

***Mapping Genres, Mapping Culture: Japanese Texts in Context.***  
**Elizabeth A. Thomson, Motoki Sano, and Helen de Silva Joyce.**  
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**pp.**

*Reviewed by*

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*Mapping Genres, Mapping Culture: Japanese Texts in Context* is an edited anthology by Japanese language scholars on the bidirectional continuity between Japanese texts and culture. In the opening chapter, "Mapping genres using systemic functional linguistics," the editors explore theories of language in context and text genre and provide a detailed outline of the book. The following eight chapters then each focus on a specific text genre in the Japanese language, yet with the mutual aim to map the genres of Japanese texts from a social semiotic perspective within a systemic functional linguistics (SFL) framework. SFL is an approach to language developed in the 1960s by Michael Halliday. It expands on previous works of linguist Bronislaw Malinowski—also frequently mentioned in this volume—and is associated with a number of purposes such as sociological inquiry and discourse analysis (see Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). In this book, following Halliday's tradition, SFL is referred to as a way of looking at language as a form of social behavior, meaning examining what language is used for. Two key elements of SFL, context and semantics, are repeatedly specified in each chapter, the former being related to genre and the latter to register. In this collection, the chapter authors describe genres in a variety of fields, from the humanities to the media, providing an insightful picture of Japanese culture from the viewpoint of genre.

In Chapter 1, Elizabeth A. Thomson, Motoki Sano, and Helen de Silva Joyce set the scene for the analytical work in this volume by first introducing the readers to SFL, the theoretical framework that has informed the analyses in all following chapters. Next, they sketch the notion of genre within SFL theory, and finally introduce each of the chapters. Kazue Kato (Chapter 2) reports on the procedural genre—a type of text that informs how things are done or should be done, such as how to purchase a ticket—by analyzing five texts from various contexts with the aim of identifying and describing the nature and lexico-grammatical features of Japanese procedural texts.

In Chapter 3, the focus is on the directive genre in the Japanese workplace. Yumiko Mizusawa analyses the administrative genre of 57 written Japanese directives to clarify workplace interpersonal relationships within the Japanese social hierarchy. The topic of Chapter 4 is persuasive text, those texts that express the social activity of persuasion in a culture. This study by Sano comprises 11 persuasive texts varying in terms of field and mode and attempts to examine the linguistic characteristics of these texts. Chapter 5 is on news stories. Masamichi Washitake addresses the generic structure and semantic formation of Japanese front-page newspaper reports with the aim of determining whether Japanese news stories are more narrative in nature or more like the orbital structure of English news stories. In Chapter 6, Noriko Iwamoto describes the analysis of three war reports with the view to identify the ideational and interpersonal orientations of Japanese newspaper texts published during World War II. Katsuyuki Sato explains in Chapter 7 the Japanese procedure and method of reading and interpreting Chinese texts into Japanese with a focus on the genre known as *Kundoku-bun* (text written in a mixture of Chinese characters and *katakana*) to demonstrate how classical Chinese has come to influence Japanese language and culture. Chapter 8 gives a detailed outline of three case studies of Japanese folktales. Through this analysis, Thomson tries to demonstrate how textual organization, semantics, and grammatical choices of traditional tales establish cultural norms in children. In the final chapter, Ken Tann applies the concept of the context of culture to *nihonjinron* (a body of texts that asserts the uniqueness of Japanese national and cultural identity). This chapter complements the referenced studies in cultural anthropology by bringing SFL to the analysis of *nihonjinron* texts to investigate their significance as discourse on culture and characterize them linguistically as a form of identity discourse.

Throughout the chapters, the patterns in texts are investigated to provide linguistic evidence of how texts form genre groups that reflect the broader cultural context. The term “context of culture” is used to describe the general context for language as a system in which lexical items and grammatical categories should be related to their cultural context (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Collectively, the chapters attempt to describe semantic and lexicogrammatical characteristics; the volume therefore fundamentally focuses on linguistic patterns. One of the greatest strengths of this book is that each chapter provides detailed analysis of the concerned genre and a wealth of information on the language choices in the analyzed texts while skillfully referring to the SFL approach in a comprehensible manner. On the other hand, though some chapters do so more than others, and despite the claims

of the book's objectives, overall there is scant attention given to the nature of Japanese culture and the norms and values found within Japanese society. For example, Chapter 2 ("Exploring the structure and meaning of the family of procedural texts in Japanese") concludes the analysis of procedural texts by stating the results of this study using technical terms of the applied methodology: "It seems that Japanese language is strongly affected by particular aspects of the *context of situation*, especially social status and degree of control in *tenor* [emphasis added]" (p. 53). Although the approach taken throughout the book is a social-semantic one, primarily concerned with meaning making in social contexts and how texts enact social processes in different contexts, it is hard to say that it actually reveals characteristics of Japanese society and culture. This issue could have been further investigated and better presented throughout the book.

Overall, however, I recommend this book to learned scholars and students, especially in the field of Japanese linguistics and pragmatics. Organized around the context of genre and clearly contributing to the understanding of genre and genre variation in the Japanese language, this book is not an easy read. However, it can be of interest to those versed in the SFL approach as well as teachers and learners in a wide range of linguistic fields. I do suggest that a basic knowledge of Japanese is preferable to make this volume even more meaningful and engaging.

## References

- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. I. M. (2004). *An introduction to functional grammar* (3rd ed.). <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203783771>
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Hasan, R. (1989). *Language, context, and text: Aspects of language in a social-semiotic perspective* (2nd. ed.). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.