

How do we Foreground in Academic Discourse? On Selected Aspects of Foregrounding in Four Research Articles

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Abstract

Foregrounding has been explored primarily in artistic literature as a technique deliberately drawing attention to selected aspects of the works and impacting the reader's perception significantly. This paper deals with foregrounding in academic discourse, adopting the text-oriented view of foregrounding. Following Mukařovský, Leech and Short, Douthwaite, and other researchers it looks at how authors of selected linguistic research articles lend special prominence to elements of their writing. The specific aspects chosen for scrutiny in this probe include the Global theme and the thematic build-up across the sections of research articles, the ways of reporting discourse, and the visual/graphic aspect. The research argues that even in non-artistic writing, such as academic discourse, cohesion and congruence of foregrounding may be studied in an individual work against the background of the conventions and practices established by the particular community of practice for the respective genre. The paper shows that foregrounding is relative, finely graded and that various mechanisms may combine to achieve a more powerful effect.

