

A GENRE ANALYSIS OF DEATH ANNOUNCEMENTS IN GHANAIAN NEWSPAPERS

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Abstract

Although an unpleasant but common human phenomenon, death is publicly announced in a language that does not only create grief in the bereaved but also presents the deceased in a way that evokes appreciation for him or her. The primary objective of this study was to investigate the death announcement (DA) genre in terms of its schematic structure and linguistic features. Adopting Swales' (1990) rhetorical approach to genre analysis, the study examined a data set of 636 DAs from three leading public newspapers in Ghana. The research identified seven moves out of which five were obligatory and two optional. In addition, each move had distinctive lexico-grammatical features. Finally, the schematic structure together with the lexico-grammatical features pointed to a definitive set of socio-cultural norms and values of Ghanaians. This research has implications for genre studies and multicultural discourses, in general, and studies on death announcements, in particular. It also has implication for further research.

Key words:

death announcements, genre, Ghana, multicultural discourse, newspapers

1. Background to the Study

The life of humans is noted to revolve around birth, marriage, and eventual death. Death, in particular, in several societies receives much attention. Among the major communicative events related to death are epitaphs, tributes, dirges, and obituaries (Moses & Morelli, 2004). In the present study we focus on obituaries or death announcements. Obituaries are presented in a manner that does not only create grief in the audience but also presents the deceased in a way that evokes appreciation for him or her (Askildon, 2007; Fernandez, 2007; Bryant & Peck, 2009).

At the outset, I draw a distinction between an obituary and a death announcement. As presented by Fernandez (2006), the term 'obituary' comes from the Latin word 'obitus', meaning departure (a common euphemistic word for death). It refers to a record of announcement of death or deaths, especially in a newspaper, usually comprising a brief biographical sketch of the deceased. According to Campbell (1971), an obituary contains minimal information including the deceased's name, date of birth, place of residence, date of death and, sometimes, cause of death. As it concerns prominent people, it is written by an expert of a publishing firm, and it is free of charge. Campbell argues that an obituary can be pre-written on a file either by or for a notable individual who is still living. This makes it easy to allow detailed, authoritative and lengthy obituaries to appear quickly after the death of a prominent person.

Fernandez (2007) further distinguishes between informative and opinative obituaries. The first type is primarily aimed at giving relevant details about the death: the deceased, place and time of funeral, and next of kin. This is done through an impersonal language and concise expression. The language is presented in an objective and standardized manner. In other words, the language is not ornate. An informative obituary does not employ hyperbolic language to heighten emotions or praise the deceased and it is often written by an editorial staff in charge of writing such a genre. An opinative obituary, on the other hand, is written by a relative, friend or the funeral home staff. It offers a more emotive and intimate account of the deceased by means of consolatory and laudatory tactics to satisfy and assuage the feelings of surviving family members. Opinative obituaries are rather subjective and perform a peculiar function of impressing readers about the social status or the exemplary conduct of the deceased. In such cases, a greater part of the obituary is devoted to the 'family stage'.

On the other hand, a death announcement (DA) is a paid for advertisement of a person's death. It is normally written by a family member or a close friend, both of whom might not

necessarily be experts. Like an obituary, a DA is also published in newspapers but in Ghana, the latter is additionally posted on walls in strategic public places so as to capture greater attention of the public and to increase participation of the public in the funeral/burial services of the deceased. Also, a DA is much more elaborate. While an obituary is not necessarily aimed at inviting people who will want to pay their respects to the deceased, a DA does.

As claimed by Campbell (1971), the two terms are used interchangeably but the focus of this study is DAs. This choice is based on the fact that unlike obituaries, DAs occur frequently in Ghanaian newspapers.

2. Aim of the Study

Diverse studies have been carried out on DAs. While some scholars like Al-Ali (2005), Fernandez (2006/2007), and Marzol (2006) investigated the figurative language of obituaries and DAs, others like Eid (2000), Booth (2002), and Nwoye (2007) concentrated on the structure of the DA genre and factors that influence the language of the DA. As far as I know, it is only Bonsu (2002, 2007) who studies obituaries (referred to in this work as DA) in Ghana, although he shows little interest in their schematic structure. The present study, therefore, seeks to find out whether the DA genre in Ghana has a common schematic structure that is accompanied by distinct lexico-grammatical features.

In what follows I situate the present study in the existing scholarship on DAs and obituaries followed by a description of the research site and the research approach adopted in the study. The analysis and discussion constitute the rest of the paper. The conclusion together with implications of the study ends the paper.

3. Previous Studies on Death Announcements/Obituaries

This section, in particular, reviews the literature on the schematic structure of the DA genre, literary/linguistic devices explored by the DA genre, and the functions of the DA genre. The aim of this review is to indicate the place of the present study in the extant literature on DAs and obituaries.

3.1 *Structure of Death Announcements*

Several suggestions have been given concerning the generic structure of the DA genre. Watson (2008) alludes to four moves in writing an obituary. The first, introduction, comprises the name, age, date and place of death as well as course of death. The second move, biography, comprises the bio-data of the deceased: information on parents, organization in which the deceased were active, things they enjoyed doing, and significant challenges they faced. The third move is the list of surviving relatives. Watson is concerned about the order of the list which includes spouse, children (and their spouses), siblings, number of grandchildren, cousins, friends and co-workers in that order. The final move is what he categorizes as “additional information”, which includes place and time of wake (optional) and address of where donations, condolences and gifts can be sent.

Harold et al. (2009) present five moves which obituary writers must adopt. The first is “announcement”, which comprises two basic pieces of information: name of the deceased and cause of death. They stressed that these should be captured in a single sentence. The second move, biographical information, includes information like date and place of birth, schools attended, notable awards received and important hobbies. Harold et al. (2009) call the next move “survivor information”, which includes people who survive or share in the inheritance of the deceased. They include, in this order, the following: immediate family members (spouse, children, parents, siblings, step-children) and secondary family members (aunts, uncles, grandchildren, close cousins). It is advised that baptismal names of relatives should be used whereas nick-names should be put in quotes. Deceased relatives are the last in this move and their names are preceded by “the late”. Next is “scheduled ceremonies” – a note of where and when important ceremonies such as wake, grave-side burials and memorial services will take place. The final move is a note of where people can make donations.

These observations and stipulations of the schematic structure of DAs and obituaries aside, there are other studies on a similar subject in different geographical settings such as those by Al-Ali (2005) in Iran, Nwoye (2007) in Nigeria, and Bonsu (2002, 2007) in Ghana. In particular, in his study of the generic structure of obituaries in an Arabic setting, Al-Ali describes nine moves, some of which overlap with others identified in Matiki (2001), Bonsu (2002, 2007), and Nwoye (2007) in Malawi, Ghana, and Nigeria respectively. There are notable differences presumably which may be accounted for on the basis of their socio-cultural differences.

3.2 *Literary and Linguistic Devices in Death Announcements*

The extant literature reveals that obituary and DAs constitute a fertile ground for the use of linguistic and literary devices (Fernandez, 2006/2007; Rubinstein, 2007; Bressler, 2009; Nelson, 2009).

In particular, Fernandez, (2006/2007) identified devices that constitute the figurative language used in obituaries. They include metaphors, hyperbole, positively and negatively loaded words, and mitigating apology expressions on one hand and rhetorical questions and second person invocations on the other. He established that, from the 257 Victorian obituaries collected, metaphors are the most dominant of the literary devices. He added that metaphors portray death as a journey, loss, joyful life, rest, reward and as the end there is to life. The use of these literary devices, he concluded, was to make obituaries more emotive. Nelson (2009) shared a contrary view, arguing that euphemisms are unnecessary and even disrespectful to human life that was lost. Nelson held that phrases such as ‘passed away’, ‘called home’, and ‘went to his rest’ only assuage the pain that is associated with death, maintaining that it is high time people were made to feel the cruelty of death so as to come to terms with the awful truth that accompanies it.

Rubinstein (2007) studied DAs from Jewish holy texts and identified two classes of descriptive phrases which, to him, appeared rather dramatic and florid. One class of such phrases was used to display the social standing of the deceased whereas the other described the causes of death. Phrases like ‘pillar of the temple’, ‘light of Israel’, ‘leader of Lebanon’, ‘captain of the army of the kingdom of Torah’ and others were used to refer to Torah sages (religious leaders). Phrases like ‘suddenly departed’, ‘dived into tremendous waters’ and ‘snatched away’, were used. For Rubinstein, such devices portrayed the dramatic nature of death. One further striking feature that is worth noting in Rubinstein’s study is that whereas phrases like ‘of blessed memory’ and ‘of pious memory’ followed males’ names, female counterparts had just ‘may she rest in peace’ following their names. Rubinstein’s study shows that religion, status and gender are key factors that influence language use in DAs.

The use of language in obituaries in Anglo-American contexts provides further interesting findings. Indeed, Bressler (2009) found the language of British obituaries rather saucy and sarcastic, depending on the writer’s mood. He realized that, written in the form of story-telling, obituaries were not entirely sympathetic; rather, they stated the mere facts about the deceased. The probable reason was the outbreak of civil wars, which increased the number of deaths and gave no room for obituaries to be embellished with many figurative devices. On the other hand, Deaton (2009) and Gorshon (2009), in an American press release, noticed that Irish and

American obituaries shared a lot in common regarding linguistic devices used in them. They held that adjectival and adverbial phrases like ‘treasured’, ‘unexpected’, ‘peacefully’ and ‘sadly missed’, which dominated the obituaries, rendered them emotionally appealing.

The studies reviewed above obviously share some similarities and differ in terms of methodology, findings and presentations regarding the schematic structure and linguistic/literary devices in DAs. In so far as the present study is conducted in Africa, it can be said to be potentially similar to those previous studies by Matiki (2001), Bonsu, (2002, 2007), and Nwoye (2007). And in making use of a mixed approach, this study seems to be similar to studies such as Al-Ali (2005), Fernandez (2006/2007), and Marzol (2006). The point to ascertain is whether the mere identification of the present study with these previous studies on those two counts provides similar results.

4. Methodology

This section aims first to describe the data sources and the data collection procedures adopted. The analytical framework used in analyzing the data is also spelt out.

4.1 Data, Sampling, and Data Collection Procedure

The major data source considered for this research is a collection of DAs published in the two national dailies, *Daily Graphic* and *Ghanaian Times* and a national weekly, *Mirror*. The table below presents the monthly distributions of DAs published in the *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times* and *Mirror* respectively during the first half of 2009.

Table 1: Distribution of DAs in Three Ghanaian Newspapers

<i>Month</i>	<i>Daily Graphic</i>	<i>Ghanaian Times</i>	<i>Mirror</i>	<i>Total</i>
Jan	54	20	13	87
Feb	63	34	16	113
Mar	57	39	21	117
Apr	47	29	11	87
May	57	30	17	104
Jun	76	31	21	128
Total	354	183	99	636

As can be seen from the table above, a total of 636 DAs were collected. Three hundred and fifty-four (354), which constitute 55% of the DAs, was recorded by the *Daily Graphic*. The *Ghanaian Times* had 183 (29%) whereas the *Mirror* recorded the least number of 99 (16%). Additionally, June recorded the highest number of 128, forming 20% of the total number of newspapers. An average figure (113), which constitutes 17% of the DAs, was recorded in February while January and April recorded the least numbers of 87 respectively, constituting 16% of the total DAs collected.

A month was used in the data collection process. The attendant of the periodical section of the UCC Library willingly offered assistance. It would have been difficult for the researcher to consider every DA in every newspaper in Ghana. Besides, considering all DAs in the entire year (2009) would have been too vast for this study; hence, the restriction to the first half of the year was considered so as to limit the amount of data and enhance analysis of the data.

4.2 *Method of Analysis*

This study utilized the mixed research approach (both quantitative and qualitative methods). The quantitative method enabled the researcher to present figures and facts in tables and other visuals in order to aid understanding while the qualitative method aided the researchers in providing illustrative sample texts and explaining the factors that influenced the various facts obtained.

Also, Swales' (1990) method of genre analysis was found equally useful. It served as the main analytical framework within which the schematic structure of the DA genre was analyzed. Swales defines genre as a set communicative acts with an overarching communicative goal and sub-rhetorical units (which he labels as 'moves') and their attendant lexico-grammatical features as distinguishing features of one genre from another. The content, which is the general information a particular genre puts across, is systematically structured into what Swales calls 'moves'. In other words, moves are the various structural and rhetorical systematic units within the genre which make it distinct from another genre. Together, the schematic structure, content, and lexico-grammatical features in this recurrent situational language use give vent to a genre, as noted by Bhatia (1993) and other genre analysts in the English for Specific Purposes tradition.

To identify the moves, as suggested in the literature (e.g. Bhatia, 1993), the semantic-functional criterion was used. It is recognized that this criterion is not full proof; thus, a second opinion regarding the determination of moves primarily was sought from a graduate student in the English Department who gladly offered to assist in this regard. Consequently, the inter-

rater reliability between the two researchers regarding the identification of the moves was 85% before discussion to deal with the differences. This inter-rater reliability was considered acceptable.

Finally, the present occasionally draws on Kress and Van Leeuwen's (1996) multimodality perspective on textual analysis. This perspective on textual analysis, which rejects linguistic items as the only meaning-making device, recognizes space, colour, position, picture, size, among others, as worthwhile veritable semiotic devices.

5. Generic and Linguistic Description of Death Announcements/Obituaries

From the data set, it was observed that DAs in the data set comprise seven moves. These are as follows: caption, list of family members and other organizations/institutions, profile of the deceased, funeral arrangements, a second list of family members, prescription of attire, and invitation. (Appendix A presents three samples of the DA genre, showing the moves described and discussed below). The linguistic resources were mainly nominal.

5.1 Caption

The first move of the DA genre is the caption. In this move, the reader is oriented to the fact of death, albeit in various linguistic means. This fact of death is mostly conveyed in the form of nominals, ranging from words like "obituary" and "transition" to sentences like "He has passed away" and "His glory has come". The caption is made to stand out by being presented in upper case, bold, indentation or underlining. Whether a word or a sentence, the caption basically gives a clue about the content of the DA genre: a report of death.

The figure below presents illustrative data on the various captions identified in the DAs collected. The four linguistic ranks (word, phrase, clause and sentence) are adopted for convenience and to aid classification of the captions.

Figure 1: Captions of Death Announcements (DAs)

Words	Phrases	Clauses	Sentences
<i>Obituary Transition</i>	<i>Funeral ann. A call to glory Eternal rest A life well lived A noble transition A call to eternity Home call Celebration of life Glorious home call Royal farewell At rest</i>	<i>Gone too soon Called to glory What a shock!</i>	<i>He has passed on. Fare thee well. Rest in peace. His glory has come. Inna Lilahi Wiana Illahim Rajium- Glory to Allah who gives and takes.</i>

As said earlier, the captions structurally range from words to sentences. The two words in the first column, namely ‘obituary’ and ‘transition’ are both nominal items which sum up the report (in this case, announcement) of death as a concept. However, ‘transition’ goes a step further to portray death as a ‘vehicle’ of passage from the present world of the living to the past world of ancestors. Also, ‘transition’ reinforces the African metaphysical concept that death is not an extinguisher of life but as a channel to join the ancestral world.

The phrase, “funeral announcement”, is a nominal one. Even though a noun, ‘funeral’ describes the type of announcement being talked about. The phrase does not carry any connotation apart from announcing death. However, other phrases like “glorious home call” and “noble transition” tend to embellish the concept of death. The adjectives ‘glorious’ and ‘noble’ rather portray death as though it were something ‘attractive’. This confirms the findings of Fernandez (2006), Bressler (2009), and Nelson (2009) that DAs employ figurative language to embellish the concept of death. ‘Eternal rest’, however, reinforces the African belief in reincarnation and immortality of the soul where the dead is considered to have gone to rest, although this resonates with the Christian belief.

In addition, some of the captions could be seen as clauses as some parts of the structures were ellipted. Captions such as ‘Called to glory’ and ‘Gone too soon’ have their initial structures, ‘He or she has been’ and ‘He or she has’ respectively ellipted. There are also sentences examples of which are written below:

- He has passed on. (declarative)
- His glory has come. (declarative)

- Fare thee well. (imperative)
- Rest in peace. (imperative)

The above sentences are simple in structure, with each having at least a subject and a verb. But while the first two are declarative sentences, the latter two are imperatives. The first sentence portrays death as a ‘vehicle’ of passage whereas the second sentence has a religious connotation of a person whose death is seen as a ‘glory’. The latter two sentences seem to command the deceased to journey well and to have a peaceful rest respectively. ‘Fare thee well’ must be noted as an old usage, which has a modern equivalence as ‘‘Good bye’’.

It is important to note that the variation in the captions above reveals the typical Ghanaian’s emotional attitude to death. At certain times, death is portrayed as a harsh phenomenon but at other times it is portrayed as though it is a pleasant phenomenon. In either case, this finding seems to resonate with Fernandez’s study which showed how Victorian obituaries made use of figurative language. Still, sometimes, death is presented as a normal occurrence, with neither negative nor positive feelings attracted.

5.2 *List of Members of Family, Clan, Organizations and other*

The next move of the DA genre is the list of family members and others. In general, this list comprises not only the family members of the deceased but also other clan, families or bodies (organizations) who were associated with the deceased (while s/he was alive) or the bereaved family. This move is also presented in nominal structures as it is a list of names.

This list does not include virtually everyone who forms part of the deceased’s family. Rather, it comprises key members like heads of clans and family elders, family members of high socio-economic status, religious leaders, leading political parties and political leaders, and some key members of associations or organizations to which the deceased or any relative of his/hers might have belonged. This part of the second move of the Ghanaian DA genre was not found in the previous studies such as Al-Ali (2005), Watson (2008), Harold et al. (2009).

This confirms the fact that the Ghanaian society does not only give primacy to the extended family system over the nuclear one but also highlights solidarity and a sense of belongingness to one’s family, clan and other organizations (social, political, religious, etc) one belongs to. Traditionally, a Ghanaian presumably belongs to two basic families: paternal and maternal even when his or her inheritance is one sided (that is, either matrilineal or patrilineal). Hence, even in the case of some Akans (the dominant ethnic group in Ghana, consisting of about 45%

of the entire population in Ghana) who inherit maternally, key members of the two sides of the deceased are represented in the list under discussion. Such a list is arrived at not without intensive consultation, as omission of a name required to be present can spark conflict and non-cooperation among family members in the funeral rites and burial services.

One needs to note that the order of this list is so hierarchical that the most key and dignified persons precede others who might be less recognized. Hence, it is possible that some members who are younger but who have some socio-economic influence may precede elder ones who are not socio-economically significant. Often, it is the case that traditional leaders such as chiefs are mentioned before reverend ministers and political leaders or people with substantial resources. The fact that not everybody in a family is listed but people with socio-economic worth indicates the place of wealth in the Ghanaian society. People tend to be accorded respect not for their age or admirable characters but rather for socio-economic worth. This suggests sadly that the contemporary Ghanaian society is trading some of its values, like respect for the elderly, for socio-economic wealth.

Also, the names of family members precede those who are not related to the deceased through blood ties but who have some other forms of relationship with the deceased or his/her family. This seems to confirm the assumption that the Ghanaian society is still communalistic and tends to keep strong family ties. Blood relations of the deceased are considered to matter more in the deceased's life than any organizations they might have belonged to. In most cases, the titles plus full formal names of the family members are written. In other cases, the family names, rather than the individual members' names, are written.

It must be noted also that this is the move which actually announces the death. A declarative sentence is often used but the choice of its linguistic features varies. Some examples identified include the following:

- ... *announce the glorious home call* of their *beloved* Cosmos Osei Forson...
- ... *announce the death* of Edward Kwame Agbenyega.
- ... *regret to announce* the sudden *death* of ...
- ... with *regret*, wish to inform the general public of the *death* of their *beloved*...
- ... *announce* with *deep sorrow* the *home call* of...
- ... *announce the passing on* of their *beloved daughter*...
- ...*announce* with the *deepest of regrets* ...
- ... *announce* to the *glory of God* ...
- ... *announce*, with the *hope of resurrection*, the *passing away* of ...

The above examples show that no matter the variation in linguistic choice, certain items are always present. The reporting verb, “announce” appeared in over 70% of the DAs collected. “Regret” is also often used to show that no matter how advanced a person was, his or her death is a loss which is regretted by the family. Also, “death” is often mentioned but it is sometimes replaced by other items such as “home call”, “glorious home call”, “passing on”, “passing away”, and “sudden departure”. These variations tend to embellish death and soothe its harshness, thereby confirming Fernandez’s (2007) claim that DAs tend to be figurative. The use of “Beloved” reveals how the Ghanaian society cherishes its members and tends to feel great sense of loss when these members die. Apart from soothing the pain of death, these linguistic choices reveal the attitude of Ghanaians towards death – a sense of loss.

5.3 *Profile of the Deceased*

This is the next move of the DA, which is also unsurprisingly nominal in nature. Here, the full formal name of the deceased is stated. The surname or family name is made to stand out through indenting, bolding or capitalizing or any other visual effect. The name is preceded by a title(s) and is post modified by cluster of adjectives, depicting the person’s profession, other social status, place and date of death.

In some cases, nicknames, put in parenthesis as recommended by Watson (2008), are added. Such nick-names are preceded by words such as either ‘a.k.a’ (which is the shortened form of ‘also known as’), ‘alias’ or ‘nee’. Many of the names are followed by the nicknames usually placed in parentheses and in a different font type to perhaps pre-empt any difficulty that readers may have in identifying the deceased, even with photographs added. Four hundred and two (63%) of the 636 DAs described the deceased by at least two of the depictions mentioned above.

This move also includes a photograph of the deceased which helps to identify them. It is interesting to note that all the DAs had photographs. In most cases, the photograph depicts the age or professional status of the deceased. The age of the deceased is also written either under the name or beside the photograph. Sometimes, in the case of the aged, two photographs are provided: one depicting the person’s youthful stage and the other depicting his or her old age. Sometimes too, the two photographs depict two different statuses of a person’s life, as for example as a public servant and later as chief (a traditional head of a community) This is possibly to aid identification where old-age overshadows the person’s physical looks. The use of two photographs, as part of the DA, was rarely observed in the literature reviewed. This shows how the Ghanaian DA is intended to help sympathizers to easily process the DA

information – to easily identify the deceased. The use of photograph was not recommended in the templates studied.

It is important to mention that features like hobbies and challenges faced by the deceased which were mentioned by Watson (2008) and Harold et al. (2009), as requirements of the DA genre, were not found in the Ghanaian DA genre. In Ghanaian DAs, the source of death of the deceased is not mentioned, although in a few cases, where the deceased passes on is revealed as ‘Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital’, ‘37 Military Hospital’, or ‘Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital’, which are leading hospitals in the country in terms of the high quality health facilities they provide.

5.4 *Funeral Arrangement*

This move of the DA gives a description of the order of the funeral activities for the deceased. This begins with various linguistic expressions such as “funeral programme”, ‘funeral announcements”, and “funeral arrangements are as follows”. These are usually in different font type (bold) and followed by at least four ‘steps’: a) no wake b) lying in state c) burial service d) funeral rites e) thanksgiving service. Not every move had all these ‘steps’ as the use of these steps will depend on the families in question. It is the case that the first step under this move is expressed by the emphatic “There will be no wake” or “No wake”.

What is interesting about these steps is that they tend to be followed by adverbials such as adverbs of place, adverbs of time, and purpose phrases. For instance, where the step involves funeral rites we are told of “at the Presbyterian School Park”, “Near the Methodist Church”, “at the same venue”; where the step concerns thanksgiving service we have expressions such as “at 9:00 a.m. at the Pentecost Church”, “at House No 33/17 Bakaano, Sekondi”. There are also purpose expressions such as ‘for filing past’, ‘for refreshment’, and “for interment”. Obviously, in this move, place-names such as names of churches (e.g. EP Church, Wesley Methodist Cathedral), important landmarks in a community (e.g. opposite GOIL OIL Station, near SSNIT Guest House, and Forecourt of State House) are used. This move was found in the works of Watson (2008) and Harold et al. (2009).

Given the primary function of DAs (that is, announcing death and getting sympathizers to attend the funeral), this move of the DA genre seems to be the most important part as it provides the direction or information needed by sympathizers to attend the funeral ceremony. Surprisingly, this move is rather relatively short in the DA. This is a clear indication that the secondary function of the DA genre (showcasing socio-economic worth) seems to have

overshadowed its primary concern in contemporary Ghana. This confirms the claims of Al-Ali (2005) and Rajula (2008) that the DA genre is a breeding ground for showcasing socio-economic worth.

5.5 *List of Family Members (Survivors)*

This is the last obligatory move of the DA genre. It is a list of nominal items which are the names of the deceased's immediate family. This list differs from the first one in two ways. Whereas the initial one (in the first move) comprises mainly heads of family or clans, elders and other key figures, this second list has the deceased's immediate family, what Watson (2008) calls 'primary family' preceding the second group of remote family members (chief mourners most of who are repeated from the initial list), what Watson calls 'secondary family'.

Secondly, unlike the initial list, this list does not include organizations which have no blood ties with the deceased. In other words, nearly every member of this second list has some blood ties with the deceased. Members in this category (second list) include spouse, children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, step children (where available), in-laws, cousins, nieces and nephews, uncles and aunts and chief mourners (key leaders of the family). So, the list exemplifies movement from close family members to distant family members. This list is also hierarchical but here, the list of immediate (nuclear) family members precedes those of distant (extended) family members. Also, the immediate family members are quite obligatory since they constitute the deceased's survivors (those who inherit his/her wealth). The distant or extended members are optional because in some cases, some are already mentioned as part of the initial list. Most of the members of the first list are repeated as chief mourners in the second list but some members in this second list like children, grandchildren and great grandchildren are not constant members of the initial list.

It is important to mention that in most cases, members in this second list are mentioned by their names, professions, places of work or places of residence, suggesting the kind of family the deceased comes from. It is also noted that sometimes family members who reside in foreign countries are identified by reference to those countries. This move often covers the largest textual space in Ghanaian DAs and this confirms the findings of Marzol (2006) which identified the 'family stage' (survivors) as the dominant move of the DA genre. After all, as noted in communication research, what is regarded as important often receives much space or time.

5.6 *Prescription of Attire and Invitation to Sympathizers*

Finally, the completion of the death announcement is often signalled by two moves: a prescription of attire and a statement inviting all sympathizers and well-wishers. These two are, however, not constant parts of the DA genre. They (prescription of attire and invitation to well-wishers) are considered to be optional because out of the 636 DAs collected, 308 (48%), that is, less than half of the data set, invited well-wishers whereas 275 (43%), again, less than half of the data set, prescribed attire. The prescription of attire is mostly affected by the age of the deceased. Black and red, black and white, exclusive black or white are often prescribed. The first two are prescribed in situations where the deceased is an adult but the latter two are prescribed in cases where the deceased are young adults and very old respectively. The data set shows the prescription of exclusive white for a man of 76 years whereas in another instance black and white are prescribed for a woman of 95 years.

Unlike Marzol's (2006) findings where the 'family stage' signalled the end of American and British obituaries, Ghanaian DAs end with a statement welcoming well-wishers as in "All sympathizers are cordially invited", "All are cordially invited", "All friends & sympathisers are cordially invited". A few times instead of the verb 'invited', 'welcome' is used. In general, the addressee of death announcements tends to be 'all, which is then specified as 'relatives' sympathisers', 'relatives, well-wishers', and 'friends'. The invitation is always expressed in the passive voice as in the examples cited. Compared to the announcement of death (the final part of the second move), the prescription of attire is shorter (in terms of text length). It is a simple sentence with five linguistic items as compared to the funeral announcement which has a longer length. This invitation could indicate the warm conviviality and hospitality of Ghanaians.

6 Conclusion

This final section provides a summary of the research findings, implications and recommendations for further research.

6.1 *Summary of Research*

The main objective of this research was to explore the schematic structure and lexicogrammatical features of the death announcement genre in a setting that has least featured in

such studies. In this respect, the study adopted Swales' rhetorical approach in genre analysis but that was occasionally complemented by aspects of the multi-semiotic approach. Six hundred and thirty six (636) DAs were collected from three leading public newspapers in Ghana, namely the *Daily Graphic*, *Ghanaian Times* and *Mirror*. The key findings are briefly presented below.

The DA genre in Ghana has five core moves: caption, a list of key members of the deceased's family and clan as well as organizations to which the deceased might have belonged, a profile of the deceased, the arrangement of the funeral activities, and a second list of family members only. However, there were two additional but optional moves: prescription of attire and extension of invitation. Prescription of attire could sometimes be placed anywhere in the DA but the extension of invitation, when present, always signalled the end of the DA. These two optional moves (found in Ghanaian DAs) were absent from other studies reviewed (e.g. Watson, 2008; Harold et al., 2009).

In response to the second research question asked whether the DA genre had specific lexicogrammatical features, the study revealed that the caption of the DA genre is nominal in structure. Besides, it structurally ranges from words to sentences sometimes, depending on age and status of the deceased. The second, third, and sixth moves were often expressed in a sentence, with the first two being couched in the active voice and the latter passive. The announcement of death (which is the final part of the second move) varied linguistically according to the age, gender and status of the deceased.

6.2 Implications

Based on the findings discussed above, the present study has three implications which relate to theory, practice, and future research.

First, in terms of theory, the analytical framework (Swales' moves) was found very useful as it enabled the identification of various moves in the DA genre. In particular, for the DA genre, five core moves were identified. There were two other optional moves. Their attendant lexicogrammatical features were also noted, with preference for nominals. This study contributes to the scholarship on genre studies, in general, and studies of DA, in particular. It has helped to locate the Ghanaian newspaper death announcements in the corpus of similar texts elsewhere in the world. The Ghanaian newspaper death announcements have a structure similar to those from Europe, Asia and America but are different in content, message, and lexicogrammatical features.

In terms of practice, this study has implication for not only professional and unprofessional writers of DAs but also for the general public in Ghana (including Ghanaians and various groups of people who come to Ghana for touristic, educational, cultural or economic reasons) who read DAs in Ghanaian newspapers and those pasted on strategic walls. Anyone who is given the task of writing a DA needs to be guided in his or her choice of schematic structure and linguistic items. Moreover, it is a response to societal expectations and norms and values as well as changes in society.

The above findings notwithstanding, the need for further research is heightened by the fact that there is no extensive body of literature on the DA genre pertaining to the Ghanaian setting, the exception being Bonsu (2002, 2007), as far as I know. Also, linguistic and contextual analysis of the DA genre is a broad and interesting topic which involves examining the linguistic resources employed by the DA genre and factors that inform the choice of those resources. The researcher, therefore, suggests further research of DAs on televisions (both public and private and c) a semiotic study of obituaries. The overall picture, however, is one of a need to examine and account for visual information in a more rigorous way, to ascertain just how the various visual modes utilised make and project their meanings. This will add to the ever expanding field of studies on obituaries and death announcements.

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