Interview with Charles Bazerman

I - How your academic life developed at the University? How was your journey, as it began to search in the area of gender and what caught his attention that has made the following motivate this area?

In the early 1970's, as I began to teach writing to university students, I realized that the reason for teaching writing at this level was to help students succeed in the work assigned in the courses in their major areas of study. I, therefore, needed to know what writing students were being asked to do in those courses. A couple of preliminary studies revealed that most assignments involved writing about reading, whether to summarize, synthesize, evaluate, or comment on. This observation led me to develop pedagogy that focused on writing about reading--what we now call intertextuality. My textbooks *The Informed Writer* and *Involved* present the pedagogy I developed. Central to the pedagogy of both books is that students not only must be responsive to the readings and genres of the subjects they are studying, but they also need to develop their own syntheses of knowledge, critical perspectives, and individual statements. In short, they learn that disciplinary discourses are a means for them to develop their own thinking and meanings, and then share them with others in persuasive ways.

In the course of developing this pedagogy, I began to observe that writing differed from discipline to discipline, and that there was some relationship between the forms of writing students were asked to do and the forms written by scholars in their field, though student assignments were not exactly the same as professional forms. This led me to study writing used within disciplines and across the curriculum. After some preliminary studies, including "What Written Knowledge Does," genre became a central concept in helping me understand the different forms of writing, and from there I started to become interested in the activity systems genres mediated. My book *Shaping Written Knowledge* initially put together my findings about genre, and my later book *The Languages of Edison's Light* elaborated the activity system extension of genre theory. My two most recent volumes on *Literate Action* present the theory most fully and directly.

I have written several essays tracing by pedagogic and scholarly history, and they can be accessed at my personal website, where most of my articles and many of my books are available. http://education.ucsb.edu/bazerman

These personal narratives include:

C. Bazerman (forthcoming). A Genre Based Theory of Literate Action. In N. Artemeva (Ed.), *New Developments in Genre Theory.* Inkshed Press.

C. Bazerman (2011). The Work of a Middle-class Activist: Stuck in History. In Seth Kahn (Ed.). *Activism and Rhetoric: Theories and Contexts for Political Engagement*, pp. 37-46. London: Routledge.

C. Bazerman (2003). Rhetorical Research for Reflective Practice: A multi-layered narrative. In C. Candlin (Ed.), *Research & Practice in Professional Discourse,* pp. 79-94. City University of Hong Kong Press.

C. Bazerman (1998). Looking at Writing; Writing What I See. In T. Enos and D. Roen (Eds.). *Living Rhetoric and Composition,* pp.15-24. Mahwah NJ: Erlbaum.

II - A few decades ago, studies of textual genres in Brazil have been consolidated in order to become inherent in the language teaching process. This fact can be seen from the second half of the twentieth century, when research turned to building a favorable theoretical approach to the application in the teaching-learning environments, by the end of the 1990s, when the National Curriculum Parameters (PCN) of Portuguese Language included while tutoring the perspective of textual genres in teaching mother tongue. You dedicated primarily to the genre as a psychosocial category that emerges historically and cognitive socio-historical context and the subject must be observed because it is from them that the senses are identified, shaped, located, and received, further stating that *"it is necessary to place the teaching of writing itself as motivated social action so that the student wishes to shape the direction and strives to create it.".* Thus, considering the formation of a student who is a autonomous texts producer and critical, considering their theoretical positions, that genres should be taught and learned in elementary, secondary and higher levels?

Genre, of course, is important to success and acceptability, because readers need to be able to recognize the genre of the message to make sense of it. and they will evaluate texts on whether the texts meet the expectations of the attributed genre. But even more significantly, writing is to convey a substantive message. Genre is the recognizable package the message comes in. For students to produce effective writing in the genre, they must be able to produce meaningful messages that reflect their expressive intentions, interests, and contribution to the social activity. This in turn requires students developing methods of critical thinking using the intellectual tools and evidence developed within the disciplines of education as well as identifying the meaning impulses that drive the desire to make extended written statements. The more skilled in the writer is in the intellectual tools of disciplines, the more powerful and fundamental their statements will be and the more they will be able to assert their interests and carry out their roles as individuals, citizens, and members of society.

An additional aspect of students developing ownership of the meanings they produce is that the power of expression provides the motivation to work on the writing. Writing is hard work and requires dedication to developing and improving the emerging text. Further, skill in writing takes many years to develop, requiring repeated motivated practice in many situations and over many instances. We would not expect a musician or an athlete to develop without motivated practice and engaged performances over many years, and we should not expect the writer to develop all of a sudden, even if the writer has a positive disposition and some talent. Love of the game or love of music may motivate the athlete or musician, but the writer gains motivation from the love of expression and the power of writing. Thus, from the earliest years of education children need to engage in personal meaning-making through writing, in ever more challenging situations, using increasingly sophisticated tools of genres. Learning that writing can be the vehicle for communication and elaboration of personally important meanings is perhaps the most important thing for students at every level; all the rest is developing the ability to make ever more sophisticated and effective statements in differing situations and activity systems.

III - Considering that here in Brazil, the issue between Textual Genres and Genre of Discourse is a great discussion to the area, and they often appear as a matter of nomenclature, but in fact there is distinction between the two terms, and what the relationship which the distance which exists, in your opinion, between Textual Genre and Gender of Discourse (text and discourse)?

The term discourse is used in various ways in different countries and in various linguistic and literary communities. While I am aware that in Brazil there has been some discussion on the difference between text genres and discourse genres, I am not sure of the exact distinctions and points of contention to comment accurately on the Brazilian discussion. So I will just make some general comments. First, following Volosinov, I view all genres as utterances and not just stretches of language or stretches of discourse, which might be identified as having registers (in the Hallidayan sense), but are not necessarily recognizable as complete statements. Register can tell us some things about the language used and the social categories the language choices invoke, but register does not tell us about the statement being made.

Genre is the mechanism by which we recognize what kind of statement has been made and what counts as a complete statement. A statement (or instance of the genre) has a recognizable beginning and end. Thus once we recognize a spoken utterance as a joke, we understand the joke is not complete until we get to the punch-line (or laugh-line), and if we try to stop the joke-teller before the end we are disrupting the utterance. Similarly we recognize when we have read a complete short story, encyclopedia entry, or newspaper story, even though these may be collected in books of stories, encyclopedias, or newspapers. We also recognize if we break off in the middle of reading, we are not reading the complete statement. Further, in writing and speaking, if we want to answer another's utterance we typically have an obligation to have listen to the complete prior utterance; otherwise we may be accused of not understanding or respecting what we are responding to.

That being said, there are potentially many differences between the genres of spoken and written language, having to do with the different affordances of

spoken and written language. Typically (though not always) writing allows longer statements, and thus the content and internal structure of written genres may be far more extensive. A single utterance in writing may extend for hundreds or even thousands of pages. Further, writers may develop, work on, reflect on, and revise their utterances for extended periods and thus their statements may be much more crafted and careful than spoken utterances that are often uttered as soon as they are conceived (though not always, and scripted talk has many of the characteristics of writing). Further spoken utterances tend to travel only as far as they may be heard and vanish immediately, except in uncertain memories; of course, telephonic and recording technologies have made some spoken genres more like written genres. Written texts can also take advantage of page design and graphic accompaniments, while spoken genres can take advantage of gesture, intonation, and physical presence. Multimedia technologies again are creating more hybrids between spoken and written genres. Because of these, and other differences between speech and writing, written texts have taken on different roles within extended organizations, particularly with respect to the creation, recording, and sharing of knowledge, the dissemination and standardization of regulation, and the organizing of complex activities. Within complex activity systems, different kinds of communications become distributed through different spoken and written genres. Spoken genres may handle informal communications, communications that require interpersonal sensitivity, communications which participants do not want to leave a record of, or, on the other hand, more formal social rituals that bind people together in shared events.

IV – What is different from the notion of text to the concept of gender? And how do you define both concepts?

As mentioned above, text does not necessarily refer to a bounded utterance. Further the term text puts the focus on the recorded language rather than the attributions of meaning and the sense-making processes of the individuals contained in the communication. From the point of view of genre I follow, the text only mediates the communication; the communication always includes the interlocutors and the sense they make of the communication. Meaning is

something that exists in the people's minds, and is negotiated in the interchange. The words or the text are only clues to help the writer construct and the reader to reconstruct the meaning.

V - Recognizing also the genre as a psychosocial phenomenon, it can be said that there is a relationship between gender and the study of psycholinguistics? Or this relationship must be viewed separately?

At the surface level, what I mean by genre being a a psycho-social recognition category, and thus a psycho-social phenomenon, is that genre must be attributed individually and psychologically by writer and reader in order to convey meaning, but for people to make similar attributions, the social types of genres must circulate socially and be typified socially. Insofar as thought is developed and expressed in our utterances, genres can give shape to shape to emergent thought and become the vehicle for the social distribution of thought and knowledge. Thus as people contribute to commubal discussions through the vehicle of genres, they express their ideas, assert identities and accomplish social actions--as well as contribute to the communal knowledge, thought, and actions of the group. Particularly as one becomes familiar and skilled with genres and other advanced expressive tools of professional communities, one develops more advanced cognitive tools in which to develop one's own thoughts and statements. Genres may constrain, but they also liberate by providing platforms for sophisticated expression.

This characterization of genre as a psychological and social process can have deep cognitive and affective implications if viewed from a Vygotskian perspective, which would say that the internalization of social forms, particularly social forms of language, leads to the reorganization of perception, affect, and thought, becausee the social forms of language come to mediate and give meaning to our relationship with the material and social worlds. Further, we can connect this internalization process with findings of neuroscience that the brain is flexible and responsive to our perception of situations in order to act, and that the brain develops in relation to repeated experience. Then we can see how socially-distributed construal categories such as genres can influence the formation of the brain over the lifespan as the brain builds functional systems appropriate to the

individual's life world, through processes such as neural paring, myelination, and prefrontal cortex development. In such ways, one's brain development can be influenced by the social activity systems one engages in and the genres one regularly read and write in. In this way a lawyer will come to think and feel differently than a medical doctor and both different than a poet, specifically because they each spend so much time and energy reading and writing in the genres of their fields, providing ways of perceiving the world and communicating those perceptions with others. It is interesting to note that Vygotsky's concept of functional systems (incorporating internalized social tools) was elaborated on the social level by his colleague A. N. Leontiev and on the neurocogntive level by the third member of the troika A. R. Luria, one of the founders of modern neuroscience.

Some of the articles in which I explore the cognitive impact of genres are

Bazerman, C. (2006). The Writing of Social Organization and the Literate Situating of Cognition: Extending Goody's Social Implications of Writing. In D. Olson & M. Cole (Eds.), *Technology, Literacy and the Evolution of Society: Implications of the Work of Jack Goody*, pp. 215-240. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum

Bazerman, C. (2009). Genre and Cognitive Development. In C. Bazerman, A. Bonini, D. Figueiredo (Eds.), *Genre in a Changing World*, pp. 279-294. Parlor Press and WAC Clearinghouse, 2009.

Bazerman, C. (2012). Writing with Concepts: Communal, Internalized, and Externalized. *Mind, Culture and Activity* 19:3. pp. 259-272.

Bazerman, C. (2012). Writing. Cognition, and Affect from the Perspective of Sociohistorical Studies. In Hayes, J.R., Fayol, M., Boscolo, P., & Berninger, V. (Eds.). *Handbook on Cognitive Research on Writing: Its Past, Present, and Future Contributions to Psychology,* pp. 89-104. Psychology Press.

Bazerman, C., Simon, K, Ewing, P. & Pieng, P. (forthcoming). Domain-Specific Cognitive Development through Writing Tasks in a Teacher Education Program. *Pragmatics & Cognition .*