



# A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS ON RHETORICAL MOVES IN HOSPITAL CORRESPONDENCE: PUBLIC ASSISTANCE AND COMPLAINTS COMMUNICATIONS IN FOCUS

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## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

Rhetorical Move Analysis can be employed to examine the purpose and structure of written texts as well as the ways in which such purposes are attained. This procedure, typically famous for its utility in academic and professional texts, examines the kind of independent moves or sections within a text as well as their rhetorical purposes while conveying a message. Consequently, Thomson and Kamler (2016) investigated rhetorical moves applicable in most workplace correspondence especially in the hospital setting. With complaints letter in mind, these are normally regarded as official complaints of dissatisfaction with service obtained from the healthcare workers. This usually arises from interaction and communication with service providers (Montini et al., 2008 cited by Skär & Söderberg, 2018). A recent study by Barnhoorn et al. (2021) found that patients are dissatisfied and complaints are active in primary healthcare environments. In return, healthcare workers also experience challenges managing patient complaints due to it being unclear, necessitating better approaches to effectively address and provide resolutions. Most of these letters from clients are not well structured and do not adequately state the problem with proper introduction, explanation, and detail of the expectation of actions and results. These, resting with little concern for appropriate structure and direction, do not serve their purposes and intents well (Formpl, 2024).

Several recent studies have brought to light the significant challenges that students encounter when writing for professional and academic objectives. For instance, Andriani and Chou (2015) investigated the writing techniques used by Indonesian patients when they filed complaints about the quality of healthcare services they received. They found that Indonesian patients, especially those who were not proficient in writing English or the official language, frequently had trouble expressing their concerns in a clear and organized way. The study also highlighted the fact that complaints are vague and devoid of specifics that would have otherwise helped healthcare providers identify and address the problem. In Singapore, a study by Wong et al. (2007) stated that complaints by patients generally had a format focusing on personal experience, sometimes starting with a narration of the

event and then particular issues regarding the quality of care, communication issues, or excessive waiting times. Although there was no formal format required to write such complaints, they all shared similar components, such as an identification of the person involved, chronology of events, and a clear expression of dissatisfaction.

Although most healthcare research focuses more on institutional reports and public health communication, this study differs due to its nature since it examines hospital complaint letters, which are frequently overlooked. Though studies like van Dael et al. (2020) focus on the perspective of the patient, they tend not to focus on the rhetorical structure of complaint letters, as well as Hutchins (2023) who goes over healthcare strategies for written communication without directing much attention to complaints. To improve communication between patients and healthcare providers, this study addresses the gap by examining the rhetorical moves employed in hospital complaint letters and how this impacts the material in general.

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The literature on the discourse analysis of rhetorical devices in hospital correspondence is thoroughly reviewed in this chapter, with an emphasis on communications pertaining to public assistance and complaints units, notably complaint letters.

Rhetorical moves use words in an effective and convincing way to engage an audience. It is a method used in written conversation to employ persuasive techniques to influence the reader. Move analysis, genre analysis, or ESP genre analysis are other names for this analysis. In this way, the goal of this analysis is to analyze rhetorical and organizational frameworks of a particular genre within specific communities (Casal & Kessler, 2024). Similarly, move analysis was described by Hamid and Maulid (2017) as a genre-oriented approach that focuses on identifying rhetorical moves. This links a text's structure and organization to the author's communicative objectives.



In this sense, a move refers to the specific type of communicative act in a text that meets a certain function due to the communicative event it belongs to. A move contributes to meaning and the entire purpose of a genre. These moves may be associated with different stages of the genre, meaning they follow a certain configurationally order for achieving the intended communicative effect. It does this by systematically channeling the audience's understanding of a series of propositions or arguments or perspectives in a coherent and persuasive way. With reference to written modes of communication, such as academic papers, reports, or complaint letters, the consideration of moves informs the organization of the text, guiding the introduction, elaboration, and conclusion of ideas (Tamela, 2019).

Moreover, going back to move analysis, as noted by Kessler (2024), rhetorical moves has been widely used in applied linguistics across all domains, particularly in the study of second language (L2) writing to comprehend the communication pattern and the structural arrangement of written texts. Examining how authors construct their thoughts to achieve communication objectives can help us understand more fully the standard discourse patterns employed in such letters. The arrangement and combination of these moves shall represent the structural patterns of rhetorical discourse, whereas the sequence shall be driven by the communicative purposes of the writer (Muangsamai, 2018)

To add, another function of move analysis is detecting patterns within different writing styles, pointing to the contrasts among various texts (Zamani & Ebadi, 2016). Discourse starts with some background information or context about the issue and then shifts into a focused discussion of the topic to address any problems the reader may have anticipated. The discussion then advances on to discuss potential implications of the solutions or evaluation (Fairclough, 1997). As a result, this analysis centers the analysis on the communicative purposes and stages within any given text, demonstrating how the structure of discourse shapes the content of the writing. In other words, Kheryadi and Suseno (2016) emphasized the role of rhetorical moves in improving understanding and comprehension. They asserted that by using such methods, the author may easily guide the reader through difficult concepts through carefully arranging information. This can lead to understanding abstract concepts to effective, specific thoughts and, frequently, to a significant conclusion.

However, according to later definitions, recognizing the target audience is essential for this analysis to promote good communication since it permits one to identify the issue and address it within the specific context. In this way, the writers will be able to alter the readers' viewpoint and incorporate their own by using rhetorical devices. In the same way, it is being said that its distinctive feature connects the writer's intentions with the mode by which the message is delivered (Nikpei, 2016). When describing an experience, the writer should explain some of the significant details involved, such as the subjects involved, the problem, and methods for data analysis.

Discourse analysis is one of linguistics branches that centers on the use of language. Johnstone (2008) described it as the analysis of discourse which examines language in the most casual context in which the majority uses the phrase. Additionally, discourse encompasses the processes of producing and comprehending meaningful verbal communication and includes the processes of messages construction and interpretation. People also must pay attention to classifications of discourse analysis that they apply. Additionally, one method used in discourse analysis is move analysis, which looks at both written and spoken texts. To put it another way, learning rhetorical devices involves studying discourse analysis to examine the writer's thought process when communicating (Asari & Kuryani, 2018).

To support this claim, the use of rhetorical devices in contextual writing is further clarified by Bhatia (1993) in his book *Analyzing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. The communicative goals of different genres, such as research articles, reports, and even the complaint letters as the focus of this analysis should be made clear and concise to enhance communication. He further highlighted that understanding the genre-specific standards of a particular discourse is essential for evaluating rhetoric moves and move patterns to be used.

This typically involves analyzing the meanings and structural patterns that define and make up the text. At the generic level, the sequence and arrangement of components are vital in shaping the overall structure of complaint letters, ensuring they serve their communicative purpose effectively (Al-Momani, 2014).

In summary, as a type of discourse, complaint letters are important in making sure concerns are effectively communicated within a hospital environment. By stating the problem clearly, giving elaborate explanations, and making a specific demand for redress, individuals can make their complaints heard and resolved accordingly. This systematic process not only helps to encourage effective communication among patients and medical practitioners but also leads to solving problems in a manner that ensures better care and service in the healthcare sector. Ultimately, complaint letters are an excellent tool for expressing grievances as well as ensuring constructive discussion in the healthcare sector.

To put it briefly, moves in complaint letters are utilized to ensure that the problem is communicated in an understandable and constructive way. The writer must present the issue, support it with pertinent information, offer realistic solutions, and thoughtfully organize the letter to increase the possibility for a better outcome. These devices are vital for handling the complexity of complaints and for encouraging a positive and compliant interaction between the writers and professionals, particularly in the challenging healthcare context.



## Chapter 3

### METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the methodology employed in this study. These encompass the study's research design, role of the researcher, research materials, data sources, data analysis, trustworthiness of the study and ethical consideration.

#### Research Design

This qualitative study employed discourse analysis as its research design, aiming particularly on the examination of rhetorical moves in written texts. As Lou (2023) mentioned, it provides a deeper level of insight into the way in which people perceive occurrences and react to them. Furthermore, it is also important to understand the ability for the writers to convey freely their emotions and ideas under this concept in the most specific manner by understanding the context better (Tenny et al., 2022). In discourse analysis, the focus is not only on the content of the text but also on the way meaning is created through its structural organization. In this context, discourse is analyzed in terms of its patterned arrangement, functional stages, and linguistic moves that are used to create a particular communicative purpose. In this way, the analysis is on the way texts are systematically organized through rhetorical moves and how these moves are used to create the structure of the discourse. Therefore, qualitative method is more specific in understanding the ways in which moves are employed for the purpose of conveying ideas not just intellectually but socially or emotionally.

This qualitative research therefore uses discourse analysis through a rhetorical move approach to examine the moves used in hospital correspondence, particularly complaint letters. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of how language is used in some correspondence to achieve communicative goals within a specific context. The study will focus on the identification of moves and move patterns and draw the significance of language in its specific setting. It shall employ purposive sampling to draw relevant research material that shall further be subjected to move analysis. Data analysis will be done ethically in compliance with the directives of the research study, guaranteeing both its accuracy and its trustworthiness.

#### Research Materials

This discourse analysis encompasses twenty (20) purposively chosen complaint letters from the hospital of choice, specifically housed within the Public Assistance Unit. The selection made is in line with Clark and Braun's (2013) advice that the range of qualitative research materials should normally be between 10-100 sources, depending on the study's focus and scope.

To provide significant insights on the moves and move patterns used in complaint letters, the sample size of research materials will be practically chosen. The letters then will undergo a thorough analysis using established discourse methods. In this manner, the data will ensure enough representation and depth to allow a comprehensive analysis of the moves employed in every correspondence. Subsequently, the goal of the analysis lies on the

important knowledge on how moves and move patterns are utilized and facilitated in complaint letters in healthcare service.

#### Data Sources

In qualitative research, there are various ways of collecting information, all of which belong to two categories, namely primary and secondary data. There are numerous differences between primary and secondary data, but the most vital distinction lies on the identification of primary data which are considered original and factual whereas secondary data is the analysis and interpretation of the primary data (Ajayi, 2023). Both of which can be used in this analysis, wherein data can be obtained in the forms of interviews, observations, journals, documents and audio-visual (Creswell, 2007).

As the name suggests, primary data is one which is collected for the first time by the researcher while secondary data is the data already collected or produced by others. These are first-hand, unique insights straight from the research subjects from participants or witnesses (Ajayi, 2023). This offers direct evidence that is crucial for researchers looking to comprehend underlying patterns, or circumstances, in contrast to secondary data. The originality of the research is derived from the fact that primary data frequently uncover exclusive and original results that have not yet been identified (Maxwell, 2012). Primary data are hence useful in academic and empirical studies as it includes direct thoughts or raw information produced through observation, interviews, surveys or otherwise engaging with the study's subject (Fowler, 2014). In this study, complaint letters are the key data sources, which provide direct views of the writers on their letters as they convey issues, experiences, and their complaints in general. To investigate the moves and move patterns pertaining to the current study, complaint letters will serve as the main source of information.

On the other hand, secondary data sources according to Bryman (2016), represent information that has previously been gathered and made accessible for use in other research proposals. Aside from primary data, secondary data may provide an additional perspective on the subject matter. Recent studies, historical documents, journals and various data, for instance, provide supplementary information that may have influenced the type of complaints or grievances recorded in primary sources (Babbie, 2021). Secondary data is crucial in this study because it offers deeper context and wider frameworks that guide the analysis of moves in the context of complaint letters. The actual use of secondary data in this study entails utilizing prior information gathered by other researchers, institutions, or organizations which could help strengthen the analysis while improving its findings. The journals, articles, and related literature that are included in this paper are utilized for collecting sources of information to further enhance the study's objectives and scope. It can offer comparable perspectives, expand the theoretical basis, and give a wider context for interpreting the focus of the analysis.



## Chapter 4

### DISCUSSION

This chapter provides an in-depth interpretation of the results of the rhetorical moves in the hospital correspondence, particularly the complaint letters under the Public Assistance and Complaints Communications. The interpretation was based on the Problem-Solution model of Hoey, which comprises the moves of Situation, Problem, Response, and Evaluation. The interpretation of the results was done in line with the theory, discourse analysis, and communication in institutions.

#### **Moves Found in the Hospital Correspondence particularly the Complaint Letters housed within the Public Assistance and Complaints Communications**

From the analysis of the complaint letters in the repository of the Public Assistance and Complaints Communications, it is evident that while there is a pattern of realization of rhetorical moves that approximate the Problem-Solution framework of Hoey, there is a significant variation in the realization of such moves, reflecting a divergent orientation towards the conventional structure. The current study aims to examine the rhetorical moves of complaint letters in hospitals, which will, in turn, reveal the ways in which the writers organize their complaints.

With the findings of the research presented, the conclusion can be explained as to the applicability of the Problem-Solution Discourse Model in this study can be ascertained to the results of the analysis. This conforms to the idea of Jalilifar et al. (2011) as cited in Rustipa et. al (2023) which states that the communicative purpose of the Problem - Solution genre aims to identify, reveal, communicate, and explain the issue to be addressed. This communicative purpose is achieved through a series of rhetorical moves. Each move represents purposeful stages in the development of the text, and is achieved through features, which are referred to as rhetorical strategies. These strategies represent particular linguistic devices for achieving the communicative function of the move. Thus, moves represent the overall functional units of the discourse; features represent strategies which enable the writer to achieve the functions effectively. However, the research initially indicates that the said moves from the framework used in this study are not obligatorily realized in the texts.

#### **Rhetorical Move Patterns Employed in Complaint Letters Within Public Assistance Communications in Hospital Correspondence**

The rhetorical move pattern in public assistance communications in hospital correspondence suggests that the writers make use of a variety of structured communicational strategies to express their concerns. The fact that these letters are not merely spontaneous expressions of dissatisfaction or inquiry suggests that they may, in fact, be structured in a way that is indicative of their awareness of institutional conventions.

The distribution and frequency of the identified move patterns suggest that the writers make use of purposeful and patterned

structuring in their communications. This may, in fact, suggest that the writers have an implicit understanding of the way in which institutional discourse works, in which clarity, coherence, and logical progression of information are key factors to ensure that the message is taken seriously. The fact is, these are not merely personal expressions, but rhetorically constructed texts. However, it is important to consider the role of structure in writing. Reilly (2020) suggests that too many structures may impede critical thinking, especially for individuals dealing with ill-structured problems. On the other hand, too little structure may lead to confusion and frustration.

Moreover, this practice indicates that writers know that these correspondence function in an organizational setting where complaints must be justified. It is parallel with Mahboob and Hartford (2004) who also investigated the nature of complaint letters written in other countries. The study analyzed the generic structure of complaints and reference choices employed to refer to the complainant and the object of complaint. Based on the analysis, it was revealed that complaint letters across these languages follow a similar structure, which usually includes moves such as introduction, background, complaint, appeal, suggestion, and justification. The significance of the findings of the present study have shown that complaint letters, irrespective of linguistic and cultural differences, tend to have a relatively stable rhetorical structure determined by institutional conventions and communicative purposes.

In general, the results imply that writers are trying to find a balance between the need to express their complaints clearly and the need to ensure that the complaints are legitimate and appropriate. Many complaints are presented in a manner that offers sufficient context to support the need for the problem to exist, thus increasing the validity of the complaint. At the same time, some writers tend to be more direct or plain in their approach, focusing only the problem. Moreover, as Ali (2013) stated that the realization of Hoey's SPRE moves is extremely genre dependent. Likewise, the results of the current study support the conclusion that not all SPRE moves are obligatorily undertaken in hospital complaint letters. Specifically, the lack of an Evaluation move as a final move of the letter reflects the writers' main concern with problem presentation and call for action rather than post-solution evaluation.

Furthermore, elements of a text with communicative functions and rhetorical moves, are frequently logically connected with subsequent moves to achieve coherence and to lead the reader through the text. Hoey (1986) offers a very persuasive account of why communicative functions fail to match one-to-one with textual moves. This observation draws attention to the fact that the sense of order in a text is determined by the writer's interpretation of the relationship between parts of a text, rather than by the structural patterns between moves.



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