

## A Genre Analysis of the Methodology Sections of Descriptive Medical - Surgical Nursing Articles

### Betimsel Cerrahi Hemşirelik Makalelerine Ait Yöntem Bölümlerinin Tür Analizi

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#### Abstract

The aim of the present study is to conduct a genre analysis on a corpus of 10 published research articles in the field of Medical-Surgical Nursing and propose an instructional procedure for the teaching of writing methodology sections within the context of English for Academic Purposes. The data is analyzed through the identification of the rhetorical moves and their order within the corpus, followed by a computer-based lexical analysis aiming to reveal the most frequently used content words and their collocates, both left and right-hand. Lastly, the grammatical structures within the corpus are extracted based on frequencies. The findings reveal the rhetorical moves used in the methodology sections of Medical-Surgical Nursing research articles, the most commonly used words in those sections and the words which are meaningfully used with the most common words. Based on the findings, an instructional procedure is proposed drawing upon the literature on Genre-Based Instruction.

**Key words:** Genre Analysis, Nursing, Academic English, Genre-Based Instruction

#### Öz

Çalışmanın amacı cerrahi hemşirelik alanında yayımlanmış 10 akademik makaleden oluşan bir bütüncü üzerinde tür analizi gerçekleştirip, Akademik Amaçlı İngilizce çerçevesinde yöntem bölümü yazımının öğretimi için örnek bir uygulama sunmaktır. Veri analizi, bütüncü içerisindeki metinlerde bulunan sözbilimsel eylemlerin ve bu eylemlerin sıralarının belirlenmesiyle başlayıp, bütüncedeki en sık kullanılan sözcüklerin ve bunlara ait eşdizimliliklerin bilgisayar destekli olarak belirlenmesiyle devam etmektedir. Son aşamada bütüncüde yer alan dilbilgisi yapıları sıklık temelinde incelenmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları cerrahi hemşirelik makalelerinin yöntem bölümlerinde kullanılan sözbilimsel eylemler, en sık kullanılan sözcükler ve bu sözcüklerin çevresinde kullanıldığında anlam ifade eden diğer sözcükleri ortaya koymaktadır. Çalışmanın son bölümünde bulgulara dayanarak ve tür temelli öğretim literatüründen yararlanılarak bir öğretim uygulaması önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Tür Analizi, Hemşirelik, Akademik İngilizce, Tür Temelli Öğretim

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## Introduction

The word 'genre' comes from the Latin word 'genus', meaning 'kind' or 'sort'. Quite a historical term, scrutiny of genres dates back to Ancient Greece, and differentiating between different sorts of texts has continued since then (Beghtol, 2001). However, while mentioning the term 'genre', it should also be taken into account that the use of the word does not equal to the use of 'text type' since there are differences between the two. According to Biber (1988), a 'text type' refers to the linguistic form and the co-occurrence of these forms in a text and grouping is made according to these criteria. On the other hand, 'genre' refers to commonly occurring activities within a society, which are regarded to be of the same type by a particular speech community. Therefore, linguistic forms within the same genre may vary to a serious extent (Biber, 1988; Richards et al., 1992; Dudley-Evans, 1989).

Although the word 'genre' has been subjected to numerous definitions, two noteworthy definitions of the concept come from Martin (1984:25) who defines genre as 'a staged, goal-oriented, purposeful activity in which speakers engage as members of our culture' and Swales (1990:58), who describes the term as 'a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes which are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community'. Adding to this definition, Paltridge (2013:347) argues that genres "establish the constraints on what is generally acceptable in terms of how the text should be written or spoken, what issues it will address, and how it can do this".

The definitions of the term 'genre' point at the same direction in that genre is defined through the same culture or discourse community. Samraj and Monk's (2008) findings, in which they reveal that the graduate program applications show similarities in the same discipline and differences across disciplines, are supportive of the culture or community-specific nature of genres. The same notion is put forth by Hyland (2012), who state that a text within the framework of a genre may have varying features in different disciplines. However, genre knowledge may also diverge according to socio-economic class, personal style and characteristics (Spinillo & Pratt, 2005; Hyland, 2010). In addition, Samraj and

Gawron (2015) conclude that not all genres may be stemming from a uniform discourse community and a higher-level categorization of genres might be necessary since genres such as suicide notes or ransom letters do not appear to be belonging to a uniform discourse community with a generalizable goal. The order of the communicative move structures, which may be linear or hierarchical, can also be complex within the same genre and some genres may be of a flexible nature in terms of being adaptable to the context (Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013) and involving rhetorical functions which overlap (Yang & Allison, 2003). Genres are also considered to be dynamic since they evolve and mix with other genres over time (Gillaerts, 2012).

As seen in the literature, the term genre has both historical roots and contemporary implications. The available body of knowledge on the concept of 'genre' suggests that it should be distinguished from the term text type since it not only refers to linguistic forms but also to a communal event that is of a flexible and dynamic nature. Parallel to this, the commonalities of the definitions by Martin (1984) and Swales (1990) can be stated as a group of texts' having an identical communicative purpose and their sharedness by a particular cultural community, which is referred to as a discourse community, which deems the analysis of a genre quite different than that of a text type.

#### *Genre Analysis and Medical Research Articles*

Among the genre-based approaches to research articles, identification of communicative moves appears to be one of the most commonly preferred methods. Swales (1990) defines a move as a discursual or rhetorical component which serves as a communicative function, having a functional and responsive nature. While a communicative move can take up as little as a clause, it may also be realized through several sentences (Swales, 2004). According to Nwogu (1997), hierarchical text structures, which are schematic, serve as the main focal point of move analysis.

Basturkmen (2014) states that move analysis is usually in the form of qualitative inquiry based on the scrutiny of repetitive patterns in texts. Dividing the text into units according to their rhetorical functions, the researcher infers and proposes certain moves and

steps for each unit during the analysis. Following this phase, the identified moves are quantified as frequencies with the aim of putting forth how each unit within the text corresponds to the general communicative purpose of the text. Although computer-aided analysis of rhetorical moves is possible, its use is yet of a narrow scale due to the difficulty of computerized extraction of deep structures (Upton & Connor, 2012).

There are several studies which focus on the structure of the moves in medical research articles. An extensive example of move analysis on research articles comes from Nwogu (1997), in whose article 15 randomly selected medical research articles with each part are analyzed on a basis of communicative moves. Moreover, Nwogu's study (1997) shows that the methodology sections of medical research articles have the following moves:

- 1) Description of data collection procedures
  - a) Indicating the data source
  - b) Indicating the data size
  - c) Indicating the data collection criteria
- 2) Description of experimental procedure
  - a) Identifying the main research apparatus
  - b) Portraying the process of experiment
  - c) Identifying the success criteria
- 3) Description of data analysis procedures
  - a) Defining the terminology related to data analysis
  - b) Indicating how data is classified
  - c) Indicating the instruments and procedures of data analysis

Similar to Nwogu (1997), Csongor (2013) conducts a move analysis on medical research articles and concludes that the methodology sections within the mentioned discipline are comprised of a description of materials or participants followed by the indication of data collection procedures, a description of experimental procedures and a description of data analysis procedures. Kanoksilapatham (2005) also identifies the moves in medical research articles and his findings suggest that the methodology sections of medical

research articles respectively consist of the description of materials, experimental procedures, research equipment and data analysis procedures, having similar findings with the previously mentioned studies. In the same vein, Fryer (2012) reveals that the methodology sections of medical research articles follow a move pattern of describing research material or participants, experimental procedures and data analysis procedures. Huang (2014) carries out an extensive genre analysis on a corpus of 5 medical research articles and concludes that the methodology sections of medical research articles include the description of the study materials, the inclusion criteria for the study, the procedures of the study and the presentation of analysis techniques. Li and Ge (2009) express similar findings, stating that the same sections within medical research articles include the descriptions of the data collection procedures (data source, data size, inclusion criteria), the experimental procedures and the techniques of data analysis including the tests and the software used. Davis (2015) also reveals that the methodology sections of medical research articles include the statement of ethical issues, the indication of the location, bio-data and the study's rationale, followed a description of the experiment with the research materials, research procedures and the types of tests that are used within the context of the study.

Although there are numerous studies aiming to identify the moves in medical research articles, they mostly focus on articles as uniform wholes rather than specifically addressing the methodology sections. Moreover, most of these studies focus on medicine/health as a general topic (Nwogu, 1997) or point specific areas such as biochemistry (Kanoksilapatham, 2005) or obesity (Fryer, 2012). In that respect, the aim of the present study is to find out what sort of communicative moves are used in the methodology sections of academic articles on Medical-Surgical Nursing, which has not been put under thorough scrutiny in terms of the communicative moves within, through genre and lexicogrammatical analyses. The findings are expected to contribute to the literature related to the genre of academic research articles, as well as producing a potentially instructional material in courses for Specific Academic Purposes and a guide for those who actively partake in the act of writing academic articles on Surgical Nursing.

## Methodology

The present study is of a descriptive nature, aiming to identify the communicative moves, most frequently used words and structures as well as the collocations within the corpus. Taking the scope of the study into account, the methodology sections of 10 articles from two peer-reviewed academic journals, MedSurg Nursing and Indian Journal of Surgical Nursing, which are designed as descriptive research studies on medical-surgical nursing, are selected to form the corpus.

Following the creation of the corpus, each text is subjected to genre analysis to identify the rhetorical moves within them. The frequencies and percentages of the occurrence of these moves are then calculated to point out which moves are present in which articles.

As for the lexicogrammatical analysis, the word count for each methodology section within the corpus is calculated to reach an average word count. Then, the most frequently used content words in the corpus are counted. The function words list of Cook (1988), which includes 225 function words such as the articles and auxiliary words, is used in order to separate content words from function words.

In order to see with which words the most frequent words in the corpus collocate, the concordance analysis is performed, using AntConc (Anthony, 2014), a concordance analysis software. According to McEnery and Wilson (1996), not every co-occurrence of two words can be counted as a collocation, since co-occurrence may also take place in a text by chance. For that reason, they suggest the computation of Mutual Information Score (MI) to reveal the strength of the co-occurrence. The lowest acceptable MI score for a collocation is 3.00 (Church & Hanks, 1989). Therefore, MI scores are also calculated in this study to indicate the strength of the collocations. Following the lexical analysis, grammatical structures within the corpus are also analyzed and tabulated according to tenses and sentence mode.

## Findings

The findings related to the genre, lexical and grammatical analyses of the articles selected for the corpus are presented in this section.

### *Genre Analysis Findings*

The communicative moves and their percentages according to their frequency of occurrence are presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Communicative Moves and their Percentage of Occurrence

Move	Percentage
The Research	
Indicating the research design (RD)	90%
Indicating the research setting (RS)	80%
Indicating the aim of the research (RA)	40%
Indicating the Research Method (RM)	10%
Indicating the research question (RQ)	10%
Presenting the conceptual framework of the study (CF)	10%
The Sample	
Indicating the inclusion criteria for the study (IC)	90%
Indicating the sampling procedure (SP)	80%
Indicating the exclusion criteria (EC)	60%
Presenting the population of the study (PS)	30%
Data Collection	
Presenting the data collection instrument (DCI)	100%
Indicating the data collection procedure (DCP)	90%
Validity and Reliability	
Presenting evidence for the validity of the data collection instrument (V)	70%
Presenting evidence for the reliability of the data collection instrument (R)	40%
Data Analysis	
Indicating the instruments and procedures of data analysis (DA)	100%
Defining the terminology related to data analysis (DT)	10%
Ethical Issues	
Presenting evidence for the ethical nature of the study (EN)	80%
Presenting evidence for the security of the data (DS)	20%

As seen in Table 1, the communicative moves in the methodology sections of peer-reviewed descriptive medical-surgical nursing articles can be categorized under six headings, which are the research, the sample, data collection, validity and reliability, data analysis and ethical issues. The findings show that, in all articles within the corpus, the authors make a communicative move to present their data collection instruments and data analysis procedures. It can also be seen in the table that most of the authors indicate their research designs, research settings, sampling procedures, inclusion criteria and data collection procedures along with presenting the validity of their data collection instruments and the ethical nature of the study. The findings also suggest that some authors indicate the



aim of the study, present the population from which the study sample is extracted and the reliability of the data collection instruments. The rest of the moves identified are the indication of the research design and setting, the presentation of the conceptual framework, the population from which the sample is extracted, the definition of the data analysis terminology and the security of the collected data which are observed only once or a few times in the corpus. The sequence of the identified moves is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Sequence of Moves in the Methodology Sections of the Articles

Text	Moves
Article 1.	DCP-RA-RD-RQ-RS-DCI-R-V-EN-IC-DCP-DS-DA-DT
Article 2.	EN-RD-SP-EC-IC-DCP-DA
Article 3.	RA-RD-EN-IC-DCP-DCI-V-R-DA
Article 4.	RD-IC-RS-SP-DCI-R-V-EN-DCP-DS-DA
Article 5.	RA-RD-SP-IC-EC-EN-DCP-DCI-DA
Article 6.	RM-RD-PS-RS-SP-DCI-DA
Article 7.	RA-RD-SP-RS-DA-IC-EC-DCI-V-CF
Article 8.	RS-EN-IC-SP-EC-DCI-V-DA
Article 9.	RS-PS-RD-SP-IC-EC-DCI-V-R-EN-DCP-DA
Article 10.	RD-RS-PS-SP-IC-EC-DCI-EN-DCP-DA

It can be seen in the list that the moves identified in the selected articles are of an irregular nature, having no regular pattern that they follow. However, although the sequence of individual moves vary, it can be observed that most of the articles begin with moves which are in the 'The Research' category, followed by the moves in the 'The Sample' category and the category of "Data Collection" always precedes 'Validity and Reliability', which is followed by the category of 'Data Analysis', with only a few exceptions. Moves related to presenting the ethical nature of the study appear to be the least regular one among all others, appearing in various parts of the methodology sections included in the corpus.

#### *Lexicogrammatical Analysis Findings*

Word count analysis reveals that the total number of words within the corpus is 4461 and the average number of words per methodology section is 446. The total number of content words, on the other hand, is 2806 (63%), which makes an average number of 281 per text. The results of the frequency analysis to reveal the 15 most commonly used words in the corpus are presented in Table 3.



**Table 3.** Most Frequent Content Words in the Corpus

Word	Frequency	Percentage
Data	64	2.28
Study	58	2.07
analysis	26	0.93
items	26	0.93
patients	26	0.93
care	21	0.75
included	21	0.75
descriptive	19	0.68
nurses	19	0.68
participants	18	0.64
subjects	18	0.64
criteria	17	0.61
sample	16	0.57
collection	15	0.53
research	15	0.53

Table 3 demonstrates the most commonly used 15 words in the methodology sections of the selected medical-surgical nursing articles. The findings reveal that the most commonly used words are 'data' ( $f = 64$ ), 'study' ( $f = 58$ ) and 'analysis' ( $f = 26$ ). These words take up 2.28%, 2.07% and 0.93% of the content words, respectively. On the other hand, the last three words in the list of most commonly used words in the corpus are 'sample' ( $f = 16$ ), 'collection' ( $f = 15$ ) and 'research' ( $f = 15$ ), which form 0.57%, 0.53% and 0.53% of the content words in the corpus, respectively. It is also seen that only 3 words out of 15, namely 'patients', 'care' and 'nurses' belong to a health care setting and the majority of the most frequent words are research-related words.

**Table 4.** Most Frequent Words and their Collocations ( $MI \geq 3.00$ )

Word	Left-Hand Collocates	Right-Hand Collocates
Data	qualitative, polysomnographic, numerical, large, electronic, collect, quantitative, quality, final, demographic, interview, group, collected, shift	collection, sets, files, analysis, set
Study	present, larger, explorative, prospective, previous, descriptive	proposal, eligibility, provided, design, samples, site, population, includes, purpose, variables, medical
Analysis	one-way, factor, regression, data	showed, plan

Items	clarify, adding, added, categorical, includes, intuitive, analytic, test, included	generated, related, included
Patients	select, predispose, interviewed, consenting, neurosurgical, postoperative, orthopedic, home, cancer, following	Receiving
Care	psychosocial, tertiary, rehabilitative, critical, therapeutic, direct, self, patient	positions, teaching, units, nurses, after
Included	samples, review, collection, age, questionnaire, items, sample, criteria	general, information, presence, subjects, nurses, items
descriptive	Comparing	explorative, statistics, design, variables, analysis, study
Nurses	invite, employs, practice, categorize, shift, included, care	Waking
participants	protect, potential, asking, individual, interview	Completed
Subjects	studied, included	Prior
Criteria	inclusion, exclusion, eligibility, standard, sampling	participated, included
Sample	convenience	size, inclusion, included
Collection	Data	tools, form, structured, included
Research	future, experimental, quantitative, nursing	methodology, faculty, council, assistants, setting, design, question, methods, hospital

The left and right hand collocates of the most frequent content words in the corpus are presented in Table 4. It is seen in the table that the most frequent content word, 'data', has left-hand collocates such 'qualitative', 'collect' and 'interview' while it has also right-hand collocates such as 'collection', 'analysis' or 'set'. The fifth most common word, 'patients', is seen to have 11 collocates on the left-hand side out of a total number of 12 collocates, such as 'interviewed', 'postoperative' and 'cancer'. On the contrary, the word 'descriptive', which is the eighth most common content word in the corpus, is seen to have 6 out of its 7 collocates on the right-hand side, such as 'statistics', 'design' and 'study'.

**Table 5.** Frequencies and Percentages of Tense Forms in the Corpus

Form	Frequency	Percentage
Past Forms	219	80.51
Present Forms	53	19.49
TOTAL	272	100

Table 5 shows the use of verb tense forms in the corpus. Out of 272 sentences, 219 sentences are written in the past form, while 53 of them are written in the present form. Most present forms are observed in the DCI move.

**Table 6.** Frequencies and Percentages of Voices in the Corpus

Voice	Frequency	Percentage
Passive Voice	180	66.18
Active Voice	92	33.82
TOTAL	272	100

According to the results of the frequency analyses, 180 of the 272 sentences within the corpus are written in the passive voice. 92 sentences, almost half of the sentences in passive voice, are written in the active voice within the corpus.

**Table 7.** Clause Types and Verbs that are Less Frequently Used

Clause/Verb Type	Frequency
Relative Clause	38
Modal Verbs	14
That-clauses	2

As seen in Table 7, relative clauses appear in the corpus only 38 times in a total number of 272 sentences. Modal verbs are observed 14 times and there are also 2 that-clauses in the corpus.

## Conclusion and Suggestions

The present study aims to reveal the communicative moves, most frequent words and their collocates as well as the most frequent grammatical structures within a corpus of methodology sections extracted from academic articles on Medical-Surgical Nursing. The findings reveal that, although the sequence of moves are of a varying nature, most of the articles within the corpus follow a pattern of identifying the research, providing the details related to sampling, introducing the data collection methods, presenting the validity and/or reliability of the instrument and presenting the details related to data analysis. The category

of 'ethical issues', in which the authors provide evidence that the study is of an ethical nature, appears to be the most irregularly used one, occurring in various parts of the methodology sections. The findings are in line with those of Nwogu (1997), Kanoksilapatham (2005), Li and Ge (2009) with the exception that these studies do not explicitly mention a statement of the ethical nature of the study as a communicative move. On the other hand, Fryer's (2012) and Davis's (2015) findings are in the same vein with the present study in that they also specify the statement of ethical issues or the informed consent of the participants as a communicative move. The findings of the present study reveal what sorts of moves are predominantly used in the methodology sections of academic articles on Medical-Surgical Nursing, as well as providing the general sequence of the categories to which the moves belong.

Word frequency analyses reveal that a majority of the most frequent words in the selected articles are those that can be used in research studies of varying fields and there are only a few words among the most frequent ones, which can be directly attributed to health care settings. When Yang's (2015) corpus study for an academic word list for nursing is investigated, it is seen that the words 'data', 'analysis', 'research' and 'items' are included in that list, but the rest of the most frequently used content words within the corpus of the present study do not appear to match Yang's findings. The reason for the mismatch might be that Yang's (2015) study focuses on Nursing as a general field including many sub-disciplines and the corpus of the present study is more of a limited nature, dealing only with medical-surgical nursing research articles with a descriptive study design. On the other hand, Millar and Budgell (2008) have similar findings to those of the present study in their word frequency analysis of public health texts, having the words 'data', 'study', 'analysis', 'patients', 'care', 'participants', 'sample' and 'research' in the list. However, it is seen that only 7 words out of 15 listed in this study as the most frequently used words within the corpus seem to match Millar and Budgell's (2008:370) list, which may be caused by the fact that their study involves "research articles, editorials, commentaries and reviews" unlike the present study which is of a more limited scope.

Similar to the most frequently used words, the collocates of these frequent words are also observed to belong to research settings to a large extent, having only a few items that can be solely attributed to health care settings. In that respect, it can be concluded that words which pertain to research are more frequently used in the methodology sections of the selected articles than those which belong to the field of Medical-Surgical Nursing.

Another finding related to the lexical nature of the corpus is that the percentage of content words within the corpus exceeds the percentage of function words. This finding is in line with the findings of Halliday (1994), in that written texts typically include a larger amount of content words due to their complexity.

As for the grammatical structures within the corpus, it is seen that the past form of passive voice dominates the corpus to a large extent, although there are instances of present verb forms and active voice. According to Myers (1989), social distance should be regarded as high in academic writing and Sarcevic (2000) holds that impersonality is conveyed through the use of passive voice, which may be considered to be explaining the high percentage of passive voice use in the corpus. The finding that past verb forms are dominant in the corpus may be due to certain procedures' (i.e. sampling, data collection, data analysis) being mostly narrated and described in the methodology sections since narration and description are mostly identified by the use of past forms (Swales, 1990; Paltridge, 2001).

The findings of the present study can be used in an EAP teaching setting, especially with the research assistants of Nursing, following the steps of Genre Based Instruction proposed by Osman (2004), which are learners' exposure to the target genre, providing guidance for the analysis of rhetorical moves and structures, practicing the construction of genre and constructing the genre independently. Based on the findings of the study, the following instructional procedures can be proposed to teach how to write the methodology section of a Medical-Surgical Nursing article:

1. The learners bring the methodology sections of the articles in which they are interested to the class.

2. Rhetorical moves and structural patterns in a few of these texts are analyzed under the guidance of the teacher. Specific focus in terms of structures may be on the past form of passive voice in terms of structures, based on the findings of this study.
3. The rest of the texts are analyzed in groups or individually by the learners, while the teacher monitors.
4. The learners practice constructing the moves in a given research scenario.
5. The learners write a full methodology section independently and submit drafts. If the instruction is directed towards research assistants, the related sections of their own research studies can be constructed.

Following the steps proposed above, the learners may be able to figure out the code related to the specialist genre, become acquainted with the specialist culture, improve their sensitivity to the structuring of the related genre and exploit this knowledge for the independent construction of it, as suggested by Osman (2004).

However, there are also limitations of this study, which should be kept in mind. Firstly, the study is limited to a corpus of 10 articles selected by the researcher. In order to reach more general conclusions, the size of the corpus should be increased and analyses should be repeated. Secondly, the corpus used in this study is limited to published descriptive research articles in the field of Medical-Surgical Nursing only, therefore, different findings can be revealed in other branches of Nursing as well as other research designs, such as experimental or quasi-experimental ones. As a further study, several other branches within the field of Nursing can be analyzed using a similar methodology in order to find out if it is possible to reach more general conclusions related to Nursing as a field of research.

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