

– regardless of the particular medicinal product – is used to guide the patient as how to take the medicine (see ‘Patient Information Leaflet’ below). This type of relationship among texts that share the same function and the same formal characteristics is called generic intertextuality.

2.4 Articulating written communication through genres

What is a genre?

As has been pointed out, texts share participants, functions, and the situations in which they are used as well as formal conventions with many other similar texts; that is, any text belongs to a more or less recognizable textual genre (i.e. editorial, original article, review article, case report, book review, text book, clinical guide, etc.). Following Bazerman (1998: 24), we could define genre as:

[...] not just [...] the formal characteristics that one must observe so as to be recognised as correctly following the visible rules and expectations. Genre more fundamentally is a kind of activity to be carried out in a recognisable textual space. That activity embodies relations with the readers and kinds of messages to be developed in order to carry out generically appropriate intentions and interactions – to complete the rhetorical and social possibilities of the genre. Thus genre presents an opportunity space for realising certain kinds of activities, meanings, and relations. Genre exists only in the recognition and deployment of typicality by writers and readers – it is the recognisable shape by which participation is enacted and understood.

According to this definition, an original article as a genre is not just a set of formal characteristics – structure, length, tenor, degree of specialization of the information contained, and so on – that must be fulfilled, but is also a communicative activity carried out by researchers whose purpose is to convince readers of their conclusions, gain prestige, make the discipline advance, and so on.

Thus, written communication in health practices covers more than just the purely expository research genres. According to the overall rhetorical purpose of the writer, we can distinguish three basic types of genres.