Analysing Options in Pedagogical Business Case Reports: Genre, Process and Language

Abstract

Analysis of options has been identified as comprising an important element in the writing of pedagogical business case reports (Easton, 1993; Forman & Rymer, 1999a; Maufette-Leenders, Erskine & Leenders, 1997; Nathan, 2013). Based on a corpus of 23 options analysis texts extracted from business case reports (17,931 words) written by NS and NNS postgraduates at a UK university business school, this paper uses Swalesian genre move analysis as a framework for proposing a rhetorical structure for the options analysis move. The move structure proposed incorporates an initial introductory 'orientation to the analysis' move, followed by a cycle of rhetorical moves focusing on each option under consideration in turn. Moves in the cycle are (1) identifying the option; (2) providing a rationale/motivation for option consideration; (3) establishing the feasibility of the option; and (4) providing evaluational information about the option. A range of sub-moves are identified within each move, with further cycling at deeper levels found within move 3 and its functional equivalents. Frequency counts evidence differences in NS and NNS deployment of moves and sub-moves. Linguistic analysis using the Wordsmith Tools program indicates functional and rhetorical differences in NS-NNS deployment of modal verbs.

Key Words: genre analysis; options analysis; business case reports; move cycling; English for Academic Purposes

1. Introduction

Business case reports, also referred to as case studies and case analyses, are written across the range of specialisms on higher education business programmes, from Human Resource Management to Banking and Finance, from Accounting to Organisational Behaviour, and from Marketing and Marketing Management to Project Management (BAWE, 2008; Bridgeman & Carlson, 1984; Canseco & Byrd, 1989; Cooper & Bikowski, 2007; Horowitz, 1986; Zhu, 2004). The writing of these business case reports comprises a key vehicle for the promotion of student learning and a substantial component of student assessment on both undergraduate and postgraduate business degree programmes (Easton, 1993; Nathan, 2013).

Linguistic research on the characteristics of these reports has been conducted in a range of contexts, with genre move structures and other core language elements identified in ethnographically focused New Rhetoric genre studies (Forman & Rymer, 1999a,b; Freedman & Adam, 1996) as well as through Swalesian genre analysis (Nathan, 2013). All of the rhetorical structures presented incorporate moves which include forms of analysis and recommendation. An additional core move reported by these researchers requires the proposal and analysis of alternatives or options for action.

The importance of this options move has been widely recognised (Easton, 1993; Forman & Rymer, 1999a; Maufette-Leenders, Erskine & Leenders, 1997; Nathan, 2013), with options analysis identified as representing, in many business cases, a key step towards formulation of the recommendations for action which are crucial elements in these case reports (Nathan, 2013).

Nathan's research (2010, 2013) has posited roles and purposes of these options sections within the business case report, and examined the frequency of option move occurrence as well as aspects of modal verb deployment within this move. However, key aspects of the options move, particularly its constituent move structure and grammatical and lexical characteristics, have not been described.

A preliminary examination of options analysis sections written on preparatory Business programmes by NNS writers, conducted prior to the more systematic options analysis research on degree programme texts presented in this paper, identified

difficulties in the structuring of option analysis components, as well as with specific report language, in particular related to deployment of modal verbs.

Given the difficulties identified for these preparatory course NNS writers in writing these options analysis sections, the importance of options analysis in pedagogical business case reports and the absence of research on options analysis, it was decided to investigate options analysis writing, focusing specifically on structural aspects of these texts and the more micro-linguistic elements required for the effective realisation of options analysis. As part of this study, it was decided to compare NS and NNS options analysis writing with a view to identification of any systematic differences which might inform the teaching of options writing to NNS students.

Additional to its relevance for business case report writing, such research was seen as having potential relevance to disciplines beyond the Business School, such as Medicine and Psychology, where case analysis is used to support learning and assessment, as well as having relevance to other academic genres in which learners need to identify and evaluate alternate theories, explanations and actions (Nesi & Gardner, 2012) and for the writing of non-academic genres such as business reports (Yeung, 2007).

2. Background to the Study

2.1 Business Case Reports

Also termed ‘case studies’ (Freedman, Adam & Smart., 1994, Freedman & Adam, 1996) and ‘case write ups’ (Forman & Rymer, 1999a,b), pedagogical business case reports comprise one of a range of responses to business cases which may include

case presentations, case analyses and case critiques (BAWE, 2008, Nathan, 2013). These case reports are generated within the context of case method teaching wherein business students are taught and learn through situated business problems or 'cases' usually presented in the form of substantial documentation, which are subject to discussion within the lecture and classroom context (Easton, 1993, Mauffette-Leenders *et al.*, 1997; Russell, 2002). The cases themselves comprise descriptions of businesses and their operating environments, often including market information, company financial data, and information about personnel and management strategies, and are selected in line with disciplinary, programme and course objectives.

Case method teaching is approached in different ways dependent on teaching context. In the best-known method, the Harvard Method, students' case responses are written then brought to class for discussion. However in other contexts there is no in-class discussion of case reports, which are instead written over the period of a business programme, or in seen-examinations where students receive case data prior to the exam, only receiving the actual task in the examination (Easton, 1993, Maufette-Leenders *et al.*, 1997). The business case reports themselves can vary in length from a single page to three or four thousand words in continuous assessment tasks (Forman & Rymer, 1999a, Nathan, 2013).

Genre move structures have been proposed for business case reports. Based on a corpus of short MBA management case reports and interviews with faculty at a US University, the New Rhetoric genre researchers Forman & Rymer (1999a) identified six explicit non-sequential moves in their case report genre model, framed within different writer roles. According to this model, in the role of problem solver, student

writers identify significant problems in the case and propose and analyse alternative solutions (options analysis). In a manager role, writers make logical recommendations and develop an implementation plan; and as disciplinary thinkers, writers connect course materials to the case and demonstrate understanding of disciplinary tools and principles.

Using a range of documentation from business programmes, including course handbooks, case report texts, as well as focusing on situational and contextual features, Nathan (2013) defined the communicative purposes of pedagogical business case report texts as:

> *persuasion of/demonstration to the lecturer reader that the writer has knowledge of, understands, and can apply core business specialist concepts as taught during the course programme, and further can generate appropriate, logically justified and effective advice for action presented in an appropriate academic style and format.*
>
> (Nathan, 2013, p. 60)

Within the context of this communicative purpose, and from study of a corpus of 69 business case reports originating from the specialisms of marketing, marketing management, project management and management accounting, Nathan identified eight business case report moves (Table 1), three obligatory, namely the Orientation, Analytical and Advisory moves, with other moves including the Options Analysis move, identified as optional.

2.2 The Options Analysis Move

The Options Analysis ('Alternatives') move described by Forman and Rymer (1999a) was identified explicitly by MBA programme lecturers in their study as a task requirement for their case reports, this move involving the proposal and analysis of alternative solutions. Text analysis identified the move as commonly associated with generic headings such as *Problems, alternatives and solutions.*

Examining his corpus of business case reports, Nathan (2010, 2013) identified the options analysis move (referred to as the 'Options and Alternatives move') in 79% of extended (approximately 3000 words) continuous assessment reports written as assignments on a Marketing Management module (comprising 30% of report text) and 12% of reports written as part of examination assessment on a Marketing module (comprising approximately 10% of text in reports where the move occurred)[1]. Situational exigencies, particularly time available and required assignment report length, appeared to influence the presence or absence as well as the extent of the options analysis move.

In Nathan's model, the options move is located subsequent to an obligatory analytical move (frequently realised through standard business disciplinary tools such as SWOT[2], PEST(EL)[3], Five Forces Analysis[4], and financial analysis tools) but prior to

[1] Marketing management and Marketing are seen as two different business specialisms.
[2] SWOT is a standard framework for situational analysis focusing on business Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
[3] PESTEL is an analytical framework focusing on Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Environmental and Legal elements of the business environment.

the obligatory advisory move (generally comprising recommendations, but also realised through frameworks such as the 4Ps[5]), and serves to prepare for and bolster the recommended actions and decisions taken in this advisory move. More specifically, the options analysis move fulfils the case report communicative purposes by demonstrating the student's capacity for generating solutions that are reasonable in conception, justifiable and potentially effective in the case situation (as well as demonstrating the capacity for discounting inappropriate options), thereby showing creative thinking and logically underpinning strategies in the advisory move.

3. The Research Context

The research reported in this study was conducted at a leading UK Business School. Texts analysed were written by students following a one year MSc Marketing degree programme in a single academic year of study. Students on this programme were a mix of home and international students, the latter originating largely from mainland China. Interviews with the programme director together with analysis of programme documents showed the students experiencing lectures, tutorials and seminars in marketing strategy, marketing management as well as other business-related modules. Courses were supported by core marketing texts and accompanying lecture handouts. Business cases were introduced and discussed in lecture and seminar sessions through the marketing and marketing management modules, however, by contrast to the Harvard method, students did not bring prepared case reports to class sessions. In the marketing management module, students were assessed through a continuous

[4] Porter's Five Forces (Porter, 1980. 2008) is an approach to analysing the competitive environment for business, incorporating bargaining power of suppliers and buyers, threat of substitutes and new entrants, as well as intensity of industry rivalry.
[5] The 4Ps or marketing mix is a framework for developing marketing strategy based in Price, Product, Promotion and Place.

assessment case report task with case documentation and data presented six weeks before the report hand-in, whereas in the marketing strategy module, students received case data two weeks before an end-of course seen-examination.

4. Methodology

4.1 The corpus

All 50 business case reports obtaining merit or distinction marks[6] on the relevant MSc Marketing modules were analysed for the presence of options analysis components. Twenty three options analysis move texts, comprising 17931 words, were identified through the presence of options analysis or closely related section titles, or in one sample through in text signposting of an options section. Twenty options samples derived from the Marketing Management continuous assessment assignment, which was based in a pharmaceuticals industry-based case. An additional three options texts, based in a confectionery-industry case and written in the three hour Marketing seen–examination were also included in the corpus to support insights into the effect of situational exigencies on options writing, examination writing representing an under-researched area of study. 12 reports were NNS samples and 11 NS. A total of 118 option focused sub-sections were identified within these options analysis texts.

4.2 Genre Move Analysis

Genre structure analysis of the options analysis move was conducted within the framework of Swalesian genre analysis, widely applied in the field of ESP (for

[6] Merit and distinction texts were seen as more likely to contain text features characteristic of effective options writing.

example, Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1981, 1990, 2004). Moves and sub-moves[7] within the options analysis components were identified following top-down qualitative meaning-based analysis, with moves and sub-moves formulated within the frame of the options move communicative purposes described in section 2.2 above. Moves and sub-moves were hypothesised based on initial options text analyses, then compared with further options text samples in an iterative process until a stable rhetorical structure, as consistent as possible with text samples, was identified.

Move designation was influenced by geographical proximity of rhetorical components within the text and also the desire for a parsimonious representation of the move structure. Having identified a number of moves and sub-moves, however, it became apparent that sub-moves themselves could be further divided into finer component categories.

In order to validate move and sub-move designation as well as the overall cyclical sub-section model, an MA qualified and experienced tutor with knowledge of genre analysis was recruited to support this analysis. Cohen's Kappa (Cohen, 1960), previously applied by Crookes (1985) for genre structure validation, was used to determine levels of rater agreement based in 12 options texts and 60 text sub-sections. κ values of 0.64, 0.65 and 0.67 were generated for text to model agreement[8], for text to move allocation and text to sub-move allocation, indicating substantial agreement between raters (Landis & Koch, 1977) with raw agreement levels of 93%, 93% and

[7] This paper uses Bhatia's terminology of sub-moves which incorporates both distinct rhetorical strategies and components representing stages of rhetorical strategies.
[8] Sub-sections are defined as consistent with the model if they possess a move proposing an option (move 1) and an evaluatory move or sub-move (move 1, sub-move 4, move 3 sub-move 4 or move 4)

94% respectively. The κ value regarding overall model validity rose to 0.96 (near complete agreement) following discussions after initial rating.

Notably, while possessing options related titles and divided into options related sub-sections, analysis of samples C2M and C2N showed these texts were inconsistent with the proposed model. Combined with sub-sections inconsistent with the model, this reduced the options sub-sections available for move analysis to 96 sub-sections.

Additional validation was sought through presentation of the model for discussion and comment to an expert academic researcher and lecturer in the marketing discipline who was supportive of the genre move model but provided specific comment in regard to move 2 sub-move 3 (see section 5.1).

Following genre move designation and validation processes, move and sub-move frequency comparisons between NS and NNS sub-corpora were conducted using Mann-Whitney U[9] mediated through SPSS (version 22.0).

4.4 Lexicogrammatical Analysis

Qualitative analysis of lexical and grammatical features of options moves was supplemented by frequency analysis of these lexical and grammatical features using the wordlist function of Wordsmith Tools 6.0 (Scott, 2012). NNS and NS sub-corpora were compared using the Wordsmith keyword function and the G^2 Log

[9] Non-parametric Mann-Whitney U statistical tests were used here as data plots did not support the presence of normal distributions required for statistically more powerful t-tests and because statistical tests for normality lack efficacy with small samples of data as used in this work (e.g. Marques de Sa, 2003). Data sets analysed comprise independent samples and meet key assumptions of the Mann-Whitney test (Conover, 1999; Coolican, 2004).

likelihood statistic with p-value set at $p < .05$ in order to identify those differences displaying statistically significance[10]. Analysis of NS-NNS differences was also conducted using Mann-Whitney U through SPSS (version 22.0). Effect sizes were interpreted using Cohen's criteria (cited in Pallant, 2010, p.230) with effect sizes r = 0.1, 0.3 and 0.5 representing small, medium and large effect sizes respectively. Modal verb utilisation was analysed within the frame of clausal functions (Thompson, 2001; Viel, 2002) modified to enhance the differential capacity of this approach through finer clausal specification (Nathan, 2010).

5. Results

5.1 Move structure

The key component rhetorical moves identified within the options analysis move are shown in Figure 1. These component moves comprise an optional initial introductory move providing an orientation to the overall options analysis, followed by sequential consideration of each of the options addressed within the analysis through a cyclical repetition of moves. Following the final move in the cycle addressing a specific option (usually move 4), a new option is identified and passes through a similar cycle of moves.

The options analysis move in continuous assessment samples contained on average approximately five option-focused sub-sections (96 sub-sections in all samples) while in the small sample of examination texts approximately 4 sub-sections per text (11 sub-sections) were identified. The options focused sub-sections were usually

[10] Due to small sample sizes used in this research, reported significance levels represent exact significance rather than asymptotic significance.

signalled through option-focused titles, with each sub-section in general analysing and discussing a single option, though two continuous assessment sub-sections and one examination sub-section focused on two related options with each option dealt with in turn in a separate cycle of analysis. A number of option focused sub-sections were sub-divided into titled smaller structural components usually relating to the advantages and disadvantages of following a particular option (move 4).

Only move 1, identification of the option, occurred in all 98 option-focused move cycles identified in the 96 continuous assessment sub-sections, although the evaluative move 4 occurred in 81% of continuous assessment move cycles[11] with further evaluational sub-move components identified within cycle move 1 (2% of move cycles) and within move 3 (21%) in which option implementation strategies are evaluated.

Similar numbers of specific option focused move cycles were observed in NS and NNS options analysis moves. However, the move cycle structure in NS sub-sections tended to be more complex than in NNS texts, with 2.86 moves per cycle in NS (127 moves) compared to 2.56 moves per cycle in NNS samples (138 moves). Mann-Whitney analysis showed this difference was not statistically significant (p = .131, U = 23.5, Z = -1.51, r = -.36). However sub-move comparison showed statistically significant difference in complexity with NS samples averaging 5.52 sub-moves per cycle as against 4.42 sub-moves per cycle for NNS (p = .012, U = 12, Z = -2.52, r = -.59).

[11] Figures are given in % of total move cycles identified. This is approximately equal to the number of options sub-sections as only two of the sub-sections contained multiple cycles.

As shown in Table 2, notable differences in particular individual move frequencies were observed between NS and NNS writers in continuous assessment samples, with statistically significant NS-NNS difference observed for move 3 deployment. Most text in the NS and NNS continuous assessment samples was identified in moves 3 and 4, though NNS text was more prevalent in move 4 and NS text in move 3.

Notably frequent items in the options analysis move included business lexis, specific modal verbs (discussed in section 5.2 below) and the word *option(s)* (58 occurrences, 3.74 occurrences per thousand words). Other differences identified through keyword analysis such as the higher frequency of reference *this* in NS samples could not be specifically linked to the options analysis move function.

Within the 4-move cyclical sub-section component of the move structure, a range of sub-moves and at a more detailed level, sub-sub-moves was identified. The sub-moves and sub-sub-moves within the options sections exhibited cyclic patterning in a manner similar to the overall move structure of the options sections. Sub-move and sub-sub move components are discussed below within the context of the relevant moves[12].

The Introductory Move - Orientation to the options analysis

Orientation components occurred at the beginning of the options moves and were identified in 47% of options analysis moves. Orientation moves within continuous

[12] The following sections provide a move-by-move analysis with text from a range of samples used to evidence the identity and form of rhetorical move components. Detailed analyses of option text samples can be found in Nathan (2010).

assessment reports varied in length from approximately 20 words to 135 words, in some cases being rhetorically complex. In the examination reports, orientation text was minimal consisting simply of short references to the level or number of options.

The purpose of this non-obligatory move is the orientation of the lecturer reader to the process and content of the options analysis (OA) move. The most common orientation component, identified in 8 of the 10 orientation texts, involved statements of the level or number of options dealt with in the OA move which, in 4 of the 10 samples, were linked to purpose statements:

> *There are many options available to Baxter's Renal Division to put them back on the growth track.*
>
> (sample C1G) [13]

Orientation moves also focused on the processes and approaches (including pre-and co-requisites) that were required for development of successful strategies (3 samples):

> *Before Darling Chocolate enters the Russian market the company should look at the possible strategies of marketing their products.*
>
> (sample E2B)

Two orientation texts incorporated positioning of the options analysis within the general sequence of analysis, while other content areas, identified in single samples, included problem statement, historical contextualisation, a rhetorical question and the

[13] Samples designations – E=exam; C =continuous assessment; 1=NS; 2=NNS

relationship between options. Apart from the link between option levels and purpose statements, there was little identifiable co-occurrence of these diverse content elements and therefore no sequential sub-move structure could be derived for this move.

Sub-section Move 1: Orientation to the option under consideration

This obligatory move consists of six sub-moves performing a range of orientation functions, namely:

Sub-move 1 : Identifying the option topic area Sub-move 2 : Stating the option(s) under consideration Sub-move 3 : Stating the purpose of the option Sub-move 4 : Exemplifying the option Sub-move 5 : Stating requirements and conditions for option selection/success Sub-move 6 : Providing a summary evaluation of the option

Focusing in on the option identity may involve both an optional sub-move 1, designating the option topic area and an obligatory sub-move 2, stating the specific option(s) under consideration. This is exemplified in sample C2D below, where the topic area of price precedes a sub-move 2 stating the specific option, in this case, lowering the costs of renal products. In this text, both a referring statement and the purpose statement precede the option statement:

> *Price [SM 1]*
>
> *As suggested at the end of the report, Baxter, to win back old accounts [SM3] could lower the cost of renal products …. [SM2]*
>
> (C2D sub-section 1)

Where individual sub-sections dealt with more than one option, these were either juxtaposed in the sub-section title, e.g. Focus on specific, most profitable area vs broad based approach (sample C1F sub-section 4) or simply brought together as differing selected options, e.g. Improve morale and distribution (sample C1F sub-section 7). Each option passed through the same or similar cycles of moves.

Notable lexis in sub-move 2, included *option* (8 occurrences per thousand words), *company* (4.0) *focus, improve* (4.0) *promote, reduce* and *increase* (3.3). The word *option* is used in option titles, linked to the hypothetical modal *would,* or to the verb 'to be' (the latter found only in sample C1J sub-section 2).

A third option would be to leave the prices as they were.

(C1E sub-section 3)

Option 1: Develop new or exciting treatments.

(C1C sub-section 1)

The second option is to revert back to HD ……..

(C1J sub-section 2)

The hypothetical modal verb *could* occurred at high frequency in this sub-move (15.6 occurrences per thousand words) relative to other sub-moves, collocating with the word *company* or a company name, as shown above in C2D sub-section 1. However, in NNS samples there appeared a greater tendency to deploy the 'real' modal verbs *can* (sample E2B sub-section 2 above) and *should* for the statement of options as in:

Some of non-sales department should be unified.

(C2B sub-section 5)

The sub-move 3 statement of purpose, identified in 19% of move 1 occurrences (26% of NNS/10% NS OA), was closely linked to option statements as shown in C2D sub-section 1 above.

Sub-move 4, which exemplifies the option, was identified in only four move 1 texts, and clarifies further the nature of the option under consideration, in all identified instances using 'for example' as in C1F sub-section 4 below. While this sub-move could be seen as relevant to implementation, its position close to the option statement but distant from the implementation relevant move 3, evidences an orientation function.

> *Baxter could look to research in their strongest area or the area allowing greatest profitability and focus on the market* [SM2] *(for example the CAPD market).* [SM4]
>
> (C1F sub-section 4)

Sub-move 5, identifying pre-requisites and co-requisites for action, was largely found in NS move 1 texts.

> *Once having improved the infrastructure, focus and sales teams, Baxter could intensively target the lost accounts with special offers…*

(C1F sub-section 3)

The modal verbs *could* and *would* occurred at high frequency in this sub-move (11.1 and 27.9 occurrences per thousand words respectively) compared to other sub-moves.

The final move 1 sub-move, sub-move 6, an options evaluation sub-move, was identified in only two NS continuous assessment samples, in both cases involving explicit rejection of the option exemplified in the sample below:

> *Clearly this passive approach would have few advantages and would do nothing to reverse the unfavourable trend.*
>
> (C1E sub-section 1)

It seems reasonable to suppose that evaluations in the orientation move will always be negative, as positive summary evaluation would be equivalent to recommendation, relevant to the report advisory move. While the options section can rule out options, its function is not one of positive recommendation.

Sub-section move 2: Establishing the motivation/rationale for option consideration

This move constitutes a new phase in the analysis process, an assertion supported in part by the fact that moves 1 and 2 were in no cases identified in the same grammatical sentence. While move 2 almost always followed move 1, in two sub-sections, move 2 was found prior to the option orientation move.

Three move 2 sub-moves were identified in move 2:

Sub-move 1 : Highlighting the importance of the option topic area Sub-move 2 : Highlighting the problematic nature of other options Sub-move 3 : Establishing motivation through factors in the internal/external environment

The first s

justification for the option, as exemplified in sample C1F sub-section 2:

> *Price, as mentioned earlier, is a critically important area of Baxter's offering,*
>
> (C1F sub-section 2)

Another infrequent sub-move used the problematic nature of alternative options to justify consideration of the option:

> *The treatments CAPD and APD have already provided this option, but they are currently too expensive for "economic buyers" to take on board.*
>
> (C1C sub-section 4)

Sub-move 3 identified factors in the internal and external environment as motivations for considering the option and was the most frequent realisation of move 2, representing a significant element of text where identified.

> *Cutting prices addresses the needs of a price sensitive market and the needs of the budget conscious economic buyers.*
>
> (C1A sub-section 1)

The marketing expert consulted in regard to the move model commented that move 2 should incorporate reference to the competencies and capabilities of the company

involved. This specific content was not identified within the samples examined but would fall under internal factors in sub-move 3.

Problem-related lexis was prominent in this sub-move with lemmas of *fail* (3.4 occurrences per 1,000 words in NS samples) and *loss* (4) occurring at notably high frequencies compared to other sub-moves. Lower frequency problem-related words included *problem, discrepancy, expensive, inefficient, despondency, damaging, usurped,* and *dwindled*.

The modals *would, may, could,* and *must* were identified in this options sub-move, but only in NS samples. Most instances of *must* usage were epistemic, relating to logical deduction, as in for example:

> *Gambro and Fresenius* [Baxter's competitors] *must be offering their products or services at a lower price to those of Baxter.*
>
> (C1B sub-section 1)

Markers of logical cause and consequence were noticeable in this sub-move with *since* (2.7 occurrences per thousand words), *because* (0.63) *due to* (0.18), and *therefore* (0.18) occurring in both NS and NNS samples.

Sub-section move 3: Establishing the feasibility of the option

This move describes possible implementations of the option under consideration, demonstrating to the lecturer reader that the writer has considered the practicalities

and feasibility of the option, thereby making the option a more convincing possibility for recommendation in the case report advisory component.

This move was identified as comprising 4 sub-moves.

Sub-move 1 : Orientation to the implementation option/action (detailing option implementation)
Sub-move 2 : Establishing motivation/rationale for consideration of the implementation option/action
Sub-move 3 : Establishing the feasibility of the implementation option/action
Sub-move 4 : Evaluation of the implementation option/action

Interestingly, as shown in table 3, the pattern of these sub-moves mirrors the overall move structure in the options sub-sections themselves. Further, in the same manner in which the options analysis sections discuss a range of options, within move 3, several optional implementation strategies can be discussed, with individual sub-moves applied to one implementation option and then the next in a repeating cycle (figure 2).

Furthermore, there are texts where cycling deepens even further to consider different options for the implementation of the implementation option/action. These deeper cycles operate through sub-sub-move (SSM) structures which mirror both the move cyclicity in the options sub-sections and the cyclic sub-move pattern focused on implementation options. Sub-sub-moves within move 3 were identified in 31 sub-sections occurring at 3.73 SSMs per sub-section (97 SSMs) in NS samples and 2.26 SSMs per sub-section in NNS samples (34 SSMs).

The rhetorical function of move 3 sub-move 1, identification of the implementation option, parallels that of the orientation to the option(s) move 1. However, the

identification function of move 3 sub-move 1, can itself be broken down into further sub-sub-moves, with sub-sub-move 1, found in all sub-move 3's, identifying the implementation strategy or action under consideration. This sub-sub-move 1, in 10 of the 54 move 3 samples, is accompanied by a purpose sub-sub-move 2 exemplified in the following text:

> *These groups* [those susceptible to renal problems] *can therefore be targeted* [SSM1] *to gradually increase demand and improve their well-being* [SSM2].
>
> (C1F sub-section 5)

Other sub-sub-moves, paralleling the sub-moves in option orientation move 1 were not identified.

Move 3 sub-move 2, functionally parallel to options sub-section move 2, justifies consideration of the implementation option and was realised in all cases through sub-sub-moves relating to motivation from the internal or external environment in parallel to sub-section move 2 sub-move 3 exemplified in sample C1E sub-section 5.

> *Key groups of people are identifiable as being at higher risk of renal disease than others [SSM1].*
>
> (C1E sub-section 5)

Move 3 sub-move 3, mirroring the option feasibility move 3, provides evidence to the reader about the feasibility of an implementation option/action. A range of sub-sub-

moves may occur as shown in sample C2G sub-section 2 below, which arose in the context of a move 3 focused on implementing improvements in communication. Move 3 sub-move 1 proposes implementation of improved communication via an internet site (text not shown), then the provision of a chat-room within the website is proposed in sub-move 3 sub-sub-move 1 to show the feasibility of the implementation option. Evaluational information is then provided about the chat-room option (parallel in function to a move 4 sub-move 1).

> *This internet site could also provide a chatroom where patients could chat to other renal sufferers [SSM1]. This could help promote PD treatment and increase demand from consumers…[SSM4]*
>
> (C2G sub-section 2)

The frequent use of modal verbs is noticeable in sub-move 3.3, particularly *could*, found in all six sub-move samples generated by NNS writers, although other modals including *would*, *can*, and *should* were also identified in NS samples.

Move 3 sub-move 4 parallels the function of move 4 in the overall options analysis move structure, providing arguments for and/or against the discussed implementation option/action.

> *..... if Baxter was to try and produce APD bags for all segments, ... the economic buyers may opt for the increased use of HD or buy a rivals CAPD bags [SSM 1].*
>
> (C2D sub-section 2)

Sub-sub-move functions mirroring the two sub-moves from options sub-section move 4 were identified as realisations of move 3 sub-move 4. Notably, in several options sub-sections, the provision of evaluative information regarding the implementation option seemed to displace evaluation of the option itself.

Sub-section move 4: Providing evaluative information about the option

Sub-section move 4 presents option evaluation and comprises two sub-moves.

Sub-move 1 : Providing arguments for and against the option without summative evaluation Sub-move 2 : Providing arguments with summative evaluation

Sub-move 1 was by far the most prominent realisation of this move (found in 94% of move 4s). This sub-move presents arguments for and against the option often in the form of a list of advantages and disadvantages. While in many cases neutral and balanced, these arguments may in some cases not be equally weighted, providing support for acceptance or rejection of the option, though incorporating no summative evaluation. These arguments provide additional rationale for subsequent option acceptance or rejection in the final advisory section of the report.

In a small number of cases, move 4 was realised through a sub-move 2 (found in 6% of move 4's) combining argument with summative evaluation of the option. This sub-move is characterised by overt negative evaluation of the option, combined with arguments supporting this negative evaluation.

In short this option does nothing to dispel the weaknesses, relying on Baxter's strengths alone to keep it afloat. These strengths were beginning to lose their relevance as quality, range, technology and innovation were not relevant to the new power holders, …

(C1E sub-section 1)

Sub-moves 1 and 2, could not be conflated into a separate argument move followed by a summative evaluation move, as negative evaluations in sub-move 2 resulted in directed, less balanced, argument, and differing language and tone compared to the generally more neutral and balanced tone in move 4 sub-move 1.

As with a number of other sub-moves, modal verbs constituted the most frequent verb form in this sub-move (53%) with the modals *could*, *would* and *will* found at 14.6, 9.8 and 8.2 occurrences per 1,000 words respectively in continuous assessment samples. These modals were generally used to support predictions, with varying degrees of certainty, about the positive or negative consequences of an option as in the following examples:

Cutting investment in research and development would effect the brand image of Baxter...

(C1A sub-section 1)

Baxter could obviously benefit from this, whilst one of these companies could benefit from Baxter's long history of innovation and quality, …

(C2B sub-section 3)

Notable lexical frequencies in this sub-move include the relatively high frequency of conditional 'if' (5.9 occurrences per thousand words) compared to other sub-moves and the implementation related preposition 'by' (5.2) frequently followed by '-ing' forms or noun phrases as shown below: .

Baxter could keep its prices by selling its bags in a package with the machine needed for PD treatment…

(sample C2A sub-section 2)

This can be remedied by a postal publicity campaign…

(sample C1J sub-section 1)

5.2 Modal verbs in the options analysis move

Modal verbs comprised 49% of verb forms deployed in the options analysis moves with present simple forms the second most frequent category (41%). Comparing frequency of occurrence of modal verbs in the NS and NNS continuous assessment samples, log likelihood tests showed no statistically significant difference in total NS and NNS frequency levels (NNS 4.1 per thousand words, NS 3.9). However these tests identified statistically significant higher frequencies in NS samples at $p < .05$ for the modals *would* (G^2 = 27.47) and *may* (G^2 = 8.30), and statistically significant higher levels in NNS samples for the modals *can* (G^2 = 18.37), *might* (G^2 = 21.40), *must* (G^2 = 15.20), *should* (G^2 = 8.54) and *will* (G^2 = 5.05) . Analysis using the Mann-Whitney test showed statistically significant differences in frequency for only

would and *can* at $p < .05$, with large effect sizes demonstrated for these modal comparisons (Table 4.).

A number of reasons can be posited for the higher levels of *would* identified in the options texts of NS writers and the higher levels of *can* in the options texts of NNS writers. One possible explanation might be that these differences are, at least in part, reflective of challenges for NNS writers in expressing the hypothetical-real distinctions encoded by *would-will* and *could-can* modal verbs, with NNS writers tending to more frequently use the real rather than the hypothetical modal form. This explanation may be the case, however the observed NS-NNS differences in deployment of *would, can* and indeed other modal verbs would also appear grounded in differential frequencies and realisations of the clausal functions containing these modal verbs. For example, as shown in Table 5., *would* was used on 24 occasions by NS writers but only once by a single NNS writer, to support the clausal function of option proposal. NS writers also used this hypothetical modal more frequently for stating pre and co-requisites for action, stating possible consequences of an option and giving direct evaluations of options. The clausal function data also shows that NNS writers used the real modal verb *can* more frequently than NS writers for proposing options and stating anticipated consequences of options.

These differential expressions of clausal functions are reflected in modal verb deployment in moves and sub-moves. Figure 3 shows, for example, that the modal verb *would* occurs at relatively high levels in NS moves-sub-moves 2.3, 3.1, 3.4 and

4.1, but is almost unused in the equivalent NNS sample moves-sub-moves (Figure 4). Amongst other notable differences, the modal verb *could* is found at high levels in move 3.3 in NS compared to NNS samples, reflecting the high frequency of this sub-move in NS (17%) compared to NNS samples (3%).

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This paper has presented a rhetorical structure for the options analysis identified in business case reports. The proposed structure comprises an optional introduction to the analysis move followed by sub-section cycles of four moves focusing on specific options. These cycles comprise one obligatory move, identification of the option, and three optional moves. Within this cycle of moves are further cycles of sub-moves and sub-sub-moves (Figure 5).

Within the options move sub-sections, NS samples were found to possess statistically significant higher levels of sub-moves and move 3 compared to NNS samples. Substantially higher frequencies of total moves and move 2 were also identified in NS sub-sections compared to NNS samples though this difference was not statistically significant. Move 4 was more frequent in NNS sub-sections, though also not at a statistically significant level. Overall NS options texts appear to be more rhetorically complex than NNS texts.

In pedagogical terms, it would seem likely that the teaching and learning of case report writing to all students would benefit from presentation of the options move model, this model depicting a range of rhetorical moves which could be used for enhancing option consideration and hence case reports. NNS students on pre-

sessional programmes leading to business courses in English medium higher education institutions might benefit not only from encountering the model but from identification of the rhetorical differences in NS-NNS writing identified in this study.

Nevertheless, despite the rhetorical differences identified, NS and NNS case reports in this study achieved similar marks. Assuming that such rhetorical complexity mediated for example through discussion of option implementation is a feature which enhances options analysis texts, this observation of similar marks is likely to be explained by the sampling approach adopted (selected samples receiving merit grades or over 60%), the existence of options analysis sections as one of many report components contributing to the overall mark, and the fact that case reports were graded based on multiple criteria, these factors potentially serving to obscure the effects of rhetorical differences in options analysis moves.

Recognising the diverse nature of NNS students, further research would be required to identify whether the differences in rhetorical complexity of NS and NNS texts suggested in this study might exist more generally, and if this is the case, to investigate the potential origins of such rhetorical differences.

In regard to move cycling, while previously unreported in non-empirical pedagogical texts, this phenomenon of move cycling has been commonly observed in research writing, particularly within the context of research articles (RA), Masters and Doctoral dissertations. In RA introductions, move cycling has been described by Swales in his CARS genre model (2004) and in RA introductions in astrophysics and social sciences (Crookes, 1986), sociology (Brett, 1994), computer science and

software engineering (Anthony, 1999; Posteguilllo, 1999), second language writing and second language acquisition studies (Ozturk, 2007), and biochemistry (Kanoksilapatham, 2005). Similarly, move cycling has been identified across disciplines in RA results sections (Brett, 1994; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Posteguillo, 1999; Yang & Allison, 2003) and discussion sections (Dudley-Evans, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Kanoksilaptham, 2005; Peacock, 2002; Peng, 1987).

Further, multiple move cycles as identified in the options move have also been reported in RAs. In the discussion sections of chemical engineering RAs, an average of 6.8 cycles of moves per discussion section was identified by Peng (1987), while Holme's political science RA discussions averaged 3.5 cycles per section. In doctoral dissertation introductions, Bunton (2002) identified move cycling in 42 of 45 introductions with most containing two or more cycles of moves, up to 18 cycles. Bunton also identified move cycling in results, discussion and conclusions sections of these dissertations.

Reflecting the deeper levels of cycling observed in the options analysis move, Bunton identified multiple cycling of rhetorical steps in doctoral dissertation conclusions. Soler-Monreal, Salom-Gil and Carbonell-Olivares (2011) found a range of steps and sub-steps in their introduction move 1, an *identification of problem* sub-step occurring on 50 occasions and 4 other sub-steps occurring more than 20 times. Similar cycling is identified by these authors in other introduction moves.

The phenomenon of cycling of rhetorical components is considered an important characteristic of the options analysis move examined in the current research. Given the prevalence of move cyclicity in RAs and dissertations, it seems possible that cyclicity of rhetorical moves, and cyclicity at different rhetorical levels, may also occur in pedagogical and other forms of writing. Such cyclicity may be a fundamental characteristic of many genres and worthy of greater emphasis in move analyses. Researchers engaging in move analyses of different genres might benefit from a preparedness to foreground cyclicity where appropriate in their genre move structures. It is also possible to conceive of texts within discourse chains and within differing genres exhibiting inter-textual cycling with rhetorical patterns recycled within and across genres.

Clearly, in terms of limitations, the corpus is rather smaller than would be desired, stemming from only a single institution. Furthermore, while all samples received merit or distinction marks, differing marks awarded suggest some potential variability in options sample quality. However, in regard to NS and NNS sample comparison, there was no noteworthy difference in marks awarded, suggesting broad similarity in case report quality.

Overall, the corpus was sufficiently extensive to enable a clear rhetorical move structure to be generated and to have elicited some important language and structural principles of options analysis, as well as useful comparison between rhetorical moves adopted by NS and NNS writers. Additional analysis of options analysis components from a broader range of business specialisms and other disciplines would serve to develop our knowledge of how learners tackle options analysis.

It is noteworthy that examination options sections were limited in extent and moves compared to continuous assessment samples, and further that the options analysis move itself is not obligatory. It seems clear that situational exigencies and other factors substantially influence both the presence of the options move and the range of component moves deployed.

More broadly, the analysis of options is a component of much writing and thinking beyond the context of business case reports. It is hoped that the findings of this research may provide insights into the writing of options analyses not only in regard to texts in other academic disciplines but also in the field of business English and other non-academic contexts. Move cycling, as illustrated by the options cycle, may apply to a wider range of text types than have been analysed so far. Further, the influence of rhetorical structure on the deployment of modal verbs may suggest a broader more functionally and rhetorically-based pedagogical approach to teaching these verb forms. All of these features should serve to support research and pedagogical practice in the range of writing contexts, both academic and non-academic.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Almut Koester for her comments, encouragement and support during my doctoral research of which this study formed a part. I would also like to thank Andrew Mckay for his assistance with genre validation procedures as well as the academic business professionals who supported or provided comments on this

work. I would finally like to thank the anonymous reviewers and Nigel Harwood for their constructive and helpful comments during the preparation of this article.

References

Anthony, L. (1999). Writing research article introductions in software engineering. *IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication*, 42, 38-46.

BAWE (2008*). British Academic Written English Corpus*. Oxford Brookes University, University of Reading, University of Warwick. Available at Oxford Text Archive (http://ota.ahds.ac.uk): Resource number 2539.

Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genres: language use in professional settings*. London: Longman.

Brett, P. (1994). A genre analysis of the results section of sociology articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, 13, 47-59.

Bridgeman, B. & Carlson, S. (1984). Survey of academic writing tasks. *Written Communication*, 1, 247-280.

Bunton, D. (2002). Generic moves in PhD thesis introductions. In J. Flowerdew (Ed), *Academic Discourse* (pp.57-75). London: Longman.

Canseco, G. & Byrd, P. (1989). Writing required in graduate courses in business administration *TESOL Quarterly* 23, 305–316.

Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 20, 37-46.

Conover, W. J. (1999). *Practical non-parametric statistics* (3rd ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Coolican, H. (2004). *Research methods and statistics in psychology* (4th ed.). Oxford: Hodder Arnold

Cooper, A., & Bikowski, D. (2007). Writing at the graduate level: What tasks do professors actually require? *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6, 206-221.

Crookes, G. (1986). Toward a validated analysis of scientific text structure. *Applied Linguistics*, 7, 57–70.

Easton, G. (1993). *Learning from case studies*. Hertfordshire: Prentice-Hall International.

Feinstein, A.R. and Chicchetti, D.V. (1990). High agreement but low kappa: 1. The problems of two paradoxes *Journal of Clinical Epidemiology*, 43, 543-549.

Forman, J., & Rymer, J. (1999a). Defining the genre of the "case write-up". *Journal of Business Communication*, 36, 103-33.

Forman, J., & Rymer, J. (1999b). The genre system of the Harvard case method. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 13, 373-400.

Freedman, A., Adam, C., & Smart, G. (1994). Wearing suits to class: Simulating genres and simulations as genre. *Written Communication*, 11, 193-226.

Freedman, A. V., & Adam, C. (1996). Learning to write professionally: "Situated learning" and the transition from university to professional discourse. *Journal of Business and Technical Communication*, 10, 395-427.

Holmes, R. (1997). Genre analysis and the Social Sciences: An investigation of the structure of research article discussion sections in three disciplines. *English for Specific Purposes*, 16, 321-337.

Hopkins, A. & Dudley-Evans, T. (1988). A genre-based study of the discussion sections in articles and dissertations. *English for Specific Purposes*, 7, 113-122

Horowitz, D. M. (1986). What professors actually require: Academic tasks for the ESL classroom. *TESOL Quarterly*, 18, 445-62.

Kanoksilapatham, B. (2005). Rhetorical structure of biochemistry research articles *English for Specific Purposes*, 24, 269-292

Landis, J.R. & Koch, G.G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, 33, 159-74.

Nesi, H & Gardner, S. (2012). *Genres across the disciplines: student writing in higher education.* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Ozturk, I. (2007). The textual organisation of research article introductions in applied linguistics: Variability within a single discipline. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26, 25-38.

Marques de Sá, J.P. (2003). Applied statistics using SPSS, STATISTICA and MATLAB. Berlin: Springer-Verlag.

Mauffette-Leenders, L. A., Erskine, J.A., & Leenders, M.R. (1997). *Learning with cases*. Richard Ivey School of Business, University of Western Ontario.

Nathan, P. (2010). *A genre-based study of pedagogical business reports*. Unpublished doctoral thesis. University of Birmingham, Birmingham UK.

Nathan, P. (2013). Academic writing in the Business School: The genre of the business case report. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. 12, 57-68

Pallant, J. (2010). *SPSS survival manual: A step by step guide to data analysis using SPSS.* New York, Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education

Peacock, M. (2002). Communicative moves in the discussion sections of research articles. *System*, 30, 479 - 497

Peng, P. (1987). Organisational features in chemical engineering research articles. *ELR Journal*, 1, 79–116

Porter, M.E. (1980). *Competitive Strategy*. New York Free Press.

Porter, M.E. (2008). The five competitive forces that shape strategy. *Harvard Business*

Review, 86, 78-93

Posteguillo,.S. (1999). The schematic structure of computer science research articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, 18, 139-160

Russell, D. R. (2002). *Writing in the disciplines: A curricular history*. Southern Illinois University.

Scott, M. (1996). *Wordsmith Tools.6.0* Oxford University Press.

Soler-Monreal, C., Salom-Gil, L., & Carbonell-Olivares, G. (2011). A contrastive study of the rhetorical organisation of Spanish and English PhD introductions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 30, 4-17

Swales, J. M. (1981). *Aspects of article introductions.* Aston ESP Research Reports, Language Studies Unit, University of Aston, 1.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J.M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and Applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Thompson, P. (2001). Academic writers: Putting modal verbs to work. In Aston, G. & Barnard, L.(Eds), Corpora in the description and teaching of English*: Papers from the 5th ESSE conference (Helsinki)* (pp. 25–43) Bologna: CLUEB.

Viel, J. (2002). An overview of auxiliary verbs in E.S.T. *English for Specific Purposes World*, 1.

Yang, R. and Allison, D. (2003). Research articles in applied linguistics. Moving from results to conclusions *English for Specific Purposes,* 22, 365 – 384

Yeung, L. (2007). In search of commonalities: Some linguistic and rhetorical features of business reports as a genre *English for Specific Purposes,* 26, 156 - 179

Zhu, W. (2004). Writing in business courses: an analysis of assignment types, their characteristics and required skills. *English for Specific Purposes*, 23, 111 - 135