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Genre Exploration: a Frame for Understanding and Teaching Social Work Writing in Botswana

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Introduction

Social work writing evidences various characteristics of professional discourse as defined by Gunnarsson (2009): it has its own domain of expertise, is frequently goal-oriented, and is conventionalised, reflecting both the structures of a workplace and the structures which link that workplace to wider society. Within social work, written documents carry high stakes for practitioners and clients alike; Alter & Adkins (2001, 2006) argue that they are uniquely powerful for the interpretation of the complexity of social work clients' lives, so that "clients' well-being is frequently dependent on social workers' ability to express clearly the meaning of their professional judgements and build convincing arguments" (2006, p. 337). Sarangi (1998) and Savaya (2010) emphasise the role of documentation in providing accountability both within and between professional agencies, with social work practitioners increasingly required to provide textual accounts of interventions and outcomes.

Yet, research in a range of contexts shows novice social workers being judged as inadequately equipped for the writing demands of their profession. Rai & Lillis (2012) comment that beginning social workers in the UK are frequently claimed to have weak basic writing skills, leading to undesirable variation in the standard of case notes and report writing. Alter & Adkins (2006) discuss the writing weaknesses of Master of Social Work students in Canada. Kahn & Holody (2012) in the USA offer suggestions for field instructors to share in the task of helping social work students improve their writing. Engstrom, Min, & Gamble (2009) in the USA focus specifically on student social workers with limited English proficiency and recommend that language issues should be addressed in the context of the entire social work curriculum.

Social work in Botswana aims to be "a community- based practice grounded on social justice and provided by professionals working with vulnerable people to: reduce risk and enhance their lives; prevent social dysfunctioning and situations which are threatening to the social order; promote healthy development for communities; organizations and individuals; enhance the provision and effective management of progressive services to those in need; and promote social justice, human rights, and mutual responsibility." (Osei-Hwedie, Ntseane, & Jacques, 2006, p.572). The role of professional discourse in such an endeavour cannot be underestimated; the high stakes writing of social work is a vehicle through which ideals can be either promoted or hindered. Vojak (2009, p. 936) argues that "social service providers who care about social justice, but do not understand the relationship between language and the larger social vision they want to help create, may unwittingly undermine their own project…".

In Botswana, the linguistic dimension of social work also encompasses the bilingual nature of society, and the ways in which this maps onto social and cultural divisions. Both Setswana and English have the status of official languages, but they are unequally distributed and have different social roles. English is the language of university education and is also the language of social work record keeping, but Setswana is likely to be the language of direct social work practice: "All agency work is conducted in Setswana, which rarely translates easily into English" (Bar-On, 2001, p. 128). Tsang's (2007) notion of a potential clash between the literate mind set of university education and the oral mind set which underpins social work practice is particularly relevant to Botswana. Osie-Hwedie & Rankopo (2008) discuss a significant cultural gap between urban educated professionals such as social workers and the materially poor and culturally traditional rural communities where many of their clients live; language is a significant element of this.

In Botswana, then, novice social workers training in the university face significant language-related challenges. They are asked to acquire a specialised professional discourse in an academic setting, and then, in their professional practice, to use it to promote progressive ideals while at the same time mediating between two languages each with different cultural associations.

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The aims of our research are to examine the nature of some of the language of social work in Botswana and then to build on what we find to bring pedagogic benefit to social work students. We have two objectives. First, we seek to use an established genre-analytical methodology to provide a pedagogically useful description of our target genre. Second, we aim to build a set of pedagogic proposals to help students understand it and be better prepared to practise it. Through this combination of critically aware analysis of a target genre, and pedagogic sensitivity to the needs of students in this context, we aim to respond to Blyler's (1995) call for "a pedagogy that instructs students not simply in the forms of writing they will encounter on the job but also in the connections between that writing and social action". (1995, p. 289).

Collection of data for genre exploration

Our genre exploration involves analysis of texts, investigation of the contexts in which the texts are produced and used, and interviews with the social workers who write them. Clearly, the sensitivity and confidentiality of professional social work writing means that access, whether to texts or to the people who work with them, was a complex process.

We gained permission to access texts and to approach social workers for interview firstly from the ministry of local government, and subsequently from the heads of individual social work departments. The chief social worker of the region where data was collected acted as a gatekeeper and facilitator; she introduced the researcher to local social workers, inviting her to explain the purposes of the research and the kinds of documents that we hoped to see. This was a long process involving the establishment of individual relationships of co-operation. This data collection was very open ended and a wide variety of documents were offered to us, anonymised to protect client and practitioner confidentiality.

Although senior officials had given their consent in principle for social workers to be interviewed, it was of course important to gain individual informed consent as well. One author spent considerable time talking to social workers in their offices and agreeing, for example, what anonymity they would have when the research was reported. Six experienced social workers were formally interviewed; interviews were

conducted bilingually, with participants code-switching between English and Setswana.

Establishing a focus for research

As indicated above, our collection of written data was open ended; we had a general interest in the writing of social workers but had not, at this stage, made any decisions about what sorts of writing we would examine. Our eventual choice of focus was influenced by two factors: firstly, by what social workers told us about the importance of various types of writing; and secondly, by the number of samples we were able to obtain of any given type.

In discussion with the social workers, we decided to focus our attention on 'reports', official records of interventions and decisions. We had obtained 218 documents fitting this definition. Preliminary analysis of these documents (for more detail see [AUTHOR], 2013) showed a wide range of types of report and so again we chose to narrow down and focus on one type, the Destitution Case report, of which we had 64 examples.

Exploring the Destitution Case Report as a genre

The Destitution Case Report (DCR) is a document whose primary function is to recommend whether or not the client can be included in the Destitute Care Programme, whereby s/he will be assisted by provision of food and some other basic goods. It refers to Botswana's Revised National Policy on Destitute Persons (2002) which defines a destitute person as "An individual who, due to disabilities or chronic health condition, is unable to engage in sustainable economic activities and has insufficient assets and income sources". In this genre, the role of the social worker is to assess whether the client fits that definition and to write a report which recommends appropriate action.

This genre encapsulates many aspects of social work practice in the Botswana context. It is produced by a social worker after an interview with a client and has the high-stakes function of gatekeeping access to resources. It is written for an audience which includes other social work professionals as well as officials in the Social Welfare Office who make the final decision. It is a good example of "social work writing in the field [which] occurs under added pressures of time constraints, competing demands, the need to sensitively handle confidential material, and production of a final document that multiple (often interdisciplinary) audiences must comprehend" (Moor, Jensen-Hart, & Hooper, 2012, p. 65). It is highly intertextual, as we will show below. It requires the social worker to be accountable for his/her recommendation, and is an example of the emphasis, in social work in Botswana, on social problems as community issues and on the role of social workers in the amelioration of undesirable social conditions (Osei-Hwedie et al. 2006). For all these reasons, it offers a good basis for exploring social work practice as evidenced in a particular genre, and offers opportunities for the education of social workers in training.

In the following subsections we will discuss the genre in detail, giving examples from actual texts as they were written.

Contexts of Production and Use

Following Paré & Smart (1994) we begin by discussing the composing practices and reading practices associated with the genre. A major finding from interviews was the extent to which the Destitution Case Report is an intertextual document. It is connected not only with the state policy document on destitution, mentioned above, but also with a range of less formal texts which are produced by social workers prior to the report, which are themselves based on spoken interactions of various degrees of formality. Hoey (2001) explains intertextuality as "the relationship a text forms with previous texts such that the production of the later text is in some respects affected – and the understanding a reader makes of it is likewise affected by these earlier texts"(p.43). We will therefore discuss the related texts in turn.

The case register

The case register is a handwritten notebook which is held in the social work office for use by all staff. When a potential client visits the office for the first time, his/her details are recorded in the case register in the following format:

Client's name	Gender and date of birth	Identity number	Caregiver	Ward	Comments	Officer

Interviewees explained that this is an important gatekeeping stage: if the client does not pass this stage the case will not proceed, that is, there will be no follow up or report. For example if the identity card is not produced there will be no assistance until it is produced. In such a case, the register simply functions as a record of the client's visit to the office. At this sensitive stage of the process, social workers need the linguistic and interpersonal skills to elicit information which clients may be unsure of or be suspicious of giving. Clients may be in distress and hoping for immediate help. Given the social justice goals and community orientation of social work in Botswana, this first contact is far from a simply bureaucratic procedure.

Where follow up does take place, the case register forms a guide for the next stage, which is a home visit. During a home visit, the social worker talks with the client and observes his/her home environment. To assist with recording observations, social workers use a form known as an intake sheet.

The intake sheet

The intake sheet is a pre-prepared form designed to guide the social worker as to what sort of information to look for or to ask about. It is divided into eleven sections, as follows:

1. Referring agency
2. Presenting problem
3. Client's particulars
4. Place of origin
5. Children
6. Siblings
7. Relatives to be consulted
8. Other sources of assistance received by the client
9. Case history
10. Assessment.
11. Recommendations.

In Sarangi & Slembrouck's (1996) terms, the intake sheet serves to categorise the client on those dimensions which are perceived as relevant by the institution. Interviewees were aware of this, commenting that they may elicit specific information, for example about livestock owned, in order to be able to represent the client's situation in terms that match those mentioned in the destitution policy. They are conscious that a client would be at a disadvantage should the interview not cover all required points. As one interviewee commented: "That is why it's important that when you do your assessment you do it thoroughly otherwise if you leave other issues unattended to, chances are that it will be deferred, because you wouldn't have given them the picture or even the full information about the client". The client, of course, may not be aware of the implications of information that they give or may be afraid to give it. In this case, the social worker faces competing demands: respecting a client's right to privacy, or persuading him/her to disclose information to make it more likely that s/he will receive benefit.

The case register and intake sheet, and the discussions which give rise to them, are in an intimate intertextual relationship with the Destitution Case Reports. There is a "genre chain" (Swales, 2004, p.18) involving a social worker's conversations with clients, the case register and intake sheets, and the formal Destitution Case Reports which are considered by staff of the Social Welfare Office. The case register and intake sheet are set out in English and completed by the social worker in English but, as explained above, discussions with clients are generally conducted in Setswana.

Tsang's (2007) claim that there is an inherent incompatibility between "the oral mode of direct practice and the literate mode of written communication for professional and administrative purposes" (p. 53) is especially apposite here. Not only must the social worker 'translate' the interview discussion into content suitable for a bureaucratic form, but they must also translate into a different language. Our interviewees highlighted this as an area of challenge, and we will return to it in our discussion of pedagogic interventions.

Approach to Analysis

Having spent some time looking at the contexts in which the genre is produced, we now describe its textual realisation in detail. To understand the textual realisation is not, of course, an end in itself – the description needs to be pedagogically useful. To achieve this, we work in the English for Specific Purposes tradition of genre analysis, originally associated with the work of Swales (1990, 2004) and Bhatia (1993, 2002) and characterised by explanations which combine descriptive insightfulness with pedagogic relevance (Hyon, 1996; Barwarshi & Reiff, 2010). We orient our description to the potential needs of novice users of the genre.

We begin from the definition of a genre as "A class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes" (Swales, 1990, p. 58). Communicative purpose is not a sufficient defining characteristic in itself (Swales, 2004) but a starting point from which texts may be understood; this notion leads to that of move analysis, where segments of texts , known as 'moves', are identified and classified inductively in terms of their own communicative purposes as related to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. As Bazerman (1994) puts it, "the various smaller speech acts within the larger document contribute to the macro speech act of the text, and each of the sections must carry its weight" (p. 89). In other words, move-based genre analysis proceeds from an understanding of the overall communicative purpose of the genre in question, to an understanding of the communicative purpose of specific sections of text. It is an inferential, qualitative process.

[Some text has been moved from here to pp 12-13]

Communicative purpose and supporting moves in the Destitution Case Report

The overall communicative purpose of the DCR is unusually transparent and explicitly stated: all reports contain a phrase such as "This is a social enquiry report aimed at determining whether one [name], who for the purpose of this report is referred to as client, should or should not be assisted as a destitute". This, then, can be considered an overarching, labeling move of the genre: *State the purpose of the report.* This move encapsulates the high-stakes nature of the genre, and indicates the need for novice social workers to understand the processes of decision making of which it forms a part.

Through a process of inductive examination of the 64 texts, we looked for other potential moves which support this overall communicative purpose. As Lewin, Fine and Young (2001) point out, the concept of move is under-theorised and it is incumbent on researchers to be clear about how they themselves define it. For this genre, we define a move as a the smallest discourse unit which expresses a communicative intention related to the overall communicative purpose of the genre, and which is observable in at least 75% of the texts we examined.

On this basis, we identify the following moves in addition to the overarching labelling move:
2. Record the client's particulars
3. Describe the client's social networks
4. Assess the standard of the client's physical residence
5. Comment on the client's well being
6. Interpret facts in relation to client's ability to self-support
7. Recommend a decision
8. Justify the recommendation
9. Authenticate the report

We will explain these moves in turn, basing our explanations on our analysis of the texts and on the comments made by interviewees. Lack of space precludes us from

presenting a range of textual examples for each move, but at the end of the article we offer an appendix consisting of a single report in which moves are labelled.

Move 2: Record the client's particulars

This move, like the intake sheet, enacts the categorization of the client on criteria deemed relevant by a powerful institution (Sarangi & Slembrouck, 1996). Social workers interviewed stated that clients need to show evidence of their name, place of birth and identity number to prove that they are citizens and are entitled to benefits. This move shows the DCR functioning as an accountability practice; not only must potential clients prove their entitlement, but also social workers must prove that they have checked this.

Move 3 Describe the client's social network

This move discusses members of the family who are residing with or near to the client as well as their roles and contribution to the family. Interviewees explain that this move relates to an understanding of Botswana as a communal society where family members support each other economically. In deciding what to write for this move, social workers have to make judgements between the communitarian ideal, and the possible reality of clients who do not in fact receive appropriate care from family members. For example, social workers are aware that providing information about siblings who are working make it is less likely that the client will be assisted, whereas information about family members who are economically dependent on the client make it more likely. Having gained a picture of the client's no doubt complex social reality through a two way conversation, the social worker must now present it as rationale for a recommendation.

Move 4: Assess the standard of the client's physical residence

This move is the description of where the client is currently living. The social worker describes the type of houses and number of rooms in the compound. S/he also describes essential services in a compound for example, whether there is a tap, a toilet and cooking facilities. Information found in this move informs the recommendation when combined with information found in other moves – whether a residence can be considered adequate depends in part on how many people are living there. This move depends heavily on social workers' observations as they visit their clients.

Interviewees state that one of the reasons why social workers are asked to do home visits is to observe the client's residence for themselves; self-report would not be considered adequate evidence.

Move 5: Comment on the client's well being

This move reports on the client's physical fitness, since physical incapacity would tend to lead to a recommendation that the client be assisted. In realising this move social workers base their comments on medical evidence as well as on clients' own reports of their heath situation. Interviewees comment that this move is particularly challenging from the point of view of translation, since a discussion of health in Setswana, particularly in a rural context, may be based on a schema of traditional beliefs and practices for which English equivalents are lacking.

Move 6. Interpret facts in relation to the client's ability to self-support

In this move the social worker makes a range of comments about the client's apparent degree of economic independence, beginning to form an argument about whether the client needs help or not. In this move, social workers may recapitulate points made in moves 3 and 5 and relate them to the Destitution Policy. This is arguably a key move for the social workers to demonstrate their professional competence; their eventual recommendation will need to be coherent with what is stated in this move and in the policy. The move indicates a consciousness, on the part of social workers, that the report could in principle function as evidence that they have interviewed the client as required and that they understand their own role in implementing the destitution policy.

Move 7: Recommend a decision

In this move the social workers make a specific yes/no recommendation on whether the client should or should not be assisted in the Destitution Care programme. The social worker may also make an additional recommendation, for example, for another member of the family to be assisted. As explained, the final decision on this issue is made by the social welfare office; however, interviewees inform us that it is extremely unlikely for the social welfare office to place a client in the programme against the recommendation of a social worker. The social workers, then, have a powerful position as gatekeepers to resources.

Move 8: Justify the recommendation

In this move the social worker summarises the reasons behind his or her decision made in move 7. The justificatory comments throw light on the community consensus about what kind of people can be considered destitute, as might be indicated by the following two examples:

- Based on the above captured information the office does not recommend the client because she is young, active and she has a supportive sister.
- The officer also took in to consideration the fact that the client currently lives below poverty datum line and the client incapacitation due to his old age years cannot be rehabilitated to work nor can he be recommended to be engaged in [programme name].

Move 9: authenticate the report

This is a brief move indicating the officer who wrote the report. It includes the job title of the officer, the place of the report, and date the report was written or submitted.

In summary, then, we see that the overall purpose of the report is to recommend a decision, and the purpose of each move is to represent the client's situation in such a way as to make sense of that recommendation. Put together, the moves of the report form a narrative that can be seen as leading to the social worker's decision. The complexity of the task lies in the interpretation of oral interactions and then the transformation of these into a rationale for a recommendation. Apparently objective 'information' in the report has in fact been selected and fashioned in such a way that the reader of the report will understand, and agree with, the social worker's recommendation.

It is important to note that move analysis is not the same thing as identifying patterns of *form* across a group of texts. Indeed, for the genre in question, it very soon became apparent that there was no overall pattern to be found in terms of the subheadings which the reports included or the order in which much of the information was presented. An interviewee commented that she had a lot of freedom in terms of how she chose to organise the texts:

Interviewer: Is there a format that you have to follow when you do a social enquiry report?

Interviewee: A format? There is but I'm one of the people who is not into formats. Because my belief is when I sit down and write a report, I have to be comfortable writing that report in a manner that it would be best portraying the case and what I'm doing.

One of the strengths of move analysis as an approach to research is that it allows the researcher to identify patterns of communicative purpose across texts even in circumstances, as here, where there is not an easily identifiable pattern of text form.

A focus on language: representation of the client

Given the emphasis, in our move analysis, on the portrayal of the client by the social worker, we now turn to a specifically linguistic issue. This is the issue of choices available to the social worker when representing the client's own voice.

An interviewee made a distinction between parts of the report where the social workers' role was to express what the client had said, and parts of the report where they should add their own views: "it is what the client said not what the reporter has said … that is why we analyze in the assessment findings but not under health status or any other part of the report". This social worker makes a distinction between communicative moves in which she sees her role as reporting what the client has said or what she herself has observed, and other moves in which she sees her role as arriving at an interpretation and a recommendation of these 'facts'.

Our text analysis indicated that social workers use two different language strategies in their representations of clients. They may report the client's situation directly, e.g. "Mosadi is a mother of five children", or they may report the speech of the client, e.g. "She outlined to this office during assessment that she is a mother of four, all boys." In the texts analysed, the first strategy dominates. For example, stretches of text categorised as move 3, describing the client's social network, included 190 statements specifically about the client. Of these, 147 portrayed the situation directly, and only 43 made use of reported speech.

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This tendency to represent the client directly, downplaying the role of the social worker as mediator, would seem to relate to the social workers' goal of aligning with the client and representing the client in as transparent a way as possible. In the less frequent cases where a reporting verb is used, the effect is to separate the voice of the client from that of the social worker. Clearly the lexical choice of reporting verb is itself important, as it may hint at the social worker's opinion of what the client has said, and thus either support, or weaken, the status of the assertion which the client is reported as making. An example of this is the following: "He reported that he is on TB treatment and adheres well. (According to the officer's observation it is more than just TB but because of age difference it was difficult for the officer to discuss in depth)". In this extract, the officer indicates that he is not aligning with what he is reporting, because his own observations are contradictory; he also gives an explanation for not having pursued the matter further.

Pedagogy

In section 4 above, we have explored the DCR from the perspective of the context in which it is produced; we have also outlined rhetorical moves, and some specific language choices, in textual realisations of it. In this section, we discuss our pedagogic approach to raising students' awareness of it; bearing in mind that 'effective pedagogy' is not simply a methodological notion, but is also intimately linked with the characteristics of the students themselves.

The limitations of learning to write a workplace genre in a classroom setting are obvious, and both the feasibility and the desirability of attempting it have been debated at for some time (Freedman, Adam, & Smart, 1994; Johns, 2011; Rai & Lillis, 2009). Still, the reality is that much social work education does take place in classroom settings, and our goal is to make this as effective as possible in the Botswana context.

Previously, the teaching of social work writing at University of Botswana followed an approach categorised by Lea & Street (2010) as a study skills orientation, focusing on surface features and conceptualising writing as a transferable skill. This approach has

advocates in the field of social work writing. For example, Alter & Adkins (2006) argue for a skill-based approach at a writing centre, and Horton & Diaz (2011) describe an approach which again focuses on general writing skills in a range of assigned exercises.

However, the conception of the goals of social work referred to earlier in this paper would suggest the need for a pedagogy of social action (Blyler, 1995) in the language and writing education of social workers , recognising the key role of written language in facilitating, or hindering, social goals. In our own approach, we are conscious of the need to focus on specific genres of professional writing (Coyle, 2010) and help the students acquire what scholars such as Devitt (2009) or Johns (2011) would describe as a critical awareness of the genre. We seek to prepare students to write a professional genre appropriately, but we also seek to use that process of preparation as an opportunity for students to critically examine its underpinnings. In both of these ways, we hope that they will deepen their critical knowledge and understanding of social work policy and practice.

Methodologically, we follow the general principles of ESP genre based teaching (see e.g. Swales & Feak, 2004) which encourage students to become observant readers and analysts; to look at sections of texts and ask themselves firstly what the author is trying to achieve in a given section, and secondly what aspects of the author's language may promote this. Via this discovery based methodology, students are asked to explore authentic discourse guided by genre-related tasks, making use of their knowledge of the professional practice of social work. In this way, writing education and social work education are tightly integrated.

The following are some relatively specific procedures which could be adapted for use in a range of contexts.

Orientation to the communicative purpose of the genre
As shown above, the overarching communicative purpose of the genre is transparent. Still, students as future social work practitioners must orient themselves to it – do they see themselves as facilitating access for as many clients as possible, or as restricting

access to a scarce resource? Classroom discussion of such issues can increase critical consciousness as well as improving understanding of the pragmatics of different elements of texts which students will write.

Study the whole genre chain.

Students need to explore the intertextuality of a genre and to simulate the writing of it based on supporting texts in the same way that the professional social workers do (Harding, 2007) in order to begin to experience the complexity of "translating" oral work to written documents, with all the challenges this poses (Tsang, 2007). If appropriate permissions can be obtained, it may be possible for students to listen to authentic interviews between social workers and clients and then to draft documents based on these. Awareness of a genre chain can raise students' awareness of the importance of full documentation in professional practice (Savaya, 2010).

Study the conditions in which the target genre is produced.

Blyler (1995) argues that looking at context of production and reception of texts is an essential part of pedagogy of social action - in order to critique texts, and potentially be able to produce them, students need to understand where these texts come from and what they do. Study of a formal text such as the DCR should not neglect the informal texts with which it is linked. One resource is an interview with a social worker where s/he talks about the conditions under which a genre is produced, and the challenges of doing it. Students can consider how they themselves might respond to such challenges. In the Botswana context, this discussion makes students aware that they will be working bilingually, encourages them to value their status as bilingual practitioners and to reflect about how different languages may have different cultural capital in the context (Harrison, 2009).

Work with authentic documents as much as possible.

 Moor et al. (2012) comment: "Many... undergraduate students entering a social work program ... have never seen a court report or social history" (p. 65); an unfortunate situation which social work educators may be able to ameliorate by negotiating access to appropriately redacted authentic documents. There are risks associated with authentic documents; for example, students might uncover deficiencies (Savaya, 2010). This raises ethical issues additional to those associated with accessing the

documents in the first place. It can be disconcerting for the student and requires sensitive handling on the part of the teacher, but also creates an opportunity; a student who perceives deficiencies has understood the potential problem for the reader and may be motivated to avoid similar problems in his/her own practice (Coyle, 2010). Authentic text examples may not be perfect but Kahn & Holody (2012) argue that what is important is for them to be 'good enough' and for students to understand the constraints under which they are produced.

<u>Detailed work with the pragmatic and linguistic features of target texts</u>

To introduce students to the idea that specific sections of texts can be understood as supporting the communicative purpose of the text overall, students can be asked to identify micro-level intentions in sections of text – potential moves. Since students are likely to come up with varying boundaries for sections of text and varying names for the communicative intentions, this can lead to useful group discussion.

Since students will only be able to work with small numbers of texts, they will not be able to comment on whether any potential moves which they hypothesise are in fact generalised in the genre. Where instructors have the opportunity to examine many textual examples of a genre they may be able to offer their own framework, such as we have done for the Destitution Case Report. This would allow students to work top-down with textual examples, developing a critical sense of the extent to which individual texts conform with a generic template.

In addition to this focus on textual pragmatics, students may benefit from a more intensive focus on specific language features. Teachers may choose to emphasise features which differentiate one move from another, or, as in our discussion above, to emphasise an aspect of language which is significant across several moves.

Conclusion

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This research has both descriptive and interventionist dimensions, and both of these have implications for social work education. The descriptive dimension illustrates the importance of researchers and teachers working with specific, context based texts as they seek to understand social work practice. Although such research is necessarily narrow, it is also deep. It forms a welcome contrast with more superficial, study skills orientations to professional writing which fail to take account of the myriad of factors which affect the final form of a given professional text. The descriptive dimension also illustrates the possibilities afforded by the English for Specific Purposes tradition of genre analysis, which is frequently used for researching and teaching academic writing, but less well known in professional education. In our view this analytical tradition has a lot to offer to understanding the language of social work.

The interventionist dimension offers a framework which others could use and at the same time raises the issue of transferability. As educators, we recognise that it would be wrong to assume that activities developed in one context can be unproblematically transferred to another. In phrasing the pedagogic part of the article as suggestions which might be taken up by others, our intention is to contribute to the ongoing conversation about the development of social work education; to offer an approach to both analysis and pedagogy which others may evaluate for suitability in their own context, then perhaps modify, use, and discuss. In this way, we believe, our analysis of a specific social work genre makes a contribution to social work education as a field.

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