Defining the Discourse Community:

“A Discourse is a sort of “identity kit” which comes complete with the appropriate costume and instructions on how to act, talk, and often write, so as to take on a particular role” (Gee 484). Each person is molded by these “identity kits” that are gathered throughout a lifetime. Some of them are acquired through the environment a person is born into, while access to other communities is only granted after much patience and hard work is done to meet the specific requirements of each discourse community. According to John Swales, six essential characteristics create the individual makeup of discourse communities that when all are met successfully they form a diverse yet unified community with a common vision and mission.

1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed upon set of common public goals.
2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members.
3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback.
4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims.
5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis.
6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise (Swales 471-473).

Athletic Training as a Discourse Community:

In order for Athletic Training to be defined as a discourse community it must meet those six characteristics.

1. The field of Athletic Training possesses an agreed set of common public goals including goals for professional growth and a set of agreed patient care goals.
2. The community has built up multiple ways for intercommunication including the National Athletic Trainers Association.
3. The community utilizes the process of evidence bases practice in order to keep information and feedback current.

4. The writing within the Athletic Training community if often different from many other styles of writing. The information contained in these notes is specific and concrete so no further justification of the information obtained is needed, with this style of writing less is always more.

5. The community possesses its own individual language consisting of symbols and acronyms to communicate with one another within the field

6. The community includes members within a wide range of expertise levels. This includes those new members applying to Athletic Training education programs and members who have pioneered the field and are now considered the experts.

Gaining Acceptance into Athletic Training Discourse Community:

Students have to apply and be accepted to an accredited Athletic Training education program. Once their schooling is done, they are then subjected to a comprehensive Board of Certification Exam which determines the certification status of each individual. This whole process takes approximately four to six years and even after being certified an individual is still considered a novice in the field. Not until they have been in the field practicing for seven years is an individual considered an expert in the field.

Common Texts:

There are many different texts as it relates to the discourse community of Athletic Training. Three common types include: SOAP Notes, rehabilitation logs, and journal articles.
SOAP Notes:

The acronym SOAP stands for Subjective, Objective, Assessment, and Plan, each one describing a separate part in the note. They are used as documentation for injury assessment, determining patient goals, progression from rehabilitation, and for discharge purposes. SOAP notes also use terminology that many, if not all individuals outside of the Athletic Training discourse community would not understand. Short hand writing is a major concept in SOAP note writing. Here is an example of a SOAP note.

Rehabilitation Logs:

Rehabilitation logs can often be much more difficult to write because they require much more information to be conveyed over much less space. The rehabilitation log documents individual rehabilitation appointments and serves to show patient progression throughout their rehabilitation. In order to write a complete rehabilitation log several components must be included: alignment and stabilization, intensity, volume, exercise order, frequency, duration, recovery period, mode of exercise, velocity of exercise and periodization. These use shorthand and specific terminology found in Athletic Training. You can see an example of a basic rehabilitation program by using the following link.

http://www.docstoc.com/docs/28891125/ACL-REHABILITATION-PROTOCOL

Journal Articles:

Athletic training prides itself on evidence based practice. Research is continuously being conducted in order to find the most effective, safe, and efficient way of handling patients. This research is aimed at being able to provide the best care possible. Journal articles in Athletic Training are much different than those of other professions. Most of the articles relate to a specific type of research or study that was performed. Qualitative data, charts, tables, graphs, key findings, and implementations for practice are among some of the items you can expect to find in Athletic Training journal articles.

Conclusion:

Athletic Training is a very popular field and therefore the discourse community must be somewhat exclusive to eliminate those candidates who are not willing to put in the work to help the community continue to grow. Although individuals must put in years of time and effort in order to simply join
the discourse community, this relationship between the members and the community is mutually beneficial. Discourse communities provide the necessary tools and materials to construct the “identity kits” that work together to mold an individual’s identity. Without the proper understanding of discourse communities it can be difficult to function within one and an individual can feel lost without being able to understand his or her role in the distinct community.

Works Cited


