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A GENRE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH ARTICLE FORMATS IN LINGUISTICS: INTRODUCTION – METHODS – RESULTS – DISCUSSION

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ABSTRACT

This article is Part 1 of a study examines the organisation of research articles in linguistics, focusing on how article structures reflect different epistemological orientations and modes of knowledge construction within the discipline. Although the IMRaD (Introduction–Methods–Results–Discussion) format is widely regarded as the dominant structure for empirical scientific writing, its use in linguistics has received limited systematic investigation.

Drawing on an analysis of research articles from diverse areas of linguistics, the study identifies recurrent organisational patterns and examines their relationship to research purposes and analytical approaches. Part 1 outlines the overall orientation to the study and its methodology. The findings focus specifically on articles that employ IMRaD or adaptations of it.

The findings demonstrate that linguistic research articles rarely follow a purely canonical IMRaD format. Instead, empirical studies typically use an expanded IMRaD format incorporating background sections that provide literature review, theoretical framing, and linguistic or sociocultural contextualisation. Articles also frequently display internal segmentation and recursive structures, with IMRaD components reproduced within multiple studies or experimental phases. These patterns demonstrate how the basic IMRaD framework is adapted to accommodate the conceptual and methodological complexity of linguistic research.

The study argues that article structures are not merely rhetorical conventions but are closely connected to disciplinary assumptions about evidence, explanation, and scholarly contribution. By relating research practices to textual organisation, Part 1 contributes to a broader framework for understanding the diversity and adaptability of academic writing in linguistics. The analysis further highlights how variations in article structure reflect the methodological and epistemological diversity of linguistics as a discipline.

Key words: research article structure, academic genres, linguistics writing, disciplinary variation, rhetorical organisation, genre analysis, IMRaD format, corpus-based analysis, research methodology, academic writing.

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LINGVISTIK ILMIY MAQOLALARNING JANRIY TUZILISHI: KIRISH – TADQIQOT METODLARI – NATIJALAR – MUNOZARA

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ANNOTATSIYA

Ushbu maqola tilshunoslik sohasidagi ilmiy maqolalarning tuzilishini o‘rganishga bag‘ishlangan tadqiqotning birinchi qismidir. Unda maqola tuzilishi tilshunoslikdagi turli ilmiy qarashlar va bilimlarni shakllantirish usullarini qanday aks ettirishi tahlil qilinadi. Empirik ilmiy tadqiqotlarni yoritishda Kirish – Tadqiqot metodlari – Natijalar – Munozara (IMRaD) formati keng qo‘llanilsa-da, uning tilshunoslikdagi qo‘llanilishi hozirgacha yetarlicha tizimli o‘rganilmagan.

Tadqiqotda tilshunoslikning turli yo‘nalishlariga oid ilmiy maqolalar tahlil qilinib, ularda takrorlanib turadigan tarkibiy tuzilmalar aniqlangan hamda bu tuzilmalarning tadqiqot maqsadlari va tahlil usullari bilan bog‘liqligi ko‘rib chiqilgan. Birinchi qismda tadqiqotning umumiy yo‘nalishi va metodologiyasi bayon etiladi. Asosiy e’tibor IMRaD formati yoki uning o‘zgartirilgan shakllaridan foydalanilgan maqolalarga qaratiladi.

Tahlil natijalari shuni ko‘rsatadiki, tilshunoslikka oid ilmiy maqolalar kamdan-kam hollarda IMRaD formatining qat’iy, an’anaviy shakliga to‘liq amal qiladi. Aksincha, empirik tadqiqotlarda ko‘pincha kengaytirilgan IMRaD formatidan foydalaniladi. Bunda adabiyotlar sharhi, nazariy asoslar, shuningdek, lingvistik yoki ijtimoiy-madaniy kontekstni yorituvchi qo‘shimcha bo‘limlar kiritiladi. Maqolalarda ichki qismlarga ajratish va takrorlanuvchi tuzilishlar ham tez-tez uchraydi. Xususan, bir nechta tadqiqot yoki tajriba bosqichidan iborat maqolalarda IMRaD tarkibiy qismlari har bir bosqich doirasida qayta qo‘llanishi mumkin. Bu holatlar IMRaD formatining tilshunoslik tadqiqotlaridagi mazmuniy va metodologik murakkablikni hisobga olgan holda moslashtirilishini ko‘rsatadi.

Tadqiqot mualliflari maqola tuzilishi shunchaki bayon qilishga oid an’anaviy qoidalar yig‘indisi emasligini ta’kidlaydilar. U maqolaning dalillarga munosabati, hodisalarni izohlash usuli va ilmiy yangilikni asoslash bilan chambarchas bog‘liq. Ilmiy tadqiqot amaliyotini matn tuzilishi bilan bog‘liq holda o‘rganish orqali ushbu ishning birinchi qismi tilshunoslikdagi akademik yozuv shakllarining xilma-xilligi va moslashuvchanligini tushuntirishga xizmat qiladi. Shuningdek, maqola tuzilishidagi farqlar tilshunoslikning metodologik va epistemologik jihatdan rang-barang soha ekanini ham namoyon etadi. Shu jihatdan, maqolaning tuzilishini tahlil qilish tilshunoslikda ilmiy natijalarni taqdim etishning umumiy talablarini hamda muayyan tadqiqotning maqsad va metodlariga mos yondashuvlarni aniqlashga yordam beradi.

Kalit so‘zlar: ilmiy maqola tuzilishi, akademik janrlar, tilshunoslikda ilmiy yozuv, fanlararo farqlar, ritorik tuzilish, janr tahlili, IMRaD formati, korpusga asoslangan tahlil, tadqiqot metodologiyasi, akademik yozuv.

ЖАНРОВЫЙ АНАЛИЗ ФОРМАТОВ НАУЧНЫХ СТАТЕЙ ПО ЛИНГВИСТИКЕ: ВВЕДЕНИЕ – МЕТОДЫ – РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ – ОБСУЖДЕНИЕ

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АННОТАЦИЯ

В данной статье, представляющей первую часть исследования, рассматривается организация научных статей по лингвистике и анализируется, как их структура отражает различные

эпистемологические ориентации и способы формирования научного знания в рамках данной дисциплины. Несмотря на то что формат IMRaD (введение – методы – результаты – обсуждение) широко признан основной моделью организации эмпирических научных публикаций, его применение в лингвистике пока не получило достаточного систематического изучения.

На основе анализа научных статей, посвящённых различным направлениям лингвистики, выявляются повторяющиеся структурные модели и рассматривается их связь с целями исследования и аналитическими подходами. В первой части определяются общая направленность исследования и его методология. При этом основное внимание уделяется статьям, в которых используется формат IMRaD или его модифицированные варианты.

Результаты показывают, что лингвистические статьи редко полностью соответствуют классической структуре IMRaD. Вместо этого эмпирические исследования, как правило, используют расширенный вариант данного формата, включающий дополнительные разделы с обзором литературы, теоретическим обоснованием и лингвистическим либо социокультурным контекстом. Кроме того, статьи нередко характеризуются внутренним членением и рекурсивной организацией, при которой компоненты IMRaD повторяются в рамках нескольких исследований или отдельных этапов эксперимента. Эти особенности свидетельствуют о том, что базовая структура IMRaD адаптируется к концептуальной и методологической сложности лингвистических исследований.

В статье обосновывается положение о том, что структура научной публикации представляет собой не просто совокупность риторических условностей, а тесно связана с дисциплинарными представлениями о доказательности, объяснении и научном вкладе. Соотнося исследовательские практики с текстовой организацией научных статей, первая часть исследования вносит вклад в разработку более широкой концепции, позволяющей объяснить разнообразие и гибкость академического письма в лингвистике. Анализ также показывает, что различия в структуре научных статей отражают методологическое и эпистемологическое многообразие лингвистики как научной дисциплины.

Ключевые слова: структура научной статьи, академические жанры, научное письмо в лингвистике, дисциплинарная вариативность, риторическая организация, жанровый анализ, формат IMRaD, корпусный анализ, методология исследования, академическое письмо.

INTRODUCTION

Linguistics is a methodologically diverse discipline, encompassing corpus-based quantitative studies, experimental designs, and interpretive qualitative approaches such as discourse analysis and ethnography. The diverse orientations in linguistics research paradigms is reflected in academic writing practices, where authors select rhetorical structures that align with epistemological assumptions rather than fixed genre templates. For example, R.Yang and D.Allison [Yang & Allison, 2004] highlight that applied linguistics research articles are functionally organised rather than strictly IMRaD-bound (Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion), with cyclical movement between reporting and interpretation. Given that linguistics is a diverse discipline, it is important to understand the range and diversity of research article formats the field. Existing studies tend to either (a) contrast qualitative and quantitative writing at a broad level [e.g., Kargar et al., 2025; Sabet & Minaei, 2017], or (b) focus on specific sections such as introductions or discussions [e.g., Ozturk, 2007; Yang & Allison, 2004] . Similarly, genre studies of qualitative research articles often describe the “flexibility” of article formats or “non-IMRaD formats” [Guo, 2019], but rarely map the systematic range of macro-structural patterns across different ways of doing research within linguistics. As a result, there is limited knowledge of how qualitative

linguistics research articles vary as complete textual artefacts, and whether recurring global templates exist beyond general claims of hybridity and fluidity. Addressing this gap would contribute to a more fine-grained model of RA genre variation across methodological paradigms in linguistics that would support the teaching and learning of research writing within the discipline. This study addresses this gap by examining research writing across a range of linguistics subdisciplines to identify the article structures employed across the field and to examine how these structures relate to different research purposes and modes of knowledge construction. The study is reported in two parts. Part 1 first examines the relative frequency of IMRaD and non-IMRaD formats across the corpus and then focuses on how the IMRaD format is realised in linguistics. Part 2, to be published separately, turns to the principal non-IMRaD formats identified in the corpus and considers how these alternative structures reflect different epistemological orientations, research purposes, and modes of argumentation.

Genre analysis of research publications

Research articles are a central genre of academic communication, playing a key role in the production, validation, and dissemination of disciplinary knowledge. Because the successful and "proper" execution of this genre is high stakes for academics given its direct implications for publication, career progression, and disciplinary recognition, it has been widely studied within applied linguistics and rhetorical genre studies [Swales, 1992] . Genre analysis of research articles has focused particularly on how authors organise texts to design their academic communications, with substantial attention given to the rhetorical moves and functions through which research problems are established, previous research is positioned, methods and findings are presented, and claims are interpreted and justified. Much of this work has examined the rhetorical organisation of particular sections, especially introductions and discussions, or has sought to identify recurring move structures across disciplinary contexts. Other research has examined variation between disciplines or methodological traditions, showing that genre conventions are shaped by the communicative practices of particular research communities. This body of work provides an important foundation for examining research article organisation, while also raising questions about the extent to which genre analysis has addressed the article as a complete textual structure and the range of macro-structural formats through which disciplinary knowledge is organised.

Genre has been widely conceptualised in applied linguistics and rhetorical genre studies as more than a set of textual conventions; it is seen fundamentally as a socially situated form of action. C.R. Miller [Miller, 1984] defines genre as typified rhetorical action, emphasising that genres arise from recurrent rhetorical situations rather than existing as static textual templates. A central idea is that genre is closely linked to communicative purpose, and that this purpose fundamentally shapes textual forms [Swales, 1992]. B.Perdomo [Perdomo, 2021], for example, shows that the dominant IMRaD format is not simply a formal arrangement but a rhetorical organisation through which authors establish research problems, present procedures, construct

findings, and communicate disciplinary contributions.

Communicative purpose refers to the socially recognised goal or function that a text is designed to achieve within a discourse community. Rather than being an individual writer's intention alone, it is socially constructed through repeated rhetorical use and becomes conventionalised over time within particular contexts [Liddicoat, 2008; Miller, 1984; Swales, 1992]. Because genres are oriented toward the achievement of specific communicative actions, communicative purpose influences how texts are structured, including the sequencing of sections, the selection of linguistic resources, and the rhetorical strategies employed. In research articles, for example, the communicative purpose of contributing new disciplinary knowledge is realised through conventional structures that enable authors to establish the originality and significance of their contribution, demonstrate the rigour and appropriateness of their research approach, and position the new knowledge within existing disciplinary frameworks and debates. Thus, A.A. Sánchez-Upegui [Sánchez-Upegui, 2018] conceptualises the scientific article as a genre whose organisation is shaped by the communicative demands of academic communities. He emphasises that the research article is not simply a vehicle for reporting findings but a rhetorical construction through which authors establish credibility, negotiate disciplinary expectations, and position their contribution within existing knowledge. Similarly B.Huemer [Huemer, 2016] has argued that research articles are shaped by the conventions of particular disciplinary communities, arguing that genre analysis can reveal how academic texts embody the knowledge-making practices and expectations of specific fields. Her analysis highlights that disciplinary genres are not simply universal textual structures but reflect the rhetorical practices through which communities construct and communicate knowledge.

Genres are embedded in social and cultural practices rather than existing as neutral or purely linguistic forms. As they emerge from recurring communicative situations within particular communities and are shaped by the values, beliefs, and conventions of those communities, genres represent culturally organised activities that embody shared ways of accomplishing social purposes through language and reflect how communities organise knowledge, interaction, and participation [File, 2017; Freadman & MacDonald, 1992]. From this perspective, writing a research article involves more than following a prescribed structure; it requires engaging in the culturally recognised practices of a discipline, including constructing arguments, evaluating evidence, and positioning one's work in relation to previous scholarship. A.Liddicoat [Liddicoat, 2008] thus argues that genres simultaneously function as communicative purposes and cultural activities. He distinguishes between *texts of the discourse community*, which reflect the communicative expectations of a particular disciplinary group, and *texts of the culture*, which embody broader cultural assumptions about how knowledge should be organised and communicated [Liddicoat, 1997). Academic genres are therefore shaped not only by disciplinary conventions but also by wider cultural norms, meaning that writers must negotiate both discourse community expectations and the broader cultural contexts in which academic communication occurs.

A key principle of contemporary genre theory is that variability is an inherent

and purposeful feature of genres rather than a deviation from established conventions [Devitt, 2015; Dota, 2025; Paltridge, 1994]. Although genres exhibit recognisable structural patterns, these patterns function as flexible rhetorical resources rather than fixed templates. Writers do not simply reproduce generic forms; instead, they strategically exploit the affordances of genre to achieve particular communicative purposes and respond to the demands of specific rhetorical situations. Consequently, academic writing involves making informed rhetorical choices about how ideas are organised, developed, and presented in ways that are meaningful and persuasive within a disciplinary community. As K.Hyland [Hyland, 2015] argues, disciplinary conventions shape these choices by reflecting shared epistemological values and expectations. The capacity to write in a particular genre, therefore, lies not in rigidly following structural prescriptions but in adapting genre conventions to construct knowledge in ways that are recognised and valued by the intended discourse community.

METHODS

This study adopts a corpus-based genre-analytic methodology to examine structural organisation in linguistics research articles across subfields. Genre analysis provides a systematic approach to understanding how academic research writing is organised to achieve its communicative purposes. Rather than describing texts solely in terms of their linguistic features, genre analysis examines how structural patterns emerge as responses to recurrent rhetorical situations and disciplinary expectations [Swales, 1988, 1992, 2004]. As a mode of inquiry, it seeks to identify the recurring rhetorical functions that writers use to accomplish communicative goals within a genre. Through the comparative analysis of multiple texts, genre analysts identify regularities in the sequencing and organisation of these rhetorical actions while also recognising variation as a consequence of disciplinary, contextual, and rhetorical differences [Paltridge, 1994; Shaw, 2016]. In this way, genre analysis reveals not only the conventional structure of research writing but also the relationship between textual organisation and the social practices of academic communities. Genre analysis is not concerned with prescribing ideal structures; rather, it offers an empirical framework for explaining how writers employ recurring rhetorical resources to construct and communicate disciplinary knowledge [Flowerdew, 2015, 2023; Tardy, 2021].

Journal selection and rationale

A purposive sampling strategy was used to select peer-reviewed journals representing the main theoretical, empirical, and applied domains of contemporary linguistics. The aim is not statistical generalisation but disciplinary representativeness, ensuring coverage of distinct areas of linguistic inquiry that may shape research article structure differently.

Journal selection was guided by three criteria. First, sub-disciplinary coverage was prioritised to include core areas of theoretical linguistics, sociolinguistics, historical and comparative linguistics, and applied sub-disciplines. This allows for analysis of variation in article structure across epistemologically distinct fields. Second, journals were selected based on their role as established outlets for peer-reviewed research in

their respective areas, ensuring that the corpus reflects standardised academic publishing practices. Third, methodological diversity was considered, ensuring inclusion of journals publishing quantitative, qualitative, experimental, and corpus-based studies, which is essential for examining structural variation associated with different research designs. All journals included are indexed in Scopus and Web of Science (Clarivate Analytics), ensuring that the corpus consists of internationally recognised and quality-controlled academic outlets. Indexing status was used to support comparability across journals and to ensure consistency in editorial and peer-review standards. The corpus is presented in Table 1. For each journal, 80 research articles were selected beginning with the last issue for 2025 and counting back until 80 articles had been collected. This procedure was adopted because each journal published different numbers of issues per year and different numbers of articles per issue leading to radical differences in the number of articles published over a year. Papers other than research articles, such as special issue introductions, editorials, notes and replies were excluded. The total corpus was 1280 articles in total (See Table 1):

Table 1. ***Selected journals, linguistic subfields, and indexing status***

Journal	Main disciplinary focus
Language	general linguistics, including theoretical, descriptive, and empirical research across linguistic subfields
Linguistics	general linguistics, including theoretical linguistics, language description, and interdisciplinary linguistic research
Applied Linguistics	applied linguistics, including language learning, teaching, assessment, language use, and language-related social issues
Current Issues in Language Planning	language policy, language planning, multilingualism, and language management
Diachronica	historical linguistics, language change, and diachronic analysis of linguistic systems
First Language	first language acquisition, child language development, and early linguistic processes
Journal of the International Phonetic Association	phonetics, phonetic description, speech sounds, and the international phonetic alphabet
Journal of Pragmatics	pragmatics, discourse, interaction, meaning in context, and language use
Journal of Psycholinguistic Research	psycholinguistics, including cognitive processes underlying language comprehension, production, and acquisition
Journal of Semantics	formal semantics, meaning representation, and interfaces between semantics and other areas of linguistic theory
Language in Society	sociolinguistics, language variation, language and identity, and relationships between language and social structures
Linguistic Typology	cross-linguistic comparison, typological patterns, and the classification of linguistic structures
Morphology	morphological theory, word structure, inflection, derivation, and morphological processes across languages
Phonology	phonological theory, sound systems, and formal and empirical analyses of phonological patterns

Studies in Second Language Acquisition	second language acquisition, bilingualism, language learning processes, and learner language development
Syntax	syntactic theory, sentence structure, and empirical and formal approaches to grammatical organisation

Data analysis

The data analysis adopts a genre-analytic approach focused on the macro-level structural organisation of research articles, with particular emphasis on section headings as the primary unit of analysis. Following established traditions in genre studies (e.g., Swalesian move analysis adapted to macro-structure), each article is treated as a complete rhetorical artefact, and its organisational structure is operationalised through the identification, classification, and sequencing of explicitly marked sections.

The analysis proceeds in two stages. First, all articles in the corpus were segmented into structural units based on author-provided headings and subheadings, which were treated as observable markers of rhetorical organisation. This ensured that the analysis remained grounded in the surface structure of the text, consistent with genre-analytic approaches that prioritise reproducible structural features. In some cases, articles began with an initial section that did not have a heading. These were counted as Introduction sections based on a reading of the section and identification of the textual function it performed. Second, each article was coded for its macro-structural pattern, defined as the sequential organisation of major sections as indicated by headings. Articles were classified according to whether they conform to a recognisable IMRaD format or whether they follow non-IMRaD patterns more typical of qualitative research articles. Articles were therefore categorised based on the extent to which their global structure reflects a linear reporting model versus a more flexible, interpretive organisation associated with qualitative research traditions in linguistics. A comparative analysis was then conducted across journals and subfields to identify patterns of structural organisation. This includes identifying whether articles follow IMRaD or non-IMRaD formats and examining the recurring rhetorical structures within each, including patterns of section organisation, sequencing, and internal segmentation. The analysis is qualitative-interpretive but supported by systematic coding of structural patterns to ensure consistency across the corpus. For each format identified, one article is selected for close analysis as an illustrative example of the organisational pattern. These examples are not intended to be representative of all articles within the format, but to demonstrate how the identified structural features are realised in an individual article.

IMRaD and non-IMRaD formats in linguistics writing

The distribution of IMRaD and non-IMRaD article formats is shown in Figure 1 (See Figure 1):

Figure 1. ***Proportion of IMRaD and non-IMRaD articles in linguistics journals***

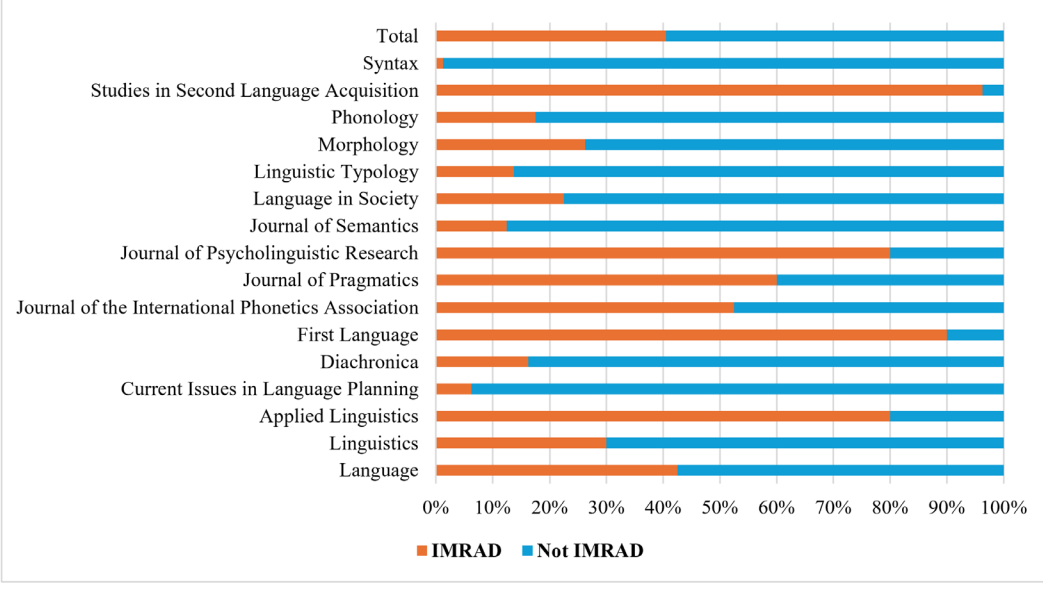

Figure 1 reveals that IMRaD and non-IMRaD formats coexist within linguistics, but their distribution is strongly conditioned by subdisciplinary epistemology rather than by membership of the discipline itself. Across the corpus, 40% of articles employ an IMRaD format compared with 60%. However, this overall distribution masks pronounced differences between subdisciplines, which cluster into those where IMRaD is the dominant rhetorical model and those where non-IMRaD organisation remains the norm.

Only four journals contain a majority of articles organised using IMRaD (≥60%): *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* (96.3% IMRaD), *First Language* (90.0%), *Applied linguistics* (80.0%), and *Journal of Psycholinguistic Research* (80.0%). These journals represent three closely related areas, language acquisition, and psycholinguistics. Although they differ in their research questions, they share a common commitment to the empirical investigation of language behaviour through systematic observation, experimentation, and quantitative analysis. They are research areas dominated by experimental, cognitive, educational, and quantitative empirical approaches. These studies typically employ controlled experiments, intervention designs, corpus analyses, surveys, longitudinal research, or quantitative observational methods, requiring explicit reporting of participants, procedures, analytical methods, and statistical results. Such research emphasises replicability, methodological transparency, and the clear separation of data collection, analysis, and interpretation. Even where methodological diversity exists, empirical studies increasingly adopt designs influenced by psychology and the social sciences. Consequently, IMRaD aligns closely with research that treats language as an observable phenomenon investigated through systematic, sequential stages of design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation.

Ten journals have IMRaD rates below 30%, ranging from 1.3% in *Syntax* to 13.8% in *Journal of Semantics*, 14.1% in *Linguistic Typology*, 16.3% in *Diachronica*, 17.5% in *Language in Society*, 20.8% in *Morphology*, 22.2% in *linguistics*, and 27.5% in both *Current Issues in Language Planning* and *Phonology*. The low use of IMRaD is concentrated in research traditions where the primary objective is theory development, conceptual explanation, formal modelling, qualitative interpretation, or linguistic analysis. These studies typically construct arguments through logical reasoning, evaluation of competing theoretical accounts, detailed analysis of linguistic examples, acceptability judgements, historical evidence, or cross-linguistic comparison. Even where empirical data are central, they are interpreted as part of an ongoing analytical argument rather than presented as discrete experimental results. Qualitative, ethnographic, discourse-analytic, and policy-oriented studies similarly integrate methods, evidence, and interpretation throughout the text. Across these research traditions, article organisation is therefore driven by conceptual progression and analytical reasoning, making non-IMRaD formats more appropriate than the procedural sequencing characteristic of experimental research.

These distributions demonstrate that article structure in linguistics is determined less by disciplinary identity than by epistemological orientation. The strongest predictor of IMRaD usage appears to be whether research follows a sequential empirical workflow in which research design, data collection, analysis, and interpretation constitute distinct phases. Experimental psychology, language acquisition, educational research, and corpus-based quantitative studies all satisfy these conditions and consequently favour IMRaD. By contrast, non-IMRaD predominates where knowledge is constructed through theoretical reasoning, conceptual analysis, interpretive explanation, or cumulative linguistic description. In these traditions, evidence and argument develop together rather than sequentially, making a rigid separation between methods, results, and discussion rhetorically inappropriate. The distinction therefore corresponds broadly to different conceptions of what constitutes evidence. Experimental disciplines produce data through controlled procedures that require explicit methodological documentation before results can be interpreted. Theoretical linguistics, historical linguistics, and much qualitative sociolinguistics work with evidence that is inseparable from interpretation. Linguistic examples, historical texts, policy documents, or interactional transcripts only become meaningful through analytical discussion, encouraging article structures in which description and interpretation remain integrated.

These findings suggest that research article structure in linguistics is fundamentally genre-sensitive rather than discipline-specific. The discipline exhibits a continuum of organisational practices ranging from highly standardised IMRaD formats in experimental and acquisition research to highly flexible argument-driven structures in theoretical and qualitative domains. This variation underscores the need for models of academic writing that move beyond treating IMRaD as a universal standard and instead recognise the plurality of legitimate research article genres within linguistics.

Features of the IMRaD format in linguistics writing

The IMRaD format is mainly used in quantitative research writing in linguistics, where the results of an experimental approach are presented. However, while research in linguistics may be described as following the IMRaD model, most studies adopt an expanded version of this structure. articles very rarely have a pure IMRaD format without additions (only 26 articles in the corpus have neither of the additional sections). A typical linguistics article follows a structure with six possible elements:

- Introduction
- Background
- Methodology
- Results
- Discussion
- Conclusion.

In this model, Background and Conclusion are common but optional within IMRaD formats in the texts under investigation.

In addition to the core IMRaD elements, linguistics articles typically include a additional Background section before the methodology that contains a literature review, a presentation of the theoretical framework used in the study or necessary linguistic or sociolinguistic background for contextualising the topic of the research. A literature review focuses on previous scholarship and summarises and evaluates existing research, identifying patterns and debates in the field relating to the topic that the current study addresses. Its primary purpose is to position the study within the existing body of knowledge and justify why the research is needed. A theoretical framework section focuses on concepts rather than studies and introduces the theories, models, or analytical perspectives that guide the research, explaining how key concepts are defined and understood. It provides the conceptual lens through which the research questions are formulated, the data are analysed, and the findings are interpreted. In some studies, the theoretical framework may draw on a single theory, while in others it may integrate concepts from multiple theoretical traditions. A background section provides contextual information that readers need in order to understand the study. This context may be linguistic, such as describing the phonological, grammatical, lexical, or pragmatic characteristics of the language under investigation, or sociolinguistic, such as explaining the historical, political, educational, or cultural context of a speech community. Background information is particularly important when the study concerns a language, variety, or community that is unfamiliar to the journal's international readership. Linguistics articles may include more than one of these components because they address different purposes, which, although purposes are distinct, are often closely connected. Previous research is interpreted through theoretical perspectives, and both are informed by the linguistic or sociocultural context in which language is used.

Articles usually have a separate conclusion that performs a broader function than merely summarising the results. It synthesises the main findings in relation to the research questions, highlights the study's theoretical and practical contributions,

acknowledges limitations, and suggests directions for future research. This allows authors to demonstrate the significance of their work beyond the immediate study and to position it within ongoing scholarly debates.

An example of the expanded IMRaD format is represented by Example 1, which reports a quantitative corpus-based historical linguistics study in contact linguistics. It uses comparative analysis of Portuguese-based creoles to examine consonant stability patterns relative to the lexifier language. The study combines typological comparison and statistical analysis of phonological variables within a structured empirical research article format.

Example 1: *expanded IMRaD format – Consonant stability in Portuguese-based creoles* [source: Silva & Moran, 2025]:

1. Introduction
2. Background
    - 2.1 Temporal, geographical and social context of the creoles
    - 2.2 Consonant stability in the lexifier
    - 2.3 Borrowed or shifted systems
3. Methods
    - 3.1 The corpus
    - 3.2 Data preparation
    - 3.3 Protocol and measurements
4. Results
    - 4.1 Stability of Portuguese creoles
    - 4.2 Segment stability
    - 4.3 Word-position correlation
    - 4.4 Typological, borrowing, and cross-substrate frequency
5. Discussion

The global organisation of Example 1 can be described as an expanded IMRD structure, while still remaining firmly anchored in the canonical "Introduction–Methods–Results–Discussion" (IMRD) prototype but with and added 'Background' section. This section functions as a contextual and theoretical bridge between the Introduction and Methods, and its internal components each contribute distinct layers to the construction of the study's object of analysis. Subsection 2.1 establishes the sociohistorical embedding of the dataset by situating the creole varieties in specific time periods, locations, and speech communities providing the empirical grounding necessary for interpreting variation as historically and socially conditioned rather than purely structural. Subsection, 2.2 shifts the focus toward theoretical anchoring in prior linguistic descriptions of the lexifier language, establishing a comparative baseline against which stability and change in the creoles can be assessed. This component functions to align the study with existing phonological literature and to define the expected patterns of stability derived from the source language system. Subsection, 2.3 extends the comparative orientation by introducing mechanisms of linguistic change, particularly contact-induced borrowing and structural shift broadening the explanatory framework of the study by specifying the processes that may account for divergence from the lexifier, thereby pre-structuring the interpretive categories later used in the results section.

Rather than representing a departure from IMRaD, this expanded structure can be understood as an adaptation that reflects the disciplinary characteristics of linguistics. It accommodates the need to situate research within a rich body of theoretical and contextual knowledge while maintaining a clear progression from the research problem, through the methods and findings, to their interpretation and broader implications. In doing so, it provides readers with a coherent account of not only what was investigated and what was found, but also why the study matters and how it contributes to the advancement of linguistic knowledge.

This expanded IMRaD format reflects the nature of linguistic inquiry, where empirical findings are interpreted through theoretical and contextual lenses rather than simply reported. Unlike many fields in the natural sciences, where theories are often well established and methods are relatively standardised, linguistics encompasses a wide range of theoretical traditions and methodological approaches. Authors therefore need to make explicit the assumptions that inform their research, define key concepts, and explain how these concepts are operationalised in the analysis. In addition, many linguistic studies require readers to understand the broader characteristics of the language under investigation or the sociolinguistic environment in which language is used before they can appreciate the significance of a particular linguistic phenomenon or communicative practice. For example, a study of a pragmatic feature, grammatical construction, or multilingual interaction may only be fully understood when readers are first introduced to the structural properties of the language or the social, historical, and cultural context in which it occurs. The combined Background section therefore provides the foundation for interpreting the study by integrating previous scholarship, theoretical perspectives, and contextual information into a coherent framework.

Example 1 reveals a further dimension of the way IMRaD is commonly used in linguistics; the individual sections are commonly divided into subsections. Such internal segmentation is a common feature of research article organisation in linguistics. While canonical IMRaD (Introduction–Methods–Results–Discussion) provides a high-level macro-structure, linguistics articles rarely operate with unsegmented, monolithic sections. Instead, they routinely subdivide sections into finer-grained rhetorical and analytical units. This practice reflects both disciplinary epistemology and methodological complexity.

Example 1 illustrates this sort of segmentation in the Background, Methods and Discussion sections. The segmentation of the "Background" section is functional and explanatory as each subsection isolates a distinct dimension of explanation progressively constructing the conceptual space required for analysing consonant stability. Rather than presenting background element as a single literature review section, the authors structure the information according to the main thematic areas that are relevant to the study. The Methods section is segmented into "3.1 The corpus", "3.2 Data preparation", and "3.3 Protocol and measurements". Here, internal segmentation reflects procedural transparency and replicability. Each step in the research process is isolated, allowing readers to reconstruct the analytical trajectory. This is a hallmark of quantitative linguistics research, where methodological clarity is essential for

validating corpus-based or statistical claims [Kargar et al., 2025] but is also found in qualitative work. Similarly, the Results section is subdivided into multiple analytical outputs ("stability," "segment stability," "word-position correlation," and "cross-substrate frequency"), each corresponding to a distinct variable or test outcome. This reflects a move from narrative reporting to structured presentation of multivariate findings. In linguistics research writing the macro-level sections function more like containers for multiple rhetorical moves, each of which must be made visible through explicit subheadings. This reflects both the complexity of linguistic data (e.g. multiple interacting phonological, typological, and sociolinguistic variables) and the interpretive demands of the field, where transparency of analytical steps is crucial. IMRaD is *granularized* becoming a hierarchical architecture in which macro-sections organise global rhetorical purpose, while micro-sections organise analytical reasoning. This produces a layered structure in which the article is simultaneously linear (IMRaD progression) and modular (fine-grained analytical decomposition).

A further feature of IMRaD formats in linguistics research articles is the recursiveness of components, in which sections are repeated for different elements of a complex study. Recursiveness is a characteristic feature of IMRaD organisation, where the core IMRaD macro-structure is not simply applied once at the level of the whole article, but is instead reproduced internally within multiple components of a study. Rather than presenting a single unified Methods, Results, or Discussion section, authors often reiterate the IMRaD sequence for distinct sub-studies, experiments, or analytical phases. This produces a layered structure in which IMRaD operates simultaneously at both global and local levels. As a result, the article becomes architecturally iterative: each major empirical component contains its own mini-IMRaD cycle embedded within the larger IMRaD frame.

A recursive IMRaD format is illustrated by Sherwood et al. (2023), which reports an experimental study of variation, gender, and perception of Japanese linguistic variables.

Example 2*: recursive and expanded IMRaD format – Variation, gender and perception: the social meaning of Japanese linguistic variables* [source: Sherwood et al., 2023]:

1 Introduction
2 Gender marking in Japanese
3 Experiment 1
3.1 Experiment 1: methods
3.2 Experiment 1: results
3.3 Experiment 1: discussion
4 Experiment 2
4.1 Experiment 2: methods
4.2 Experiment 2: results
4.3 Experiment 2: discussion
5 General discussion
6 Conclusions

In example 2, after the initial introduction and thematic framing, the article

divides into two discrete experimental blocks: “Experiment 1” and “Experiment 2”. Each experiment internally reproduces the IMRaD logic through the subsections “methods”, “results”, and “discussion”. The same pattern is then repeated for Experiment 2. This structure shows that rather than treating Methods, Results, and Discussion as singular global sections, the authors replicate the full interpretive cycle for each experimental condition. The article then steps back to a higher level of abstraction in “5 General discussion” and “6 Conclusions”, where findings from both experiments are integrated and synthesised. This creates a nested architecture: experiment-level IMRaD cycles embedded within an overarching IMRaD framework.

A similar recursive structure appears Example 3, though with a different logic of repetition and with internal expansion. Example 3 reports a study investigating the relationship between foreign language aptitude and native grammatical proficiency using an experimental psycholinguistic design.

Example 3*: recursive and expanded IMRaD format – Foreign language aptitude predicts individual differences in native grammatical proficiency* [Source: Llompart & Dąbrowska, 2023]:

1 Introduction
2 Study 1
2.1 Methods
    2.1.1 Participants
    2.1.2 Materials and procedure
        2.1.2.1 Language analysis
        2.1.2.2 Sentence pairs
            2.1.2.3 Auditory grammaticality judgment task
2.2 Results
    2.2.1 Data processing
    2.2.2 General analysis
    2.2.3 Analysis by structure
2.3 Interim discussion
3 Study 2
3.1 Methods
    3.1.1 Participants
    3.1.2 Materials and procedure
        3.1.2.1 Sentence pairs
        3.1.2.2 Picture selection
3.2 Results
3.3 Interim discussion
4 General discussion

The article is organised into “Study 1” and “Study 2”, and each study contains its own internally segmented Methods and Results sections (e.g. “2.1 Methods”, “2.2 Results”, “3.1 Methods”, “3.2 Results”). Within Study 1, Methods is further subdivided into components such as “Participants”, “Materials and procedure”, and even more fine-grained analytical breakdowns (e.g. “Language analysis”, “Sentence pairs”, “Auditory grammaticality judgment task”), showing how internal segmentation supports the recursive replication of the IMRaD cycle. Each study also includes an “Interim discussion”, creating a pattern of repeated interpretive closure at each stage.

The article then concludes with a "General discussion," which functions as a supra-structural synthesis layer integrating both studies.

These expanded IMRaD formats are especially characteristic of linguistics sub-disciplines that are context-sensitive, theory-driven, and interpretive, because it allows researchers to integrate empirical observation with theoretical explanation and contextual grounding in a single coherent argument. Fields such as applied linguistics (particularly second language acquisition and classroom interaction research), psycholinguistics, typological linguistics (especially large-scale cross-linguistic comparisons), acoustic phonetics, and language variation studies all make use of this structure. These areas require researchers to interpret language not only as a formal system but also, depending on the sub-discipline, as a cognitive, social, or physical phenomenon that must be situated within broader theoretical and contextual frameworks. At the same time, many of these sub-disciplines also draw on experimental and computational approaches to strengthen or test theoretical claims. For example, second language acquisition research often uses controlled experiments and quasi-experimental designs to test hypotheses about language learning processes, while psycholinguistics relies heavily on experimental methods such as reaction time studies, priming tasks, and eye-tracking to investigate real-time language processing. Typological linguistics increasingly employs large-scale comparative datasets and computational modelling to identify patterns across languages, and acoustic phonetics uses instrumental and laboratory-based methods to measure and analyse speech signals with high precision. Across these fields, computational methods such as corpus linguistics, natural language processing, and large-scale text analysis are also widely used to identify patterns in large datasets that would be difficult to observe manually. The expanded IMRaD format accommodates this methodological diversity by providing space for theoretical positioning and contextual explanation alongside the presentation of empirical or computational findings, ensuring that quantitative, experimental, and qualitative insights can be interpreted within a unified analytical framework.

CONCLUSION

This study has examined the organisation of research articles in linguistics, focusing on the relationship between article structure and the ways in which linguistic knowledge is produced and presented. The analysis demonstrates that IMRaD and non-IMRaD formats coexist across the discipline, but their distribution is closely associated with the epistemological and methodological orientations of different areas of linguistic research. IMRaD is particularly prevalent in research characterised by systematic empirical investigation, experimental design, quantitative analysis, and a relatively clear distinction between research procedures, findings, and interpretation. By contrast, non-IMRaD formats are more common where theoretical reasoning, linguistic analysis, interpretation, description, or argumentation are integral to knowledge construction. This supports the broader view of academic genres as disciplinary practices shaped by the communicative and epistemological needs of

particular research communities [Hyland, 2008a, 2008b, 2009; Swales, 1988, 1992, 2004].

Part 1 has focused on the use and adaptation of IMRaD across different areas of the discipline and demonstrates that empirical linguistic research rarely follows a purely canonical IMRaD format. Most IMRaD articles in the corpus expand the basic framework through additional Background and Conclusion sections. The Background section is particularly significant because it accommodates literature review, theoretical framing, and linguistic, historical, social, or cultural contextualisation. Empirical observations in linguistics therefore acquire their significance through their relationship to existing knowledge, theoretical assumptions, and the contexts in which linguistic phenomena occur. Such variation illustrates the flexibility of genre conventions and the ways in which disciplinary texts adapt established rhetorical patterns to particular research purposes [Hyland, 2008a, 2008b; Yang & Allison, 2004].

The analysis further shows that IMRaD in linguistics may be segmented and recursive. Internal segmentation makes distinct methodological, analytical, and evidential steps visible within larger rhetorical units, while recursiveness allows IMRaD components to be reproduced within individual studies, experiments, or analytical phases. IMRaD therefore operates simultaneously at different levels of textual organisation: as a global framework for the article and as a local framework for particular empirical components. The resulting architecture is hierarchical rather than simply linear, with macro-sections functioning as containers for more fine-grained rhetorical and analytical units. This extends previous genre research demonstrating that apparently stable article structures contain substantial internal variation and that rhetorical organisation needs to be understood functionally rather than as a fixed sequence of obligatory sections [Swales, 2004; Yang & Allison, 2004].

These findings suggest that IMRaD is better understood as a flexible organisational principle than as a fixed article template. Its central logic can be retained while being adapted to the conceptual, contextual, and methodological requirements of linguistic research. The expanded and recursive forms identified here demonstrate how researchers accommodate the particular demands of a discipline in which empirical investigation is frequently intertwined with theoretical interpretation and contextual explanation. The findings therefore challenge the treatment of IMRaD as a universal model of research writing. Instead, article structure can be understood as a textual manifestation of disciplinary assumptions concerning evidence, explanation, and scholarly contribution [Hyland, 2009; Swales, 1992].

The study thus proposes that research article structure in linguistics is best understood as genre-sensitive rather than simply discipline-specific. Part 1 has examined how IMRaD is adopted, expanded, segmented, and recursively organised in linguistic research writing. The substantial body of non-IMRaD research identified in the corpus raises complementary questions about how alternative structures correspond to different forms of linguistic inquiry. These formats are taken up in Part 2. Together, the two parts provide a broader account of how the organisation of research articles reflects the conceptual and methodological diversity of linguistics.

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