

MOVES IN SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS' REPORTS

Unity Mmapula Nkateng
Communication and Study Skills Unit
University of Botswana

Abstract

This study investigates the rhetorical move structure of case reports written by Social work students during their fieldwork placement. Twenty six case reports were collected and interviewed twelve students from department of social work office. Reports were analysed using move analysis (Bhatia 2003) I am looking at moves in student reports that indicate the communicative purposes in the texts and how language is used to express these moves or to achieve the communicative purpose. The findings show that students' reports have six moves, and the reports have two communicative purposes.

Key words: Internship, case reports, move analysis

Introduction

It is important to explore the role that writing plays in the social work department at the University of Botswana. The paper examines the writing done by students during their fieldwork placement. The objective is to look at the types of reports written by students on internship as the core objective of the social work syllabus is to help students to “be proficient in oral and written communication with people in different contexts, communities and organisations”(Social work manual, p. 7). This will also enable the departments concerned to consider the extent to which students on fieldwork are being prepared to write the professional genre.

During fieldwork students are placed in different agencies in the country in order to satisfy one of the elements of social work education as stated in their fieldwork manual, for example, theory and fieldwork practice. Forster and Rehner (2008) explain that “direct experience, in the form of supervised field education in an appropriate setting, is also indispensable to the development of students into social workers committed to efforts in the cause of greater social justice” (p.39). Students are attached in different agencies from May to September at the end of their second and third year. During this period they are faced with writing tasks daily. They write log books, where they record their daily activities, they enter the cases they attend to each day in case registers, and they have to write case reports and community project reports. At the end of their internship they have to submit a log book, a case study report and a community project report to the department of social work at the university.

Among these writing tasks, the case report is particularly important as it is directly akin to the case reports written by professional social workers. Students on attachment write reports for the offices to which they are attached, make recommendations about the clients and these reports remain in the offices when they complete the internship. This strongly suggests that the texts have a professional role and are not only academic exercises. As Healy and Mulholland (2007) explain, “case records provide an information base for social work intervention” (p.69).

Literature Review

The English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach to genre was developed by specialists working in this field. In the ESP field the most famous members of this group are John Swales and Vijay Bhatia who are known for 'move analysis'. The macro structures of texts and the move structure analysis was central to work in ESP genre theory. The main motivation for these practitioners was to develop pedagogic materials for non-native speakers of English in advanced academic and professional settings. The ESP tradition focuses mainly on the communicative purposes of genres within social settings.

The most influential definition of genre within the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) is by Swales who sees genre as a communicative event. Swales (1990) describes genre as:

A class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of the parent discourse community, and thereby constitute the rationale of the genre. (p.58)

The main feature of the definition is the concept of genre as a 'class of communicative events which share some set of communicative purpose'. Genres therefore involve the use of language in different contexts for different purposes. The communicative purpose of a specific genre is recognized by members of the discourse community who then collectively develop notions of what content and style is appropriate. Genres are staged events that develop through a sequence of what Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) call moves and component steps. The moves and steps are motivated by different purposes.

A focus on moves has informed a wide range of research over several years. For example Holmes (1997) used 30 articles, 10 from History, 10 from Political science and 10 from Sociology to investigate variation in discussions. His choice was motivated by the need to control as much as possible for such variables as writers' nationality, levels of experience and expertise, period of publication and special features of sub disciplines. The study found that no move from the model was completely obligatory.

Samraj (2008) explored a discourse analysis of master's theses across disciplines with a focus on introductions using Swales (1990) CARS model. She concludes that the master's theses reflect some disciplinary variations. Basturkmen (2012) investigated a discussion section of research articles in dentistry and applied linguistics and she found the 'schematic structure of discussion section in Dentistry appeared to include similar moves and thus appeared to have broadly similar rhetorical purposes as Applied Linguistics'.

Communicative purpose was used as one of the criteria for genre definition in students' reports. As Bhatia (1993) says, "genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs" (p.13).

The notion of communicative purpose has, however, been problematized. Askehave and Swales (2001) contend that communicative purposes in any given communicative event are often complex. And it is not safe to simplify purpose to a single aim. They also argue that communicative purpose in many texts is not easily determined, although the text type may be recognizable. They suggest that it would be sensible to abandon communicative purpose as a quick method for sorting texts into generic categories. They propose that

communicative purpose may be recognized in the early stages of analysing a genre, but the function of a text must be realised through “extensive text-in context inquiry” (Askehave and Swales 2001:209). They propose that analysts should retain the concept of communicative purpose as a valuable and long term outcome of the analysis.

Communicative purpose is an especially complex issue in student writing. It is a problematic criterion because students are often writing for assessment and for fulfilling a general professional function during placement. These complex communicative purposes can be used for assessing the social function of the genres that are written by students for the different audiences that are addressed.

Various researchers have used the notion of communicative purpose to explain genre characteristics. Gimenez (2006) looked into the emerging textual and communicative complexity of business e-mails. The paper focuses on the most prominent textual features that reflect the changes emails have experienced to meet new demands of the business community in terms of communicative purposes. According to Gimenez, the findings of this study seem to lend support to previous studies which have explored the evolving nature of genres. As dynamic entities, genres evolve to reflect the socio political realities of the communities that produce them. One of the difficulties here is making generalisations across business contexts, especially given the context specific, corporate culture based nature of electronic communication.

Pinto Dos Santos (2002), in a genre analysis of business letter writing used Swales (1990) definition of genre to analyse a corpus of 117 letters. The first analytical procedure was to study each letter separately trying to identify the rhetorical functions present in the communicative event; the second step compared these individual results within the whole corpus aiming at drawing common characteristics which could be recognized as typical of this genre. The discourse community which uses this genre is made up of agricultural business professionals who have graduated in animal health studies and occupy top positions in the company, in three surveyed companies.

The communicative purpose which motivated the exchange of these letters is the interest on the part of the European company to have their product represented by the Brazilian company in Brazil. The participants exchanged and answered questions and doubts; they also made arrangements to be settled so that both parties are committed to agreement. The language patterns identified were classified according to the intended rhetorical function. Formal aspects and structural features were also observed in terms of content, intention, and function, and these also guided the division of this genre into moves and steps.

Methodology

In order to examine the writing done by students during their fieldwork placement. The objective is to look at the types of reports written by students during their fieldwork placements. Twenty six case reports were collected and twelve students from the department of social work office at the University of Botswana were interviewed. From my observation the students were to select a case from the area they were attached to and write a report about the study. They were to attend different cases and write about them with reference to what they have learnt from their social work courses.

The students’ reports were written as part of a requirement for their social work course, but as I read the reports, I observed that the copies were also left in the offices they were attached to, because they were dealing with real life issues which needed future reference.

The reports that these students write play important roles such as to influence decision making, change individual behaviours while others help individuals or families. The students are expected to demonstrate good communication and relationship skills with clients, agency personnel, and members of other formal and informal organisations.

The reports that I have collected were submitted since 2007 and have been kept in the lecturers' offices. They were marked and the marks were ranging from 70 to 80 per cent and they had comments from the lecturers. According to my observation these are considered to be very good reports because of the comments of the markers. The students who have submitted the reports that I have, have already completed their course and are now working.

Move analysis is used to analyse the student reports that indicate the communicative purposes in the texts and how language is used to express these moves or to achieve the communicative purpose. Ding (2007) states "Move analysis is a helpful tool in genre studies since moves are semantic and functional units of texts, which can be identified because of their communicative purposes and linguistic boundaries" (p.370).

I am using the moves in students' reports to explore how they achieve the objectives of their reports. I found it appropriate to work towards moves inductively because I recognised that social work students' report is a genre on its own, I did not attempt to find features of social work professional reports in the internship reports because to do so would be to assume that internship report is another version of professional report but given its purpose that is not the case. In what follows, I provide an inductive list of moves that I found in the students' reports. I have identified six moves in the student reports.

Moves identified in students' reports

Move 1: Recording the clients particulars

Move 2: Providing history of the case

Move 3: Stating what the student wishes to achieve

Move: 4: Accounting for the client's problems

Move 5: Reporting roles the student played in lives of clients

Move 6: Suggestions for the profession (presenting suggestions for the profession)

Frequency of moves

Move	NAME OF MOVE	FREQUENCY
1	Recording clients particulars	25
2	Providing history of the case	26
3	Stating what they want to achieve	20

4	Accounting for the client's problems	21
5	Reporting roles the students played in lives of the clients	25
6	Presenting suggestions for the profession	21

Table 1: frequency of moves I students' reports

I will now discuss the nature of each move and provide an example taken from an internship report. The texts will be taken from different reports.

Description of moves

Move 1: Recording the clients particulars

This move is similar to move 1 identified in professional destitution reports. Details of the client are stated, they include age, gender educational level and occupation in all the reports. Though this move appeared in all the reports, the students do not include all the details of the clients as the social workers did for their reports. Students included fewer details. There are those that have all the details and some do not have them as illustrated in the extracts below. I have also observed that in this move students indicated that they have not used the actual names of the clients.

For example extract 1: case 18

CLIENT'S DETAILS

Name: Lift Modisaotsile

Age: 14 years

Gender: male

Place of Birth: Molepolole

Extract 2: case 7

NAME	DATE OF BIRTH	GENDER	OCCUPATION	PHYSICAL ADDRESS
Names shall be withheld for fear of victimization	11 October 1978	Male	Chartered Accountant	Phase 4 Marulamantsi

Table 2 client's particulars

In the example above the student does not give the name of the client and does not provide a pseudonym but gives reasons for withholding the names of the clients. At this point it shows that this student is addressing the academic audience because a copy of the same report that is left in the office bears the client's name for ease of future reference.

Move 2: Providing history of the case

This move gives a background of the case and gives full details about the client. It indirectly gives the purpose of the report and student writers describe the client, how the client came to the office, they also give details of the situation of the client. It is elaborated and provides the background of the case. In most reports, this move is not realised through a single block of extended text, but rather is scattered throughout the text. The students give details in this move in order to come up with objectives or identify theories that will help them account for the client's problems which is identified in move 4. Healy and Mulholland (2007) explain that case records contain situational data on the client's needs. They further explain that "this information needs to be drawn together, to be given focus and made accessible to others involved" (p.69).

Extract 3: case 10

This is a case of a client who is already registered as an orphan. The client was brought to the office by a gentleman who does not know the client at all but because he was touched by the condition which the client was in when he first saw him in front of one shop one of the mornings. The client was currently living with his aunt in Kgwathleng ward and he also used to stay some days in Mheelo with his grandparents.

Extract 4: case 4

Mr Rodgers is an unmarried man who has five children. ...he has been cohabiting for the past fifteen years. He states that his partner has since deserted the family after he discovered that she was having an affair with another man. ...he has since called both parties parents in an effort to help reconcile this issue, and disappointedly, his partner's parents informed him they cannot help because he has not married their daughter. He has also sought assistance from the chief. However the chief's intervention was unsuccessful.

Move 3: Stating what they wish to achieve

This is the move where the writer states the objective of the case. That is what they want the client to do at the end of the intervention. This is identified as the main communicative purpose of the reports as the students cite their purposes and the main body of the report is centred on these objectives. The objectives are listed in bullet points. This is another example of students talking about themselves and what they want to do.

Extract 5: case 12

Objectives

- *To remove the children (Tebogo and Mike) from that unsafe, uncondusive and deplorable state of affairs to a place of safety (SOS Children's village, Tlokweg).*
- *To provide psychological counselling to Bashi's family so as to become a functional family.*
- *To link Tebogo and Mike with agencies dealing with children where they can be given a rigorous counselling to boost their self - esteem.*

Extract 6: case 17

- *To advocate for him to get a lighter sentence in order to continue with his school since he has already shown interest in school.*
- *To help him avoid problematic situations and focus on what is important to him, through the provision of counselling.*

Move 4 Accounting for the client's problems

This is the move where students try to relate the cases they are solving to the theories that they have learnt from their course. They are stating reasons for some of the behaviours of their clients and suggest ways of assisting.

Extract 7: Case 4

According to Hepworth et al (2002 p. 221), "people with cognitive flexibility generally seek to understand the part they play in their difficulties. They can also ask for assistance without believing it's an admission of weakness or failure". This description was evident in Mr Rogers considering the extent to which he has sought assistance.

Extract 8: Case 11

According to Wellness Reproductions (1991), there is what is called "escalating one's anger" a process in which- a person provokes blame and shame. The purpose is explained that a person who escalates his or her anger is often afraid of getting close to other people and lacks effective communication skills. Again escalating one's anger typically yields short-term results and impaired relationships. This was true of Lekaba as she demonstrated all these. She doesn't have good relationship with people .like family members and she was carrying this anger that was weighing her down. Explained to her that managing one's anger results in an increased energy level, effective communication skills, strengthened relationships, improved physical and mental health, and boosted self-esteem.

Move 5: Reporting roles they played in lives of the clients

This is the part that states the agreement (achievement) reached by the student and the client. It is usually closing the case and mentions what was achieved in this part. They also report what they have done to reach their conclusions. They also reflect on the types of

cases and what they did. In the example below the goal was to get a lighter sentence for the client and it was achieved. The client was given a whipping instead of being sent to prison. It is considered lighter because the whips will heal and the client will go back to school unlike when sent to prison which means he will be removed from the school register. The example below is an illustration of a successful outcome.

Extract 9: Case 17

The client was sentenced to be whipped at kgotla, so he was able to go back to school and continue with his education.

Extract 10: case 8

The results of termination were mostly positive and the clients proved that they could work on their own and we had to end the relationship on the third week earlier than the estimated time.

Extract 11: case 11

Our contract with both clients was for a month. We had a time table in which there were times when counselling was done at the office and at times I visited them at home. We meet three times a week (Monday, Wednesday and Friday), for the first two weeks and when positive outcomes were shown I reduce the appointment to two days being Monday and Friday to give them more time to do things on their own.

I was pleased with the outcome because now the mother and child have developed a different self-image about themselves and about each other as well as having learnt how to appreciate each other. The atmosphere at home is a pleasant one and the other children are happy about the change they find in their mother and sister. This positive change has extended to the external family as Lekaba is now relating to them in better way.

Move 6: Making suggestions for the profession

The students made recommendations with reference to their work and not to the case in most of the reports. It shows that the reports were written for outside stakeholders as well as lecturers. Some of the recommendations are about what they do in the profession. In this move, the students are making fairly large scale suggestions yet they are not in necessary position of power for the suggestions to be carried out. When asked about what happens to their recommendations, the students stated that “they are geared towards helping the client” [Shato]. Some stated that the recommendations are discussed by the screening committee.

For example

Extract 12: case 17

A case of this magnitude and sensitivity requires constant contact with the client in order for therapy to be effective, therefore the heavy workload of social workers compromises the quality of the work they do. This calls for specialisation of duties in order to improve service delivery.

Extract 13: case 8

Recommendations

...In my observations, most social workers in S&CD practice as generalists and sometimes lack the competence in special areas like working with children. It is therefore important to come up with a program where we can specialize in our areas of best performance such that we do not need to have clients running around referral places when they can have specialists in S&CD. We also have limited resources like stationery and transport, we are also short staffed yet overwhelmed with work due to increasing social problems, this declines our effectiveness at work. I therefore recommend that more social workers be employed. The- Ministry of education and others should have their own social workers to offload S&CD of extra work.

The recommendations above sound as petitions to social work employers and not about the cases that the students attended. It might also be an indication of under-performance by the student and trying to explain that they are overloaded with work they are not trained for as stated in extract 13.

The next section discusses how the various moves of the student report genre fit the communicative purpose.

How the moves function together

The structure of these reports as stated earlier is narrative. The students are telling the story of the clients but also telling the story of themselves and what they did during the intervention. The key components are identified in all the moves. They start by providing history of the case, which leads them to formulating what they want to achieve, and to identify the source of the clients' problems through interviews and observations, then reporting how they helped the clients in order to come up with the recommendations.

When asked about the standards they used in writing the reports, Derby explained that they have to come up with activities that the client is going to do during and after intervention, then they make a plan of how they are going to help the client to overcome the problem. She further explained that they have to incorporate theories in order to account for the client's problem or to help them understand the problem they are dealing with.

The moves work together to help the students achieve their objectives. They give a history of the case in order to come up with theories that will account for the case and how they assist the client. The move analysis has shown that these reports have two common

purposes. One is to advocate for the clients and the other is for students' own development where students show their lecturers what they have learnt.

The fieldwork placement is a relevant form of learning for social work students as they are exposed to real life situations and they meet real clients unlike in class where they have to role play and simulate such instances. Students felt that they should be taught to write professional reports before they actually go for their fieldwork placements. Some of the challenges they were faced with was the writing of professional documents which they have never done before. They also commented that academics may not be consistent in evaluating these reports, as they stated that it depends on the marker's area of specialisation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the purpose of this paper was to identify the communicative purpose of the reports that students write during their internship and also to share their experiences in writing these documents. The findings show that there are six moves and two communicative purposes. It is important to help student differentiate between professional and academic writing. The interviews revealed that Communication and Study Skills Unit (CSSU) should teach students the reports that they actually write during their placements instead of generalising the reports for all departments in the faculty. They also felt that there should be collaboration between the department of social work and CSSU. This would be a positive contribution to the field of social work. Currently, there is a perception that 'anyone' can write a social work report which lowers the status of the profession but if reports are improved then the reputation of social work will be recognised.

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