Research Paper

A Qualitative Genre Analysis of Engineering Students' Job Application Letters: A Philippine-Based Study

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Abstract

Despite progressive research on professional communication, the intricacies of job application letter writing among Filipino engineering students remain underexplored. Crafting job application letters varies across different cultures. Factors such as environmental setting, social norms, and deeply held personal beliefs affect their standard structure. Existing studies indicate a scarcity in discipline-specific investigations that fail to emphasize the structure of job application letters of Filipino engineering students and the cultural factors that influence them. Recognizing this gap, the study provides new insights into the particular move-step structures used in job application letters by Filipino engineering students from state universities and colleges in Negros Occidental. For a more distinct analysis, researchers employed a comprehensive mixed-methods content analysis and Bhatia's (1993) seven-move framework to identify different move-step elements, both obligatory and optional. Researchers examined 40 job application letters gathered from various state universities and colleges. Through the frequency assessment technique, the study's novel findings revealed obligatory moves (M1: Establishing credentials; M2: Introducing candidature; M4: Enclosing documents; M6: Soliciting response; M7: Ending politely) labeled as the "universal generic structure". Meanwhile, optional moves M3 (Offering incentives) and M5 (Using pressure tactics) were omitted, reflecting the socio-cultural setting. This study not only sheds light on the existing conventions among Filipino engineering students but also contributes significantly to the broader discourse on professional communication practices that can enhance employability, sociolinguistic awareness, and discipline-specific templates.

Keywords: *Genre Analysis, Job Application Letters, Content Analysis, Move Structure, Filipino Engineering Students*

INTRODUCTION

In the domain of professional discourse, job application letters play a crucial role in showcasing the candidate's credibility, identity, and suitability for the position. As a genre of writing, this serves as a candidate's personal branding, with a purpose to persuade and commit to conventional norms that mirror individual capabilities as well as societal expectations regarding professionalism (Bhatia, 2014; Swales, 1990). In the field of engineering, a competitive job market in well-crafted job application letters plays a crucial role in securing employment opportunities, and effective communication skills are crucial for career success. Job application letters serve as an essential tool for job seekers to communicate their qualifications, skills, and experiences to potential employers (Bhatia & Fage-Butler, 2017; Tardy, 2009). The essence of a job application letter goes beyond national boundaries. In a globally competitive world, engineering students are expected to adapt in multicultural and multilingual environments (Crosling & Ward, 2002).

Effective job application letters are crucial, especially in engineering. A research study revealed that 75% of employers considered job application letters crucial in hiring decisions. It

serves to capture the attention of prospective employers' confidence in written communication by rectifying grammatical and technical errors (Ryan, 2002; El-Sakran, 2018). According to Khan and Zaki (2018), the purpose of a job application letter should be persuasive in nature. Engineering students often face many challenges in job application letter writing (Beer & McMurrey, 2019). In many contexts, most employers require a balance between humility and self-promotion. Candidates must articulate these two aspects, integrating achievements and organizational values (Henry & Roseberry, 2001).

In the Philippine context, the essential role of state universities and colleges is to produce competent engineering graduates who contribute to innovation, economic, and societal progress (Philippine Statistics Authority, 2020). Furthermore, state universities and colleges ensure to supply the industry with skilled engineering graduates (Pibal, 1987; El-Sakran, 2018). However, engineering education often prioritizes technical knowledge and problem-solving, leaving little room for developing the technical writing and rhetorical skills necessary for professional communication. While job application letters may use correct terminology, this focus on technical accuracy alone makes them sound competent but ineffective. Engineering students often struggle with writing due to a lack of understanding of proper writing techniques, which can prevent their letters from fulfilling the key purpose of persuading employers.

In the field of genre analysis, many researchers in professional settings have suggested the application of a genre-based approach to the process of writing (Wang, 2005; Bhatia, 2014; Hyland, 2003). In this regard, this study employs Bhatia's framework to investigate the typical move-step structure of genre and adopts the structure of application letters, which ultimately leads to the design of a genre-based syllabus for teaching engineering students how to write effective job application letters.

This research study significantly contributes to the existing body of knowledge in professional communication, specifically in the engineering context. It will enhance understanding about job application letters as a genre (Bhatia, 2014; Swales, 1990). This would also contribute to innovation that ensures effective writing instruction in engineering education (Hyland, 2003; Ford, 2004). Through analyzing move-steps in crafting job application letters, the study will serve as a guide for crafting industry-tailored templates uniquely designed for engineering students and professionals in this field. Despite the growing importance of effective job application letters in securing employment, particularly for engineering graduates, existing research highlights significant gaps. Novice job applicants often face difficulties in writing professional job application letters due to a lack of familiarity with the varying demands of different jobs and employers. Existing studies primarily explored the general characteristics and genre conventions of job application letters (Bhatia, 2014; Swales, 1990). Regardless, the specific move steps incorporated by Filipino engineering students in writing job application letters remain understudied.

The study conducted by Olsun and Kim (2021), Fillenwarth et al. (2017), Haji, (2023), Ketteringham (2015), and Alinsunod (2014) focuses on technical skills and linguistics of engineering students when writing their application letters. The studies only focused on technical and linguistic aspects, but not on the sequential structure of how these letters were created. Despite mandatory English courses, many graduates lack skills (Dannels, 2011; Berieter & Scardamalia, 1987). Learners need to attain a certain level of proficiency in both format and topic knowledge. Engineering students often utilize a combination of direct and indirect strategies to convey their qualities, qualifications, and experiences. These studies neglected to analyze the structure of the letters (Johns & Nodoushan, 2015; Hyland, 2004). Furthermore, these studies mainly focus on Western countries, but not on non-Western countries like the Philippines.

Moreover, a study conducted by Rosa and Cruz (2015) revealed that job application letters created in the Philippines lacked the required physical elements needed for employment; however,

it was found that American letters strictly adhere to their structure conventions. Several gaps were found in this study; there is a lack of research on how various cultures perceive mistakes in employment settings, specifically in engineering fields, which could possibly help to create tailored strategies in this context. Also, the study of Daniel *et al.* (2023) examined the move structure of application letters; however, it only focuses on application letters of Filipinos and Singaporeans, resulting in general findings and analysis, lacking an investigation into how Filipino engineering students structure their application letters. In addition, studies are scarce regarding discipline-specific investigation in the field of engineering (Johns & Nodoushan, 2015; Hyland, 2004).

Out of all the related studies, it does not provide emphasis on the structure of the job application letters of Filipino engineering students in state universities and colleges. Furthermore, there is no standardized job application letter structure in the field of engineering in the Philippines. It has been said that engineering education depends on social, intellectual, and contextual factors that allow students to process the learning of engineering. Regarding the said interest is how the intricate connection between engineering education and the context in which it is integral and can be modified over time, Cheville (2014). This study aims to analyze the genre of job application letters crafted by Filipino engineering students from different state universities and colleges in Negros Occidental using a mixed-methods approach. Through a thorough analysis of the Filipino engineering students' job application letters, this study will be the first step in improving genre-based instructions, bridging the gaps in engineering education. This study seeks to answer the question: (1) What is the standard step-by-step structure for crafting job application letters that Filipino engineering students use in state universities and colleges?

Theoretical Conceptual Framework
Genre Analysis

According to Bhatia (2014), the structure of a job application letter should follow a seven-move pattern of genre analysis, his framework includes "Establishing credentials (Move 1), Introducing the candidature (Move 2), Offering incentives (Move 3), Enclosing documents (Move 4), Using pressure tactics (Move 5), Soliciting response (Move 6), Ending politely (Move 7)" (p. 62). Move 2 consists of three steps, (1) "offering the candidature", (2) "essential detailing of the candidature", and (3) "indicating value of the candidature" (Bhatia, 2014).

Move 1 presents the candidates' strengths by stating their predominant academic credentials and their admiration for the reputation of companies of prospective employers (Bhatia, 2014). Lesikar (1984, as cited in Bhatia, 2014) suggests that a successful method to establish credentials is to match employers' needs with an explanation of applicants' qualifications as effectively as possible.

Move 2 consists of three steps: (1) "offering the candidature", (2) "essential detailing of the candidature", and (3) "indicating value of the candidature" (p. 64). The first step presents how the candidates meet the requirements of prospective positions, while the second step shows the most necessary information about the candidates. The third step is responsive to the requirements of the jobs they are applying for. Bhatia (2014) describes that indicating the value of the candidature is similar to self-representation to present relevant information, be persuasive, and present positive aspects of candidates.

Move 3 is stated on sales promotion letters but is rarely found in job application letters. The information shown in this move overlaps with the details found in the step of indicating the value of candidature, since both offer the attractive qualifications of the candidates. It is, therefore, difficult to differentiate which one the candidates refer to.

Move 4 functions as a reminder to see further information about qualifications, experience, interests, strengths, etc., through the CV, certificates, and testimonials, which are referred to as

enclosed documents.

Move 5 represents tactics the candidates use to force readers (or prospective employers) to make a quick decision. However, this move is not often found in job application letters.

Move 6 is to persuade prospective employers to call to conduct interviews.

Move 7 refers to the closing of job application letters and consists of thanking the readers for spending the time to read their letters.

Table 1. Bhatia's (1993) Moves for the Job Application Letters.

MOVES	DESCRIPTORS
Move 1	Establishing Credentials
Move 2	Introducing Candidature
Move 3	Offering Incentives
Move 4	Enclosing Documents
Move 5	Using Pressure Tactics
Move 6	Soliciting Response
Move 7	Ending Politely

LITERATURE REVIEW

The researcher studied writing job application letters to give a better comprehension of the elements that are involved in the application of job application letters, specifically to Filipino engineering students in state universities and colleges. Khan and Zaki (2018) emphasize the importance of the content and form of job application letters, pointing to the need for communication effectiveness, which is vital as one gets into the engineering profession. They also showed the need for clarity and precision, together with organization, which are often regarded as qualifiers for engineering communication.

Genre Analysis

In the 21st century, genre began to be used notably in academic discourse and linked to professional and commercial life, not only in non-literary discourse (Nunan 1993; Derewianka 2003). Genres refer to more specific classes of texts. Genre is a particular type used to explain spoken or written text types based on external criteria. For example, the text that is produced by a particular person for a specific reason and target audience, and in a particular context. Such as newspaper articles, research reports, essays, lectures, and personal letters.

Genre is a particular communicative purpose using structural knowledge of linguistics and discourse in disciplinary and organizational cultures, and it apparently focuses on social situations embedded within disciplinary, professional, and other institutional practices. All disciplinary professional genres have certain standardized practices within the boundaries of a particular genre and have an integrity of their own, which are frequently recognized with regard to a combination of textual, discursive, and contextual elements. In accordance with this, Dudley-Evans and John (1998) stated that the knowledge of genre is an important factor in the sort of communication found in texts of academic writing. They believed that knowledge of genre imposes an understanding of the expectations of the discourse community that reads the text due to the conventions that have been gradually generated about the schematic structure, language use, and rhetoric of genre.

Genre-based theories

In addition to purpose, exemplars of a genre exhibit various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style, content, and intended audience. Bhatia (2014) is more interested in business and legal genres; in addition, she summarized a number of the common grounds of genre definition as follows.

"*Genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by members of a professional or academic community in which they regularly occur*."

"*Although genres are viewed as conventionalized constructs, expert members of the disciplinary and professional communities often exploit generic resources to express not only 'private' intentions but also organizational intentions within constructs of 'socially recognized communicative purposes.*"

Job Application Letters

This research underscored the need for targeted interventions and analyzing professional genres to support Filipino engineering students in Bhatia (2014), who described a job application letter as a dynamic framework that aids in investigating the move-step structure of letters and informs the design of teaching methodologies. His findings have been instrumental in designing teaching methodologies that emphasize the interplay between form and function, helping students balance technical content with persuasive communication.

The structural framework of job application letters has also been a recurring theme in relevant studies. Wang (2005) developed a six-move framework to analyze the structure of job application letters, categorizing them into distinct rhetorical segments. Wang's study identified key moves in job application letters, including establishing context, presenting qualifications, and closing with a call to action. His findings offered a systematic approach to understanding the structural expectations of job application letters, which have been applied across different cultural and professional contexts. This has proven especially useful in examining how engineering students structure their letters to meet the demands of potential employers.

Linguistic challenges are another critical aspect explored in existing studies. Weedon and Fountain (2021) highlighted that engineering undergraduates are overcoming these linguistic barriers. Recognition of linguistic challenges faced by Filipino engineering undergraduates suggests a nuanced examination of genre in this study. The importance of balancing technical content with persuasive language was underscored, particularly for engineering students communicating to a non-technical audience.

Engineering Students

Engineering students faced significant challenges in crafting effective job application letters, which required a blend of technical precision, clear communication, and persuasive language. For Filipino engineering students in Negros Occidental, these difficulties were compounded by language barriers, cultural influences, and a lack of professional writing training in technical education. One challenge was transitioning from technical writing to the more persuasive style needed in job applications. This highlighted that students often struggled to present their technical qualifications in a way that appealed to non-technical audiences. Writing in English, a second language for most, further complicated this task (Weedon & Fountain, 2021). Additionally, the education system's focus on technical skills left little room for developing communication competencies.

Cultural norms emphasizing humility also affected students' self-presentation in job application letters. Filipino students often downplayed their achievements, which could put them at a disadvantage in competitive job markets. Furthermore, students from rural or semi-urban areas in Negros had less exposure to professional writing styles, limiting their ability to meet employer expectations. To address these issues, schools could offer focused writing programs and integrate communication training into engineering curricula (Bhatia, 2014; Ketteringham, 2015). Practical exercises like mock applications and workshops would also help students gain real-world experience and strike a balance between technical content and persuasive communication (Alinsunod, 2014).

In conclusion, Filipino engineering students in Negros Occidental faced unique challenges in writing job application letters due to linguistic, cultural, and educational factors. Addressing these through targeted training and practical activities would better prepare them for the demands of the job market.

Content Analysis

The technical and linguistic insights provided by Olsun and Kim (2021) and Fillenwarth et al. (2017) found that engineering students often face difficulties in balancing technical content with linguistic clarity, particularly when attempting to explain complex technical concepts to non-technical audiences.

This challenge is particularly relevant for Filipino engineering students, who must navigate these technical demands while addressing linguistic barriers in writing job application letters. Language proficiency plays a significant role in crafting high-quality applications. Fillenwarth et al. (2017) highlighted that there is a need to include language training in the overall quality of job application letters. Additionally, Haji (2023) emphasizes that the growing use of digital tools has become a common practice among students to enhance and organize their writing. While these tools can improve the quality and clarity of their work, relying too much on automated suggestions might limit their ability to think critically and develop independent writing skills.

Ketteringham (2015) proposed an approach that incorporates iterative revisions, peer feedback, and explicit genre instruction to enhance students' writing skills. This method meets the needs of Filipino engineering students by providing structured, supportive learning environments, a valuable perspective on the study, emphasizing the value of experiential learning through real-world simulations, and enabling students to practice writing job application letters in authentic contexts. This study advocates teaching methods tailored to address the unique challenges of engineering students, especially in diverse linguistic and cultural settings. This research emphasizes the intersection of technical expertise and communication skills, positioning job application letters as a critical juncture where these domains converge. For Filipino engineering students, crafting such letters involves not only showcasing technical knowledge but also aligning it with professional and cultural expectations.

This literature review highlighted the multifaceted challenges faced by Filipino engineering students in writing job application letters, including linguistic barriers, cultural influences, and a lack of professional writing training. These challenges hinder their ability to effectively communicate technical qualifications to non-technical audiences. The integration of targeted writing programs, genre-based instruction, and experiential learning activities was proposed as a viable solution to address these issues. Such interventions not only equipped students with the necessary technical and linguistic skills but also aligned their communication styles with professional and cultural expectations, ultimately enhancing their competitiveness in the job market. By fostering an educational environment that bridged technical expertise and persuasive communication, engineering students could better meet employer expectations and succeed in a

globalized job market. These insights underscore critical needs for a holistic approach to developing job application letter writing competencies, particularly for students in linguistically and culturally diverse contexts.

RESEARCH METHOD
Research Design

In this study, the researchers utilized content analysis using a mixed-methods approach. Krippendorff (2018) suggested in his study that content analysis was a crossroads. He also stated that content analysis was unpretentious, not affecting the sources of receivers while processing large amounts of data. Mixed-methods research helped to ensure that the strengths of qualitative and quantitative data were complementary Brown, 2014). According to Drisko and Maschi (2016), in order to analyze the data, basic content analysis identifies word count and other quantitative analytic methods. It uses codes to recognize data by using a list of generated codes. According to Bengtsson (2016), content analysis was presented many years ago and consequently used as a quantitative and/or qualitative method. "Each of us independently reads and generates coding categories." Stemler (2015) also discussed emergent coding in his study, which he stated is purely empirical as well as theoretical. The researchers Elo et al. (2014) stated that the results of content analysis are technically linked to transferability, conformability, and credibility. Results are crucial in this analysis, hence they should be reported systematically and carefully with the support of quantitative and qualitative data. He also added that before choosing an analysis method, the most suitable method should be considered to provide data richness. According to Potter & Levine-Donnerstein (1999), content analysis is a method that provides researchers with a high level of trustworthiness.

Corpus of the Study

This study examined a corpus of 40 job application letters from engineering students across various fields. The students were chosen from almost all the undergraduate programs from different State Universities and Colleges in 3 different cities, namely Sagay City, Talisay City, and Bacolod City, Negros Occidental, Philippines. The participating institutions were selected based on their impressive reputation in the field of engineering, a high number of engineering board passers, and their employability rates. Specifically, the sample included first-year to graduating, and/or any level students who may have written job application letters as part of their course subjects, and engineering students from several prominent engineering universities/schools in Negros Occidental. The selection criteria ensured diversity in terms of gender, academic performance, and socioeconomic background to capture a representative range of experiences.

Research Instrument

In this study, the researchers created a checklist to note various move structures in the job application letter. The recognition of each move was based on the semantic and pragmatic meaning of the words and phrases, and the purpose of these words and phrases in the letters. According to Bhatia (2014), each move may be recognized even through words within paragraphs, since the length of the sentences was not the same in every paragraph. Moves may vary depending on how the words were used in a sentence. Once a move is recognized. The existence of each move was checked (✔) in each letter and left blank if it didn't exist. After all moves had been identified, two samples of Moves 1 to 7 from the job application letters collected were under the interpretation of Bhatia's Framework (1993).

Data Gathering Procedure

A letter of invitation to participate in this research was sent to each prospective participant. A letter of consent was also given to the person in charge within the College of Engineering and to the chosen participants to respect their time. This explained the purpose of the research and some important ethical considerations. This research resorted to the collection of job application letters either with the assistance of professors or via targeted recruitment by researchers. After each session, students submitted their letters, which were analyzed for structural features, specifically the rhetorical moves and the types of information included. Data collection was conducted online, aligning with the study's mixed-methods approach to exploring genre patterns in the writing of Filipino engineering students.

Data was gathered and analyzed through the instrument in Table 1. Information was computed for the Percentage of frequency of moves using Bhatia's framework. The study was countersigned by a mathematics professor who is well-equipped with the results, so that reliability and validity can be ensured. To maintain confidentiality and protect the privacy of the participants, each letter was anonymized. This methodology ensures that the research can proceed ethically while still obtaining valuable data for analysis.

Data Analysis Tool

Once all moves had been identified, the results were analyzed and presented using coding schemes and frequency tables. After analysis, researchers presented the results effectively (Brown 2014). This approach allows for a comprehensive breakdown of the data, ensuring that every move step was meticulously documented. First, the number of occurrences of each move was counted and presented as frequencies of all schools, labeled from school A to D. Additionally, the overall frequency of each move was recalculated as a percentage to determine results concerning obligatory and optional moves for job application letters. To ensure our study's reliability and validity, we sought a mathematics professor to review the data results. The expert's review is integral to our process, in which it checks the accuracy of our data analysis and the validity of our results.

Table 2. Description of Moves and Codes for the Study

Coding Scheme

The table below was used as a guideline for analyzing job application letters. To analyze the letters comprehensively, researchers created a coding scheme that considered target words and phrases in recognizing each move. The created scheme was based on Bhatia's framework (1993) of move structure, which is crucial in analyzing the content of the letters. In the study of Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2017), a coding scheme was used to highlight target words and phrases in analyzing letters. Another study conducted by Henry and Roseberry (2001), Bhatia's framework was also part of their analysis tool. Thus, the coding scheme within Table 2 is crucial in our study as this will be the basis of our data analysis.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Data Analysis

This chapter is concerned with the presentation and interpretation of data. Research findings were presented in a Checklist form after being analyzed using the framework of Bhatia (2014) as an analysis tool. This study analyzed job application letters of Filipino engineering students in state universities and colleges within Negros Occidental. Corpus was gathered from various universities and colleges within Negros Occidental, with the participation of 10 random

students per school. Table 3 shows the presence and absence of each move.

After gathering 10 job application letters from each school, a total of 40 letters were collected. Table 3 shows the result of analysis using Bhatia's (1993) framework as an analysis tool. Result shows that moves 1, 2, and 7 are consistently included in job application letters from schools A-D. Meanwhile, M4 and M6 were also used, but not by everyone. However, M3 and M5 were completely excluded. The coding scheme in Table 2 was used as a guide during the process of data analysis.

Table 2. Moves in job application letters by the Filipino engineering students from Schools A-D.

No. of Job Application Letters	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7
1	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
2	✔	✔				✔	✔
3	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
4	✔	✔				✔	✔
5	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
6	✔	✔				✔	✔
7	✔	✔				✔	✔
8	✔	✔				✔	✔
9	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
10	✔	✔					✔
11	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
12	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
13	✔	✔					✔
14	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
15	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
16	✔	✔					✔
17	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
18	✔	✔		✔			✔
19	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
20	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
21	✔	✔					✔
22	✔	✔				✔	✔
23	✔	✔					✔
24	✔	✔		✔			✔
25	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
26	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
27	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
28	✔	✔				✔	✔
29	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
30	✔	✔				✔	✔
31	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔

	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3	Move 4	Move 5	Move 6	Move 7
32	✔	✔		✔			✔
33	✔	✔		✔		✔	✔
34	✔	✔					✔
35	✔	✔		✔			✔
36	✔	✔		✔			✔
37	✔	✔				✔	✔
38	✔	✔		✔			✔
39	✔	✔					✔
40	✔	✔					✔
Total	40	40	0	23	0	26	40

NOTE: The job application letters from numbers 1-10 from (school A), 11-20 from (school B), 21-30 from (school C), and 31-40 from (school D)

Table 3 displays the frequency of moves of job application letters collected. Here is the systematic tally of the number of letters and the number of letters that were used for each move. A total of 40 (JAL), and the study's key findings are:

Move 1 (Establishing Credentials), Move 2 (Introducing Candidature), and Move 7 (Ending Politely) have a 100% occurrence rate. Meanwhile, Move 6 (Soliciting Response) follows with a total occurrence of 65% and Move 4 (Enclosing Documents) with a total of 57.5%. Results show that certain moves are obligatory in writing job application letters in engineering, serving as the backbone of the letter. In contrast, optional moves like Move 3 (Offering Incentives) and Move 5 (Using Pressure Tactics) had a 0% occurrence, indicating they are not appropriate in this field and are more relevant in other areas, such as business management. Findings indicate that Filipino engineering students effectively utilized five out of Bhatia's seven move structures, aligning with the norms of their professional context.

Table 3. Frequency of Moves in Job Application Letters Written by Filipino Engineering Student

Names of Moves	Number of Occurrences	Percentage %	Total Job Application Letters
Establishing Credentials	40	100%	40
Introducing candidature	40	100%	40
Offering incentives	0	0%	40
Enclosing documents	23	57.5%	40
Using pressure tactics	0	0%	40
Soliciting response	26	65%	40
Ending politely	40	100%	40

Data Interpretation

The analysis of job application letters written by Filipino engineering students revealed that all 40 letters used M1 "Establishing credentials". In this section, they highlighted their most important skills, listed their strengths, and included self-praise (Bhatia, 2014). Students providing their strengths serves as an advantage during the application. This move can be found in the introductory part of application letters. The purpose of M1 in their letter is to provide a basis for their strengths and skills rather than being boastful. This provides the passage about the skills they gained during their study and the knowledge that the university contributed to them. Some examples are

"I have developed strong skills in….",

"I have mastered subjects like….",

"I have a Bachelor's Degree in…",

and *"I gained a solid understanding of…"*.

Here are two samples from the collected job application letters.

"*I have developed strong skills in mechanical engineering and have a solid understanding of relevant engineering concepts such as thermodynamics, mechanics of materials, and fluid mechanics.*" - Sample 1

"*I've mastered core subjects like process control, industrial automation, and control system design. And instrumentation maintenance. Beyond the theory, I've actively applied this knowledge in labs and projects, developing practical expertise in troubleshooting, calibration, and data analysis.*" - Sample 2

"Introducing candidature" is evident in all 40 collected job application letters. This is crucial as it demonstrates the applicant's interest in the job vacancies they are applying for. In this section, Filipino engineering students put themselves forward as candidates for the advertised positions. M2 emphasizes the enthusiasm and interest in the position. This move is usually found in the first sentence of the first paragraph. A study conducted by Fung (2014), "Introducing Candidature," considered as move 1, despite this difference, this move conveys a similar purpose and placement. This move is compulsory in writing job application letters and serves as an opening statement (Barnes, 2007). Examples are

"I am excited to apply for …",

"I am writing to express my interest in…."

This move also indicates the job, such as

"as advertised on your website..",

"The position posted from your page…".

Moreover, it indicates their emotion that are already outside of their academic background. The following examples illustrate M2:

Note: Some personal information was modified for privacy.

"*I am excited to apply for the Marine Engineer position at XY Maritime Corporation, as advertised on XY Maritime Corporation's Facebook Page, with a degree in Marine Engineering from ABC College and Training Center Incorporated"* - Sample 1

"*I am writing to express my interest in D.M. Consunji, Inc. I am happy to join your team with my Bachelor's Degree in Civil Engineering with a specialization in Structural Engineering and interest in this field. I am glad to have the opportunity to bring my expertise to your team."* Sample 2

None of the job application letters included "Offering incentives," where the applicant suggests what they can bring to the table or motivations to increase their appeal to the employer. Filipino engineering students might avoid using M3 due to concerns that offering incentives could backfire and create a negative impression on the hiring manager. Swales (1990) stated that the description may differ in other sociocultural settings. A study conducted by De Mello *et al.* (2021) revealed that Malaysian graduates also omitted M3 in their job application letters. The exclusion of this move requires an understanding of the various factors that may affect the use of this move. This may start as

"I am eager to join your company…",

"with my expertise in….your company will improve…".

"Enclosed documents" are evident in 23 out of the 40 job application letters, highlighting the addition of supporting information or materials like resumes, training certificates, and other relevant documents De Mello et al. (2021). Some of the typical codes are

"*Enclosed is my resume…",*

"Attached is my resume…", or "If you need more information, I attached…".

Here are examples demonstrating M4:

"*Enclosed is my resume for your review. I look forward to the opportunity to discuss how my background aligns with your needs.*" - Sample 1.

"*Enclosed with this letter is my resume, which provides further details about my academic background, relevant coursework, and any previous experiences that apply to the field of electrical engineering*" - Sample 2

Like M3, none of the Filipino engineering students opted for "Using pressure tactics" in their application letters. This decision suggests an understanding that employing pressure tactics could

convey desperation and impatience, casting the applicant in a negative light as manipulative or aggressive, which is not in line with a professional image. De Mello *et al.* (2021) discovered that Malaysian graduates omitted this move. Consequently, the avoidance of this move reflects a desire to safeguard the applicant's chances and uphold a positive character impression. This move may start like

"I am eager to get this position…",

"I can't wait to enter into your company….",

"I believe I can handle this job better than others…",

and *"I conclude that I am the most fit for the position…".*

"Soliciting response" is utilized in 26 out of the 40 job application letters, reflecting applicants' efforts to elicit a reaction or response from the company. This move shows that applicants are seeking specific feedback or comments through questions, statements, or actions. Some codes are

"I am looking forward…",

"I am hoping to…",

and *"I am excited to hear your response….".*

This move was considered a subtle way of convincing the employer to accept the application. Here are examples demonstrating M6:

"*I am looking forward to your affirmative response. I hope someday I will serve in this company."* - Sample 1

"*I look forward to the possibility of joining your esteemed organization and contributing to its continued success.*" Sample 2

All 40 job application letters composed by Filipino engineering students concluded with an "Ending politely". The purpose of M7 is to provide a polite conclusion that signifies professionalism, respect, and a positive attitude, indicating the applicant's appreciation for the employer's time and consideration (Bhatia, 2014). Such a courteous closure aims to leave a favorable impression and enhance the applicant's likelihood of being evaluated for the position. Examples are

"Thank you for your time…",

"I appreciate your effort to…",

"Thank you for considering my application…"

or *"I am glad for your time…".* Result shows that being courteous should be visible in the job application letter of engineering students.

"Thank you for your time and consideration." - Sample 1

"Thank you for considering my application. - Sample 2

Bhatia (2014) emphasized that certain moves are indispensable in achieving the intended communication goals of an application letter. For instance, introducing oneself, persuading an employer, and concluding politely are essential components (Fung, 2007). Bhatia (2014) and Al-Ali (2008) acknowledged that variations might exist in the seven-move structure across different contexts and cultures, recognizing that the genre of job application letters is shaped by the sociocultural environment in which they are produced. Results signify that the moves identified in the letters of engineering students are crucial to their application process.

Overall, most application letters in the study included obligatory moves (M1, M2, M4, M6, M7), indicating that Filipino engineering students possess knowledge of the structure. Although there were slight deviations from Bhatia's (1993) analysis, notably the absence of (M3: Offering incentives) and (M5: Using pressure tactics), which were considered optional. Study of De Mello *et al.* (2021) revealed that it is crucial to employ at least five out of seven moves from Bhatia's framework. Through a thorough analysis of the importance of these moves, engineering students can gain knowledge about understanding obligatory moves needed to convey the message clearly and comprehensively.

A study conducted by De Mello *et al.* (2021) found that Malaysian graduates employed five out of seven moves using Bhatia's (1993) move structure. Malaysian graduates employed (M1, M2, M4, M6, and M7). Some of the omitted moves are (M3: Offering incentives) and (M5: Using pressure tactics), which are excluded in letters of Malaysian graduates. Another study conducted by Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2017) found that most of the participants also employed the same moves; however, both studies fail to emphasize the reasons for the omission of some moves. In this pioneering study, (M3) and (M5) were also excluded from the job application letters of Filipino engineering students. In the socio-cultural context of the Philippines, it is evident that Filipinos always try to balance morality and achievements, especially in a professional community. A study conducted by Dy (1994) stated that Filipinos avoid pressuring others, valuing freedom and harmony, which explains the omission of Move 5 (Using Pressure Tactics) in their application letters. This aligns with Malaysian graduates who also exclude M5. However, while Move 3 (Offering Incentives) was also excluded by Filipino students, it is considered obligatory by Malaysian HR managers as it emphasizes the applicant's potential contribution to the company. Considering the demographic characteristics of this study, Swales (1990) stated that genre is bound by socio-cultural setting. Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2017) agreed that the socio-cultural setting affects the structure of letters. There are specific moves that may have different meanings in other cultures; specifically, the description and usage of the moves may vary across different countries (Bhatia, 1993; Swales, 1990). Thus, the exclusion of M3 is because of socio-cultural differences where the letters were created. Therefore, M3 has a different description in the culture of Filipinos.

After comparing our study with previous research, the study's novel findings found a common "universal generic structure" with moves 1, 2, 4, 6, and 7 (e.g., introducing candidature, establishing credentials, enclosing documents, soliciting a response, and ending politely). Moves like offering incentives (M3) and using pressure tactics (M5) were rarely used, especially by Filipino applicants. The comparison with a study on Filipino engineering students highlighted cultural differences, particularly the omission of M3 and M5 due to values like modesty and respect. Unlike the broader ASEAN study, this study offers more specific insights into local cultural norms and emphasizes the need for genre-based instruction in curricula.

CONCLUSIONS

Conclusively, this study examined how Filipino engineering students from state universities and colleges in Negros Occidental write job application letters. Findings highlight the consistent use of certain rhetorical moves, such as "Establishing Credentials," "Introducing Candidature," and "Ending Politely," in all letters, reflecting students' adherence to professional and polite communication styles. Additionally, "Enclosing Documents" and "Soliciting Response" were less frequently used, while "Offering Incentives" and "Using Pressure Tactics" were absent. These patterns suggest that Filipino engineering students prioritize humility and respect in their letters, aligning with Filipino cultural values (Dy, 1994; De Mello et al., 2021)

The typical structure utilized by students, introducing themselves, stating the purpose, and highlighting relevant qualifications serves as the foundation of an effective job application letter. This emphasizes the importance of clearly articulating one's intent and credentials to potential employers. The omission of certain moves, such as "Offering Incentives," may suggest a limited awareness of genre-specific conventions. Filipino cultural norms, which emphasize modesty and harmony, may contribute to the omission of moves perceived as overly assertive or aggressive.

The study highlights the need for genre-specific instruction in engineering curricula to address structural, content, and language requirements in job application letters. Incorporating Bhatia's (1993) framework into the syllabus can guide students in understanding essential rhetorical moves and their applications. Practical activities, such as workshops and mock application exercises, could provide students with hands-on experience in crafting letters that are both persuasive and technically accurate, ultimately enhancing their employability in both local and global markets.

Moves that are less frequently used, like "Soliciting Response" and "Enclosing Documents," are present in 65% and 57.5% of the letters, respectively, and are intuitively understood by employers and do not necessarily undermine the message. Nonetheless, including these moves can enhance the clarity and completeness of job application letters. By integrating structured lessons and practical writing exercises into the curriculum, students can be better equipped to meet the demands of professional communication in the engineering field. Insights from this study offer a practical guide for improving job application letters, supporting engineering students in effectively showcasing their qualifications to potential employers, and achieving success in their career pursuits.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

The research on genre analysis of job application letters for engineers is limited by several factors. These include a narrow dataset focused on specific geographic areas, particularly Negros Occidental, and engineering disciplines. The corpus was drawn from random universities and colleges within the region, which means the study does not cover all schools in Negros Occidental. Additionally, the small sample size of 40 limits the broader applicability of the findings. The subjective nature of genre analysis may lead to varying interpretations of the structures and conventions in job applications. Moreover, the absence of contextual elements, such as job market trends, can influence the findings. Modern job applications may also include non-textual components, such as multimedia or digital tools, which are often overlooked in such studies.

For Language Researchers

To address these limitations, future language researchers may consider broadening the geographic scope and exploring additional professional fields such as Medicine and Business Administration. Investigating regional differences in job application letter writing could offer deeper insights into contextual variations. Expanding the sample size and including diverse fields

would enhance the validity and generalizability of future findings. Furthermore, it is recommended that future studies examine the impact of current labor market trends and the integration of AI tools in the writing of job application letters.

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