

A GENRE-BASED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS: CHRISTMAS INVITATION LETTER IN GKPS INDONESIA

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Abstract

This study analyzes Christmas invitation letters within the Simalungun Christian Protestant Church (GKPS) community using a genre-based discourse analysis approach. Employing Swales' (1990) genre move analysis method, the research identifies the structural and rhetorical functions of Christmas invitation letters to understand the communication strategies used. The study sample consists of five Christmas invitation letters analyzed based on six main moves: opening, salutation to the recipient, statement of purpose and invitation message, event details, request for attendance, and conclusion with church authority signatures. The findings reveal that Christmas invitation letters in GKPS serve not only as a medium for conveying event information but also as a reflection of the cultural and religious values of the Simalungun Christian community. The textual structure used reflects a blend of Christian traditions and Indonesian social norms, characterized by a warm formal tone, religious expressions, and strong communal elements. Additionally, visual and textual elements, such as opening greetings and official signatures, reinforce a sense of respect and togetherness within the community. The study concludes that Christmas invitation letters within the GKPS community function beyond mere event announcements; they also serve as a medium for strengthening social and religious identity. This research contributes to a broader understanding of genre analysis within religious and cultural discourse contexts.

Keywords: Genre analysis, Christmas invitation letter, religious discourse, GKPS community, cultural communication.

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INTRODUCTION

An invitation is a letter composed to request the presence of a guest at a specific event or celebration. The invitation is classified into various categories. Some classify it as a formal or informal invitation, while others distinguish it as a commercial or friendly invitation. Al-Ali, (2006) identifies two kinds of

invitations: written and spoken. Printed invitations possess specific generic characteristics in comparison to spoken invitations. Spoken invitations may be conveyed by telephone calls or in person, and printed invitations are sent away either through postal services or delivered personally to the guests. According to Eriani et al., (2023) Invitations function as a means of providing information about the date and location of the event to be held.

Discourse analysis has emerged as a crucial domain for comprehending the utilization of language within certain social and cultural contexts to fulfill communicative objectives. Genre-based analysis is a fundamental method in discourse analysis that investigates the structural and functional characteristics of texts to reveal the alignment between writers' goals and audience expectations (Swales, 1990). Discourse analysis studies are not only about statements but also the structure and rules of discourse. The formation of discourse buildings and discourse analysis structures is inseparable from the relationship between discourse and reality. Reality is understood as a set of social constructions formed through discourse. The discourse analysis referred to in this writing will provide a basic understanding that discourse is not understood solely as an object of language study but is discourse as a purposeful social practice. Discourse does not just appear but comes with a specific purpose intended to be conveyed to the audience (Silaswati, 2019).

An invitation letter is a letter sent by a person/a certain agency to another agency as a form of fulfilling a certain invitation. An invitation letter must follow the rules of official correspondence, starting from the structure of the letter, the spelling used and the language of the letter (Kemal & Fitriani, 2014). The examination of specific genres in discourse studies offers significant insights into the utilization of language for communicative objectives within distinct social and cultural contexts (Swales, 1990). One notable genre is the Christmas invitation letter, an important document within Christian communities, especially in the Simalungun Christian Church (GKPS). These letters function as both a medium of communication and a reflection of the cultural and religious values that exist in

the community. These letters promote the social and spiritual unity of the church by urging members to engage in Christmas celebrations.

Linguistics is the science of language, which studies, examines, and analyzes language in general, whether regional languages, Indonesian, or foreign languages. Therefore, linguistics is called general linguistics. Then, language as an object of linguistic study is an arbitrary sound symbol system used by social group members to work together, communicate, and identify themselves. Language has the following characteristics or properties: language is a system, language is in the form of symbols, language is sound, language is meaningful, language is arbitrary, language is conventional, language is productive, language is unique besides being universal, language is dynamic, and language is human and varied (Efendi, 2012). According to Ananda et al. (2021) and Nurani et al. (2023), the genre-based approach is commonly used in learning to write by combining product and process approaches. In this case, the product is that learners are asked to write text by imitating the given pattern.

Since the late 1980s, critical discourse analysis (CDA) has become a well-established field in the social sciences. CDA can be defined as a problem-orientated interdisciplinary research programme, subsuming a variety of approaches, each with different theoretical models, research methods, and agendas. What unites all approaches is a shared interest in the semiotic dimensions of power, injustice, and political-economic, social, or cultural change in society. The manifold roots of CDA lie in rhetoric, text linguistics, anthropology, philosophy, sociopsychology, cognitive science, literary studies, and sociolinguistics, as well as in applied linguistics and pragmatics (Wodak, 2014). Wodak and Meyer's (2009) critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework offers an additional layer to genre analysis by focusing on how language reflects and reinforces power dynamics and social hierarchies. CDA explores how genres function within social structures, examining the ways in which texts can both challenge and uphold societal norms. By applying CDA, researchers can uncover the ideologies and power relations that are embedded in language use, providing a

deeper understanding of how texts not only communicate but also shape social realities.

Christmas invitation letters are texts intended to serve distinct communicative objectives, including conveying event information, promoting attendance, and developing a sense of community. This enables them a valuable resource for genre-based discourse research, especially through move and step analysis. Bhatia (1993) proposes that moves indicate the functional phases of a text, whereas steps are the methods utilized to create these phases. Analyzing the components of Christmas invitation letters offers a methodical approach to identifying how they fulfill their communicative purposes and engage the audience.

Rhetoric is not just about speaking well, but also about how to construct strong and convincing arguments. We present rhetorical techniques that have been proven effective and provide practical guidance for applying them in a variety of public communication situations (Wulan et al., 2024). Linguistics is the scientific study of language. Language as a means of communication plays a very important role in establishing social interaction so that there is mutual understanding between speakers and interlocutors (Riana, 2009). This study aims to identify the rhetorical and linguistic conventions that define Christmas invitation letters in the GKPS through the analysis of these components. This analysis is significant for its capacity to connect linguistic and cultural viewpoints, emphasizing the relationship between form, function, and context. Christmas invitation letters are influenced by the sociocultural and religious conventions of the GKPS group. These conventions affect language selection, information structure, and the text's fundamental style.

Moreover, the examination of moves and steps in Christmas invitation letters offers insights into their efficacy in fulfilling communication objectives. The principal objective of these letters is to provide information and invite, while also seeking to inspire and engage. This study discusses the persuasive and emotive potency of language in religious discourse by analyzing the realization of

these aims using rhetorical methods. In addition to enhancing the comprehension of religious and cultural discourse, this study offers useful advice for writing invitation letters in comparable contexts.

METHOD

This study adopts a qualitative research approach, employing Swales' (1990) genre move analysis method to analyze the structural and functional components of Christmas invitation letters within the Simalungun Christian Church (GKPS). A qualitative approach is appropriate for this research because it allows for an in-depth exploration of textual patterns and their contextual significance, which is essential for understanding the rhetorical and communicative strategies employed in these letters. The principal approach employed is genre move analysis, as defined by Swales (1990), which emphasizes the identification of the "moves" and "steps" that form a text's structure. By evaluating these features, the study seeks to discover the structural composition of Christmas invitation letters in order to fulfill their communicative objectives and engage their target audience.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Five Christmas invitation cards were chosen at random as a sample. Following data collection, general component similarities and variances across different Indonesian Christmas invitation cards were taken into account. As previously stated, the current study centers on Swales' (1990) genre move analysis approach, which examined the schematic structures of invitation genre, including communicative goals, lexico-grammatical elements, content, and sub-rhetorical components (moves). Additionally, the viewpoint on textual analysis put forth by Kress and Van Leeuwen (1996) was taken into account.

Linguistic Features and Generic Component Movements

After analyzing the Christmas invitation cards from Christian's Simalungun Church, nine component moves were identified. The Sixth component moves are as follows: opening, congratulating the recipient of

the letter, stating the invitation's purpose and messages, stating the date, time, and location of the event, stating the inviters' request, and concluding with a gesture from the authorities (Figure 1).

1. First Move: Opening

The opening is the first move in Christmas invitations, according to an analysis of 5 randomly selected cards from the Christian Simalungun Church. Given that it is present in all 5 of the examined invitations, this opening is a necessary element. These Christmas invitations usually begin with a kind greeting in their native Indonesian. An example that is frequently used is "Salam sejahtera untuk kita semua," which means "Greetings of peace to all of us." This beginning establishes a friendly and inclusive atmosphere immediately. In Indonesian culture, it is customary to use this kind greeting for official correspondence and social gatherings. It shows how much value is placed on hospitality, a sense of community, and spiritual health. By starting the invitation in this manner, the organizers are letting the recipients know that this is a chance to unite in a spirit of friendship and peace.

Different invitation card designs may differ in the opening's size, font, and formatting. The fundamental goal is still the same, though: to create a welcoming and inclusive environment that gets the recipients ready to interact with the remainder of the invitation material. The remainder of the invitation is built upon this introductory statement. It makes a good initial impression and puts the receivers in the correct frame of mind to understand the contents and goal of the Christmas celebration, which will be explained in the invitation's later steps.

2. Second Move: Congratulating the letter's recipient

The invitation then moves into congratulating the designated recipients, such as the BPH Namaposo GKPS Resort Medan Selatan, following the cordial introductory greeting. This is accomplished by stating: "With sincere gratitude and thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ, we the

Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar invite Mr./Mrs., Brother/Sister to kindly attend the Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar Christmas Celebration that will be held on...". Let's dissect the main points of this congrats message:

- a. First, the organizers give their "sincere gratitude and thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ." This makes it clear right away that the event they are commemorating—the birth of their Savior—has religious and spiritual importance.
- b. Addressing the Recipients: The invitation then uses the polite phrases "Mr./Mrs., Brother/Sister" to address the recipients directly, such as the BPH Namaposo GKPS Resort Medan Selatan. The recipients find the invitation to be more significant because of this inclusive and personalized approach.
- c. The term "to kindly attend" is used by the organizers to extend the invitation in a very kind and polite manner. This is a reflection of Indonesian society's traditional values of hospitality and respect.

The organizers are expressing their gratitude to the honorees and acknowledging their significance in the community by including this congrats message. This draws the recipients even more into the event by fostering a sense of camaraderie and shared purpose. This kind of cultural and religious festival is suitable for the official yet friendly language utilized. The organizers are attempting to strike a balance between showing the beneficiaries respect and giving them a sense of real welcome and value. In order to establish a personal connection with the recipients and convey the importance of the event to the larger Simalungun Christian community, this second move is an essential component of the invitation structure. It creates the foundation for the remainder of the invitation's content to be positively received.

3. Third Move: Invitation's purpose and messages

Inviting the recipients—such as the Church Youth—to join the "Perayaan Natal Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar" or the Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar Christmas Celebration is the main goal of this invitation. The

invitation contains multiple crucial statements to effectively convey this goal: The first statement from the organizers is "sincere gratitude and thanks to the Lord Jesus Christ." This establishes the Christmas celebration's religious and spiritual significance for the Simalungun Christian Protestant Church community right away. They are gathering to celebrate the birth of their Savior, Jesus Christ, with pleasure. The invitation then makes it clear that the event's organizers are "inviting Mr./Mrs., Brother/Sister" to come. There is no room for doubt regarding the goal of this explicit call to action—the recipients are being cordially encouraged to take part in the Christmas celebrations.

The invitation gives the precise date, time, and place of the Christmas celebration so that the recipients can plan and get ready. The recipients can mark their calendars and make plans to come if these useful details are included. By inviting the "Mr./Mrs., Brother/Sister," the event's organizers highlight how inclusive and communal it is. They hope that everyone in the Simalungun Christian community would join them in celebrating this happy occasion. Lastly, words like "inviting" and "to kindly/be willing to," which express enthusiasm and eagerness on the part of the organizers, are employed. They truly can't wait to meet the recipients and join in their celebration. The goal of the invitation, which is to ask the community to join the Simalungun Christian Protestant Church in celebrating Christmas, is successfully conveyed by the organizers through these thoughtfully written letters. Together, the religious importance, sense of community, and useful event details make for a thorough and persuasive invitation.

4. Fourth Move: Stating the date, time, and location.

The celebration is scheduled for Sunday, December 10, 2023, according to the Christmas invitation. GKPS Simalingkar is the location, and the event will end at 6:00 PM. Giving recipients advance notice of these particular details enables them to schedule their attendance. It also conveys the organizers' focus on the little things and dedication to a well-planned event.

5. Fifth Move: Stating the Inviters Request

Declaring the inviters' request is the sixth phase in the Christmas invitation cards from Christian Simalungun congregations. This action is required and shows up in every sample that is examined. In accordance with Simalungun cultural norms and Christian principles, the inviters use formal and respectful language while requesting the invitees' presence. In the card that was uploaded, the invitees state, "Dengan penuh rasa syukur dan terima kasih kepada Tuhan Yesus Kristus, kami Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar mengundang Bapak/Ibu/Saudara/i agar berkenan untuk menghadiri acara Perayaan Natal Namaposo GKPS Simalingkar." This is equivalent to a kind and sincere invitation to attend, highlighting respect for the invitees and thankfulness for Jesus Christ. The community-centered approach is highlighted by the use of inclusive names like "Bapak/Ibu/Saudara/i" (Mr./Mrs./Siblings), which make sure everyone feels welcome. This gesture expresses the event's goal as well as the inviters' admiration for their guests' attendance.

6. Sixth Move: Concluding with gesture from authorities

The sixth strategy used in Christmas invitation cards from Christian Simalungun churches is to close with official signatures. Every sample that is analyzed exhibits this necessary action. It serves as a formal conclusion and confirms the invitation's official status with the signatures of significant people who assisted in organizing the event. For example, the Sekretaris Natal (Christmas Secretary), Ketua Natal (Christmas Chairperson), and Ketua NGKPS (Head of Namaposo GKPS) all signed the card at the end of the submitted file. These come with the signatures of church leaders, including the Porhanger (Elder) and Pembimbing (Mentor), as well as an official church stamp. In addition to confirming the invitation's legitimacy, the use of official signatures lends credibility and accountability. The invitation's numerous signatories emphasize the church's and its committees' joint responsibility and effort in planning the event. This action offers a formal and courteous ending that leaves a lasting image of community ideals and sincerity.

CONCLUSION

The genre-based discourse analysis of Christmas invitation letters within the Simalungun Christian Church (GKPS) reveals significant insights into the structural, linguistic, and cultural elements that shape these texts. A sample of 5 Christmas Invitation was selected. Six key moves were identified in the invitation letters: opening, congratulating the recipient, stating the purpose and message, providing event details, making formal requests, and concluding with official signatures. Each of these components serves not only to communicate the event's details but also to reflect the cultural and religious values of the Simalungun Christian community.

The findings suggest that the language and structure of these invitations are deeply influenced by both Christian religious traditions and Indonesian cultural norms. The formal yet welcoming tone, the use of religious expressions, and the integration of communal values reflect a blend of spiritual and social objectives. Additionally, the inclusion of visual and textual elements, such as greetings and official signatures, demonstrates the importance of establishing a formal and respectful tone, reinforcing the sense of community and shared purpose. In conclusion, the genre-based analysis of these Christmas invitation letters provides a framework for understanding how religious and cultural values are communicated through written texts in specific social contexts. This study contributes to a broader understanding of how genres function within religious communities, offering valuable insights for both genre analysis and cultural discourse studies.

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