

Chapter 8

A Genre–Based Study of Algerian EFL Writers’ Academic Texts: Move Structure in Research Article Abstracts

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ABSTRACT

To disseminate academic knowledge, scholars publish their research in the form of journal articles, whose content is sketched in an abstract with a conventional rhetorical organization. This chapter reports a study that aims to examine and assess the organization of research article abstracts in terms of move units. The move structure of 42 abstracts of English research papers written by Algerian researchers and published in one of the Algerian language journals was scrutinized. The study follows Hyland’s analytic model, comprising five rhetorical moves: introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion. The findings of the study indicate that the writers predominantly employ the pattern introduction-purpose, with some inconsistencies in using the other moves. On the basis of identifying the existing deviations from the predictable generic arrangement of abstracts, the importance of raising genre awareness among EFL writers has been highlighted as a means to enhance the quality of published discourse.

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INTRODUCTION

Effective participation in scholarly work requires a good command of writing various genres. Amidst the bulk of scholastic activities, academics are compelled to participate efficiently in the discourse community of their disciplinary fields via writing. This can be attained through the diffusion of their research to wider readerships by publishing articles in international journals of authority. Research article abstracts, an autonomous academic genre, constitute central elements of published papers. Skillfulness in producing forceful research paper abstracts of conventionally recognized formats has now become a crucial means of access to the world of publishing and of establishing the writers' status in the academy. However, writing abstracts in English has been found to constitute a thorny task for graduate and international students, researchers and even experienced authors based on the firm norms governing their construction (Swales & Feak, 2000; 2009). Writers often fail to observe such constraints, producing inconsistent texts for their readers. This has intrigued interest in researching the distinctive characteristics of the abstract genre for application in English writing classes either in a second language (SL) or a foreign language (FL) as part of writing pedagogy. Although a substantial amount of research has been devoted to the exploration of the structural and rhetorical tendencies in disciplinary abstract writing in a variety of ESL and EFL contexts, scant research in Algerian academic circles has been undertaken to study the issue of conformity of abstracts to international conventionalized genre formats. It would be thus of interest to investigate current practices in the immediate context to gain insights into precise difficulties and contribute to enhancing the quality of abstract writing, which targets international readerships. Detecting inconsistencies may even upgrade editorial work. The study reported in this chapter follows this perspective. It generally addresses the question of research paper abstract writing proficiency in the Algerian university context from the perspective of genre theory. The objective is to explore EFL writers' rhetorical propensities in terms of text staging and to measure their conformity with the conventional organizational patterns of the specified genre.

BACKGROUND

The Notion of Genre

The concept of *genre* is gaining increasing recognition in academic writing discussions. The origin of this concept can be traced back to Aristotelian thought, but it has significantly been refined in contemporary research. In essence, this concept signifies categorization. In traditional works, its sense was confined to literary

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