Templates: Same Structure, Different Disciplines

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ABSTRACT

Few would challenge the statement that the hallmark of success for any university student or professional person is mastery of academic writing. Yet most student writers, particularly those with linguistic, cultural, and academic diversity, have great difficulties entering any intellectual debate because they cannot generate or even understand the rhetorical patterns of academic prose.These difficulties often remain if they enter the professions and must write for publication. Templates (stock words and phrases) provide accessible ways for academic writers to generate research papers because despite discipline-specific variations, most academic writing is rigidly structured, especially in the sciences.Templates help writers create sentences from a "bottom-up," or inductive perspective; and at the same time to grasp the "moves," or basic sections of a research paper, from a "top-down," or deductive perspective. Although they pivot on the "They say/I say" paradigm, templates also help generate summarizing, paraphrasing, quoting, and other functions of academic discourse. Grounded in classical topoi, templates harmonize with current classroom and writing center perspectives of writing as collaboration, rather than inspiration or regurgitation.They receive strong support from Writing Across the Curriculum and English for Special Purposes. As a corollary to facilitating writing, templates can enhance skills in reading academic prose and in all-important critical thinking. They can also be applied to the currently popular corpus linguistics.Participants in this hands-on session will identify and analyze the function of templates in an excerpt from a treatise about language policy, and then find types of templates in their own or another piece of academic writing which they are encouraged to bring to the session. Lastly, they will see a demonstration of concordance software used to analyze templates on both the phrasal level and the "moves" level, using two excerpts from juried journals in applied linguistics and biology.