

CHAPTER 10

CONCLUSION

This study was undertaken to discover the organization and linguistic features of medical research articles with the main motive of providing a thorough account of how the medical research article is structured to make meanings in context, how each stage or structure contributes towards achieving the overall purpose and how language is used in each stage. It was also felt that a description of the organization and language of medical research articles would differentiate the genre from all others and be of interest to materials writers interested in running a course on academic writing and those interested to know more about academic writing and who are facing difficulties in writing articles.

The method of analysis used is a combination of both Swales' moves analysis which has succeeded in the creation of 'moves' suitable and in some cases pertinent only to medical research articles, and Halliday's sys-

temic grammar. Each model is made up of a few moves or several moves which are either obligatory or optional. The moves provide a clear illustration of how the medical article is structured and they depict the semantic units which are relevant to the writers' purposes. A description of the lexicogrammar in terms of Mood, Transitivity and Theme have enabled the moves to be seen interpersonally, experientially and textually. These are important information which relates the moves to the context of situation and the context of culture of the writers.

This research demonstrates that articles are constructed according to a set of conventions which define the genre and, when these are violated, the result is unacceptable articles for publication even if the content is good. Each section is made up of a number of different functionally related stages and different lexicogrammatical choices are found in the different stages. The results identify sections of discourse where certain structures may be concentrated, as in the case of passives, which occur mostly in Methods and they also indicate which move in a section has a concentration of a particular grammatical or lexical choice. For example, the types of grammar and lexis used in 'Reference to previous research' are not the same as those used in 'Introducing the present study'. Writers make different lexicogrammatical choices according to the purposes they want to achieve and the subject matter of the move.

The results of this study seem to affirm that rhetorical and linguistic characteristics are associated with the different sections and moves in an article. It is not that the sections and moves have exactly the same patterns, but that identifiable similarities and differences seem to exist.

The enormous pressure which English has begun to exert as an international language of medicine has important implications for teachers involved in training doctors and medical students how to write. Becoming an accepted member of an academic community is indeed a problem for newcomers. Each discourse community has unique characteristics that have to be examined, for example, Swales (1984) notes the predictable characteristics of scientific introductions, Francis and Kramer-Dahl (1991) found that clinical case reports and case stories differ considerably and Halliday (1993) speaks of special features of scientific articles. It is hoped that some of the findings will prove to be applicable to the development of a range of teaching materials in academic writing and that they add to the body of knowledge about the nature of texts. The discourse and language analyses should also shed light on how the articles make meanings, where those meanings come from, and the implications they may carry with them. The findings may be able to raise the level of writing instruction from one relying upon individual intuition and prefer-

ence to one fixed upon empirically based genre and register conventions.

The pedagogical value of this study is that it can help uncover the conventions and rules that typify this particular genre. This suggests that students of academic writing need to be offered a paradigm of moves and linguistic features of the research article that they wish to come up with. Because it is field-specific, this research can only cater for advanced students of academic writing. Their linguistic competence may not require them to attend general English classes; however, they do not possess the knowledge of the conventions and the language used in such a genre. Even native speakers have difficulty coping with the form and structure of a genre when they are new members of a particular discourse community. This knowledge has to be learnt if one desires an adequate command over any specialist use of language. Whether a person needs general English classes or not, 'the fact remains that unfamiliarity with the subject disciplines as well as with the linguistic conventions that are specifically associated with them impose difficulties in the processing and understanding of such texts' (Tickoo (ed.), 1986:49). The rules employed by members of a discourse community are generally not articulated and the knowledge is tacit. As a result, newcomers in a particular discourse community often face problems in becoming effective producers of texts and are not able to identi-

fy the social and linguistic conventions employed by the others.

The authentic materials used will be suitable, highly motivating for the students as well as ensure a more realistic participation, as opposed to simplified texts as the course designed with the type of students in mind will be considered advanced ESP work for academic and professional purposes. The course instructor could draw the students' attention to the conventions regarding organization and how the moves are realized. Of course, this can work 'only if the language work for which this input is used helps the learner to acquire the cognitive abilities that he will require in order to cope with the specialist material in his subject-discipline' (Tickoo (ed.), 1986:60). There is a need for more research on how students can be assisted to develop their awareness of the functional patterning of discourse. This has not been the concern of this research.

From the above, it can be concluded that a study of this kind can be useful for applied purposes. The models that have been devised for each section can be used as a guide for writing and for other subject disciplines, some changes in the models would be necessary to make them suitable for other fields. The schemas for the lexicogrammatical choices would also be useful as they depict the kinds of choices that are usually made for each move.

The data in this study has been restricted to a narrow discipline because it is expected that the organization and language use may vary from discipline to discipline and even from one area of medicine to another. The articles have not been examined for various other characteristics such as cohesion and reference due to lack of time and space. In spite of this, it is felt that the moves and language analyzed have provided a coherent account of the structure of the medical research article, and this in turn can form the basis of materials aimed specifically at an increased awareness of the organization and language of medical research articles.

More research needs to be carried out on medical research articles and other genres so that comparisons can be made across genres to discern similarities and differences. The present study has limited itself to medical research articles and no comparison with other genres is found as it is felt that before a comparative study can be made, a detailed study of a single genre has to be done first. For this reason, this research has concentrated solely on medical research articles to enable an accurate description and analysis of its organization and lexicogrammatical features, to find out what sets this genre apart from all others.

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