

JOLANTA ŁĄCKA-BADURA
University of Economics in Katowice

MARKETISATION OF UNIVERSITY ADMISSION BULLETINS: THE EVOLUTION OF THE GENRE

The paper seeks to investigate how the shift towards the ‘marketisation’ of academia, widely discussed by critical discourse scholars and researchers specialising in academic discourse, is reflected in the genre of university admission bulletins. The study examines two sets of texts: the admission bulletins published by four Polish universities in the years 1978-1981, and the ‘Admissions/Information for candidates’ sections found at the websites of those universities in June 2014. Acknowledging the rather obvious differences between the two corpora stemming from the development of Internet technologies, the analysis focuses on the evolution of the communicative goals of the genre and its inner structure, seen as being largely determined by the external social context. The findings indicate that although some of the structural elements appear to remain rather stable over time, others demonstrate a considerable tendency to being colonised by promotional functions. The linguistic/communicative strategies realising particular moves confirm the evolution of the genre, reflecting the broader shift towards ‘marketisation’ of academia.

1. Introduction

Universities are ‘culturally loaded’ organisations, in which certain values, norms and beliefs guide academic behaviour and various aspects of academic life (Clark 1983; Dill 2012). On the other hand, the emergence of market competition among academic institutions in the last few decades has had a profound impact on tertiary education which seems to growingly resemble business activity (e.g. Gea-Valor and Ros 2009; Hayes and Wynyard 2002; Heiberger and Vick 2001; Enders and Musselin 2008). The trend was forecast a long time ago; in their introduction to the seminal book “*The Mcdonaldization of Higher Education*”, Hayes and Wynyard quoted George Ritzer, a sociologist who in the 1990s claimed that “it is inevitable that the university in the 21st century will

borrow from many sectors of the society, including the shopping mall and the fast-food restaurant” (2002: 1).

In line with the above, there are voices among both academic career advisors and scholars that speak of ‘marketisation’ of higher education (Heiberger and Vick 2001), as well as ‘marketisation’ and ‘commodification’ of university discourse (Fairclough 1995). Fairclough observes that “[i]nstitutions of higher education come increasingly to operate (under government pressure) as if they were ordinary businesses competing to sell their products to consumers” (ibid.: 141). Enders and Musselin, analysing recent trends and future projections for higher education in the 21st century, claim that boundaries between academia and “other sectors and stakeholders in society” are growingly blurred; “the introduction of staff management techniques in universities (...) has been expanded and led some authors to conclude that academics are becoming ‘managed professionals’” (2008: 133). With faculty members being perceived as ‘managed professionals’, students come to be seen as ‘clients’, and universities resort more frequently than ever to methods and techniques traditionally associated with business organisations.

Without aspiring to evaluate the above mentioned trends, the present study seeks to investigate how the shift towards the ‘marketisation’ of academia is reflected in university admission bulletins aimed at prospective students in Poland. Acknowledging the rather obvious evolution of communication/promotional techniques resulting from the development of Internet technologies, the study foregrounds the *textual* layer of information and persuasion identified in two sets of texts: the admission bulletins published by four Polish universities in the years 1978-1981, and the ‘Admissions/Information for candidates’ sections (and/or the online admission bulletins) found at the websites of those universities in June 2014.

The analysis examines the evolution of the communicative goals of the genre and its inner structure, seen as being largely determined by the external social context. Further on, it focuses on the linguistic/communicative strategies realising the goals performed by particular structural elements (or *moves*). Finally, largely overlapping with the above, it investigates the signals of continuity and change in the (broadly understood) academic culture and values projected in the genre.

2. Dynamic nature of genres

The simplest definitions of *genre* see the latter as a particular text or discourse type (Caballero 2008; van Dijk 1997; Paltridge 2006; Wang 2009). Many genre scholars take a broader view and treat genres as communicative events with a set of communicative purposes recognised and shared by people establishing a particular discourse community (Bhatia 1993; Catenaccio 2008; Swales 1990, 2004). Others perceive genres as “frames for social action”,

“environments for learning”, “locations within which meaning is constructed” (Bazerman 1997: 19), or typified social actions undertaken in response to recurrent rhetorical situations (Bargiela-Chiappini & Nickerson 1999; Berkenkotter & Huckin 1995; Bhatia 1993; Miller 1984; Swales 1990; Yates & Orlikowski 1992). Drawing on Swales’ (1990) approach, Renkema defines genres as “communicative vehicles for achieving purposes”; those purposes are “shared by and recognisable to the participants in the communicative event” (2004: 74). The *communicative purpose* or *functionality* is thus regarded by many researchers as the principal criterion for classifying a collection of communicative events as genre (Askehave and Nielsen 2005; Bhatia 1993, 1997, 2004, 2007; Caballero 2008; Dudley-Evans and St John 1998; Nunan 1993; Wilkoń 2005, among others).

Genres do not necessarily ensure that a typified, communicative act effectively be carried out, but provide the potential for doing so (Bazerman 1997). They offer conventionalised and recognisable patterns of responses to recurrent situations, organising the conditions and modalities of peoples’ interactions with one another, reflecting the disciplinary and organisational cultures and values of particular discourse communities; genres are thus historically, culturally, and – above all – socially situated. Devitt offers the following summary of the social situatedness of genres and the mutual interdependence on genres and social situations:

People construct genre through situation and situation through genre; their relationship is reciprocal and dynamic. If genre responds to recurring situation, then a particular text’s reflection of genre reflects the genre’s situation. Thus the act of construing the genre – of classifying a text as similar to other texts – is also the act of construing the situation.

(2004: 21)

Importantly for the present study, there is an apparent contradiction within the very concept of *genre*. Being – by definition – associated with recurring rhetorical contexts, and thus with relatively stable, standardised and conventionalised purposes, forms and features, genres are not static. They continually change, develop and evolve, being modified or manipulated in response to changing situations, needs and perceptions. As Berkenkotter and Huckin observe, “genres are inherently dynamic rhetorical structures that can be manipulated according to conditions of use, (...)”; they have always been “sites of contention between stability and change” (1995: 6). The *dynamic* and *fluid* nature of genres is emphasised by many scholars (see e.g. Bazerman 2004; Bhatia 1997, 2002, 2004; Caballero 2008; Devitt 2004; Gajda 2008; Flowerdew and Wan 2010; Halmari and Virtanen 2005; Orlikowski and Yates 1994, among others).

Bhatia (2004) explains the two seemingly contradictory features of genre theory, namely the “[e]mphasis on conventions and propensity for innovation” (2004: 24). The former feature tends to view genre as a rhetorically situated and highly institutionalised textual activity, whereas the latter assigns genre a natu-

ral propensity for change and development; the expert members of a discourse community often exploit the latter feature to create new forms in response to novel rhetorical contexts, or with a view to conveying private intentions without abandoning the socially recognised set of communicative purposes. People's responses to evolving socio-rhetorical contexts and situations may be shaped by changing socio-cognitive needs, encouraging discourse participants to bend the conventions and innovate on the form.

Institutionalised generic resources are often manipulated with a view to achieving persuasive and promotional goals. Even genres that have traditionally been perceived as informative are increasingly colonised by promotional functions (Bhatia 2005; Fairclough 1995; Koester 2010, among others). *Colonisation* is a process involving

invasion of the integrity of one genre by another genre or genre convention, often leading to the creation of a hybrid form, which eventually shares some of its genre characteristics with the one that influenced it in the first place.

(Bhatia 2004: 58)

The process reflects broader social and discursive changes taking place in various domains, including higher education; Fairclough subsumes the changes under the term *commodification*, defined as

the process whereby social domains and institutions, whose concern is not producing commodities in the narrower economic sense of goods for sale, come nevertheless to be organised and conceptualised in terms of commodity production, distribution and consumption. (...) In terms of orders of discourse, we can conceive of commodification as the colonisation of institutionalised orders of discourse, and more broadly of the societal order of discourse, by discourse types associated with commodity production.

(Fairclough 1992: 207)

Fairclough (1993) discusses instances of academic course descriptions and job advertisements becoming increasingly promotional. In a similar vein, Bhatia (2004, 2005) observes that many traditionally informative genres, including academic, corporate, political, journalistic and many of the reporting genres, are growingly being influenced and/or invaded by promotional concerns. Consequently, they appropriate features typically encountered within the colony (or family) of promotional discourse types. Broadly understood *marketing* constitutes their most distinctive communicative goal: the shared, overlapping purpose is to *promote* a product or service to a potential customer, or '*sell*' commodities, ideas, brands, organisations and institutions (Bhatia 2004; Fairclough 2003). Promotional genres are inherently *persuasive*, in the sense that they involve influencing or inducing the addressees to willingly and knowingly do something, change their beliefs and, as a consequence, the way they behave (cf. Halmari and Virtanen 2005; Mortensen 2008; Mulholland 1994; Simons 2001; Tokarz 2006); put differently,

the addressers aim to “elicit a specific response” from the addressees (Bhatia 1993: 45). Along with sharing overlapping communicative purposes, promotional genres are also similar in terms of the use of lexico-grammatical and discoursal resources (e.g. Bhatia 2004; Catenaccio 2008).

In recent decades, many traditionally stable genres have been transformed by the medium of the Internet. Although the online versions of some genres have remained actually the same as their print counterparts (e.g. many of the academic papers accessible online), others show “diverse degrees of digitalisation and/or novelty”, exhibiting a “mixture of conventional and new – digital – traits”, or becoming unique to the online medium (Caballero 2008: 21). Thus, while some genres have adapted to the new medium, others emerged as specifically web-based types of discourse (see also Orlikowski and Yates 1994; Warnick 2007). Consumption of online digital hyperlinked texts differs from reading or listening to other mediated textual forms in several dimensions, of which the most significant seems to be the fact that works in print are generally written to be read continuously and in sequence, whereas the hypertext enables non-linear and non-sequential reading (e.g. Askehave and Nielsen 2005; Warnick 2007). In many environments, writing is no longer unquestionably the dominant mode of communication, having been overtaken by the image. This can easily be observed in online persuasive texts where persuasion is not only constituted of words, but also of pictures, symbols, and other forms of non-verbal communication. Consequently, genre scholars often recommend treating online texts as interactive media which should best be read and analysed in the “navigating”, rather than “reading”, mode (Askehave and Nielsen 2005: 3-4). Taking a *multi-modal* approach to the analysis allows to account for the non-verbal dimensions of discourse and investigate its visual and sound aspects which vastly contribute to, or dominate, the production and reception of texts (e.g. Iedema 2003; van Dijk 1997; van Leeuwen 2008; van Leeuwen & Kress 2011; Renkema 2004).

3. Material and methods

The corpus analysed for the purposes of the study comprises two sets of texts. The first sub-corpus (further on referred to as the ‘old’ sub-corpus) consists of the admission bulletins published in the years 1978-1981 by four Polish universities: the University of Gdańsk (UG), the Nicolaus Copernicus University (Toruń – UMK), the University of Silesia (Katowice – UŚ), and the University of Wrocław – UWr);¹ the other one (further on referred to as the ‘new’ sub-corpus) includes texts extracted from the ‘Admissions/Information for can-

¹ The ‘old’ sub-corpus of university admission bulletins includes the following:

UG University of Gdańsk (1979)

Uniwersytet Gdański : informator. Gdańsk: UG. 1979.

UMK Nicolaus Copernicus University (Toruń) (1978)

didates' sections (and/or the online admission bulletins) found at the websites of the same universities in June 2014. More specifically, the analysis covers the 'General Information' sections of both sub-corpora, targeted at all potential candidates, and the sections directed at candidates wishing to be enrolled in foreign languages programmes.

As mentioned earlier, the analysis foregrounds the *textual* layer of information and persuasion found in the corpus. Although it has been indicated in section 2 that a *multi-modal* approach is advisable when investigating web-based discourse (the 'new' sub-corpus in the present study), a decision has been made to choose the "reading mode" of analysis, rather than the proper multi-modal examination, stemming from the fact that the evolution of communication/promotional techniques used in university admission bulletins, resulting from the development of Internet technologies, seems rather obvious. Merely a quick look at the 'old' and 'new' bulletins is sufficient to notice a tremendous shift in the modes of meaning representation and a considerable growth in the visual attractiveness of the – broadly understood – texts; this in turn reflects the importance attached to the attractiveness of the message seen as a vehicle for projecting the attractiveness of the communicator and their offer. Also, the "navigating mode" enabled by hypertext technologies increases the functionality of the texts, allowing the reader to navigate the online resources and actively construct the reading path, gaining easy access to a multitude of information related to the offer. It thus seems less obvious, and – in consequence – more worthwhile, to investigate how the shift towards promotionalisation of university admission bulletins is reflected in the very text of the 'old' and 'new' bulletins.

The analysis compares, in the first instance, the communicative goal(s) of the texts constituting both sub-corpora as reflected in their rhetorical structure, with a view to examining which structural elements, i.e. *moves* and *steps* (sensu Bhatia 1993, 2004; Swales 1990, 2004), appear solely in one of the two sub-corpora, and which seem to remain rather stable over time. The so-called move-step approach has become well-established in linguistic research in the last three decades, being widely adopted for investigations of structural/rhetorical patterns in professional and business genres (Bargiela-Chiappini et al. 2007; Bhatia 2004, 2005; Biber et al. 2007; Paltridge 2013, among others). This analytical

Uniwersytet Mikołaja Kopernika w Toruniu: informator. Jacek Staszewski (ed.). Toruń: UMK. 1978.

UŚ University of Silesia (Katowice) (1981)

Informator dla kandydatów na studia dzienne w Uniwersytecie Śląskim. Katowice: Uniwersytet Śląski. 1981.

UWr University of Wrocław (1981)

Uniwersytet Wrocławski im. Bolesława Bieruta: informator. K. Fiedor, H. Pyka et al. (eds). Wrocław: Uniwersytet Wrocławski. 1981.

The same abbreviations (UG, UMK, UŚ, UWr) are used throughout the text to mark the four universities.

paradigm is based on a top-down approach to analysing the discourse structure of texts viewed as sequences of ‘rhetorical moves’, where each move represents “a discursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (Swales 2004: 228). Moves have their own purposes, contributing to the overall communicative goal(s) of the genre. They may contain multiple components that together, or in some combination, realise the move. Swales (1990) refers to these smaller elements as *steps*, whose primary function is to achieve the purpose of the *move* to which they belong.

The second stage of the analysis involves a more detailed investigation of the linguistic/communicative strategies realising particular moves identified in both sub-corpora, aiming to determine whether, and to what degree, they have evolved to serve promotional (rather than informative) purposes. As indicated in section 2, promotional texts are inherently *persuasive*, i.e. they involve influencing or inducing the addressees to willingly and knowingly do something, change their beliefs and the decisions they make; broadly understood *marketing* constitutes the most distinctive communicative goal of these texts: their overarching purpose is to *promote* or ‘*sell*’ products, services, ideas, brands, organisations and institutions. Drawing on a vast body of research concerned with the linguistic strategies commonly used in persuasive/promotional discourse, the strategies analysed for the purposes of this paper have been classified into five categories:

- 1) positive self-presentation of the university
- 2) building a common ground/solidarity with the candidates
- 3) enhancing the candidates’ status
- 4) offering benefits
- 5) encouraging the candidates to take action as indicated by the communicator (cf. Bralczyk 2004; Cook 2001; Gorman 2007; Lubaś 2006; Mulholland 1994; Mortensen 2008; O’Keefe 1990; Simons 2001; Tokarz 2006; Wolny-Peirs 2005).

Finally, overlapping with the above, the analysis seeks to trace the signals of continuity and change in the academic culture and values projected in the two sub-corpora.

4. Results and discussion

The present section summarises the results of the comparative analysis of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ university admission bulletins. It examines the evolution of the rhetorical structure of the genre, followed by a more detailed analysis of the linguistic/communicative strategies used in particular moves, reflecting the shift towards promotionalisation of the genre and a shift in some aspects of the academic culture and values projected in the two sub-corpora.

4.1. The rhetorical structure

Table 1 below shows the moves identified in the analysis of the ‘old’ and ‘new’ university admission bulletins.

Table 1. The rhetorical moves identified in the ‘old’ and ‘new’ bulletins

MOVES		‘OLD’	‘NEW’
1.	University presentation	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
2.	Programme description	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
3.	Admission criteria	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
4.	Application procedure	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
5.	(Direct) encouragement	–	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r

As can clearly be seen in Table 1, the rhetorical structure of the genre seems very stable with regard to MOVES 1, 2, 3 and 4: university presentation, programme description, admission criteria and application procedure, respectively, are present in both the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ bulletins published by all four universities. MOVE 5, however, (directly) encouraging candidates to choose a particular university and their study offer, is entirely absent in the ‘old’ sub-corpus, and present in all the bulletins constituting the ‘new’ sub-corpus. As encouraging addressees to take action intended by the communicator is one of the core communicative goals of advertising – the central/prototypical member of the colony of promotional texts (see e.g. Bhatia 2004; Cook 2001), this difference between the two sub-corpora suffices to conclude that there indeed is a shift towards promotionalisation of the bulletins reflected in their textual layer.

A more detailed analysis reveals the steps contributing to the realisation of particular moves. Tables 2-6 summarise the results found for both sub-corpora.

Table 2. Steps contributing to the realisation of MOVE 1
– university presentation²

MOVE 1 UNIVERSITY PRESENTATION		‘OLD’		‘NEW’	
1.	History/tradition	UG	+	UWr	+
		UMK	+++++		
		UŚ	+		
		UWr	+++		
2.	Faculty (their academic achievements/quality of teaching)	UG	+	UG	+
		UMK	+++	UMK	+
		UŚ	+	UŚ	+++
		UWr	+++	UWr	
3.	University rankings/achievements	UG	++	UG	++
		UMK	+	UMK	+++++
				UŚ	+++++
		UWr	++	UWr	++++
	3a. Famous graduates (incl. celebrities)			UG	+++++
				UWr	+++
4.	Facilities/support/student organisations/entertainment	UG	+++	UG	++
		UMK	+++	UMK	+++++
		UŚ	++	UŚ	+++++
		UWr	++	UWr	+++++

² The presence or absence of particular steps found in the two sub-corpora is shown as being a matter of degree, ranging from absence, through weak, to very strong presence (‘+’/‘++’/‘+++’/‘++++’/‘+++++’).

Table 3. Steps contributing to the realisation of MOVE 2
– programme description

MOVE 2 PROGRAMME DESCRIPTION		‘OLD’	‘NEW’
1.	Courses/specialisations	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
2.	Programme strengths/benefits	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
3.	Job prospects	UG, UMK, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r

Table 4. Steps contributing to the realisation of MOVE 3 – admission criteria

MOVE 3 ADMISSION CRITERIA		‘OLD’	‘NEW’
1.	Admission limits/thresholds	UŚ	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
2.	References/links to the regulations of MNSW ^{a)}	UŚ	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
3.	(Sample) exam questions	UŚ	

^{a)} The Ministry of Science and Higher Education.

Table 5. Steps contributing to the realisation of MOVE 4
– application procedure

MOVE 4 APPLICATION PROCEDURE		‘OLD’	‘NEW’
1.	Documents required	UŚ	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
2.	Fees	UŚ	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
3.	Dates/deadlines	UŚ	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
4.	Contact details	UG, UŚ, UW _r	UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r

Table 6. Steps contributing to the realisation of MOVE 5
– (direct) encouragement

MOVE 5 (DIRECT) ENCOURAGEMENT		'OLD'	'NEW'
1.	Addressing candidates directly		UG, UMK, UŚ, UW _r
2.	Welcoming/inviting		UG, UMK, UŚ
3.	Giving advice/guidance		UŚ, UW _r
4.	Wishing candidates success/ satisfaction		UG, UW _r
5.	Emotional encouragement/ pressure tactics		UG, UMK, UW _r
6.	Slogans		UMK, UŚ, UW _r
7.	'Sales promotion' (competition/ lottery)		UMK

The above analysis demonstrates that all the three steps realising MOVE 2 (programme description) are present in nearly all texts in both sub-corpora (Table 3). This is not surprising in view of the fact that the steps provide information about the core 'product' offered by the universities: specific programmes, courses, specialisations and their benefits, including employment possibilities after graduation. Less stability is observed with regard to steps realising MOVES 3 and 4 (admission criteria and application procedure, respectively). As shown in Tables 4 and 5, the 'new' bulletins offer significantly more information related to the admission criteria and application procedure than the 'old' ones. This can be attributed, on the one hand, to the opportunities provided by Internet technologies, allowing to upload large amounts of information and make it easily accessible to the readers, and on the other hand, to the fact that, with increasingly tougher competition for students on the Polish higher education market, and the young generation being used to finding all the information they need online, the universities that do not provide all the necessary details in the Admissions section on their website would probably fail to stand the competition in terms of student recruitment.

Interesting differences have been found in the analysis of steps realising MOVE 1 (university presentation). Table 2 shows that although the four steps identified in MOVE 1 are present in both corpora, the degree of their presence is significantly different. References to the universities' history and traditions are made markedly more frequently in the 'old' corpus, indicating that these aspects presumably used to be valued in the past more than they are today. The 'old'

bulletins also include slightly more references to the academic achievements of the university faculty and the high quality of teaching. On the other hand, the universities' achievements and position in the rankings of higher education institutions are more frequently highlighted in the 'new' bulletins, bringing to mind associations with business organisations boasting about their leading market position. Even more interestingly, the achievements include mentions of famous people that have graduated from the universities, not only renown entrepreneurs, scientists and politicians, but also celebrities (e.g. a former Miss World who graduated from the University of Gdańsk). This is suggestive of an evolution of the values which are appreciated by the young generation and, consequently, projected by the institutions wishing to attract candidates. The 'new' bulletins boast about the university facilities, support offered to students, opportunities for entertainment and participation in student organisations only slightly more frequently than the 'old' texts, indicating that the communicators recognise the steady interest on the part of students in this type of benefits.

The most striking dissimilarities have been observed for steps realising MOVE 5, whose communicative goal is to encourage candidates (usually in a direct manner) to submit their applications. As shown in Table 6, four steps (addressing candidates directly, e.g. in the Rector's address, acts of welcoming and inviting, emotional encouragements, sometimes verging on pressure tactics, and slogans resembling those communicated by business organisations) have been found in all or the majority of the 'new' bulletins, with the other three steps (acts of advising and guiding, wishing candidates success and satisfaction, and encouraging them to take part in a competition or lottery as part of the recruitment process) found in one or two bulletins in this sub-corpus. On the other hand, none of the 'old' bulletins makes use of such tactics, a finding which confirms the evolution of the genre, and academia, towards marketisation.

4.2. Persuasive/promotional strategies

Largely overlapping with the above, this sub-section offers a closer look at the linguistic/communicative strategies used in both sub-corpora to realise the communicative goals of the genre, with particular emphasis on those strategies that contribute (directly or indirectly) to the persuasive/promotional appeal of the texts. As indicated in section 3, the strategies have been classified into five categories: positive self-presentation of the university, building a common ground/solidarity with the candidates, enhancing the candidates' status, offering benefits, and encouraging the candidates to take action.

4.2.1. Positive self-presentation of the university

The analysis of steps realising MOVE 1 has revealed that references to the universities' history and traditions are made significantly more frequently in the 'old' bulletins. An investigation of the linguistic resources used to communicate

those values shows that the ‘old’ texts tend to use relatively neutral language, and thus the self-praise is realised mostly through the acts of informing. Examples include the following:³

- (1) The University of Gdańsk is currently implementing 50 cooperation agreements with institutions and enterprises ... (UG)
- (2) The Institute of Microbiology, established in 1974, conducts research in three main areas: ... (UWr)

More persuasive language is used in this move only in two contexts: when the ‘old’ bulletins praise academic and scientific achievements of the faculty (with positively loaded nouns and adjectives such as *authority*, *recognised*, *honored* – UMK), and in sections boasting about the universities’ contribution to the region, the nation, the country and, characteristically, the socialist system, for instance:

- (3) The research profile of the University of Wrocław has been shaped mostly with a view to catering for the needs of the Lower Silesia region and ... (UWr)

By contrast, the ‘new’ bulletins abound in open acts of self-praise/boasting and rhetorical strategies commonly used in advertising discourse, as shown in the extracts below:

- (4) Why study at ... ? (UMK, UWr)
- (5) The University of Wrocław is the only Polish University belonging to the worldwide exchange network ISEP ... (UWr)
- (6) The graduates of the University of Gdańsk change the world ! (UG)
- (7) The Nicolaus Copernicus University is one of the best Polish universities; our position is confirmed in numerous national and international rankings ... (UMK)

As shown in the above examples, the ‘new’ bulletins resort to a number of rhetorical strategies enhancing the persuasive appeal of the message, including rhetorical questions (4), exclamatory structures (6), superlative forms (*one of the best*), strong quantifiers indicating scarcity or uniqueness (*the only Polish university*), hyperbole (*change the world*). In terms of values, in line with the results presented in the previous sub-section, the focus is on the universities’ current status, achievements and attractiveness, rather than history and tradition.

³ All the extracts quoted to exemplify the findings of the present analysis have been translated from Polish into English by the author.

4.2.2. *Building a common ground/solidarity with the candidates*

The 'old' bulletins consistently use impersonal address forms and the passive voice when referring to the addressees (*students/candidates are expected to...*); the 'new' bulletins shorten the distance between the communicators and the addressees by including mixed address forms (impersonal address and direct address) as well as the active voice and the imperative, for example:

(8) Upload all the information concerning your ... (UWr)

Common ground and solidarity is also achieved in the 'new' bulletins through frequent use of the personal pronouns *you* and *we*; the former builds an atmosphere of familiarity and intimacy, whereas the latter creates an image of the university as a well-integrated community of students, the faculty members and the authorities. The personalisation strategies are commonly used in marketing-type advertisements, enhancing the appeal of ads on mass and indeterminable audiences (see e.g. Cook 2001; Talbot 2007).

Another strategy aiming to build common ground with the candidates in the 'new' bulletins, absent in the 'old' sub-corpus, is the communicators' engagement in a 'dialogue' with prospective students:

(9) Did you know that English is one of those languages that comprise the largest number of words? About 600 thousand ! (UWr)

(10) On the next few pages we would like to tell you about ... (UMK)

Personalisation combined with the informal and conversational tone in (9) and (10) contribute to the projection of a friendly, relaxed atmosphere to be found at the universities.

4.2.3. *Enhancing the candidates' status*

The strategies aiming to enhance the candidates' status are, again, frequently used in the 'new' bulletins, and absent in the 'old' sub-corpus. The goal is achieved through acts of complimenting (as exemplified in extract 11 below), as well as through polite forms of address and other politeness strategies:

(11) We can see the potential in you ! (UG)

(12) Dear Candidates! (UG)

(13) Dear Candidate! Welcome to the ... (UŚ)

(14) If you like ... , we would like to invite you to ... (UMK)

(15) We wish you a lot of satisfaction ... (UWr)

The same goal is realised in the acts of promising guidance and support, as shown in the example below:

- (16) Don't listen to the jokes they tell about the dangerous ladies in the Dean's Office – you will soon see that there are plenty of nice and helpful people working there. (UWr)

Extract (16) implies that candidates will not only be welcome and appreciated, but also taken care of. The conversational tone of the above quotes further contributes to the projection of an atmosphere of partnership between prospective students on the one hand, and the university faculty and authorities on the other.

4.2.4. Offering benefits

Benefits are promised in both the 'old' and the 'new' bulletins, primarily in MOVE 2 (benefits related to the study programme and future job prospects) and MOVE 1 (university facilities, support for students, opportunities for entertainment and participation in student organizations), yet considerable differences have been found with regard to the emphasis placed on particular benefits and the communicative strategies used in both sub-corpora. One of the most striking changes in the programme descriptions is the shift from the emphasis on *obligation* in the 'old' bulletins to the emphasis on *opportunity* in the 'new' ones. This trend is exemplified in the extracts below; (17) and (18) come from the 'old' sub-corpus, whereas (19), (20) and (21) have been found in the 'new' bulletins:

- (17) Candidates are required to ... (UŚ)
 (18) Students are obliged to ... (UŚ)
 (19) Candidates can ... (UŚ)
 (20) You will have an opportunity to ... (UWr)
 (21) The programme will enable you to ... / You can ... (UG)

As is clear from the examples, the 'old' bulletins tend to communicate what the candidates are *required/obliged to do*, while the 'new' texts focus on what the prospective students *can/will be able to/will have an opportunity to do*.

As far as the job prospects after graduation are concerned, the section seems to evolve from 'neutral' *lists* of options focusing on how the jobs performed by graduates will benefit the society, towards a *wide range* of opportunities, with emphasis on benefits for the candidates themselves. The following two extracts exemplify this shift:

- (22) The main goal of the programme is to develop qualified teachers, thus the emphasis is placed on preparing candidates for school jobs. The majority of graduates undertake the duties of foreign language teachers in various types of schools ... (UŚ)
 (23) Fluency in English and the expertise in the culture and arts of English speaking countries (...) open employment opportunities in a variety of areas ... (UMK)

In extract (22), found in the ‘old’ sub-corpus, the emphasis is placed on the duties that candidates will be required to undertake after graduation to serve the society as teachers; (23), extracted from the ‘new’ sub-corpus, focuses on the *opportunities (in a variety of areas)* that the skills gained in the course of studies will provide for the candidates.

With regard to university facilities, support for students, opportunities for entertainment and participation in student organisations, the relative stability in *what* is communicated and promised is not confirmed by the linguistic strategies used to communicate the benefits. The ‘old’ bulletins tend to resort to a rather neutral, informative style, for instance:

(24) Besides providing entertainment, the majority of student clubs organise meetings with scholars, politicians, writers ... (UWr)

By contrast, the ‘new’ bulletins make frequent use of highly persuasive/promotional language, as exemplified in the extract below:

(25) Why study at the University of Wrocław ? There is something for everyone ! (UWr)

The rhetorical question, followed by an exclamatory structure verging on a cliché (*There is something for everyone!*), clearly resembles the discourse of mainstream advertising.

4.2.5. Encouraging the candidates to take action

Absent in the ‘old’ sub-corpus, this communicative goal (overlapping with MOVE 5 in the structural analysis) is realised in the ‘new’ bulletins in several ways, including acts of welcoming and inviting (extract 26 below), imperatives (extract 27), and slogans (extract 28):

(26) We invite everyone who’d like to exercise to our ... (UMK)

(27) Join the student (UMK TV) team, ... (UMK)

(28) Good to know more. (UWr)

Yet the encouragement is even more visible in the highly emotional appeals, exemplified in some of the exclamatory structures found in the ‘new’ bulletins:

(29) See you in the new academic year! (UG)

(30) Save your money and study in a nice atmosphere! (UMK)

(31) Choose the English philology! (UWr)

The above extracts are strong encouragements that – due to their heavy emotional load – may plausibly be classified as pressure tactics typical of marketing-type ads.

5. Conclusions

The present paper has sought to investigate how the shift towards the ‘commercialisation’ of academia and the (broadly understood) academic discourse is reflected in the genre of university admission bulletins. The study compared two sets of texts: the admission bulletins published by four Polish universities in the years 1978-1981, and the ‘Admissions/Information for candidates’ sections of the universities’ websites in 2014. The analysis of the rhetorical structure of the genre indicates that although the majority of the *moves* appear to remain rather stable over time (MOVES 1, 2, 3, and 4, i.e. university presentation, programme description, admission criteria and application procedure, all four found in both sub-corpora), the strong presence of MOVE 5 – (direct) encouragement – in the ‘new’ bulletins, and the absence of this move in the ‘old’ texts, clearly confirms the shift in the communicative goal of the genre from predominantly informative to strongly persuasive/promotional.

A more detailed investigation of the *steps* realising particular moves corroborates this tendency; while the presence of steps contributing to MOVES 2, 3 and 4 suggests a relatively stable structure of the genre, with some differences stemming mostly from the opportunities provided by Internet technologies, and the universities striving to stand the competition by offering easy access to large amounts of information related to the admission requirements and the recruitment procedures, more significant dissimilarities have been found for steps realising MOVE 1 (university presentation) and MOVE 5 (encouragement). The different degree of presence observed for such steps as references to the universities’ history and traditions, their rankings and achievements, their famous graduates, and praising the high quality of the faculty (MOVE 1), as well as the seven steps in MOVE 5 contributing to the communicative goal of encouraging the candidates to submit applications (acts of welcoming and inviting, emotional encouragements, slogans, acts of advising and guiding, wishing candidates success and satisfaction, and other ‘sales promotion’ techniques) clearly indicate the evolution of the genre towards promotional discourse.

Finally, the promotionalisation is further confirmed by the persuasive strategies identified in both sub-corpora and analysed at the level of linguistic expressions. Largely overlapping with the communicative goals of the moves and steps, the linguistic/communicative strategies contributing (directly or indirectly) to the persuasive/promotional appeal of the texts encompass five categories: positive self-presentation of the university, building a common ground/solidarity with the candidates, enhancing the candidates’ status, offering benefits,

and encouraging the candidates to take action. The analysis of the persuasive strategies shows that the language of Polish university admission bulletins has evolved considerably from relatively neutral, impersonal and informative, to strongly personalised, persuasive and promotional. Additionally, interesting trends have been observed with regard to the values communicated by the genre, reflecting the broader social context shaping, and being shaped by, the genre. The analysis allows the conclusion that there seems to be a shift in academia from appreciation of universities' history and tradition, to appreciation of the universities' current achievements and position on the higher education market, from emphasis on the benefits for the society, to emphasis on the benefits for individual candidates, from focus on the candidates' duties and obligations, to focus on a wide range of choices and opportunities awaiting prospective students.

All things considered, the genre appears to be increasingly colonised by marketing discourse, and thus evolve towards text types whose predominant communicative goal is to persuade and promote. The evolution clearly confirms the tendency of the communication between universities and their prospective students to growingly resemble corporate marketing discourse, contributing to the general trend towards the 'marketisation' of academia.

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