

Analysis of Moves and Linguistic Features in Valedictory Speeches

Vivian Addoboah-Bersah, Kafui Danku Diaba

Department of English Language, Holy Child College of Education, Ghana

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ABSTRACT

This paper analyses the moves and linguistic features in valedictory speeches of ten graduating students of some Colleges of Education in the Western and Central Regions of Ghana. Ten speeches ranging from 2013 to 2019 were selected from Holy Child College of Education, Takoradi, Our Lady of Apostle College of Education, Cape Coast and Foso College of Education, Fosu. Valedictory speech is important to graduating students of tertiary institutions and some high schools; as a specific form of genre, it shares the characteristics of both oral and written genre in the context of English for specific purposes which is geared towards English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The exemplars were analysed according to move patterns and their textual space as well as its linguistic features. This study adapted mix method design. Interview, focus group discussions and questionnaires were the instruments used. The study revealed that, communicative elements in the valedictory speech are very important to the graduating students and their message they intend to send to the audience. It also identified that it brings out a picture of issues that had contributed to the success of the graduating students and the end result of they being awarded their diplomas or degree. It was clearly established of linguistic features of valedictory speeches. For the analysis of moves and linguistic features in valedictory speeches, one relevant theory is Swales' Genre Analysis. This theory is instrumental in understanding the structure (moves) and language use (linguistic features) in specific types of discourse like valedictory speeches. This investigation was underpinned by genre analysis theory foundered by Swales, J. (1990). Swales', Genre Analysis focuses on how different types of texts (genres) are structured to achieve particular communicative purposes. The theory is especially useful in understanding academic and professional communication, as it provides a framework for analyzing the "moves" within a text-segments of discourse that serve specific functions. It was recommended that linguistic features within these moves should realize the functions and contribute to the overall purpose of the genre. Again, framework can be applied to valedictory speeches to analyze the rhetorical structure and the specific linguistic choices made to achieve the communicative goals of the speech.

Keywords: Genre Analysis, Linguistic Features, Move, Speech Genre, Valedictory Speech and Written Genre.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Valedictory speeches mark significant milestones, often encapsulating the journey, achievements, and aspirations of individuals and institutions. Analyzing the moves and linguistic features of these speeches offers insights into how language is strategically used to inspire, reflect, and connect with audiences during these pivotal moments. This analysis can uncover the underlying patterns and rhetorical techniques that make such speeches impactful, shedding light on how emotions, values, and collective experiences are articulated. Understanding these elements can enhance public speaking skills, inform educational practices,

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and contribute to the broader field of discourse analysis, offering valuable tools for effective communication in various contexts.

INTRODUCTION

"Genre pervades lives, people use them consciously and unconsciously, creatively and formulaically, for social functions and individual purposes, with critical awareness and blind immersion in the past and yet today. They shape our experiences and our experiences shape them. As we may be approaching an understanding not just genres but of messy complex ways that human beings get along in their world. (Devitt, 2009).

Studies of genre awareness puts emphasis on essentiality in the product of a discourse that is appropriate to the situation or context of use. (Askehave and Swales, 2001), Bazerman, (1994, 2004).

According to these authors and their views, it means knowing what goes into genre writing may strengthen students communicative ability effectively in society and participate effectively in society and also participate effectively in academic disciplines.

Again, the word genre is of French origin meaning kind or class. It refers to a particular type of text that it does not only describe surface features of a discourse but also reveals the rationale behind it (Zhou, 2012).

Valedictory speech as a genre for specific purpose shows how language can be used to appreciate the contribution people have made in the lives of graduating students as well as encouraging them to move on to higher heights as they leave their institutions into the next stage of their academic laurels (http5./en.wikipedia, org/wiki (2018).

The purpose and objective of the paper is to look at the move employed in different valedictory speeches and also delve into the linguistic features common in the exemplars. The article seeks to answer the following research questions: (1) What are the number of optional and obligatory moves found in the valedictory speeches? (2) What are the common linguistic features found in the different exemplars? 3. How does the valedictory speeches enhance the communication skills? The valedictory speeches from Holy Child College of Education, Takoradi, Our Lady of Apostle College of Education, Cape Coast and Foso College of Education, all in Ghana. This study looked at Ghanaian perspective. Valedictory speeches are formal addresses delivered at graduation ceremonies, typically by the valedictorian or other designated individuals, to reflect on the experiences and achievements of the graduating class. These speeches serve multiple purposes: they commemorate academic milestones, celebrate collective accomplishments, provide encouragement for future endeavors, and express gratitude to educators, families, and peers. Due to their ceremonial importance, valedictory speeches follow a distinctive structure and employ specific linguistic features designed to evoke emotions, inspire the audience, and create a sense of closure.

In analyzing valedictory speeches, it is essential to identify the underlying "moves" or rhetorical strategies that speakers employ to achieve their communicative goals. A "move" refers to a section of discourse that performs a particular function within the speech, such as offering thanks, reminiscing about past experiences, or expressing hope for the future. Understanding how these moves are structured, ordered, and articulated can shed light on the speech's overall coherence and effectiveness. Furthermore, the linguistic features embedded in these speeches—such as the use of personal pronouns, emotional language, figurative expressions, and rhetorical devices—play a crucial role in shaping the tone and resonance of the message. Analyzing these features allows for a deeper appreciation of how language is crafted to meet the expectations of the event and how speakers manipulate language to connect with their audience on both intellectual and emotional levels.





This study aims to examine the rhetorical moves and linguistic features in valedictory speeches, with a focus on identifying common patterns and variations across different contexts. By investigating how these speeches are structured and the language used, this analysis seeks to contribute to the broader understanding of ceremonial discourse and the socio-cultural factors that influence its construction. In attempting to answer these questions, the study analysed ten valedictory speeches taking into consideration the number of obligatory moves and optional moves as well as their linguistic features. Unfortunately, studies have not been concluded on valedictory speeches but on other oral and written speeches, such as presidential inaugural speeches, political discourse and others which are quite related to valedictory speech.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON CONCEPT OF GENRE

Swales, J. (1990). Genre Analysis focuses on how different types of texts (genres) are structured to achieve particular communicative purposes. The theory is especially useful in understanding academic and professional communication, as it provides a framework for analyzing the "moves" within a text—segments of discourse that serve specific functions. The linguistic features within these moves help to realize these functions and contribute to the overall purpose of the genre. This framework can be applied to valedictory speeches to analyze the rhetorical structure and the specific linguistic choices made to achieve the communicative goals of the speech. This theory supported the systematical analyze and the structural components and the language used in valedictory speeches, identifying patterns that are typical of this genre.

According to Afful and Tekpetey (2011), "genre can be traced to as far back as the Graeco-Roman period but has been popularized in recent times especially in the field of Applied linguistics due to the work of scholars such as (Swales, 1990, Bhatia, 1993, Bazerman, 1994 & Martin 1985).

Again, "Bazerman (1994) states that "genres are forms of life, ways of being and frames for social action," and should be considered "what people, as groups and individuals, recognize them to be" (2005a, p. 92).

Genre has been defined by Swales and Feak (2002) as a "type of text or discourse designed to achieve a set of communicative purposes". Genre might have a purpose of either to persuade, share ideas, being creative.

Hyland (2009), states that genre is a term for grouping together representing how writers typically use language to respond to recurring situation.

Vijay K. Bhatia, a member of ESP asserts that genre is a situated linguistic behaviour in institutionalized academic or professional settings, whichever way one may look at it; whether in turns of typification of rhetorical action as in Miller (1984), Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) as in regularities of staged goal oriented social process as in Martin, Christy and Rothely (1987) and Martin (1993) or consistency of communication purpose as in (Swales, 1990 & Bhatia, 1993).

Swales, (1990) also maintains that genres are not created overnight but they evolve over a period of time and are not recognizable till they become somewhat standardized.

The English for specific scholars reveals to readers how genre communicative purpose is versatile (Swales, 1990; p. 58; Bhatia, 1993) identified genre-based linguistic as a number of levels of generic description. They further elaborate that genre communicative-purpose is associated with a specific rhetorical situations a privileged criterion and combine the advantages of more general view on the one-hand and its very specific realization on the other hand.

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Speech Genre

A speech genre can be defined as a relatively stable type of expression that matches a specific characterized situation. Speech genres consist of daily communication activities like greetings conversation situation and many more of which valedictory address is one. Most speech genres are based on social, economic and relationship status between the source of a speech and the target audience. https://ivypanda.com>essays & speeches (December 14, 2019).

Basically, "speech genre can be referred to as an utterance. It is true that the utterance never comes to an end when it ends, another one emergences and a response become an utterance to reply previous one. Vocal statement is always created and formed as a response to previous statements and always created in anticipation of responding statements. There is no complete language, all language as sporadic, provisional, unfinished and can be compared with connecting web of utterance" (Crowstin, 200:234-238). To add up, Swales (1990), defines concept of genre to be "any distinctive category of discourse of any type spoken or written, with or without literary aspirations".

Bhatia, (1993:13)," Genre is a recognizable communicative event, characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs."

Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints or allowable contribution in terms of their intent, positioning form and functional value. The constraint are often exploited by the expert member of the discourse communities to achieve private intention within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s). When these assertions made by the authors are observed critically, it can be clearly seen that speech genre are the kinds of genres which are spoken and oral in nature.

Written Genres

Parodi (2015; P. 487) "Genres are those texts which bring together specific knowledge of the world which, in turn constitutes the purposes of the professional community. Written genres related to particular or specific text seeks to bring out expectations and requirement of the event.

Moves Analysis of Valedictory Speech

The communicative purpose of the valedictory speech is to offer a fond reflection on graduating students' school years. They connect with the audience using anecdotes and lots of name dropping. Again, they offer gratitude and encourage themselves to score higher in the new world of work they are entering.

Table 1: Guidelines for Deciding on Status of Individual Moves

Frequency	Status	Comments
90% – 100%	Obligatory	Genre exemplar usually considered inappropriate or some way "flawed" without this move.
50% - 89%	Core	Typical of the genre, considered part of an appropriate and acceptable genre exemplar.
30% – 49%	Ambiguous	Status can only be decided with further expert information.
19% – 29%	Optional	Not considered a typical feature of genre.
Below 30%		Can be considered an acceptable.

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Valedictory Speech

The term valedictory is Anglicized derivation of the Latin phrase "vale dicere" meaning (To say farewell). This speech is used for expressing farewell at a graduation ceremony. It is historically rooted in the valedictorian's traditional role as the final speaker at the graduation ceremony before the students receive their diplomas and degrees (http5./en.wikipedia.org./wiki (2018).

Moves

Genre analysis is an approach used to study the relationship between a particular type of the text and its context by dividing the text into small semantic units which is termed as moves. Each move has a different communicative purpose that are shared among community members and this is reflected by the use of appropriate language registers to serve a specific function. The combination of moves brings to bear structural pattern of the rhetorical discourse, and their sequence based on author's communicative goals.

'Moves analysis' (Swales, 1981, 1990) is one example developed as a top-down approach (where the focus is on meaning and ideas) to analyze the discourse structure of texts from a genre. The text is described as a sequence of 'moves', where each move represents a stretch of text serving a particular communicative purpose.

Julia Huttner, (2010) gives a guide of a move taxonomy which gives a clear interpretation of move frequency in a study. This taxonomy will be used in analysis of this paper.

Empirical Framework

There are several studies that have been conducted that are related to speech genre for specific purposes. Among them is an article written by Faug Liu and Vadim. V. Demetyev.

Faug Liu, (2012) conducted a study on American presidential inaugural speeches. The paper focused on using more analysis to unveil linguistic realization of text (American Presidential Speech) serves, with the move as the possible generic structure. His work also revealed the available form – function relationship of text and its significance to language learners. Again, his paper would allow learners and readers to understand the communicative purpose, rhetoric situation of the tradition of inaugural speeches.

Vadim V. Demtyev of Sarator State University also worked on an article which was devoted to research on speech genre in the paradigms of discourse analysis. His studies was focused on the direction of discourse analysis which is common to speech genre to workout speech genre and discourse analysis problems, categorizing apparatus or set of base units as well as using speech genre methodology. He concludes his study by finding out adequate model of real dialogical speech communication.

METHODOLOGY

This study was about analyzing papers so mix method research approach was used to discover the move pattern realised from the schematic structure of valedictory speeches.

Mix- method research is denoted as consisting of the basic empirical material collected in the research process which is verbally and statistically described or narrated. Furthermore, the collected material is worked on and analyzed in words without numerical operations (Mesec, 1998). Fraenkel Wallen (2006) draws attention to the fact that mix- method researchers were not mainly focus on examination of character traits or properties of a certain activity, group, situation or material. Mix- method research is a characteristic

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that data are gathered more in verbal and visual and in a numeric form. When analyzing the gathered data, statistical procedures are very essential not used.

Sample Size

Ten copies of valedictory speeches constitute the data for the research. They were purposely collected from these Colleges of Education in the Western and Central regions of Ghana; Holy Child College of Education, OLA College of Education and Fosu College of Education. Even though, the document is not included, it is difficult getting some since the graduating students are no more in the College, but with the help of some tutors in the Colleges who proofread and edited some of them, the investigator managed to get the ten needed for the study. The ten documents were of different length but they have very similar elements or information which could help to detect the moves and steps. Creswell, (1994) stated that when there are a number of data, it is only prudent that a smaller number of the lot is selected for a good and accurate analysis especially in the case of this study which is an article.

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection procedure took me about two weeks. The tutors consulted were who were in charge of Academic affairs; in the case of Fosu College of Education and Our Lady of Apostle (OLA) College of Education, the officers directed me to some English tutors who have had the opportunity to proof read and edited the sample and had soft copies of the speeches. The study had the opportunity to receive two copies from Fosu College of Education and four from Our Lady of Apostle College of Education. The Vice Principal of Holy Child College of Education managed to give me four copies. The study ended up getting ten documents which were used for the study.

Data Analysis

The paper made use of genre theory (Swales, 1990 and Bhatia, 1993) and Huttner (2010). Taxonomy of Move Frequency Mode for identification of the status in a text to analyze the communicative purpose of the data. It also looked at linguistic features of the speeches. The study was specifically based on English for Specific Purpose (ESP) which is in the context of academic genre.

Table 2: The table shows the name of moves identified and their description

Move	Name	Description of Move
Move 1	Heading	
Step 1	Title of Paper	
Step 2	Name of overall best student	Deals with title of the speech
Step 3	Batch of Congregation	
Step 4	Date of the Congregation	
Move 2	Vocative Address	
Step 1	Salutation	A list of invited guests according to the order of importance
Step 2	Acknowledgement	

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Move 3	Introduction	Expression of feelings of speaker and ready to stand in to read on behalf of colleagues.					
Move 4	Journey of Campus						
Step 1	Challenges	Personal experiences in the school from the first day. They entered till the last day they left					
Step 2	Successes						
Move 5	Appreciation	Showing gratitude to all stakeholders who contributed to their education.					
Move 6	Admonition						
Step 1	Encouragement	Encourage colleagues to work hard.					
Step 2	Advice						
Move 7	Conclusion	Expresses how a legacy had been left and must be maintained or improved upon by continuing students.					

Table 3: Frequency of Occurrence of Moves in Valedictory Speeches

EXEMPLARS	FREQUENCY OF MOVES						
HCCE 1	M1, Step 1, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, Step 1, M6, Step 1, Step 2, M7						
HCCE 2	M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, Step 1, M6, Step 1, Step 2, M7						
НССЕ 3	M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, M6, Step 1, Step 2, M7						
HCCE 4 M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, N							
OLCE 1	M1, M2, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, M6, Step 1, Step 2						
OLCE 2 M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, Step 1, Step 2, M7							
OLCE 3 M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, Step 2, M3, M4, Step 1, Ste M5, M6, Step 1, Step 2, M7							
OLCE 4 M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5 Step 1, Step 2, M7							
FSCE 1	M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M4, M5, M6, Step 1, Step 2						
FSCE 2	M1, Step 1, Step 2, Step 3, Step 4, M2, Step 1, M3, M4, Step 1, Step 2, M5, M6, Step 1						
	HCCE – Preceding code for Holy Child College of Education.						
Key:	OLCE – Preceding code for Our Lady of Apostle College of Education.						
	FSCE – Preceding code for Fosu College of Education.						



Table 4: Distribution of Moves for Valedictory Speeches

S/N	Moves	HCCE1	HCCE2	НССЕ3	HCCE4	OLCE1	OLCE2	OLCE3	OLCE4	FSCE1	FSCE2	Total
1	M1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
2	M1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
3	M1	_	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9
4	M1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
5	M1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
6	M1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	10
7	M1	_	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	9

Table 5: Interpretation of Move Frequency Distribution of Valedictory Speech

S/N	Move – Name	No. of Occurrence	Percentage (%)	Interpretation
1	Heading	10	100	Obligatory
2	Vocative Address	10	100	Obligatory
3	Introduction	9	90	Obligatory
4	Life Journey	10	100	Obligatory
5	Appreciation	10	100	Obligatory
6	Admonition	10	100	Obligatory
7	Conclusion	9	90	Obligatory

Table 6: Textual Space Analysis for Valedictory Speech According to Number of Lines

MOVE	НССЕ1	нссе2	нссе3	НССЕ4	OLCE1	OLCE2	OLCE3	OLCE4	FSCE1	FSCE2	TOTAL	PERCENTGE (%)
M1	3	5	5	3	1	3	3	4	3	3	33	4.1
M2	14	8	8	13	8	8	15	3	2	10	96	12
М3	_	13	13	7	6	10	6	4	3	12	74	9.2
M4	36	16	15	43	27	10	44	9	3	31	234	29.1
M5	17	13	7	18	30	16	18	12	2	12	145	18
M6	10	18	29	23	19	23	16	39	17	11	194	24.1
M7	_	1	1	5	1	7	2	8	1	2	28	3.5
TOTAL											804	100

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The study focused on the analysis of valedictory speeches. Ten exemplars were used for the analysis. From the analysis in Table 2 above, seven Move Pattern were identified; they are Heading, Vocative Address,

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Introduction, Life Journey on Campus, Appreciation, Admonition and Conclusion.

All the ten exemplars have M1.

Move 1 – Heading. The move has four steps; except for OLCE 1, all the nine exemplars have the four steps.

Move 2 – Vocative Address. This move exhibits, salutation and acknowledgement as its steps. HCCE 1, HCCE 2, HCCE 3, HCCE 4, OLCE 2, OLCE, 4, FSCE 1 and FSCE 2 have step 1 only, while OLCE 3 has step 1 and step 2, OLCE 4 has no step.

Move 3 – Introduction. In the write up all speeches have introduction except for HCCE 1.

Move 4 – Life's journey on campus. All ten exemplars have move 4 together with its steps.

Move 5 – Appreciation. All ten exemplars have move five.

Move 6 – Admonition. This move runs through all the ten exemplars.

Move 7 – Conclusion. Nine exemplars exhibited Move 7 with exception of HCCE 2.

Nine of the exemplars have the same move pattern except HCCE 1 which has a different pattern because of the absence of some moves. From the interpretation of the move frequencies in all the ten exemplars, it is obvious that all moves are obligatory; (Huttner, 2010) since all seven moves were between 90% - 100% according to their distribution on table 5. The analysis reveals that the communicative elements in the valedictory speech are very important to the graduating students and their message they intend to send to the audience.

The textual space of each move contributes significantly to the analysis. From table 6 above, it is obvious that move 4 which is related to the life of students on campus occupied the largest textual space which consisted of two hundred and thirty four lines, equivalent to 29.1%.

The next largest move is move 6, it is made up of one hundred and ninety four lines which constitute 24.1%. Move 5 takes one hundred and forty five lines which is also equivalent to 18.0%. It is followed by Move 2 which also occupied ninety six lines which constitute 12.0%.

The last three follows, M3 made up of seventy four lines which is 9.2% and the penultimate Move, Move 1 occupied thirty-three lines equivalent to 4.1% and the lowest being M7 occupied twenty-eight lines which is 3.5%.

The major purpose of the valedictory speech is centered around Move 4 and M6. They bring out a picture of issues that had contributed to the success of the graduating students and the end result of they being awarded their diplomas or degree.

Linguistic Features

In addition to the move analysis, the paper revealed key linguistic features of valedictory speeches. Bhatia (1999), states that genres are essentially defined in terms of the use of language in a conventionalized communicative setting which gave rise to a specific set of communicative goals for specialized disciplinary and social groups which in turns establish relatively stable structure and to some extent constrain the use of lexico-grammatical resources.

In the ten exemplars, there is the use of the four types of sentences in terms of structure but the compound-

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complex sentence predominated in the narratives. There is also the use of all types of verbs action (regular and irregular types) and auxiliary. The verbs depicted in the paper falls under all the tenses e.g. "want, make, wondering, came, should, to deliver, were, also but the past tense was predominant. There is also predominant use of the discourse mood type which is the declarative.

There was formality and explicators in the papers. Formality and politeness in the addressing of the vocatives. Adjectives and Adverbs were also present in the exemplars. These were obviously seen when students were appreciating stakeholders; examples of words are "honourable", "supportive", "momentous", "selflessly", etc.

There was also the use of philosophical constructions such as "climb to the top", "keep pushing", "think big".

Finally, most of them seasoned their address with quotes: The study would want to agree with Alfred Lord Tennyson who ended his poem "Ulysses" with the line "To strive, to find, and not to yield". Vaishwas Chavan "Today is a day of 'doing' and 'celebration." As Winston Churchill once said "Nothing is more endangered in the modern world than the powerful combination of hard work toward meaningful goals joined with an exuberant embrace of the present moment.", As Isaac Newton said, "If I have seen further, it is by standing on the shoulder of giants.", Ralf Waldo Emerson once said, "Do not go where the path may lead, go instead where there is no path and leave a trail."

CONCLUSION

This paper examines the move patterns in valedictory speeches pursuing the analysis on Huttner (2010) move taxonomy as well as looking at some linguistic features. The findings revealed that there were seven moves in the valedictory speech. All seven moves were present in nine of the exemplars with the exception of one (HCCE 1) which did not have Move 3 and Move 7 yet did not affect the frequency distribution interpretation because it fell between 90% - 100% making the status obligatory as pertains in Huttner (2010).

Again, in all the exemplars, Move 4 took the percentage rating of 29.1%. The linguistic features that usually accompany valedictory speeches were revealed through the analysis of the text. Most of the exemplars were flaunted with quotations.

Finally, the paper contributed to how valedictory speeches should be written and also the moves that are obligatory for the communicative purpose to be achieved.

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