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**REVISIONS MADE BY
POSTGRADUATE SCIENCE STUDENTS
IN THEIR SHORT PAPERS :
FOUR CASE STUDIES**

by

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Abstract

This study is grounded in the theory of social constructionism according to which the composing process of an individual reflects the sociocultural values of the discourse community in which it is situated. The texts or genres created in this way fulfil a social function within the discourse community and are, consequently, constrained by the norms of their sociological setting. Conforming to these conventions is essential to ensure the acceptance of the text and of the writer.

The present research examines some of the composing processes and problems of four writers preparing short papers for presentation at conferences. The four writers are postgraduate students pursuing research in the discipline of microbiology. Through discussions with the writers and their supervisors as well as through examination of several written drafts that the writers went through in arriving at the final paper, the motivations behind the revisions were probed.

The findings suggest that in acquiring "specialised literacy", the writers of the present study were concerned with basically three types of competence: general linguistic and communicative competence; competence in the appropriate use of the discourse dialect of the community; and competence in the rules and conventions for exploiting and manipulating the genres of the

community. The sociological aspects of purpose and audience were found to be important influences that constrained the genre production.

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