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## **Structure of introductions to conference presentations**

Associate Professor Dr Su-Hie TING  
Universiti Malaysia Sarawak

Different communicative purposes produce texts with different organisational structure and register of language use. Among the academic genres, oral conference presentations have been less studied compared to research articles and expository texts. This study examined the structure of introductions in paper presentations for conferences held in Malaysia and abroad. The focus was on the staging before the main content was presented. The data were collected from 200 presentations in 15 conferences in the fields of applied linguistics, humanities and language teaching. The conference paper presentations were audio-taped for analysis. Results showed the title of the paper was included in nearly all the conference presentations but inclusion of greetings, acknowledgement, research context and presentation outline was variable, subject to the influence of the presenters' background. The conference presentation genre is situated in the broader framework of oral presentations but the move structure characteristics is a function of the discipline specific nature of the content and the expertise of the audience. The findings suggest that the structuring of introductions to conference presentations reflects extent of socialisation in the research discourse community.

### **Introduction**

The use of English for academic communication is a central area of study as English is still, by far, the main language for researchers to share their research findings with the research community worldwide. Among the various types of texts produced for communication on research, the research article has been the focus of many studies. The research article is a genre with recognisable discourse features. "Genres are typically associated with recurring rhetorical contexts, and are identified on the basis of a shared set of communicative purposes with constraints on allowable contributions in the use of lexico-grammatical and discourse forms" (Bhatia, 2002, p. 23). Bhatia (2002) contends that while some genre theory views genres as stable, others see them as not static and changeable.

For the research article, the compulsory components appear to be the title, authors' names and affiliation, abstract, keywords, introduction, purpose of study, materials and method, results and discussion, conclusion and references. Of the various components of a research article, the abstract has been very well researched. For example, studies have shown that abstracts have a conventional structure that must comprise the purpose of study, materials and method, and results in one paragraph but some abstracts are structured and organised by paragraph. The structured abstract has shortfalls in that it takes up space but it is more informative (Hartley & Sydes, 1995). For the introduction, Swales' (2004) Creating-A-Research-Space (CARS) model