

Students' Identity Indicated by Genre Movement Used in Application Letters

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Abstract—As a first document used to assess someone's capacity, an application letter is required to be created in good genre moves to show someone's positive identity. This study analyzed the genre moves of students' application letters and investigated the students' identity portrayed in their texts. Using the SFL approach, this study analyzed four texts written by eleventh-grade students of a private school in West Java regions of Indonesia. The findings showed that the students' texts still weakly showed their positive identity since they did not cover all genre moves in their application letters. The students from the middle and high class used five of seven genre moves, while low-level students only used three of them. Although readers could still indicate that the documents belonged to application letters, the letters could not meet the purpose of an application letter since the text could not show the author's identity.

Keywords: *application letter, genre movement, authors' identity*

I. INTRODUCTION

An ability to create a good application letter that could meet the real purpose of this text was needed by students since after graduating from a school, they need to make application letters for applying for a job or continuing their study. Their application letters would determine whether they are accepted or rejected by a company or a scholarship. Application letters were texts having a particular genre (Pierini, 2014). Creating this text by following the genre was a way to meet the main purpose of this text. By looking at students' application letter, people would know their identity since creating this letter belonged to a self-reflexive activity (Watts, 2015). As application letters belonged to the authors' self-presentation texts (James, Scholfield, & Ypsiladis, 1994), students would show who they are in their application letters.

Dealing with genre movement and register choices in application letters, a study investigating schematic structures and the use of appraisal in application letters in the Malaysia context was done by Paramasivam and Rahim (2016). This study found that the participants used five of seven genre moves in their texts. This study also stated that the participants still had some problems in creating some parts of application letters such as creating essential detailing of candidature, indicating the value of candidature and offering incentives. Furthermore, the participants were still weak in promoting their

individuality since they were unable to create strong appraisals. By analyzing the genre movement and register the choices of students' application letter, this study found some ideas that were needed to teach application letters based on students' real problem.

Some other researchers like Al-Ali (2006), Khan and Tan (2012), Maasum, Darus, Stapa, and Mustafa, (2007) and Wang (2005) also researched the genre moves of application letters. In investigating Chinese applicants' texts, Wang (2005) found that only four genre moves were found in the participants' application letters namely establishing self, referring to enclose materials, offering self and inviting further action. The high number of moves used in application letters was found in Jordanian graduates' texts. Al-Ali (2006) found six genre moves in the Jordanians' application letters namely opening, giving candidature, stating to apply for the job, promoting candidature, enclosing the letter and ending the text politely. The higher number of genre moves used in the application letter was found in Pakistan applicants' texts. Khan and Tan (2012) found six genre moves that were used by their participants. Unfortunately, a very limited number of genre moves emerged in application letters were found in another context. In analyzing Malaysians' application letters, only two to four genre moves were found. Maasum, et al. (2007) investigated graduates' application letters and only found establishing credentials, offering incentives, enclosing documents and ending politely as the genre moves used.

The previous studies had investigated the genre moves in application letters. However, the authors did not correlate the result with the students' way to build their identity in their application letters. To fill the gap in the previous studies, this study was done. This study analyzed the genre moves of students' application letters and investigated the students' identity in their application letters. This study correlated the results of analyzing the genre moves in application letters and the way students built their positive identity in their application letters. Using the SFL approach, this study analyzed four students' texts written by eleventh-grade students of a private school in Bandung.

II. METHOD

This study used a qualitative approach with descriptive and explanatory procedures. This study used document analysis as a technique to gather data. A qualitative approach was used if a study investigating a real phenomenon without any manipulation (Litchman, 2006). The use of a qualitative study emphasized more on the thick description rather than numbering in reporting the findings (Hamied, 2018). A qualitative approach was also used if a study analyzed an interesting real phenomenon (Creswell, 2012) and focused on understanding the phenomenon through the process of meaning-making (Merriam, 2009). Since this study explored how students built their identity through their application letters which were a real phenomenon and needed a thick description in reporting the findings, a qualitative approach was used. The genre analysis in this study was done by finding out the recurrent patterns of moves portrayed in the students' texts. The explanatory procedure was used as this study tried to interpret the data found and related to how students built their identity in their application letter.

The analysis of the data was conducted using Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) theory. Texts which were analyzed were written by four students of a private vocational high school in Bandung. The English teacher had taught students how to write application letters using the genre-based approach. After that, the students were asked to create the texts. The texts analyzed in this study were chosen from students having different language proficiency.

The data of this study were analyzed using Bathia's framework (Bhatia, 1993). According to this framework, seven genre moves should be used in writing an application letter. The first move was establishing credentials. In this move, the author showed his qualifications to make readers believe that they could fulfill the readers' needs. The second move was introducing candidature. Through this move, the author introduced himself, stated the position he would like to apply and described some details to show their skills. The third move was offering incentives. Using this move, the author expressed his motivation to apply for the job. The fourth move was enclosing documents. In this move, the author stated some information supporting the letter. The fifth move was using pressure tactics. Through this move, the author used a strategy to make the readers provide his desired response. The next move was soliciting a response. Through this move, the author gave contact to make the readers get ease in giving the response. The last move was ending politely. In this move, the author ended his letter politely. Bathia's framework was used in this study as it provided a clear and detail way of analyzing the students' application letters.

In analyzing the data, several stages were done. First, the moves were identified by analyzing the students' sentences and interpreting the meanings using Bhatia's (1993) framework. The paragraph division was not considered as the marker for the change of the moves since a move could be found in more than a paragraph. After analyzing the moves, the next step was to correlate the findings with the students' identity using the theory proposed by Norton (2013).

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Findings

1) Genre movement analysis of student's Text 1

In the first student application letter, five genre moves were found. In establishing credentials, the author stated that her educational background was appropriate for the intended job. In introducing candidature, she introduced herself, showed her educational background and told her experience. Furthermore, in offering incentives, she said that she had some qualifications as the company wanted to. She told her ability in operating Microsoft Office which was required by her intended position. In enclosing documents, she closed her letter by showing her gratitude to the company. However, in the part of using pressure tactics, she did not use any strategy in her letter. She also did not give any contact for the company to give any response. Nevertheless, she closed her letter politely by showing her gratitude.

2) Genre movement analysis of student's Text 2

In the students' text 2, three genre moves were used. In establishing her credentials, she explained her good characteristics in her letter. In introducing candidature, she introduced herself and showed her educational background. However, she did not offer any incentives. She also did not use any pressure tactics in her letter. The contact for the company to inform the response was also not provided. But she closed her letter by stating his availability. She also ended the letter with really polite statements.

3) Genre movement analysis of student's Text 3

In the students' text 3, five genre moves were found. In her letter, the author explicated that her educational background was appropriate with the intended job to establish the credentials. Then, she introduced herself, showed her educational background and told her experience in the part of introducing her candidature. Furthermore, the author mentioned that she had qualifications as the company wanted to by showing her good characteristics which were required by her intended position to offer the incentives in her letter. In enclosing her letter, she closed her letter by showing her gratitude to the company. However, she did not use any pressure tactics in her letter. She also did not provide any contact in her letter. Though, the author closed her letter politely by showing her gratitude.

4) Genre movement analysis of student's Text 4

In the students' text 4, five genre moves were used. The author established credentials by stating that her educational background was appropriate with the intended job and showing her reason to take the job. Then, the author introduced herself and showed her educational background. In offering incentives; she said that she had qualifications as the company's desire by showing her good characteristics which were required by her intended position. Furthermore, she closed her letter by showing her gratitude to the company. However, she did not use any pressure tactics in her letter. She also did not provide any contact to make the company easily communicate with her. However, the author closed her letter politely by showing her gratitude.

B. Discussion

There were four students' texts analyzed in this paper. Every text used a different number of genre moves. As identity-related to someone's skill and ability (Norton, 2013), the number of genre moves showed the authors' strength in showing their positive identity since it portrayed their capacity in writing a text in English. The number of genre moves used portrayed how the students tried to build their positive identity through their application letters to persuade readers since the students' way of arranging the stage of their letter would determine whether the goal was achieved or not (Martin, & Rose, 2008).

The first, third and fourth students' text contained five genre moves namely establishing credentials, introducing candidature, offering incentives, enclosing documents and ending politely. The author had been able to elaborate on useful information related to those genre moves to persuade the company. However, the authors did not use any pressure tactics and solicit responses in their texts. Although the text had met the purpose of an application letter, the authors' positive identity in their texts was fairly weak. In their letters, the authors did not elaborate any information for giving pressure tactics and soliciting responses which actually could show their strong identity.

The second student's text contained only three genre moves namely establishing credentials, introducing candidature, and enclosing documents. Although readers could still indicate that the document belonged to an application letter, the letter could not meet the purpose of an application letter since the text could not show the author's identity which could be a way for considering her capacity. The author also did not elaborate any information to show three important genre moves namely offering incentives, using pressure tactics and soliciting responses. The author's positive identity shown in this letter was very weak.

Using non-native English writers as the participant, this study found that the genre moves emerged in students' application letters were establishing credentials, introducing candidature, and enclosing documents. In another context, Henry and Roseberry (2001) investigated the common moves that emerged in English native writers' application letters. They found some aspects mostly found namely opening that could be categorized as establishing candidature, referring to a job advertisement and offering candidature that could be classified as introducing candidature, stating reasons for applying, stating availability and promoting the candidature that could be identified as offering incentives, stipulating terms and conditions that could be categorized as enclosing the document, naming references that could be seen as soliciting a response, enclosing documents, polite ending and signing off that could be identified as ending politeness. It showed that English native writers mostly wrote application letters that covered all genre moves. The different number of genre moves emerged in English native and non-native writers were considered common as non-native English writers should write a text using different structure influence by the different culture they had.

Even though the genre moves used in students' application letter varied, offering an incentive as the first move was stated in all of those texts. Based on Bhatia (1993), promoting candidature was the main aim of an application letter. After introducing their candidature, the students had elaborated information to support their candidature in the move of offering an incentive.

Related to those findings, Lipovsky (2013) stated that there was limited attention from teachers to teach how to create some tactics in application letters. Therefore, many students still weakly showed their identity in their application letters since they did not have any strategies in using any tactic through elaborating valuable information to make the company believe them as appropriate employers for the intended jobs.

Since every move had a specific function (Ding, 2007), writing an application letter by elaborating detail information and using all genre moves were essential to be promoted to students. White (2001) stated that readers always expected that the text they read had a good structure, high clarity, and brevity. If a text could not fulfill those requirements, the text seemed unfavorable.

Furthermore, students also needed to be taught metalanguage in explicit teaching. Teaching metalanguage was important for critically investigating how texts were designed to find variances between texts, and relate these to the contexts of culture and situation in which they seemed to work (New London Group, 1996).

Teaching students to write application letters based on the appropriate genre was considered important as Maier (1992) and Wolfson (1983) stated that besides making grammatical errors, the problems posed by non-native writers were they did not master specific rules in writing a text that makes them failed in communicating their ideas and achieving the aim of their texts. Baker (2001) supported that idea by mentioning that students needed to know L2's culture and rule to make their texts meet the L2 context. Related to that case, Hou (2013) highlighted that an application letter was essential to be written based on the right genre to meet the L2 context.

IV. CONCLUSION

In writing application letters, no students covered all genre moves as proposed by Bhatia. It means that students needed to be guided in writing the text in explicit way. The expert texts that have covered all genre moves could be a model for students in writing a good application letter. The expert texts would make students had a clear picture in writing application letters in complete genre moves to show their positive identity in their texts.

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