# A Genre Analysis of Linguistics Research Articles Written by Iraqi University Instructors of English

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## Abstract:

Genre analysis can be seen from two different angles. First, it can be seen as a reflection of the complex realities of the world of communication and second as a pedagogically effective tool for the design of language teaching programs. This study investigates the macrostructure of linguistic research articles (RAs) written by Iraqi university instructors of English from a genre-based perspective. The study corpus consists of 25 linguistics RAs published in some national academic journals. To achieve the study aims, Swales' (1990, 2001) theoretical framework of generic structure is adopted to explore the macrostructure of linguistics RAs. Results reveal that the discoursal organization of linguistics RAs is based on five main schematic moves. On the basis of these findings, a number of pedagogical implications are suggested.
*Keywords*: macrostructure; genre analysis; linguistic RAs.

# تحليل بلاغي لمقالات علم اللغة لتدريسي اللغة الإنكليزية الجامعيين العراقيين

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## الملخص:

تسهم بحوث تحليل الانواع اللغوية في كل من تفسير الحقائق المعقدة للتواصل البشري وكوسيلة ناجعة في تصميم برامج تعليم اللغات الاجنبية. تتقصى هذه الدراسة التركيب النصي الكلي للمقالات البحثية في مجال علم اللغة المنشورة باللغة الانكليزية والمكتوبة من أساتذة اللغة الإنكليزية في الجامعات العراقية.

تم اختيار ٢٥ مقالة بحثية في مجال علم اللغة والمنشورة في بعض المجلات العلمية المحلية لتحليلها من منظور تحليل النوع اللغوي. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم اعتماد الإطار النظري لسويلز (١٩٩٠، ٢٠٠١) في دراسة التركيب النصي العام لهذه المقالات البحثية. افضت نتائج الدراسة أن التركيب النصي للمقالات البحثية في مجال علم اللغة يعتمد في بناءه على خمسة خطوات بلاغية تسهم في تحقيق اهداف كتابة هكذا نوع لغوي. وفي ضوء النتائج التي تم التوصل اليها تم اقتراح بعض المضامين والمقترحات التعليمية.

## 1. Introduction:

Over the last two decades, a genre-based analysis has started to get more investigative attention. This analytic procedure derives directly from discourse and text analysis, and has been used extensively in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). However, there is a dispute concerning the adequacy of discourse and text analysis in providing direct help in needs analysis, syllabus design and creating materials for ESP courses. Dudley-Evans (1986) suggested that text analysis is concerned with the "top down" analysis that constitutes general features of all texts rather than analyzing particular text types or genres. John Swales (1981) makes a sort of linkage between the basic postulates of discourse and text analysis on the one hand and the needs of ESP for appropriate syllabuses and materials on the other. Hyland (1992) claims that genre analysis is "directly relevant to the classroom". He emphasizes "the crucial importance of rhetorical text structure" by establishing "common rhetorical patterns... in academic writing" (p. 23).

Different academic and professional genres have been examined by using such analytic framework. Some of the research done in the field done include the genre of business and organization writing (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Berkenkotter, 2002; Spinuzzi, 2003), academic and scientific writing (e.g, Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Swales, 1990, 2004), and professional writing (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Nwogu, 1997; Devitt, 2004). Also, a great research attention has been given to the genre of the analytical essay and research within the realm of the physical sciences (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Meyers, 1990), psychology (Berkenkotter, 2001), economics (Ning, 2008). One area that has not received an adequate investigative attention is the genre of research writing by non-native speakers and learners of English. For this motivating need, the present research paper is intended to examine the macro-structure of linguistics research articles written by Iraqi university instructors of English. After a careful inspection into the research literature available, it has been noticed that there is a dearth of research on the finer details of how and why the discourse of linguistics research articles is organized and structured.

## 2. Genre Analysis: Theoretical Underpinnings:

A substantial literature in English on a variety of academic genres including abstracts, presentations, lectures, theses, dissertations and textbooks are available now. However, it is the Research Article that has received the most attention with several studies focusing on its overall structure. This is not surprising because research articles represent the main channel of scientific communication (McNamee & Willis, 1994; Nwogu, 1991; Peck MacDonald, 1987).

Genre Analysis did not receive that much attention from scholars in the field of discourse analysis. Berkenkotter & Huckin (1995) stated that "discourse boundaries and frames have received too little attention in discourse studies" (p. 181). Cao yan & Mu ai-peng (1993), on the other hand, suggested that "work on the patterns of interaction between discourse and grammatical structures is only just beginning" (p. 99). Bhatia (1993) conducted a study in genre analysis and concluded that 'the ultimate criterion for assigning discourse values to various moves is functional rather than formal' (p.87). The purpose of this study is to investigate the genre analysis of the research papers published by Iraqi researchers in the field of linguistics. The study will expose the formal and

functional moves followed by those researchers to stand on the strength and weaknesses of genre selection by Iraqi researchers.

The theoretical framework for the study is based on Swales' (1994, 2001) genre analysis model which draws insights from Rumelhart and Rumelhart and Norman schema models (Gosden, 1993; Holmes, 1997; Hyland, 2001; & Nwogu, 1991). Such schema models are useful for accounting for the structure of technical texts (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Swales (1994, p.141) gives a good example of three-move schema for article introductions as follows:

MOVE 1:  ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY
Step 1    Claiming Centrality and /or
Step 2    Making topic generalization and /or
Step 3    Reviewing items of previous research
MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE
Step 1A            Counter-claiming or
Step 1B            Indicating a gap or
Step 1C            Question-Raising
 MOVE 3: OCCUPYING THE NICHE
Step 1A              Outlining purpose or
Step 1B              Announcing present research
Step 2            Announcing principal findings
Step 3            Indicating RA structure.

This example is very helpful if elaborated to include other parts of the paper and presented to researchers in their earlier years of study so they can follow the write way of constructing their studies.

Genre analysis is not just an investigation of the influence of purpose on the choice of grammatical forms, but also takes into consideration rhetorical functions. Robinson (1991) claims that the "author's purpose is explained with reference to the wider professional culture to which the author belongs" (p. 65). Thus, genre does not refer only to the text-type but also to the role of the text in the community within which it has been created.

Many scholars tried to define genre analysis. Dudley-Evans (1987) said that the main goal of genre analysis is pedagogical because it provides a flexible prescription based on analysis that makes suggestions about the layout, ordering and language appropriate to a particular text. Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) assumed that genre analysis is "an explicit description of the way in which texts are organised" (p.27). Hyland (1992) considered genre analysis as the study of how language is used within a particular context. He believed that genres differ in their goals and structures. Bhatia (1991), on the other hand, defined genre analysis as an analytical framework which reveals form-function correlations and contributes to our understanding of the cognitive structure of information.

The first study that used genre-based analysis was done by John Swales in 1981. He investigated 48 research article (RA) introductions from different fields of science offering a four-move model. Swales claimed that article introductions included a series of moves (parts) that appear in a predictable order. Those moves consist of steps. In 1990, Swales presented a revised model including three moves due to many disputes concerning the similarities of the moves he presented in his earlier study.

After Swales' studies, many scholars followed his steps in investigating research article introductions in different scientific fields such as physics, medicine, engineering, biology etc. And there is only article regarding this issue in economy. This study was done by Dudley-Evans and Henderson (1990) regarding the change in economics writing from 1881 to 1980. In their study, they did not aim at establishing a model of rhetorical organization in economics RA introductions, but to show that conventions have changed from the end of the last century till nowadays. That is why they do not offer any model or a detailed description of these introductions.

A review of the literature in linguistics reveals that only three studies dealt explicitly with the structure of the linguistics article (Hymes & Fought, 1981; Johnstone, 2000), and only one of these discusses genre conventions for the linguistic article in any detail (Johnstone, 2000). The earliest of these publications (Hymes & Fought, 1981) is a historiographical piece written as an overview of one of the more important eras of 20th Century linguistics, particularly in America, the time period roughly following the publication of Bloomfield's (1933) Language and lasting to the beginning of the "Chomsky revolution" in the mid-1950s known as the "structuralist" period. The materials created during the "structuralist" era reflect important theoretical and methodological advances that occurred in the field at the time. In particular, they highlight innovations to the genre of the linguistics article that occurred during this era. These include the systematic presentation of linguistic data to support the analysis of linguistic structure described by certain authors, as well as discussion of how that presentation contrasts with the analysis of data before the "structuralist" era. However, the implications of this material for a genre analysis of the structural elements of the linguistics article are not directly addressed by Hymes and Fought (1981). Macaulay (2011) provides a more explicit discussion of the use of data as a genre element of the linguistics article, but this discussion is not a major element of the text. Her work is a "how-to" guide written for graduate students who want to study linguistics in graduate school and perhaps pursue linguistics as a career. She presents this information as a part of a larger discussion of "elements of academic presentation" used by linguists within several sections of the book. In several chapters, genre conventions of the linguistics article are mentioned, such as the inclusion of an Introduction, a Conclusion, and Methods, Data Analysis, (and Discussion sections, but in each case, the material is presented from the practical perspective of how to go about setting up a section and formatting that section properly, rather than as an analysis of the rhetorical and structural reasons those sections appear. In contrast to Maculay (2011), Johnstone (2000) provides a more detailed discussion of the genre elements of the linguistics article. Johnstone's book is also written from a "how-to" perspective, but her focus is much more explicitly on research methods and the presentation of research findings. Johnstone further differs from Maculay by also discussing the fact that, although the structure she explicates is by far the most common one seen in the linguistics article, an alternative that one still sees from time to time is the older, descriptive essay model. As Johnstone points out, however, that model is seen primarily in discourse analysis, not sociolinguistics/language change and variation.

## 3. Research Questions:
This study is dedicated to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the schematic structure of linguistics RAs written by Iraqi university instructors of English in terms of component moves?

2.  What is the communicative function of these component moves in linguistics RAs written by Iraqi university instructors of English?
3.  What are the lexico-grammatical resources used to realize the component moves of linguistics RAs written by Iraqi university instructors of English?

## 4. Research Methodology:

To answer the research questions set forth, twenty five research articles in the area of English linguistics

This study investigates the schematic moves of 25 English Linguistics RAs written by Iraqi researchers. The studies were published in two scientific journals in 2016. Seven study were published in the Journal of the College of Arts at the University of Basrah (28%) and 18 study were published in Al-Ustath Scientific Journal at the University of Baghdad (72%) (See Table 1).

## Table 1

**Journal**

|  |  | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Al-Ustath | 18 | 72.0 | 72.0 | 72.0 |
|  | Journal of the College of Arts / U. of Basrah | 7 | 28.0 | 28.0 | 100.0 |
|  | Total | 25 | 100.0 | 100.0 |  |

## 5. Procedures

SPSS was used to analyze data. Data collection included the following:
2) Searching for linguistic clues such as function words, explicit lexemes and expressions, structural headings and subheadings, summary statements, etc.
3) Classifying and paraphrasing the context of discourse based on the linguistic clues.
4) Assigning discourse functions to the overall information in segments of text as well as constituent elements of information in the segments.

The guiding checklist of analysis consisted of eight Moves and four demographic items. The first seven items answer the second research question, whereas two other items answer the first one.

## 6- Results and Discussion:

The results showed that (32%) of researchers chose comparative studies, (16%) conducted discourse analysis, (20%) did literature reviews. (8%) of the articles were qualitative, (16%) were quantitative, and (8%) were stylistic analysis (See Table 4).

**Table 4**

**Research Genre**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | CS | 8 | 32.0 | 32.0 | 32.0 |
| | DA | 4 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 48.0 |
| | LR | 5 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 68.0 |
| | Qual. | 2 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 76.0 |
| | Quant. | 4 | 16.0 | 16.0 | 92.0 |
| | SA | 2 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

The current study involved the identification of the schematic units or the Moves of the RAs. This identification needs the following procedures, as suggested by Nwogu (1997):

1) Focusing on the proposition in the texts and identifying important information.

2) Searching for linguistic clues such as function words, explicit lexemes and expressions, verb forms, discourse conjunctions and markers, structural headings and subheadings, summary statements, etc.

3) Classifying and paraphrasing the context of discourse based on the linguistic clues.

4) Assigning discourse functions to the overall information in segments of text as well as constituent elements of information in the segments.

5) Establishing whether or not the function identified is a general one by reference to other texts in the corpus.

The statistical analysis of the corpus revealed seven Moves. Move 1 was concerned with the existence, absence, and structure of the abstracts, as in Table 5.

**Table 5**

**Abstract**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Short | 11 | 44.0 | 44.0 | 44.0 |
| | Long | 13 | 52.0 | 52.0 | 96.0 |
| | No Abstract | 1 | 4.0 | 4.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

As Table 5 explains, (44%) of the articles had short (which stands here for acceptable) abstracts, (52%) of them had long abstracts, and (4%) had no abstract (See Figure 2).
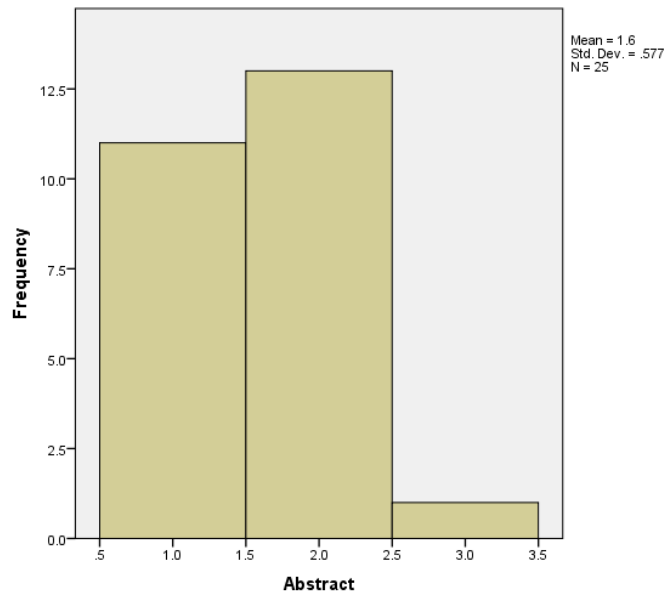
**Figure 2**

The second Move was about 'keywords'. Only (24%) of the articles had keywords provides, and the rest (76%) did not have any (See Table 6).

**Table 6**

### Keywords

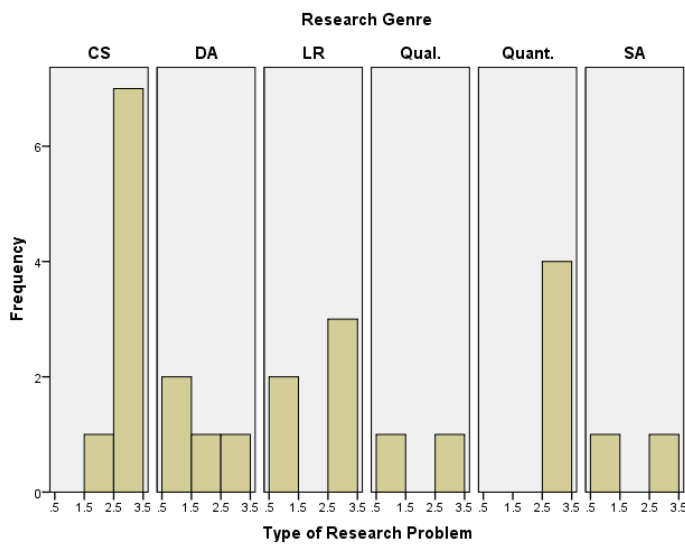|       |                   | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|-------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Keywords provided | 6         | 24.0    | 24.0          | 24.0               |
|       | No Keywords       | 19        | 76.0    | 76.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total             | 25        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Clear research problems were stated in (32%) of the articles, and (68%) of them had no clear research problem (See Table 7). (24%) of the research problems were general, i.e. they discuss general linguistic issues. (8%) of those problems were specifically addressing linguistic issues in Iraqi educational institutions. (See Table 8). Figure 3 showed the type of problem used in the sample articles in relation to research genre.

**Table 7**

### Research Problem

|       |                        | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Clear Research Problem | 8         | 32.0    | 32.0          | 32.0               |
|       | No Research Problem    | 17        | 68.0    | 68.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total                  | 25        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

**Table 8**

**Type of Research Problem**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | General | 6 | 24.0 | 24.0 | 24.0 |
| | Specific | 2 | 8.0 | 8.0 | 32.0 |
| | N/A | 17 | 68.0 | 68.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Figure 3**



As far as the purpose of study, (80%) of the articles had clear purpose stated in the introduction and (20%) of them had no clearly stated purpose. 'Research questions' is one of the component of scientific articles that is usually missing from Iraqi research articles. The results showed that (16%) from the articles had clear research questions and the rest (48%) had none (See Table 9 & 10).

**Table 9**

**Purpose of Study**

| | | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Valid | Clear Purpose of Study | 20 | 80.0 | 80.0 | 80.0 |
| | No Purpose of Study | 5 | 20.0 | 20.0 | 100.0 |
| | Total | 25 | 100.0 | 100.0 | |

**Table 10**

**Research Questions**

|       |                           | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|---------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Clear Research Questions  | 4         | 16.0    | 16.0          | 16.0               |
|       | No Research Questions     | 21        | 84.0    | 84.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total                     | 25        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

The final move investigated in the current study was the article construction in terms of the existence of the 'Methodology' and 'Results' sections explicitly or implicitly. Results of the current investigation showed that (32%) of the articles had both methodology and results, (8%) of them had methodology and observations but no clear results, (12%) of them came with results but no stated methodology, and (48%) of them had no methodology and no results.

**Table 11**

**Research Construction**

|       |                                    | Frequency | Percent | Valid Percent | Cumulative Percent |
|-------|------------------------------------|-----------|---------|---------------|--------------------|
| Valid | Methodology & results              | 8         | 32.0    | 32.0          | 32.0               |
|       | Methodology but no results (observations) | 2  | 8.0     | 8.0           | 40.0               |
|       | No methodology but results         | 3         | 12.0    | 12.0          | 52.0               |
|       | No methodology and no results      | 12        | 48.0    | 48.0          | 100.0              |
|       | Total                              | 25        | 100.0   | 100.0         |                    |

Based on the analysis of the data, it is clearly expressed that there are gaps in the understanding of Iraqi researchers concerning genre selection, linguistic requirements, and overall arrangement of the construction of linguistic research articles. Researchers who conducted quantitative studies are more aware of the scientific construction of those articles, however, other genres like discourse analyses, stylistic analyses, comparative studies, and literature reviews act as summaries of previous works of other authors rather than carrying a contribution to the field of linguistics.

## 7- Conclusion:

This descriptive study reports a genre analysis of 25 articles selected from the publications of the Journal of the College of Arts at the University of Basrah and Al-Ustath Scientific Journal at the University of Baghdad in the field of linguistics. The study presents a detailed analysis of macrostructure in published linguistic research articles written by Iraqi researchers.

The results showed that the macro-organization of linguistic research articles was structured in eight moves: abstract existence and length, keywords existence, availability of the research problem, type of the research problem in relation to its contribution to the field of study, availability of the purpose of study, availability of research questions, research construction in terms of methodology and results, and research genre.

As a kind of applied linguistic research, this study has the following theoretical, research and pedagogical implications. Genre analysis is an important approach used to analyze the generic structure and particular text features of linguistic research articles. As for the theoretical implications, this study will extend genre analysis to the discipline of linguistics, thus enriching scholars' knowledge of genre theory and expanding the scope of genre-based studies. Increasing interest in genre-based research in studies like the current one will have benefits for L1 and L2 pedagogic applications. This study had its focus also on the implications of genre theory for EFL classrooms. By identifying the macrostructure of linguistic research articles and analyzing their genre-specific features, the current research may pedagogically offer students some useful information to help them grasp the characteristics of schematic units in linguistic research articles and its potential as a genre discriminator. In order to better prepare EFL learners and future researchers for future academic writing, authentic teaching materials and current examples are highly demanded. In this case, the corpus of 25 currently published research articles chosen for this study might be of potential value for the EFL curriculum.

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