

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

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Abstract

This study investigates the macrostructure of linguistic research articles (RAs) from a communicative purpose perspective through descriptive statistical analysis. The corpus consists of 25 English RAs written by Iraqi scholars. The corpus is grouped according to the type of research followed into discourse analysis, stylistic, qualitative, quantitative, comparative studies, and literature reviews. Following this genre analysis, the macrostructure of primary research articles is identified. The results reveal that the organization of linguistic RAs consists of five moves: introducing the current research, presenting the theoretical background, presenting the methodology, stating the results, and discussing the findings. Move 3 and 6 are the mostly missing moves from some of the studies investigated, which indicates disciplinary influences on this genre. Besides, the embedding with other steps appears to be the salient feature in Move 6. However, a 100% frequency of occurrence foregrounds Move 2 "Presenting the theoretical background". This study can enrich the field of genre analysis and provide pedagogical benefits for English teaching and academic writing instruction in Iraq. It can also help EFL learners write effective English RAs with increased knowledge of macrostructure of linguistic RAs.

Keywords: macrostructure; genre analysis; linguistic RAs

الملخص:

تتقصى هذه الدراسة التركيب الداخلي لدراسات اللغة البحثية من منظورٍ تحاوري وذلك من خلال تحليلٍ إحصائيٍّ وصفيٍّ. تألفت العينة من 25 دراسة كتبها باحثون عراقيون. صنفت الدراسات حسب نوعية البحث: تحليل نصي، أسلوبية، نوعي، كمي، دراسات مقارنة، ومراجعة للدراسات السابقة. باتباع تحليل النوع هذا تم تحديد التركيب الداخلي للدراسات البحثية. أفصحت الدراسات عن خمس حركات يتكون منها تنظيم هذه الدراسات اللغوية: تقديم البحث الحالي، عرض خلفية الدراسات السابقة، عرض طريقة البحث، عرض النتائج ومناقشتها. عادةً ما تكون الحركة الثالثة والسادسة غير موجودة في عينة البحث مما يشير إلى تأثير حقل الدراسة. بالإضافة لذلك يبدو أن الدمج بين الخطوات هو صفة مشتركة في الحركة السادسة. ولكن 100% من التكرار كان نتيجة الحركة الثانية، وهي "عرض خلفية الدراسات السابقة". يمكن لهذه الدراسة أن تثري حقل التحليل النوعي وأن تقدم فوائد تعليمية لمجال تدريس اللغة الانكليزية وتدريب الكتابة الاكاديمية في العراق. ويمكن للدراسة الحالية أيضاً أن تساعد متعلمي اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة أجنبية على كتابة دراسات فعالة بعد حصولهم على معرفة كافية بتركيب المقال اللغوي الداخلي.

Introduction

The issue of determining the boundaries of structural elements in texts is tackled in a limited basis in the literature on genre analysis. Some of the studies that dealt with genre analysis include studies of the genre of business and organizational writing (e.g., Berkenkotter, 2002; Bhatia, 1993; Spinuzzi, 2003), academic and scientific writing (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Crookes, 1985; Swales, 1990, 2004), and professional writing (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Devitt, 2004; Nwogu, 1997). Within studies of academic and scientific writing, a great attention has been given to the genre of the analytical essay within the realm of the physical sciences (e.g., Bazerman, 1988; Meyers, 1990), psychology (Berkenkotter, 2001), economics (Ning, 2008), and studies of English for academic purposes (e.g., Swales, 1990, 2004). One area that has not received such attention is the genre of research writing in the area of linguistics. Specifically, there has been almost no discussion of the finer details of how or why linguistics articles use the conventions of scientific information reporting that are most commonly employed in writing across the discipline, including in journals focused more heavily on the quantitative analysis of audio-recorded or statistically-analyzed numeric data.

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.

Genre-based Analysis

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.

Research Questions

The study aims at answering the following research question:

- What is the characteristic of the schematic units or moves in linguistic RAs?

Methodology

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

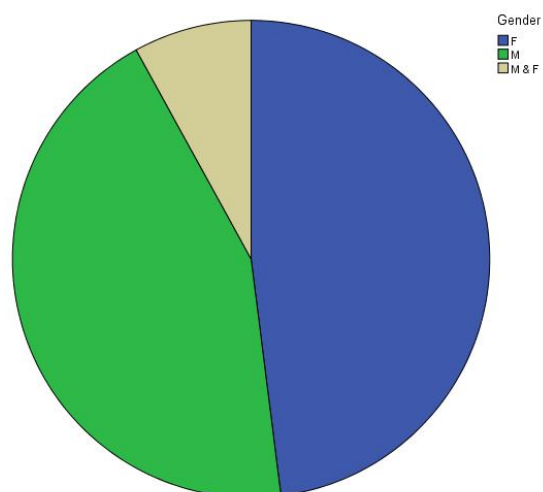
		Journal			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Al-Ustath	18	72.0	72.0	72.0
	Journal of the College of Arts / U. of Basrah	7	28.0	28.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Depending on the articles chosen for the current studies, (48%) of the research articles were written by female researchers, (44%) of them were written by males, and only (8%) were shared articles as is shown in Table 2 and Figure 1 below.

Table 2

		Gender			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	F	12	48.0	48.0	48.0
	M	11	44.0	44.0	92.0
	M & F	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

Figure 1



Articles from Al-M' amoon University College represented (4%) out of the corpus of the studies chosen for this study, (4%) from the University of Mustansiriya/College of Arts, (4%) from Babylon University and ThiQar University/ Colleges of Education, (8%) written by

researchers who did not state their affiliation, (8%) from Shat Al Arab University College, (4%) from ThiQar Directorate of Education/ Teachers Training Institute, (8%) from the University of Anbar/ College of Education, (8%) from the University of Baghdad/ College of Education-Ibn Rushd, (4%) from the University of Baghdad/ College of Education for Women, (20%) from the University of Basrah/ College of Arts, (4%) from the University of Diyala/ College of Engineering, (4%) from the University of Kufa/ College of Arts, (4%) from Salahaddin University/ College of Languages, (4%) from the University of Technology and Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research, (4%) from the University of Tikrit/ College of Education for Women, and (8%) from Wasit University/ College of Education (See Table 3).

Table 3

		Resesarcher Affiliation			
		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Al Ma'moon University College	1	4.0	4.0	4.0
	Al-Mustansiriya University - College of Arts	1	4.0	4.0	8.0
	Babylon University - College of Education & Th Qar University - College of Education	1	4.0	4.0	12.0
	None	2	8.0	8.0	20.0
	Shat Al Arab University College	2	8.0	8.0	28.0
	Thiqar Directorate of Education Teachers Training Institute	1	4.0	4.0	32.0
	University of Anbar - College of Education	2	8.0	8.0	40.0
	University of Baghdad - College of Education (Ibn Rushd)	2	8.0	8.0	48.0
	University of Baghdad - Education College of Women	1	4.0	4.0	52.0
	University of Basra- College of Arts	5	20.0	20.0	72.0
	University of Diyala - College of Engineering	1	4.0	4.0	76.0
	University of Kufa - College of Arts	1	4.0	4.0	80.0
	University of Salahaddin - College of Languages	1	4.0	4.0	84.0
	University of Technology & Ministry of Higher Education	1	4.0	4.0	88.0
	University of Tikrit, College of Education for Women	1	4.0	4.0	92.0
	Wasit University - College of Education	2	8.0	8.0	100.0
	Total	25	100.0	100.0	

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.

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& 3).

Figure 2

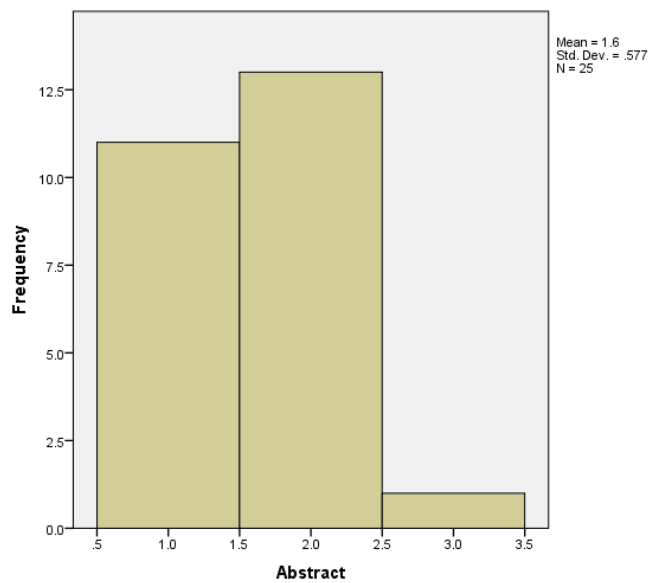
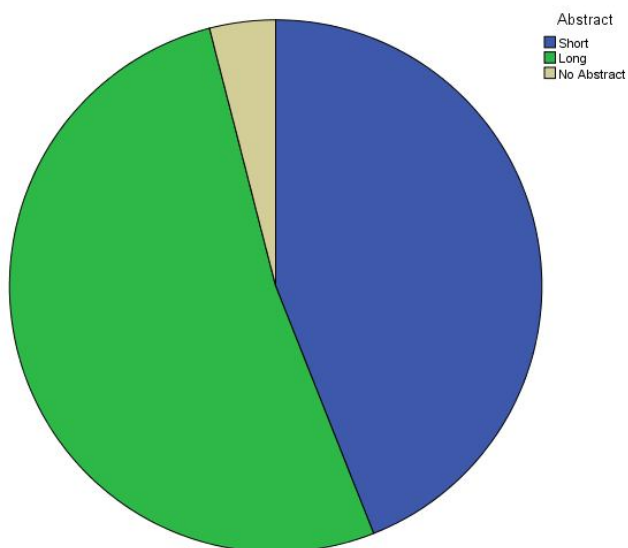


Figure 3



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 4 showed the type of problem used in the sample articles in relation to research genre.

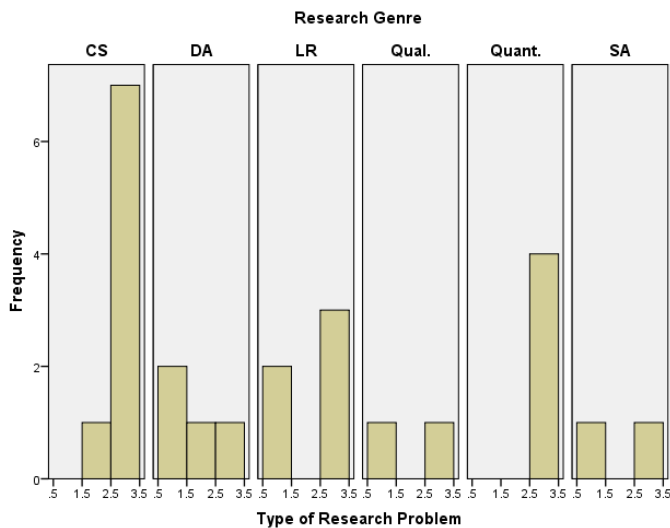
Table 7

		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 4



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.

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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