

RELATIONAL, MATERIAL, MENTAL AND VERBAL PROCESSES IN MATHEMATICAL RESEARCH ABSTRACTS

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ABSTRACT

Abstracts are one of the most important sections in academic articles as they represent the readers' first encounter with the article. In Hyland's words (2004, p. 65), "this ... is the point at which a piece of research may stand or fall – at which the reader must be 'hooked'". In other words, it is based on the abstract that the reader first judges the quality of the researcher's work and decides whether to continue reading the article or abstain from doing so. Because of its importance in gaining the interest and acceptance of the corresponding research community, research on abstract writing has proliferated. Abstracts have particular generic features which reflect the common practices of the corresponding research community (Hyland, 2004) and differentiate them from other sections in the research article. These generic features become more fine-tuned according to the specificities of the discipline to which abstracts belong. In this context, the present research attempts to study relational, material, mental and verbal processes in mathematical research abstracts in order to find out how researchers abide by the generic features of abstracts and the specificities of Mathematics, a discipline belonging to the hard domain of knowledge. To this end, a corpus of thirty mathematical research abstracts is investigated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The analysis has shown that relational, material, mental and verbal processes are not equally distributed. This is attributed to the generic features of abstracts and the specificities of the corresponding discipline, i.e. Mathematics. This is also traced back to the communicative functions of relational, material, mental and verbal processes.

KEYWORDS: Relational, Material, Mental and Verbal Processes/ Research Article Abstracts/ Generic Features/ Disciplinary Norms