

LEXICAL AND GENERAL GRAMMATICAL FEATURES OF INFORMED CONSENT FORM TEMPLATES FOR DENTAL TREATMENT

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The profession of dentistry is now known as one of the highly standardized, scientifically based and technology-advanced oral health service. Dentistry discourse regarded from the point of view of 'professional discourse' as proposed by Sarangi and Roberts (1999), Gotti's notion of 'specialist discourse' (2003) reflects the complexity of subject matter knowledge, social networks, workplace environment, shared set of values. Thorough study of conventional textualized forms of communication, genres, can contribute to better insight into better understanding of professional discourse development.

The practice of informed consent is a working standard in Western health care systems and clinical research, but linguistic characteristics of this genre, which determine the readability and understandability of the template texts, have been paid surprisingly little attention to. This study is aimed at investigating some lexical features (average word length, use of technical words and general service words) and general grammatical features (word classes, sentence structure) of informed consent forms for dental treatment.

The major procedural steps include preparing the corpus made up of 50 templates used in the USA medical settings licensed to provide various dental services; linguistic analysis of the texts; quantitative rating of occurrence for each linguistic characteristic mentioned above by using Wordstat, Microsoft Word, and interpretations of the data obtained.

Though the templates are designed for various kinds of dental treatment, e.g. tooth extraction, endodontic treatment, tooth whitening, etc., they are highly stereotyped in text structure and vocabulary and cover the information on the nature and purpose of the treatment, potential risks and benefits, common complications, available alternatives. The content of informed consent has been primarily framed through the language of medicine and law, but linguistics means should be chosen fairly explicit for lay persons. The mean length of word in the templates is 5,42 characters that is slightly over the average and may be more complicated for perception; while the mean length of the sentence is 18 words that is normal for an English sentence ranging from 15 to 20 words. An average informed consent template includes about 630 words, the 43% of them are technical words, e.g., *endodontic treatment*, *pulpotomy*, *composites*; 6,21% of words are of law vocabulary and 28% are qualified as general academic words. As for word classes, nouns are predominant, that is characteristic of specialized discourse. Simple sentences make up 64% and typically comprise a few homogenous elements. Complex sentences are more prevalent over compound sentences.

In conclusion, inappropriate language in templates can impede decision making and requires additional resources for their better comprehending.

Key words: *dentistry discourse, informed consent for dental treatment, genre, lexical and grammatical features.*