

# Research analyzes academic abstracts written by students

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Abstracts are summaries that introduce scientific articles. Their purpose is to inform as to the content of the text so that in a short time potential readers can get a general idea of the contents and decide whether they

are interested in reading the entire document. Formally, it is a basically informative summary that synthesizes the most important contributions of the article: the topic of study, the methodology applied, and, above all, the results obtained. Undergraduate final year projects (TFG) are academic texts written by students starting out as researchers and are also preceded by an abstract or summary.

Although there are studies on scientific abstracts written by experts, few deal with student productions. An article published recently in the *Revista de lingüística teórica y aplicada* by Maria Dolors Cañada and Carme Bach of the Gr@el research group at the UPF Department of Translation and Language Sciences, analyses abstracts written by future graduates in Applied Languages for their final year project (TFG), "an academic [genre](#) for evaluation as it will be graded by teachers, which does not occur with scientific texts".

The abstracts studied were treated at two levels of analysis: macrotextual (rhetorical moves), and microtextual (metadiscourse markers used to indicate relationships, unions and preview ideas and phrases in the discourse).

As the authors point out in their article, "the importance of studying these textual products is due to the fact that all curricula include an end of bachelor's or master's degree project. This leads to the emergence of a new genre with a significant presence in written academic practices, which deserves descriptive research like ours, because the implications for the teaching [academic writing](#) are obvious".

The corpus of this study consists of 36 abstracts from TFG by an entire cohort of the bachelor's degree in Applied Languages at UPF, extending to 7,488 words. The students received general instructions on how to perform their TFG, but no special attention was paid to the drafting of the work in general or of the abstract in particular. Abstracts varied in

length from a minimum of 83 to a maximum of 327 words.

## Helping achieve discourse competence to disseminate research

"Being competent in discourse means having internalized the characteristics of a specific genre not just linguistically but also at sociocultural and at pragmatic level, i.e., directly related to the context in which genre is produced and received", the authors assert. From the point of view of the teaching of writing, helping students become proficient in discourse involves making them aware of the characteristics of the genre.

In many cases, the presentation of the subject expresses the author's identity rather as a [student](#) than as a researcher, since they do not succinctly introduce the area of knowledge they are working in, but display their knowledge extensively, which they suppose will deserve positive assessment by the teacher. The study shows that the abstracts analyzed are hybrid texts, halfway between academic discourse, produced by students who will be evaluated, and specialist discourse, produced by and targeting expert readers.

**More information:** María Dolors Cañada Pujols et al, Competencia discursiva y redacción de abstracts: gestionar la doble identidad estudiante e investigador, *RLA. Revista de Lingüística Teórica y Aplicada* (2020). [DOI: 10.29393/RLA58-7MCCD20007](https://doi.org/10.29393/RLA58-7MCCD20007)

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