

Three versions of the same abstract

In a previous text, I provided an abstract for the same text in two different ways. I have now become more familiar with a third way of looking at how a story can be introduced into an abstract – the ABT structure (also know under other acronyms, but I'll ignore those for now). I find this structure (.... and but therefore ...) a powerful way of starting an abstract – although of course further elements are usually added to make up a full abstract. The texts below are my attempt at turning what was a classic scientific abstract (IMRAD) into two different types of abstracts with a story to tell. I won't say that any version is perfect and I have had workshop participants argue that the IMRAD version is what they always read. However, I personally prefer the story-telling versions and find that the ABT structure has both an academic feel to it and a story to tell. Interestingly enough, it also has the lowest word count, a vital aspect in an abstract.

Which one do you feel you could use in your scientific area? Is your academic field ready for story-telling?

IMRAD Version

A Comparison of Discourse Patterns and Textual Differences in English Language Papers Written by Native Speakers and Non-Native Speakers

This report contains the results of a textual analysis of 12 academic papers on economics or socio-economic topics. Six of the papers were written in English by English native speakers, 6 of the papers were written in English by German native speakers. The work investigates differences in various textual aspects between papers of the two cultures. It studies whether findings reported by Clyne (1987) are still relevant for Germans writing in the academic context today. The results suggest that, although some of the problems identified by Clyne are no longer present in the English being written by the Germans, there are still factors causing problems that might be related to the cultural background of the writer. These factors appear to be associated with providing a paper with structure and presenting this structure to the reader. The author suggest further work is necessary to identify the exact components of structure within a native speaker paper so that those teaching English for Academic Purposes can integrate the findings into their work.

Story-telling Version 1

Are teachers of academic English in Germany providing the right information in their workshops?

If one believes that academic writing styles are culturally different, then teachers of academic writing should know and teach these differences. Clyne (1987) suggested some stylistic differences between academic texts written by English native speakers and ones written in English by German native speakers. But that was 1987. Are the differences still the same in 2010, and, if not, what should now be taught in academic writing courses in Germany?

Using 12 economic papers (6 by native English speakers and 6 in English by native German speakers), Clyne's findings and the findings of more recent contrastive rhetorical research into other aspects of German-English differences were re-assessed. The results showed that, although German scientists have learnt from native speaker texts and are no longer making many of the mistakes made in 1987, some issues still need dealing with. In particular, academic writing teachers today should concentrate on how a paper is provided with a structure that is transparent to the reader. To do this, they need more information on how native speakers are providing that structure.

Story-telling Version 2 (ABT Structure)

What should teachers of academic English in Germany be teaching their students?

Some linguists consider academic writing styles to be culturally different **and** Clyne (1987) has suggested some stylistic differences between academic texts written by English native speakers and ones written in English by German native speakers. **But** that was 1987, which poses two interesting questions: Are the differences still the same in 2010? If not, what should now be taught in academic writing courses in Germany?

To answer these questions, this paper investigates 12 economic papers (6 by native English speakers and 6 in English by native German speakers). The results showed that, although German scientists have learnt from native speaker texts and are no longer making many of the mistakes made in 1987, some issues still need dealing with. In particular, academic writing teachers today should concentrate on how a paper is provided with a structure that is transparent to the reader. To do this, they need more information on how native speakers are providing that structure.