Alke Gröppel-Wegener

Staffordshire University

Embodying Regenring. Analysing the Genre *Furoshiki* Using English’s Theoretical Framework

Abstract

*Really my contribution to this issue is an artefact – a regenring of Fiona English’s Orientations of Genres framework as a* furoshiki*, a Japanese Wrapping Cloth. But as I cannot share this with all of you beyond a photograph, the best way of describing it within the constraints of a (printed) journal is as this article, part origin story, part analysis… but really this is the story of how by applying the framework, I started to understand it much better (and how I now propose to change it)!*

The purpose of this paper is to use English’s Orientations of Genres framework to compare the Genre *Furoshiki* (a Japanese Wrapping cloth designed to represent said framework and to serve as a delegate pack for a workshop on using genre in Higher Education) to the two genres it grew out of – a summary of the framework itself, namely English’s 2015 chapter ‘Using Genre as a pedagogical resource’ (which we included in the material disseminated to delegates after the workshop) and the traditional conference tote bag so often used as a receptacle for a delegate pack. As the framework was developed with mainly linguistic genres in mind it will be critiqued as to its suitability in discussing artefactual genres, and I argue that Gestalt Principles and Jacques Bertin’s Visual Attributes make a useful extension to the framework itself.

Keywords: furoshiki, genre, genring, pedagogical resource, regenring

The Origin Story (Background)

In November 2016 I organised an exploratory workshop on the processes of genring and regenring in association with the Writing-PAD network and Staffordshire University. Called ‘Playing with Genre’ it was a day that exposed attendees to a number of genres linked to education, such as the formal presentation, the creative making session, the rethought textbook and the guided tour (for that specific purpose this was held at Middleport Pottery and a short studio tour was included in the programme). It was planned as an introduction to the subject of genre and regenring with the specific aim to familiarise delegates with not just the practice of using genres, but also a possible analytical framework they could use when analysing the process of genring in order to make the argument for this type of work back at their home institutions and in possible theoretical dissemination of their own work. The framework had been developed by one of the scheduled speakers, Fiona English, as part of her PhD work and was subsequently regenred and published in 2011 as *Student Writing and Genre*. English summarised her theoretical framework in a diagram titled ‘The Orientations of Genres’ (see a reproduction in Figure 1). This clearly would be a central bit of information for our attendees and I was keen to find a prominent way to include it into the delegate pack.

[Figure 1: The Orientations of Genres, reproduced from English, 2015: 251]

At the same time I had come across a type of artefact that for me embodied the process of regenring: the *furoshiki* or Japanese Wrapping Cloth. A *furoshiki* is a usually square piece of cloth used in Japanese culture to wrap items, with many ways to wrap differently shaped bundles. Often the cloth is lavishly decorated – and it is interesting to see how the appearance of this decoration changes from the fully laid out piece, where you can see all of it, to the wrapped forms, where new patterns emerge via the different folds and knots needed to hold it in place. This could be seen as an embodiment of regenring, depending on how this piece is used it changes how it appears and what it offers. You can use it in its laid out form as a piece of decoration, or you can use it as a bag, but then some of the decoration becomes invisible to you. You can use it as a scarf or to carry a bottle, but you cannot do both at the same time.

The idea formed to combine these two different ways of looking at regenring, the theoretical framework and the artefact that demonstrates regenring in action, by designing and producing a *furoshiki* based on English’s Orientations of Genres and integrating it into the workshop by using it as a conference bag.

About a Bag

I have been attending academic conferences, symposia and workshops since 2004, and while I have not kept every single one of the receptacles that has come with these event, I have to admit to still having quite a collection (see figure 2 for a random selection). I have received conference materials in a shiny silver envelope, in a rigid A4 sized box, but most commonly I have received it in a bag of some sort. There were paper bags, but mainly the bags were made of some sort of fabric. There seem to be two standard shapes: you can get a satchel style bag, with a flap closing it and extra spaces for pens, etc, or you can get a simple canvas tote bag (I once received one with a zip across the top, so you can actually close it – one of my favourites that I use for more than just storage). Usually the bags are decorated with the logo of the host institution or, if it is a large conference, the logo of the conference or association etc that is organising the conference.

[Figure 2: Random selection of the conference and workshop bags I have acquired over the years]

In all my years of conference going I have only once received a bag where the design of the bag itself (and not only the visuals shown on it) tied into the theme of the conference in some way: at the Eighth International Conference on Design Principles and Practices 2014 in Vancouver, Canada, which as its theme had ‘Design as Collective Intelligence’, delegates received a conference bag assembled from polyester mesh, webbing, binder clips and coffee stir sticks (it can be seen at the bottom left corner of figure 2). Without a seam, it is possible to take it apart into its components and reassemble it at will. It was designed by faculty at one of the hosting institution, Emily Carr University of art + design. In its spirit and functionality, this bag embodied the theme of the conference. Interestingly the bag itself was not branded at all, although it included instructions on the assembly.

The genre of the *furoshiki* seemed to open up the opportunity for me to provide a conference ‘bag’ that would tie into the theme of the workshop. But what exactly to put on it?

From Diagram to ‘Scarf’ Design

English’s framework for analysis (figure 1) is formally very close to a bullet pointed list, which in the context of academic publication is, of course, completely appropriate. The most straight forward way of reproducing this would have been to simply keep it in the given form. However, this would have ignored some of the visual opportunities on offer when looking at this in a different genre, say scarf design (the scarf being one of the uses of a *furoshiki*). For example, English calls this ‘The Orientations of Genres’ (2015: 250) and showing something as an orientation is possible as a visual, particularly if you are talking about something that does not have a predetermined ‘up’ or ‘down’ orientation. The sides of a square scarf are equal in importance, and assigning one half as English’s ‘social’ and the other as her ‘material’ orientation allows them to become equal in importance in the visual – whereas in the original form the one that is stated first would always be seen as more important in our culture, even if that had not been the original intention. In a bullet pointed list something needs to come first.

Using the four different orientations as a starting point, and also applying two different colours to show the difference between the Social and the Material orientations, I came up with a design that kept the main terms but organised them in a way to represent English’s framework beyond the bullet pointed list. I then added capital G’s in different typefaces to represent the idea of genres – having the same content (the G), but showing it slightly differently (the typefaces). These I used in the middle, as an overlapping ‘huddle’ to show the potential of using any of them, and along a border with each of them separately. Each corner of the border featured a controlled overlap of two different typeface G’s to highlight their similarities in two corners and the gains and losses of using the different typefaces in the other two corners (because I think the gains and losses are a key concept of English’s theory, even if they do not feature in her framework directly).

[Figure 3: from sketch (left) to finished *furoshiki* (middle) to wrapped delegate pack (right)]

In the capable hands of Richard Mellor, a graphic designer friend of mine, my initial sketch (see Figure 3, left) was transformed into a digital file, which I then ordered in an edition of 31, printed on 70x70 cm cotton lawn fabric (edges overlocked), so that I had them ready to wrap up the delegate packs for the workshop (see Figure 3, right).

Analysing the Genre *Furoshiki*

In order to understand the various aspects that happened during the regenring of English’s original framework into a visual representation that went beyond the bullet pointed list and as well as regenring the traditional conference bag into a *furoshiki* – and doing both of them at the same time -, the following analysis uses the framework established by English to compare the *furoshiki* to a chapter discussing her work and a conference bag.

I have decided therefore to start the analysis with applying the framework by analysing the different genre according to the different orientations in a table, just as English does in her book (2011) and article (2015). However, as there are two different modes that need to be addressed for a *furoshiki*, I have made a further distinction between its visual properties (i.e. the design/decoration) and its artefactual dimension (i.e. the attributes of the cloth and the ways of wrapping it that come with it).

The book chapter chosen as a representation was the one we distributed to the workshop delegates after the workshop (English 2015). I chose the chapter rather than just the diagram, as this was its original context – and you would not usually find the diagram of this sort without it being explained in more detail through scholarly text.

For the purposes of this analysis, I have chosen to let the most recent conference bag I received to stand in as an example of a ‘typical’ conference bag (see figure 4). Representing the 11th Conference of the Association for Researching and Applying Metaphor, held in July 2016 in Berlin, this is a satchel style bag. It comes in a non-woven polypropylene fabric, the body of the bag is grey, apart from the flap which is white, with the logo of the conference screen printed onto the front. The flap is held in place by two pieces of Velcro, and there are 6 pen slots on the outside of the bag, covered by the flap. A label at the side of the pen slots tells me it was made by a company called Joytex and is model 58. From their website, I can find out that its dimensions are 36 by 27 by 6 cm, and checking the website, there is a minimum order quantity of 250.

[Figure 4 – RaAM conference bag]

The Social Orientations

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **The Social** | | | | |
|  | Chapter | Furoshiki  visual | artefactual | RaAM 11 bag |
| **Contextual** | | | | |
| Design | Responding to a call for chapters | Designing for the delegates at the workshop  The visual design of the furoshiki is a visualisation of English’s diagram, which summarises her analytical framework. | Designing for the delegates at the workshop  The format of the furoshiki responds to the theme of the workshop as it embodies the idea that an artefact can be used in a number of different ways, in effect it can be regenred. | The shape of the bag is a stock product that can be ordered from the Joytex website, although there are a number of choices as to the colour.  The screen-printed logo has been designed or ordered for this specific conference by the conference team. |
| Production | Scholarly text | Visual representation of a theoretical framework | Digitally printed on square pieces of cotton to add the functionality of a *furoshiki* | Satchel style bag with branding for the conference and the group organising the conference. |
| Distribution | For interested experts; evaluation against disciplinary criteria and values decided whether this was included in the book or not | The distribution was as a whole – you cannot split it into a visual and an artefactual layer.  As a give-away, there was no pressure of evaluation, if people didn’t like it this wouldn’t have made a huge difference (apart from to my ego). Feedback was welcome but not necessary for the success of the workshop | | As a give-away for conference delegates. Like with the *furoshiki* there was no pressure of evaluation, people were free to use it for the duration of the conference and in the future, or not. |
| **Discursive** | | | | |
| Purpose | Disseminate knowledge and make the case for regenring as a knowledge production process | Make diagram more accessible to delegates through visual treatment.  Give delegates a memorable gift to take home  For designer a personal goal was to understand the theoretical framework better through transforming it into a visual. | Show the principle of regenring in an artefact that embodies the principle.  Give delegates a memorable gift to take home.  Development of own creative practice. | As a bag – to carry things in.  Branding by the group to raise interest.  Visual clue for delegates to be able to identify themselves while at the conference. |
| Process | Mine existing work (PhD and subsequent book), with additional planning, creating, analysing and writing | Create  Visualise  Synthesize into visual form that made use of layout and colours in the output  Analyse what the most important aspects of the diagram were | Dialogue with graphic designer to bring it into a format that could be printed digitally.  Order it | Combination of the stock product of the bag and conference branding, which was specific to the event.  Select colours of bag, design appropriate logo.  Order it. |
| Identity | Expert scholar | Designer  Creative practitioner  Workshop organiser | | Organising group of conference and/or hired designer |
| Role | Informer, Performer, Educator | Informer,  Performer,  Designer,  Educator,  Workshop host | | Bag to remind of event, organising group, host institution and sponsors |
| Agency | Visible  intertextual | Visible  Mediated by design constraints | | Visible |

Table 1: The Social Orientations

Reviewing the resulting breakdown (Table 1), it is interesting to see how changing the genre from chapter to *furoshiki* allows the communication of the key concept of ‘regenring’ to take central stage within the workshop. It allows discussion in the moment easier than a reading would have. (It is always difficult to include readings into a workshop, either they need to be done beforehand – and it is not always practical to assign people preparatory work before they come – or it is necessary to plan for chunks of time for this to be done in the moment, which means having time when people are sitting in quiet reading, but then how much time to leave for this? This is usually dealt with by having a speaker summarise a key topic, which was also happening at the workshop as English talked about her work in the morning.) On the other hand, it adds additional functions to the traditional bag, while traditionally this is produced in bulk for the purposes of the hosts, and is mainly a branding exercise, it now becomes an integral part of this specific event.

With that also comes a certain price: because conference organisers order tote bags in large numbers they are relatively cheap (becoming even cheaper if a stock bag from the host institution is used). From the website of the company producing the bags (Joytex 2017) it is clear that the minimum order was 250 units and while no price was available, I would estimate that even with the customisation of the logo, the price per bag would have not have been higher than 20% of what it cost to produce each of the *furoshiki*. Making such a special item for a very small workshop had a significant impact on the workshop fee because of its production costs. This decision would not have been taken if the *furoshiki* had not been so integral to the event, embodying its subject.

Looking at the discursive orientation it becomes clear that not only are there layers in the artefact/genre of the *furoshiki*, in its combination of a visual and its functionality, but also how many layers there were in my understanding of myself, not simply as a scholar and workshop host, but rather as a creative practitioner and designer. The design of this artefact allowed me to combine my academic with my creative practice, and disseminate it in a way that is not always possible for creative practice.

The Material Orientations

Using the framework English suggests for the material orientations proved slightly more challenging. I believe this is because the provided categories were designed from a linguistic perspective, and therefore prioritise written texts. While in the context of academic genres a ‘text’ can be defined as any form and shape whether writing is involved or not, and that is clearly English’s intention, the way she categorises the material orientations do not have clearly defined spaces for the visual, tactile and embodied attributes of the artefact I was looking at. As the Material Orientations are about the created artefact rather than about the context or the author (as the Social Orientations are), I have decided to discuss them in two separate tables after making suggestions of how to include prompts based on theories originating within graphic design for each of them.

To find a system that could be used to add the needed functionality within English’s framework, I considered Lengler and Eppler’s (2007) work on classification of visualization methods, but found that it would have been too data focused for the purposes of genre. However, there are some stalwarts of graphic design and data visualisation that I believe can be integrated here to allow a systematic treatment of the visual attributes, namely Gestalt Principles (which I suggest to include as part of the ‘organisation’ part of the thematic orientation) and Jacques Bertin’s variables of the image (which I suggest to include under what English termed ‘textual material’ as part of the semiotic orientation).

With the additions of these theories, I have decided to discuss the thematic and semiotic orientations separately.

Thematic

English’s Thematic orientation includes two categories: ‘Organisation’ as well as ‘Topics and Specific Characteristics’. Of these it is the Organisation that particularly leaves room to look beyond the written word, and especially within visual genres the layout of a piece is very important. A good framework to analyse this are the theories that have been developed as part of the Gestalt movement.

Gestalt Principles were developed by German theorists around 1910 to 1930 and are concerned with visual perception, i.e. how the grouping and comparison of objects seem to suggest meaning to the viewer (for a brief and concise introduction to the key theories and principles of the Gestalt Movement, see Brownie 2006). Max Wertheimer, in particular, identified seven ‘laws’ or ‘factors’ central to the movement explaining that humans perceive objects based on how they appear in relation to other objects. (Brownie 2006: 2) They are

* proximity (objects that are close together are perceived to belong together either as a group or forming a larger whole),
* similarity (objects that are similar are perceived to belong together, a dissimilar object sticks out as an anomaly),
* uniform destiny (a dominant factor overrides the others when there are multiple factors at play),
* simplicity (the simplest arrangement is likely to be perceived first, i.e. the one with fewer elements; or the one that is symmetrical, rather than asymmetrical),
* direction (the branch of a line that is closest to continuing the line will be perceived as the original path and other linking lines will be seen as secondary branches),
* closure (if an object is incomplete but suggests enough of a familiar shape, the whole shape will be perceived with our brains filling in the blanks),
* good curve/continuation (the continuity of a perceived line might override other shapes).

These factors provide a framework for how to consider visual information within the category of ‘organisation’ within English’s Material Orientations, as they give prompts as to how to analyse the layout of an image that goes beyond the organisation of a written text. It is understood that not all of these will always be in play, just like in the example discussed here, there is no real case of the uniform destiny, direction, closure or good curve/continuation factors.

Analysing the Genre *Furoshiki* with this in mind, three seem to have been of use: proximity, simplicity and similarity.

* The central image is made up of a number of overlapping capital G outlines (see figure 5). The proximity of these shapes suggests that they belong together, while at the same time forming a very complicated shape in which the separate G’s are difficult to recognise. The simplicity factor thus means that we perceive one central image of a ‘huddle’ much more easily – the separate G shapes only reveal themselves on closer inspection. The central image thus shows by the way it has been organised/laid out the potentiality of various genres for any given subject.

[Figure 5: Genre *furoshiki* detail: the ‘huddle’]

* The separate ‘G’ shapes on the border (see Figure 6), on the other hand, suggest that they belong together via the factor of similarity – while they are not using the same typefaces, they are all the same letter, of the same size, and using the same colour treatment (grey outline). They clearly form a homogenous border, and by that also contrast with the huddle in the middle – their organisation is so different that they are set apart from the central image. They are also set apart from the huddle by not being in close proximity from it, but being removed by a number of clear borders. A reading of this could be that they tease out the differences of each of the genres, while the central image shows them as an overlapping huddle, here it becomes possible to see the differences between each of the G’s. This is highlighted by the corner images (see figure 7), which show two Gs each in a controlled overlap, exploring the common areas in two corners and the differing areas in the other two corners (the gains and losses).

[Figure 6: genre *furoshiki* detail: outer border]

[Figure 7: Genre *furoshiki* details: corner images]

* The theoretical framework itself is the delineation that stands between the ‘huddle’ and the outer border (see figure 8). It uses the same shape (a square) as the outer border, but otherwise is very different – using a distinct typeface (Futura) throughout it is clear that the four sides of this square belong together, as this is the only place where there is no dot pattern in the background.

[Figure 8: Genre *furoshiki* detail: the framework square]

Within this framework, the typeface also suggests a hierarchy. While the Futura family is used, the orientations are in Futura Bold and white on the colour (see below for discussion of the colour uses), while the underlying categories are in Futura Medium, a slightly smaller point size and use coloured type on white background. The similarity of the treatment is perceived first (simplicity factor) while the differences become clear when focusing on the details of this aspect of the design.

* The use of two colours for the main orientations (turquoise for Social and green for Material) again uses similarity as an organising principle as it suggests that both sides are different from each other, while at the same time having equal weight (there is the same amount of green as there is turquoise volume.
* Similarly, the opposite colour treatment of the border suggests that while this still ties in (because the same colours were used) there is now a different aspect represented, so in breaking with similarity it makes the point it is now different.

Looking at the visual added to the RaAM 11 bag, we can also see that some of the Gestalt principles were used in its design:

* the information pertaining to the theme, host, date and sponsor forms a rectangle using the same typeface and colour. This makes use of similarity, but also of closure – while the lines of text are not continuous lines or on a continuous background, the brain perceives this as a complete rectangle that encloses a middle (see figure 9).

[Figure 9: RaAM 11 conference bag detail: logo]

* Within this arrangement (which at first glance is the one noticed – Simplicity), on closer inspection the top line is slightly different: it uses a larger point size. This and the fact that it is arranged on top makes the viewer perceive this information (the theme of the conference) as the most important within the rectangle. The second most important line is arguably the bottom line – as it can be read easily (this line gives the full name of the conference). The lines at the sides are more difficult to read as they are perpendicular to the other text (as well as to the right-side-up of the bag). To the left the name of the publishing company sponsoring the event, this is in all caps, which relates to their corporate identity, but the size appears smaller. To the right the name of the host institution and the dates of the conference, which appears ‘lighter’ due to more tracking (adding spaces between the letters). I suspect that the mix of sizes of the type and the tracking on all of the sides was due to the desire to form a rectangular frame for the logo.
* The conference logo, the visual in the middle of this rectangle, uses a similar, but slightly different typeface to show the short name for the conference, its importance is highlighted because it uses a much larger point size and has a salmon coloured background (all the other printing is grey). The number of the conference appears in white, but retains the same size as the name, again this similarity shows us that this information belongs together.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Material – Thematic** | | | | |
|  | Chapter | Furoshiki  visual | artefactual | Conference Bag |
| Organisation | Chapter conventions (abstract, background, ‘body’, conclusion);  Description; analysis;  examples;  data | Pared down information;  Use of proximity and simplicity to suggest the not yet formed potential of different genres in ‘huddle’ of central image;  A clearly formed border of G shapes reflecting on potential genres differences and similarities (and the gains and losses of regenring);  Clearly set apart frame that shows the theoretical framework;  Layout uses four compass points of orientation;  Attributions are added at opposite corners outside of the frame of the design | The organisational functions of a furoshiki are separate from the content shown in its design.  Wrapping functions need instruction to become viable as a bag. | One large section inside, six pen slots on the outside of the bag (underneath the flap);  Similarity, simplicity and closure make us perceive a rectangular frame enclosing a logo (which is clearly the focus of the arrangement);  There are some perceived differences of importance within the frame triggered by their differences |
| Topics and specific characteristics | Disciplinary topics, summary of one of the examples analysed in the book and a commentary of the usefulness of genre as process of knowledge production | Disciplinary topic of workshop | Functionality of ‘conference tote bag’ needed to be retained, but in a way that fit the workshop theme | Shape is non-specific to the event;  Logo is descriptive listing theme, hosts, date and sponsor for this particular conference |

Table 2: Material Orientation - Thematic

Looking at the comparison between the three genres in the context of the Thematic Orientations (Table 2), it becomes clear that the visual layer of the *furoshiki* encodes a lot of content in the organisation that goes beyond a simple order and hierarchy, which is the case in the book chapter. It also shows how more complicated the function of the *furoshiki* is compared to a regular conference bag: while a bag is easily understood and can be used instinctively in our culture, the idea of a cloth to serve a similar function needs to be introduced – and possible needs further instructions to become realistic. While the organisation of the visual information on the RaAM 11 bag can also be read further by applying the Gestalt principles, the content on it does not go beyond announcing a specific event. This, on the other hand, is something the genre *furoshiki* does not do, in fact the artefact itself does not make any mention of the workshop it was designed for, by making the decision that this was about the concept of regenring, it lost that content that would have been central for a traditional conference bag.

Semiotic

English’s Semiotic Orientation includes the categories of Modes and Textual Material. A useful theoretical framework to add to the latter could be the work of Jacques Bertin, one of the pioneers of graphic design principles in his 1967 *Sémiologie Graphique*. He updated the basic principles of this book in 2001 as the ‘Matrix Theory of Graphics’, “a homogenous and coherent system for the analysis of the graphic language, its use and pedagogy.” (Bertin 2011: 5). While a lot of this is focused on the graphic transmission and analysis of data, Bertin suggests a number of ‘variables of the image’ (often in English referred to as Bertin’s ‘Visual Attributes’ or ‘Visual Variables’) that might come in useful when analysing visual attributes of genres. Bertin’s (2001: 7) variables are:

* 2 Dimensions of the Plane (is it a point, a line or an area; what is the location/position),
* size (length/area/volume),
* value/tone (in the grey-scale),
* grain/pattern/texture,
* colour,
* orientation (tilt),
* shape.

I would argue that the first of these, which is concerned with location and positioning, has already been analysed as part of the Gestalt principles in the Organisation category, and will therefore not be considered in this category.

The visual aspect of the Genre *Furoshiki* uses all of the remaining six, although not all of them actually encode meaning.

* The size of the square representing the framework covers the main area of the *furoshiki*, and thus shows this is the most important aspect of the message. On the other hand, the sizes of the two colours used are equal showing a balance.
* The grey-scale value of the colours used is similar, however, because the frame that represents the orientations uses block colour rather than pattern, this is marked out as more important.
* A regular, small-scale dot pattern is used to provide background colour throughout most of the design. While it is in two different colours, the pattern itself does not change. However, the places where it is not used denote the theoretical framework itself.
* There are three colours (plus the white of the background) used as part of the *furoshiki* design: The main two are turquoise and green. Turquoise represents the Social Orientation and was chosen due to associations with colours used in social media, namely the light blue of Facebook and Twitter. The green was chosen to represent the Material Orientation due to an association with the material/growing world. (Initially the colours chosen were green and pink (see the original sketch in figure 3-left), but that was abandoned because it might have been perceived as too ‘girly’ with pink having a feminine association in contemporary Western society.) The third colour is grey, and that is only used in the outlines of the G shapes, the demarcation line between the middle square and the border, as well as the copyright and attribution notices. While the grey is a neutral colour in this scheme, the turquoise and green are perfectly balanced in their use, neither of them is more prominent than the other.
* The orientation of the writing is laid out according to the four compass points. With a square basic shape this allows each side to be perceived as of equal importance, there is no beginning or end point to the content, unless you ‘read’ it from the inside out or the outside in. The orientation of the border is opposite to that of the text of the theoretical frame abutting it, marking it out as different. The only elements that are tilted are the corner pieces on the border, which at a 45 degree tilt suggest the reading and repositioning around the corner, and the G shapes in the middle, some of which are located on the diagonal, aligned with the corners, but most of which are randomly placed.
* The overall shape is a square, which allows for the equal weighting of the four orientations, as well as turning it into the potential design for a *furoshiki*. Other shapes used are letter shapes, on the one hand to spell out words, on the other the capital G shape is used in a number of typefaces to abstractly represent the concept of different genres.

The design of the RaAM 11 bag can also be analysed using these attributes.

* The size of the logo takes up a lot of the flap; within it, the short name of the conference ‘RaAM 11’ takes up most of the area within the rectangle made of type. This is clearly the most important information. The sizes of the type forming the rectangle vary in size, with the line running on top being slightly larger than the other three sides.
* There are only two colours on the logo – a dark grey and a salmon colour, which is lighter when viewed as a grey scaled image. The bag is of a light grey colour, with a white flap and back.
* There is no real pattern on the logo, although the fabric the bag itself is made out of gives the appearance of little dots, as the fibres are pressed.
* As this is a structured bag, there is a clear orientation of the artefact as to what is the ‘right’ side up. The type on the logo is organised according to this, with the name of the conference (both long and short forms) and its theme being in that orientation. The name of the sponsor and of the host and date are perpendicular to that. There is no upside-down type, again showing that there is a right way up in which to ‘read’ the bag.
* The bag itself suggests a rectangular shape, which is reinforced through the logo. The salmon colour forms a different (seemingly random) shape.

As it is important to be aware that ‘textual’ material goes beyond the narrow definition of written text, I would suggest exchanging this term for ‘Attributes’, which makes it open to the discussion of these visual attributes.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Material – Semiotic** | | | | |
|  | Chapter | Furoshiki  visual | artefactual | Conference Bag |
| Modes | Writing (writtenness) | Writing (writtenness) in short terms and phrases  Letters as abstract concepts (G is for Genre)  Colours (green for material, turquoise for social)  Orientation of layout to show concept of ‘orientation’ | Fabric;  folds and knots; specific to the function of what needs to be wrapped | Bag-ness, container for event specific materials;  Carrier of branding;  Allows for identifying with a group – as conference goer you are able to identify others attending the same event |
| ~~Textual materials~~  Attributes | Personal forms (use of personal pronouns of expert);  Original of quotes  Tables  Formal writing-like expressions | Short terms and phrases of written material, quoted from original diagram;  Attribution notices;  Visual attributes show that the different orientations are equal in importance (size, shape, orientation, tone);  Colour shows the difference between Social and Material Orientations;  Pattern shows the difference between the theoretical frame and the rest of the content | Cotton lawn fabric – lightweight, but still durable, easy to manipulate and knot;  Overlocked hem to hinder fraying | Branding;  Logo shows the importance of the conference and theme itself over the host, date and sponsor |

Table 3 Material Orientation - Semiotic

The comparison of the semiotic orientations shown in Table 3 show a lot of information is encoded in the attributes of the genre when it comes to the visual dimension. The RaAM11 conference bag equally has a lot of semiotic material encoded in it, but comparing the columns in the table makes clear that here the meaning has a branding purpose, while the Genre *Furoshiki* encodes subject-specific meaning.

Summary and Conclusion

Applying the theoretical framework to the Genre *Furoshiki* resulted in an overview of the losses and gains of this particular *furoshiki* as opposed to an academic book chapter and a conference bag exemplar, both representing the genres the *furoshiki* was inspired by. It became clear that the *furoshiki* works through two different modes: the surface design, which allows a lot of the information to be encoded in a visual way, and the artefactual, which while it may embody the concept of regenring, does not embody any of the theory on its own. Neither of them are stand-alone; the visual dimension is encoded in a way that needs previous knowledge of the subject to make sense of the framework, while the artefact needs to be introduced as a wrapping cloth in order to open up its functionality beyond the poster.

English, whose work specifically focuses on the use of genres in the context of Higher Education academic literacies, i.e. writing practices at the university level, argues (2015) that if genres are simply used as templates to display knowledge, the potential of regenring as a process of knowledge making is ignored and underused. Turning the conference bag into a wrapping cloth means that the process of regenring is laid at the users’ fingertips. Yes, they can use it as a poster to remind them of English’s theoretical framework, but that would mean narrowing its scope to just one use – displaying the design like a poster. If, on the other hand, users use the cloth to wrap up things, using it in the genre of a bag, they activate a different functionality, while making it not work as a poster anymore. Although it retains the design, through the different folds and knots necessary to make a bag or bundle, the design becomes hidden while the *furoshiki* is in that mode. In this it embodies regenring, but that is not tied to the content it can display, rather it is something all *furoshiki* do. Hence the Genre *Furoshiki* is a double-layered artefact that in itself uses different modes of meaning making for the user.

Using the genre of the *furoshiki* allowed the topic of the workshop to be taken through from theoretical work to the practical dimension of the bag, allowing this artefact to embody the topic. And there is another dimension – the workshop delegates who were taking these artefacts home, are required to interact with it themselves, by using it. While they might decide to display it as a poster focusing on the visual information, they might also use it in the other affordances it can have, i.e. as a bag, a scarf, a table cloth, etc.

As for using the framework itself: English’s Orientations of Genres framework was developed in a linguistic context there were some aspects of it that were difficult to apply to a genre that was both visual and tactile. I have therefore made suggestions on additions that could be made in order to include some of the theory of information and graphic design to apply to non-written aspects of genres. With these additions, Gestalt Principles and Visual Variables could act as prompts in future analysis of genres. I realise that while my suggestions attempt to extend the framework, they are themselves based within particular modes of practice, namely the visual and to a lesser degree the tactile, and thus seem to ignore genres that use other senses. This seemed beyond the scope of this paper. I would, however, argue that while my suggestions for attributes to analyse are based on visuals in particular, they might also be helpful in the context of analysing how other senses perceive genres. Chang, Nesbitt and Wilkins (2007) pointed out that particularly similarity and proximity are Gestalt Principles that could be applied to haptic elements while they mentioned Moore (2003) made a similar link to auditory elements. There might be ways to interpret the volume of sound similar to a visual grey scale and difference in instruments playing to different colours, for example. While taste, smell and touch might be more difficult to analyse that sight and sound, English’s framework is flexible enough to be used with a multisensory approach, and I believe renaming the ‘textual material’ category into ‘attributes’ will allow for more openness in this matter. I believe that we need to keep on the lookout for those genres that go beyond the traditional texts, which is exactly the potential that using genre as a knowledge making and knowledge transmitting process offers.

Coda

In a way this turned into a meta project for me: Analysing an artefact inspired by a framework through using the framework itself. I had been using genring and regenring as strategies before coming across Fiona’s work, but thought of them as re-designing texts. To be honest, as a designer, I still do. But it is useful to have a theoretical framework to apply to your work and the terms she introduced me to have proven incredibly useful for my own work.

My engagement with the work this paper describes, first in terms of a designer and then in terms of an academic, brings home the notion of how important practice is. Turning a diagram into a ‘scarf’ design made me understand the framework better than just reading about it did. And then using it for the analysis made me understand it better again. So much so that I then wanted to redesign it to make it more suited to my purposes. Consequently, if I had the chance to redesign the Genre *Furoshiki*, it would look slightly differently: I would replace ‘textual materials’ with ‘attributes’, but I would also move this and Organisation so that they would be in closer proximity, because there were so many overlaps between them (it was hard to decide which bits to discuss where, but that is the nature of making categories, I guess). A designer’s work is never done…

Bibliography:

Bertin, J. (2001), ‘Matrix theory of graphics’ *Information Design Journal* 10(1); pp 5-19

Brownie, B. (2006), ‘A Brief Introduction to Gestalt, Identifying Key Theories and Principles’ available at <http://www.fluidtype.org/texts/Gestalt%20Theories%20and%20Principles.pdf>

Chang, D., Nesbitt, K.V. and Wilkins, K. (2007), ‘The Gestalt Principles of Similarity and Proximity Apply to Both the Haptic and Visual Grouping of Elements’ Eighth Australasian User Interface Conference (AUIC2007), Ballarat, Australia available at <https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Keith_Nesbitt/publication/228938144_The_gestalt_principles_of_similarity_and_proximity_apply_to_both_the_haptic_and_visual_grouping_of_elements/links/02bfe510edfd3d1f3b000000.pdf>

English, F. (2015), ‘Genre as a pedagogical Resource at University’ in: Lillis, T (ed) (2015) Working with Academic Literacies [online] available at wac.colostate.edu/books/lillis/chapter17.pdf Chapter 17, pp. 245-255

Joytex (2017), *Joytex – Quality Bags – Ihr Spezialist fuer nachhaltige Mehrwegtaschen* [company website] available at <http://www.joytex.de/?lang=en> [accessed 14.9.2017]

Lengler, R. & Eppler, M. (2007), [Towards a Periodic Table of Visualization Methods for Management](http://www.visual-literacy.org/periodic_table/periodic_table.pdf). IASTED Proceedings of the Conference on Graphics and Visualization in Engineering (GVE 2007), Clearwater, Florida, USA

Moore, B. (2003), *An introduction to the psychology of hearing*, 5th ed. London: Academic Press

Acknowledgements:

Thank you to Richard Mellor for helping me turn my sketch into a digital file ready to be printed and his enthusiasm, the participants of the ‘Playing with genre’ workshop, Lucy Biggs and David Heap for their feedback on drafts of this paper and to Fiona English for letting me have some (visual) fun with her work.

Contributor Details

Dr. Alke Gröppel-Wegener is Associate Professor of Creative Academic Practice at Staffordshire University, where her teaching focus is Animation Studies. Her research interests include exploring the links between creative and academic practice, and she has developed a number of visual analogies and creative activities to help students understand ‘hidden’ academic practice, which have been collected in *Writing Essays by Pictures*, (2016, Innovative Libraries Press). In 2015 Alke was recognised by the Higher Education Academy and awarded a National Teaching Fellowship. She blogs about her work at [www.tactileacademia.com](http://www.tactileacademia.com/).

Contact Details:

Staffordshire University

School of Computing and Digital Technologies

College Road

Stoke-on-Trent

ST4 2DE

[a.c.groppel-wegener@staffs.ac.uk](mailto:a.c.groppel-wegener@staffs.ac.uk) or tactileacademia@gmail.com