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HYBRIDIZATION OF DISCOURSE CONCERNING THE TITLES OF ACADEMIC PAPERS[1]

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen an upsurge of interest in academic writing as a research area (Veszelszki 2016, 2018), especially in the international literature (Altinmakas–Bayyurt 2018; Al–Khasawneh 2017; Talebzadeh–Samar–Kiany–Akbari 2013). However, the number of studies on title formation remains limited, even though this topic forms an integral part of academic writing. The current research aims to join the discourse on Hungarian academic writing.

The study reveals the trend that the titles of scientific texts increasingly give evidence of conscious planning on behalf of their authors. The data show that the hybridization of discourse is present during the process of title formation and can also be found in the titles of academic works written by teacher trainees. The research focuses on which functions titles are moving away from and which functions they are increasingly associated with. Some tendencies, directions can be discerned from the analyses which we would like to present in the present paper.

The first section of the study introduces the basic concepts of academic writing. The following chapter deals with title-formation as an integral part of academic writing. The next section describes the phenomenon of hybridization of discourse. The last chapter introduces the methods of data collection and the sample of the research.

Before beginning the research, we assumed that the hybridization of discourse is present in the titles given by the teacher trainees, which means that scientific discourse is moving towards another style.

2. Academic writing in higher education

In Hungary, it is increasingly common for teachers of L1 to teach rhetorical writing when they teach writing. The teaching of source-based writing in Hungarian public education is minimal, even though its use would greatly contribute to the development of students' writing skills (Pintér–Molnár 2017). Source-based writing as it is called in the international literature (Klein–Boscolo 2016; Kirkpatrick

2012; Leijten et al. 2013) is writing from sources, i.e. the production of written texts based on the specialized literature. Szilassy's (2014) research has shown that there are major shortcomings in the text-writing abilities of post-graduate students. The reason for this (among others) is that in public education there is not enough emphasis placed on developing students' communication skills including their writing skills (cf. Jánk 2015, 2016). Nevertheless, in higher education, students are expected to have the appropriate scientific literacy to be able to produce a well-structured, scientifically worded text, such as a seminar paper, an essay, a research paper or a thesis. To improve students' scientific writing skills, *academic writing* courses have been offered which focus on the scientific construction of a text. In academic writing, the author studies the problems of a particular research field and raises new ideas connected to that (Kruse 2003). According to Kruse, academic writing cannot be produced without disciplinary thinking. The author says that without disciplinary knowledge, "*content cannot be generated*" (Kruse 2013: 51). Of course, disciplinary knowledge itself does not create a part of writing competence but it is one of the most important components of writing competence. Moreover, many studies have shown that disciplinary thinking and writing relate to each other and writing shapes disciplinary thinking (Walvoord–McCarthy 1990; Langer–Appelbee 1987). There are some general features of academic writing which are the following: the use of formal language; the structure of the text is logical; every argument is supported by evidence; it answers research questions; it is based on clear critical thinking.

3. Types and habits of title formation

Title formation makes for an integral part of academic writing. The title is the part of the work that the reader reads first and on the basis of which she decides whether or not to read the whole article; therefore, all words in the title should be chosen with great care (Day, 1995). Thus, one of the most important tasks of the title is to draw attention to the text, to illustrate the author's attitude and to highlight the essence of the text (Domonkosi 2016; Tomesz 2015; Tolcsvai 2001; Szabó 2001;). Szikszainé (1999) adds two more functions of the title, namely its identifying role and its contribution to inventory building.

The relationship of the title to the text can be *deictic* and *metonymic*. When the title points to the text, we call it a deictic relationship, when the title itself represents the text, it is a metonymic relationship (Tolcsvai 2001). In addition to raising awareness, the title's other important role is the cataphoric role (Szikszainé 1999), which means that it informs the reader in advance about the text that follows.

In the division of Gábor Kemény (Kemény 1985), the criteria of stylistics and text linguistics prevail. His typology is based on how headings relate to the opening and/or closing motifs of the text. He has created four groups:

1. *opening = heading* - in this type, the text is the same as the title or the text continues the idea raised in the title;
2. *ending = heading* - these types of titles refer to the end of the text;
3. *opening = ending ≠ heading* - these titles do not refer either to the opening or the ending of the text, but as a frame the same picture is used to open and to end the text.
4. *opening = ending = heading* - in this case, the opening, the ending and the heading part are the same.

Szikszainé (1999) classifies titles into four categories: *titles referring to the topic, label-like titles, titles with an advertising role* and *titles referring to the genre.* Titles referring to the topic make a clear reference to the content of the text. These types of titles immediately reveal the topic of writing; therefore, they are the most informative. Label-like titles are characterized by brevity, as they are usually one- or two-word titles. These types of titles are often evocative, and the text is labeled almost the same as the goods are in the stores. The main task of titles with an advertising role is to attract the reader's attention. Finally, the essential role of titles referring to genres is to immediately identify the genre of the text (Szikszainé, 1999). Although there are titles that can be clearly assigned to one or the other group of titles, Szabó (2001) treats the following functions of titles as simultaneously present: arousing the reader's interest, expressing the author's opinion on the topic and naming the article. That is, she thinks that a good title is one in which the groups are to some extent brought to a synthesis. Of course, besides the content and the topic, the formation of a title is also greatly influenced by other factors such as place of publication, country of publication, the genre of the text, etc.

4. The hybridization of discourse

The most commonly used types of titles listed in the previous section are best illustrated in a model which has two scales: the *scale of awareness* and the *scale of informativeness.* The scale of awareness includes titles that are intended to attract the reader's attention and interest. The titles of scientific texts are on the scale of informativeness because their most important function is to inform the reader (at least on some level) about the research and the topic. However, recently the titles of scientific writings have moved closer to the scale of awareness than to the scale of informativeness. Authors of scientific texts are increasingly using title-creating techniques that earlier were specific only for titles which caught the attention. This type of discourse-merging phenomenon is called *discourse hybridization* in the literature (Fairclough 1992, 1993; Eitler 2011, 2012; Domonkosi–Ludányi 2018). The main feature of discourse hybridization is that the genre of business finds its way into the genres which are basically not classified as business genres. In the present case, the titles

which are not only informative but also efficiently awareness-raising give evidence of the process of discourse hybridization.

The key components of discourse hybridization, or discourse-merging, are the combination of conversational style with the characteristics of non-conversational style; the informalization of language (using of words of informal style); the use of imperative mood; the use of elliptical structures; the use of morphologically simplified variants (Eitler 2011, 2012).

Discourse hybridization plays a prominent role in title-formation, since titles are the elements of scientific texts that readers are most likely to encounter. We emphasize this because looking at the scientific titles we can see that they are moving towards the schema of awareness-raising titles. This phenomenon also applies to the title-forming habits of students in higher education. It is evident from the titles written by students that they are not experienced in the field of science yet. It is assumed that in the titles written by students the reasons of discourse hybridization are that students do not have much experience with academic writing and that the media has a much more prominent role in their lives than science; therefore it is easier for them to work with the language of media and/or business than with the language of science. In what follows, we supply examples that illustrate discourse hybridization in titles.

5. The method of data collection and the sample

To collect the data to be analysed the questionnaire method was used. The first part of the questionnaire was an anonymous questionnaire focusing on the personal background of the informants. In the next section, informants had to write titles for two previously created abstracts. The instructions did not specify how long the titles should be. The abstracts were chosen from the book of abstracts of *Science Communication Conference* 'Tudománykommunikáció konferencia' organized in 2018 (Veszelszki–Cser 2018). One of the abstracts was about an astronomical news portal, while the other was about promoting natural science among young people.

We found it important that the abstracts should not contain any technical terms connected to one specific area, because it would make the work of informants difficult. The questionnaires were filled in online only by the trainers, the students were given the traditional printed format of the questionnaire. The printed questionnaire had a positive benefit for the research because it allowed us to observe the formation process of each title: we could see which had been the previous versions of a title, which were later crossed and reformulated.

The sample of the study included university teachers and teacher trainees of Eszterházy Károly University in Eger. The total sample consisted of 107 people, of whom 96 (89.7%) were teacher trainees and 11 (10.30%) were teachers. The sample was selected by the random sampling method. As the number of

teachers is much smaller in the sample than the number of teacher trainees, we will now present only the results of teacher trainees.

6. Results

As mentioned above, the four most basic title types are titles referring to the topic, label-like titles, titles with an advertising role and titles referring to the genre. While analysing the data we will use this categorization. The title referring to the topic is the type of title that immediately identifies the topic and the content of the text; that is, this is the most informative type of title. Humor and the use of puns are not common in such titles, because these can be misleading for the reader; therefore, these titles are the most objective. In terms of extent, the most difficult task is to compress the content of an article into a title which is not long but informative enough. This type of title was the rarest appearing in teacher trainees' data. Titles in this group include: *Perspectives on the popularization of science in public education* 'A természettudományi tudománynépszerűsítés perspektívái a közoktatásban', *Promotion of natural sciences* 'A természettudományok népszerűsítése', *Innovative methods of promoting science* 'Innovatív népszerűsítése módok a természettudományban', *Endeavors in the education of natural science* 'Törekvések a természettudomány oktatásában'.

The next group consists of titles referring to the genre: these types of titles immediately identify the genre of the text. The following titles are included in this group: *Presentation of the Hungarian Astronomical Association* 'A Magyar Csillagászati Egyesület előadása', *Awakening piece of writing* 'Felkeltő írás', *Review of an astronomical news portal* 'Csillagászati hírportál ismertetője'. In the case of *Awakening piece of writing* 'Felkeltő írás', the reference is made to the abstract itself, while the other two titles clearly identify the genre (presentation, review).

The third group is that of label-like titles, which are characterized by very short form: these are usually one-word or two-word long titles, as if the author were to label the text with the title. Teacher trainees' label-like titles included: *Fall of news* 'Hírhullás', *Promotion of science* 'Tudománynépszerűsítés', *Talent management* 'Tehetséggondozás', *Astronomy* 'Csillagászat', *In nature* 'Természetközelben'. In these titles we can observe that most of the informants chose one of the keywords of the abstract (e.g. science, astronomy) as the title, while others focussed on raising attention (e.g. *Fall of news* 'Hírhullás'); therefore, these titles are less scientific. That is, in these examples, scientific discourse hybridization can already be observed.

The fourth group of titles comprises titles with an advertising role. The purpose of these titles is to catch attention, while the expression of the topic is not as important as the raising of readers' awareness. In this type of title, a very common technique is when the writer catches the reader's attention by using alliteration. In the following example, not only alliteration can be observed, but also the use of capital letters and an exclamation mark along with imperative

mood, which is one of the main features of discourse hybridization: *LOVE TT!* On the one hand, the English language appears (*love*), while on the other hand the abbreviation *TT* is shorthand for the Hungarian equivalent of *natural sciences* 'természettudományok'. In this title we cannot observe scientific style but rather the style of media. It was also a very common technique to play with the word 'star': sometimes it was included in the title and sometimes just alluded to. This technique can be observed in the following examples: *News of the stars* 'Hír csillagok', *Vesper* 'Esthajnal'. Another technique is to make a title from already existing material. This subgroup is made up of titles that are already used somewhere else: sayings, proverbs (e.g. *Through hardships to the stars* 'Rögös az út a csillagokig' which evokes the Latin proverb *Per aspera ad astra*), movies (e.g. *The Intouchables* 'Életrevalók', *Interstellar* 'Csillagok között'), talent shows (*A Star is Born* 'Csillag születik'). These procedures are also far from the scientific style, but they have a very good eye-catching power.

As we have mentioned earlier, one of the major components of discourse hybridization is the informalization of language (Eitler 2011), which includes the use of words of informal style (Domonkosi 2002) and the imperative. These elements can also be found in the examples. The imperative mood can be observed in the following examples: *Let´s go for astronomy(.hu)!* 'Csillagászat (.hu)-ra fel!', *Let´s go for natural sciences!* 'Természettudományra fel!', *More about astronomy!* 'Több szót a csillagászatról!'). These examples illustrate the frequent use of non-scientific language in scientific writing very well.

The development of titles can be observed very well in the questionnaires, which were printed and filled out by hand, because it can be seen which title was crossed out and which was left as final. For example: *About the Hungarian Astronomical Association´s news portal → Fall of News* 'A Magyar Csillagászati Egyesület hírportáljáról → Hírhullás'. In this case, the first version expressed the topic and the content of the text much better than the second which the teacher trainee left as final. The *Fall of news* 'Hírhullás' is a label-like title which is less informative than the previous version was. The following example also illustrates very well how the title went through the discourse hybridization process:

1. *Nature and Science* 'Természet és tudomány'
2. *Learning about nature* 'Tanulás a természetről'
3. *Teaching Nature* 'Tanító természet'

The first title was the most informative, containing the two keywords of the abstract which are essential for linking the title to the topic. The next version (2) was less informative, while the final version of the title (3) was the least informative. Although the teacher trainee used alliteration in all three versions, it is clearly observable how the title went through the process of discourse hybridization from the first version of the title to the final one.

7. Summary

The present paper has focused on the phenomenon and process of discourse hybridization in the titles written by teacher trainees. The data supports the hypothesis that discourse hybridization is present in the titles of academic papers written by teacher trainees in higher education. The data shows that students have very little experience with the language of academic writing but more with the language of media, including advertisements. Based on the data it can be stated that teacher trainees would need much more experience to master the basics of academic writing, because they will need it during their studies while writing a thesis, seminar work, research paper, essay, etc.

Although the present research does not cover the title-forming habits of teachers (as the number of teachers was not proportional to the number of teacher trainees), we intend to observe their title-creating habits in the future, because we believe that discourse hybridization is starting to spread among them as well.

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