A Quest for Contextual Factors in Academic Writing

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Abstract

Language is one of the semiotic systems that culture is naturally embedded in it. It comprises a shared meaning and symbolizes the social system. As a social semiotic, the interpretation of language is provided through social context, viz contextualized factors, and the purpose of the exchange. In this study, it is aimed to find out the contextualized factors in academic texts and the impact of these factors over the specific genres. As for the data, several parts of 27 MA and 20 PhD dissertations are chosen and analysed. Some divergences are found among the texts due to the different contextual factors: academic, socio-cultural and geographical backgrounds. The contextual factors such as the institutional conventions, the geographical position, the religion, the academic status and the native language of the student writer are observed as the most significant ones in the related genre. According to the results, some implications for pedagogical practices and suggestions for further analysis are offered.

Key Words: Academic writing, discourse analysis, contextual language, language education, genre