Move Registers and Language Teaching

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Genres are now generally considered to consist of a series of obligatory and optional moves, with each move contributing to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. One concept which has been found to be useful from a language teaching perspective is the notion of the 'move register'- the list of lexico-grammatical features found in each move of a particular genre. This paper aims to review four ways in which move registers can be used in language teaching. Firstly, the paper looks at some early work in move register analysis which recommends teachers teach the language of the moves and not the language of the genre. Secondly, the paper explores the concept of language learners as ethnographers. By using the move as the main unit of analysis, learners can be made aware of the dynamic nature of genres by using move registers to track historical change in generic structure and in important linguistic features. Thirdly, the role move registers can play in identifying problems in cross-cultural communication is highlighted using examples of scientists in Asia applying for research positions in Britain. Finally, the paper looks at how the large amounts of data mined from move register analyses can be presented to learners meaningfully.

Key words: genre, move registers, ethnography, variation

INTRODUCTION

The theoretical basis for this paper is John Swales' work in genre analysis. Following Swales (1981, 1990) a 'genre' is defined as a set of communicative events each with a specific purpose. In order to achieve the purpose a participant in the genre must be aware of the communicative context in which the genre is set (Halliday & Hasan, 1985). Included in the context are the participants, their culture, their history and their present socio-economic situation. For a writer or speaker to create an effective instance of a genre, they must meet the genre expectations of the reader or listener. To do this they have to include all the obligatory 'parts' (commonly referred to as 'moves') and any optional moves that will enhance the effectiveness of their communication. In addition, they will have to use language and any other non-linguistic features appropriate to the context. This paper aims to show how the notion of 'moves' and more particularly, the language of the moves can be used in the English language classroom to help learners meet genre expectations. The paper will begin by showing how language varies significantly within a genre, how it can vary within a move, and finally will explore how this variation can be exploited in the classroom.

VARIATION WITHIN A GENRE

The term 'move register' was first used in Henry and Roseberry (1996) to describe the language and linguistic patterns found in individual moves of a genre. Using this concept, we analyzed the genre Brief Tourist Information and found that the move registers in this genre differed significantly from each other. This genre has four obligatory moves: Identification, Location, Description, and Facilities and Activities, which are usually found in that order. As Table 1 clearly shows, each of the moves is realized by a completely different set of lexico-grammatical features. This has many implications for language teaching and learning, the most important being

that the language of individual moves should be taught rather than the language of the genre as a whole.

TABLE 1
The Main Features of the Location, Facilities and Activities, and Description Moves (Henry & Roseberry, 1996, p. 485)

	LOCATION	FACILITIES & ACTIVITIES	DESCRIPTION
Discourse Functions	location	action (+ modalities), location, possession, range, provision, time	description, possession, existence, range
Length	1 T-unit or less	5-6 T-units	3-4 T-units
Reader Address	(none)	"you", "your" in 52% of the texts	"you", "your" in 14% of the texts
Modality	(none)	"can" 38% "will" 24% of the texts	"can" 5% "will" 7% of the texts
Possession	(none)	's (43%)	its (25%); 's (20%)
Lexical Phrase Frame	3 phrase frames are commonly used	many phrase frames	many phrase frames
Idioms	none	many	few
Words	location words, geographical features, constructed features, measuring terms	"you", action verbs, modals, entertainment targets, quantitative adjectives	wide range of adjectives, particularly those expressing opinion and texture/condition; nouns of natural features, constructed features, units of measure, natural substances; verbs expressing existence

Variation Within a Move

In a later paper (Henry & Roseberry, 2001a), through an analysis of the genre Letter of Application, we demonstrated that while the move itself was a useful unit for analysis, if a move could be realized through a variety of strategies, then the basic unit for analysis would then have to be the strategy itself. The resulting analysis would result in the identification of the lexico-

grammatical features or 'strategy register'. We found, from our corpus of 40 native speaker letters, 11 moves, of which five, Opening, Polite Ending, Signing Off, Offering Candidature and Promoting the Candidate were thought to be obligatory while six moves, Referring to a Job Advertisement, Stating Reasons for Applying, Stating Availability, Stipulating Terms and Conditions, Naming Referees and Enclosing Documents were optional. Of the obligatory moves, Promoting the Candidate and Polite Ending, were accomplished by different strategies. The Promotion move could be realized in one or more of the following ways: listing skills and abilities; stating how skills and abilities were obtained; giving qualifications; demonstrating knowledge of the target position; predicting success; listing publications; naming the present job, and–giving reasons for leaving the present job. An analysis of the lexico-grammatical patterning in each strategy found that they too differed radically from each other.

We also found that within a move or strategy, there was a wide variety of choices available to writers. For example in the Offering Candidature move, the writers in our corpus often used the phrase 'to be considered' but they used it with varying degrees of politeness as shown in the following example 1.

Example 1
Degrees of Politeness When Offering Candidature (Henry & **Roseberry, 2001a)**

> **to be considered**
> I am writing **to be considered** for [name of job].
> I wish **to be considered** for [name of job].
> I should (very much) like **to be considered** for [name of job].
> I would (very much) like **to be considered** for [name of job].
> I would like my application [for name of job] **to be considered**

Although 'to be considered' would appear to occur in a relatively uncomplicated syntactic environment, Figure 1 reveals the large number of possible syntagmatic and paradigmatic variations which exist even in a very

small corpus of native speaker writing. This data also demonstrates how complicated authentic language use really is.

Implications and Applications of Move and Strategy Registers

Having outlined the notions of genre, move registers and strategy registers, we will now review some of the research into their implications and applications to language teaching. This paper will cover the use of move registers in four areas: accounting for learners' errors, learners as ethnographers, cross cultural communication, and the presentation of register analyses to language learners.

Language Errors

We look first at the types of errors language learners make when writing a genre for the first time. A study by Henry and Roseberry (2007) found quite conclusively that students' errors were, to a very large extent, induced by the genre move they were attempting to write. The study involved 40 tertiary education students from a bilingual education system in Brunei Darussalam. The students were asked to write an example of the genre, Brief Tourist Information. In this genre there are four obligatory moves: Identification, Location, Description, and Facilities/Activities (Henry & Roseberry, 1996). The study looked at the errors made by learners when writing the Identification and Location move (which are usually combined) and the Facilities/Activities moves. In this paper, we will look at the analysis of the Identification/Location move to illustrate the relationship between learner errors and genre move. This joint Identification/Location move is usually realised by three syntactic structures:

1. Identification + Location Verb + Prepositional Phrase
(e.g. Damai Beach is 35 kilometres from Kuching.)

2. Reduced Adjective Clause + Identification
(e.g. Only 35 kilometres from Kuching, Damai Beach....)

3. Participle + Prepositional Phrase + Identification
(e.g. Located a mere 35 kilometres from Kuching, Damai Beach....)

As Henry and Roseberry (2007) point out, 2 and 3 above require a high level of knowledge of clause formation and clause reduction and consequently, we would expect learners to have some difficulty with them. When we look at the error analysis, summarised in Table 2, we find that 36% of the errors come from learners attempting to write these clauses. What is more interesting is the collocation and usage errors which made up 54% of the total.

Errors in clause structure include, among others, faulty reference, as in 'It has a rich cultural diversity of *Sarawak which is situated at the foot of Mount Santubong*' which could be more acceptably and meaningfully rewritten as 'It shows the rich cultural diversity of Sarawak and is situated at the foot of Mount Santubong' or 'Situated at the foot of Mount Santubong, it shows the rich cultural diversity of Sarawak'.

With regard to usage, a student would be aided by a good learner's dictionary. Such a dictionary would show that 'known to be located' in the following sentence is more acceptable as 'is located' 'It is situated *at* about six hectare site and *known to be located* at the Foot of Mount Santubong.'

Collocations are a special matter of usage that can be confusing to students who are translating word for word from their first language. In the data, '*centre town*' is a combination that is unknown to most speakers of English. The intended meaning is probably 'main town' or 'capital'. Often a learner's dictionary gives the required information, or, more specifically, a dictionary of collocations. However, some collocations are specific to certain moves in certain genres and are not covered by these dictionaries. An example is 'golden sands', which is commonly found in the description move of tourist information texts but is not covered by collocation dictionaries because of the

ability of 'golden' to collocate with a vast number of words in English (Henry & Roseberry, 1996).

Misuse of tense can also be problematical. The student's sentence 'The village *was located* at the foot of Mount Santubong' strongly indicates that the village no longer exists. The preferred tense here is 'is located'.

TABLE 2
Students' Errors in the Identification/Location Moves
(Henry & Roseberry, 2007, p. 190)

Error Type	Students' Errors
Clause structure (8) (36%)	• built on a six hectare site about 35 km from Kuching situated at the foot of the highest mountain • at the foot of Mount Santubong of which is the highest mountain in Sarawak. • It has a rich cultural diversity of Sarawak which is situated at the foot of Mount Santubong • It about 35 kilometres from Kuching and about six hectare site situated at the foot of Mount Santubong. • Sarawak Cultural Village which is popularly known as the living Museum. • Located at the foot of mount Santubong, 35 kilometres from Kuching. • If you go to their Living Museum which is about six hectare site and about 35 kilometres from Kuching, … • Mount Santubong of which is the highest mountain
usage (not including collocation) (8) (36%)	• It is situated at about six hectare site and known to be located at the Foot of Mount Santubong. • It is allocated 35 kilometres from Kuching. • It is near a historical place called Mount Santubong. • the place is only 35 kilometres from Kuching. • 35 kilometres away from Kuching, • Kuching, the centre town for Sarawak • with the area of six hectare site. • which is about six hectare site
Collocation (4) (18%)	• historical place • centre town • about six hectare site • allocated 35 kilometres from Kuching
Tense (2) (9%)	• The village was located at the foot of Mount Santubong • It was 35 kilometres from Kuching

If the learners had access to the move register analysis they might have avoided making many of the errors. For example, if we look at the move register analysis of this joint move (Henry & Roseberry, 1996) we find that *locate* is the most frequent verb, *capital* is one of the most frequent nouns, and the prepositions of location *on*, *in*, *from*, and *between* occur frequently. The preposition *from* is usually found after a specific distance as in *43 kilometres from the park headquarters*. While we have not carried out a study to confirm this with Brief Tourist Information, a study by Henry (2007) described later in the paper, shows that presenting move registers to learners, in this case the move and strategy registers of application letters, can be effective. These findings confirm our initial suggestion that we 'teach the language of the individual move rather than the language of the genre as a whole' (Henry & Roseberry, 1996, p. 487).

Learners as Ethnographers

We now look at how move registers can contribute to the idea of learners as ethnographers (Roberts et al., 2001). One of the aims of a genre-based approach to language teaching is to encourage learners to explain the language they encounter and so the ethnographic approach is highly relevant to this methodology, as is starting with a 'homely' genre as suggested by Johns (1997). A homely genre is a genre which is owned by a local community and, as such, contains socio-cultural features associated with the community. One of the aims of introducing homely genres into the classroom is to encourage language learners to notice these features and try to explain why they are there and why they are in a particular form. However, if we simply ask learners to look at a homely genre and explain the linguistic features, they find the task difficult (see Clynes & Henry, 2004). By adopting a historical perspective to genre analysis, we can encourage learners to notice differences in one of their own genres and this provides an interesting starting point for their analysis. By way of example, we will now look at one of the most fascinating homely genres in Brunei Darussalam, the Brunei Malay

Wedding Invitation. Its fascination lies in how it has evolved so very rapidly over the last 40 years to meet a changing socio-cultural situation partly brought about by independence in 1984 and the need for Brunei to establish its own identity based on the national philosophy of being a Malay, Islamic Monarchy (Clynes et el., 2006).

One way to track the various changes is to look at how the move registers of this genre have changed over time. In the 1960s, a typical wedding invitation in Brunei consisted of the following 6 to 8 moves: Naming the Inviters (parents); Inviting the Recipient; Naming the Couple; Specifying the Place, Specifying the Timetable of Events; Thanking the Recipient in Advance for Attending; Naming the Family representatives; and Naming the Welcoming Committee. In some respects this invitation resembled that of a typically British tea or cocktail party invitation. As Brunei was still a British dependency at this time, this close resemblance is perhaps understandable especially since the traditional Brunei wedding invitation was oral. However, as Brunei became independent and the need for written invitations increased, it was clear that the 1960s discourse structure failed to meet the needs of the new state – namely, the strengthening of the national philosophy. To meet these new needs, the wedding invitation changed dramatically, and today a typical invitation has 16 to 20 moves spread over 5 to 8 pages. By asking learners to compare invitations from the 1960s with present day examples, they can be introduced to ethnographic investigation. However, simply noticing that the length of the invitation has increased is not enough. Learners must be able to explain why such changes occur and we can help them do this by investigation the registers of the moves. We will exemplify this idea using data from Clynes et al. (2006). In the Invitation move itself the language has changed significantly since the mid-1960s. Example 2 shows one example of linguistic change in this move, from Standard Malay in the form of *Tuan* and *Puan* to the Brunei Malay equivalent *Pehin / Dato / Datin / Awang / Dayang*. By focussing on the move register, learners can easily identify the shift from Standard Malay to Brunei Malay and this allows them the opportunity to discuss why such a change has occurred.

Example 2
An Example of Linguistic Changes in the Invitation Move

1966:

mempersilakan […] <u>Tuan / Puan</u>   hadhir

                            'sir'   'madam'

1971:

mempersilakan <u>Pehin / Dato / Datin / Awang / Dayang</u> hadir

2007:

menjunjung Pengiran berangkat / mempersilakan Pehin / Dato / Datin / Awang / Dayang hadir

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The Brunei Malay version, as seen in the example from 1971, clearly shows the unique class structure of the country with different forms of address being used for different sections of society: *Pehin* (male) */ Dato* (male) */ Datin* (female) are the forms of address for commoners who have been awarded a title by the Sultan for outstanding service to the country, while *Awang* (male) and *Dayang* (female) are used for commoners. In the 2007 example, *Pengiran*, a form of address used with members of the royal family has been included, as has *menjunjung . . . .berangkat* which is the verb 'to invite' when addressing royalty rather than '*mempersilikan . . . hadir'* for commoners. This change over time shows how Bruneians have sought to move on from their colonial past and differentiate themselves from their neighbours by establishing their own identity in part through this genre.

Another example from Clynes et al. (2006) shows another change in a move register, which occurred fairly quickly in the course of the evolution, but this time for a different reason.

Example 3
Dates in English and in English and Arabic

1966:

 English system only:

"15hb April 1966"

1967:

Arabic & English:

"24 hb Rabil-Awal 1387 bersamaan dengan 2 hb July 1967"

The introduction of the dates in Arabic helped emphasize the Islamic nature of the society while the English version was retained for functional reasons.

Of course, as the Brunei Malay Wedding Invitation evolved from a one page document through to eight pages, lots of other changes occurred, both linguistic and paralinguistic. We have shown only two very simple but important changes in move registers which can be pointed out to Bruneian language learners to help them develop their ethnographic skills of understanding their own culture through the description and interpretation of this genre. The homely genres of other societies might not show such dramatic evolution but they will provide a rich source of study, while genre theory and move registers will provide language learners with a user-friendly model of analysis. In addition, an historical analysis can help overcome the main criticism aimed at genre-based pedagogy, namely, that it presents genres as static and leads to formulaic teaching methodologies.

Cross-cultural Communication

A third use of move registers is in the area of cross-cultural communication.

The communicative purpose of any genre may be similar from one culture to next; for example, the purpose of a letter of application is to get a job

interview. In the western context the way to do this is by 'highlighting the most relevant information in the candidate's curriculum vitae' (Henry & Roseberry, 2001a) and this thus provides 'open-ended creative opportunity for favourable self-presentation' (James, Scholfield & Ypsiladis, 1994, p. 325). However, different cultures may realize this purpose differently and this may result in communicative failure in a cross-cultural context. Bhatia (1993, pp. 70-71) in a 1989 study of application letters from India, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Bangladesh, instead of self appraisal found three strategies which were deemed not to be effective. The first, 'self-glorification' consisted of making unsupported claims such as '… having a shining academic record' (p. 71). The second, which Bhatia labeled 'adversary glorification', occurs when the organization or even the country in which the organization is located is 'magnificently appreciated' as in Bhatia's example 'in my loving great country, United States of America...' Bhatia's third ineffective strategy is termed 'self-degradation' as in 'I belong to a poor family'. Despite globalization and the availability of the Internet, we can still easily find examples of failure to take into account the communicative context when Asian writers apply to western institutions. Three examples are shown below from a research centre in the United Kingdom. In each case the applicants are well qualified, and having studied in the United Kingdom, have a good command of English. The examples are discussed in terms of the obligatory Promotion move.

Example 4
A Letter of Application with no Promotion Move

From: Name + email address
Sent: 12 March 2006 18:25
To: John Smith-Jones
Subject: apply for postdoc job

Dear Prof. J. M. Smith-Jones

Here I write you this email to apply for a postdoctoral position in your group. Now attached my CV with the statement of my research interest. The attachment is in Word format, so if you have any problem in opening it, please let me know and I can send you a hard copy. I am more than willing to answer any of your questions concerning my application and research am looking forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Name
Name of Institution, Address, P.R China
Tel. XXXXXXXX Work, XXXXXXX (mobile telephone)

In Example 4, there is no self-promotion; most of the body of the email is taken up with dealing with a possible problem of the reader not being able to open the attachment. More seriously, the writer expects the reader to take the trouble and the time to go through the CV and judge for themselves the suitability of the applicant. The writer also states the obvious that he or she is willing to answer questions related to the application. In the second example, shown in Figure 4, the writer does indeed include some self-promotion: he or she has done a PhD in a particular area. However, the writer does nothing to distinguish the application from the many others who have also done a PhD in the same area. In fact, two of the primary strategies of self-promotion in such letters in the western context are to give one's qualifications and to state what kinds of relevant experience one has. The promotion move, therefore, typically comprises a significant portion of the entire letter.

As in the first example the writer eschews the opportunity for 'open-ended creative favourable self-presentation' and invites the very busy reader to take the time to read through the attached resume and respond to the reader 'at [his/her] earliest convenience'. In addition, the letter contains the phrases 'your esteemed guidance' and 'my key experience' which could be considered as 'adversary glorification' and 'self-glorification' in Bhatia's terms.

Example 5
A Letter of Application with an Ineffective Promotion Move

Dear Sirs:

Application for Post Doctorate Fellow
I have done PhD in Subject Area May 2002 to April 2006. The details regarding my research experience/ undertaken projects are included in my Resume (enclosed).
Further to enhance my professional career I'm looking forward to work under your esteemed guidance where I can implement my key experience with greater expertise.
Having grown up myself in a multi racial and multi cultural society, I easily mix up with people of different backgrounds and have good communications skills and capable of taking varied responsibilities in a rapidly evolving research environment.
I believe I will have the opportunity to put my aforementioned qualities into practice from which we will mutually benefit.
I look forward to your consideration of my application and hope to hear from you at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Name + Address in India

Why are these highly educated applicants so unaware of what is expected of them? One possible answer may lie in the question of self-promotion. Without doubt in many cultures self-promotion is not encouraged. Even within the 'west' James et. al. (1994) found the amount of self-promotion that is acceptable varied quite significantly. But what about in Asia where the above letters originated, or, for that matter, many other parts of the world? We have, between us, lived in Japan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Malawi, and Brunei Darussalam, and have found that self-promotion is rare in everyday conversation and in the workplace. It is possible that the writers of such

letters are loath to promote themselves so explicitly. A more likely answer is that they are simply unaware of the need to do so. As highly educated people they may expect the readers of their letters to have the time or the inclination to read through their CVs.

Whatever the reason for the problem, the solution lies in using real language and to teach its meaning through an understanding of the cultural norms of the communicative context. This presents two main problems: there is a huge variety of cultural norms found in the world; and secondly, there is a huge variety of language from which members of a given society can draw to achieve their goals. The answer to this question lies in the presentation of move register analysis to learners so that they can be made aware of the communicative expectations of their audience.

Presenting Move and Strategy Registers to Language Learners

The next use of move registers in language teaching that we look at is in the presentation of linguistic data to learners in a meaningful context. As Figure 1 shows, when we analyze a genre using the move or the strategy as the basic unit we find that there is a large amount of information which has to be presented meaningfully. Henry and Roseberry (2001b) suggest linking the name of the move to the move and strategy registers in an HTML website, thus making it easy for learners to move from the language function to the specific details of the language used to realize the function.

In addition to teaching the language of the moves, the materials also allow learners to work out the obligatory and optional moves and the possible order for the moves. In order to evaluate this method of presentation, Henry (2007) asked 13 advanced language learners, who were about to leave for undergraduate study in Britain, to write a letter of application for a position with a voluntary organization. After they had written a first draft of the letter, they were asked to write a second draft using the hyperlinked materials described in Henry and Roseberry (2001b). A corpus made up of the first drafts of the letters was compared to a corpus comprising the second drafts to

investigate the effects of the teaching materials.

The study had four main findings. The first, based on the evaluations of expert judges, was that the students wrote more persuasive applications after they had used the web-based materials. The second finding, which goes some way to explaining the first finding, was that they successfully realized more moves in their second drafts both semantically and syntactically. In the first corpus the students attempted 95 moves and were successful in 65, or 68%, while in the second drafts they attempted 113 and were successful in 106, or 94%.

TABLE 3
The Effects the Teaching Materials Had on the Discourse Structure of the
Learners' Letters (Henry, 2007)

	FIRST	DRAFT	SECOND	DRAFT
MOVE	Attempted	Successful	Attempted	Successful
Opening	13	10	13	12
Refer. to Job Ad.	1	1	13	13
Offering Cand.	13	4	13	11
Reasons for Apply	7	7	11	11
Promoting	12	6	12	11
Stipulating T&C	5	4	7	7
Naming Referees	0	0	1	1
Stating Availability	1	1	2	2
Enclosing Docs	12	9	12	11
Polite Ending	13	7	13	11
Signing Off	12	10	13	13
Benefits to Applic.	5	5	3	3
Refer Read to CV	1	1	0	0
Total	95	65	113	106

A third finding was that, in many cases, the successful realization of the moves in the second drafts was due to the manipulating of lexical phrases found in the teaching materials. Finally, the students evaluated the materials very positively in terms of accessibility, organisation, ease of navigation, layout, course content, and in providing opportunities for learning. Thus the use of a set of web-based materials helps overcome the problem of presenting real language with all its variations in a meaningful way.

In a recent study drawing on our work on letters of application, Crossley (2007) applies Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the chronotope to moves of a genre. Bakhtin describes the chronotope as the natural connectedness that exists between time and space in any give part of a genre. Crossley (pp. 22-23) concludes that

> [a] chronotopic approach to teaching genres would allow students to not only understand how the moves of a genre are formed, but would also allow students to better understand the choices that a genre permits. The chronotope as a pedagogical tool would help to better inform the L2 writer of the expected temporal and spatial conventions used by L1 writers.

This suggestion is in keeping with our own insistence on teaching the language of the move, since different moves, and indeed different strategies for realizing a given move, frequently have their own specific sets of language features, including those that stipulate the often culturally sensitive relationships between space and time.

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have demonstrated four ways in which move registers can contribute to language teaching and learning. A detailed analysis of move registers of a genre provides teachers with information on what to teach and when to teach it. Secondly, by using the move register as the unit of analysis, language learners can begin the development of the ethnographic skills necessary to develop cultural competence. Thirdly, some problems of cross-cultural misunderstandings of genres were investigated. Finally, the large amount of data mined from a move or register analysis can be presented in a meaningful way to make language learners aware of the wide range of linguistic choices available to them when writing even an uncomplicated syntactic structure. In this way learners are provided with a much more realistic representation of the language rather than with a highly restricted

representation as found in many textbooks.

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