

PRAGMATIC AND COMMUNICATIVE ASPECTS OF CASE REPORTS IN DENTISTRY

Nowadays dentistry is considered as well established professional discourse community, and research in dentistry has become highly important not only to the professionals in dentistry but also to society [1, p. 10]. Oral diseases are known to be the fourth most expensive diseases to treat [2]. Moreover, the World Health Organization has integrated oral health into its chronic disease prevention efforts "as the risks to health are linked." [3]. The goal of dentistry discourse is to develop and disseminate new knowledge on the anatomy and physiology of areas of dentist's care, which include not only patients' teeth and gums but also the muscles of the head, neck and jaw, the tongue, salivary glands, the nervous system of the head and neck; on state-of-the-art approaches in diagnosis, treatment and prevention of diseases or conditions of the above mentioned areas. The case report genre plays an important role in this process, as it not only contributes in constructing scientific knowledge, but also promotes social networking among dentists and dental communities all over the world. F. Salager-Meyer [4, p. 152] classifies case reports as one of the four major types of written medical texts, together with editorials, review articles, and research papers. However, there have been made only few efforts to specify the textual characteristics of the medical case reports, or case series, or case series reports (T. Nissen and R. Wynn, 2012, C. Ramesh and J. Bycroft, 2004, K Hunter, 1991). But it looks like the dentistry case reports are the most underrated by scholars of genre studies. The objective of this article is to highlight the pragmatic and communicative characteristics of the dentistry case reports in order to deepen the understanding about this written variety and how to employ it in ESP classes.

Having analyzed the definitions of the case report presented in the special dictionaries and relevant literature (M. Fillyaw M., 2011, A. Jamjoom, A. Nikkar-Esfahani A, J. Fitzgerald, 2009, D. Venes, 2008, we adopted the following definition:

is a genre, a narrative in the professional literature that identifies a single incident and discusses pertinent factors related to the patient, including the presenting signs and symptoms, diagnostic studies, treatment course and outcome.

The study corpus consisted of 20 dentistry case reports published within 10 last years in three different, but highly respected dentistry journals: *British Dental Journal*, *The Journal of the American Dental Association*, and *Oral Health Case Reports*. These are peer-reviewed scientific journals with high impact factor known for rapid dissemination of high-quality research.

The dentistry case reports from the selected corpus were subjected to a bipartite analysis: they were studied in terms of their pragmatic and communicative peculiarities. In the most general sense, pragmatic and communicative dimensions involve socio-cultural, psycholinguistic, discourse-centred and functional aspects.

The dentistry case reports may be presented under the special headings, e.g. “Practice” in *BDJ*, or may be included into more general section as “Original contributions” in *JADA*.

The communicative aims of this genre are to inform and to convince readers of unusualness or novelties referring oral diseases or conditions, diagnosis, treatment, outcomes, side effects. Thus, the dentistry case studies serve as a stepping stone for further trials and research by contributing in generating new ideas, hypothesis. They are also helpful for dental specialists who are seeking a solution for a particular clinical case they have faced in daily practice; dentistry case reports are of a strong educational value in present day evidence-based medical practice, both for students and dental practitioners. Moreover, this type of dentistry prose authored by dental clinicians can promote communication between practicing clinicians and academic researchers by sharing knowledge and experience.

The analysis of the corpus texts has demonstrated some variations within the genre. Along with the case reports in their conventional format, we have found some publications imbibing elements from other types of dentistry academic written texts that is accented in their title, e.g.: *Severe oropharyngeal trauma caused by toothbrush – case report and review of 13 cases* [5];(2) *Orofacial*

presentations of sarcoidosis – a case series and review of the literature [6]; Characteristics and treatment of invasive cervical resorption in vital teeth. A narrative review and a report of two cases [7]. This can be explained by the author's aim to achieve maximum argumentative effects

Understanding the characteristics of dentistry discourse, the diversity of communication patterns within the discourse and mechanisms of their generating requires not only professional insight but also academic literacy. Knowing the pragmatic, communicative, and stylistic features of dentistry case reports helps to produce this type of publications, which have been integral components of medical literature.

References

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