Chapter 24
Thematic Organization and the Analysis of Selected Online Academic Scientific Journals’ Sites

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ABSTRACT
This chapter analyses the thematic organization of the instruction to authors’ section of selected online academic scientific journals’ sites. Fifteen scientific journals were selected randomly from different fields in the sciences. The theoretical framework for the study is provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics. The results showed that the marked theme had a higher occurrence than the unmarked theme. The marked themes were realized by adverbials and grammatical subjects. The unmarked themes were realized by subjects and predicates. Simple themes had a higher occurrence than multiple themes while interpersonal themes had more frequency than textual themes. The editors observed the given-new information structure as there was a low occurrence of entirely new information. The derived theme pattern was mostly used while the split-theme pattern had the least occurrence. The results show that the editors of these journals made use of these structures to organize their message logically and coherently.

INTRODUCTION
The analysis of discourse on the internet has led to a new area of study referred to as computer-mediated discourse (CMD), which focuses on language and language use by humans through networked computers, using the methods of discourse analysis, pragmatics and sociolinguistics as tools for analyzing language and language use. CMD is an important aspect of computer-mediated communication (CMC), which is the communication among human beings through networked computers. CMC is mainly text-based and covers the transmission of messages through Internet Relay Chats (IRCs), e-mails, Instant Messaging (IM), text messaging, bulletin boards, listservs, blogs, wikis, podcasts, and online conferencing (see Herring, 2001). Quite a number of studies have been carried out on CMD and these include the study of discourse structures (Turoff et al, 1998), conversational analysis (Hol-
mes, 1987; Beißwenger, 2008), ethnography of communication (Androutsopoulos, 2008), gender studies (Herring, 1994), and generic structure (Goutsos, 2005).

The instructions for authors sections of academic scientific journals sites, also referred to as guide for authors, are webpages of electronic journals where editors communicate the guidelines for the writing of research articles to would-be authors. This is to make sure that all the papers in the journals follow a particular format. This chapter attempts a study of the thematic organization in selected instructions to authors section of online academic scientific journals’ sites. This is important as there is an increasing need for would-be authors from different countries to access these sites in order to publish their articles, as most journals have contact with authors and reviewers through the internet. The data for the study include fifteen academic scientific journals’ sites (instruction for authors section) selected randomly from different fields in the sciences. These were sourced from the internet. The theoretical framework for the study is provided by Systemic Functional Linguistics. The texts are analyzed at three levels of thematic organization—information structure of the given-new dichotomy, thematic structure of the theme-rheme dichotomy and thematic progression.

**BACKGROUND**

Thematic organization is a functional resource that serves as one of the markers of textuality in discourse and it is closely related to discourse coherence (Downing, 2001). It is part of the structural cohesive devices in English, Halliday (1989). Thus, it is necessary to look at the various aspects of thematic organization within discourses. The aspects to be studied in this paper include Halliday’s (1985) given-new dichotomy of the information structure, the theme-rheme dichotomy of the thematic structure and thematic progression of the Prague school.

In English, every clause is divided into a theme and a rheme. The theme is the starting point of a clause while the rheme is the remaining part which develops the theme. This is exemplified below:

*Barack Obama* is the President of the United States.

*Barack Obama* is the theme while the rest of the sentence is the rheme.

In declarative clauses as seen in the one above, the subject is also the theme and in this case, the theme is said to be unmarked. Unmarked themes exist in interrogative clauses as finite and subject (*Who opened the door?* or *Have you seen him?*); in imperative clauses as predicator (*Open* the door) and in exclamative clauses as Wh-complement or Wh-word adjunct (*What a beautiful day this is!* or *How delicious this food tastes!*).

Marked themes occur in declarative clauses when any other element apart from the subject is placed in the theme position. The most common element that appears as marked theme is the circumstantial adjunct as seen in example below:

*After a long time*, the man left the palace.

Complement can appear as a marked theme as seen in the example below:

*John I love, Jane I hate.*

Barzegar (2008) opines that thematicization in English is a process of shifting various sentence elements to the initial position with any grammatical changes within a sentence, which are caused by such a movement. In the case of passive sentences, the complement is put in the subject position and thus it becomes marked. An example is given below:
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