

Genre

Not just formal features

In the chapter “Text in contexts, theorizing learning by looking at genre and activity”, David R. Russel (2009) discusses the transfer of knowledge and various pedagogical strategies based on genre. With references to North American genre theory, Russel’s definition of genre is formed in a way that provides perspective for my study.

Genres are not merely (texts) that share some formal features; they are shared expectations among some group(s) of people. Genre are ways of recognizing and predicting how certain tools, in certain *typified*-typical, reoccurring - conditions, may be used to help participants to act together purposefully.

(Russel 2009, 24)

With references to Bazerman and Schryer, Russel describes genres as forms of life, ways of being, frames for social action.

They are environments for learning and teaching. As forms of life, genres and the activity systems they operationalize are (temporarily) regularized, stabilized, through routinized tool-use within and among groups. Thus, context is an ongoing accomplishment, not a container for action or texts. The behavior of individual writers/subject is constantly recreated through the specific actions of people together; and thus, genres are always only stabilized-for-now [...], from the point of view of the group or groups involved.

(Russel 2009, 24)

This definition of a genre makes me see how thinking about dance genres often defines content and style, but that the importance of context is not always taken into account. Russell's clarification makes visible, the movements and displacements that occur in the specificity of my practice, the issues and meaning of genre that I work with. It also sheds light on different ways of working with folkdance and give me better understanding of my responsibility in relation to them. Russel’s definition of genre uncovers a relational, temporary subjective approach. It places the activity of group(s) and individual(s) in focus in a way that emphasizes the action; dancing and teaching as a process for review. It offers room for action, thinking and development, and makes it possible to understand folkdance as a practice with many different meanings that all depend on the context. In his conclusion, Russel points at the usefulness of analyses of amongst others genre in approaching the

complexities of transfer. Also, ways to bring for example genres into analyses of teaching and learning while providing a basis for practical change efforts (Russel 2009, 28). I see that my description of the practice from a genre position is complex, difficult to analyze but hopefully can contribute to development and change.

Russel, David. R. 2009. "Text in contexts, theorizing learning by looking at genre and activity." In *Rethinking contexts for learning and teaching: communities, activities and networks*, edited by Richard Edwards, Gert Biesta, Mary Thorpe, 17-30. New York: Routledge.