
This is the **published version** of the bachelor thesis:

Sánchez Muñoz, Marvin; Oliver del Olmo, Sònia, dir. Academic Writing in L2 English : a look at schematic and discursive features of research articles. 2019. 46 pag. (801 Grau en Estudis Anglesos)

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DEPARTAMENT DE FILOLOGIA ANGLESA I DE GERMANÍSTICA

**Academic Writing in L2 English: A Look at Schematic
and Discursive Features of Research Articles**

Treball de Fi de Grau/ BA dissertation

Author: Marvin Sánchez Muñoz

Supervisor: Dr. Sònia Oliver del Olmo

Grau d'Estudis Anglesos

June 2019

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A huge thanks goes to my best friends, Aina, Aida and Clàudia for their encouragement and cheers throughout this phase. It is appreciated that you were interested in my topic. I am proud to be your friend.

I also want to appreciate my mum and my sister for being there from beginning to end. These 6 years have been transformative at a personal level and I owe you all my love. Jokes about what TFG is, some kind of Transtorn (Malfunctioning) still make me laugh. I love you two dearly.

I also want to thank my classmates, with whom I have shared the joys and the stresses of treading this degree. Some tears have been shed, and some loud laughter has been enjoyed.

Huge thanks also go to several professors who I respect, and I have befriended. They have made these 4 years more interesting and exciting. Especially, Mercè Mur Effing, you are such a passionate and excellent teacher I will never forget you. Montserrat Capdevila, I discovered you in my third year but I think you're an excellent teacher and person.

I want to thank Elisabet Pladevall, because she always works hard and always smiles at me. I have felt your support and encouragement both as student and delegate. Thanks for thinking about me for the creation of the promotional video of this degree, I appreciate that you found me a capable applicant and the high esteem you have about me.

Before finishing, I want to thank Núria Gavalda for three reasons: First, for being such an excellent phonetics teacher, I have enjoyed every single class with you. Second, for helping me out several times, from correcting a paper of mine to accepting my interview and being my second supervisor. Third, for having created the practicum position for Phonetics Assistant, exclusively with me on mind. I can't thank you enough for that opportunity and having seen in me this potential. I'm indebted.

I also want to take advantage of this section to appreciate Esther Pujolràs and Carme Font, two literature professors. They have seen in me big potential for writing literature which I did not know I had. I also want to thank them because they have transmitted their love for literature to me. I had never seen two professors who were that motivated and vocational. I felt love towards literature because you two transmitted it to me.

My last appreciation goes to my supervisor, Sònia Oliver del Olmo. I knew from the very beginning you were going to be my supervisor. You teach excellently but you are yet a better person. You have seen in me great potential as a writer, and you have encouraged me, energised me, supported me and trusted me from the very beginning. I really appreciate your motivational messages and the strong connection we have made.

This dissertation is dedicated to all of you

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Abstract

This dissertation examines the main features of academic writing in order to differentiate it from general English and, namely, help the undergraduate and non-native writer to improve their academic writing abilities. Academic writing is understood of alongside with genres, and each genre operates differently. Thus, features working for one may not work for another. With that in mind, the following dissertation focuses on describing skeletal aspects of academic writing which are shared across disciplines and can boost the reader's writing abilities regardless of the genre they choose.

This dissertation has been divided into three parts. The first one will consider the workings of academic writing: how writing abilities can be acquired, what academic writing is and how it is structured at a macrostructural and microlinguistic level. The second part will explore the definitions of genre and how it associates to academic writing. The last part will analyse one sociopragmatic phenomenon that is basic in order to understand academic writing; hedging. Evidence suggests that the key elements to a satisfactory piece of academic writing are macrostructure, microstructure, register and style. After these get defined, the paper concludes that academic writing abilities can be boosted by step-by-step guides, but the only way for a writer to build their literary persona and authority is through trial and error. In sum, through experience, writers galvanise their academic profile, as all the abilities they acquired get internalised. Further research could conduct a study on undergraduates to test their process of acquisition of the academic writing features described in this dissertation.

Keywords: Academic Writing, Formality, Macrostructure, Microstructure, Genre, Hedging, Undergraduate

1. Introduction

The world of EAP has received a great deal of attention, in part because it is the language of scientific research, and the aspiring writer who wishes to traverse those lands needs to be trained in the academic features which seed them. This is also the case for undergraduates, who, in order to pass their different pieces of assessment, must employ language of an academic slant.

In order to make this instruction more accessible, EAP has created several step-by-step guides (Oshima and Hogue, 2006; McCarthy and O'Dell, 2008; Alonso, 2009; Swales and Feak, 2012). However, whereas guides are useful, writing academically is still difficult, and the situation is even foggier for the non-native undergraduate. The latter, when engaging in English scientific register, must dispense with the functioning of their L1, and “think” in their L2. This can be shown in the following example:

Spanish and Catalan are two languages known for their roundaboutness, whereas English is known for its succinctness and straightforwardness. A Spanish or Catalan student dealing with English paragraph structure will likely transfer their L1 into L2 written production, meaning they will produce output which is correct and natural in their L1, but ungrammatical and odd in the L2. Hence, they will need plentiful training, for the acquisition of academic writing skills underlies a process of trial, error and experience.

As a matter of fact, writing itself is a process, because whereas speaking is spontaneous, writing is not. In speech, there is live interaction, but in writing, transmission of information is deferred (Cassany, 2005) because the text will be read later in the time line. This means that for the text to convey all ideas through, it needs to be structured, well-organised and clear. Ultimately, it must allow the reader to understand it easily.

Inevitably, when all the elements in a text are in the right place, the writer comes across as knowledgeable, authoritative and compelling. In other words, a text that is pleasant to read, immediately provides the writer with authorial voice and a literary persona. This is, precisely, the aim of EAP, to teach the different features of academic writing to the novice writer for him or her to “create in writing a credible image as a competent member of [their] chosen discipline” (Swales and Feak, 2012: 1).

The following dissertation will undercover some of those features. The first part will define writing versus speech and specify the main features of academic writing. The second part will analyse what Swales and Feak (2012) mean by disciplines, and the third part will explore sociopragmatic devices which are important for students to learn in order to be “confidently uncertain” (Skelton, 1988, cited in Swales and Feak, 2012).

2. Speaking vs. writing

Let us begin describing differences between oral and written communication. Cassany (2005) posits sets of rules that the user needs in order for him to master the language. First, the user must learn first phonetic and orthographic, and then morphosyntactic and lexical rules in order to make the creation of grammatical sentences possible. Secondly, he needs to learn rules of adequacy, coherence and cohesion. These comprise the rules responsible for the creation of texts.

These rules apply to the creation of the writing process, but not to oral communication, because these two are notoriously different. Cassany compares them from two different approaches. From a contextual point of view, the author discerns oral communication as immediate in the timeline, as the listener comprehends the message as the speaker is uttering it, whereas written communication is seen as differed, for the

reader's reading of the author's written outcome happens after a while. The author describes this approach as contextual because it refers to the context of communication, that is, space, time and relation between the interlocutors. A second approach compares them on the basis of textual idiosyncrasies, that is, how their grammatical aspects differ. For example, what syntactic structures are employed in what code, what degree of complexity they have, what their length is and what kind of word order features in each code. In table 1, Cassany features their differences in terms of adequacy, coherence and cohesion:

Oral code	Written code
Adequacy	
Tendency to mark the speaker's dialectal origin (geographic, social and generational).	Tendency to neutralise speaker's signs of origin. More frequent use of the standard.
Associated to general themes, low degree of formality and subjective intent (private uses).	Associated to specific themes, high degree of formality and objective intent (public uses).
Coherence	
Less strict selection of information: presence of digression, change of subject, repetition, irrelevant data, etc.	Highly precise selection of information: the text contains exactly the relevant information.
More redundant	Less redundant
Open structure of the text: there is interaction, thus the author can modify it during emission	Close structure: It answers to a structure previously planned by the author
Not prototypical structure: the speaker has more freedom to elaborate them the way they desire	Stereotypical structure: with social conventions, formulae and figures of speech, etc.
Cohesion	
Less grammatical: increased usage of pauses and intonation, as well as some elements of grammar (pronouns, conjunctions)	More grammatical: punctuation marks, pronominalisation, synonyms, linkers (conjunctions, relatives, etc.).
Great use of paralinguistic devices: changes in rhythm and rate, tone variation, etc.	Little use of paralinguistic devices: varied typography (italics, bold, etc.) and other graphic codes (brackets, stars, etc.).
Great use of non-verbal codes: eye and body movement, gestures, etc.	Little use of non-verbal codes: spatial distribution of the text, other visual signs (figures, graphics), etc.
Great frequency of <i>exophoric</i> references (relating to context, situation, etc.): <i>you, I, here, now</i> , etc.	Great frequency of <i>endophoric</i> references (relating to the text itself): <i>he, that, my, some</i> , etc.

Table 1. Contrastive analysis of oral and written code (Translation from Cassany, 2005: 35)

2.1 What makes a writer competent

In this section, we will explore how writers can improve their writing skills. In this sense, Cassany author suggests that in order to greatly enhance our ability in written skills, we need to learn to read as with the same enthusiasm a child listens to their parents or friends. In his words, the novice writer needs to read the text as an emitter in order to learn to use the written language in the same way great writers do.

Following, the author outlines the following strategies that competent writers adopt. First, they are aware of their audience. That is, competent writers give plentiful consideration to the readership and its characteristics. In second place, they plan and outline the text before writing it, for instance by taking notes and drawing tables. Thirdly, they reread their production. The reason they do this is for them to check whether their production thus far matches their global picture they have of the text. In other words, rereading allows them to check the old plan, make some sense out of their own production and, also, concatenate future sentences with former ones. The last consideration competent writers adopt is that of correction. The fact that they do correct does not exclude the possibility less competent writers do not do so, as they also do. However, as Cassany neatly points out, whereas competent writers base their correction on the context and the exposition and order of ideas, the second group does it so on superficial writing of the text and grammar or orthography.

In fact, Stallard (1974; quoted in Cassany, 2005) compared students with seasoned writers. In the experiment, both wrote a draft. For students, the draft they had written already contained all the ideas which they wanted to convey in the text. Thus, the correction of the draft consisted exclusively in finding the most suitable words to express their ideas. On the other hand, for veterans, the whole meaning behind the correction was

significantly different. For them, the draft was only an approximation to the message of the text. The correction served for them to develop the initial ideas, and to define the final content of the writing.

This gives us an idea that Stallard's study bolsters the importance of refining textual production while prioritising attention to audience, global picture and meaning making of the different ideas that are being interrelated in the creation of the message. Competent writers understand these concepts, and this may be indicative that these are useful tools to improve one's writing skills. Following this line of thought, novice writers could adopt them, thereof modelling competent writers and improving as writers themselves.

According to Cassany, writing abilities can also be developed by acquiring reading comprehension skills. In order to make this successful, it is condition to grasp the global ideas behind the internal structure of a text. Competent readers achieve that, and they do so by taking notes, drawing associations and rephrasing. What separates them from novice readers is also the fact that they read more, and the more they read, the easier it is for them to acquire that global picture of the internal structure of the text, and to model it in their writing productions. This demonstrates that reading is useful to improve writing abilities.

In this introductory section, it has been seen the distinctive features of oral code and written code, and how writing abilities can be acquired in the lenses of a competent writer. Now, let us delve into the central theme of this dissertation, which is the code of writing, and primarily academic writing. The following section will uncover the underlying conceptions about it and will also explain its main features.

3. The theory of genre and genre analysis

Text does not form part of a vacuum, but is rather subject to situational contexts (Vázquez, 1995) or, in other words, to communicative events (Swales, 1990). These communicative events vary depending on the context and the culture, and the term that encapsulates them is genre.

The definition of genre is not clear and it has been much exploited in the literature. Genre is understood as an umbrella term which comprises the different purposes of texts. So, what creates a genre is the action a text attempts to achieve. According to Swales (1990), a genre goes beyond the nature of the form or macrostructure, it asks not what textual form is found but, rather, why. In other words, genre connects to a greater picture which captures the ultimate purpose of a text, what Swales coins as “communicative purposes” (Swales, 1990, cited in Vázquez and Hornero, 1995).

For example, in the genre of research articles, passive voice and nominalisations, as will be explored, are used to attain objectivity and packing of information into phrases, among other reasons. Genre analysis observes this but does not stop here. It further investigates why *objectivity and packing of information into phrases* are employed, and concludes, for example, that research articles “report situations of thinking, experience, observation [and] application / testing (...) as to the solution of a scientific problem identified” (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018: 129).

The creation of genre is inevitably linked to the ways cultures have grown to achieve common goals, Vázquez (1995) contends:

Within each culture there have evolved ways of getting things done, or ways of going about achieving common goals or purposes in life. These are the different genres. Each genre is distinguished by a distinctive schematic structure, that is, a distinctive sequence of beginning, middle and end stages that enable the overall purpose of the genre to be realised. Each culture has evolved its own ways

of going about doing things, and thus there may be considerable variation of genres from one culture to another. Each involves, in one way or another, the use of language and each results in a different text type, or genre. (Vázquez, 1995: 35)

For this author, genres define the typology of text as well as how differently language will be employed in each. Following this argument, he claims that genres are semiotic systems¹, because they are context and culture-dependent. In sum, we encounter a specifically structured genre for every context and culture. This claim is sensible, but unsafe, because it may well be possible to narrow the scope of description of texts too much and end up with as many texts as there are genres.

In order to abate doubts on it, Swales and Feak (2009) have devised a solid network of genres which potentially defines all the currently existing genres; see Figure 1 in the next page:

¹ Semiotics is the science that studies signs and symbols, and Vázquez (1995) introduces semiotics because signs and symbols are context and culture-specific. Given the assortment of genres, Vázquez argues that genres themselves are semiotic systems.

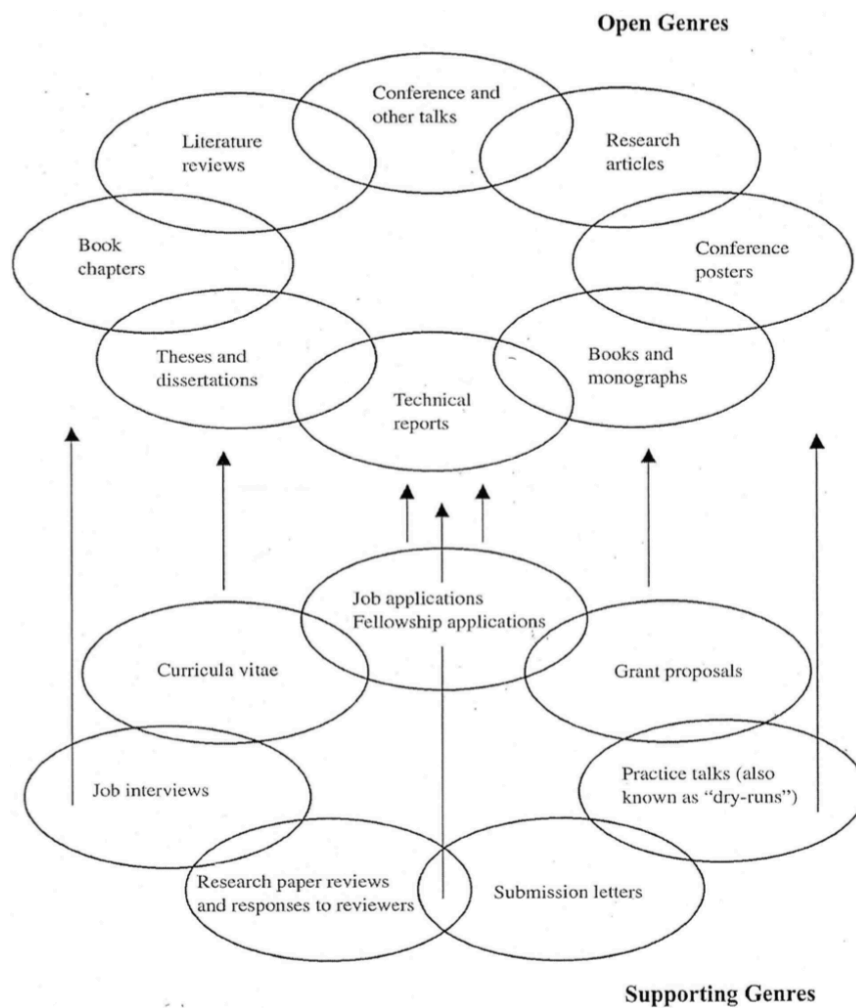


Figure 1. Academic Genre Network (Swales & Feak, 2009: x)

These existing genres are defined as “completable structured texts” (Couture, 1988) and Vázquez argues that boundaries between these completable structured texts is not clear cut, for it is possible to encounter a text displaying features of more than one type. For example, passive voice cannot be solely attributed to medical science or engineering, because it also frequents soft sciences such as applied linguistics, literature and philosophy. The same happens to hedges, sociopragmatic phenomena that mitigate

the strength of one's claim. They are typical of research articles but can also be found in book reviews. This serves as an overview that genre is multifunctional and academic writers must accommodate to such diversity.

Now that the theory of genre analysis has been explained, let us explore academic writing within the genre of research articles. The following sections will (i) undercover eight different disciplines within research articles, (ii) describe its main features, and (iii) compare the frequency of three of these features across several disciplines.

4. Understanding academic writing

Academic writing is the currency of research articles. It is formal, a specialised language. Its main purpose is to be objective, because it attempts to provide a detached solution to a problem (Akkaya & Aydin, 2018). In this line of thought, it can be claimed that the focus of academic writing is displaced from the agent, and centred onto the action and the object, these being the results obtained from the scientific² study or research. In other words, there takes place an impersonation and detachment of the writer in order for the text to better attain objectivity. As an example of this, interest of academic writing does not generally lie in the opinion of the writer, but rather in the methodology, results and discussions that are provided.

As a consequence of this interest, the text needs to successfully convey all its ideas in such a fashion that allows the reader to interpret them easily. Succinctness and ecology of language (Swales & Feak, 2012) can make that happen, for academic writing primes

² The term "scientific" does not mean science such as physics and chemistry. In academic terms it is associated to broad or umbrella term which undercovers the different genres or disciplines such as applied linguistics and engineers. Thus, "scientific" needs to be understood as some discipline providing a solution to an issue or providing knowledge within their specific frame of knowledge (or science).

clarity and straightforwardness. Albeit in some cultures such as Japanese, Korean and Chinese the writer is the one who zips all the information in complex fashions, and it is the reader that disentangles it (Hyland, 2008), in English academic writing, the writer is the one who needs to make the effort of making his or her text accessible and clear.

Apart from being clear, the academic text needs to be organised. When a text is organised, it is pleasant to read and, thus, easy to follow. Swales and Feak (2012) convey that in order to successfully organise a text, the writer needs to include a set of macrostructural elements, such as paragraph structure, sentence topic, supporting arguments and transition signals, and microstructural elements such as nominalisation, passivisation and reporting verbs. When these elements are included, the text flows seamlessly from idea to idea. On the other side of the coin, this flow is claimed to be one of the hardest skills to master within academic writing, for attaining it involves a perfect understanding of the ideas and their relationship (Swales and Feak, 2012).

Objectification is also a main consideration in academic writing. In academic settings, in order to validate your ideas, facts are required, not opinions. Opinions can be expressed in academic settings, and professors encourage students to make them, but even if students express an opinion, they must scaffold it with facts. This is so because opinions are subjective, whereas facts are “objective statements of the truth” (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 40).

All the more, a claim might need proof. Writers need to employ specific supporting details in order to prove the validity of their facts. For instance, they can use examples, statistics, and quotations. Considering the last, citing in academic writing is a very recurrent -almost obligatory- practice because it is necessary to search for outside

sources on a given topic. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), others' works can be quoted, summarised and paraphrased.

The reason we need to cite is to show familiarity with and others' opinion on our topic at hand. Citing is perceived as proof that the writer has done their corresponding research on the topic. In fact, one of the first skills professors urge novice writers to master is, precisely, citing, that the latter learn to acknowledge someone else's work and mention it in an appropriate form. On the other hand, they discourage plagiarism. Plagiarising is a practice that must be avoided at all costs because it is a serious offense, for it implies theft of intellectual property and, as such, carries negative consequences. A way to avoid plagiarism is, for instance, to place quotation marks when citing (Oshima & Hogue, 2006; Swales & Feak, 2012).

For further explanation on citation, it is foregrounded that different texts are interspersed with their respective disciplines; therefore, many researchers explore the same topic. For them to show authority and familiarity with it, it is customary they acknowledge others' work. This way, their text can be unmistakably associated to their chosen discipline. In fact, when a piece of academic writing does not mention someone else's work, it runs the risk of coming across as isolated in the literature and this might cause an author's text to be rejected.

Ultimately, the writer needs to create their proof of concept by showing that they are acquainted to what the literature around their topic states, and not citing may lead to the reader thinking that the writer is not knowledgeable, and this can affect the writer's image within their own discipline. The writer is, thus, advised to learn the conventions of their chosen discipline. The following sections answer what disciplines there are in research articles and describes the common schematic and rhetorical features.

4.1 Describing the main features of academic writing

Research articles are one fruitful genre. There can be as many disciplines as scientific problems there are. For this reason, science itself is a broad term. It encompasses many disciplines such as social, natural, formal and applied sciences; and each, in turn, capture sub-disciplines. In the case of social sciences, for instance, anthropology, archaeology, economics and human geography can be found. In the case of natural sciences, we can identify biology, chemistry and physics, for example. For formal science we can encounter disciplines such as mathematics and statistics, and for applied sciences, business, engineering and medicine. Owing to this variety, if reference is being made to structural and linguistic elements, there can exist similarities and differences. This section will narrow down the focus. Figure 2 displays eight disciplines from which similarities in macrostructure and microlinguistic elements will be drawn.

Applied						Mech.	Elect.
Philosophy	Sociology	Linguistics	Literature	Physics	Biology	Engin.	Engin.

Figure 2. Eight disciplines (Sánchez 2019, adapted from Hyland, 2004, cited in Swales & Feak, 2012, 157)

Figure 2 displays eight disciplines which share sets of academic features which constitute them. It is possible that one discipline has features unique to it, but all of them answer to greater or lesser extent to the following features, displayed in Table 2:

Macrostructural	Microlinguistic
Genre Analysis	Formalisation of language
Paragraph structure	Pronoun concord
Transition signals (linkers)	Nominalisation & Passivisation
Punctuation	Collocations and reporting verbs

Table 2. Academic writing features shared cross-disciplinarily (Sánchez, 2019)

As seen in Table 2, features of academic writing can be found in these disciplines, albeit with varying frequencies depending on the chosen discipline. These features have been classified into macro and microstructure. The former is the starting point for genre analysis, and deals with the bigger picture, that is, what the reader sees at first sight such as paragraph and sentence structure, and transition signals -linkers (Swales & Feak, 2012). The latter deals with more linguistic aspects, for example with formalisation of language. Microstructure also deals with the degree of caution and politeness of the text, hedging, or boosters, to strengthen the message, both of which will be analysed in later sections of this dissertation. Let us deal with each of those macrostructural and microstructural elements in greater depth to better understand the workings of academic writing.

4.1.1 Formal language

The first major change from general to academic English is one in formalisation. As introduced, academic writing is a formalised language. There are expressions which are neutral, but others are formal and not used on an everyday currency. McCarthy &

O'Dell (2008) advise the writer to learn the differences, summarised in Table 3, in the next page:

Neutral	Formal
In short, briefly, basically	In sum, to sum up
Only	Solely
Almost / more or less	Virtually
Try	Attempt
Mainly/mostly	Primarily
Typical of	Characteristic of

Table 3. Illustration of neutral expressions and their formal counterparts (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008: 10)

General English typically chooses between phrasal or prepositional verbs, but academic English employs single verbs, those of Latinate origin, listed in Table 4:

Phrasal or prepositional verbs	Verbs of Latinate origin
Put up	Tolerate
Look into	Investigate
Figure out	Determine
Come up with	Develop
Make up	Constitute
Get rid of	Eliminate
Go up to	Reach
Keep up	Maintain
Go down	Decrease
Think about	Consider

Table 4. List of General English phrasal and prepositional verbs (Sánchez, 2019, adapted from Swales & Feak, 2012: 17-19)

It is possible to opt for a rather neutral or more informal item during classes, seminars and lectures, but these experts welcome using the formal variant of words and expressions they employ in everyday contexts or in spoken academic English in academic English. In turn, the authors also argue in favour of the difficulty in deciding what is academic against what is not because what is used in some disciplines is not used in others, for example contractions (e.g., *don't*), which are frequent in philosophy but not in other fields.

4.1.2 Paragraph structure, transition signals and pronoun concord

In relation to paragraph structure, according to Swales & Feak (2012), one-sentence paragraphs are usually rejected, but Oshima and Hogue (2006) claim that the number of sentences in a paragraph is unimportant on condition that it conveys the main idea clearly.

All paragraphs contain a topic sentence, supporting sentences and perhaps concluding sentences. The purpose of that topic sentence is to state the main idea of the paragraph, thereof “limit[ing] the scope of the paragraph and what can be discussed in the space of a single paragraph” (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 3). Furthermore, there is a controlling idea, that which announces the specific area to be discussed³:

- (1) Gold, a precious metal, is prized for two important characteristics.

TOPIC

Controlling idea

Supporting sentences develop the topic sentence, so they explain the main idea or convey more points to expand on it:

³ All examples are original to the authors.

- (2) First of all, gold has a lustrous beauty that is resistant to corrosion.
- (3) For example, Macedonian coin remains as untarnished today as the day it was made 25 centuries ago.
- (4) Another important characteristic of gold is its usefulness to industry.
- (5) The most recent use of gold is in astronauts' suits.

The concluding sentence ends the paragraph and reminds the reader of important points:

- (6) In conclusion, gold is treasured not only for its beauty but also for its utility.

The **topic sentence** is crucial both for the writer and for the reader as it helps the reader to gather what to include or exclude and guides him to the main idea of the paragraph, thus preparing him or her to understand its content better. A topic sentence (ts) is, as its name indicates, a sentence. Therefore, (7) – (9) will not be examples of a ts because they are phrases, not sentences.

- (7) *Driving on freeways.
- (8) *How to register for college classes.
- (9) *The rise of indie films.

Let us continue. A prototypical ts includes both a **topic** and a **controlling idea**. The topic idea names the topic and the controlling idea limits its interpretation. Their main objective is to anticipate the idea to the reader but not unfold all the details in the first sentence:

- (10) Driving on freeways requires skill and alertness.
- (11) Registering for college can be a frustrating experience for new students.
- (12) The rise of indie films is due to several factors.

Oshima and Hogue (2006) claim that students often fail to correctly support their ideas, and they need to support their arguments with details in order to be compelling. This linkage of ideas entails there must be some unity. This concept defines that a paragraph must discuss only the main idea from beginning to end. It is nonetheless possible to discuss more than one idea within the same paragraph, on condition that the ideas show close relationship with each other (Swales and Feak, 2012), albeit supporting sentences always need to be employed to create a general sense of unity.

More specifically, ideas need to be cohesive. That is, transitions from one idea to the other ought to be fluent, smooth and seamless and, according to the authors, coherence can be achieved through: (i) repeating key nouns (ii) using consistent pronouns (iii) using transition signals (*c.f.* Swales and Feak: 2012) to link ideas and (iv) arranging your ideas in logical order (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 22). Let us expound on these:

First, it is often better to repeat **key words** instead of using subject pronouns to clarify meaning. The reason is that overuse of pronouns may cause the reader to lose the referent. Swales and Feak (2012) also discuss this. For these experts, repeating keywords creates an old-to-new principle whereby “[p]lacing relevant “old” information in early position establishes a content link that establishes the context” (Swales & Feak, 2012: 31).

Secondly, it is important that **pronouns have person and number concord**. Sometimes, successful interpretation of a sentence is grounded on the correct use of pronouns, so it is customary to consider them in order to avoid ambiguity.

Thirdly, transition signals are to be added to create **cohesion**. They can be imagined as traffic lights which indicate a stop, a continuation or a direction and, hence, their purpose is to bridge two different ideas. In fact, absence of linkers is avoided, as not

using them can distort the smoothness of the text. Let us consider the following text when linkers are removed:

Olympic athletes must be strong both physically and mentally. If you hope to compete in an Olympic sport, you must be physically strong. Aspiring Olympians must train rigorously for many years. For the most demanding sports, they train several hours a day, five or six days a week, for ten or more years. Being physically strong, athletes must also be mentally tough. You have to be totally dedicated to your sport, often giving up a normal school, family and social life. Being mentally strong means that he or she must be able to withstand the intense pressure of international competition with its accompanying media coverage. Not everyone can win a medal, so Olympians must possess the inner strength to live with defeat. (Oshima & Hogue, 2006)

The text above has disconnected ideas and these result in loss of flow. To be more precise, five linkers were there originally but were removed from the text to show how truncated and disconnected a text can result when this happens. If these are re-introduced, the text may gain clarity and flow. Nevertheless, it may still appear to be somewhat awkward. This is so because of pronoun concord, or rather lack of it. The text at hand also contains pronouns which need to be amended. The next text is a successful attempt to this exercise, where transition signals (linkers) have been reintroduced and pronouns have been amended:

Olympic athletes must be strong both physically and mentally. First of all, if they hope to compete in an Olympic sport, they must be physically strong. Furthermore, they must train rigorously for many years. For the most demanding sports, they train several hours a day, five or six days a week, for ten or more years. In addition to being physically strong, aspiring Olympians must also be mentally tough. This means that they have to be totally dedicated to their sport, often giving up a normal school, family and social life. Being mentally strong means that they must be able to withstand the intense pressure of international competition with its accompanying media coverage. Finally, not everyone can win a medal, so Olympians must possess the inner strength to live with defeat. (Oshima & Hogue, 2006)

In this second attempt, the text gains clarity thanks to the addition of linkers and the amendment of pronouns. On the basis of the correction it can also be claimed that not

always must a pronoun be used, but the correct one needs to be employed which accords in person and number with its anaphoric noun.

Linkers also need to be used. First, they allow visual division of main points and make reading of the information clearer. Secondly, linkers create flow in the reading, because the different ideas get interconnected in a way that these bridge between one and the other. Consequently, given the flow of the text, the pace of reading is accelerated and understanding of ideas is facilitated.

On the other hand, overuse of linkers is not encouraged (Oshima & Hogue, 2006; McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008). If it occurs, the interpretation can be taken that the piece of writing is lacking content. Nevertheless, underuse of linkers may, in turn, make it more challenging for the reader to interconnect the different ideas. Thus, it is optimal to maintain a balanced number and appropriate usage. In this sense, a variety of linkers can be used; and they can be classified on the basis of functional categories and meaning or purpose, see Table 5 in the following page:

Meaning Function	Transition Phrases	Conjunctive Adverbs	Coordinating Conjunctions	Subordinating Conjunctions	Others
To introduce an additional idea	In addition	furthermore moreover besides also too	and		another (+noun) an additional (+noun)
To introduce an opposite idea or contrast	on the other hand in contrast	nevertheless nonetheless however instead still	but yet	even though although though whereas while	in spite of (+noun) despite (+noun)
To introduce a choice or alternative		otherwise	or	if unless	
To introduce restatement or explanation	in fact indeed	that is			
To list in order	first, second, third next, last, finally				the first, second, third, etc. the next, last, final
To introduce an example	for example for instance				an example of (+noun) such as (+nouns)
To introduce a conclusion or summary	clearly in brief in conclusion indeed in short in summary				
To introduce a result	accordingly as a result as a consequence	therefore consequently hence thus	so		

Table 5. Taxonomy of linkers (Oshima & Hogue, 2006: 27)

4.1.3 Punctuation and ambiguous sentences

The next element characteristic of academic writing is punctuation. According to Oshima and Hogue (2006), punctuating a text well requires certain mastery of the language as this is one of the least known aspects of English as a second language

(Oshima & Hogue, 2006). However, it is probably the issue which may cause more problems in understanding what has been written (Swales & Feak, 2012). The following Table 6 illustrates some examples on how to use them:

Symbol	Usage	Example
,	Can join two independent clauses when they begin with the connectors <i>and</i> , <i>nor</i> , <i>but</i> , <i>so</i> , <i>yet</i> , <i>for</i> .	(13) They left early, and they arrived on time
;	Joins two independent clauses or sentences when a coordinating conjunction is not used.	(14) Medicine helps; motivation heals (15) The second stage of the classification system was useful; it shed light on the final results
:	Introduces a list of elements or a formal question, and is used after the expressions <i>as follows</i> , <i>namely</i> , <i>such as</i> .	(16) Writing involves operations such as: paraphrasing, structuring
–	Used in sentence middle or sentence end. They usually add a surprising element. Can introduce an extra comment that is appropriate and fits the overall meaning of the sentence	(17) Marks have not been posted -not yet, that is.

Table 6. Punctuation marks with usage and examples (Alonso, 2009: 12)

Apart from punctuating well, the writer is advised to be wary of ambiguous sentences. Alonso (2009) suggests rephrasing the sentence eliminating in (18), the coordinating conjunction and splitting the sentence into two, joining them with a cause-effect conjunction, as in (19):

(18) The teacher asked the student but he didn't speak loud and clear.

(19) Although the student was asked, the teacher didn't speak loud.

4.1.4 Nominalisation

The sixth element under description is nominalisation, another linguistic feature contended to be prominent in academic writing (Baratta, 2010; Swales & Feak, 2012; Arduengo, 2017). Nominalisation attains shortening of wording and consequent “packing of information into clausal structures” (Baratta, 2010: 1018). This is of interest to academic writing because nominalising contributes to creating cohesion. What is more, in nominalising, the subject-verb-object cosmology is removed, and the verb is nominalised. This linguistic process entails that the subject has been removed from the action (Baratta: 2010) and the focus has been redirected to the action itself, creating an effect of authorial detachment from the text. Thus, nominalisation not only packs information but, by removing the subject, it makes the text more impersonal and detached from the writer. This consequentially confirms the initial claim that academic writing is centred more on the results than on the researcher. Let us illustrate nominalisation in examples (20) – (24):

(20)

- a. Alcohol **addiction** lost him his job.
- b. Because he was addicted to alcohol, he lost his job.

(21)

- a. I discovered similar findings on this subject during the research.
- b. The **discovery** of similar findings on this subject during the research...

(22) The group decided on a way to solve the problem. The **solution** was to cut back on break times.

(23) The government recently banned cigarette smoking in all public buildings. This **eradication** has not met with favor by many members of the public.

All are instances of nominalisation, and each set of examples shows one different use of it. In (20a), nominalisation is attained through the noun “addiction”, where information has been packed and a grammatical metaphor has also been attained:

Example ([20]a) is metaphorical as the congruent form which involves a verb denoting a process (i.e. to be addicted) is now coded as a noun, thereby functioning in the sentence as a thing instead, and not a process as in ([20]b). Further, grammatical metaphor can also involve, as does ([20]a), the placing of a non-human subject in the sentential position of agent; in the context of the sentence in example ([20]a), however, it is clear that only a human, directly or indirectly, could be responsible for the loss of someone’s job. In other words, it wasn’t alcohol that ‘personally’ caused the loss of a person’s job. (Baratta: 2010, 1019)

Example (21b) shows objectivity and impersonal tone since attention has been removed from the discoverer ‘I’ and has been placed onto the discovery itself. Thirdly, in example (22), the nominalised element follows up on the rheme⁴ of the previous sentence, which is indicated by the verbal counterpart of “solution”. This way, cohesion is attained. Lastly, (23) achieves personal stance. (23) shows that the author positions himself through the use of the nominalisation *eradication*, implying that, to him, the happenings of sentence (23a) are that.

Evidence shows that nominalisation appears to be central to academic writing and, in some hard sciences, it is especially encouraged. For example, Arduengo (2017) argues that some nominalised terms are scientifically recognised, so dispensing with them may create the false impression that the writer is unfamiliar with the topic and, thus, non-authoritative. In other cases, excessive use of nominalisation may create too impersonal a tone and may well hinder sentential meaning-making. This being the case, Baratta

⁴ Baratta (2010) defines rheme as new information within a sentence, which is followed by a theme, which provides reference to previous discourse (Baratta, 2010: 1020)

(2010) posits that frequency of nominalisation, as well as the reason for usage and its connotations vary across disciplines.

4.1.5 Passive voice

Passivisation is another key feature of academic writing and is similar to nominalisation because it displaces the focus from the agent and places it onto the action itself. It is also similar in its attempt to objectify, detach the writer from the text, and compact information.

In discussing the nature of passive voice, Swales and Feak (2012) contend that choice of either voice will depend on the purpose. Grammar checkers discourage its use, but it is not denied that passive voice is frequent in academic writing, as it contributes to optimising and objectifying language. “The passive voice allows you to keep the focus on the something other than the agent and also allows you to maintain a good flow of ideas. Thus, it is reasonable to use passive constructions in sections other than a process description.” (Swales and Feak, 2012: 123). On the other hand, in acknowledging its similarities with nominalisation, the experts encourage balancing the use of passive and active voice. Overuse of the passive voice may hinder understanding of meaning. Thus, it can be claimed that good pieces of academic writing maintain a balance between passive and active voice, as well as with nominalisation and SVO⁵ construction.

⁵ Subject + Verb + Object is the prototype for sentence structure for English. SVO order and simplicity are primed in English – academic writing being no exception, in order for the message to be conveyed inasmuch straightforwardly way as possible

4.1.6 Collocations

The seventh element to be described are collocations. Collocations refer to usual occurrences of lexical items, that is, two different lexical items which tend to be used together. Collocations are common in academic writing and can be created, for example, by adjoining a verb and a preposition, and a noun and a preposition. As seen Table 7 and 8, both verbs and nouns can collocate with prepositions, respectively:

Verbs	Prep.	Examples
Associate, provide, couple, equip	With	We try to equip our laboratories with the latest technology. Heart disease is often associated with unhealthy life styles.
Depart, benefit, emerge, exclude	From	In this book, Herne departs from his earlier theory. [takes a different view] Some of the data were excluded from the final analysis.
Write, speak, convince, dispose	Of	Abuka writes/speaks of the early years of industrial development. [both are rather formal] we must convince people of the need for water conservation
Account, search, call, argue	For	Lung cancer accounted for 20% of deaths in men. [formed the total of] Hopper (1987) argues for a new approach to English grammar. [opposite: argue against]

Table 7. Collocations: Verb + preposition (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008: 36).

Nouns	Prep.	Examples
Look, attempt, point, age	At	An attempt at integration of economic and psychological theories of consumption
Changes, difference, increase, decrease	In	Gender differences in risk-taking in financial decision-making
Insight, inquiry, research, investigation	Into	An investigation into sleep characteristics of children with autism.
Work, research, influence, emphasis, effect	On	Genetic influence on smoking - a study of male twins.
Basis, idea, part, lack, exploration, means	Of	A computerised clinical decision support system as a means of implementing depression guidelines.
Need, reason, basis, case, preference	For	Assessing organisation culture: the case for multiple methods.
Relation, approach, response, attention	To	Communicating with strangers: an approach to intercultural communication.
Attitude, tendency, move, progress	To/towards	Progress towards sustainable regional development.
Principle, rationale, assumptions, logic	Behind	Questioning the assumption behind art criticism.
Relationship, difference, distinction	Between	The relationship between educational technology and student achievement in mathematics.

Table 8. Collocations: Noun + preposition (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008: 36).

4.1.7 Reporting verbs

Reporting verbs are used to discuss an author's work. For example, the reporting verb chosen to introduce discussion can either indicate the writer's own viewpoint regarding the veracity or accuracy of the literature (e.g., correct, neutral, incorrect), as seen in Table 9, or it can indicate the author's viewpoint on the content of the literature (e.g., positive or negative), as Table 10 shows:

Student's attitude towards the literature	Correct	Correct	Neutral	Incorrect
Usually in 3 rd person singular or plural simple present tense form.	Acknowledges Defines Demonstrates Explains Identifies Observes Outlines	Adds Argues Claims Clarifies Concludes Describes Expresses	Indicates Informs Presents Proposes Remarks Reminds Reports	Confuses Disregards Ignores

Table 9. List of reporting verbs introducing writer's viewpoint on the veracity of the literature (The Australian Catholic University, 2010: 1)

Author's attitude towards the content being discussed	Positive		Negative / Uncertain	
Usually in 3 rd person singular or plural simple present tense form.	Accepts Advises Affirms Agrees Applauds Asserts Concurs Insists Notes Praises	Points out Posits Recommends Remarks Stresses Subscribes to Suggests Supports Thinks Urges	Attacks Challenges Disagrees Dismisses Disputes Doubts	Mistrusts Opposes Questions Rejects Suspects Warns

Table 10. List of reporting verbs introducing author's attitude to the content being cited (The Australian Catholic University, 2010: 2)

Reporting verbs are varied, so they lend themselves to providing nuances in communication. This way, one can, for example, overtly acknowledge someone, or

covertly challenge them, and the other way around. Reporting verbs are usually introduced in the third person, since they usually introduce another author's viewpoint, so, given the importance of acknowledging other authors, Swales and Feak (2012) advise the writer to become familiar with reporting verbs.

4.2 Active and passive voice and nominalisation across hard and soft sciences

All the features described above are used to greater or lesser extent depending on the disciplines writers choose, due to genre restrictions. For example, the active voice is primed in literature, where (i) the writer assumes – and establishes – cause-effect relationships between different events:

(24) Anne Brontë **must kill** Huntingdon for Helen **to eventually** find happiness [...]

(ii) the writer addresses the reader:

(25) **This allows us to imagine** the 'other' story which Anne Brontë never tells (...)

(iii) the writer makes explicit apparition:

(26) [A]s **I** have noted, Arthur dies, aged only 32 (in 1828).

In (26), *I* exposes the actual writer from behind the lines, and this bears some generic and sociopragmatic connotations: the writer explicitly addresses the reader, thus creating rapport. This rapport draws the reader's attention to the message while possibly – and deliberately – piquing their curiosity to reading it. Ultimately, the writer exposes themselves, so it can be assumed that because of that exposure, the writer becomes vulnerable for a second as they are not shielding themselves behind the text, and this approaches them to the reader, or the other way around. The writer being apparent, the reader likely assumes the former is confident that the information they are unfolding is correct. However, if the writer putting themselves at that position of risk happens to

convey the wrong message, the reader can reject them more strongly than if they did not stamp themselves in the text; because rejection might be strengthened by overconfidence on the part of the writer.

That is the consideration for active voice. Let us now consider passive voice, starting with example (27). The two statements in (27) employ the passive voice. The result of using passive voice in (27) is that cohesion between the two ideas is attained, as well as objectification, impersonation and packing of information.

(27) Lady Lowborough **is** just **named** as the partner in Arthur's adultery. This pattern **is repeated** in other studies[.]

Passive voice is thus recurrent in literature, to make generalisations. In other fields such as medical writing, use of the passive voice and nominalisation is even more accreted due to reasons of objectification of information and focus displaced from the agent, exemplified by sentences (28) – (30):

(28) **Comparisons** of phase information by two different methods **have been reported** by a few groups both at medium and atomic resolutions.

(29) A luminometer **is required** for **measurement** and subsequent **establishment** of ATP levels.

(30) **It is found** that the peak phase values and the corresponding number of atoms for both heavy Zn ($Z = 30$) and light O ($Z = 8$) are in close agreement (...)

These examples eliminate any trace of the researcher's involvement as a result of using passive to draw attention to discussion, methodology, and result, (28), (29) and (30), respectively.

It can also be the case that in describing results with the passive voice, sentences such as (31) occur:

(31) Phase detection limit in both the methods and the atomic model used to count the atoms **is discussed**.

As we can see, the subject is not limited to a single noun phrase, but rather spans all the way from *phase* to *atoms*; it is rather long. The passive construction is postposed, and no complements follow. In a sentence of this fashion, a deliberate effort is clearly made to communicate more with less, through a passive construction. Information is zipped in subject position and the verb is left peripheral. Naturally, it becomes difficult to the unfamiliar reader to interpret the sentence because the we are accustomed to shorter subjects, and (31) presents a long one, containing various phrases, among them an embedded clause.

In effect, academic writing does prime passive constructions, and subjects are seldom that long. Odd constructions such as (31) can, however, be found. For this reason, Arduengo (2018) feels it is sometimes necessary to dispense with complex fashions in order to facilitate reading of ideas and make the text more engaging:

As science and medical writers we strive to communicate complex topics as clearly and accurately as possible. One way to do this is to edit difficult constructs like nominalisations that rely on our readers to decipher the actors and actions in our sentences. Bringing the action of your sentences out into the open can make your science writing more engaging for your readers, and engaged readers are more likely to remember what they read and even return for more. (Arduengo, 2018: 12)

Thus, (28), *[a] luminometer is required for measurement and subsequent establishment of ATP levels*, could undergo the following modifications so as to further engage with the reader:

(32) You will need a luminometer to measure luminescence and establish ATP levels.

5. Hedging

It had been introduced that microstructure also deals with caution and politeness. These refer to the writer's stance (Jian, 2017: 86) with regard to the text, and stance "allows the writer to reveal not only what they know, but also what they think." (Swales & Feak, 2012: 156) In these grounds, writers can show rebuke if they have a negative attitude towards the literature being cited. However, depending on their tone of rebuke, the writer's ideas might come across as too judgemental, and this could affect the general tone of their work, potentially causing rejection among readership. Furthermore, such rejection can be accreted if the audience is foreign to the writer, meaning that the latter may need to pay special attention to the way they are forwarding their claims.

In order to avoid rejection, Swales & Feak (2012) advise the writer to dissent tactfully and subtly. Accordingly, they put forward that the latter learn to shield their own claim to mitigate its effect. Fortunately, it is possible for the writer to decrease the strength of their claims, so he or she does not come across as rude. This is made possible by hedges. Hedges are sociopragmatic⁶ phenomena which involve the use of vague language in academic writing in order to be careful and cautious. Hedging aims at minimising that effect that what a researcher has written may produce on other researchers who read the article (Swales & Feak, 2012). Swales and Feak neatly observe that caution needs to be expressed and resources to express such caution need to be learned. These resources will allow the writer to qualify or moderate a claim and, therefore, indicate their stance toward such claims (Swales & Feak, 2012). In sum, even though the results writers discuss are genuine, they need to be hedged:

⁶ Sociopragmatics refers to the intention behind an utterance, both at a social and communicative level.

- (33) Phase shift encodes the information on the potential distributions of atomic ensembles, which **may be used** to deduce the atomic arrangement and properties of the materials.
- (34) It **seems** most plausible to propose a bidirectional relationship between wellbeing and perceived stressors (...)
- (35) The implication **might be** that, broadly speaking, science students **may need** to learn to refer to themselves less within their text.
- (36) There are opposing views within the literature, however, **which might suggest** that students **need not** always strive for a high frequency of nominalizations within their academic writing.
- (37) If we take the findings thus far presented, **it might be suggested** that a simple balance is therefore needed regarding one's use of nominalizations (though this is admittedly hard to quantify); moreover, there **may** indeed be discipline-specific writing conventions with regard to how frequently nominalizations are used.

Hedging occurs as a consequence of the objectivity that is targeted in science. Results need to be as detached as possible because they are falsifiable and, thus, prone to be challenged. Some authors do not lend themselves to hedging, either because they have not been trained or because they do not mind stamping their own presence in the writing (Baratta: 2008, 1407). Not hedging is possible, it creates the effect that the author is confident in what they are writing. It is also true that hedging, when learned as a generic convention, may be employed by writers regardless of how confident and knowledgeable they are. In fact, it can be argued that some writers deliberately hedge to show both familiarity with the conventions, and confidence. They may conceive of hedging as the rule, and accordingly employ it even deftly to show command in the field.

Ultimately, either to greater or lesser extent depending on the discipline, being cautious and polite is the norm in the English audience, so the scholar in formation ought to take it into consideration. In doing so, they may need to dispense with their idea of a weakened, a neutral, or a strengthened claim and adopt the audience's idea of it. The following passage sums up the main idea of this section:

In England it is bad manners to be clever, to assert something confidently. It may be your own personal voice that two and two make four, but you must not state it in a self-assured way, because this is a democratic country and others may be of a different opinion. (Mikes, 1942: 34, cited in Oliver del Olmo, 2004: ix)

6. Conclusion

This dissertation has put forward the language of academic writing. It has been contended that it is a specialised language which comprises features that scholars in formation need to learn in order to navigate the world of EAP. These features are shared inter-disciplinary but their rate of frequency varies depending on the discipline. Disciplines have been understood of within the different genres. Plentiful genres have been accounted for, and it has been considered how genre is the result of the purpose a text attempts to achieve. In this line, it has been explored that genre analysis, precisely, conceives macrostructure and uncovers what the intention in using it is.

This dissertation has offered a top-down approach to provide the reader with the full picture, that is, understanding of where academic writing features sprout from. First, difference between speaking and writing has been established, and account has been provided of how writing abilities can be acquired through the lenses of competent writers. The second section has expounded on the cosmology behind a text, subscribing to the claim that text does not form part of a vacuum but is, rather, subject to communicative events which give answer to communicative purposes (Swales, 1990, cited in Vázquez,

1995). From there, understanding has been provided that genre are semiotic systems which are the product of the ways culture have grown about achieving things (Vázquez, 1995: 35). Focus has been, then, placed on one genre, specifically research articles. Following Hyland (2004, cited in Swales & Feak, 2012), eight disciplines have been identified, and then, academic features common to these have been explored. At the bottom line, these academic features have been exemplified.

In conclusion, this dissertation has aimed to provide the reader with the understanding of why we write what we write, academically speaking, for the novice writer to gain clarity on what it means to be an academician. A top-down approach has been followed to situate the reader in the context of genre and, hopefully, to illustrate that being academic is an arduous task. As explained in the introduction, one must do away with their L1 and think in terms of what the L2 audience is expecting, from pronounce choice, through paragraph structure to extralinguistic considerations concerning how the audience is going to perceive one's text. This confirms that it is the purpose of the text that marks what schematic and rhetorical elements it is going to contain. So, the nature of a text gets defined by the purpose of such text, and not the other way around. This is the reason a top-down approach has been chosen, it has been thought to be a good choice to provide the reader with the "bigger picture" (Riggenbach, 1999, cited in Oliver del Olmo, 2004: 22).

As an extension of this dissertation, interview has been carried to a researcher from UAB who, as a scholar herself, must employ conventions of academic writing on a daily basis. In this sense, nine questions were asked with the purpose to understand her view on its microstructural and microlinguistic features. Her answers confirm my prediction that hedging is crucial in academic writing, for scholars' texts need to include

them in order to pass muster the reviewers' correction. Her answers also corroborate that: at a macrostructural level, attention needs to be paid to cohesive paragraph structure and varied use of linkers and, at a microlinguistic level, nominalisation, passivisation and formal language need to be used with frequency. She also resonated with the fact that sentences need to be kept short and straight to the point and need to be introduced by a topic sentence. The researcher also agreed to the avoidance of personal pronouns, in her case because she learnt to be as detached as possible.

With regard to impersonation, she was also asked about the risks of not detaching oneself from the text, and she expressed uncertainty. It appears that there is some mysticism when it comes to impersonation, as some authors struggle to stamp themselves on the text whereas others do not (Sánchez, 2019). According to the researcher, she prefers not to use personal pronouns as she feels she does not yet have the authority, in other words, the combination of both knowledge and confidence, to do so. Nevertheless, she neatly points out that many scholars are beginning to sound less detached, albeit that is a personal feeling.

Lastly, this scholar also agreed to the axiom that one learns to write the more they read. This confirms my prediction and gives substance to the explanation in the first section that a good reader makes a great writer.

Further research could analyse how the acquisition of the main features of academic writing described in this dissertation develops in undergraduates, with special attention to UAB English Studies undergraduates.

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Appendix A

Interview to UAB English Phonetics scholar

(Recorded 22/05/2019. Duration: 15 minutes)

The following is an interview which was carried out to a female professor of English Phonetics at UAB. This professor uses academic writing at a user level, so she is familiarised with its workings. The theme of the interview is the exploration of key considerations in academic writing such as: caution, politeness, impersonation and sentence structure. The insights this professor provides are of interest, because they match with key points that have been described in this dissertation. These key elements will be highlighted in the interview.

The professor's name is left in anonymity for personal and political reason.

1. What is academic writing, in your opinion?

Academic writing is a genre itself, I would say, that is used in academia, obviously so, hence, the name. It's used in a particular way that researchers and academics in general have when writing about their research and showing their research to the international world or scientific community, and it has **specific characteristics that need to be followed** and they should be followed by everybody in the academic world, I think.

2. What do you think are the differences between academic English and General English?

General English is a very global term. In general English, this is my opinion and I'm not an expert. It would include both formal and informal register and genres as well. **Academic English is, definitely, formal** and it is, I would say, one specific kind of English that we use for a specific purpose, that is, academia.

3. You as a researcher, what do you consider in order to write as academically as possible?

The first thing I would say is **clarity**, in the sense that it is sometimes difficult to write even when we know what we are writing about. It's difficult to express or understand your ideas. So, as much clarity as possible, and then you have some **formulaic expressions**. Obviously, there is a strategy you need to follow, in the case of academic papers. Formulaic expression are there, such as: **linkers and cohesive constructions of the body of the text. Topic sentence** is very important, but obviously you have to apply it to every paragraph. But I suppose that is general for every genre you write, journalistic kind of writing. And also, **not be personal**, avoid any kind of personal opinion but also personal reference to the author. **The author doesn't need to be shown**. You have different ways you can express your authorship, for example avoiding the use of *I*. Some people say we definitely should say *I think* or *I found*, *my results are*, etcetera. But the way I learnt is to be as impersonal as possible, for example saying *it has been found*; **avoiding personal pronouns**.

4. My dissertation takes the premise that academic writing abilities are ultimately acquired through time and experience. Do you agree with this statement?

Definitely. I think so. It's a mixture of both, you need to learn the basic abilities, like what is a topic sentence, the different linkers and expressions you can use, but the **more you write and read academic papers, the more you learn about how to write them.**

5. You, as a researcher, what do you find easy in academic writing?

Nothing (laughter). For me, it is difficult. And, I've talked to other researchers and colleagues and I think it's a general feeling that it's hard to write. The fun part is to do the research, to find the findings and everything and, then, **the difficult thing is to write the findings within the confines of what is good academic writing and good science** and requirements that we have. Then, every journal has their own ways you need to write. For example, the referencing system is different for every journal. It depends on what you are writing. I personally had fun writing my dissertation, because I had been researching and reading about it for so long, but it is definitely not easy.

6. Do you think that hedging is important?

I'm not sure if it's important, but it's **required in every piece of academic writing.** I definitely know I have to write using such formulaic expressions, saying *it is shown, it can be seen, it is claimed*. Even sometimes when I get some revisions from piece of writings I did; I still realise I missed a few; they told me: you can't use that. It's important and **reviewers ask you for that.** I don't know how **culturally associated** that is, because I tend to write for English-speaking environments, but I'm not sure if in Spanish it happens the same or not.

7. So, what do you think would be the risk of not detaching yourself from the text and claiming something with too much strength?

I'm not sure, anybody has done that. I once read a book where they used contractions, which is something you initially can't do in academic and scientific writing, and I thought: that's brave, that's bold. It was a book, not a generalistic paper, so it was his book and was doing what he wanted. But, somebody thought, at some point, that it was not a good idea to use contractions. I believe, little by little, **some authors are trying to sound less detached from their text, but that is just a feeling.** I don't think I still have the authority to do that – yet.

8. My dissertation explores various features of academic writing. What do you think is one of the key linguistic features I shouldn't forget about?

Linguistic features are a broad term. If dealing with grammatical features, then **passive constructions**, to avoid active expressions of what the author is saying. I would say, **short sentences**: try not to construct very long sentences, because we tend to do that sometimes (she refers to Spanish and Catalan speakers). It's important to be clear and, we can only achieve that partly through short, not very complex sentences.

9. Tell me any personal experience or anecdote, or trauma you may have with academic writing.

Doing a degree in English philology is very important to achieve good academic writings. At least, that stands for my experience. It was the basis of my knowledge, little knowledge of academic writing, for example how to write an essay, which I had never done until getting to university. Perhaps, at that time you don't realise how important that is, but, again, I think that was the basis. After my postgraduate studies that gets better (academic writing abilities), but the basis was my degree in English.

Writing in any form is not something that we're used to doing until, for me, in my experience, we got to university. In opposition to other studies, I don't know, **we learn how to write by reading and writing in English.**