In the Name of God

Ferdowsi University of Mashhad

Genre-based Analysis of English Patient Information Leaflets (PILs) and Examining the Reading Strategies Used by Skilled and Novice Readers in Reading PILs

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to my dear

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Subject	Page
Title Page	i
Acknowledgements	iii
Dedication	iv
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables & Figures	x
Abstract	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction	
1.1. Background	2
1.2. Statement of the Problem	7
1.3. Significance of the Study	7
1.4. Purposes of the Present Research	8
1.4.1. Research Questions	8
1.5. Definitions	9
1.6. Delimitation	11
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	
2.1. Introduction	14
2.2. Language Analysis for ESP	14
2.2.1. Register Analysis	14
2.2.2. Rhetorical Analysis	15
2.2.3. Genre Analysis	16
2.2.3.1. Approaches to Genre Analysis	18
2.2.3.1.1. English for Specific Purposes	18
2.2.3.1.2. New Rhetoric	19
2.2.3.1.3. The SFL Approach	19
2.2.3.2. Key Concepts in Genre Analysis	20
2.2.3.2.1. Discourse Community	20

2.2.3.2.2. Genre 21
2.2.3.3. Definition of Genre 22
2.3. Empirical Studies of Genre 24
2.3.1. Studies in Research Articles 24
2.3.1.1. RA Abstract 24
2.3.1.2. RA Introduction 25
2.3.1.3. RA Method 29
2.3.1.4. RA Results 30
2.3.1.5. RA Discussion 32
2.3.1.6. RA Conclusion 34
2.3.2. Studies in Medical Genre 35
2.3.2.1. PILs Rhetorical Structure 35
2.3.2.2. PILs Readability and Comprehensibility 37
2.3.2.3. PIL Translatability 41
2.4. Reading 42
2.4.1. Hypertext Reading 43
2.4.2. Reading Comprehension Strategies 44
2.4.3. Skilled and Novice Readers 48
2.4.4. Eliciting Reading Information Technique 48
2.3.4.1. Think-aloud Protocol Analysis 49
2.5. Empirical Researches on Reading 53
2.5.1. Empirical Studies on Hypertext Reading 56

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1. Introduction 60
3.2. Phase 1: Genre Analysis 60
3.2.1. Corpus 60
3.2.2. Analytical Framework 61
3.2.2.1. Macrostructure 62
3.2.2.2. Move 62
3.2.2.3. Step 62
3.2.3. Data Analysis 63

3.2.3.1. Analysis of Macrostructure 63
3.2.3.2. Analysis of Move-Step Structure 64
3.3. Phase 2: Examining Reading Strategy 64
3.3.1. Participants 65
3.3.2. Subject Selection 68
3.3.3 Instruments 69
3.3.3.1. TOEFL 70
3.3.4. Procedure 71
3.3.4.1. Using L1 for Verbal Reports 71
3.3.4.2. Choosing Text 72
3.3.4.3. Organizing Think-aloud Session 74
3.3.4.4. Pre-Think-aloud Training 74
3.3.4.5. The Main Task 74
3.3.4.6. Probing 75
3.3.4.7. Response Classification Scheme 75
3.3.5. Data Analysis 75
3.3.5.1. Segmentation 76
3.3.5.2. Simple vs. Complex Strategy 78
3.3.5.3. Strategy vs. Response 82
3.3.5.4. Cognitive vs. Affective Response 82
3.4. Summary 82

Chapter 4: Discussion of Results

4.1. Introduction 84
4.2. Phase1: Genre Analysis 84
4.2.1. Macrostructure Analysis 84
4.2.2. Microstructure Analysis 86
4.2.2.1. Composition 87
4.2.2.2. Pharmacodynamics and Pharmacokinetic Properties 88
4.2.2.3. Indications 90
4.2.2.4. Dosage and Administration 91
4.2.2.5. Contraindications 93

4.2.2.6. Special Warnings and Precautions for Use 94
4.2.2.7. Interactions 95
4.2.2.8. Side Effects 96
4.2.2.9. Pregnancy and Lactation 98
4.2.2.10. Drivers and Machine Users 99
4.2.2.11. Overdose 100
4.2.2.12 Storage Condition and Shelf Life 100
4.3. Phase two: Reading Strategies 104
4.3.1. Proportion of Reading Strategies 104
4.3.2. Analysis of the Protocols 107
4.3.2.1. Higher-level Processing Strategies 107
4.3.2.1.1. Using Prior Knowledge 108
4.3.2.1.1.1. Using Background Knowledge 108
4.3.2.1.2. Metacognition 108
4.3.2.1.2.1. Paraphrasing 108
4.3.2.1.2.2. Identifying Problems 110
4.3.2.1.2.3. Adjusting Rate 110
4.3.2.1.2.4. Skipping Difficult Sections 111
4.3.2.1.2.5. Skipping Trivial Sections 112
4.3.2.1.3. Inferencing 112
4.3.2.1.3.1. Reprocessing at Sentence Level 112
4.3.2.1.3.2. Reprocessing at Phrase Level 113
4.3.2.1.3.3. Guessing 113
4.3.2.1.3.4. Watchers 114
4.3.2.1.3.5. Finding the Key Words 115
4.3.2.2. Lower-level Processing Strategies 115
4.3.2.2.1. Word Recognition 115
4.3.2.2.1.1. Decoding 115
4.3.2.2.1.2. Using Dictionary 116
4.3.2.2.1.3. Repeating Words 116
4.3.2.2.1.4. Correcting Pronunciation 117
4.3.2.2.1.5. L1 Equivalent Search 118

4.3.2.2.1.6. Word for Word Translations 118
4.3.2.2.2. Syntactical Processing 119
4.3.2.2.2.1. Morphological Analysis 119
4.3.2.2.2.2. Syntactical Analysis 119
4.3.2.3. Cognitive/Affective Responses 120
4.3.2.3.1. Cognitive Responses 120
4.3.2.3.1.1. Self-Directed Questioning 120
4.3.2.3.1.2. Commenting on Process 120
4.3.2.3.2. Affective Responses 121
4.3.2.3.2.1. Emotive Responses 121
4.4. Strategies in each section 122
4.5. Summary 124

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1. Introduction 126
5.2. Summary 126
5.3. Pedagogical Implication 128
5.4. Suggestions for Further Research 130

References 133

Appendices
Appendix A: Reading Paper of Sample TOEFL Used in the Study 143
Appendix B: Subjects' Raw Data 153
Appendix C: Transcriptions of Verbal Reports (Skilled Readers) 154
Appendix D: Transcriptions of Verbal Reports (Novice Readers) 158

List of Tables:

Tab. 2.1. Swales' 1981 Model for the Structure of RA Introduction 26
Tab. 2.2. Swales' 1990 CARS Model of RA Introduction 27
Tab. 2.3. Nwogu's 1997 Model for Structure of RA Method 30
Tab. 2.4. Williams' 1999 Model for Result 31
Tab. 2.5. Hopkins and Dudley-Evans' 1988 Model for RA Discussion 32
Tab. 2.6. Swales' 1990 Model for RA Discussion 32
Tab. 3.1. Subjects' Demographic Makeup 66
Tab. 3.2. Classification of Processing Strategies 79
Tab. 4.1. The Percentage and Sequence of PILs Section 85
Tab. 4.2. Microstructure of Composition Section 88
Tab. 4.3. Microstructure of Pharmacodynamics & Pharmacokinetic Properties Section 89
Tab. 4.4. Microstructure of Indications Section 90
Tab. 4.5. Microstructure of Dosage and Administration Section 91
Tab. 4.6. Microstructure of Contraindications Section 93
Tab. 4.7. Microstructure of Warnings and Precautions for Use Section 94
Tab. 4.8. Microstructure of interactions Section 95
Tab. 4.9. Microstructure of Side Effects Section 96
Tab. 4.10. Microstructure of Pregnancy and Lactation Section 98
Tab. 4.11. Microstructure of Driver and Machine Users Section 99
Tab. 4.12. Microstructure of Overdose Section 100
Tab. 4.13. Microstructure of Storage Condition and Shelf Life Section 101
Tab. 4.14. Micro-Structure of PILs 102
Tab. 4.15. Frequency of Reading Strategies Used by the Skilled Readers 104
Tab. 4.16. Frequency of Reading Strategies Used by the Novice Readers 106

List of Figures:

Fig. 3.1. Ratio of Gender and University Levels 66
Fig. 4.1. The Percentage of PILs Sections 85
Fig. 4.2. Percentage of Reading Strategies Utilized by the Skilled and the Novice Readers 106
Fig. 4.3. The Proportion of Categories of Reading Strategies Used by the Skilled Readers 123
Fig. 4.4. The Proportion of Categories of Reading Strategies Used by the Novice Readers 124

ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify the rhetorical structures of Patient Information Leaflets (PILs), and also explore the reading strategies utilized by skilled and novice readers in reading this kind of text. The majority of researches on genre analysis only have explored text rhetorical structures without examining them in tasks such as reading. This study was conducted in two phases; the first is genre analysis of English PILs and the second comprises case studies by means of think-aloud protocol analysis. The genre analysis phase aimed at identifying the macro- and micro-structure of PILs; the microstructure analysis was done at two levels of move and step. In this phase, 30 English PILs were analyzed. The second phase tried to explore reading strategies used by readers possessing different reading abilities. A reading TOEFL test was administered to two groups of undergraduate and graduate EFL learners of Ferdowsi University of Mashhad and think-aloud procedure was used to study the use of different reading strategies. The verbal reports of 6 selected informants were analyzed and the results were categorized. The results of the first phase indicated that PILs are composed of 17 sections, and each section has its own particular move-step framework. The second phase showed that skilled readers used more reading strategies than the novice. The highest utilized category of strategies among both groups was word processing strategy. Moreover, the skilled group paid more attention to higher-level processing strategies (using prior knowledge, metacognition, inferencing) than the novice group. In addition to this, they paid attention to word and sentence level meaning simultaneously.

Keyword: genre, move, step, reading strategies, *think-aloud procedure*

Chapter one

Introduction

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1. Background

English is currently the most widespread language in the world, most of written texts and more especially the scientific data and research articles are presented in English. In order to yield this information, reading is the most beneficial tool. Yalcin and Sengul (2004) mentioned that students should catch up with the changing world, so they are supposed to be lifelong learners. As most of the learning processes occur in terms of reading, students should possess meaningful and critical reading abilities. Without supportive skills of reading comprehension, ideal level of learning may not be reached. A large amount of research in the field of reading confirms the reading skill importance. It has got the central attention in language research and language instruction. Many scholars have tried to shed light on different aspects of this skill. Reading is an active and complex process; it is a 'cognitive process' both in L1 and L2. This skill is an interaction among the reader, the text and the context in which the reading takes place (Flavel, 1979). The readers try to decode symbols in order to derive or construct the meaning. Reading is not a linear process; in reading readers constantly form hypotheses, test predictions, and use world knowledge and language knowledge to construct meaning (Goodman, 1967, 1985; Smith, 1979).

A large body of research indicated that there are many factors that affect reading comprehension. Paris and Jacobs (1984) who differentiated between skilled and novice readers, pointed that skilled readers often are engaged in deliberate activities. which need planful thinking, flexible strategies and periodic self-monitoring, while novice readers seem to be inattentive to these effective strategies. Moreover, proficient L2 readers can compensate for the lack of English proficiency by increasing awareness and usage of reading strategies to reinforce their understanding (Carrell, 1991).

Baker and Brown (1984) and Klatzien (1991) also have distinguished between skilled and poor readers; according to them, poor readers are generally deficient in reading skills and using strategies, while the skilled readers are able to reflect and monitor their own cognitive processes in reading. Skilled readers are not only aware of which strategies to use, but also tend to be better at regulating the use of strategies while reading. In other words, the skilled learners know which strategy to use and when to use them in order to increase their reading comprehension. It should be noted that the awareness of reading strategies does not mean knowing how to use them.

Some researchers have tried to categorize the identified reading strategies (Akyel & Erçetin, 2009; Pilten, 2010; Sheorey & Mokhtari, 2001). They listed some useful reading strategies such as 'setting purpose for reading', 'previewing text before reading', 'checking the text content purpose', 'noting text characteristics', 'determining what to read', and 'rereading for better understanding'.

Moore, et al. (2003) counted following strategies as particularly important ones:

- Connecting knowledge to prior experience
- Previewing and predicting to improve comprehension
- Organizing information and applying meaningful frameworks and categories
- Self-monitoring of understanding
- Evaluating the text critically

In order to collect data about the process of reading comprehension, different methods could be used. One of these methods is think-aloud procedure. This verbal report of thinking is different from earlier introspective methods because the central assumption of this method is that subjects can verbalize their thought while no change takes place in their thought sequences; it should be done at the time of performing the task. Being able to think about one's own thinking is a crucial component of learning, since it enables learners to assess their comprehension and adjust their strategies, which leads to greater success (Ericsson, 2002).

It seems necessary to assert that reading strategies are not inherently effective, but need to be valued by the reader while accomplishing the reading task. Selecting an effective strategy is specified by different factors including the nature of the task, learners' individual characteristics, learners' learning aptitude, prior experience, and background knowledge (Williams & Burden, 1997).

Readers' awareness of the text genre may accelerate their reading comprehension. Genre analysis has attracted so much attention since the early 1980. Genre, which has traditionally been a literary concept, has recently become a popular framework for analyzing the form and rhetorical function of non-literary discourse (Candlin, 1993). Linguistics and language teachers have tried to apply genre-centered-approaches to the analysis of written and spoken discourse in order to provide satisfactory models and descriptions for academic and scientific text and also help non-native speaker students to enhance their ability of understanding and proper production of text (Dudley- Evans, 1986).

The first scholar who introduced the concept of genre in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) was Swales (1990); he defined the term genre as "conventionalized communication event whose form and linguistic features are determined by practices and conventions of discourse community to which the text is addressed" (p. 58). The definition implies that when linguistic features of communication event are analyzed, the specific social context where it is used should be taken into consideration. Genre analysis essentially is based on two central assumptions. First, the feature of a similar group of text depends on the social context of their creation and use. Second, those features can be described in a way that relates a text to other texts like it.

Biber (1988) made a distinction between genre and text type in this way genre is based on external and non-linguistic features, while text type is defined by internal and linguistic characteristics of a text. A genre can be viewed as a category assigned on the basis of external criteria like intended audience, purpose and activity type which refers to a conventional and culturally recognized grouping of text based on

properties other than (linguistic) criteria forming the basis of text type categories. External criteria which determine genre categories are assigned based on use rather than form.

Swales (1990) introduced two other concepts, move and step, in the field of genre analysis. According to him, move is a seminal unit relevant to the writer's purpose. Many linguistic features made up a text segment like lexical meaning, prepositional meaning, illocutionary force, etc. These features give the segment a uniform orientation and signal the concepts of discourse in it. A move can be realized by one step or the combination of steps. It captures the function and purpose of a segment of a text at a more general level; however, steps spell out more specifically the rhetorical means of realizing the function of move, the set of steps for a move is the set of rhetorical choices.

Swales' model has been used by different scholars in the field of applied linguistics and English for specific and academic purposes. The reason for conducting the analysis of rhetorical structure of academic papers by different scholars (Cheng, 2006; Martin, 2003) is the role that genre can play in text classification, which may contribute to comprehension and production of text. The role of genre in reading comprehension seems to have roots in the idea that there may be underlying recurrent features which are prototypically present in particular group of texts.

Swales' (1990) model has attracted the attention of the researchers working on medical genre (Nwogu, 1997; Samarj, 2000). But except medical research articles the other types of medical text have been ignored. Conducting ample of researches (Nwogu, 1997; Rezaei & Sayfouri, 2009; Samarj, 2000; Williams, 1999) on medical research articles is an obvious evidence for the importance of these kinds of texts; other medical texts like medical brochures, patient information leaflets (PILs), drug labels, and medical postures get less attention. These texts are anticipated for public. therefore, the scope of their intended audience is broader than academic papers. It seems that no standard international structure has been identified and proposed for

designing PILs, so the present study aims at analyzing the rhetorical structure of PILs to fill this gap.

Medicine leaflets should comply with some legislation (e.g. European commission); they ought to be understood by general population who possess different needs and abilities. Some studies were conducted to evaluate the quality of leaflets by means of readability formulae, but they were limited in their scope for improving the quality of the information in leaflets. Information should be designed in a way that attracts, motivates and promotes the readers' understanding (Twomey, 2001).

It is well known that patients forget or misunderstand much of the consultation content. A study conducted by Savage (1992) showed that on average, patients forget half of what the doctor had told them within 5 minutes of leaving the consultation. In general, people may only retain about 20% of what they hear, also the average adult forgets half of what he or she is told within a few minutes, but this may be decreased if there is additional visual or written input. So, it seems to be crucial to back up verbal advice with written material. As patients are unreliable witnesses to the consultation, leaflets should be used to compensate these inadequacies, and to bring patients' knowledge in line with the correct medical information (as cited in Dixon-Wood, 2001). PIL audiences prefer information that is easy to understand with sufficient detail to fulfill their needs. The essential steps in the advancement of health education material are evaluating them by the target groups, providing pictures and visual aids to increase their comprehension, representing needs of various ages, genders, and different levels of literacy (Elliot & Shenker, 2009). As Dixon-Wood (2001) supposed, a crucial condition for success of information is that the massage is reached and comprehended, interpreted, and understood by the reader as intended by the writer.

Another important characteristic of the PILs that makes them appropriate to be selected as the material for analysis in this study is their authenticity. Widdowson (1979) argues that authenticity is achieved when the readers interpret the intention of

writer and respond correctly to it. Some teachers prefer authentic texts in which nothing has been changed, but the others favor simulated authentic materials in which some changes have been done to assist learner. Materials are classified into 3 types; "authentic" not written for language learners, but for natives, "pedagogic" specially written for the learners of language (these texts have a pedagogic goal), and "adopted" simulated authentic texts according to learner's level and need. According to this definition, PILs can be categorized as authentic materials.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Because of their large number of intended audience and the importance of their content, PILs are considered to be one of the most important text types in the field of medicine. It is surprising that this kind of text genre has got no attention up to now. The present study is a genre-based analysis of PILs which focuses on the identification of their rhetorical structure.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the previous section, the role of genre in reading comprehension is not deniable. Identifying the reading strategies EFL learners with different levels of proficiency utilize to read PILs would shed light on the relation of reading strategies and the genre of PILs.

1.3. Significance of the Study

The results of the genre analysis of the present study can contribute to devising ESP courses, especially for students of medicine. It can make them aware of the generic structure of the medical informative materials.

ESP teachers can enhance their students' ability in writing, reading and comprehending this genre by informing them of the rationale behind these analyses. The proposed model of the study can be used as a descriptive template in developing PILs.

The findings of the think-aloud experiment would give insight to instructors for assigning remedial tasks according to learners' abilities. In addition, identifying the strategies used by skilled readers in comprehending reading texts and equipping novice ones with those strategies could compensate for their reading weaknesses.

1.4. Purposes of the Present Research

The present study aims at: a) Analyzing the rhetorical structure of English PILs in order to find the comprising moves and steps of each section of the PILs based on Swales' model at two-level; b) Discovering the reading strategies used by the skilled and novice EFL learners in comprehending PILs; c) Comparing the utilized reading strategies based on the rhetorical structure with respect to proficiency levels of these learners.

The present study has two major components; the first one is genre analysis of 30 English PILs. The overall macro- and micro-structure of PILs are recognized. The second phase tries to identify the reading strategies utilized by the skilled and novice readers in reading these informative and authentic texts. A reading paper of a sample of TOEFL test[1] is used to select these participants. The test scores indicate the proficiency level of the participants. These subjects, who have different reading abilities, read the selected PIL and their reading strategies are identified by means of think-aloud protocol analysis. The identified strategies are classified, compared and contrasted.

1.4.1. Research Questions

This study is based on and guided by the following research questions:

- What is the dominant macrostructure of English PILs?
- What are the moves and steps comprising the rhetorical structure of different sections of English PILs?

[1] More detailed information of this instrument and the way of its administration is provided in Methodology section of the study.

- What are the reading strategies used by the skilled EFL readers in understanding of these moves and steps?
- What are the reading strategies used by the novice EFL readers in understanding of these moves and steps?
- What are the differences between reading strategies used by skilled and novice EFL learners?

1.5. Definitions

The key terms that are present in this study are listed below together with their definitions. Some of these terms have been stated few times, while the others are appeared more frequently. All these key terms are defined in this section regardless of their frequency of occurrences in the present study.

1.5.1. Genre

Swales (1990) has defined genre as "a conventionalized communication event whose form and linguistic features are determined by practices and conventions of the discourse community to which the text is addressed." (P. 58)

1.5.2. Move

Move is a seminal unit relevant to writer purpose, many linguistic features made up a text segment like lexical meaning, prepositional meaning, illocutionary force, etc. These features give the segment a uniform orientation and signal the content of discourse in it. Moves can vary in size, but contain at least one proposition (Swales, 1990).

1.5.3. Step

Step spells out more specifically the rhetorical means of realizing the function of move. The set of steps for a move is the set of rhetorical choices (Swales, 1990).