



Philanthropic Discourse vs Promotional Genre: To Study the Rhetorical Choices of Promotion and Structural Moves of Two Appeal Letters in Hong Kong

Patrick Chi-wai LEE (Corresponding author)

School of Humanities and Languages, Caritas Institute of Higher Education

18 Chui Ling Road, Tseung Kwan O, N.T. Hong Kong

E-mail: cwlee@cihe.edu.hk

Received: 09-03-2016

Accepted: 30-05-2016

Advance Access Published: July 2016

Published: 01-09-2016

doi:10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.5p.15

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.5n.5p.15>

Abstract

Based on two appeal letters from (i) Oxfam Hong Kong and (ii) Hong Kong Committee For United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), this paper aims to study the rhetorical choices of promotion and structural moves of two appeal letters, exploring whether the philanthropic discourse can be viewed in line with the promotional genre. The findings appear to reveal that there is a hybrid form of promotional genre in philanthropic discourse, with reference to Bhatia's (1998) generic patterns in fund-raising discourse framework. There are similar structural moves of advertising, although the move sequences could vary. However, the move of "introducing the cause" is always found at the very beginning because the readers are more interested to realise what the main theme of the appeal letter is. In addition, appeal letters are found to be modelled in promotional genre, in which they are rhetorical choices of promotion attracting attention from readers – by using "you" and marked devices of attention getters. The findings in this study appear to be in line with the argument that promotional concerns have influenced the nature of philanthropic discourse.

Keywords: appeal letters, Hong Kong, promotional genre, rhetorical choices of promotion

1. Introduction

This paper aims to examine two appeal letters collected from two international fund-raising non-profit organisations in Hong Kong: (i) Oxfam Hong Kong and (ii) Hong Kong Committee For United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Their purpose of writing is to promote the cause of charity, that is, to persuade an audience of Hong Kong residents to donate money for war victims, and for the education of children. The choice of these appeal letters is motivated by an interest in this type of writing which does not promote goods or services, but charity. The audience is not asked to purchase a commodity but to give away money for something which they cannot redeem personally. The question arises how this type of writing can be viewed in line with other types of promotional writing, especially, whether there is some particular genre after which the appeal letters are modeled. The research objectives in this paper aim to study the rhetorical choices of promotion and structural moves of two appeal letters, exploring whether the philanthropic discourse can be viewed in line with the promotional genre. The significance of this study is to shed light on understanding whether promotional concerns have influenced the nature of philanthropic discourse.

2. Promotional Genre vs Fund-raising Text

The prime example of promotional genre is advertising. Advertisements are all around us. Featherstone (2007) rightly claims that we are living in a "consumer culture", where many of our discursive activities, whether in business or academic, or even in personal context, have to some extent been influenced by promotional concerns. The inevitable result of this is that many of the institutionalized genres, whether they are social, professional or academic, are seen as incorporating elements of promotion. In addition, Fairclough (1993:141) points out, "... there is an extensive restructuring of boundaries between orders of discourse and between discursive practices; for example, the genre of consumer advertising has been colonizing professional and public service orders of discourse on a massive scale, generating many new hybrid partly promotional genres...".

Among other research studies, Rotzoll et al. (1986), Kotler, P. and Armstrong (2014) and Wharton (2015) discuss the basic functions of advertising (product or service) and identify two primary roles: to inform and to persuade, and an effective advertising links the wants and needs of the consumer with the properties and functions of the product. The same persuasive purpose is common to a variety of advertisements, promoting a certain kind of products or services. According to Weinstein (2009), fund-raising texts share with these diverse advertisements this one feature, the persuasive function. They persuade readers to donate for charity. More specifically, Clarke and Norton (1997: 21) state that "a fundraising text is more about "selling" than "telling" and it is about persuading people to give". In the previous studies, different linguists may use different approaches for conducting an analysis of the same fund-raising letter. Let me cite as an example and a case in point the eleven contributions in Mann and Thompson (1992). Eleven linguists used

eleven different approaches to analyse one and the same fund-raising letter. The differences of approach resulted from different degrees of detailing of clause relations, and of degrees of focus on either genre or register. The authors tried to do justice to a "diversity of language functions" (Mann and Thompson 1992: 2). From seeing eleven different analyses at work for one and the same text, it is clear that "there is no consensus on what the relevant set of function is" (Mann and Thompson 1992: 1). However, Bhatia (1998; 2004; 2008; 2010) has pointed out that like most promotional letters in business contexts, fund raising letters also have a relatively simple move discourse structure. Promotional concerns have influenced the nature of entire range of professional and even academic discourse. In Bhatia (1997), he introduces a further dimension to this debate about hybridization; he (1998) also makes an analysis of genre appropriation and mixing on "generic patterns in funding raising discourse", with the aims to investigate the influence of present-day corporate advertising and marketing strategies on the development of philanthropic discourse. Bhatia (1998: 14) highlights the generic patterns in funding raising discourse, listing the similarities and differences in advertising and philanthropic discourse (see table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Similarities and Differences in Advertising and Philanthropic Discourse

ADVERTISING DISCOURSE:		PHILANTHROPIC DISCOURSE:
ESTABLISHING CREDENTIALS (By individual needs) (By long established services) (By gratitude for past support) (By celebrity endorsement)	[1]	ESTABLISHING CREDENTIALS (By community needs) (By established cause) (By gratitude for past support) (By celebrity endorsement) (By mission statement) (By credentials of trustees)
INTRODUCING THE OFFER	[2]	INTRODUCING THE CAUSE
OFFERING INCENTIVES (Special offers discounts)	[3]	OFFERING INCENTIVES (Income tax rebates)
ENCLOSING BROCHURES (Details of offer) (Request / order forms)	[4]	ENCLOSING BROCHURES (Brochures and mission statements) (Pledge or donation form)
SOLICITING RESPONSE	[5]	SOLICITING SUPPORT
USING PRESSURE TACTICS	[6]	
ENDING POLITELY	[7]	EXPRESSING GRATITUDE

Source: Bhatia: 1998: 14, "Generic Patterns in Funding Raising Discourse"

His finding is to highlight the notion of appropriation of rhetorical strategies across closely related genres. In the case of philanthropic discourse, it is interesting to see that in a number of respects it appears to be very similar to much of corporate promotional discourse, especially when seen in the context of an increasing liberal attitude towards appropriation of generic resources from a much more powerful and hence dominant corporate promotional discourse.

3. Methodology

3.1 The collection of the texts under study

The process of studying more than thirty, ending up with two appeal letters: those two texts are arrived at by two international non-profit making organisations in Hong Kong. Those two appeal letters are standardized presentation and they appear to be most representative, as checked from the text makers from those two international non-profit making organisations, UNICEF and OXFAM.

3.2 Format of analysis: Segmentation within text, function and explanation

Two sample texts are studied and each sample text is divided into single units -**segments (seg.)**, and the segmentation is intended to be a superficial, simple reflection of visible subdivisions (most often sentences, but not all the time). With reference to the textual analysis of all those "segments", this study is to analyse how the words and syntactic structure create effects as the text is read. The function of each segment is reviewed and the rhetorical purpose of each segment in the text is explained. Segments, functions and explanations are related in columns. How different types of segments are treated as exemplified below (Segs. 1-4)

Seg. 1

TEXT	<i>Dear Reader,</i>
FUNCTION:	Salutation
EXPLANATION:	Crucial to the reality of a letter, personal touch with the reader

Seg. 2

TEXT *A little help from our donors has repaired 380 school buildings this year*
 FUNCTION: Value the support
 EXPLANATION: Solution is quoted as evidence of showing readers the use of resource

Seg. 3

TEXT *Dear Reader,*
Can you stop reading and think about something else?
 FUNCTION: Relational Opening
 EXPLANATION: Relational open (between "Dear Reader" and "you" in those two segments)

Seg. 4

TEXT *All we ask of you now is to put aside a minute to fill in the donation form...*
 FUNCTION: Soliciting response
 EXPLANATION: Ask readers to fill in the donation form and it functions to solicit response from readers

3.3 Explanation of full analysis in table form

The following tables 2 and 3 list the findings of the genre mixing of promotional type and philanthropic discourse (based on the sample texts 1 and 2):

Table 2. Full Analysis of an Appeal Letter from UNICEF – Sample Text 1

Segment	TEXT	FUNCTION	EXPLANATION
Seg. 1	May xxxx	Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Date is crucial to the reality of the letter.
Seg. 2	Dear Reader,	Salutation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crucial to the reality of a letter Personal touch with the reader
Seg. 3	Can <u>you</u> stop reading and think about something else?	Segment 4b is an attention-getter (GIMMICK–Marked device)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Relational open (between "Dear Reader" and "you" in segment 2 and 3)
Seg. 4	(a)This is a letter about children in war, (b) <u>so stop reading and switch your attention to something more pleasurable</u> , such as what you'll have for dinner, or what's on the television tonight.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segment 4b attracts readers' attention (by stimulating readers' curiosity to read more about this letter)
Seg. 5	Life would be far too stressful if we couldn't screen out information that makes us uncomfortable.	INTRODUCING THE CAUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Segment 6 is an example to illustrate the situation of segment 5
Seg. 6	Like, <u>for example</u> , the fact that over 50,000 children are still <u>suffering</u> from the effects of war in Kosovo.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "suffering" is a lexical signal for the negative evaluation of the situation as a problem.
Seg. 7	<u>Are you still with me?</u>	GIMMICK-marked device Attention-maintaining device	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cohere with segment 4 : attention getter
Seg. 8	<u>Good</u> , because statistically speaking about 30% of readers normally would have stopped by the time they read that fact.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Speech act - Conversation approach" is shown between segments 7 and 8.
Seg. 9	And if you have made it this far, <u>you are probably ready for another one:</u>	INTRODUCING THE CAUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "However" is a word showing the "contrast-relation" between situation stated in segments 9 and 10.
Seg. 10	It's been a year since the NATO bombings.		
Seg. 11	<u>However</u> , for many children, life after the war is even <u>worse</u> than during the conflict.		

Seg. 12	Ula, an ethnic Albanian adolescent in Pristina, <u>will be reading a letter from</u> her brother just as you read this one.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Situation of reading a letter
Seg. 13	Reading helps her escape from the confines of her bed.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "help", "escape" are lexical signals for the solution to the problem.
Seg. 14	<u>Ula lost both legs</u> in a landmine accident after <u>the end of the bombing</u> in Yugoslavia.	DETAILING CAUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landmine accident after the bombing (cause) • Ula lost both legs (problem)
Seg. 15	She knows her brother's letter by heart, since there is <u>little else to read</u> at the refugee camp.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little else to read
Seg. 16	She has yet to summon up the courage to tell her brother about her own life.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forget about misery
Seg. 17	She would like to forget about her own misery.		
Seg. 18	Victims like Ula need help.	Soliciting a RESPONSE from readers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victims like Ula need help. • Categories of "Help" are mentioned
Seg. 19	Help from UNICEF means she will be one of hundreds of children to be <u>reunited with their families.</u>	VALUE OF THE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Reunited with families" • future tense - "will be"
Seg. 20	A little help from our donors <u>has repaired 380 school buildings</u> this year.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has repaired school buildings • past perfect tense
Seg. 21	That little help <u>has delivered 60 metric tonnes of medical supplies.</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has delivered medical supplies • past perfect tense
Seg. 22	The same help <u>has provided counseling to hundreds of child casualties</u> of landmine accidents.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • has provided counseling to child casualties • past perfect tense
Seg. 23	In fact, with the <u>enclosed donor's form</u> , helping out is almost as easy as it is to stop reading this letter.	ENCLOSING DONATION FORM	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enclosed donor's form
Seg. 24	You've come this far, all we ask of you now is to <u>put aside a minute to fill in the donation form</u> and <u>change the life of a child.</u>	Soliciting RESPONSE from readers to the charity RESPONSE to the problem by the charity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fill in the donation form • Change the life of a child.
Seg. 25	Yours sincerely	Complimentary Close	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial to the reality of the letter
Seg. 26	(handwritten signature)	Signature	
Seg. 27	Dr. Robert H. P. Fung	ESTABLISHING CREDENTIAL	
Seg. 28	Chairman	Position (in the organisation)	
Seg. 29	Hong Kong Committee For UNICEF United Nations Children's Fund	ESTABLISHING CREDENTIAL	

Table 3. Full Analysis of an Appeal Letter from OXFAM – Sample Text 2

Segment	TEXT	FUNCTION	EXPLANATION
Seg. 1	<u>Education now</u> <u>BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY</u>	Headline	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Main theme
Seg. 2	September xxxx	Date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial to the reality of the letter
Seg. 3	Dear Friend,	Salutation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crucial to the reality of the letter • Personal touch with the reader
Seg. 4	Oxfam is glad <u>you</u> can read this letter	EXPRESSING GRATITUDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational open (between "Dear Friend" and "you" in segs. 3 and 4) • Involvement with reader
Seg. 5	We are also grateful to be <u>able to write</u> it.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In seg. 6, "But" is a word to show the clause relation of "contrast" with the previous sentence
Seg. 6	<u>But</u> there are <u>872 million adults and 275 million children who can't read or write.</u>	INTRODUCING THE CAUSE	
Seg. 7	Most of these <u>illiterate people are poor, very poor.</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Illiterate people are poor, very poor
Seg. 8	An <u>education</u> is <u>the most important</u> thing <u>to help people GET OUT OF POVERTY.</u>	DETAILING CAUSE AND	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "help", "get out of " are lexical signals for the solution to the problem.
Seg. 9	Education <u>is more than being able to read and write.</u>	VALUE OF THE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Education" is more than being able to read and write. • In seg 8, it states about "education" is important to get out of poverty. In seg 9, it is a basis to elaborate more about education in segs. 10, 11, 12.
Seg. 10	It's about <u>making a LIVING</u> - students learn skills to last a lifetime		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohere to seg.9, (education)it's about making a LIVING
Seg. 11	It's also <u>about HEALTH</u> - for parents to know when children need a doctor.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohere to seg.9, (education)it's also about HEALTH
Seg. 12	It's <u>about poor people protecting the few things they might have,</u> and getting the things they deserve, <u>by knowing the LAW.</u>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohere to seg.9, (education) it's about poor people protecting the few things they might have... by knowing the LAW.
Seg. 13	In 1990, 155 governments agreed that a basic education is "all the knowledge and skills which people need if they are to lead to a decent life."	DETAILING CAUSE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It states that a basic education is "all the knowledge and skills which people need..." • (general truth, present tense)
Seg. 14	What is Oxfam doing?	Question-answer approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Speech act - Conversation approach" is shown between segs. 14, 15, 16, 17 and 18.
Seg. 15	The following stories are just a few of our projects in poor countries.	VALUE THE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve education policy • verb indicating change of state
Seg. 16	We also work to improve education policy, as after all, it is the government that has the responsibility to provide a basic, education for their citizens.		

Seg. 17	The 11 Oxfams around the world lobby for debt relief so poor countries can have more money to spend on school systems.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 11 Oxfams around the world lobby for debt relief so poor countries can have more money to spend on school systems.
Seg. 18	And we also work to educate the Hong Kong public, especially youth, on poverty - why it happens and what can be done.	VALUE THE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> work to educate the Hong Kong public future solution
Seg. 19	Visit the web site www.oxfam.org/educationnow for more information.	Soliciting the RESPONSE from the reader	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get more information about the organisation
Seg. 20	What can YOU do?	Question-answer approach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Speech act - Conversation approach" is shown between segment 14 and the following segments.
Seg. 21	The best thing to do is be an Oxfam Partner.	Soliciting RESPONSE from the readers	
Seg. 22	Please donate what you can every month.	Imperative Clause	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reasons - "helps ensure that our projects get the funding they need" in segs. 23 and 24 are given as prior to the imperative clause in seg. 22.
Seg. 23	Your regular support helps ensure that our projects get the funding they need.	Soliciting RESPONSE from the readers	
Seg. 24	It also reduces administrative costs.		
Seg. 25	You can also join our basic education campaign or volunteer (see the last page).	Soliciting the RESPONSE from readers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Soliciting response from reader to be a volunteer
Seg. 26	Thank you for your joining our work AGAINST poverty and FOR education.	EXPRESSING GRATITUDE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Involve reader at the closing of the letter
Seg. 27	(handwritten signature)	Signature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Crucial to the reality of the letter
Seg. 28	Lum Kwokchoi	Full Name	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "reality" - textual force (illocutionary force)
Seg. 29	Education Coordinator	Position (in the organisation)	
Seg. 30	Oxfam Hong Kong	ESTABLISHING CREDENTIALS	
Seg. 31	P.S. Please support Oxfam.	P.S. – Attention getter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> P.S. is an attention getter.
Seg. 32	You'll be helping children get an education, and their families get out of poverty.	VALUE THE SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> "Reason - helping children get an education ... get out of poverty" in seg. 32 is given as prior to the imperative clause in seg. 31.

4. Findings and Discussion

4.1 Generalised move structure and sequence of the move

Overall, we found that there are similar structural moves with promotional genre for those two appeal letters from two international non-profitable organisations. As stated in section 2 "Methodology", those two appeal letters collected are representative as pointed out by those two organisations, and the structural move includes (i) establishing credentials, (ii) introducing the cause, (iii) detailing the cause, (iv) value of the support, (v) enclosing donation forms, (vii) soliciting support and (viii) expressing gratitude. However, we found that the move of "offering incentive" is missing in both samples of appeal letters (sample texts 1 and 2). Probably, the move of offering incentive by stating "income tax rebate" could be found in some enclosed donation forms, not directly stated in the appeal letters. The following is a table listing the move structure of genre mixing of advertising and philanthropic discourse.

Table 4. Structural Moves of those Two Sample Texts (Genre Mixing of Promotional and Philanthropic Discourse)

Segment	TEXT 1 APPEAL LETTER- UNICEF	TEXT 2 APPEAL LETTER- Oxfam
Seg. 1	• Date	• Headline
Seg. 2	• Salutation	• Date
Seg. 3	• GIMMICK – Marked device attention-getter	• Salutation
Seg. 4		• EXPRESSING GRATITUDE
Seg. 5	• INTRODUCING THE CAUSE	
Seg. 6		• INTRODUCING THE CAUSE
Seg. 7	• Marked device attention-maintaining device	
Seg. 8		• DETAILING CAUSE AND
Seg. 9		• VALUE OF THE SUPPORT
Seg. 10	• INTRODUCING THE CAUSE	
Seg. 11		
Seg. 12		
Seg. 13		• DETAILING CAUSE
Seg. 14	• DETAILING THE CAUSE	• Question-answer approach
Seg. 15		• VALUE THE SUPPORT
Seg. 16		
Seg. 17		
Seg. 18	• Soliciting a RESPONSE from reader	
Seg. 19	• VALUE OF THE SUPPORT	• Soliciting the RESPONSE from the reader
Seg. 20		• Question-answer Approach
Seg. 21		• RESPONSE
Seg. 22		• Imperative Clause
Seg. 23	• ENCLOSING DONATING FORM	• RESPONSE
Seg. 24	• Soliciting RESPONSE	
Seg. 25	• Complimentary Close	• Soliciting RESPONSE
Seg. 26	• Signature	• EXPRESSING GRATITUDE
Seg. 27	• ESTABLISHING CREDENTIAL	• Signature
Seg. 28	• Position (in the organisation)	• Full Name
Seg. 29	• ESTABLISHING CREDENTIAL	• Position (in the organisation)
Seg. 30	Nil	• ESTABLISHING CREDENTIAL
Seg. 31	Nil	• P.S. – Attention getter • VALUE OF THE SUPPORT

As for the sequence of all moves from those two sample texts, it has revealed that the sequence of the structural moves varies. However, the move of “introducing the cause” is always stated at the beginning because the readers are interested in what the main theme mentioned in that particular text. Also, it is found that “establishing credential” is found at the end, as a “re-enforcer to the readers that the particular charity has a good reputation and the spending of their donation is properly distributed. As stated in section 2 “Promotional Genre vs Fund-raising Text”, Bhatia (1998: 14) has highlighted the generic patterns in funding raising discourse, and he further argues that like most business promotional letters, fund raising letters also have a relatively simple move discourse structure. Based on those two sample texts collected in Hong Kong, the findings in this paper appear to be in line with Bhatia’s (1998) argument, supporting that promotional concerns have also influenced the nature of philanthropic discourse.

4.2 Rhetorical choices of promotion in appeal letters

4.2.1 Marked devices of attention-getters

In those two fund-raising appeal letters, there were some rhetorical choices of promotion which aim at getting “special” attention from readers. For the sample text 1, it is found that there is a promotional marked device which is just like an “advertising tool” of raising the attention from readers. The following segments 3 and 4 aim to attract the attention of readers by “asking” readers not to read the appeal letter, by contrast, aim at stimulating the readers’ curiosity to see what the main theme of the fund-raising appeal letter is.

segment 3 *Can you stop reading and think about something else?*

segment 4 *This is a letter about children in war, so stop reading and switch your attention to something more pleasurable, such as what you’ll have for dinner, or what’s on the television tonight.*

Quoted from the seventh and eighth segments of the text as another illustration:

segment 7 *Are you still with me?*

segment 8 *Good, because statistically speaking about 30% of readers normally would have stopped by the time they read that fact.*

The segments 7 and 8 are also promotional attention devices which aim to “maintain the attention” of readers by “cross-checking” readers if they are still there to read the message.

4.2.2 Involvement of readers – Using “you”

According to Smith (1996: 113), ““you” is the word that used most frequently in the fundraising letters”. True or not, it is indeed used very frequently. Tannen (1989; 2005) also highlights that the use of the words “you” and “I” is critical as they provide human interest. She (1898: 27) clearly points out that “Stories, anecdotes, and common names have some of the same effect - but the most powerful way to engage the reader is by appealing directly to her: use the word “you”. That is an involvement device which is aimed to make the reader particular, which increases the possibility to solicit response successfully.”

Examples:

Text 1:

Seg.

3 *Can **you** stop reading and think about something else?*

4 *so stop reading and switch **your** attention to something more pleasurable, such as what **you**’ll have for dinner...*

7 *Are **you** still with me?*

25 ***Yours** sincerely*

Text 2:

Seg.

4 *Oxfam is glad **you** can read this letter.*

20 *What can **YOU** do?*

26 *Thank **you** for **your** joining our work **AGAINST** poverty and **FOR** education.*

32 ***You**’ll be helping children get an education, and their families get out of poverty.*

As can be seen from the sample appeal letters 1 and 2, it is known to everybody that letters are meant to establish a dialogue with a “you”. While the pronoun “you” appears in various positions in the textual structure, the letters show it in those steps where the anticipated success of the reader’s donation (response) is described, e.g. “you can help 4 women to build energy-saving stoves...” It seems that here the textual structure works together with style in some multiple functions. The use of “you” in the letter format has some relational closing (quoted in Bhatia 1993: 55) which aims at establishing good “business relations”, and maybe some emotional satisfaction.

Relational closing is to add involvement with readers at the end of text by using an involvement device. “You” is an involvement device, and the “relational closing of you” functions to increase response from readers by being a reminder and also adding more involvement with readers in the text. That is the reason of why “soliciting response or support” is always found near the closing of the appeal letters. All examples showing the relational closing of “you” are listed as follows:

Examples:

Text 1:

Segment

- 24 **You've** come this far, all we ask of **you** now is to put aside a minute to fill in the donation form and change the life of a child.
- 25 **Yours** sincerely (Complimentary close)

Text 2:

Segment

- 26 Thank **you** for **your** joining our work AGAINST poverty and FOR education.
- 32 **You'll** be helping children get an education, and their families get out of poverty. (the last sentence)

To conclude, by using "you - an involvement device" in appeal letters, it is meant to add more involvement with readers and then solicit responses from them. In addition, assuming that the writer and the reader have the same or very similar beliefs and values, the appeal letters set out to influence conduct in a very specific way - "relational closing"; that is, to get responses from readers to send in a contribution.

5. Conclusion

Based on those two appeal letters in Hong Kong, the findings appear to reveal that there is a hybrid form of promotional genre in philanthropic discourse, according to Bhatia's (1998) generic patterns in fund-raising discourse framework. There are similar structural moves of advertising, although the move sequences could vary according to different texts. However, the move of "introducing the cause" is always found at the very beginning because readers are more interested to realise what the main theme of the appeal letter is. In addition, appeal letters are found to be modelled in promotional genre, in which they are promotional strategies of attracting attention from readers – using "you" and marked devices of attention getters. The findings in this study appear to be in line with the argument that promotional concerns have influenced the nature of philanthropic discourse. Finally, the data collection is limited to only two appeal letters from two organisations; however, this study can be treated as an exploratory one to investigate how the appeal letters can be modelled in promotional genre.

References

- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: language use in professional settings*. London: Longman.
- Bhatia, V. K., (1997). Genre-mixing in academic introductions, *English for Specific Purposes*, 16, 3, 181-196.
- Bhatia, V. K. (1998). Generic patterns in fundraising discourse, *New Directions for Philanthropic Fundraising*. 22, 95–110.
- Bhatia, V.K. (2004). *Worlds of written discourse: A genre-based view*, London and New York: Continuum.
- Bhatia, V.K. (2008). Genre analysis, ESP and professional practice', *English for Specific Purposes* 27, 161-74.
- Bhatia, V.K. (2010). Interdiscursivity in professional communication', *Discourse and Communication*, 4/1, 32-50.
- Clarke, S. & Norton, M. (1997). *The complete fundraising handbook*. London: Directory of social change.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketisation of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse and Society*. 4 (2): 133-68.
- Featherstone, M. (2007). *Consumer culture and postmodernism*. London: Sage.
- Mann, W. & Thompson, S. (1992). *Discourse description: Diverse linguistic analyses of a fund-raising text*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.
- Rotzoll, K. B., Haefner, J. E., & Sandage, C. H. (1986). *Advertising in contemporary society*. West Chicago, IL: South-Western Publishing Company.
- Smith, G. (1996). *Asking properly: The art of creative metaphor*. San Diego: Academic Press.
- Tannen, D. (1989). *Talking voices: Repetition, dialogue and imagery in conversational discourse*. New York: Cambridge University Press
- Tannen, D. (2005). *Conversational style: Analyzing talk among friends*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Weinstein, S. (2009). *The complete guide to fundraising management*. N.J.: John Wiley & Sons.
- Wharton, C. (2015). *Advertising: Critical approaches*. Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge.