

Variation in Phrase-Frames and Rhetorical Moves: A Corpus-Based Approach to a Non-Academic Genre

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Abstract

This study explores variations in the connection between phrase-frames (p-frames) and rhetorical moves within a non-academic genre across different media types. Employing a corpus-based genre approach, it analyses a Footballer Obituary Corpus (FOC) of 50 texts drawn from broadsheets, tabloids, institutional obituaries, radio, and video platforms, with a total of 44,957 tokens. The research identifies patterns of linguistic and rhetorical features across media, employing a novel time-based rhetorical framework to categorise communicative moves.

The findings reveal significant variation in how p-frames are employed across media. For example, while tabloid texts focus on announcing death with straightforward p-frames, broadsheets and institutional sources also highlight professional achievements. The study notes disparities in the prevalence of specific rhetorical moves, with “Recognition as an Established Professional” (Move T-4) dominating in most media, except in radio, which uses emotionally resonant language. Methodologically, the study integrates a function-first approach to move annotation and a frequency-dispersion threshold tailored to the small corpus size.

Despite the limited size of the corpus, the study highlights how linguistic forms align with rhetorical functions within a multimodal and cross-media framework. It further introduces a time-based move structure and underscores the importance of semantic grouping in p-frame analysis. These insights extend the scope of corpus-based genre studies into non-academic domains and demonstrate the utility of p-frames in understanding genre-specific communicative strategies.

Keywords: corpus-based genre studies, phrase-frames (p-frames), rhetorical moves, linguistic variation, time-based rhetorical framework, obituaries

1. Introduction

This study addresses the following research question: What variation exists in the associations between frequently occurring phrase-frames and rhetorical moves in a non-academic corpus, that of obituaries, in different media platforms? It takes a corpus-based genre studies approach to answering this research question. A recent trend in genre studies focuses on combining rhetorical move analysis and corpus linguistic methods, referred to as corpus-based genre studies, to identify the recurring linguistic patterns of disciplinary genres together with rhetorical features. A corpus is a large, principled collection of texts, stored electronically. A corpus can include written texts such as books, articles, or web content, as well as spoken texts like transcriptions of speeches or conversations. Researchers use corpora (plural form of corpus) to examine patterns in language use, such as frequency of words, collocations (i.e., habitual word pairings like *strong coffee* or *heavy rain*), grammatical structures, and stylistic features. Corpus linguistic research provides insights into how language is used in different contexts and can be applied in various areas such as language teaching, lexicography, and language processing. (Lindquist & Levin, 2018; Huston, 2002; Biber et al., 2004). A corpus-based approach refers to using data from corpora to inform research or analysis in linguistics or other language-related fields. This approach leverages the large quantity of data available in corpora to identify patterns and trends in language use. It allows researchers to make evidence-based conclusions about language phenomena, often using quantitative methods to assess linguistic features (McEnery et al., 2006; Biber et al., 2007).

Rhetorical move analysis is a method used to study the rhetorical structures of texts within specific community genres (Swales, 1990, 2004; Moreno & Swales, 2018). This method uses a dance analogy to describe how broader

moves are carried out through more detailed steps. Rhetorical move analysis guides writers' decision-making based on the rhetorical and linguistic expectations of community members as they participate in genre practices seen as "structured communicative events" (Swales, 1990, p. 45). Moves are defined as coherent communicative functions in texts (Swales, 2004). They are dependent on genre and are seen as functional units rather than formal ones (Swales, 2004, p. 229), serving a specific local purpose while contributing to the overall communicative goal of the genre. Moves can be realised in various text sizes, such as paragraphs, sentences, or phrases. Steps are more definite functional segments of a text that support the realisation of rhetorical moves, acting as building blocks for moves.

Rhetorical move analysis originated with Swales (1981), who explored the recurrent rhetorical structures in the introduction sections of academic research articles. This seminal work recognised four moves that writers commonly used in introductions. Swales (1990) presented the Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model, which consisted of three moves: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying a niche. While Swales is known for developing rhetorical move analysis, other scholars such as Bhatia (1993) have also contributed to its evolution by focusing on professional genres like sales promotion letters. Even though the genres of academic English have been the primary focus of most move analyses, the approach can be used on all written or spoken genre. By systematically analysing the moves and steps, rhetorical move analysis offers a nuanced understanding of the writers' or speakers' persuasive techniques and how they construct their argument (Biber, 2007).

Corpus-based genre studies involve analysing texts within a corpus to identify the linguistic characteristics and rhetorical conventions associated with each genre (Lu et al., 2021). This type of analysis can provide insights into how genres are structured, the rhetorical strategies they employ, and the expectations readers have when engaging with texts from a particular genre (Dong & Lu, 2020; Flowerdew, 1999, 2012, 2015). The ability to recognise language patterns from large amounts of texts, big-data, gives this approach a quantitative empirical foundation to the results that emerge.

Genres have specific communicative aims within a discourse community. Rhetorical features are linguistic and stylistic elements that contribute to the persuasive and communicative effectiveness of a text, and that text belongs to a genre. These features can include the organisation of information, use of cohesive devices, the choice of vocabulary and tone, as well as appeals to ethos (credibility), logos (logic), and pathos (emotion). Rhetorical features play a key role in shaping the impact of a text on its audience.

Recent corpus-based genre studies have placed focus on, among other areas, formulaic sequences, lexical bundles (n-grams) and phrase-frames, in the rhetorical construction (move) of academic genres (Cortes, 2013; Le & Harrington, 2015; Yoon & Casal, 2020). Lexical bundles are recurrent sequences of words, typically three or more in length, that appear with high frequency across texts within a specific register or genre (Biber & Conrad, 1999; Conrad & Biber, 2005; Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Biber, Conrad, & Cortes, 2004). They are considered to be building blocks of fluent discourse, contributing to both meaning and coherence. For example, *on the other hand* is a common lexical bundle used to introduce a contrasting point or argument; *in terms of* is frequently used in academic and professional writing to specify a particular aspect or dimension of a topic; *as a result of* is often used to indicate causation or consequence in discourse; *for the most part* is a typical lexical bundle used to express a generalisation or predominant characteristic.

Phrase-frames, also known as p-frames, are a concept used in corpus linguistics to identify recurring syntactic structures with a variable slot (Yoon & Casal, 2020). P-frames are disjointed groupings of word "n-grams with an internal variable slot" (Römer, 2010, p. 103). They represent sets of n-grams (sequences of words) that share the same structure except for one word, which can be replaced with a variety of options depending on the context. For example, in the p-frame *it is important to [verb]*, the variable slot is represented by a verb; the frame could generate instances such as *it is important to understand*, *it is important to consider*, or *it is important to acknowledge*. In the following structure, *the purpose of [noun] is*, the variable slot can be filled with a noun, for instance, *the purpose of education is*, *the purpose of research is*, or *the purpose of travel is* are all possible variations. *[Noun] is a type of*, this p-frame uses a noun slot at the beginning of the sentence, examples might include *music is a type of art*, *python is a type of programming language*, or *rice is a type of grain*.

Discourse studies involving n-grams and p-frames often focus on "various interrelated levels of analysis at the same time: identification of communicative purpose(s), schematic structure, grammatical features, lexical features, etc." (Flowerdew, 2002, p. 95). These analyses probe the connection between formulaic expressions and communicative purposes through rhetorical moves and steps (Swales, 1990, 2004). The identification of n-grams and p-frames has been ongoing since the late 1970s.

The emphasis on this area of research is at least in part motivated by genre theorists' understanding that genre

competence entails knowledge and mastery of at least formal and rhetorical domains of genre practices (Tardy, 2009). Corpus-based genre analysis connects linguistic features with rhetorical moves. The vast majority of them have focused on academic genres, yet less attention has been given to non-academic (Casal & Kessler, 2024, p. 101). Using a corpus-based genre approach, Cortes (2013), for example, analysed lexical bundles in a corpus of research article introductions. She found that many bundles correlated with the realisation of specific rhetorical moves. Further, as Cortes underscores, “many genres have not been studied from a corpus-driven formulaic language perspective... there are still many written registers that need to be explored through their use of bundles and p-frames, particularly specific registers that are not academic” (2024, pp. 122–123). Studying non-academic genres from a corpus-based genre approach can give insights into the form-function relationship within texts. This can demonstrate that some functions are achieved with specific forms in determined genres.

In terms of methodological orientations, most corpus-based genre studies typically employ a form-first approach, wherein instances of target linguistic features are initially extracted and then assigned specific rhetorical move tags (Cortes, 2013; Omidian et al., 2018). Acknowledging the potential limitations of this approach regarding the reliability of determining rhetorical moves in local contexts, other researchers have embraced a function-first approach (Lu et al., 2020). This method involves annotating a corpus of texts with rhetorical moves, enabling a more dependable analysis of instances of target linguistic features concerning the rhetorical goals they serve. This line of research, corpus-based genre studies focusing on form and function, has enhanced our comprehension of how writers’ use of linguistic features typical of disciplinary genres is function-specific (Durrant & Mathews-Aydinli, 2011).

Software like Collocate (Barlow, 2004), or Antconc and Antgram (Anthony, 2021, 2022) or KfNgram (Fletcher, 2012) can be used to carry out n-gram and p-frame analysis. The analysis of the semantic grouping of p-frames fillers is a particularly productive area of this research. The fillers are analysed, no matter how frequent they are, classifying them into semantic groups. This can help identify specific semantic domains and create groups of fillers with strong semantic relationships. Mbodj (2021) demonstrated the semantic groupings of a many p-frame fillers in her analysis of published medical discourse.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Corpus Creation

The present study’s corpus consists of 50 texts written in English referring to 10 recently deceased football players. After careful consideration it was decided to work only within one discourse domain, football, to avoid a further variable that could influence variation. Future studies could focus on other discourse domains, but it was considered out of the scope of this current study. 10 people (50 texts) were chosen as it is a good number of texts to learn and test methods of analysis, which was feasible within the time-frame of the current study. Only obituaries created within five years of the time of research were chosen. This was to reduce another possible variable, that of diachronic change. Although not all British, all the football players chosen had a strong connection with British football having participated within that discourse community for the most part of their lives.

For each player, the corpus contains a written obituary from a tabloid newspaper (Daily Mail, Daily Express, Mirror, and so on), a written obituary from a broadsheet newspaper (Guardian, Telegraph, Independent, and so on), a written obituary from a non-journalistic institution the deceased was associated with (Tottenham Hotspur FC, Manchester United FC, England Football, and so on); a spoken obituary from radio (BBC Radio 4); and a video obituary from any source (BBC, Guardian, Manchester United FC, and so on). These media- and text-types were chosen as they encompass both the traditional and emerging media of obituary communication.

To compile a workable corpus, first a list of recently deceased players was compiled. This list included over 20 players. During the text gathering stage, it was also noted that radio and video obituaries were the most uncommon, so these were identified first through BBC Radio (for Radio obituaries) and YouTube for video obituaries. When 10 radio and video obituaries had been identified, the broadsheet, tabloid and institutional obituaries for the deceased footballers were searched. There was ample choice in this media and sampling was organised to achieve the largest range of publication sources so as to be more representative of the text- and media- type i.e., not to have all broadsheet obituaries from the Guardian, or all tabloid obituaries from the Daily Mail. The radio and video obituary texts were transcribed and then transferred to text files, whereas the tabloid, broadsheet and institutional texts were transferred to text files. Then the whole corpus was cleaned: removal of irrelevant content, headers and footers, special characters, URL’s and email addresses, cleaning white space, dealing with ambiguities like photo captions. After cleaning the corpus, the total word count for the Footballer Obituary Corpus (FOC) is 44957 tokens. Appendix A provides links to the sources from which the corpus was compiled. Table 1 provides a description of the corpus:

Table 1. Description of the Footballer Obituary Corpus

Footballer	Media type					Total tokens
	Radio tokens	Video tokens	Broadsheet tokens	Tabloid tokens	Institutional tokens	
Terry Venables	1086	214	2439	1116	612	5467
Bobby Charlton	1263	221	1901	1906	1017	6308
Trevor Francis	1115	192	1305	587	422	3621
Craig Brown	1052	157	989	1187	919	4304
Gianluca Vialli	1233	125	887	1121	1568	4934
Jimmy Greaves	1064	0	2234	1372	608	5278
Nobby Stiles	910	401	1320	883	342	3856
Ray Wilkins	1137	0	791	570	599	3097
Cyrille Regis	792	55	1226	793	427	3293
Jack Charlton	1321	94	2096	846	442	4799
Total	10973	1459	15188	10381	6956	44957

As can be seen from Table 1, the corpus was divided into five sub-corpora according to media type. The total token for each media type is given in the bottom row whereas the total token for each player is given in the right-hand column. As can be seen here, the broadsheet sub-corpus has the most tokens, the radio and tabloid sub-corpora are of similar length. The institutional sub-corpus is the smallest written sub-corpus, but the video sub-corpus stands out as using very few tokens.

2.2 Rhetorical Framework

A rhetorical moves framework was developed on the basis of established research using the methods of Swales (2004) on the topic framework finding of Moses and Marelli (2004). A rhetorical move is genre-dependent, defined as a “functional, not a formal, unit”, Swales (2004, p. 229). The texts were annotated according to the conventions of this specialised move analysis. The aim was to identify the rhetorical structure of the genre as well as how the communicative purposes are realised through various moves. According to Hafner (2018), it is important to consider both verbal and visual cues when identifying moves in multimodal genres. Researchers have not reached a consensus as to the best way to recognise and code moves in a text and is a delicate context-dependent process that has often not been completely transparent, even in the EAP and SLA traditions.

...one of the most persistent issues facing rhetorical move analysis is that of methodological transparency (and subsequently, *reproducibility*). Move-step identification and demarcation of rhetorical boundaries are inherently complex and subjective (Casal & Kessler, 2024, p. 96).

A bottom-up or top-down approach can be adopted in the identification of moves. Decisions based on linguistic cues are a bottom-up approach. A top-down approach is when content forms the basis for move identification (Pho, 2008). Adopting a function-first approach, the top-down approach was used in this study.

Consideration was also made of the findings in Sawalmeh (2019) on rhetorical moves in obituaries, but the bottom-up approach adopted in that study rendered it inappropriate for the current research aims. As already mentioned, Moses and Marelli (2004) have created a topic-framework for obituaries. However, this structure method omits and overlaps information about the deceased (e.g., “Achievement” would overlap with “Fame”), and there is no space for future impact of the deceased in this model. It was also noted that this model gives no attention to the treatment of time in a genre that deals overwhelmingly with biographical details. It also does not involve textual times and real times which become even more important in video obituaries as there can be multiple times working at once. For this reason, a time-based structural annotation method was created to tag the relevant sections of the texts.

The time-structure places the moment of text production at 0 with “+” after text production and “-” before text production. The texts were analysed according to the framework in Table 2:

Table 2. Rhetorical Moves Framework Used

T+1	Future reactions, consequences and predictions
T 0	Time of text production
T-1	Death
T-2	Tribulations
T-3	Breakthrough & moments of success
T-4	Recognition as an established professional
T-5	Early employment & assignments
T-6	Schooling and training
T-7	Birth and early childhood
T-8	Pre-birth
T-A	Extra-activity of the deceased
T-NT	(no-time) other e.g. family association.

An example of a text analysed for rhetorical moves using this framework has been included in Appendix B to support replicability.

2.3 P-frames Analysis

For the analysis of p-frames, AntConc (Anthony, 2021), a corpus analysis tool, was used following the methods of Casal and Kessler (2020). There are two important criteria that need to be established in conducting phraseological analysis: frequency and dispersion. Frequency refers to how often a word appears in a corpus usually calculated per million words. It is a raw count of how many times a particular word is encountered. Dispersion describes how evenly a word is distributed throughout the corpus. A high dispersion means the word appears consistently across different sections of the corpus, while a low dispersion indicates the word is clustered in specific parts. Previous research has set different frequency and dispersion thresholds for lexical bundles (Biber & Barbieri, 2007; Bychkovska & Lee, 2017; Gray & Biber, 2013). This criterion is used as a safeguard against idiosyncratic uses from individual writers (Biber et al., 2004). Although a few studies have set the dispersion threshold to three texts (e.g., Ädel & Erman, 2012), most studies have established the requirement of bundles to occur in at least five texts (e.g., Cortes, 2004, 2008, 2013; Biber et al., 1999, 2004).

A methodological issue arose here in the setting of frequency and dispersion threshold levels for p-frames due to the small body of literature identifying thresholds and the dependence of those thresholds on the size and type of corpus. This echoes the same difficulties met by Liu and Chen (2022), Grabowski (2015); and Golparvar and Barabadi (2020). The thresholds were unavoidably subjective but were guided by the aforementioned published literature. To determine a balanced combination of frequency and dispersion thresholds appropriate for the size of the current corpus and to keep the data in a manageable size for further manual analysis, preliminary analyses were conducted using a range of combinations of cut-off points following Gray and Biber (2013) and Lu et al. (2018).

Initially, p-frames consisting of five and six words were chosen for examination, in line with Lu et al.'s (2018) observation that 4-word frames may lack linguistic cohesion and completeness. Nonetheless, the corpus provided few six-word frames, all of which were part of the identified five-word frames. This is a consequence of the size of the corpus as it was small (Lee, 2009). Typically, normalised frequency in phraseology research ranges from 20 to 40 occurrences per million words (Biber et al., 2004). However, previous research has shown that many bundles appear over 100 (Cortes, 2004) and even over 200 times per million words (Pan et al., 2016).

Due to the small size of this study, it was finally decided to extract five-word p-frames that appeared more than 30 times per million words. Additionally, the p-frames needed to appear in 3 or more texts, and at least one text in each of the five text type groupings. This would be in line with thresholds suggested for small sized corpora (Liu & Chen, 2022; Golparvar & Barabadi, 2020). Following Yoon and Casal (2020), p-frames with variable slots in the initial or final position were included. Using the AntConc n-gram tool with an n-gram size of 5 with an open slot setting of 1, lists of p-frames were produced. These lists were manually cleaned and checked for repetition, and a final list of p-frames was compiled.

The list of p-frames produced by AntConc underwent a thorough process of manual cleaning and verification, this involved the deletion of repetitions, p-frames that linguistically crossed clausal boundaries, or that lacked semantic coherence. A manual review of the p-frame occurrences was conducted and variants within context and the final list of five-word p-frames was established. Excel was used throughout the study to organise the p-frames and related data on variants and their corresponding rhetorical functions. This was done to connect form and function across the different media types and to analyse the potential variations that might exist.

3. Results

3.1 Variation Between Phrase-Frames and Rhetorical Moves

In answering this question, it is important to compare p-frame results between different text types, p-frame results of different moves between different text types as well as p-frame results between different moves. Table 3 illustrate the p-frames in the various media- and text-types with the frequencies normalised to one million words.

Table 3. p-frame 5

Broadsheet		Tabloid		Institutional		Radio		Video	
p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq
in the + cup final	317	the age of + a	482	to the + finals of	720	the + he was a	365		
for + world cup in	211	died + the age of	385	to + of the passing	576	he + a very very	273		
he + survived by his	211	has + at the age	385	at the + of the	576	i + that that s	273		
in + european cup final	211	died at + age of	385	to learn + the passing	576	to + one of the	273		
is + by his wife	211	has died + the age	385	are + saddened to learn	432	was + one of the	273		
the + cup final in	211	died at the + of	385	saddened + learn of the	432	a great + he was	273		
who + died aged was	211	has died at + age	385	was + an mbe in	432	i m + that he	273		
for the + cup in	211			are extremely + to learn	432	he was a + very	273		
he is + by his	211			at this + sad time	432	he was the + of	273		
is survived + his wife	211			saddened to + of the	432	the rest of + life	273		
who has + aged was	211			was a + of the	432				
for the world + in	211								
he is survived + his	211								
is survived by + wife	211								
that won the + cup	211								
the world cup + in	211								
who has died + was	211								

From these results it can be seen that the different text types employ a different range of 5-word p-frames to achieve the same communicative aims. For example, the tabloid sub-corpus has exclusively p-frames that communicate the death, whereas the broadsheets and institutional sub-corpora have p-frames that express not only the death but also the area of activity of the deceased (football). This would suggest that the communicative focus of the text types is different. These results however should be considered as only preliminary as the corpus is too small to be conclusive (Lee, 2009), further studies should focus on this aspect to confirm or contradict this claim.

In answering the second part of this question, p-frame results of different moves between different text types, a comparison of the moves from the various text types was carried out. Among the different moves in the corpus, T-4 and T-0 occurred in all texts in four of the five media types. These two moves also included all the p-frames present in this small corpus. In other moves such as T-2, T-5 and so on, there were no 5-word p-frames that met the threshold and distribution criteria. Move T-0 can be exemplified with instances like: *who has + aged was; to learn + the passing*. All the rest of the p-frames occurred in move T-4. Table 4 illustrates the p-frames for move T-4 across the text types. For reasons of illustration, move 4 was chosen as it is the most dominant compulsory move, although all the other moves belonged to T-0. It should also be pointed out that there were no instances that satisfied the selection criteria for the video sub-corpus at all, this is why no video p-frames table are present.

Table 4. p-frame 5 Move T-4

Broadsheet		Tabloid		Institutional		Radio		Video	
p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq	p-frame	Norm Freq
in the + cup final	317			to the + finals of	720	the + he was a	365		
for + world cup in	211			the + finals of the	576	he + a very very	273		
in + european cup final	211			at the + of the	576	i + that that s	273		
the + cup final in	211			was + an mbe in	432	to + one of the	273		
for the + cup in	211			was a + of the	432	was + one of the	273		
for the world + in	211					a great + he was	273		
that won the + cup	211					i m + that he	273		
the world cup + in	211					he was a + very	273		
						he was the + of	273		
						the rest of + life	273		

Move T-4 (Recognition as an established professional) deals with the professional achievements of the deceased. As is to be expected, there is a predominance of p-frames dealing with football like: *the + cup final in, as + player he was*. This would go some way in supporting Mbodj's (2021) findings who suggested that, analysing the fillers and the collocates of fillers, aid identification of specific semantic domains and can form groups of fillers with strong semantic relationships. These current results support the notion that an important step in the analysis of p-frames is the semantic grouping of their fillers. This would be particularly important when expanding the current study to a larger corpus of varied professionals and not just football players. Common words in the variable slots include: *cup, final, European, world*.

What stands out from these results is the difference of the move T-4 radio sub-corpora p-frames compared to the others as they do not deal with football but have a rhetorical effect that is potentially in line with the aims of T-4: *he + a very very*. Other observations worthy of note are the non-football orientated p-frames in the other text types; for example, *was awarded + mbe in*. The perlocutionary effect is to assign recognition as an established professional, even if not directly to do with football, although the awarding of an MBE was also due to the player's lifetime contribution to their discourse community.

Considering structural differences, it can be noted that there are more verb-phrase p-frames in the institutional sub-corpus compared to the others. The tabloid sub-corpus results in only noun-phrase and preposition p-frames. In the radio sub-corpus there are only clausal p-frames. In the lexical bundles literature, bundles have referential, discourse organising, and stance functions. It would be logical to extend this notion to p-frames, even though there is little literature on this issue. There were no patterns of this type identifiable from these results, for this type of analysis a larger corpus would need to be created.

This corpus proved to be too small to give generalisable results in answering this research question. However, the systems adopted are well-grounded and with a larger corpus could produce more nuanced results.

4. Conclusion

This study addressed the following research question: What variation exists in the associations between frequently occurring phrase-frames and rhetorical moves in a non-academic corpus, that of obituaries, in different media platforms? Using a corpus-based genre approach, the present study examined the variation in the rhetorical structure and linguistic realisations of this structure, focusing on p-frames, across five media types of a non-academic genre, that of the obituary, using the Football Obituary Corpus made up of 50 texts totalling 44957 tokens.

First a taxonomy of moves was established, this can be seen in Table 2. The results showed that there was significant variation between media- and text-types in the status of move-stability: broadsheets give more emphasis to T3 (Breakthrough & moments of success) and T-7 (Birth and early childhood) and less emphasis to T2 (Tribulations), tabloids emphasise T-1 (Death) but there is the total omission of T-1 (Death) in radio obituaries.

How these moves are dealt with across the text- and media types was shown to be very different. The ability to track how each move is dealt with would be an important innovation, even if dealing with small but important moves, as was the case for T-0 as well as larger and more dominant moves like T-4. This could also be further developed as it would also be informative to see how a particular move is dealt with in a text and in relation to other moves. For example, T-0 was often a very small but appeared at the beginning and the end of the whole text, framing the contents. Another example is the use of T3 and T4, that were predominate moves, but that were often

not dealt with in one specific section of the text, but that were used at various moments, interspersed with T-2s or T5s or T-6s. This tracking of moves could contribute to a better understanding of how a narrative within a text is formed and would contrast the highly regimented structure demonstrated in research article genre results.

The corpus proved to be too small to yield meaningful results on a comprehensive analysis of the relationship between p-frames and moves and the variations. However, the results did suggest that there was a variation in T-4 between media types, especially regarding the radio sub-corpus. The findings also supported the notion (Mbodj, 2021) that by analysing the fillers and their collocates it can help identify specific semantic domains and create groups of fillers with strong semantic relationships. This would be important to focus on when expanding the current study to a larger corpus involving more discourse domains beyond football.

Beyond answering the specific research question, this study also brought to light a number of other interesting issues worthy of note. Firstly, the development of the Time-based Rhetorical moves analysis. Although not a response to the specific research question, it can also be considered a research product. This framework still needs development, especially the identification of the steps needed to enact the identified moves. For example, the use of 3rd party testimonials that was particularly abundant in the radio and tabloid sub-corpora, could be considered a step in the achieving of move T-4.

This study can be criticised due the size of the corpus that makes the results ungeneralisable, the lack of a thorough and quantitative multimodal analysis, and the omission of a steps-level framework for more granulated analysis. The size of the corpus was kept small to develop and check methods before embarking on larger research. The methodology can now be considered ready for application to larger corpora. Regarding the multimodal analysis, it was decided to dedicate less attention to this aspect so as not to detract from the main focus of the research, also due to the fact that there are no automated corpus-based multimodal analysis tools currently available, so any research in this direction would need to develop such a tool. With the Rhetorical structure moves framework validated, a steps-level framework can now be developed for greater granularity of analysis. These aspects all feature as future possible areas of research.

Despite potential these shortcomings, this research offers new results and methods that also stimulate further research: including: increasing the size and diversity of the corpus; comparing results across different discourse domains (footballers, musicians, politicians, and so on); carrying out diachronic analyses comparing results across time; conducting enhanced corpus-based multimodal analysis, through the development of automated tools which are currently unavailable; developing a step-level framework for Rhetorical structure analysis for greater granularity.

In spite of these limitations, using a corpus-based genre approach to the analysis of variation in the non-academic genre of obituaries has given some important insights into rhetorical structure and phraseological variation. By adapting the methods used on rhetorical structure in research articles by Swales (1990), Lu et al. (2020), Casal and Kessler (2020), Lu et al. (2021), to a non-academic genre, this study has answered gone a long way on answering the research question and has offered some insight into methods of corpus-based genre research on variation in rhetorical moves. By applying a similar analytical lens to a new area of genre studies, it has contributed to this growing area of research. However, in doing so it has also created more lines of enquiry regarding expanding the corpus to obtain more generalisable results, extending the corpus to compare different discourse communities, further developing the rhetorical moves framework, and the tracking of move positioning and distribution.

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Appendix A

Corpus Sources Corpus Texts Organised by Text Type

Player	Radio	Video	Broadsheet	Tabloid	Institutional/ non-journalistic
Terry Venables	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001sv85	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aXnh5EAZygI&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2023/11/26/terry-venables-football-qpr-tottenham-hotspur-england-coach/	https://www.standard.co.uk/sport/football/terry-venables-obituary-b1122890.html	https://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/news/2023/november/obituary-terry-venables/
Bobby Charlton	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001rqz0	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d1lZdAlQFz8&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.theguardian.com/football/2023/oct/21/sir-bobby-charlton-obituary	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-9137879/OBITUARY-Humble-brave-abundantly-talented-Sir-Bobby-Charlton-born-inspiration.html	https://www.manutd.com/en/news/detail/obituary-of-manchester-united-and-england-football-legend-sir-bobby-charlton
Trevor Francis	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001p23x	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nrbwjBsk0SE&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2023/07/24/trevor-francis-birmingham-european-cup-	https://www.express.co.uk/sport/football/11794535/Trevor-Francis-dead-Birmingham-Nottingham-Forest-	https://www.englishfootball.com/articles/2023/Jul/24/football-legend-trevor-francis-obituary-20232407

Craig Brown	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001n8wh	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SJHNCSN20Z0&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.theguardian.com/global/2023/jun/29/craig-brown-obituary	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-12234531/Craig-Brown-obituary-Former-Scotland-boss-innovator-enthusiasm-never-waned.html	https://www.scottishfa.co.uk/news/craig-brown-1940-2023/
Gianluca Vialli	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m001gxfz	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Eqeo9IuoPJ4&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/64188093	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/football/article-11558167/OBITUARY-Gianluca-Vialli-footballs-Lion-King.html	https://www.chelseafc.com/en/news/article/gianluca-vialli-1964-2023
Jimmy Greaves	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000zv8y	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8XZ4sVDURhg&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/jimmy-greaves-obituary-death-tribute-b1922854.html	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-8199375/JEFF-POWELL-Jimmy-Greaves-grand-master-feared-goalscorer-day.html	https://www.tottenhamhotspur.com/news/2021/september/jimmy-greaves/
Nobby Stiles	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/m000p0td	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=916PoFpKSe&ab_channel=ManchesterUnited	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2020/10/30/nobby-stiles-linchpin-englands-1966-world-cup-winning-team/	https://www.mirror.co.uk/sport/football/news/nobby-stiles-obituary-england-1966-22933984	https://www.manutd.com/en/news/detail/tributes-paid-to-nobby-stiles-as-man-utd-legend-passes-away
Ray Wilkins	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09xp16w	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1KB1Cj0v7I&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/ray-wilkins-chelsea-england-captain-died-age-61-obituary-a8289996.html	https://www.express.co.uk/news/obituaries/941655/Ray-Wilkins-dead-obituary-football-England-Chelsea-Manchester-United-AC-Milan	https://www.manutd.com/en/news/detail/obituary-of-ray-wilkins-following-the-news-of-his-passing
Cyrille Regis	https://www.bbc.co.uk/sounds/play/b09m198v	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4SeJebuRkwc&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.telegraph.co.uk/obituaries/2018/01/15/cyrille-regis-footballer-obituary/#:~:text=Cyrille%20Regis%20C%20the%20former%20West,conduct%20off%20the%20pitch%20and	https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sport/sportsnews/article-5269977/Cyrille-Regis-dies-heart-attack-age-59.html	https://www.wba.co.uk/news/2018/january/cyrille-regis-1958-2018
Jack Charlton	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=51HZLzrERJc	https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MZPbe4MLha8&ab_channel=GuardianFootball	https://www.theguardian.com/football/2020/jul/12/jack-charlton-obituary	https://www.standard.co.uk/sport/football/all/jack-charlton-obituary-dead-world-cup-tributes-a4495471.html	https://www.thefa.com/news/2020/jul/11/jack-charlton-110720

Appendix B

Example of Rhetorical Moves Analysis

<p>Terry Venables, colourful figure in English football who coached the national side to the semi-finals of Euro 96 - obituary</p> <p>For his fans, his run-ins with authority only confirmed "El Tel" as a roguish but decent bloke who stuck it to the stuffed shirts at the FA</p>	<p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p> <p>T -2 Tribulations</p> <p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p>
<p>Terry Venables, who has died aged 80,</p> <p>competed at every level for the England football team and went on to manage the national side, leading his players to the semi-finals of Euro 96.</p> <p>His character and talents radically divided opinion: to some he was an unjustly overlooked saviour of the English game, to others a footballing snake-oil salesman who promised far more than he could deliver. Subscribers to the latter opinion could point to a trophy cabinet that hardly groaned with honours: as a player Venables won one League Cup and one FA Cup, while as a manager he led Barcelona to a single La Liga title. His critics also underscored Venables's decidedly dodgy track record in business, a record that saw him accept 19 charges of serious misconduct in 1998 and led to a seven-year ban on being a company director.</p>	<p>T 0 Time of text production</p> <p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p> <p>T -2 Tribulations</p>
<p>But for fans, such run-ins with authority only served to cement Venables's reputation as a charming East End boy-made-good, a roguish but essentially decent bloke who stuck it to the stuffed shirts at the Football Association or in the City in the finest traditions of Arthur Daley or Del Boy Trotter.</p> <p>There was no denying his affability. In the early days of Venables's career most players were largely anonymous figures - "Saturday men" who would appear before fans at the weekend, only to disappear from view again.</p>	<p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p> <p>T -5 Early employment & assignments</p>
<p>He wanted to carve out a much higher profile for himself, and did so often through his off-pitch activities. Aged 17, shortly after being signed by Chelsea, a well-Brylcreemed Venables took to the stage of the Hammersmith Palais to sing with the Joe Loss Orchestra.</p> <p>His determination to stand out irked some, but Venables had a crucial ability to get on with his fellow players, and later, as England manager, developed a rapport with those in the dressing room utterly lacking during the reign of his predecessor, Graham Taylor, or his successor, Glenn Hoddle.</p>	<p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p> <p>T -3 Breakthrough & moments of success</p>
<p>It was not solely rapport, however, that allowed him to mould England into a team that came within an inch of reaching, and probably winning, the final of Euro 96.</p> <p>Venables had already demonstrated genuine technical ability while at Barcelona, where he introduced a high-tempo pressing game at odds with the languorous style he had inherited.</p> <p>With a squad full of talented midfielders and the Euro 96 tournament being staged at home, he encouraged the England side to play fluid, enlightened football, dependent on pace and width and speedy passing interchanges. As "Cool Britannia" revelled in the Britpop age, here was a new and self-confident brand of the national game to match, nowhere better displayed than in a 4-1 victory over the Netherlands.</p> <p>Venables also seemed to extract the best from the notably self-destructive midfielder Paul Gascoigne. It was Gascoigne who pulled England through a turgid display against Scotland with an audacious overhead flick and volleyed goal. And against Germany in the semi-final it was Gascoigne who stretched out a leg, apparently to send his country through to the final, only to miss by an inch. Germany, inevitably, went on to win on penalties.</p>	<p>T -2 Tribulations</p> <p>T -3 Breakthrough & moments of success</p>
<p>For Venables, who was already facing allegations of financial impropriety, which meant that his contract was not renewed by the Football Association, Euro 96 was to prove the high watermark in a career that had lasted 35 years.</p>	<p>T -4 Recognition as an established professional</p>
<p>Despite his troubles, however, he was still linked to almost any managerial vacancy that came up: after a brief stint with Australia, popularity alone seemed to propel him into moves to Portsmouth, Crystal Palace, Middlesbrough and Leeds. All lasted barely a year. But his enduring appeal, to players if not chairmen, was obvious.</p> <p>"He's great," said Steve Archibald, the Scots striker who was Venables's first signing at Barcelona. "He treats everybody like an adult, which isn't a very common thing with football managers. He talks to you on your own level, about many things, and he makes sense. He's confident, but not over-confident. He doesn't brag. But I've never come across anyone in the game who knows more than Venables:"</p>	<p>T -7 Birth and early childhood</p>
<p>Terence Frederick Venables was born on January 6 1943 in his grandparents' house in Dagenham, east London; the house where his mother Myrtle had been staying until then was flattened by the Luftwaffe on January 7. Terry's father Fred, a former goalkeeper for Barking Town, had been inclined to christen his son Duncan, only (so legend has it) to spot an advertisement for Terry's Chocolates on the side of a bus and change his mind.</p>	

<p>Young Terry grew up on housing estates in London and in Wales, where his mother had been born. In his autobiography he recalled playing football as a child in Wales with some friends when the ball smashed through a window. His London instincts propelled him to run, but when he looked back he saw his Welsh friends pooling their pocket money to help pay for the breakage. The guile of his urban upbringing was to compete with the generosity and innocence of Wales for the rest of his life.</p>	
<p>He loved playing football from an early age and established himself as one of the best players at Valence primary school, then at Lymington School - both in Dagenham. "I was already very much "the General" on the field, a bit of a busybody, organising everyone;" he said. When required to identify "What I want to be when I grow up", his response was simple: "I am going to play professional football:"</p>	
<p>His industrious mother was dubious about this proposed course of action, and eventually the two came to an agreement: Terry could pursue a career in football if he managed to get selected for England Schoolboys. From Lymington, Venables was selected for Dagenham in 1956, then for Essex and then, finally, for England.</p>	T -6 Schooling and training
<p>By the time he was 16 he was considered one of the brightest prospects in the game, a utility player in midfield who was being pursued by a host of clubs. "It seemed like half the clubs in England were chasing me;" he said. The Daily Mirror described the hunt for his signature as "the hottest since Stoke City captured Stanley Matthews".</p>	
<p>Though he was a Tottenham fan - aged 12 his autograph book contained the signatures of all Tottenham's players, plus, prophetically, his own scrawl: "Terry Venables, manager of Tottenham" - Venables chose Chelsea, where he quickly broke into the first team.</p>	T -5 Early employment & assignments
<p>There, the manager Tommy Docherty did his best to keep the youngster's attention exclusively on football. It proved an impossible task. Venables showed a restless urge to pursue several ventures at once, backing them with enormous enthusiasm, if not similar quantities of common sense.</p>	
<p>Only such a doomed entrepreneurial spirit could explain The Thingamwig - a hat with artificial hair mounted inside -which Venables marketed to women who wanted to go out without embarrassment when they had their curlers in.</p>	T -2 Tribulations
<p>Another plan saw Venables plunge into men's tailoring. One partner was his fellow player George Graham, another the sportswriter Ken Jones. "We ended up with good suits and bad debts;" Jones noted.</p>	
<p>There were the continued singing engagements and, in the most unlikely move of all, writing. At 18 Venables took a secretarial course to learn how to type. It was a skill that would prove useful before the end of his playing career, when he co-wrote a string of detective novels. These were eventually adapted by ITV into the television series Hazell.</p>	T- A Extra-activity of the deceased
<p>Meanwhile, Venables had been made Chelsea's captain in 1963, organising the team on the pitch in the manner he had been accustomed to doing from primary school days. This led to conflict with Docherty, and though Venables won his two international caps in 1964 (against Belgium and Holland), he was offloaded to Tottenham in 1966, having won only the League Cup (in 1965) with Chelsea.</p>	T -6 Schooling and training
<p>He was not so influential at his new club, but won the FA Cup with Spurs in 1967, helping them to defeat Chelsea in the final. He then moved to Queens Park Rangers in 1969, playing 179 games and scoring 19 goals, before making his final move, to Crystal Palace.</p>	
<p>There it became clear over the next two years that Venables's leadership and vision could be more effectively applied from the manager's bench than on the pitch. He was 33 when he officially made the transition, taking over from Malcolm Allison, and it was as a manager that Venables would become best known.</p>	T -5 Early employment & assignments
<p>His first season in charge was capped by the most dramatic game of his career. Palace needed to win by two goals to win promotion to the Second Division, but were drawing 2- 2 as the game moved into injury time. Two goals within 90 seconds saw them run out 4-2 winners. "It's the most memorable game for me out of all the clubs and memories I have;" Venables said later. "It was just eerie, amazing, just like it was meant to be. It was quite amazing:"</p>	
<p>Only two years later Venables won the Second Division title with a youthful, skilful Palace side, but after a successful start to life in the First Division, results tailed away, despite his prediction that they would be "the team of the Eighties". In October 1980 he moved to replace his old manager, Tommy Docherty, at QPR. Venables irked some at Palace by taking many of his back-room staff with him, a practice that is now common</p>	
<p>But he was pioneering in other, less successful, ways too.</p>	T -2 Tribulations
<p>Under his management, for example, QPR became the first club to lay down a plastic pitch (his first venture into fiction was a tale set in the future entitled "They Used to Play on Grass"). Seen as a potential owner, he was also appointed managing director of the club. He took QPR, then a Second Division side, to the FA Cup final in 1982, and the following season they were promoted to the top flight as champions.</p>	T -4 Recognition as an established professional
<p>There, Venables cemented his fast-growing reputation by leading them to fifth place, and qualification for the Uefa Cup.</p>	

<p>He had become a hot property, but even so, few expected that he would be poached from QPR by Barcelona. His successful interview for the coaching role, which ended with the Barcelona president, Jose Luis Nunez, offering Venables a cigar, has become the stuff of legend. Nunez found to his embarrassment that his cigar box was empty, whereupon Venables produced a pair of Montecristos from his socks, where he had been keeping them for later.</p> <p>He proceeded to endear himself to the fans in typically boisterous fashion, learning to sing My Way in Catalan and winning the nickname "El Tel", which stuck long after he had left Spain.</p> <p>He spent three seasons at Barcelona, winning the league title with the club at the end of his first. Having sold Diego Maradona, Venables encouraged English footballing talent to follow him to Spain, notably Gary Lineker and Mark Hughes. The side won the Copa de la Liga in 1986 and faced Steaua Bucharest in the final of the European Cup, only to lose a dire match on penalties</p>	T -3 Breakthrough & moments of success
<p>His fortunes with the club began to decline the following season with a quarter-final defeat to Dundee United; he was fired in September 1987. Two months later, however, he was hired by Tottenham, the club he had supported as a boy, but where his career would ultimately founder.</p> <p>He achieved moderate success there - one third-place finish and one FA Cup win - but it was his lifelong instinct to diversify and get into the boardroom that won him most headlines. The chairman, Irving Scholar, was keen to sell and battle for ownership was fought out between Robert Maxwell and Alan Sugar, whom Venables had persuaded to invest. When Sugar triumphed, he made Venables chief executive. Relations between the two were rarely cordial after that.</p> <p>The battle between Venables and Sugar was fiercely waged over the next two years, with the two East End lads-made-good slugging it out for control. Though Venables's popularity dwarfed that of Sugar (described at the time as having a charisma bypass) in the end it was Sugar who had the money, and he who prevailed.</p> <p>It was more than a financial and personal blow, however. The fall-out led to scrutiny of his business dealings, not just at Spurs, but also at his company Edenote, and at Scribes West, the Kensington club he had bought in the early 1990s (and where he frequently took to the stage to regale punters with show tunes).</p> <p>He was the subject of two BBC Panorama investigations, and the Serious Fraud Office considered a case against him over allegations of illegal loans and lying in the run-up to the Spurs takeover. The scandal cast a shadow over his tenure as England coach, and despite the success of Euro 96, it was clear he was not wanted by the FA on a long-term basis.</p> <p>In the event the Department of Trade and Industry set out 19 charges against him, which Venables chose not to contest in court in January 1998. A week earlier he had left Portsmouth, a club he had bought for £1; though it was in financial disarray, he claimed a performance bonus of several hundred thousand pounds. "We recognise his great achievement in football coaching;" noted Nigel Griffiths, minister for competition and consumer affairs,</p>	T -2 Tribulations
<p>but even our national heroes cannot be allowed to fall below accepted standards of probity when they enter the business world:"</p> <p>Venables - whose later career also included brief stints with Leeds United and as adviser to the England manager Steve McLaren - certainly was a national hero to many.</p> <p>In 2010, backed by The Sun, he starred in a patriotism-soaked cover of the Elvis Presley classic If I Can Dream to support England during the World Cup in South Africa. The record reached No 23 in the charts, but the England side - like Venables, in the eyes of the DTI - flattered to deceive, and were soon knocked out of the tournament by Germany.</p> <p>In 1964 Terry Venables married Christine Mccann, a dressmaker; they had two daughters, but divorced in 1984. That year he met Yvette Bazire, who went on to manage Scribes West. They were married in 1991, and from 2014 until 2019 owned and ran a hotel in the Alicante region of Spain. His wife Yvette survives him along with his daughters</p> <p>Terry Venables, born January 6, 1943, died November 25 2023</p>	T -4 Recognition as an established professional T -2 Tribulations T -4 Recognition as an established professional T- A Extra-activity of the deceased T-NT (no-time) other e.g., family association, characteristics. T 0 Time of text production

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