

Title: Structure and pragmatic features in school counselling discourse: a case study of selected secondary schools in Nairobi

Author: Andera, Adams Oliver Nadecho

Abstract: This study is an investigation of school counselling discourse. It establishes the discourse structure of school counselling talk with a view to identifying the discourse markers that signal the various units that comprise this structure. The study further examines the pragmatic features of discourse found in the data and to show how these lead to a possible communication breakdown between the counsellor and client in school counselling sessions. The data used in this study was collected for selected schools in Nairobi. The selection of the schools was based on the availability of counselling room and a trained counsellor assigned to deal with guidance and counselling. The data was collected by cassette recording of the sessions. This recorded data was transcribed and analysed to extract the features of structure and pragmatics following Sinclair and Courtyard (1975) model on classroom discourse. The study reveals that school counselling discourse has a hierarchical structure in which smaller units combine to form larger units. Acts, which are smaller units of this discourse structure, combine to form Moves, Moves combine to form Exchanges and these form Transactions. The largest unit is the session. The unit of Move, identified as the minimal communicative unit, is further analysed in terms of illocutionary acts following Austin (1962) Speech Act Theory, to identify the pragmatic features of discourse. The pragmatic analysis also draws upon other works of pragmatics. Topic shift, Speaker assumption, participant role and pragmatic focus are identified as pragmatic features of discourse that indicate or effect miscommunication between counsellor and client in school counselling discourse.