Genre formation as enregisterment

Aidan Malanoski

CUNY Graduate Center

Friday, 22 April 2022

A cliché

"a category of artistic, musical, or literary composition characterized by a particular style, form, or content" (Merriam-Webster)

Contents

1. Enregisterment and genre
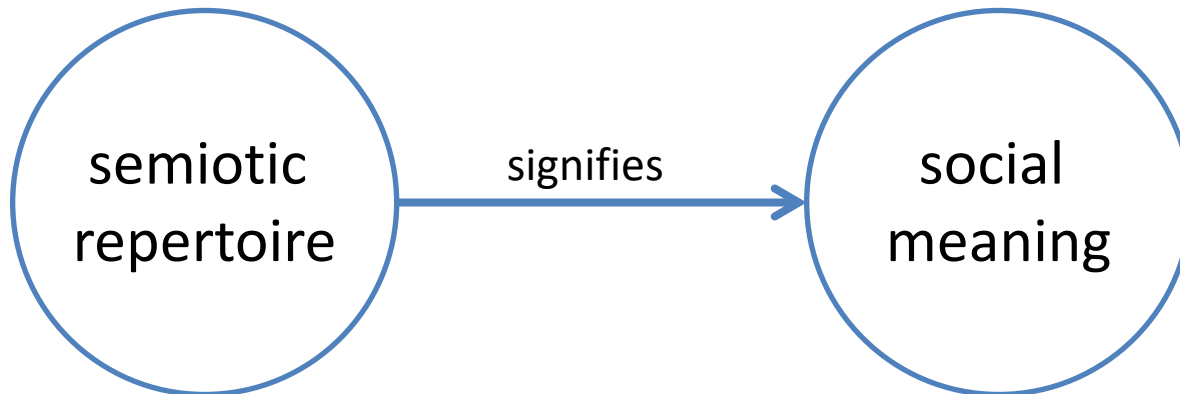2. Case study: carimbó chamegado
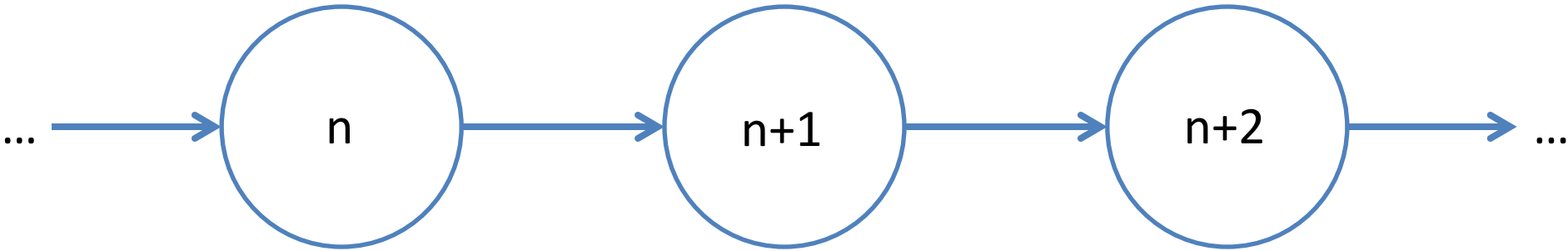3. Consequences and conclusion

ENREGISTERMENT AND GENRE

Enregisterment

- **enregisterment (Agha 2003)**: processes by which a semiotic repertoire…
  - becomes recognizable
  - acquires social meaning
- **register**

semiotic repertoire → signifies → social meaning

Speech chain

Registers are transmitted in a **speech chain**

... → (n) → (n+1) → (n+2) → ...
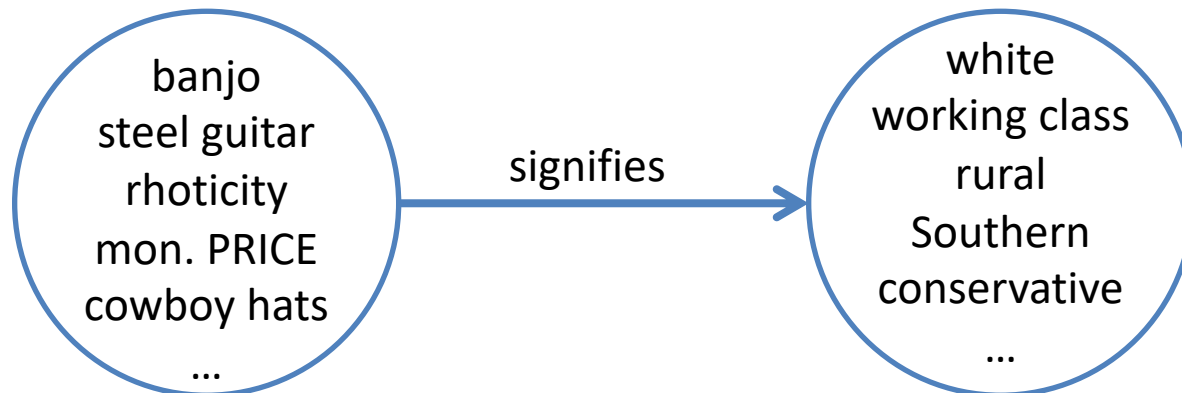
Enregisterment beyond language?

the processes involved in enregisterment "apply to—indeed, treat language like—any other cultural form" (Agha 2003: 232)

"Linguistic and other <u>potentially meaningful acts of any kind</u>, at any level, can become semiotically linked with the culturally-relevant ways of acting and being that Agha calls registers" (Johnstone 2016: 634; emphasis added)

What enregisterment tells us about music

Proposal: Musical genres are formed through enregisterment. This means that…

- genres are sociocultural constructs

- genre repertoires are not necessarily strictly "musical"

- genres are linked to social meaning and personae

banjo
steel guitar
rhoticity
mon. PRICE
cowboy hats
…

signifies →

white
working class
rural
Southern
conservative
…

CASE STUDY: CARIMBÓ CHAMEGADO

Dona Onete

- Singer from Pará (North Brazil)
- *Cabocla*
- Performs carimbó
- Created subgenre, *carimbó chamegado* (AKA *chamego*)

https://i0.wp.com/worldmusiccentral.org/wp-content/uploads/Dona_Onete_byAdrianoFagundes_2.jpg?w=500&ssl=1

Clips

https://youtube.com/clip/UgkxMnmuyfeYdu5pgejK-_u_gSfYg8hQX4Uh

https://youtube.com/clip/Ugkxzuhm0kyEHsfArtIkIErk7ZcsIJnFWIs-

Repertoire of carimbó chamegado: Sound

- 'From a gourd I made a maraca // With Job's tears // From a can I made a *milheiro* // From the sapopema root I made my guitar' ("Carimbó Chamegado")

- 'There the White, Black, and Indian [*índio*] people // Left everything mixed // Lundu, banguê, carimbó // Siriá, the Nagô drum // A tune from boi-bumbá' ("Carimbó Chamegado")

- 'Swing isn't merengue, no // Cumbia, zouk, nor cha-cha-cha, no // It's a nice Caboclo rhythm' ("Vem Chamegar")

Repertoire of carimbó chamegado: Lyrics

- "I started to make these songs, which talked about love, in a slower and very sensual rhythm, and like that, carimbó chamegado was born" (quoted in *Brasil Música e Artes* 2019)

- "No one sings Pará like I do. I talk about the waters, the river, the trees, the fruit, the magic … I take a lot of inspiration from the people who live on the rivers" (quoted in G.Lab 2021)

Meaning of carimbó chamegado

- 'Caboclo from inland // The Caboclo is a dancer // The Caboclo is a musician // … // The Caboclo is a composer' ("Carimbó Chamegado")

- 'It's a nice Caboclo rhythm' ("Vem Chamegar")

- 'My *chamego* is Caboclo' ("Mistura Pai D'Égua")

Transmission of the genre

- 'Dona Onete makes *música regional* [lit. regional music]*, carimbó, guitarrada, samba* … of excellent quality, without the slightest attempt at reinventing the wheel' (Araujo 2012)
- "In the shake of carimbó, lundu, siriá and other roots genres from the Brazilian North, a legitimate representative of this musical tradition has been helping to carry the sound of the edges of the Amazon" (Wanderley 2016)
- Cabocloness largely erased

Summary

Like any other register

- carimbó chamegado is constructed within speech events (songs, reviews, etc.)

- carimbó chamegado changes across speech events

CONSEQUENCES AND CONCLUSION

Subgenres as subregisters

- Subgenres are **subregisters**

- Subregisters ≠ subset

- The relationship between register and subregister is ideological, produced through **nested enregisterment**

- Linguistic example: legalese as a subregister of White Mainstream English

Speech chains as graphs

- A review of an album simultaneously responds to multiple speech events
- Speech chains are highly intertextual
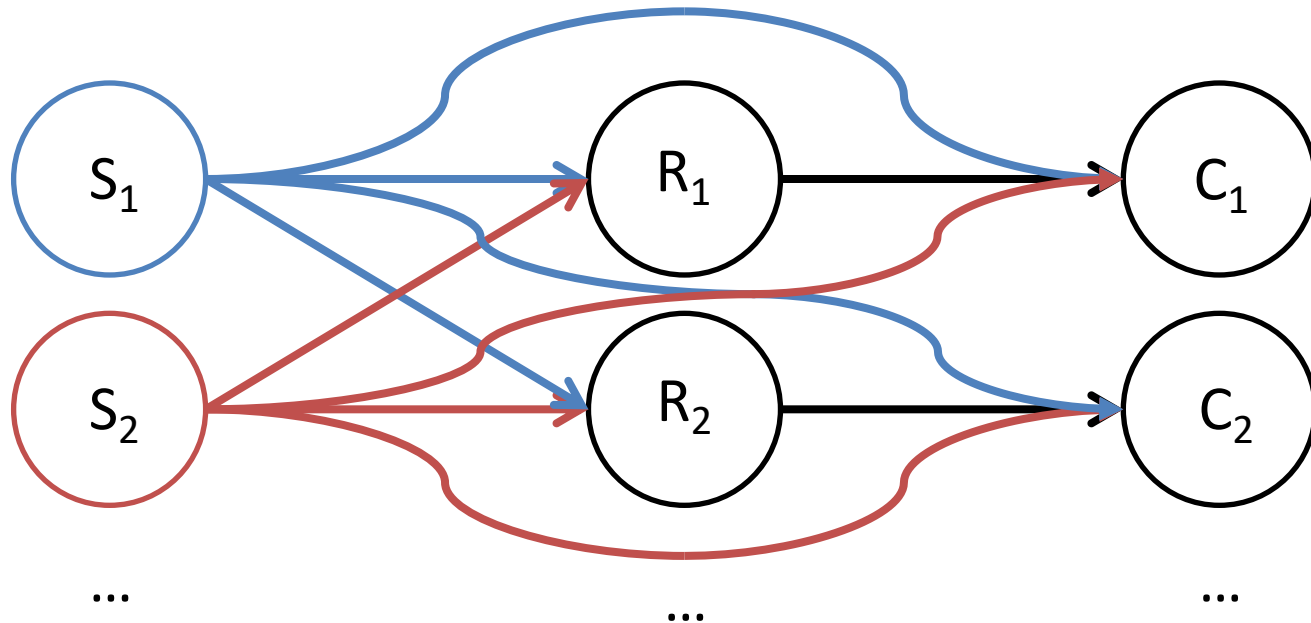
Are there "purely linguistic" registers?

- As shown, genre repertoires can contain features that are not "musical"

- As linguists, we should be open to the idea that "linguistic" registers involve features that we may not consider linguistic

Takeaways

- Musical genres are registers

- One register may be nested within another

- Speech chains are not linear

- Registers aren't necessarily "pure"

Selected references

- Agha, Asif. The social life of cultural value. *Language & Communication* 23. 231–273.

- Araujo, Bernardo. 2012. Crítica: Dona Onete faz disco regional, graças a Deus. *O Globo.*

- Duncan, Daniel. 2017. Australian singer, American features: Performing authenticity in country music. *Language & Communication* 52. 31–44.

- G.Lab. 2021. Dona Onete: "Me perguntam como posso ser compositora, cantora e poeta. Eu não sei, misturo tudo e deixo virar sopa". *O Globo.*

- Johnstone, Barbara. 2016. Enregisterment: How linguistic items become linked with ways of speaking. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 10. 632–643.

- n.a. 2019. Dona Onete se presenta pela primeira vez na Womex. *Brasil Música e Artes.*

- Wanderley, Felipe. 2016. Dona Onete: A história da a ex-professora que 'ensinou' carimbó aos gringos. *A Crítica.*