Reading Skills and the Discourse of the Technical Research Article

Course Format, Requirements, Contact Information and Workshop Assignments

Instructor: Margaret Newman-Nowicka, PhD

LTH, Autumn 2014
Course Format
1) Lecture / discussions about the discourse of technical Research Articles (RAs).
2) In-class practice sessions analyzing sample texts
3) Small-group workshops to discuss the discourse of RAs in the students’ fields

Course Requirements
A. Lecture class assignments:
   Before each lecture, prepare the “Homework assignment for in-class Analysis” for the RA section to be discussed during the practice session.

B. Workshop assignments:
   1. Analyze two abstracts from RAs in your field.
   2. Select a sample RA from your field that is of interest for your research.
   3. After each lecture, read the relevant section of your sample RA, mark discourse of interest and be ready to discuss the section briefly (5 or 10 minutes) in the small-group workshops.
   4. In ONE small group workshop, prepare to lead a discussion about a section of your sample RA.
   5. Complete the Impact Factor Science Citation Index exercise for the RA selected.
Instructions for the workshop assignments above are found on pages 3 through 7 of this handout.

E. Attendance:
   You may miss one lecture or one workshop of the course and still receive credit (3hp).

Contact information for Margaret Newman-Nowicka:
e-mail: Margaret.Newman-Nowicka@genombrottet.lth.se
Tel: 046-2220448
Internal Mail: Studiecentrum / Hs# 8
Office: Genombrottet offices in the studiecentrum (to the left at the far end of the hall when coming in from the off-street entrance)
Note: there is a wall phone outside the door to the offices that you can use to call Margaret using the telephone number above.
WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENT 1:
SELECT AND ANALYZE TWO ABSTRACTS
FROM RESEARCH ARTICLES (RA$s$) IN YOUR FIELD

Follow the instructions below to select and analyse two abstracts for discussion in Workshop 1.

A) Select two abstracts for discussion in Workshop 1.
   a. Each abstract should be from a different journal of importance in your research area.
   b. Both abstracts should cover research of importance for your research.
   c. At least one abstract must be from a research article; the other may be from a review article.
   d. Try to find an abstract from an RA written at a university where English is the native language. (This is not necessary, especially if those in your field tend to tend to work at universities or institutes where English is not the native tongue, but it can simplify our discussion of language use.)

B) Analyze the two abstracts in the following way:
   a. From the title, author(s) names and affiliations (university, institute, company…), predict what you will find in the abstract about the novelty and significance of the reported research.
   b. Mark any moves and steps you find, as we did in class, remembering that there may be cycling.

C) E-mail the marked abstracts to Margaret at Margaret.Newman-Nowicka@genombrottet.lth.se and to the other members of your group:
   a. At the top of the marked copy write: RDRA + Your name + group number.
   b. Be SURE that the title of the article, the date of publication and the name of the journal is clearly shown as well as the name(s) of the authors and their affiliations (university, institute, company…)

D) Bring a copy of the marked texts along with the entire articles to the workshop class.
   a. Be ready to discuss or ask questions about communicative aspects of the text, including any predictions you might make from the title, journal readership and/or the RA$s$’ author sand and from the moves and steps you find (or do not find).

The workshop discussion will take place in the small groups in the conference room in the office area across from our classroom. There is a wall-phone beside the door to the area. Use it to call Margaret to let her know you have arrived (tel: 20448).
WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENT 2:

SELECT A FULL ARTICLE IN YOUR FIELD AS A SAMPLE RA

BE READY TO DISCUSS BRIEFLY THE DISCOURSE OF EACH OF ITS SECTIONS IN THE WORKSHOPS

Follow the instructions below to select and prepare to discuss your sample RA in Workshop 2 (Introduction section), Workshop 3 (Methods/Model section) and Workshop 4 (Results and discussion section).

A) Choose a research article (RA) in your field to analyze during the workshops. It should be:
   a. of interest for your research. (It may be the research articles you found for Assignment 1 or be entirely new RAs.)
   b. a research article (NOT a review article)
   c. preferably written at a university where English is the native language. (This is not necessary, especially if those in your field tend to work at universities where English is not the native tongue, but it can simplify our discussion of language use.)

B) Send a copy of the article you selected to Margaret by e-mail.

C) After the lecture and analysis class on an RA section, analyse the relevant section of the sample RA in the following way:
   a. Underline any headings or subheadings.
   b. Underline any Topic Sentences you find
   c. Mark any Moves and Steps that you can identify.
   d. Underline any information in the RA's abstract that is also found in the section to be discussed.

D) Bring a copy of the marked RA to the workshop, as well as the entire RA. Make SURE that the title of the article, the date of publication and the name of the journal is clearly shown as well as the name(s) of the authors and their affiliations (university, institute, company…)

E) Be ready to discuss the section discourse briefly at the end of the Workshop. (This analysis is informal. You do NOT have to send it to me or to the other group members before the workshop.)
WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENT 3:
LEADING A DISCUSSION OF A SECTION OF YOUR SAMPLE RA

Follow the instructions below to lead a discussion of your sample RA, either in Workshop 2 (Introduction section), Workshop 3 (Methods/Model section) or Workshop 4 (Results and discussion section).

A) After the lecture and analysis class on an RA section, analyze the relevant section of the sample RA in the usual way (Step a. through d. repeated below for your convenience) and be ready to discuss communicative issues like those in step e. Make sure the analysis should be clear not only for yourself but for the others in the groups.
   a. Underline any headings or subheadings.
   b. Underline any Topic Sentences you find
   c. Mark any Moves and Steps that you can identify.
   d. Underline any information in the RA’s abstract that is also found in the section to be discussed.
   e. Be ready to take up/point out possible issues for discussion, for example:
      1) The use of headings / subheadings
         Are they addressed to specialists or to a less knowledgeable audience?
         Why do the authors highlight topics in the (sub)headings?
         What can you predict from them about the (sub)section.
      2) The use of Top-Down Organization
         Are there TSs that are easy to skim?
         What can you predict from them about the content of the paragraph to follow?
         Are headings used instead of TSs to establish topic?
         What sort of topical focus or emphasis is created by the sequence of TSs?
         Is the focus more on factual information or concepts?
         Does the TS sequence create an overview of ideas or merely indicate which topics are covered?
      3) The Moves and their Steps
         Which are present / absent?
         What purposes are served by the moves or steps you identified?
      3) Communicative aspects of organization and language
         What purpose does the author seem to have in the use of certain vocabulary / expressions?

B) Complete the Journal Impact and Citation Index Exercise for the RA (see Assignment 4 on the following page)

C) Two working days before the workshop, send your copy of the section analysis by e-mail, along with the Journal Impact and Citation Index Exercise to Margaret and to the other people in your workshop

D) Be ready to discuss your section analysis in the workshop in the conference room in the Studiecicum.
WORKSHOP ASSIGNMENT 4
JOURNAL IMPACT AND AUTHOR CITATION EXERCISE

Complete the exercise below for the sample RA you will be analyzing in the Workshops. E-mail the completed exercise to Margaret along with the analysis of your RA section on which you will be leading the discussion.

To do the exercise, use the Web of Science (WS), Scopus and/or Google Scholar, which you will find at the links below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Database</th>
<th>Link</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Web of Science</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lu.se">www.lu.se</a> &gt; libraries &gt; “Databases A-Z” &gt; type “Web of Science”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scopus</td>
<td><a href="http://www.lu.se">www.lu.se</a> &gt; libraries &gt; “Databases A-Z” &gt; type “Scopus”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Google Scholar</td>
<td><a href="http://scholar.google.com/">http://scholar.google.com/</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Follow the instruction below to use the Impact Factor, Scientific Journal Rankings and citation indices in Web of Science, Scopus and Google Scholar as a means of putting your sample RA into a general context.

**A) For the journal where your sample RA was published, go to:**

a. the Web of Science home page find the journal’s Impact Factor (IF) for
   i. the year that the RA was published
   ii. a few years before and after publication by clicking “Impact Trend”

b. and/or the Scopus home page find the Scientific Journal Rating (SJR) and Scientific Normalized Impact (SNIP) in Scopus
   i. for the year of publication
   ii. comparison with other journals in the area by clicking on comparison with other journals

   NOTE: If the RA is very recent, it may only be possible to find the IF/SJR for previous years.

When you lead the Workshop discussion, be ready to take up the importance of the journal in the field or subfield. To do so, also check with researchers in your field about which journals they consider to be important and about what is considered a “good” Impact Factor of Journal Rating in that field/subfield. You might even ask about their opinions about journal rating systems in general.

**B) Search in one or more citation index (i.e., Web of Science, Scopus and/or Google Scholar) and do the following:**

a. Find the number of times the RA in question was cited. (This tells you something about the interest in the field for the specific RA.)
NOTE: If the RA is very recent it may be too early for it to be cited. If this is the case, go on to step C).

b. Copy the names of the journals and the titles and authors of the citing RAs. (Skim through the list to get an idea about the (type of) researchers that consider this RA to be of interest and the (sub)fields of those researchers.)

NOTE: If the author selected has a common name (e.g., Johan Svensson), make sure that the citations are for the researcher of interest and not a researcher in another field with the same name.

C) Search in one or more citation index to find information about one of the authors of your RA. (This may be the 1st author, the corresponding author or any of the others. Be ready to explain in why you chose that author.)

a. Find up to five other RAs of the author chosen and list their titles, journal titles and years of publication.

b. Copy the titles of the five RAs, the journals in which they were published and the year of publication. (Skim through the list to get an idea about the (type of) research of the author selected.)

c. Find the total number of RAs written by the author chosen.

d. Find the total number of citations for the author you have chosen.