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LINGUISTIC AND COGNITIVE FEATURES OF ENGLISH WRITTEN ACADEMIC DISCOURSE

Summary.*The article highlights the linguistic and cognitive characteristics of English written academic discourse from a cognitive-communicative perspective claiming that the academic prose has a set of verbal features that testify to the actualization of corresponding conceptual structures.*
Keywords: *discourse, academic English, construal, cognitive linguistics.*

Approaches to the definition of academic discourse in contemporary linguistics are largely defined by the theoretical perspective adopted and the corresponding methodological framework employed.

Literature Overview. In recent years, a cognitive-communicative approach to discourse has gained in popularity whereby discourse is defined as a complex communicative and cognitive event that includes texts and the actual conditions of their construction and reconstruction [1, 2]. Similar to other types of discourse (political, media, advertising, etc.), academic discourse is regarded as dynamic in nature; hence, discourse analysis involves the examination ofits creation, reception, and interpretation [2, p. 52]. To investigate academic prose in cognitive-communicative terms, the reader has to reveal the message of the academic discourse under analysis and its relation to interpersonal, institutional, socio-cultural, and other possible contexts where it was constructed [5, p. 24].**The topicality** of such a study lies in the fact that it allows not only disclosing the linguistic characteristics of academic discourse but also accessing corresponding structures of knowledge embodied in the text. Thepresent paper **aims** to offer an overview of basic linguistic features of English written academic discourse with regard to the structures of knowledge represented in them.

From a cognitive-communicative perspective, the examination of discourse entails the analysis of the rhetorical context in which it was produced. The rhetorical context is grounded in the rhetorical purpose, audience, and genre. The rhetorical purpose or the purpose for writing can be represented as follows: to analyze, to explore, to express, to inform, to persuade the reader, etc.In this regard, the knowledge of the audience is crucial inhelping the academic writer to organize their discourse appropriately. Hence, the

audience's worldview, its assumptions, and expectations inevitably impact the author's conception and intention. Finally, the form and conventions of academic discourse are dictated by a certain genre. Typical genres of scientific prose include research articles, conference abstracts, case studies, laboratory reports, undergraduate essays, annotated bibliographies, literature reviews, master theses, Ph.D. dissertations, etc.

Apart from the linguistic organization, the analysis of written academic discourse entails the notion of discourse communities. Academic discourse has institutional nature and is produced at different institutions such as schools and universities that influence its form, transform, and categorize it thereby making it more predictable and more easily manageable [5, p. 27]. No discourse exists independently of discourse communities – groups of people who share common goals and values that put conventions on language use, which, in turn, imposes restrictions on a ceratin discourse community [2, p. 53]. The implication is that different discourse communities significantly vary in constructing their discourses, which results in writing as a sociologist, an economist, a biologist, or a linguist.

The cognitive-communicative approach to discourse analysis stems from the assumption that linguistic constructions allow accessing corresponding structures of knowledge that signal how conceptualization unfolds.In this regard, Langacker offers the notion of construal,or the relationship between speakers and the situations that they portray or conceptualize [4, p. 487-488]. Hence, the way the content of a certain structure or text is presented testifies to the angle or perspective the academic writer is taking,with certain concepts emphasized, or foregrounded, and others played down or backgroundedin the text.

Among the the typical features of academic discourse, scientists point out their high lexical density (a large percentage of content words in relation to form-words words: pronouns, articles, and prepositions), high nominal style, and impersonal constructions [3, p. 13-14]. Ahigh nominal styleis marked by the predominance of nouns and noun phrases that are preferred to verbs. In cognitive terms, nouns and noun phrases construe or represent complex abstract phenomena as objects with intricate relationships between them [ibid., p. 14]. Consider the following example: *the generalization of human needs*

includes <u>*the most important individual motives of competence, affiliation, achievement*</u> <u>*and money*</u> (BAWE). The underlined noun phrases in the analyzed excerpt package several abstract phenomena testifying to the academic writer's conceptualizing them as complex interconnected entities.

The next distinctive feature of English academic discourse is the use of impersonal constructions whereby first-person pronouns are replaced by passives: *Although the study* <u>*was conducted*</u> *on a small scale public opinion was very strong* (BAWE). The use of the passive voice in this example signals a particular type of conceptualization marked by generalization rather than an accent on the agent of the action. Another characteristic of academic prose is the so-called dummy 'it' subject: (e.g., *whether* <u>*it*</u> *is practical to maintain gender as a core category of analysis within Social Anthropology is debatable* (BAWE)) and formulaic constructions involving an inanimate entity in the subject position of an active verb (<u>*this study aims*</u> *at testing the hemispheric asymmetry hypothesis in a single subject* (BAWE)).Such constructions where the agency is associated with things rather than people allow the writer to background the agent avoiding the passive voice and "letting data and results speak forthemselves"instead of profiling researchers [Dorgeloh and Wanner (2009) in 2, p. 56].

Conclusions. In summary, linguistic features of written academic discourse such as formality, lexical density, nominal style, and impersonalconstructions, distinguishacademic prose from other registers on two levels of analysis: linguistic and conceptual.Further studies in this direction could aim at revealing other characteristic features of contemporary English written academic discourse with a focus on the construal of scientific knowledge by representatives of modern English-speaking scholarly community.

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SOURCES

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