A COMPARATIVE GENRE ANALYSIS OF SCHOLARLY ELECTRONIC MAIL AND BASIC ELECTRONIC MESSAGE SCHEMA

BY

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C 50/21656/2010

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT FOR THE AWARD OF THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS IN ENGLISH AND LINGUISTICS OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI.

NOVEMBER 2013
Declaración

This thesis is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university or any other award.

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We confirm that the work reported in this thesis was carried out by the candidate under our supervision.

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Dedication

The journey of writing this thesis was characterised by self-discovery, diligence and the beauty of collaboration. This thesis is deeply dedicated to Congress WBN family, my dear husband Jacob, son Larry and daughter Charry. May you put value in journeying, hard work, corporate dialogue and sacrifice.
Acknowledgements

I am grateful for the flow of divine grace through Joseph Njoroge the Senior Elder of Life Reformation Centre Githurai without which this work would not have been accomplished.

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Maroko for his unparalleled patience, highly sighted guidance, and very productive suggestions and Dr Waweru for his insightful comments and advice. Without their patience and guidance, the shaping up of this thesis would have been impossible.

I also thank my colleagues in the 2010 class for their support and useful comments. I sincerely appreciate the assistance accorded to me by members of my Christian community as well as my entire family.

Special thanks to Jacob, Larry and Charry who walked with me the long journey till I arrived to my destiny. Your unfailing encouragement, prayers and patience enabled me to finish this task. Finally to all I say:

GOD BLESS YOU.
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Operational definition of terms

This section defines some technical terms as used and understood in this study.

**Discussants:** the authors of the scholarly electronic mail discussing different linguist topics through electronic mail.

**Genre:** a class of communication that shares modes and purposes. Scholarly electronic mail is the genre under study.

**Mailing list:** a list of addresses to which the same information is sent for discussion using electronic services. LINGUISTlist is the mailing list in this study.

**Move:** a discrete part of an electronic mail with unique communicative purposes. The moves in this study are; link to a previous message, expression of views and appeal to other participants.

**Online environment:** digital communication between one person with another or with a group of people who have access to the same communication network. Scholarly electronic mail is the online environment in this study.

**Schema:** a form of a model or outline. The schema in this study is basic electronic message schema.
Abstract
This thesis presents a comparative genre analysis between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. This was by evaluating the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. The study also examines communicative functions of the discrete parts as communicated by subscribers to the mailing list. Lastly, the study established and described the linguistic features that signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. A qualitative research design is adopted for this study. Twenty scholarly electronic mails were sampled for analysis first through purposive and then stratified sampling techniques. Only those themes that had more than four contributions were considered. The study adopts an eclectic theoretical framework in which the basic electronic message schema and Genre Theory informed data analysis. It has emerged that there is a strong relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Also, the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail display a diverse class of communicative functions. Finally, specific linguistic features signalled the discrete parts in scholarly electronic mail. The study recommends that genre based teaching approach be adopted in the teaching of texts in computer mediated communication. This is in reference to the aspects of generic moves, communicative functions and linguistic features. Curriculum developers of English for Specific Purposes can also benefit from this study by developing a curriculum that is genre based. This can be done by sourcing materials for teaching writing in computer based communication from the internet. This will go a long way in grounding learners in computer-mediated communication. This seems to agree with Shammon (1998) that electronic mail E learning should have a strong place in writing across the curriculum theory and practice.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides the background information which places the present study in a genre-based context. It further articulates the problem the study investigated, the objectives and the assumptions. The chapter also defines the rationale and the scope of the study.

1.1 Background to the study

In the last fifteen years, the rise of information technology has had far-reaching cultural and social impacts (Gruber, 2008a). Computer technology and the development of the internet play the main role in this technological revolution. Moreover, mobile telephony has an ever increasing role in this process. According to Gruber (2008a), computer technology and mobile telephony both represent what has been called the ‘new media’ during the last decade. New information technologies not only offer the appropriate technological means for meeting the needs of the globalised information society; they also symbolize all the relevant features associated with twenty-first-century society.

Among the internet technologies used for interpersonal communication is the electronic mail. It is one of the oldest forms of computer-mediated
communication. Electronic mail is recognized as the most popular application of computer-mediated communication and widely used more than other services of the Net (Anderson 1987; Blackwell 1987; Weisband 1987, as cited in Ho, 2002). In the year 2000, it was estimated that 90% of web users connected to the internet primarily to view and send electronic mail (NUA 2000). Moreover, broadband usage is also increasing with developing markets such as China and India predicting further growth in electronic mail usage (European Travel Commission 2010).

According to Kenya Vision 2030, it was envisaged that science, technology and innovation would be applied in all the lead sectors including education and training curricula. This would ensure that online knowledge is accessed by all learners in the Kenya schools. The government of Kenya noted that it was committed in establishing a computer supply program that would equip learners with modern information technology skills. This vision is being implemented by the Jubilee government both at primary and secondary school levels. This study looks at the role of information technology in the teaching of writing in English for Academic Purposes within the education sector.
According to the Ministry of Information, Communications and Technology (Kenya), it aims at making Kenya a knowledge society through information technology. In 2011, the ministry approximated that there are 12.5 million people who use the internet compared to four years ago when only 3 million people had access to the internet. This increase is pegged on the increased use of broadbands by many Kenyans. Facebook and Twitter are social networks growing equally as fast as the electronic mail. The use of the electronic mail is a major technology in achieving the growth of internet usage. Internet use in Kenya is accessible to all both in the formal and informal sectors such as Mpesa money transfer and development of content in information technology by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development. This in itself has increased the number of people using information technology in the education sector.

Vilmi (1994) has argued that teachers who were involved in global communication through electronic mail had shown an increasing interest in encouraging their students to practice writing by communicating with other students through electronic mail. According to Shammon (1998), electronic mail debate is highly focused, formal and topical and should therefore have a strong place in writing across the curriculum theory and practice. This is realised especially when joined with international electronic mail communication. Shulman (2001) contends that
distance learning through electronic mail (e-learning), affords both students and teachers opportunities to enhance the chances of successful learning. E-learning is gaining momentum especially within universities in Kenya in an attempt to make higher education accessible to all. This mode of learning has created opportunities of exposure to internet use by the participants and has also made possible connection of scholars with other scholars both locally and abroad. This indeed makes our world a global village.

Ho (2002) has argued that studies in computer-mediated communication discourse are generally aimed at determining the nature of discourse generated. They determine how discourse differs from other types (oral and/or written) and the extent to which written or spoken linguistic features are evident. Discourse focus in computer-mediated communication also allows for examining the structure of computer-mediated message. Attention is therefore given to organization of messages in an online environment.

The basic electronic message schema assumes that individual electronic messages are internally-organised texts (Herring, 1996). This internal structure is signalled by writers not only on micro and macro levels but also through different aspects of semiosis (rhetorical structures and generic stages). As a result, insights about these
structures can be gleaned using methods of text analysis. Text linguists such as Longacre (1992) and Swales (1990) have observed that informational texts tend to be organized as expository essays or reports (usually written). On the other hand, interactive texts tend to be organized as conversational turns (speaking) or personal notes (in writing). More importantly, each of these text-types has a distinctive schematic organization, or conventional sequence of functional moves into which the text can be chunked. Scholarly electronic mail is an electronic text that allows discussants to take their turn on the conversation floor which is evidenced by reactions from other discussants.

In an attempt to describe linguistic features of computer-mediated discourse, Murray (1985, as cited in Ho, 2002), argues that computer conversation did not have “a static place on the oral/written continuum” but rather moved “back and forth between writer style and talker style, as interactants change voice”. This notion of an “emergence” form of discourse is further reinforced in studies (Davis and Brewer 1997; Slaouti 1998; Gruber 2000) of students’ electronic discussion where texts feature a combination of written and oral features. This is a reflection of a ‘writingtalking’ with ‘hybrid’ characteristics of the two modes. Information technology and communication has an emerging type of language which involves different types of word formation which allow participants to communicate with
other members of their discourse communities. This is an indication that computer
mediated communication is unique and different from the traditional prose of
academic writing.

The classical view of rhetoric was that language was used to persuade or convince
a reader (Crystal 1987). However, rhetoric in the new approach entails how well
one presents ideas in continuous language. It is how well one communicates
thoughts and impressions (Crystal, 1987). This is a broader sense of viewing
rhetoric. Rhetoric is not just a skilful verbal coercion, but discussion and exchange
of ideas. It entails mastering the whole process of communication. Mann and
Thompson (1988) posit that rhetoric is intended to describe texts rather than the
processes of creating or reading and understanding them. Text structure refers to
how the information within a written text is organised. Mann and Thompson
(1988) further argue that text structures can be described using the coherence
relations or the schemas. In an attempt to evaluate the generic structure in
scholarly electronic mail, basic electronic message schema offers the intended
understanding into that organisational structure.

Genre analysis adds to understanding of how language is used within an important
discourse community. According to Swales (1990), genre analysis is a model of
applied linguistics in its best sense. It draws on linguistic and sociolinguistic theory to clarify the nature of language use and language learning in an educational setting. Swales also argues that genre analysis is a means of studying spoken and written discourse for applied ends. A genre-centered approach therefore offers a workable way of making sense of the myriad communicative events that occur in the contemporary English-speaking academy. According to Maroko (2008), genre analysis has been an area of concern to various researchers. He further argues that this is due to the need to identify the structure and features that describe different categories of text. Genre analysis pays attention to the sequential organization of online messages (Ho, 2002). The present study investigates the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema in the eyes of genre analysis. The schematic organisation of scholarly electronic mail offers some insights into the curriculum requirements for computer mediated communication in institutions of learning in Kenya.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Text analysis that focuses on genre analysis has been the concern of linguistic studies since the eighties where research has been largely riveted on the study of the linguistic unit above the word to larger units such as paragraphs and texts or discourse. These studies have largely pivoted on written texts until recently when internet communication has introduced a new type of text which too requires that
researchers delve into and determine the linguistic aspects formed in this emerging type of writing.

Internet use has generally pointed to a steady growth in the number of users in recent years and has greatly changed the way human communication is carried out. Human beings are able at the touch of a button to relay information anywhere in the globe within a matter of seconds and in a relatively cheap manner. As a result, new forms of communicative mediums that have not been studied before are emerging such as scholarly electronic mail. While other written texts have been largely studied, a comparative genre analysis of scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema has not been researched. It is therefore important that an explicit study be carried out to evaluate the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema.

Consequently, this study undertakes to fill this research gap by investigating how scholarly electronic mail compares with the basic electronic message schema through the eyes of genre. This helps in answering the question- what is the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema? This study therefore delves in examining the communicative functions as
well as establishing and describing the linguistic features used to signal the
discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

1.3 Research questions

This study is guided by three research questions namely;

i. What is the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic
electronic message schema?

ii. Which communicative functions are realised by the discrete parts of
scholarly electronic mail?

iii. What linguistic features signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic
mail?
1.4  Objectives of the study

i. To evaluate the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema.

ii. To examine the communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

iii. To establish and describe the linguistic features that signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

1.5  Research assumptions

This study is based on the following research assumptions.

i. There is a relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema.

ii. The discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail have communicative functions.

iii. Linguistic features signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.
1.6 Rationale of the study

Genre based approach has been highly recommended by linguists in academic teaching of English for Specific Purposes. The results of this study may be used by classroom teachers across the Kenyan curriculum to teach learners the nature of language used in the construction of computer mediated communication texts such as scholarly electronic mail. This is particularly timely because the Jubilee government in Kenya is digital oriented and has already established strategies of ensuring that all standard one pupils are using laptops for learning within their classrooms by January 2014. The use of computers has also been realised in most of the secondary schools in Kenya whereas computer literacy is a requirement for all teacher trainees graduating from Primary Teacher Colleges throughout Kenya.

Information technology and communication is quickly becoming an integral part of everyday life. This is true in the context of Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development which is mandated by the Government of Kenya to develop curriculum from Early Childhood Education up to tertiary institutions level. The results of this study may be particularly useful to curriculum developers in determining the content to be taught at different levels. Authentic learning materials for computer mediated communication needs may also be sourced from the internet. The needs may range from all level of curriculum implementation including primary schools, high schools, tertiary colleges and universities.
Online scholars particularly those engaged in E-Learning may also benefit from this study. Their chances of collaborative learning may be enhanced by the knowledge of being able to use conventions of communication in information technology. The ability to communicate using an acceptable structure may also enhance faster learning.

The study will also add knowledge in the field of genre studies with a bias in computer-mediated communication. Students researching in this area may find useful information to inform their studies.

1.7 Scope and limitation

This study is genre-analysis based. Genre-based studies are mainly concerned with identifying the structure and features that describe different categories of text. So far, most genre studies have focused on academic texts with a few focusing on written media texts. This present study limits itself to genre studies that are computer-mediated. Computer-mediated communication is a very wide online environment of differentiated concerns. These environments range from chat rooms, blogs, Wikis, social network sites like Facebook and Twitter, mobile telephony and audio-visual environments such as Skype, Tinychat and GoTo
Meeting. Therefore, the results of the present study may not be said to be an effective representation of the entire online environment because online environments have different structures with specific generic features. This is limiting in that results of this study may not be ascribed to all online environments.

Genre-based studies also concern themselves with teaching of English for Academic Purposes. This study recommends the use of this approach in teaching the generic features of scholarly electronic mail to learners of English as a second language. This is limiting in that learners may be engaged in a mechanical replication of the generic structures of computer mediated communication writing without considering the characteristics of the rhetorical situation.

The mailing list in LINGUISTlist consists of different communicative postings. These are postings on queries and summarized results, scholarly electronic mails based on topics in linguistics, journals, table of contents, dissertation abstracts, calls for papers, book and conference announcements, software notices and other useful pieces of linguistic information. The present study limits itself to the analysis of scholarly electronic mail to this mailing list. This limitation curtails the possibility of eliciting massive data that may be difficult to analyse.
1.8 Summary

The purpose of this study is to demonstrate the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. This could not only help rationalise how subscribers to mailing lists use language but also reveal their communicative functions as well as the linguistic features that signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. In view of the outlined purpose, the present chapter has dealt with the preliminaries of the study which include the background to the study, statement of the problem, research objectives, research questions and research assumptions, rationale of the study as well as scope and limitations. The next chapter deals with the literature review and theoretical framework for this study.
CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter continues the process started in chapter one especially in 1:1 of providing the background knowledge needed to understand this study. Here, literature related to discourse studies, text analysis studies and those on genre is reviewed. The second part of this chapter addresses the theoretical framework which describes basic electronic message schema and Genre Theory and how they are applied in the analysis of scholarly electronic mail.

2.2 Discourse studies in computer mediated communication

Discourse studies are the disciplines devoted to the investigation of the relationship between form and function in verbal communication (Renkema, 2004). Such studies focus on units or stretches of language beyond the sentence level - such as conversational exchanges or written texts (Gruber, 2008b). Ho (2002) argues that studies in computer-mediated-communication discourse are generally aimed at determining the nature of discourse generated, namely, how the discourse differs from other types (oral and/or written) and the extent to which written or spoken features are evident.
Studies on the nature of electronic discourse involve both L1 (Murray, 1988, 1991; Ferrara et al, 1991; Collot and Bellmore, 1993; Davis and Brewer, 1997; Slaouti, 1998; Gruber, 2000; Mathews, 2000) and L2 contexts (Kern, 1993; Chun, 1994; Kitade, 2000). These studies show that computer ‘conversation’ discourse is interactive and displays both oral and written discourse features. The former is characterized by active voice and personal pronouns; emotive and informal diction; hedging and vagueness; paralinguistic cues; and direct quotations and forms of fragmentation in particular, ellipsis and contractions. The latter comprised more formal pronoun use, highly technical language and definiteness (Murray 1991). The latter also comprised of integration through nominalisation and attributive adjectives; participles and complement and relative clauses. In view of this, computer conversation does not have a static place on the oral/ written continuum but rather moved back and forth between writer-style and talker style, as interactants change voice. Murray (1990) and Uhlirova (1994) equally observe that computer conversation exhibits features of oral communication.

The orality of computer conversation is a particularly complex issue according to Herring (1996). She likens the structure of electronic mail messages to that of personal letters. However, other linguists have described the mode of electronic mail as basically written (Johanson, 1991; Maynor, 1994; Uhlirova, 1994) but
have also described it as containing linguistic features characteristic of spoken conversation. Crystal (2001) applied spoken language criteria to computer-mediated communication and concluded that the language of the World Wide Web is further away from speech. However, chat group and virtual world interactions are closer to speech, while electronic mails sit uncertainly in the middle. Crystal (2001) also found mixed results when applying written language criteria to electronic mail. He concluded that computer-mediated communication is identical to neither speech nor writing, but selectively and adaptively displays properties of both (Crystal 2001).

The studies reviewed above indicate that computer mediated communication has a nature of language that is distinct and complex in that it exhibits the characteristics of both written and oral speech. Written language tends to be formal while oral language is personal and emotive. In line with this observation, this study establishes and describes the linguistic features used in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. These studies also point to the fact that computer mediated communication studies generally aim at determining the nature of discourse generated. This is limiting in that there are other important aspects of computer mediated communication such as their structural organisation and
communicative functions. This study extends the nature of computer mediated communication through the analysis of these elements.

Swales (1981) pioneering study on genre analysis is based on the introductions of forty eight research articles drawn from areas in Pure and Applied sciences. He proposes that the introductions are structured around a model with four moves namely; establishing the field, summarizing previous research, preparing the present research and introducing present research. This model has gradually been revised after criticisms rendering it to a three moves model. Longacre (1992) forwarded the informational expository schema of four moves. He noted that, for example, a scientific essay or other information-oriented exposition will typically be constructed of micro segments of four functional moves, each constituting a higher-order move in the schema. The moves are; identification of problem, proposal of solution, evidence in support of solution and evaluation of solution.

This study borrows from Swales (1990) observation that an academic text is typically organised in moves. This enables the text to achieve its communicative purposes within the discourse community it is used. This observation agrees with Herring (1996) basic electronic message schema which outlines the generic
structure of electronic mails. The schema is used in this study to help compare it with the generic structure of scholarly electronic mail.

The insight that text types are associated with conversational sequences of moves can be extended to include more interactionally-oriented texts such as personal notes and conversational turns (Herring, 1996). Herring (1996) posits a three part schema for electronic messages. This suggests that participants aim at an ideal electronic message schema comprised of three functional moves: introduction, contentful message body, and a close. Of the three basic moves, Herring (1996) observes that the body is the core or dominant move of the schema. This is in line with the common intuition that a well-formed electronic message should minimally contribute some new information or perspective. A message with no ideational content is likely to be dismissed as pointless and a waste of bandwidth (Herring 1996).

At the data analysis level of this study, discourse studies based on computer-mediated communication has a three-fold significance. First, the studies are instrumental in determining the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Secondly, the studies are pivotal in determining the communicative functions of scholarly electronic mail. Lastly, the studies
facilitate the establishment and description of generic linguistic features that signal
the discrete parts of a scholarly electronic mail and whether these features display
both oral and written discourse features.

2.3 Text analysis approaches

Text-based analysis is hinged on Halliday (1994) description of systemic
functional linguistics which takes a functional – semantic approach to the analysis
of language. Two of these are lexico – grammar and interactive based approaches.

The lexico - grammar approaches focus their analysis on strictly linguistic
properties (Ogutu, 1996). In their analysis, elements of texts such as anaphoric
pronouns, logical connectors and lexical-semantic relations are identified. The
studies of cohesion and lexical repetition, for example; Halliday and Hasan,
and Hasan (1976), cohesion is created in five ways namely: reference, substitution,
ellipsis, conjunction and lexical organization. A similar categorization is presented

Reference entails that there are certain items in every language which, instead of
being interpreted semantically in their own right, make reference to something else
for their interpretation. Substitution is the replacement of one item by another according to Halliday and Hasan (1976). It is a device for abbreviating and for avoiding repetition. Ellipsis is a process of omitting an item (Halliday and Hasan, 1976).

Like substitution, ellipsis is used to avoid repetition. Another important reason for ellipsis is that, by omitting shared items, attention is focused on a new material. Conjunction is a semantic relation whereby a specification of the way in which what is to follow is systematically connected to what has gone before.

Lexical organization is the cohesive effect achieved by selection of the vocabulary. This phenomenon may be referred to by the term reiteration (Halliday and Hassan 1976). Reiteration is explained as a form of lexical item at the end of the scale.

The studies reviewed above focus on linguistic properties that help a writer create coherence in writing their text. They provide useful cues to boundaries of macro segments but they are not sufficient to identify macro segments that fulfil a higher order function in the schematic organisation of the text. This is in line with Herring (1996) that surface cohesion of a text includes all the linguistic choices made in order to introduce a macro segment. However, these choices are not
adequate in themselves particularly in an academic essay where notion coherence helps fulfil a higher order through the use of moves. This study incorporates both the surface coherence and notional coherence to help establish and describe linguistic features in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

The above elements of text are summed up by Gruber (2008a) as the linguistic features found in a typical scholarly electronic mail posting. He sums them as: intertextual relations, interpersonal function of communication and clause combinations. This is very important for this study because it is not just a text under study but computer mediated text and therefore warrants to be scrutinised under studies in computer mediated communication.

Intertextuality refers to the fact that all texts are embedded to other texts both synchronically and diachronically (Wodak, 2008). According to Fairclough (1992), intertextuality means that other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis. Other texts are manifestly marked or cued by features on the surface of the text such as quotation marks. However, he argues, a text may incorporate another text without the latter being explicitly cued. This allows a writer to respond to another text in the way one words one’s own text. From Fairclough’s study, it emerges that there are different possible ways of realizing intertextuality of a text. These are direct and indirect quotations.
Direct quotation is the inclusion of part of a previous posting in the actual message which is a standard way of including the referred text into actual message in most electronic mail programs. Direct quotations in scholarly electronic mail are marked from the auctorial text by means of alphanumeric sign (‘>’) at the beginning of each quoted line. Direct quoting enables any receiver of a posting to check whether the reference of a previous contribution is correct. It also helps to track back a discussion from the beginning in order to join at a later date.

The use of direct quoting is a sign for the awareness of discussant’s that they are communicating with the author of the message(s) they refer to. Secondly, that there is a group of anonymous, silent ‘listeners’ who might also be interested in the topic under consideration but who might not have followed the discussion from the beginning (Gruber, 2008a). The author quotes both the portions of the text he refers to as well as the software generated parts of the message; that is: date, sender and subject line (thematic thread). He observes that this is rather unusual but also agrees that it guarantees that readers may find this previous posting in their own electronic mail reader or even retrieve from a site where the postings are stored. The tight relation between quoted and auctorial text is usually illustrated by the use of the anaphoric forms.
This study analyses electronic texts posted by participants asynchronously. This means that their messages are not real time where they all meet in a chart room and discuss the different topics. However, scholarly electronic mail is sent to participants at their own time and convenience. As a result, each participant must make effort to follow the discussion in order to effectively contribute. Direct quotation is therefore a very important linguistic feature in helping participants link to previous messages. This research focuses on establishing whether direct quotation as a linguistic feature is effectively used in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

The indirect quotation is realized very differently from the direct quotation. In indirect quotation, the discussant refers back to a previous message but does not obviously make use of the built-in software function for replying. Instead, a paraphrase of the previous contribution is used. Additionally, only the first name of the author of the previous message is mentioned. It does not quote any further information. This study establishes and describes indirect quotation as a linguistic feature in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

According to Halliday (1994), the concept of interpersonal (Meta-) function of language refers to the fact that language not only has an ideation function but also
establishes and maintains social relationships between people. The interpersonal function can be realized through personal reference, use of modal expressions, the use of expressions of personal beliefs, use of explicit evaluations, the occurrence of first person singular pronoun and use of contractions.

Person reference is realised through the use of the first name or full name of the author. Person reference creates a communicative atmosphere which resembles face-to-face interaction rather than a written exchange. According to (Halliday 1994), modality is used to express the intermediate degrees between the positive and negative poles of statements. According to Gruber (2008a), modal expressions may weaken or strengthen the content of a statement in four different respects: Probability, usuality, obligation and inclination. Probability refers to a scale between the poles of certainty and uncertainty; usuality allows us to scale a message between the two poles of always and never; obligation informs us about the author’s stance toward the ‘allowedness’ of the content of his message and inclination indicates to which degree the author is willing to do something.

Expressions of personal beliefs are realised when writers explicitly express that they themselves challenge the unrestricted validity of their claims but in much more personal ways, for example, ‘I personally think’, ‘I don’t know what’s there
relevant to this’. The use of explicit evaluations is realised when authors explicitly evaluate the content of their own messages. The occurrence of first person singular pronoun is realised when authors intrude into their writings in a personal way. Contractions are used to indicate involvement and frequent contact between participants (Martin, 1992).

The above studies show that one function of language is to create and maintain relationships between people. However, it did not define the environment where relationships take place: formal or informal. It is expected that academic and scholarly texts maintain formality where they only engage in sharing the ideation content without being personal and emotive. However, this study is computer mediated communication based and studies have shown that the language used combines the characteristics of both written and oral language. With this understanding, this study establishes and determines the linguistic features that signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

The concept of clause combinations refers to aspects of the logical (Meta-) function (Halliday, 1994). Logical meta-function relates to the connections between the messages, and to the ways in which we signal these connections (Thompson 1996). According to Martin (1992), the concern here is the kind of
connections (conjunctions) between clauses found in the text, how they are realized (as conjunctions, circumstantial adjuncts, verbs or nouns) and which kind of clause combining prevails (coordination or subordination). Gruber (2008a) refers to signals that aid interaction between a text and the reader as kinds of clause combinations in a text.

Macro segments of a text need to cohere to each other to enable the writer communicate with the readers. In order to achieve this purpose, writers make use of clauses and sentences to set up expectations during the reading process. It is therefore important that writers of scholarly electronic mail signal how one idea leads to another. This is consistent with Ogutu (1996) who notes that words and phrases which have a connecting function are like signs on a journey. This study therefore establishes and describes the linguistic features used by the discussants in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail to connect ideas.

2.4 Studies based on genre analysis

The word genre comes from French (originally Latin) word for ‘kind’ or ‘class’. Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) define genre as a recognisable communicative event characterised by a set of communicative purposes. A genre is identified and
mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. They further argue that in most cases, genres are highly structured and conventionalised with constraints.

Genre studies are influenced by three main schools of thought namely: the Systemic Functional Linguistics (Martin, 1992), English for Specific Purposes (Swales, 1990) and the North American New Rhetoric (Flowerdew and Medway, 1994; Miller, 1984). Genre studies based on Systemic Functional Linguistics and English for Specific Purposes heavily draw on Halliday’s (1978; 1994) whose focus is on analysing and describing textual patterns of different genres. According to Halliday (1978; 1994), choices of language are seen as determined by three contextual variables including field: the nature of social action, tenor: the roles taken up by participants and mode: the channel of communication- spoken or written. Following this framework, Martin (1984) moves beyond Halliday’s description of the relationship between text and immediate situations and seek to capture the contextual interaction between social purposes and text meaning. According to Martin (1984), genre is as a staged, goal oriented process which unfolds through a predictable sequence of stages that are deployed to achieve certain communicative purposes.
Genre studies in English for Specific Purposes share a similar conceptualisation and application of genre with Systemic Functional Linguistics. In this context, genre analysis takes the forms of the development of a taxonomic description of the generic structures for the realisation of certain communicative purposes in academic and workplace genres. According to Swales (1990), writers use a series of structured rhetorical moves to achieve their communicative goals. The potential of genre analysis in examining and identifying generic structures of texts has greatly influenced the teaching of English for academic purposes and in developing tertiary students’ control over academic discourse (Kay and Dudley-Evans, 1998; Swales, 1990).

The argument that genre analysis examines and identifies generic structures of texts is fundamental in the analysis of computer mediated communication. Knowledge of the structural organisation of this kind of a text enables readers to characterise genres with similar social goals but which are actualised with distinct functions. This is in line with the objectives of this study to examine the communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. It also enables this study to delineate the writers of the electronic mails as scholars in linguistics who belong to a discourse community and therefore any newcomers are quickly identified by the ‘old’ participants. The existence of a discourse community is one way of characterising scholarly electronic mail as a genre.
According to Couture (1986), genres operate at the level of discourse structure. They have a beginning, continuing and an ending. Therefore, genres study text structure. Swales (1990), observes that the level of operation by genres, make a distinction between them and registers. Registers occur at linguistic level of vocabulary and syntax. However, he notes that linguistics has contributed to the evolving study of genre in the emphasis laid in them. The emphasis is that genres are types of goal-directed communicative events, genres have schematic structures and that genres are disassociated from registers or styles.

The explicit perspective of analysing a text by identifying the structured generic moves to achieve a communicative goal could be limiting in that it leads to a conception of genre as fixed rules constraining the production of texts. Under this conceptualisation, writing for academic purposes becomes a mechanical replication of the generic structures. Though such limitations have been alluded to, it does not suggest that rhetorical conventions are worthless. Mastery in genre development is manifested in a writer’s ability to manipulate genre forms to construct meaning. According to Freedman and Ball (2004), the transformative process of genre development where meaning is constructed should underlie curriculum changes in any language and literacy classrooms.
In analysing genres used in academic contexts, Swales genre approach is very useful (Swales 1990). He postulates a strong relationship between discourse communities and genre and thus stresses a central feature of recent genre approaches. These approaches are the close independence of genre (that is written or spoken texts) and contextual features of their use. He states that a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims (Swales 1990).

In addition to owning genres, Swales notes that a discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals. This is one of the objectives in this study which examines the communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. Browsing through the features that define a discourse community as posited by Swales (1990), they suggest at first glance that subscribers of electronic mail discussion lists have to be viewed as discourse communities. Gruber (2008a) adapts this approach of genre analysis in analysing computer-mediated communication and upgrades it to the features of scholarly electronic mail discourse community as;
1. A discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goal. This is true for LINGUISTlist as on subscribing, each new subscriber receives a file which spells out the aims of the list.

2. A discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members. Obviously, the many-to-many communication mode of the LINGUISTlist software is the mechanism of intercommunication between members.

3. A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback. This criterion is also met by the LINGUISTlist as ‘chat’ (that is personal communication between subscribers with no relevance for the general ‘aim’ of the LINGUISTlist) is explicitly not permitted or at least negatively sanctioned by other list members.

4. A discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aim. How can we determine whether there is a genre which could be coined ‘scholarly email postings’ in the same sense as there is the genre ‘research paper’ in the human sciences/social sciences?

5. In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired a specific lexis. This is true for the LINGUISTlist because the terminology
used is from all areas of linguistics as will be evidenced in the sample texts.

6. A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise. That this is the case in the LINGUISTlist can be seen by the infrequent complaints of competent subscribers about unnecessary or even ‘dump’ questions which are sometimes put on the list.

(Adapted from Gruber, 2008a).

This research uses genre analysis to identify the communicative events in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. The existence of communicative functions warrants this study as a worthy object of study in the social sciences.

2.5 Theoretical framework

This study adopts an eclectic theoretical approach in which two theories: Genre Theory and basic electronic message schema are used in analysing and describing the concerns of the present study. Basic electronic message schema played a major role in providing a peep hole into new forms of communication compared with printed forms of communication or even to electronically transmitted forms such as radio or television communication. Secondly, the study is comparative in nature
and therefore needed the support of a computer mediated communication approach on which to anchor its analysis. Investigating forms and emerging genres of computer mediated communication allows social scientists to examine how people appropriate new forms of communication for their social and communicative needs. However, text producers in the new media use their knowledge about already conventionalised genres and their rhetorical organisation in traditional media in order to communicate in the new media. Genre Theory has played a pivotal role in establishing structural organisation of traditional genre and therefore is a source of knowledge in venturing into the analysis of new media.

### 2.5.1 Basic electronic message schema

This study adapts basic electronic message schema for analysing the data collected. This schema is used to describe the canonical structure of reactive electronic mail postings. Although it was first posited by Herring (1996), it has its roots in the works of Swales (1990) and Longacre (1992). A basic assumption underlying this approach is that individual electronic messages are internally-organised texts. As such, insights about their structure can be gleaned using methods of text analysis.
Text linguists such as Longacre (1992) and Swales (1990) have observed that informational texts tend to be organised as expository essays or reports. They are usually in written form. On the other hand, interactive texts tend to be organised as conversational turns when used in speaking or personal notes if in writing. Moreover, each of these text types has a distinctive schematic organisation, or conventional sequence of functional moves into which the text can be chunked. Herring (1996) refers to these moves as macro segments.

According to Longacre (1992), a macro segment is a functional constituent of a text at the level of organisation. Macro segments can be identified either according to their notional coherence or their surface cohesion. Surface cohesion refers to consistent linguistic choices a writer makes with regard to person reference, tense usage, or sentence structure. A macro segment can also be set off from other macro segments by a skipped line before or after, paragraph indentation, or use of formulae which explicitly introduce macro-level ideas.

Notional coherence refers to the ability of a macro segment to fulfil a higher-order function in the schematic organisation of a text. A scientific essay or other information-oriented exposition, for example, will typically be constructed of macro segments of the following four functional types.
i. Identification of problem

ii. Proposal of solution

iii. Evidence in support of solution

iv. Evaluation of solution

(Adapted from Longacre, 1992 as cited by Herring, 1996.)

Herring (1996) posits a three-part schema for scholarly electronic messages based on the preferred realisation of the three moves namely:

i. Link to an earlier message

ii. Expression of views

iii. Appeal to other participants

According to Gruber (2008a), this schema constitutes a balanced communicative unit comprising all three of Halliday’s (1978) primary language functions. These functions are; a textual link, an ideational body, and an interpersonal close. The textual link reflects the participants’ need to establish and maintain coherence across messages. This is especially important in computer-mediated communication in that, any given discussion is apt to be interwoven with
discussions on different topics. Such textual links characteristically constitute the opening move or introduction of an electronic message.

Other types of introduction include; prospective, metacomment and preamble. The prospective introduction introduces the message to follow, for instance, by providing a summary abstract. Metacomment is a comment on the discussion as a whole. Lastly, preamble introduction neither links nor summarises but rather provides background information against which to evaluate the content that follows (Herring, 1996).

The body of the electronic message is a high frequency function expressed by a single move; expression of views. Expressing views is a term used by Herring (1996) to refer to statements of ideational content evaluated implicitly or explicitly with respect to the speakers` commitment to their truthfulness. This category includes expressions of opinions, beliefs, understanding or judgment associated with some aspects of the topic under discussion. Expressing views differs from providing information (such as, bibliography references, conference announcements or announcements of software availability) in that authors` commitment to the truthfulness of the content is part of the communication in the
former. In providing the information, the content is merely reported (Herring, 1996).

Expression of views ranges from forcefully-worded assertions (including assertions of alleged facts) to opinions presented as such, for instance, through the use of hedged evidential phrases. More typically, the expression of views constitute in whole or in part, the body of electronic message. It transmits the message’s primary ideation content. The message body may also include one or more of a variety of functions, including suggestions, expression of feelings, and/or offers (Herring, 1996).

The third move in basic electronic messages (Herring, 1996) is appeal to other participants. It follows the message body although it does not occur predictably as the first two moves. Electronic message may close with an appeal for discussion or action, with an apology, an offer, a chastisement or some other interactional speech act. Appeals are interpersonal in that they invoke the other subscribers to the list in their role as addressees. In some cases, appeals invite others to take over the conversational floor and thus facilitate turn taking.
The main tenets of this model help to show an awareness of the social role of the electronic message writer. In other words, a discussant writing an electronic message, with moves and steps, satisfies the expectations of the discourse community (with regard to what is considered an adequate electronic message). This relates to the writing of a scholarly electronic mail posting in LINGUISTlist where a subscriber needs to follow the laid down format in order for the work to convince the discourse community. Thus, discourse community generally has specified conventions to be followed by scholarly writers within its context.

At the analysis level of this study, basic electronic message schema was the checklist used to determine the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Secondly, the schema helped in determining the communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

2.5.2 Genre Theory
Genre theory is used to explain the nature of discourse as manifested in genres. Although it has earlier roots, Coe et al, (2002) points out that it arose during the 1980s. This was out of practical attempts by educators and researchers to understand writing as a social activity. The theory was developed by the Sydney school of Genre Theorists as a reaction to Halliday’s (1978) Systematic-Functional Linguistics. Halliday laid emphasis on the expressionist (creative) process
approach in Australian elementary schools. In North America, the intellectual starting point of the Genre Theory was started by the New Rhetoric, as articulated by (Miller, 1984; and Bakhtin, 1983).

In Functional Systematic Linguistics, Kress (1985) argues that as most situations are conventional and rule-governed, they produce texts that have to be regarded as generic. The social occasions of which texts are a part have a fundamentally important effect on texts. These situations are always conventional. They range from entirely formulaic and ritualized occasions such as royal weddings, sporting encounters, committee meetings to family rituals such as breakfasts or barbecues or fights over who is to do the duties. Other, probably fewer occasions, are less ritualized and less formulaic such as casual conversations.

Early studies in the rhetoric of how genres persuade and the new rhetoric of how genres shape both individuals and communities, were motivated by concerns about social discrimination and exclusion. Coe et al (2002:3) provides the following explanation:

Under meritocracy, lack of proficiency in particular genres is often used to justify excluding certain people from positions of influence, power and status-and also to convince them to blame themselves for lacking literate proficiency. Helping the people to learn the genres of power was seen as a way to help people overcome such discrimination and gain access and influence.
This scenario provided a very strong basis for the development of Genre Theory which focuses mainly on delineating discourse communities and the ways in which communication is carried out in those communities. Genres were therefore to equip and empower apprentice writers wishing to join those genres (Maroko, 2008). People in particular discourse communities have ways in which they communicate. They use various genres in ways that are different from practices in other discourse communities. Bazerman (2002: 14) illustrates this as follows:

You know that if you hang around a certain place long enough, you will become the kind of person who hangs around that kind of place—you know your way around the place. How to act there, what to say there, who fits or misfits, and who is a newcomer. The places you habituate develop those parts of you that are most related to and oriented towards the activities of that place.

Genre Theory according to Bhatia (2002) looks at genres in various ways. First, genres are reflections of disciplinary cultures and in that sense, those of the realities of the world of discourse, in general. Secondly, genres focus on conventionalised communicative events embedded with disciplinary or professional practices. He also notes that all disciplinary or professional genres have integrity of their own. This integrity is often identified with reference to textual and discursive (text-internal) factors, or contextual and disciplinary (text-external) factors. However, it is not always fixed or static but often contested, depending upon the rhetorical context it tends to respond to.
Genres are also viewed as recognisable communicative events, characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community in which they regularly occur (Swales, 1990; 2004). According to Bhatia (2002), the expert members of the discourse community often exploit the natural propensity or innovation and change to create new forms in order to respond to new rhetorical contexts or to convey ‘private intentions’ within the socially recognised communicative purposes. The experts are therefore considered as having a much greater knowledge and understanding of generic practices than those who are apprentices.

At the data analysis level of this study, the genre theory has three-fold significance. First, the theory is instrumental in determining whether the discourse community in this study has established conventions and communicative purposes that guide scholarly electronic mail writing. This becomes a guide to equip apprentice writers within this genre. Secondly, the theory facilitates the identification of any instances of innovations and change in scholarly electronic mail over and above the existing conventions in basic electronic message schema. This helps explain instances where scholarly electronic mail writers manipulate some conventions in order to convey their private intentions. The lexicogrammatical features as adapted by Gruber (2008a) are described in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail in the light of the Genre Theory.
2.6 Summary

This study describes how discoursal characteristics in basic electronic message schema manifested in scholarly electronic mail. This chapter considered the present study against available related literature. Studies in computer mediated communication have basically aimed at determining the nature of discourse generated whether spoken or oral. The specifics of how communicative functions and linguistic features function to fulfil particular roles within specific contexts do not appear to have received comparable attention in genre studies. Secondly, it is limiting for rhetorical organisation of genres to simply be seen as fixed rules constraining the production of texts. They should rather be seen as catalysts for developing the writers’ ability to manipulate the genre and construct meaning out of them. This too has not been given sufficient attention. Basic electronic message schema is relevant in this study in that it has allowed us to see computer mediated text in the eyes of genre. Genre Theory is the foundation upon which the new media anchors. The two parts of this chapter: literature review and the theoretical framework have provided the grounding for the presentation, analysis and discussion of data in chapter four. The next chapter describes the methods that were adopted in the collection, presentation, analysis, and discussion of data.
CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter explored the available related literature and the theoretical framework for this study. In this chapter, the methods that were adopted in the collection, presentation, analysis and discussion of data are described.

3.2 Research design

This study adopted a qualitative design in which an analysis of downloaded scholarly electronic mail from LINGUISTlist was employed to specify, delineate, and describe the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. A study using this design is said to be deductive, since it begins with preconceived hypotheses or assumptions (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). They also argue that a qualitative design is used to establish the existence of phenomena by explicitly describing them. This study generated descriptive data in form of discussants’ words which aided in making sense of the discussants’ linguistic realisations in the electronic postings. This type of a research design therefore describes phenomena as they occur naturally without an attempt to manipulate the situation under study (Hancock, 1998).
The nature of the research questions determined the choice of the qualitative design adopted here and not other types of approaches. The qualitative research design attempts to present the data from the perspective of the research subjects who are fairly homogenous and share critical similarities related to the research question (McCracken, 1988). This is so that the intellectual biases of the research do not distort the collection, presentation or interpretation of the data. The data was discussed using figures and tables which helped in obtaining insights and understanding of the data as well as the results. Secondly, owing to the nature of this study, this design was best suited to discover phenomena such as language of writing a scholarly electronic mail from the perspective of the subscribers themselves. Thirdly, this design was deemed adequate in assisting this study to provide guidelines in the writing of scholarly electronic mail.

3.3 Area of study

This investigation is based on scholarly electronic mail downloaded from LINGUISTlist. The scholarly electronic mail is based on scholarly discussions by subscribers to LINGUISTlist covering all topics of linguistics. The area was selected to form the scope of this study in order to evaluate the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema.
The LINGUISTlist is an online resource for the academic field of linguistics. It was founded by Anthony Aristar in early 1990 at the University of Western Australia. Today, it operates from the Eastern University of Michigan. It has several thousand subscribers all over the world and the subscribers are mainly (but not exclusive) language scholars (from students to university professors). The LINGUISTlist is the oldest discussion list with electronic mail discussions covering all topics of linguistics. It is also used as a reference by the National Science Foundation of US.

The main and oldest feature of the LINGUISTlist is the pre-moderated electronic mailing list. This list is made up of postings on queries and summarized results, scholarly discussions covering all topics of linguistics, journals, table of contents, dissertation abstracts, call for papers, book and conference announcements, software notices and other useful pieces of linguistic information. The LINGUISTlist provides the scholarly discussions needed for analysis in this study. The motivation behind researching from this mailing list originated singularly from the argument that LINGUISTlist was a rich area for research and needed electronic texts to be seen in the eyes of genre analysis. Secondly, computer mediated communication is becoming a very important medium of communication in all spheres of life and therefore needs to be investigated in the social sciences.
3.4 Study corpus

Similar to studies in genre analysis, this study used authentic texts as samples. The genre being investigated is scholarly electronic mail. The corpora were generated from LINGUISTlist. The specific texts forming the data were drawn from entire discussions in the database. This was done by referring to the thematic thread of the messages (Mason, 2002).

Each scholarly electronic mail was downloaded, copied and pasted and consequently stored in a theme file. The five files containing the twenty scholarly electronic mails were then stored in one folder to ensure that retrieval of the data for analysis was easy. A total of twenty mails were sampled and categorised into five themes. Each theme contained four mails drawn from different linguistic fields.

Before analysis, a number of items inserted by the electronic mail application were removed from all the electronic mails. The items were not inserted by the discussants and did not therefore constitute the data for analysis. The items removed included headers, information on previous thematic threads as well as the linguistic fields to which these thematic threads belonged. However, direct quotations from previous thematic threads were retained due to their role in
determining the linguistic features used in the discrete parts of the electronic mails. The indirect quotations were also retained since some discussants used them as the basis for their reply. Gruber (2008a) noted that the recipients’ texts are viewed as a crucial part of discussant’s messages.

A summary of the themes that were sampled for analysis included; theme 1 which was entitled *Uneducated Families means Non-Complex Language?* The discussions within this theme were posted to LINGUISTlist between 24\textsuperscript{th} April and 4\textsuperscript{th} May 2009. The theme contained text 1 to text 4. The second theme was *Prestige and Language Maintenance* posted between 13\textsuperscript{th} and 20\textsuperscript{th} January 2006. It contained texts 5 to 8. The third theme was *Free Sharing of Linguistic Research* which was posted between 21\textsuperscript{st} and 26\textsuperscript{th} March 2009. It contained texts 9 to 12. The fourth theme was *Review of Chomsky’s Minimalism* posted between 7\textsuperscript{th} and 17\textsuperscript{th} August 2008. It contained texts 13 to 16. The last theme was An Intelligent Man’s Answer to Linguistic Truism which was posted between 14\textsuperscript{th} and 25\textsuperscript{th} January 2007. It contained texts 17 to 20. All the themes in this study were posted between 2006 and 2009. The names of the contributors were made anonymous and letters A to U were used to represent the discussants.
This data was used in testing the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Secondly, focus was put on the communicative function in scholarly electronic mail. Finally, the data assisted in determining the linguistic features that signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

3.5 Sample size and sampling procedures

Text analysis calls for finer details of every linguistic aspect showing how each contributes to the whole. This research sampled twenty scholarly electronic mails from the mailing list between the years 2006 to 2009. The total population of the discussions posted in this period was twenty nine mails. Twenty mails were then sampled for analysis. These were deemed adequate because previous research on genre analysis has demonstrated that large numbers are unnecessary (Maroko, 1999; 2008). This is because texts in the same discourse community are guided by a common model and are expected to have similar linguistic identifying units (Swales, 1990). Johns (1980) conducted a study on cohesion in written texts with a sample of twenty complete letters coded for analysis which she deemed as adequate.
The study sample for this study was drawn from LINGUISTlist. In order to arrive at a sample of twenty scholarly electronic mails, which could be analysed adequately for the purposes of this study, purposive sampling alongside stratified sampling was adopted. According to Cohen, *et al* (2007), purposive sampling handpicks cases to be included on the basis of the researchers’ judgement of the typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought. He also notes that stratified sampling involves dividing the population into homogenous groups with each group containing subjects with similar characteristics.

In view of the nature of this study, scholarly discussions on all the themes posted during 2006 to 2009 were considered for this study because they possessed the required characteristics. These postings were then grouped according to the number of reactive messages posted for each of the mails. Theme one realised four reactive messages, theme two, three and five had six messages each while theme four had seven messages. This was a total of twenty nine messages. Four mails were then selected from each of the five different themes based on similarity of their characteristics. This was a total of twenty mails sampled from the five different themes of the discussions. Data for analysis was extracted from the sample size of twenty scholarly electronic mails.
3.6 Data collection

Data was collected from the twenty mails by downloading them from machine-readable formats as plain-text files stored automatically by LINGUISTlist which creates and allows exchange of the texts. This kind of data extracted depended on the linguistic objectives. The researcher closely read all the texts and evaluated the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Secondly, the researcher keenly read and scrutinized the discrete parts of the texts and identified the communicative function within the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. This was in line with Gains (1999) and Crystal (2001) argument that electronic mails have a range of communicative functions. Thereafter, the specific linguistic signalling features found in each of the discrete parts were analysed. According to Gruber (2008), scholarly electronic mail postings are characterised by a set of typical linguistic features which display features of traditional academic prose as well as those of oral genres of everyday conversations.

3.7 Data presentation, analysis and discussion

According to Mugenda and Mugenda (2003), the mass of raw data collected must be systematically organised in a manner that facilitates analysis. It is the result of such analysis that a researcher is able to make sense of the data. Moreover, data
analysis involves scrutinizing the acquired information and making inferences (Kombo and Tromp, 2006). Consequently, data for the present study was analysed first by rewriting the basic electronic message schema as posited by Herring (1996). Guided by the moves within the schema, the researcher enumerated the generic features to evaluate the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema in relation to their generic structural organisation. This was then followed by the elicitation of the generic organisational features in scholarly electronic mail. Each of the mails is coded numerically and systematically as T1 to T20 where T represents an individual text.

In this study, the communicative functions of scholarly electronic mail were adopted from Herring (1996) on the basic electronic message schema. This was because the communicative functions had proved to be a major marker of purposes the research was interested in. The discussion of the communicative functions was described in the eyes of the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. A discussion of the identified linguistic features used by scholarly electronic mail participants were analysed based on Gruber (2008a) on typical linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail postings.
It is worth noting that data obtained from descriptive research are generally analysed with the aid of descriptive tables. This provides information such as the typical use of language (Seliger and Shohamy, 1989). In this study, descriptions were reported through tables and figures. This helped the researcher to obtain insights into an understanding of the data as well as the results. Lastly, generalisations, conclusions, implications and recommendations were made based on the findings of the study.

3.8 Summary

In summary, this chapter has described the methods that were adopted in the collection, presentation and analysis of data drawn from scholarly electronic mail. The next chapter presents, analyses and discusses the data of this study.
CHAPTER FOUR
DATA PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has explored the methods adopted in the collection, presentation, analysis and discussion of data. In this chapter, data is presented, analysed and discussed by comparing scholarly electronic mail with basic electronic message schema. This is with a view of establishing the relationship between the two. The chapter also examines communicative functions of scholarly electronic mail. Lastly the chapter establishes and describes linguistic features used by writers to signal the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

4.2 Treatment of data

Informing the analysis includes the basic electronic message schema by Herring (1996) which helps to determine whether the scholarly electronic mail has established conventions and communicative functions that guide its writing. The schema is also handy in identifying any instances of innovation and change in the scholarly electronic mail over and above the existing traditional academic genre. The lexico-grammar approach as adopted by Gruber (2008a) guides this study by subjecting scholarly electronic mail to signalling linguistic features of intertextuality, interpersonal characteristics and clause combinations.
The study draws from twenty scholarly electronic mails posted on the LINGUISTlist. The mails are coded T1 to T20 under five major themes with T representing text as downloaded from the internet. The scholarly electronic mails are provided in the appendix section.

Section 4.3 of this chapter discusses the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema with a view of comparing them. Section 4.5 then discusses the communicative functions of scholarly electronic mail following the basic electronic message schema. This section is important because the communicative functions found in the schema had proved to be markers of discourse function the study was interested in. Section 4.6 discusses linguistic features which are categorised as intertextuality, personal characteristics and clause combinations. The linguistic features are discussed in reference to existing literature.

What distinguishes this study from Herring (1996) is that it is not based on two variants of male and female discussants but on the general population of discussants in the mailing list. Besides, this study does not analyse messages drawn from WMST (Women’s Studies) list as Herring does but from LINGUISTlist. However both lists have a strict academic focus which justifies the
adoption of Herring’s schema. Additionally, both lists generate texts that employ communicative functions and signalling linguistic features similar to those already selected as relevant to this study.

A discussion from the written data, quotations, actual examples, figures and tables provide the needed supporting evidence for the patterns and categories obtained from scholarly electronic mail. Tables of the generic moves, the communicative functions and linguistic features provide insights into the data. The analyses are then followed by a summary which synthesizes the major ideas and findings of the research.

4.3 Rhetorical structures

Rhetorical structure is a term that is used in Rhetorical Structure Theory and describes the theory of text structure. Text structure describes the parts that texts have and the principles of combining these parts into entire texts. According to Mann and Thompson (1988), linguists have developed two main approaches in text structure analysis namely; discourse analysis and text analysis to deal with the transmission and reception of messages. Discourse analysis mainly focuses on naturally occurring spoken language as in conversations, commentaries and
speeches while text analysis focuses on the structure of written language as found in texts such as articles, notices and book chapters. Mann and Thompson (1988) however noted that this distinction is not quite clear and that the two approaches can be used in a much broader sense to include language units with a communicative function whether spoken or written.

Following Mann and Thompson (1988), this research describes the rhetorical structure of written texts in the form of scholarly electronic mail. This study has therefore considered structural elements such as functional moves which describe the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail, the communicative functions realised by these moves and the linguistic features which signal the discrete parts. This description will lead into insights of the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema as posited by Herring (1996). Basic electronic message schema is described here because of its importance in comparing its structure with scholarly electronic mail.

4.3.1 Basic electronic message schema by Herring (1996)

The basic electronic message schema is used to describe the canonical structure of reactive electronic mail postings (Gruber, 2008a). Herring (1996) notes that
individual electronic messages are internally organised texts and their structure can therefore be analysed. This schema is thus posited on a three-part schema for electronic messages based on the preferred realisation of the three moves as shown in figure 1 below.

**Figure 1: Basic electronic message schema**

*by Herring (1996)*

1. Link to an earlier message
2. Expression of views
3. Appeal to other participants

Figure 1 represents the basic electronic message schema where link to an earlier message characteristically constitute the opening move or the introduction of an electronic message. Secondly, expression of views typically constitute in whole or in part, the body of the electronic message. Lastly, electronic messages end with a third type of macro segment; close. In presenting the structure of basic electronic message schema, the terms; introduction, body and close for link to an earlier message, expression of views and appeal to other participants are used respectively. This is because the terms link to an earlier message, expression of views and appeal to other participants have also been used for communicative functions within the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.
According to Herring (1996), interactional text-types such as personal notes and conversational turns have a common three-part structure. However, personal notes have an additional external frame of opening and closing epistolary conventions. The basic electronic message schema (Herring, 1996) does not include these epistolary conventions in its structure. However, this study explored these conventions for their occurrence in the study data and in maintaining a social function within the discourse community.

According to basic electronic message schema (Herring, 1996), each of the three generic moves is marked by a set of communicative functions as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1: Generic moves and communicative functions in the basic electronic message schema by Herring (1996)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Functional Moves</th>
<th>Generic Functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Preamble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacomment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prospective introduction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link to previous message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Express views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Request information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express feelings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggest solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Make offer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>Apology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Appeal to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Chastisement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1 shows a limited set of recurrent textual-pragmatic functions (Herring, 1996). The introduction of an electronic message is characterised by a set of four communicative functions which include, preamble, metacomment, prospective introduction and link to previous message. Link to previous message is usually the opening line of an electronic message characterised by statements such as *I would like to respond on the question of*... or *... letter raises two important questions*. A preamble introduction provides background information against which to evaluate the content in the message that follows. Metacomment gives a comment on the whole discussion while prospective introduction provides a summary abstract to introduce the message. Link to previous message links the current message to a previous message or messages.

The body of the electronic mail has six communicative functions which include expressing views, requesting information, providing information, expressing feelings, suggesting solution and making offer. Expressing views refers to statements of ideational content evaluated implicitly or explicitly with respect to the speaker’s commitment to their truthfulness (Herring, 1996). An electronic message may close with an apology, appeal for discussion or action, a chastisement or some other interactional speech acts. The communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail are discussed in reference to this schema.
The epistolary conventions comprising of salutation, complimentary close, signature and postscript were not treated as communicative functions in basic electronic message schema because only a few of the messages contained them (Herring, 1996). This is explained by the fact that a header is added automatically to each message by the electronic mailer. The header includes the source of the message, the thematic thread, the recipient of the message, the date and time of posting.

Though epistolary conventions are not included in the structure of basic electronic message schema, they are macro segments realised in the data of scholarly electronic mails studied. According to Herring (1996), epistolary conventions are peripheral slots in interactionally-oriented texts. Such texts have an additional external frame of opening and closing epistolary conventions. These conventions gave insights into the conventional sequences of moves in scholarly electronic mail. The epistolary conventions in basic electronic message schema are a framework for describing the conventions in scholarly electronic mail.

4.3.2 Scholarly electronic mail

The scholarly electronic mail is a linguistic academic discussion posted to LINGUISTlist by scholars in this field. For the purposes of determining the
generic moves and the communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail, all
the selected texts were read. The generic moves and the communicative functions
were extracted from the texts using basic electronic message schema as the
checklist.

According to Crystal (2001), a common technique for introducing a message is to
use an explicit reference to a previous message which is usually in the form of a
quotation from it or a paraphrase. Texts studied indicate that they were introduced
as shown in the data.

(1) I have nothing to say … on the subject, but I was reminded of… (T3)

(2) But don’t Anonby’s observations support in a sense the idea of
prestige and language maintenance (T6)

(3) I remind my colleagues who are hotly discussing the on-line issue of
whether thinking comes before speaking that… (T13)

Previous messages were referred to by discussants as a way of introducing their
messages. The discussants quoted the thematic thread of the topic under discussion
explicitly or implicitly. This was an indication that the discussants were following
the thematic thread of the discussion at hand and therefore established a
relationship with the other discussants. According to Crystal (2001), it is important
for discussants to make continued use of the subject description because it enables
groups of related messages to be placed together. Crystal (2001) however notes that this is especially important if messages are forwarded.

Crystal (2001) observes that the body of an electronic mail can be viewed in terms of obligatory and optional elements. The obligatory item is patently a message of some sort which is preceded by a greeting or salutation or opening and then followed by a farewell or a signature or a closing. The obligatory element was observed in the body of this study data as illustrated in example 4-6.

(4) We know how important the relationship of children to their parents is… (T4)

(5) A lot of good stuff and useful insights remain unknown to the majority of us… (T10)

(6) A holistic approach to language assumes its biological nature (T19)

The discussants pointed out important ideation content in the topic under discussion as their contribution to the discussion. Discussants saw the need of bringing into the discussion a new content that would possibly encourage deeper scrutiny of the topic by other discussants. Discussants seemed to involve others explicitly by using the reference we as in example 4 to remind others that they were all well versed with the facts of the topic under discussion. The personal involvement of all discussants is also seen in example 5 when the discussant referred to other discussants as majority of us.
Halliday (1978) recognizes that language has a function in its semantic system. One of the functions is the ideational function which expresses language as reflexive content. Halliday further notes that beside the ideational function, language also functions to create and maintain relationships. According to Herring (1996), the body of an electronic mail refers to statements of ideation where discussants express their views about a topic and what other discussants have said about that topic.

Herring (1996) observes that electronic mails have appeal to other participants as a third move and it is preceded by the message body. According to Hwang (1998), appeal to other participants aims at continuing the discussion or even ending it. Appeal to other participants was observed in this study data as in example 7-10.

(7) Doesn’t this ignore decades of linguistic research? (T1)
(8) In any case, small languages of the world face threat from the more dominant ones in the neighbourhood (T8)
(9) Eloquence is entirely another matter, and there is no doubt that there is too little of it these days (T18)
(10) Surely, this discussion forum is not quite the place for that (T19)

Discussants used statements of appeal to other participants with finality on their take about the discussion as in example 8 and 9. Other discussants closed their discussion with a question as in example 7 possibly to elicit more discussion from
others. Discussants exited the conversation floor by expressing their attitude about the ongoing discussion as in example 10. These appeals allowed other discussants to make their contributions or leave the conversational floor. According to Herring (1996), appeal to other participants invites others to take over the conversational floor which facilitates turn taking. Turn-taking resembles face-to-face conversation in day-to-day speech.

Having scrutinized scholarly electronic mail against basic electronic message schema, a summary of the generic moves in scholarly electronic mail is summarised in figure 2 below.

![Figure 2: Generic structure in scholarly electronic mail](image)

1. Introduction
2. Body
3. Close

Figure 2 shows the generic moves in scholarly electronic mail. The first move was introduction. It was basically the first line of the scholarly electronic mail and served as a means of introducing oneself to the discourse community. Introduction
also functioned as a means of maintaining relationship with other members of the subscription list. Discussants introduced their contributions by quoting the thematic thread of the discussion. The thematic thread was either referred to as the *subject, observations* or *online issue* in examples 1, 2 and 3 respectively. The introduction aimed at maintaining a relationship with other discussants by addressing them as colleagues as in example 3.

The second move in scholarly electronic mail was body. This move was characterised by discussants’ own perspective and understanding of the topic being discussed. Discussants endeavoured to bring to the fore facts about the linguistic topic which they felt should be familiar to everybody in the discussion. This is possibly because the subscribers to the mailing list are scholars in linguistics. Apart from expression of ideation function in move 2, the need to maintain relationship was also expressed as in example 4 and 5.

The third move was close which aimed at making an appeal to others to make their contributions to the ongoing discussion. Discussants questioned some of the facts expressed in the discussion as in example 7. The questioning may also have been a call to others to join the discussion and give clarity to the seemingly contradictory issues raised. The close was also characterised by strong attitudinal positions to
end the discussion as in example 10. However, other discussants simply closed their discussion with ideation statements that did not clearly show whether they were calling for an end to the discussion or inviting others to take their turn on the conversational floor as in examples 8 and 9.

The generic moves in scholarly electronic mail have a direct relationship with those in basic electronic message schema. Both are characterised by a three-part structure namely; introduction, body and close. Herring (1996) uses the terms link to earlier message for introduction, expression of views for body and appeal to other participants for close. This study preferred the terms introduction, body and close for the reason that the terms used by Herring (1996) are similar to those used in the expression of communicative functions in the discrete parts of basic electronic message schema.

The next section presents, analyses and discusses the opening and closing epistolary conventions which give further insight into the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema.
4.3.3 Epistolary convention in scholarly electronic mail

Following Herring (1996) description of the generic moves in basic electronic message schema, this study compared the epistolary conventions in scholarly electronic mail with those in basic electronic message schema with a view of establishing the relationship between them.

Epistolary conventions are peripheral slots which add to the interactional dimension of the electronic mail (Hwang, 1998). According to Waldvogel (2007), epistolary conventions are greetings and closings and they perform important social roles just as in other forms of interactions. Kankaaranta (2005) notes that salutations, closings and signatures frame electronic messages as being relational and involved.

Cho (2010) observes that greeting and leave-taking formulas in electronic mail are a feature of phatic communication and that their occurrence would support the notion that electronic mail has a social function. He also notes that the frequent and/or lengthy greeting and leave-taking formulas could further be taken as evidence that social and/or expressive needs sometimes outweigh the principle of linguistic economy. In this study, epistolary conventions were observed and they included salutation and thematic thread which realised as greetings and website
consecutively. The complimentary close was realised as signature and references.

In our corpus, cases of salutation were observed as exemplified in 11-12.

(11) Dear colleagues (T4)

(12) Dear Linguists (T9)

Salutation in scholarly electronic mail suggested that the users expressed their feeling of close contact with other members of the mailing list. This was expressed through the use of *dear* in example 11 and 12 and the use of *colleagues* as in example 11. There is also an appreciation in example 12 by referring to his addresses as *linguists* which possibly serves as a sense of belonging to the online community.

According to Gruber (2008a), discussants who use salutation view their messages as more similar to print correspondence than to conventional turns. Crystal (2001) observes that a general enquiry posted to a group of recipients where the aim is to obtain information for the benefit of all, is likely to be opened with a greeting like *Dear all* or *Dear List Members*. By using salutations, the authors of the electronic messages aim at constructing a relationship with the recipient thus contributing to the maintenance of good social relations (Kankaaranta, 2005).
It is interesting to note that the inclusion of the thematic thread as an epistolary
convention was used in six texts out of the twenty texts under study. Thematic
thread is provided by the mailing list automatically yet authors used them to
indicate the need for relationship with other subscribers. The thematic thread in the
epistolary convention referred other readers to the link that provided the ongoing
discussion despite being provided by the mailer. This is exemplified in this study
data.

(13) Re; http://www.linguistlist.org... (T5)
(14) Discuss this message; http://linguistlist.org... (T13)
(15) Read Review; http://linguistlist.org ... (T16)

Discussants quoted website links to direct other discussants on where to find the
message under discussion. This seems rather odd because the mailing list
automatically provides the previous message as well as the website link for all
other similar messages on the topic. This could possibly be explained by
discussants unawareness of the settings of the website.

According to Gruber (2008a), a possible explanation for this is that this usage
guarantees that the readers would find this previous posting in their own electronic
mail reader. Other readers would even retrieve it from the site where the postings
are stored. He however notes that the quotation of the thematic thread as well as
other software generated parts is rather unusual possibly because the mailer inserts them automatically.

The complimentary close is preceded by both the salutation and the thematic thread. It is a form of a closing formula or a farewell to the recipients of the mail (Crystal, 2001). Complimentary close is important because it identifies the sender of the mail to the immediate recipient. Waldvogel (2007) points that a closing can help consolidate the relationship and establish a relational basis for future encounters. In this study, the use of complimentary close was observed in example 16-18.

(16) Best Regards. (T4)

(17) Best Regards, (T9)

(18) All the best to linguists everywhere! (T20)

These types of close are a characteristic of a letter written to a friend or someone that is very close to the writer. The choice of this complimentary close possibly suggested a high interpersonal involvement of the discussants. Herring (1996) observes that discussants who use this type of complimentary close liken the structure of electronic messages to that of personal letters. The pre-closing formula of the best wishes type according to Crystal (2001) confirms the general view about electronic mail as a means of informal interaction between people who
know each other. According to Cho (2010), leave-taking formula is used to incorporate the sentiments of the participants involved in the exchange of mails.

Signatures at the end of an electronic message are types of identification of the sender (Crystal, 2001). He further points that signatures can be inserted manually or electronically. Manual signatures are characterised by either a first name, an initial letter(s) or by a first name followed by surname or vice versa in languages where the ordering convention differs. Titles, qualifications and other letters after the name may be present depending on the formality of the electronic message. Automatic signatures are inserted by the mailer software using text created by the sender and stored in a file. The automatic signatures can be complex pieces of writing. For Gruber (2008a), academic electronic mail postings are distinguished from traditional genres through the realisation of the interpersonal function of language. According to Gruber (2008a), the use of the first name for signature and/or leave-taking indicates a personal relationship between the author of a mail and the recipient. In our corpus, the use of signature was observed in examples 19-22.

(19) Franz Dotter (Klagenfurt University) (T4)
(20) C. Rajendran (T7)
(21) Mike Maxwell (CASL/UMD) (T14)
(22) alex (T20)
Out of the twenty mails collected for this study, only six used personal names for signature. Four out of six used the author’s full name as in example 19. One out of six used an initial followed by name as in example 20 and one out of six used one name in small letters as in example 22. Besides the use of full name in examples 19 and 21, the writers provided the name of the university and the title held respectively. This probably indicated the high level of formality of the message.

According to Gruber (2008a), the use of full name is a traditional method of written academic prose. He further argues that in this respect, such a message is closer to the written pole of communication than the spoken language. Conversely, the use of the first name in its short form in example 22 indicates a rather personal relationship between the author and the other participants. However, Murray (1988) argues that it is redundant for a user of computer-mediated communication system to self-identify linguistically. Similarly, Werry (1996) noted that pronominal reference is redundant in Internet Relay Chat since the addressee is typically signalled in advance of the body of a speaker’s utterance.

It was observed that one text out of the twenty texts used lower case for first letter in the name instead of using upper case as shown in example 22. This was possibly due to a close relationship between the author and the recipients.
According to Cho (2010), the use of lower case for name is possibly an indicator of how linguistic features in computer-mediated communication breach traditional roles of standard written communication. Ferrara et al. (1991) and Uhlirova (1994) note that such linguistic features which reveal a new way of writing include uncorrected typographical errors, omission of essential punctuation and the use of lower case in place of upper case.

Gruber (2008a) explains that the use of first name for personal reference creates a communicative atmosphere which resembles a face-to-face interaction rather than a written exchange. He also notes that it is an indication that genre conventions for academic electronic mail are not exclusively modelled after the ‘research paper’ genre conventions. Rather they combine features of traditional written academic genres with spoken every-day genres. Signatures and closings give the electronic messages a positive tone (Kankaaranta, 2005).

According to (Herring, 1996), bibliographical references were part of what made up providing information in move 2. Reference was used by discussants as exemplified in 23-24.

(24) Pease, C.B. Physics Envy. Online at: http://www.bevpease... (T20)

All the necessary information required in accessing information from a journal and website page for online information were provided in 23 and 24 respectively. The elements in the journal were name of the contributor, year of publication, title of the paper, name of the journal, series and volume numbers in this order. This was a formal way of quoting a journal as a reference and it also made it easy for readers to access the journal.

Herring (1996), notes that bibliographical references were part of what makes up providing information. Providing information involves both requesting and providing information without requesting for it. In this study, information was provided on volition. This was possibly because the participants viewed the interactions as a platform of providing information about what they knew about the topic and to give clarity to issues that were raised in the discussion.

Maroko (1999:98) observes that mentioning the name of the author in a citation is two-fold.
1. Researchers provide proof to readers that they have knowledge of those people who have published in a particular field of research.

2. Researchers refer their readers to a particular work for further information.

He also notes that these two factors contribute to the rhetorical structure of a text since the credibility of a research work is created this way.

4.4 Summary
Having critically examined the epistolary conventions in scholarly electronic mail against the basic electronic message schema, it is plausible to conclude that there exists a relationship between them. Scholarly electronic mail realised epistolary conventions such as salutation, thematic thread, complimentary close, signature and bibliographical references. The basic electronic message schema realised salutation, complimentary close, signature, and postscript as epistolary conventions. Salutation, complimentary close and signature were realised in both scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Postscript was only realised in basic electronic message schema while thematic thread and bibliographical reference were realised in scholarly electronic mail only. It is plausible to conclude that epistolary conventions displayed both formal academic writing features and characteristics of day-to-day spoken speech.
4.5 Communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail

Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) define genre as a recognisable communicative event characterised by a set of communicative purposes. As in the case of many other means of written communication, electronic mails have the function of communicating a particular message to the recipient (Al-khatib, 2008). According to Crystal (2001), electronic messages have specific functions of asking, exchanging ideas, congratulating, complimenting and greeting. This agrees with Gains (1999) that electronic mail messages have communicative functions which range from making requests, responding to information, maintaining contact, chatting, promoting enquiring and having fun. The communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail were described within the context of the generic moves that characterise the discrete parts. These functions are link to previous message, expression of views and appeal to other participants.

4.5.1 Link to previous message

According to Herring (1996), the first line of electronic mail realises the communicative function of link to earlier message. Link to an earlier message is an introduction to the discussion and is realised in different ways such as: preamble introduction, metacomment introduction, prospective introduction and link to previous message. Preamble is an introduction or introductory statement in
a document which states the reasons for the rest of the document and it serves to explain the purpose of that document (Your dictionary 2013). Preamble introduction was used in this study corpus as illustrated in example 25-26.

(25) *The saying that every generation has to invent the world anew seems to be correct* (T4)

(26) *I think that apart from prestige and the absence of contact with other linguistic groups, opportunities also play a pivotal role for language preservation* (T7)

In this study data, two out of twenty texts used preamble introduction to link to previous message. An introductory statement was used in examples 25 and 26. The introductory statement was based on some saying presumably known to the addresses as in example 25. This possibly means that linguistic scholars subscribed to the mailing list were expected to be versed with English sayings. The use of preamble introduction was also significant in that it provided other participants with the reasons for the discussion. This enabled participants to understand the gist of the current message.

Herring (1996) notes that a preamble introduction provides background information against which to evaluate the content that follows. When a speaker or a writer wants to attract attention, he uses a metacomment which introduces a significant proposition (Runge, 2008). Runge further defines metacomment as
when speakers stop saying what they are saying in order to comment on what they are about to say, speaking abstractly about it, for example; *it is important that you understand that..., I want you to know....*. The use of metacomment is exemplified in example 27.

(27) **How convenient to suppose that study of linguistics**

> *works in the same way that chemists find some utility in divorcing the components of interest from one another* (T20)

After scrutinising the first line of all the scholarly electronic mail, only one text out of twenty texts used metacomment to link to previous message. The author of the message in example 27 momentarily shifted his perspective from a direct engagement with the discussion at hand and consciously engaged in attracting the attention of other participants possibly to express the weighty matters in the topic under discussion. The general comments made by the author of this message enabled other discussants to pay attention to what that discussant had to say. Consequently, other discussants found it necessary to join the discussion by posting their contributions.

The Free Online Dictionary defines prospective introduction as that which is likely or expected to happen or become. Herring (1996), notes that this type of an introduction provides a summary abstract in electronic messages. It summarises
the message by providing a summary. The following example occurred in this study data

(28) Another problem is the language used in scientific publishing (T10)
(29) I think socio-economic factors such as access to formal education are to be taken into account too (T8)

Discussants in examples 28 and 29 provided a summary of what the recipients of this message expected in the current message. An exposition of the idea mentioned in the summary was used as a foundation for the participants’ arguments. This was significant in that all the recipients of the message were able to connect with what others had earlier said about the discussion. It prepared the readers to encounter what had already been hinted. This implied that the motivation to read and possibly post their claims was very real.

Link to previous message is a type of introduction which links the current message to a previous message or messages. Herring (1996) notes that link to previous message is characterised by statements such as; I would like to respond on the question of... or ... letter raises two important questions.... Link to previous message was observed in this study corpus.
(30) *I am curious to hear what other linguists think about the research to which this newspaper article refers* (T1)

(31) *I would concur with Don Killian’s plea for sharing linguistic information* (T11)

(32) *Regarding the Dalrymple article referred to in posting...and comments on it, I suspect it is true...* (T8)

Discussants directly referred to the previous message possibly because they viewed their messages as contributions to an ongoing discussion. Fourteen texts out of twenty in our corpus linked to a previous message through the use of link to previous message. Discussants referred to previous message by use of words and phrases such as *refers* in example 30, *concur with* in example 31 and *referred to*. This implied that reference to previous message was an indication that the discussants were closely following the discussion and could therefore comment on the same effectively without breaking the coherence. This possibly encouraged those who had not read the messages to do so.

Herring (1996) observes that link to previous message had the highest frequency of usage of all the messages studied. Herring further attributed the high frequency to the participants’ need to establish and maintain coherence across messages. This observation is significant in computer-mediated communication in that subject
headers alone do not provide sufficient information to identify which discussion the message is responding to.

4.5.2 Expression of views

While discussing topics posted in the mailing list, participants aim at transmitting their messages’ primary ideation content. In this study, the body of the scholarly electronic mail realised communicative functions including; expressing views, providing information, expressing feelings, suggesting solutions and asking questions.

Expression of views ranged from expression of opinions, beliefs, understanding and judgement associated with some aspect of the topic under discussion. Expression of views was exemplified in this study data.
(33) *I think* part of the answer may also lie in the size of the group (T5)

(34) ... but while the technical limitations for sharing data are quickly disappearing, the social limitations are often still strong. But the solutions are known, *it seems to me* (T12)

(35)... I support Seuren’s stance that the standard minimalist T-model of grammar is unacceptable because syntax is absurdly or perversely conceived of as being before semantics has provoked objections: *I believe* they stem from a misunderstanding of the concept of “before/after” and “semantics”. (T16)

Discussants expressed their opinions, judgement, understanding and beliefs of the topics under discussion through the use of phrases such as *I think* in example 33, *it seems to me* example 34 and *I believe* in example 35. This could be explained by the need by participants to detach themselves from their assertions.

According to Herring (1996), expression of views ranges from forcefully-worded assertions (including assertions of alleged “facts”) to opinions presented as such. These assertions are expressed through the use of hedged evidential phrases such as *I think* and *It seems to me*. The impact of these forcefully-worded assertions was likely to invoke the need for other participants to join the ongoing discussion. These statements also evaluated the authors’ commitment to their truthfulness of
their message either implicitly or explicitly. Chafe and Danielewics (1987), note that academic writers are particularly fond of expressions which indicate that things happen, in general but not necessarily always. Halliday (1994) notes that academic hedges are a sign of detachment from a writer’s assertions and are common in abstract ideas and the modalisation of content. This observation is consistent with Maroko (2008) who observes that hedging is a process used by authors to tone down their statements in order to reduce the risk of opposition and minimize the threat-to-face that lurks behind every act of communication.

In basic electronic message schema (Herring, 1996), providing information is basically reporting of content. It involves providing bibliographic references, conference announcements or announcements of software available. Within scholarly electronic mail, providing information was in the form of web pages, books, journals and archives as in example 36-38.

(36) ... refreshed by glancing over a summary ... at the web page of American Educator...http://www.aft.org...reports/american_educator/... (T2)

(37) There is a movement toward both of these in linguistics ... journals such as Linguistic Discovery or the e-Language journals, as well as archives such as ROA and Lingbuzz... (T12)

(38) ... his model seems to be described as realistic but the famous note 3 (Chomsky 1995:380) puzzles the reader. (T16)
The webpage and the book reference were to provide more access to information on the discussion. The linguistic journals and archives were portals for sharing information from linguistic research. This implied that discussants viewed their messages as closer to traditional academic prose writing. Herring (1996) noted that bibliographical references were part of what makes up providing information.

Expression of feelings is usually expressed as authors attempt to express their views on a topic under discussion. According to Herring (1996), expression of feelings is realised through the use of phrases such as am concerned and It angers me. In the scholarly electronic mail, such phrases provided discussants with a platform to express their feelings about the contributions by discussants to the topic under discussion. Consequently, participants were invoked to take their role as addressees and joined the discussion. Expression of feelings is exemplified in example 39-41.

(39) It doesn’t help anyone, and it hinders a lot (T9)

(40) ... but there’s not much younger linguists can do at this point, I’m afraid (T12)

(41) ... postponing semantic component to the end of the derivation is pure nonsense (T16)

Discussants expressed disappointment in that linguistic information was not willingly distributed. Discussants expressed dissatisfaction in the way sharing
linguist research was handled causing all concerned to suffer as in example 39. The authors expressed fear that younger linguists were not able to access linguistic information by established linguists and that this was not going to change soon as in example 40. Additionally, example 41 thought it was pure nonsense to separate syntax from semantics and vice versa. The use of strong emotional expressions in scholarly electronic mail was possibly a characteristic of spoken language. In everyday speech, speakers do not hide their emotions and they say it in black and white. This observation was consistent with observations made by Hwang (1998) and Herring (1996) that although the primary communicative purpose of electronic mail is expression of views, expression of feelings emerges in that process.

Authors of scholarly electronic mail suggested solutions to the problems they face as linguists. This opened new areas of finding and sharing linguistic information about their research as in example 42-44.
(42) An improvement of this step could be that LINGUISTlist make available a list of these researchers with perhaps a search tool working on this ‘virtual’ data base (T10)

(43) Perhaps others can point to sources of information they are aware of. On my part, I will mention that SIL International is increasingly putting more basic descriptions online... (T11)

(44) For descriptive materials, however, it might be a good idea to create another archive, along the lines of ROA or LingBuzz... (T12)

Discussants suggested solutions to others in the subscription list on how to solve some of the challenges they faced as linguists. Suggestions to improve sharing of linguistic research freely ranged from improving the open access mode on websites and creating other archives in the lines of ROA or LingBuzz as in example 44. This revealed that suggestions to solutions were not necessarily requested for by other discussants but arose from the need to improve the practical realities of handling linguistic research by linguists.

This observation does not conform with Herring (1996) who points that suggestions are a call to others to subscribe to the mailing list as well as read the discussions posted by other discussants. Discussants in scholarly electronic mail possibly provided solutions to challenges in sharing of linguistic research as a call to invoke others to take their turn on the conversational floor and provide solutions.
According to Crystal (2001), rhetorical questions are more common in electronic mails than in other variables of written English, apart from certain types of literary expression. Participants in scholarly electronic mail asked rhetorical questions to express their views thus furthering on the discussion. Examples of participants asking questions occur in this study data.

(45) *What does that really mean, compared with the many different phenomena to be found in the world?* (T4)

(46) *What is really Chomsky’s position? There is no answer but just...* (T16)

(47) *What precise counterparts can mainstream linguistics point to during the past fifty years...?* (T20)

Asking questions was a communicative function realised in the body of the electronic mail. Discussants described poor and uneducated people as disadvantaged in life. This view was questioned in example 45 with some discussants arguing that other aspects of life such as acceptance, emotional stability, truth and open communication between parents and their children were of greater value than riches and education. Chomsky’s stance, that the standard minimalist T-Model of grammar where syntax is perceived as being before semantics was questioned. The discussant was puzzled by this stance in that Chomsky’s concepts of ‘well-formed’ and ‘grammatical’ remained without characterisation or known empirical justification. According to the discussant, they play virtually no role in early work on generative grammar except in informal exposition.
Another discussant in example 47 questioned the convenient presupposition by mainstream linguists that the study of linguistics works in the same way as Chemistry. Additionally, mainstream linguists were questioned on their tangible contributions over the last fifty years that warranted a comparison with Chemistry which well over two centuries had progressed with undisputable practical by-products cropping up almost every year. From this argument, it was plausible to imply that discussants asked questions which did not automatically require an answer but was a medium for expressing their opinions about the discussion. Moreover, this also enabled the discussants to take their turn on the conversational floor and post their messages.

4.5.3 Appeal to other participants

Close is the communicative function in move 3 of scholarly electronic mail. It is made up of the last line of the message minus the complimentary close and the writers’ signature. According to Herring (1996), it follows the message body although it does not occur predictably as the first two moves. This is possibly because some writers make their appeal in either move 1 or move 2. In our study data, this move was realised as either appeal for comments and opinions or call for action as in example 48-51.
(48) *I’d welcome any comments.* (T5)

(49) *I welcome any opinions.* (T9)

(50) *Shouldn’t we ask for UNESCO funding to push on this kind of projects?* (T10)

(51) *Surely, this discussion forum is not quite the place for that* (T19)

These appeals invited other participants to take over the conversational floor, and thus facilitated turn taking. Comments and opinions were viewed by participants as access to more information on topics under discussion. They were also clarifications to propositions made by other discussants.

Hwang (1998) observes that this appeal in electronic messages is different from Longacre’s use of appeal which gives credence or adoption of certain values nuclear to persuasive discourse. It was interesting to note that the appeal in 49 occurred both in move 1 and 3. This was a distortion of the rhetorical structure of this text and possibly brought a false close to the discussion. According to Gruber and Huemer (2008), if the same generic function is realised in two different places in a text, the text has a problem.

Having examined the communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail, a summary of these functions is provided in Table 4.2 below.
Table 4.2: Communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic moves</th>
<th>Communicative functions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Preamble</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Metacomment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prospective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Link to previous message</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>Express views</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provide information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Express feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Suggest solution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Asking questions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Close</td>
<td>Appeal to others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Call for action</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 summarised the communicative functions in the generic moves of scholarly electronic mail. Introduction to the discussions was realised in four functions which include, preamble, metacomment, prospective and link to previous message. The body of scholarly electronic mail was characterised by five communicative functions namely; express views, provide information, express feelings, suggest solution and asking questions. The last move was close and it realised two communicative functions which include, appeal to others and call for action. The body of scholarly electronic mail realised more communicative functions when compared to introduction and close. This is possibly because discussants express their ideation content in the body and therefore realise it in different ways.
4.6 Summary

Communicative functions in scholarly electronic mail enabled participants to take their turn on the conversational floor and continue with the ongoing discussion. Different types of communicative functions were drawn from the discrete parts of the scholarly electronic mail an indication that discrete parts had communicative functions.

4.7 Linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail

Maroko (2010) observes that one aspect of the Genre Theory is its emphasis on conventions as a basis for generic description. This is consistent with Swales (1990) and Bhatia (2002) who assert that genre can be determined by the use of language in conventionalised communicative settings to express a set of specific communicative goals of specialised disciplinary and social groups. In this way, structural forms are established which are constructed using lexico-grammatical features constrained by a specific discipline or profession.

Discourse based studies help to determine characteristic linguistic features representing the discourse generated. According to Gruber (2008a), discourse in scholarly electronic mail displays both features of oral genre of everyday conversations and written features characteristic of traditional prose. He further
notes that characteristic linguistic features can be chunked into intertextual relations, interpersonal characteristics and clause combinations. Cho (2010) observes that there is linguistic innovation in electronic mail writing. This study explored some of the innovations found in scholarly electronic mail which include capitalisation, use of parenthesis, abbreviations and acronyms and asterisks.

4.7.1 Intertextual relations
As Wodak (2008) observes, texts are linked to other texts both in the past and in the present. These links can be established in different ways either through continued reference to a topic or main actors, through reference to the same events or by the transfer of main arguments from one text into the next. According to Fairclough (1992:104), intertextuality means,

> Other texts are explicitly present in the text under analysis; they are manifestly marked or cued by features on the surface of the text, such as quotation marks. Note, however, that a text may incorporate another text without the latter being explicitly cued: one can respond to another text in the way one words one’s text.

According to this quotation, there are some crucial differences in the possible realisations of intertextuality in our study texts. The intertextuality features of direct and indirect quotations are described because of their ability to link an electronic text to a previous text. According to Gruber (2008a), direct quotation is the inclusion of a part of a previous posting in the actual message. He further notes
that it is the standard way of including the referred text into the actual message in most electronic mail programmes. Direct quotations are marked from the auctorial text by alphanumeric sign (>) at the beginning of each quoted line. The author quotes portions of the text he refers to. The following example exists in this study data.

(52) **I am curious to hear what other linguists think about**

   the research to which

   This newspaper article refers. The researchers argue that

   less educated

   Families do not deliver language as complex to their children

   as those who

   are educated... (T1)

(53) **David Johnson writes**

   > I am curious to hear what other linguists think about the

   research to which

   > this newspaper article refers. The researchers argue that

   less educated

   > families do not deliver language as complex to their children

   as those who

   > are educated. (T2)

(54) Babito says, “**As long as speakers see some social status or socio-economic value in their languages, they will certainly wish to maintain them.**” (T5)
The words in example 53 were entirely those of the original author in example 52. The link between the previous text and the actual text was enabled by the inbuilt software. Out of twenty texts, only one text used direct quotation in move 1. This is not consistent with Gruber (2008a) observation that direct quotation is the standard way of including the referred text into the actual message. However, Crystal (2001) argues that a common technique is to introduce a message with an explicit reference to a previous message usually in the form of a quotation from it or a paraphrase of it. A direct quotation as in example 53 was used in move 2. The discussant used speech marks to reveal the actual words of the writer. This linguistic feature signalled the communicative function of the writer in move 2. This implied that writers of scholarly electronic mail used direct quotation as markers of expression of views in their discussions.

Indirect quotation does not use inbuilt software though the discussant refers back to the previous message (Gruber 2008a). He further argues that the discussant uses a paraphrase of the previous contribution and only the first name of the author of previous message is mentioned. This is exemplified in example 55-58.
(55) Maybe the statement that *prestige helps maintain language* is true for Africa because the languages there are of roughly the same size and status (T5)

(56) Maxwell interestingly points out that phonological rules can be thought of as bidirectional (T16)

(57) For what it’s worth, David Foster Wallace wrote a much better essay ... that deals with some of these issues in a much more entertaining and well-informed manner than does ... (T17)

(58) ... is unquestionably and fatally wrong assuming that analysis into components can lead to revealing truths about their totality (T19)

The first name of the author being referred to was used in example 56 to bring to the fore the information referred to by the current author. Current discussants paraphrased content contained in previous messages as in example 55 and 56. This was an indication that the current discussant had clearly understood the previous discussant and could authoritatively comment on their thoughts. According to Bazerman (2002), indirect quotation usually specifies a source and then attempts to reproduce the meaning of the original but in words that reflect the author’s understanding, interpretation, or spin on the original. These examples are forms of intertextuality that resemble academic quotation practices.

The indirect quotation in example 55 was derived from views based on modern science and the discussant applied them in linguistics. This implied that content
taught in linguistics could be effectively borrowed from other knowledge areas. According to Wodak (2008), an environment where a topic-related discourse refers to topics or sub-topic of other discourses and forms new meanings is a type of intertextuality referred to as interdiscusivity. This is important because meanings are formed in use (Mautner, 2008). Authors in scholarly electronic mail used intertextuality to link the views of other participants to their own. They continuously referred to other topics and transferred main arguments from one text to another. This is the process of recontextualisation (Wodak, 2008).

Quotation of the full name of the previous author was used in example 55. The current author seemed to be laying emphasis and authenticity on the views in the discussion. He recommended that other participants should read the reference provided. However, Gruber (2008a) contends that only the first name is included in indirect quotation. The inclusion of the full name implies that the authors considered their postings as formal and therefore followed the traditional writing of academic prose.

4.7.2 Personal characteristics
Language is used to not only transmit an ideational function but also to establish and maintain social relationships between people (Halliday, 1994). This is the
The concept of interpersonal (meta) function of language. For the purposes of this study, signalling linguistic features were described according to (Gruber, 2008a). This is because they had proved to be markers in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail that the study was interested in. They included first person singular pronoun, use of contractions, personal reference, and use of modal expressions.

First person singular pronoun has a pragmatic function of authorial presence and the relationship of the author with his/her academic community (Harwood, 2005; Hyland, 2004). Conversely, traditional academic prose authors use a rather impersonal rhetoric (Nystrand, 1987; Bazerman, 1988; Myers, 1990) through which personal beliefs and stances are veiled. In scholarly electronic mail, authors used first person singular pronoun as in example 59-61.

(59) I think socio-economic factors such as access to formal education are to be taken into account too (T8)

(60) This topic is one of my biggest concerns as I supervise PhD students from African countries... (T10)

(61) I don’t know whether the translation between semantics and syntax can be done with finite transducers... (T14)

First person singular pronoun occurred in all the three moves. First person singular pronoun enabled writers to intrude into their own messages in a personal way. This was an indication of personal involvement of writers into their own claims.
and therefore placed their texts close to the spoken pole of the spoken-written continuum. First person singular pronoun was used to express the writers’ stance, to communicate with their readers and to establish their relations with the scholarly community of which they are, or they aspired to be members. It also played a key role in the realisation of indirect quotation by reproducing the meaning of the original text as in example 59. Bazerman (2002), points that indirect quotation filters the meaning through the second author’s words and attitudes and allows the meanings to be more thoroughly infused with the second writer’s purpose.

Personal reference is realised through the use of the first name or full names of the author of the text referred to (Gruber 2008a). He further observes that the use of personal reference indicates a rather personal relationship between the two authors. Personal reference in this study data is illustrated in example 62-64.

(62) ... and it could address one of the issues that Don Killian raises. (T12)

(63) Alexander Kravchenko responds to... (T17)

(64) Peter Hallman in his remarks on grammar and eloquence reassures... (T19)

Full names of previous discussants were referred to. This indicated a personal relationship between the two authors who considered their contributions as formal thus placing them closer to written academic prose. This is consistent with
Halliday (1978) who notes that language does not only have an ideation function but also is used to establish and maintain social relationship between people.

Contractions are not only a characteristic of spoken language but also indicate involvement and frequent contact between participants (Martin, 1992). They are more commonly found in less formal varieties of spoken communication such as personal conversations, than in more formal varieties of written communication such as academic papers (Chafe and Danielewicz, 1987) as exemplified in example 65-67.

(65) I haven’t had a chance to read it, but they do touch on language development (T3)

(66) I’ve been working with typological linguists for a while now ... (T9)

(67) So one shouldn’t really be surprised at the staggering parallels of the... (T19)

Contraction was used in all the three moves of scholarly electronic mail. This implied that discussants aimed at using informal language as a sign of frequent contact with the members of this discourse community. According to Nash (1980), contracted forms are perceived as an inviting gesture of friendliness from the writer to the reader. In topical sentences, contracted forms are used as discourse markers facilitating the transition from one unit of thought to the next. Cho (2010)
observes that contractions occurred with higher frequency in electronic mail than in memorandum. The use of contractions indicated that discussants in scholarly electronic mail viewed their messages as informal because formal communication does not use contractions.

Modality is an aspect of realising interpersonal function in texts. It expresses the intermediate degrees between the positive and the negative poles of statements (Halliday, 1994). Stubbs (1996:202) refers to modality as:

The ways in which language is used to encode meanings such as degree of certainty and commitment, or alternatively vagueness and lack of commitment, personal beliefs versus generally accepted or taken for granted knowledge.

According to Mautner (2008), markers of modality include modal verbs and modal adverbials such as perhaps, certainly, might, may and will. Cases of modality occur in example 68-70.

(68) The reporter is probably referring to... (T2)
(69) Possibly higher status gives people more confidence... (T5)
(70) ...It must be highlighted that Chomsky’s position is even confused... (T16)
Probably was used to express uncertainty about the work being referred to as in example 68. Mautner (2008) refers to probably as low adverbial modal which produces a hedged tentative proposition that the speaker is not sure about. When authors do not want to commit themselves to their own claims, they chose to use modality. Gruber (2008) observes that some kind of modals like possibly, limit the certainty of the ideation content of the writer’s statements. However, writers also used the positive pole of statements and committed themselves to their claims through the use of modality as in example 70. Mautner (2008) refers to must as a high modal in that the speaker fully commits himself to his claims.

Biber (1988) notes that texts which are characterised by personal involvement are verbal, interactional effective, fragmented, reduced in form and generalised in content. He further points that such texts depict a face-to-face communication. Accordingly, disjuncts are features that make a text more involved and generalised. According to Thorne (1997), disjuncts are rhetorical devices dependent upon the individual character of the writer as it is this which determines the viewpoint and tone chosen for the discourse. These devices are meant to trigger the reader into agreeing with the writer’s point of view as observed in this study data shown in example 71-73
(71) Naturally, all context features to which a child is exposed... (T4)

(72) In order to do good comparative work, you need to obtain

a fairly large amount of source material. Unfortunately,

I’ve run into problems... (T9)

(73) Obviously, even the most fervent generativists understand... (T17)

Naturally, unfortunately obviously are adverbial disjuncts and expressed the
speechers’ attitude. Naturally and obviously affirmed what was obvious and general
in the natural environment. Unfortunately in example 72 evoked the attitude of
negative effects. Though the author had met many wonderful people willing to
share linguistic information, it was still difficult to access unpublished
dissertations and theses. However, Wilson and Sperber (1993) contend that the
removal of these linguistic expressions do not affect the truth or falsity of
utterances containing them. It would be plausible to imply that the use of disjuncts
brings texts closer to the spoken language rather than the written language used in
traditional academic prose.

4.7.3 Clause combinations

Clause combination refers to aspects of the logical (meta) function of language
(Halliday, 1994). According to Thompson (1996), logical meta-function relates to
the connections between the messages and to the ways in which we signal these
connections. Clause combinations according to Gruber (2008a) are conjunctions and coordination of clauses.

According to Gruber (2008a), conjunctions are used to express relationships between clauses. He further contends that conjunctions help in determining which kind of clause combining prevails; either coordination or subordination. He also observes that more coordinated than subordinated clause and clause combinations are in most cases signalled by conjunctions such as and and but. Cases of conjunction were observed in this study as shown in 74-76.

(74)... did have important things to say about the size of parents and Children’s active vocabularies and verbal repertoires, but I don’t recall anything as simple-minded as ... (T2)
(75)... I know a lot of students, researchers, and professors, particularly here in ... (T9)
(76) This approach is obviously not holistic, and is not intended to be, but not because it denies the complexity of language, but only because of the limited scope of the task it sets before itself. (T18)

The use of conjunction as illustrated in example 74-76 was only found in move 1 and move 2. Move 3 did not realise the use of conjunction. Discussants expressed their opinions in long sentences without breaking the continuity of their thoughts through the use of a full stop which is the conventional way of ending a thought in
written prose. This implied that discussants viewed their texts in a conversational way thus putting this form of feature closer to speech-like language than to written prose. This contradicted the widely held belief that conjunctions conveyed contrast between two ideas and topics.

Simple contrast relation is used to signal two contrasting claims. Maroko (1999) notes that a simple contrast relation is used to signal two circumstances that are in contrast and that one is surprising or unexpected in view of the other. Such relations are signalled by such connectors such as however, whereas, though and although. Simple contrast relation is observed in example 77-79.

(77) A lot good stuff and useful insights remain unknown to the majority of us because they are not written in English. As a consequence ... (T10)

(78) ... one of the fundamental tenets of MGG is that syntax can be separated by semantics... However, it is empirical evidence that syntax cannot be distinguished by semantics: ... (T16)

(79) There is perhaps, a real issue here, though standard linguistics, are all reluctant to face it head on. (T17)

The use of simple contrast relations in our study was significant for contrasting claims made by other discussants in the discussions. Failure to write linguistic research had resulted in simply the rediscovery of what had already been done in other languages as exemplified in example 77. Contrast of ideas was exemplified
in examples 78 and 79 through the use of however and though consecutively. Fraser (2010) notes that contrastive discourse markers such as though, however and consequently can indicate either a direct contrast use or a contradiction and also elimination use depending on usage. From these examples, it is plausible to suggest that simple contrast relation effectively brought into the discussion other aspects of the topic which had not been adequately discussed by other discussants.

Cho (2010) observes that use of capitalisation in electronic mails is for emphasis and that this usage excludes the use of capitalisation for headings. The use of capitalisation is exemplified in example 80-82.

(80) ...it is only such autonomy of syntax that NECESSARILY leads to... (T16)

(81) This seems empirically untenable since we can see something, think that we want it and do NOT say anything either within our head or outside it through speech organs (T16)

(82) But language is NOT A CODE... (T19)

Capitalisation was used in example 80 to emphasize that the autonomy of syntax alone could not determine whether it interfaced with semantics before, after or during computation. Discussants emphasized their beliefs about the topic under discussion by capitalising the words that brought out the emphasis. This possibly implied that discussants viewed their texts as more conversational similar to day-
to- day spoken speech. According to Cho (2010), the use of capitalisation in electronic mail was higher than in memoranda. He further notes that this was expected since the electronic mail application used did not allow for bold, italics or underlining. This therefore monopolised capitalisation as the only means of emphasis in that study. In this study, capitalisation was viewed as linguistic innovation in computer mediated communication.

According to Cho (2010), a parenthetical expression is a qualifying or explanatory remark which is realised through the use of parenthesis, dashes or commas to give an explanation of the preceding sentence. He further notes that dashes are used to explain that open access websites can be used for free sharing of linguistic research because they are bound by legal permission to print or even publish. Accordingly, Cho (2010) interestingly notes that a dash requires less keystrokes as compared to parenthesis which requires more keystrokes. He further refers to this as linguistic economy. The following examples of parenthetical expression occur in this study data.
(83) It would be more accurate to say that if the patterns observed
by Hart and Risley hold over four years of real-world experience
(that is, the years before the child enters pre-school)...

(84) It consists in putting the drafts – free from copying – of their
research stuff in open access on their websites

(85) But I see the primary basis of language as neither philosophical
nor psychological nor cognitive in nature – rather it is far more likely
to emerge as primarily... not to mention – at least in the case of...

This study data showed the use of parenthesis and dashes in move 2 only. This
could be explained by the fact that move 2 was the body of the scholarly electronic
mail which carried the ideation content. Therefore, in an attempt to explain their
beliefs with clarity, discussants used parenthesis. The words in parenthesis in
example 83 were an explanation of the four years that a child experienced in real
world. Discussants also used dashes to describe the nature of websites which could
be used in free sharing of linguistic research as in example 84. Dashes were also
used in example 85 to explain the primary basis of language as neither
philosophical nor psychological nor cognitive but physiological. In this study,
parenthesis was possibly used to indicate that discussants viewed their messages
as more conversational than formal.

According to Cho (2010), abbreviations / clippings occurred in electronic mail and
these excluded commonly abbreviated names of departments and organisations
such as ITS – Information Technology Services – and popular computer abbreviations which have generally superseded the full form such as DOS – Disk Operating System. Abbreviations and acronyms occurred in this study data as illustrated in example 86-88.

(86) On my part, I will mention that SIL international is putting
more basic descriptions online…. (T11)

(87) …it might be a good idea to create another archive along
the lines of ROA or LingBuzz… (T12)

(88) As is known, one of the fundamental tenets of MGG is that syntax
can be separated by semantics (T16)

SIL International – Summer Institute of Linguistics - in example 86 was an international archive in linguistics that was recommended by discussants in LINGUISTlist. ROA in example 87 represents Rutgers Optimality Archive while LingBuzz was an archive of linguistic articles. MGG was an abbreviation for Mainstream Generative Grammar. The use of abbreviation and acronym meant that the discourse community was familiar with them and therefore discussants viewed them as linguistic economy of words because they required less keystrokes in typing. This also made the conversations more speech-like because no footnote was provided to explain their meaning.
Among linguistic features that are a sign of linguistic innovation in computer mediation communication are asterisks. Asterisks were found in the study data as shown in example 89.

(89) … the order of elements/processes/whatever in the *theory* necessarily corresponds with the order of the cognitive *processes* involved in the production/reception of language (T15)

The use of asterisk was only used in T15 in all the texts studied. The discussant aimed at emphasising the views held about the topic under discussion. The discussant could possibly have included a footnote to explain the meaning of the asterisks. This was not the case and was therefore assumed to be an instance of innovation in computer mediated communication.

After establishing and describing linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail, a summary is shown in Table 4.3 below.
Table 4.3: Linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Generic move</th>
<th>Linguistic features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>First person singular pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Direct quotation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Indirect quotation</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Simple contrast relation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Body</td>
<td>First person singular pronoun</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Contraction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Personal reference</td>
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<td>Direct quotation</td>
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<td>Indirect quotation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Simple contrast relation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Conjunction</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Disjunct</td>
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<td>Parenthesis</td>
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<td>Contraction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Disjunct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3 illustrates the centrality of move 2 in the distribution of linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail. Most of the signalling linguistic features were concentrated in this move in comparison to both move 1 and move 3. Some specific linguistic features occurred in specific moves only such as direct quotation in move 1 and move 2, capitalisation in move 2 only and disjunct in move 2 and 3. First person singular pronoun and contraction occurred in all the three moves. From this interpretation, it is plausible to conclude that move 2 in scholarly
electronic mail is the major macro segment which uses a wide range of linguistic features in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail.

Additionally, contraction was used in both move 1 and 3 to indicate that the discussants had a frequent contact and involvement and could therefore express views using a characteristic of spoken language. Modality was only used in the second move. This was possibly because discussants expressed their personal beliefs to certain degrees of commitment in order to minimise the threat-to-face. Capitalisation, parenthetical expressions, abbreviations and acronyms and asterisks are linguistic features which were used to realise emphasis as a communicative event in scholarly electronic mail. This possibly implied that they are instances of innovation and change in the writing of scholarly electronic mail.

4.8 Summary

In this chapter, data has been presented, analysed and discussed by evaluating the relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. Communicative functions in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail have been examined while signalling linguistic features have been established and discussed. It has emerged that there is a relationship between scholarly electronic
mail and basic electronic message schema. Scholarly electronic mail has communicative functions as well as signalling linguistic features in its discrete parts. In the next chapter, a summary of findings, conclusions and recommendations for further research is presented.
CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has presented the data, analysis and discussion of this study. To wind up this study, this chapter outlines the summary of the findings, conclusions, recommendations and suggestions for further research.

5.2 Summary of findings

From our study corpus of authentic texts generated from LINGUISTlist, the following findings emerged.

Scholarly electronic mail has a generally direct relationship with basic electronic message schema. Scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema have generic moves which make up their organisational structure. These moves are introduction, body and close in scholarly electronic message schema while basic electronic message schema realised link to previous message, expression of views and appeal to other participants.
The discrete parts in scholarly electronic mail have specific communication functions. Each generic move in scholarly electronic mail had a main communicative function. Move one realised introduction as the main communicative function. It was realised in the form of prospective introduction, metacomment and preamble. Move two realised expression of views as main communicative function which was realised as providing information, expression of feelings, suggesting solutions and asking questions. Move three had appeal to other participants as main communication function realised as appeal to others and call for action.

The last objective established and described the signalling linguistic features in the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. The following findings emerged.

Direct quotation was not widely used by discussants. It was expected that discussants would use direct quotation to link to previous message. Failure to use direct quotation could be explained by the need by discussants to use traditional academic writing prose where the use of explicit reference to a previous text is usually in the form of a quotation from it or a paraphrase of it.

Indirect quotation in scholarly electronic mail used the first name of the discussant being referred to. Paraphrase of the previous message was also used. The inclusion
of full and first name indicated that discussants viewed their messages from the traditional academic prose writing.

First person singular pronoun was widely used in all the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. It indicated very close personal involvement of discussants with each other. It would have been expected that discussants use impersonal rhetoric as opposed to personal rhetoric because the texts were scholarly.

Contractions were used by discussants in all the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail. Their use indicated frequent contact between discussants and was therefore an indicator of spoken language.

Modality was used to express both certainty and uncertainty about propositions made by discussants. Conjunctions were used as discourse markers which either joined sentences or contrasted ideas within the sentence. The sentences were abnormally long and this was construed to be an informal writing style which is a characteristic of everyday spoken speech.

When used, disjuncts brought out the discussants’ attitude which tended to generalise the state of things or ideas under discussion. This is a characteristic of day-to-day spoken speech. Simple contrast relation was used to contrast ideas either by revealing the effects of a previous proposition or direct contrast and contradiction.
Innovation in computer mediated communication was realised through the use of parenthetical expressions for clarity of ideas, capitalisation and asterisks for emphasis and abbreviations and acronyms for linguistic economy of keystrokes made.

The discourse function of the signalling linguistic features used in scholarly electronic mail might be considered to be the conventional use of linguistic features in any scholarly electronic mail posted to a mailing list. In particular, the discrete parts realised linguistic features which symbolised the conventions adopted by the discourse community in their communicative events.

5.3 Conclusions

From this study, we draw the following conclusions;

This study concludes that there exists a relationship between scholarly electronic mail and basic electronic message schema. This is in reference to their organisational structure. Scholarly electronic mail had three generic moves namely: introduction, body, close and opening and closing epistolary conventions. The moves are a characteristic of personal letters in traditional prose writing. Basic electronic message schema has three moves namely: link to previous message, expression of views, and appeal to other participants as well as opening and
closing epistolary conventions. The generic moves are important in scholarly electronic mail for their role as flagships in guiding the reader while reading a scholarly electronic mail.

Just like other pieces of scholarly writing, scholarly electronic mail realised communicative functions as expressed by the discourse community. Though the communicative functions are spread in all the discrete parts of scholarly electronic mail, specific communicative functions were realised by the different moves. A genre comprises a class of communicative events the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognised by the expert members of this genre and thus constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences the constraints choices of content and style. Communicative function is both privilege criterion and one that operates to the scope of a genre. This is important in academic writing of scholarly electronic mail because it helps in the organisation of the text thus making it easier for the reader. Discussants in scholarly electronic mail displayed characteristics of a shared purpose where interaction was central to their communicative events. The discussants were not only oriented towards their immediate fellow discussants but also towards others who might not have
followed the whole discussion and might want to find previous postings. This was enabled by the inbuilt technological software affordances.

The linguistic features in scholarly electronic mail not only reflected the communicative functions but also exhibited various patterns of similarity in terms of structure, style content and intended audience. Participants produced messages that were interconnected and retained social interaction features as well as coherence across messages. Scholarly electronic mail was characterised by a language that was neither oral nor written because it displayed both spoken speech features and traditional academic prose writing. The linguistic features were inclined to day-to-day spoken speech. In my view, the language of scholarly electronic mail is bound to keep changing particularly because of its place in the teaching curriculum in Kenya which is in its infancy stages.

5.4 Recommendations

As per the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

Curriculum developers need to develop an integrated approach to the teaching of computer mediated communication. The integrated approach will aid in consolidating knowledge on online communication and therefore lead to holistic
understanding of technical concepts in this field of study. Levels of integration may include; curriculum level where knowledge, ideas and concepts from other subjects are used to teach English. This is important especially for Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development in its endeavour to develop a digital curriculum for primary and secondary schools.

At the skills level, all basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing are combined to teach and learn the organisational structure of scholarly electronic mail as well its communicative functions and linguistic features. This is particularly important in the so much publicised laptop project for every pupil in standard one come 2014.
5.5 Suggestions for further research

Since this study comes at a time when information and communication technology is a key driver in realising the jubilee government manifesto as well as Vision 2030, it opens many areas of research in Applied Linguistics. Some areas of consideration would be: evaluation of linguistic aspects of online instruction, formality and informality of language of instruction and materials development. Other linguistic areas would be gender styles in online learning among others.

This study has limited itself to scholarly electronic mail in LINGUISTlist, and may therefore be interesting to compare the generic structure of other types of electronic mails derived from institutions that use online mode in instructing their learners. Some of the public universities that offer E-Learning programmes and therefore a rich source of research material would include; Kenyatta University, Maseno University and Moi University among others. LINGUISTlist can also provide other areas of research such as abstract writing for submission to journals, book reviews and announcements for software.
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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Themes selected for analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. of theme</th>
<th>Title of the theme</th>
<th>No. of texts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Uneducated families means non-complex language?</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Prestige and language maintenance</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Free sharing of linguistic research</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Review of Chomsky minimalism</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>An intelligent man’s answer to linguistic truism</td>
<td>4</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
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Appendix 2

Text 1: Uneducated families means non – complex language?
Date posted: Monday, 24\textsuperscript{th} April 2009
Mailing list: listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: A

**TEXT**

I am curious to hear what other linguists think about the research to which this newspaper article refers. The researchers argue that less educated families do not deliver language as complex to their children as those who are educated. This lack of complex language leads to a lack of complex thoughts (and even dreams!). Doesn't this ignore decades of linguistic research?
Appendix 3

Text 2: Uneducated families means non – complex language?
Date posted: Wednesday, 28th April 2009 Mailing list: Listerv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: B

TEXT

David Johnson writes:

> I am curious to hear what other linguists think about the research to which
> this newspaper article refers. The researchers argue that less educated
> families do not deliver language as complex to their children as those who
> are educated. This lack of complex language leads to a lack of complex
> thoughts (and even dreams!). Doesn't this ignore decades of linguistic
> research?
> http://seattletimes.nwsource.com/html/health/2008700779_brains03.html

The reporter is probably referring to work by Hart and Risley (1995), but
somewhat mis-characterizes their findings. (Note that these are my
recollections from a seminar five or so years ago, refreshed by glancing
They should be taken with all appropriate caveats.)

http://www.aft.org/pubs-reports/american_educator/spring2003/catastrophe.html

Hart and Risley observed 42 families with 1-2 year old children. They found
that parents in the lowest socioeconomic group uttered an average of 176
words per hour, while those in the highest group uttered 487.

The Seattle Times says, "[T]here's a gap of 32 million words between
children on welfare and children from affluent homes." It would be more
accurate to say that if the patterns observed by Hart and Risley hold over
four years of real-world experience (that is, the years before the child
enters pre-school), the lower status children will have heard several
million fewer words from their parents, and uttered several million fewer
in response, than higher status children will have done. This is indeed
reason for concern, but it is not quite as the Seattle Times report makes
it sound.

Commenters on Seattle Times's web page say things such as, "Wow, now I
feel inadequate. Must be my poor upbringing. I am fairly confident that my vocabulary is less than a million words." This suggests (probably facetiously) that the "32 million words" claim can be heard as a claim about vocabulary size. If I recall correctly, Hart and Risley did have important things to say about the size of parent's and children's active vocabularies and verbal repertoires, but I don't recall anything as simple-minded as "Uneducated families means Noncomplex language".
Appendix 4

Text 3: Uneducated families means non – complex language?
Date posted: Friday, 1st May 2009
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: C

TEXT

I have nothing to say (worth reading, anyway) on the subject, but I was reminded of a recent article that might be of interest:


I haven't had a chance to read it, but they do touch on language development (although Kuhl is not cited).
Appendix 5

Text 4: Uneducated families means non – complex language?
Date posted: Monday, 4th May 2009
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: D

TEXT

Dear colleagues,

The saying that every generation has to invent the world anew seems to be correct. The questions on the correlation of social factors and language competences (= the ability to communicate differentiatedly about the world) were already often opened and discussed. I just remind you of Bernstein and sociolinguistics from the 1960s on. There is a huge bulk of literature about, in different disciplines (psychology, pedagogy, linguistics).

Naturally, all context features to which a child is exposed in his/her ontogenesis and socialization have to be seen as a bundle of very different impact (not always towards the same direction). Many research models were too reduced to overview them adequately. If we look e.g. at the children kept in isolation or in badly organized homes, we can identify horrible mechanisms which almost destroy the possibilities for a normal life already in early childhood. We know how important the relationship of children to their parents (in the beginning especially mothers) is, how important early activities (including language) are, etc.

From all the findings we should say: It is not a natural law that poor families have children with less life chances; the same is valid for "non-educated" ones (what does that really mean, compared with the many different phenomena to be found in the world?), especially if they do very well with their children in terms of acceptance, emotion, truth, communication, etc. But we need not wonder that children from such families have a higher chance to get less that others from families with a better starting point, especially in certain areas like towns with slums or with bad social security or services.

Best Regards

Franz Dotter (Klagenfurt University)
Appendix 6

Text 5: Prestige and language maintenance
Date posted: 13th January 2006
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: E

TEXT

Re: http://www.linguistlist.org/issues/16/16-3542.html

I'd like to comment on a posting on Dec 14th, a review of Batibo's book "Language Decline and Death in Africa". Batibo says, "As long as speakers see some social status or socio-economic value in their languages, they will certainly wish to maintain them."

I'd like to address the idea that social status helps maintain languages. While this may be true in places like Africa and Europe, it doesn't seem to be so in the Americas.

I have surveyed various indigenous languages in Canada and Brazil, and in fact, the opposite seems to be true. The individuals with lowest social status usually are the people who speak their the indigenous language the best. The villages with the lowest prestige are more often than not the ones in which the language is spoken most vigorously. The tribes who retain their language the longest are usually the ones with the lowest social standing. The opposite is also true. The higher prestige individuals, villages, and tribes are the ones who shift more quickly to the language of wider communication.

Why? Maybe the lower status folks avoid contact with the majority culture out of shame. Possibly higher status gives people more confidence to interact with the members of the majority culture. This facilitates language learning and cross-cultural marriages.

I think part of the answer may also lie in the size of the group. Maybe the statement that prestige helps maintain languages is true for Africa because the languages there are of roughly the same size and status. The languages I'm thinking of in the Americas are drops in the bucket compared to super languages like English, French and Portuguese.
If you have a language that is as big as Catalan, say, the statement is probably true as well. Even though Catalan is small compared to Castilian, it is large enough that prestige can help maintain it.

However, in languages as vulnerable as those in the Americas, it isn't that simple. You can't just assume that prestige will help maintain the language. Maybe it is because they just don't have the critical mass relative to the language of wider communication.

I'd welcome any comments.
Appendix 7

Text 6: Prestige and language maintenance
Date posted: 16th January 2006
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: F

TEXT

But don't Anonby's observations support in a sense the idea of prestige and language maintenance, though. It is probably not the prestige of the speakers, so much as it is the prestige of the languages themselves, in the larger cultural sense, that affect language maintenance. For example, in the American examples he mentions, it is probably the prestige of the dominant language, relative to that of the minority language, that leads to its being adopted by minority speakers. And it is the most educated speakers who (correctly) perceive that the dominant language is of greater prestige and use than is the minority language. Perhaps these observations support the idea of language hierarchy, where people learn languages up the hierarchy, and not down. It is those villagers most in touch with outside culture, who are most aware of this hierarchy. In Africa this hierarchy can include as many as 4 or more languages. For example, in Bauchi State, Nigeria, I have noted that the hierarchy can consist of English (international), Hausa, Jarawan Bantu, and Dot, with people learning second languages above them, but not below. Actually, there can be as many 6 languages in this hierarchy, if one includes dialects (the Bauchi dialect of Hausa, "Bausanci", and the Bankalawa dialect of Bantu "Bankalanci").
Appendix 8

Text 7: Prestige and language maintenance
Date posted: 16th January 2006
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: G

TEXT

Re LINGUIST issue: http://linguistlist.org/issues/17/17-100.html

I think that apart from prestige and the absence of contact with other linguistic groups, opportunities also play a pivotal role for language preservation. If the language one speaks at home does not afford any scope for upward mobility in the society, the chances are that the next generations may soon lose touch with it. This is a fact with immigrant Malayalee population all over the world. In most cases, the second generation of immigrants may cease to speak their mother tongue in places where it does not afford any scope for social interaction and economic opportunities. Of course, when large groups of a language community migrate to another place, they can preserve their linguistic traditions intact. In any case, small languages of the world face threat from the more dominant ones in the neighbourhood.

C.Rajendran
Appendix 9

Text 8: Prestige and language maintenance
Date posted: 20th January 2006
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: H

TEXT

I think socio-economic factors such as access to formal education are to be taken into account too. The reason why the individuals with lowest social status in a particular social community keep the indigenous language of their group might be related to the fact that they are socio-economically too far from the formal education in/of the dominant language. This lack of access also reduces the chances of the ideology of the dominant linguistic group being imposed on the dominated linguistic group.

In fact, in some minority language communities in Europe language replacement has not occurred at large (ie. diglossia existed but the situation was more or less stable) until education was made compulsory for all society, including individuals from the lowest social layer (who might account for the majority of that community). Also, it seems that those who most readily start using the dominant language usually belong to the middle, not the lowest, classes.
Appendix 10

Text 9: Free Sharing of Linguistic Research
Date posted: 21st March 2009
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: J

TEXT

Dear Linguists,

I have no doubts on morphology, phonology, grammar, or any such subfield of linguistics that I'd like to ask about today. Rather, it's about ethics within our field, and I'm questioning the validity of certain practices. I'd love any advice you could give on suggestions to help change this way of thinking.

I've been working with typological linguistics for a while now. In order to do good comparative work, you need to obtain a fairly large amount of source material. Unfortunately, I've run into problems regarding accessing that information. While I've met many wonderful people who are very open with sharing their information, it is sometimes difficult to gain access to unpublished dissertations/theses, or to articles appearing in journals that charge unreasonable subscription or single access fees. Some others have been less willing to distribute their information. It causes a lot of people a lot more work to try and hunt down and obtain information, often at great costs in time and money. It doesn't help anyone, and it hinders a lot. A lot of good researchers are prevented from contributing meaningful material to our field.

The more we spread information about linguistics, the more people can learn and investigate new areas. If it's a matter of investing time and effort, I know a lot of students, researchers, and professors, particularly here in Nordic Europe, who are very much in favor of the idea of freely available information, and would put in a lot of effort to make a database happen. I myself would be willing to head some sort of cross-linguistic project to get a server with a large amount of primary material available.

While I'm open to anyone wishing to participate in the project, the most important thing would be for people to be willing to distribute their research. I am not looking for an open source project akin to Wikipedia,
and I want to make sure people are credited for their research. But at the moment, financial considerations and copyright issues are preventing better research from taking place. I'd like to see that change, particularly in this day and age, where information is much more freely available, and publishing costs are not as big a concern. I welcome any opinions.

Best Regards,
Don Killian
Appendix 11

Text 10: Free Sharing of Linguistic Research
Date posted: 22\textsuperscript{nd} March 2009
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: K

TEXT

This topic is one of my biggest concerns as I supervise Phd students from African countries where it is quite impossible to have access to required information and documents for costs reasons. One way to overcome this had been suggested and actually performed by many of us. It consists in putting the drafts - free from copyright - of their research stuff in open access on their websites. An improvement of this step could be that LINGUIST List make available a list of these researchers with perhaps a search tool working on this "virtual" data base by key words or so.

Another problem is the language used in scientific publishing. A lot of good stuff and useful insights remain unknown to the majority of us because there are not written in English. As a consequence, many papers in English just "rediscover" what had been already said in another language. With colleagues from Belgium and Switzerland we are trying to partly meet this point by planning a website containing a "best of" of linguistic research written in French with English abstracts. As you can imagine, it is not easy to find money for that. Shouldn't we ask for UNESCO funding to push on this kind of projects?
Appendix 12

Text 11: Free Sharing of Linguistic Research

Date posted: 22nd March 2009

Mailing list: listserv.linguistlist.org

Discussant: L

TEXT

I would concur with Don Killian's plea for more sharing of linguistics information. At the same time, I would point out that much is already available. Perhaps others can point to sources of information they are aware of. On my part, I will mention that SIL International is increasingly putting more basic descriptions online from various areas of the world, with especially rich resources already posted for Mexico, Cameroon, and Papua New Guinea, but also from Brazil, Burkina Faso, Colombia, Peru, Suriname, and the Philippines. These have been produced over a period of several decades and include various degrees of depth and sophistication, of course. See http://www.sil.org/worldwide.html.
Appendix 13

Text 12: Free Sharing of Linguistic Research

Date posted: 23rd march 2009

Mailing list: Listerv.linguistlist.org

Discussant: M

TEXT

I fully share Don Killian's sentiments: Linguistics (especially world-wide comparative linguistics) urgently needs better ways of aggregating its data, but while the technical limitations for sharing data are quickly disappearing, the social limitations are often still strong.

But the solutions are known, it seems to me. Basically, there are two possibilities (for new material; I'm not discussing heritage material here, which is more complicated): (1) Open-access publication, and (2) archive dissemination, as practiced widely in physics and astronomy (e.g. arxiv.org).

There is a movement toward both of these in linguistics (witness new open-access journals such as Linguistic Discovery or the e-Language journals, as well as archives such as ROA and Lingbuzz), but the movement is slow, and there is no real possibility for open-access publication of book-length material yet. Linguists generally still publish in restricted-access form because traditional journals and traditional books carry more prestige, and it's extremely difficult to bring about a shift in prestige. The more of the established linguists publish their work in open-access form, and the more innovative open-access publications we have, the more quickly will we see the change happening, but there's not much younger linguists can do at this point, I'm afraid.

For descriptive material, however, it might be a good idea to create another archive, along the lines of ROA or LingBuzz, where authors can upload their grammars and dictionaries, or their descriptive articles. This is something that can probably be done with relatively few resources, and it could address one of the issues that Don Killian raises. (Personally, I don't find such archives for self-publication ideal, but they're much easier to create and maintain than new journals.)

Martin Haspelmath
I remind my colleagues who are hotly discussing the on-line issue of whether thinking comes before speaking that there are several decades of empirical psycholinguistic work on this topic, e.g. by Merrill Garrett, Willem Levelt, Kay Bock, and their colleagues, showing that there is a very intricate on-line interaction between syntactic and semantic aspects of a sentence as pre-verbal messages get encoded. Bock, for example, has shown that some aspects of syntax are primed without respect to meaning, while Levelt & colleagues (as well as others) have shown that the information to be encoded affects the syntactic form chosen. These findings are not contradictory, but complementary, as the researchers themselves fully agree: it depends on what aspect of sentence production one is looking at.

A little googling will introduce you to this area of research, much of which is written clearly enough so that you don't have to be a working psycholinguist to understand it. Try reading the Bock & Levelt chapter in Gernsbacher's 1994 Handbook of Psycholinguistics, for a start. Arguments about what takes place in real time and real brains cannot be decided by logical and linguistic methods alone, because the data used by 'pure' linguistics just don't deal with activities in real time.
Appendix 15

Text 14: Review of Chomsky minimalism
Date posted: 11th September 2008
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: O

Discuss this message: http://linguistlist.org/pubs/reviews/get-review.cfm?subid=55999

In response to the comments on whether syntax comes before semantics (in the context of the review of "Chomsky's Minimalism", see link below), I suspect that this is a misunderstanding of the meaning of the arrows. The arrows refer to a derivational relationship, not a temporal one.

In this respect, they are similar to the arrows in phonological rules (back when phonology was done with rules...). The fact that the arrow in a phonological rule pointed in one direction did not imply that it was not possible to run the process in reverse. At least one parser (my Hermit Crab) was built that was quite capable of running phonological rules in either direction, and today's finite state transducers are routinely used to convert between phonological representations in either direction.

I don't know whether the translation between semantics and syntax can be done with finite state transducers, but I am reasonably certain that the mapping is bidirectional, although it may be ambiguous in one or both directions. If this is true, then the direction that the arrows point is largely irrelevant.

Read Review: http://linguistlist.org/issues/16/16-1890.html

Mike Maxwell
CASL/ U MD
Appendix 16

Text 15: Review of Chomsky minimalism

Date posted: 11th September 2008

Mailing list: Listserv.linguist.org

Discussant: P

TEXT

Discuss this message: http://linguistlist.org/pubs/reviews/get-review.cfm?subid=55999

While I agree with Hinzen's comments (19.2754), there seems to me to be a more fundamental confusion in the post he comments on, shared by many non-generativists (and occasionally some generativists), namely that the order of elements/processes/whatever in the *theory* necessarily corresponds with the order of the cognitive *processes* involved in the production/reception of language. This has never been claimed, to my knowledge, by generativists working in the Chomskyan mold, much less by Chomsky himself. Quite explicitly the contrary. And indeed, psycholinguistic experiments have clearly shown that language-hearing processing, for example, goes on in parallel at different 'levels', and as more and more of a sentence, say, comes in.
Appendix 17

Text 16: Review of Chomsky minimalism

Date posted: 17th September 2008
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: Q

TEXT

Read Review: http://linguistlist.org/issues/16/16-1890.html

My reply to Grohmann's review of Seuren's Chomsky's Minimalism in which I support Seuren's stance that the standard minimalist T-model of grammar is unacceptable because syntax is absurdly or perversely conceived of as being before semantics has provoked objections: I believe they stem from a misunderstanding of the concepts of "before/after" and "semantics".

The question whether or not syntax precedes (linguistic) semantics can only arise within the flawed framework of Mainstream Generative Grammar (MGG). As is known, one of the foundational tenets of MGG is that syntax can be separated by semantics: it is only such autonomy of syntax that NECESSARILY leads to wonder whether syntax interfaces with semantics before, after or during (as in multiple spell-out models) the (syntactic) computation.

However, it is empirical evidence that syntax cannot be distinguished by semantics: syntax is (part of) semantics. Syntax neither precedes nor follows semantics, because it is inherently semantics. When I wrote that semantics is before syntax, I intentionally accommodated the widespread erroneous generative view of the separability of grammar components to show that, even if one accepts such error, setting semantics after syntax is just error within error. For in a realistic reading the T-model is absurd, in that semantics is what motivates syntax. Roughly speaking, one must know what to say when speaking, and such "knowing what to say" is no doubt semantics, so that postponing the semantic component to the end of the derivation is pure nonsense. In an instrumentalist view (to reply to Fidelholtz), the model is perverse, since there is no reason why one should figure out a model that gratuitously refuses a (much more) realistic description (and Seuren's mediational model is indeed more realistic than the T-model, although I do not agree with it in many points). In this respect, then, it must be highlighted that Chomsky's position is even confused: his model seems to be described as realistic but the famous note
3 (Chomsky 1995: 380) puzzles the reader. What is really Chomsky's position? There is no answer but just recognizing that his account suffers from uncertainty, obscurity, contradiction and nonsense of the sort 'The concepts 'well-formed' and 'grammatical' remain without characterization or known empirical justification; they played virtually no role in early work on generative grammar except in informal exposition, or since' (Chomsky 1995: 213).

I think Burton-Robert has well understood the terms of the question: the fact is, however, that his "semantics-of-syntax" simply cannot exist, because - I repeat firmly - syntax cannot be distinguished by semantics (Prof. Menn says that in Bock-Levett's "Language production, grammatical encoding" some aspects of syntax "are primed without respect to meaning"; I failed in detecting them). Burton-Robert also claims, following Hinzen, that semantics is impossible in the absence of a suitable syntax. This seems empirically untenable, since we can see something, think that we want it and do NOT say anything either within our head (no "language-less nirvana" but our neurons!) or outside it through speech organs: thought without language seems to be well possible. The existence of such meaningful thoughts preceding linguistic encoding (both within our head and outside it) induces me to think that pre-linguistic semantics (i.e. meaningful thoughts) exists, and that linguistic semantics can be likely interpreted as the final stage of a continuum from "pure" thought to language. However, since many data still lack, I generally embrace an "external" view of language, focusing only on actual linguistic expressions: and these, as I have said, just prove that syntax is semantics, i.e. is meaningful (in this sense, therefore, neither of components is before or after the other).

Maxwell interestingly points out that phonological rules can be thought of as bidirectional. What Maxwell does not consider, however, is that Chomsky's model cannot be bidirectional because it is a T-model: syntax bifurcates after spell-out, the semantic and phonological components being conceived of as separate. As one can see, there is no possibility of "reversing" this model.

There would of course be much more to say on these topics: notwithstanding, I believe that even these few remarks make sufficiently clear that the standard minimalist T-model of grammar, however one approaches it, turns out to be severely confused and illogical.
Alexander Kravchenko responds to 'An Intelligent Man's Answer to Linguistic Truisms' by writing that "...I back Dalrymple on every count and find Pinker 'guilty as charged'." Dalrymple may well make some good points, and Pinker has certainly made some bad ones, but it is absurd to suggest that Dalrymple is right "on every count."

Let's take perhaps the most obvious example of Dalrymple misrepresenting Pinker's, and Linguistics', position. Dalrymple writes that "[i]t is utterly implausible to suggest that imitation of parents (or other social contacts) has nothing whatever to do with the acquisition of language. I hesitate to mention so obvious a consideration, but Chinese parents tend to have Chinese-speaking children, and Portuguese parents Portuguese-speaking ones."

It has been a while since I read The Language Instinct, but if I remember correctly, Pinker never claims that imitation has nothing whatever to do with acquisition. I certainly haven't heard it from any regular Joe linguist, either.

Dalrymple, and by extension, Kravchenko, fails to maintain an elementary logical distinction here, that between necessary and sufficient conditions. Pinker's (and others') claim is that imitation is not sufficient for language acquisition. Dalrymple is representing Pinker's position as a claim that imitation is not necessary for language acquisition. The two are not equivalent.

Obviously, even the most fervent generativists understand that "Chinese parents tend to have Chinese-speaking children, and Portuguese parents Portuguese-speaking ones." They also understand that Chinese and Portuguese have quite a lot in common 'underneath' their many obvious differences.

Perhaps Kravchenko was forgetting about this silly straw-man argument when he expressed his agreement with Dalrymple. Kravchenko rightly focuses on
the issue of 'equality' between languages, as this is probably the most interesting issue addressed in Dalrymple's article. Many linguists go to great lengths to insist that no one language is any more complex, or any better, than another. Dalrymple and Kravchenko disagree.

There is, perhaps, a real issue here, though standard linguistics, Dalrymple, and Kravchenko are all (understandably) reluctant to face it head on. In order to claim that language A is better than Language B, one must define what, exactly, better means. If this is, in fact, a real issue, then the exceedingly difficult work of defining and measuring the relative complexity or 'quality' of different languages should be undertaken.

Kravchenko doesn't offer any substantive explanation for his dismissal of the linguistic equality 'myth' other than to quote Dalrymple. Dalrymple seems to address the problem, but in doing so he conflates eloquence and linguistic competence. This is based on either a misunderstanding or a deliberate misrepresentation of Linguistics, as is the imitation foofaraw discussed above.

For what it's worth, David Foster Wallace wrote a much better essay (published in the April, 2001, issue of Harper's) that deals with some of these issues in a much more entertaining and well-informed manner than does Dalrymple. The essay can be read (as of 1/19/07, anyway) at:

http://instruct.westvalley.edu/lafave/DFW_present_tense.html
Appendix 19

Text 18: An intelligent man’s Answer to Linguistic Truism
Date posted: 23rd January 2007
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: S

TEXT

Regarding the Dalrymple article referred to in posting 18.197 and comments on it, I suspect it is true, perhaps even quantifiably so, that Abraham Lincoln was a better statesman than George Bush is. Statesmanship and eloquence are skills that not all individuals possess in the same degree, nor do all individual speakers of a language share the same vocabulary.

There is a tradition of linguistic research that goes under the broad rubric "philology" that lies at the intersection of rhetoric, textual analysis and grammatical description. In this tradition, grammar and eloquence are not so strictly differentiated, and for the practitioners of this discipline, contemporary formal linguistics must seem "airy and disembodied" indeed.

However, its disembodiedness is a core methodological tenet, based on the premise, endemic in modern sciences, that insight into the nature of a totality can be gained by decomposing it into its component parts and studying them separately. The notion of 'grammar' from this perspective is rather narrow--encompassing generalizations about what constitutes a grammatical syntactic format in a language independently of what speakers choose to express with those formats.

Formal linguistics is the study of grammar in this narrow sense. But not because it equates grammar in this narrow sense with language itself. On the contrary: precisely *because* there is much more to language than grammar, it is fruitful to divorce grammar from communication and other facets of language, and observe it in isolation, in the same way that chemists find some utility in divorcing the components of a compound of interest from one another. This approach is obviously not holistic, and is not intended to be, but not because it denies the complexity of language, but only because of the limited scope of the task it sets before itself. Some of Gross, Kravchenko and Dalrymple's remarks suggest they believe that linguists are unaware that there is more to language than grammar. Note that there is little likelihood that some unexpected epiphany will cause the chemists of the world to "abruptly awaken, rubbing their eyes in utter
disbelieve, as they mutter; 'you mean, it's not just [molecules] after all...?' It is the linguists’ narrow notion of knowledge of grammar that Pinker is claiming to be invariant among human beings. Eloquence is entirely another matter, and there is no doubt that there is too little of it these days.
Peter Hallman in his remarks on grammar and eloquence reassures Gross, Kravchenko and Dalrymple about the awareness among linguists that 'there is more to language than grammar'. Although this was not exactly the point of the discussion and the kind of awareness Hallman mentions wasn't contested, I find it hard to resist making a few comments on his own statements about grammar.

Hallman insists that 'disembodiedness of grammar is a core methodological tenet, based on the premise, endemic in modern sciences, that insight into the nature of a totality can be gained by decomposing it into its component parts and studying them separately.' There is another way to say this: "Long live analytism!" And Hallman is unquestionably and fatally wrong assuming that analysis into components can lead to revealing truths about their totality. Actually, it works the other way around - at least, in biology (or isn't it a modern science?). In biology, the more complex the level at which one seeks to explain a living system, the greater the need to examine the network of interactions that lie behind the genome. As emphasized by Cornish-Bowden et al. (2004: 716), "the fact that a complex network of interactions connect genes to phenotypes emphasizes the idea that only through the understanding of the whole can we understand the function of the parts". A holistic approach to language assumes its biological nature: language is viewed as a biological phenomenon uniquely characteristic of the species homo sapiens. Yet in formal linguistics (such as generative grammar) there is a profound lack of understanding language as a whole, and the question "What is language for?" has never seemed to be a priority (and this is, by the way, what Dalrymple spoke about). As linguists, we should not forget that language is a kind of biologically grounded adaptive behavior. Regrettably, linguistics, as represented by major schools of thought over the 20th century, appears to have had very little in common with biological science - except, of course, the generativist claim that language is a 'mental organ'.

So one shouldn't really be surprised at the staggering parallels of the kind drawn by Hallman between grammar and chemistry. The fact that a molecule of water consists of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen
(H2O), each of which is a gas, and the fact that hydrogen is a highly flammable substance while oxygen is the component that makes combustion possible, do not of themselves help understand how a particular structural combination of the two elements yields a substance (water) so radically different as to be used to put out fires! No, it's not just molecules after all!

'Disembodied' ('formal', 'generative', etc.) grammar, understood as something that can be singled out as a universal 'invariant among human beings', as a totality of molecules that can be formed using a limited set of components, is a fiction, a stark delusion rooted in Cartesian dualism and based on Alan Turing's infamous metaphor 'thinking is computation'. For people like Pinker, grammar is "a code or protocol or a set of rules that specifies how words may be arranged into meaningful combinations" (Pinker 1999: 4). This code (also known as 'language faculty') sits in everyone's head, and the mind 'works by words and rules' or, more generally, 'by lookup and computation' (ibid.: 21). But language is NOT A CODE (Kravchenko 2007). The generativist notion of 'grammar' as 'generalizations about what constitutes a grammatical syntactic format in a language independently of what speakers choose to express with those formats' is so outlandish that one doesn't even know how to begin about exposing it as totally invalid. Surely, this discussion forum is not quite the place for that.

References


Appendix 21

Text 20: An intelligent man’s answer to linguistic truism
Date posted: 25th January, 2007
Mailing list: Listserv.linguistlist.org
Discussant: U

TEXT

How convenient to suppose that the study of linguistics "works in the same way that chemists find some utility in divorcing the components of a compound of interest from one another." But chemistry can look back to well over two centuries of continued progress with indisputable practical spin-offs cropping up almost every year since Lavoisier. What precise counterparts can mainstream linguistics point to during the past fifty years (or arguably since Saussure one century ago)? Is it possible that such a claim does not take us headlong into what Stephen Jay Gould in 1981 called "physics envy," even if the object of envy here is not physics but chemistry?

I find it amazing how little the self-justifications for mainstream linguistics have changed over recent decades. It is almost as though some of these scholars are trapped in a time-warp of collective self-indulgence. I also fail to detect here any evidence that an attempt has been made to read the essay I referred to. Anyone who read it would have found references to such further real world phenomena as translation, theatre, Nazism and related totalitarianisms, concentration camps, guilt and innocence, and possible corruption within the world of academic funding, even though some mainstream apologists will assure us that none of these matters can possibly have any relationship to language, much less the sheer abstract glory of linguistics itself. As for my two Dartmouth presentations on Evidence Based vs. Voodoo Linguistics, cited by Alex Kravchenko, I see no sign that any attempt has been made to look at these either. But of course mainstream linguists do not need to, for they know in advance that all such material, including Kravchenko's message, Dalrymple's article, and the Codrescu NPR statement, can rank as nothing more than "philology." There seems to be an incurable faith among mainstream linguists that they actually qualify as scientists, that their favorite doctrines must somehow also rank as scientific breakthroughs on a Galilean or Einsteinian scale. But I believe nothing could be further from the truth. This system of belief also seems to be quite lacking in one other crucial element of
science--the slightest trace of skepticism.

Little wonder then that the prime movers of this fantasy have sought to shift the ground of their work from language to philosophy, psychology, or "cognitive" spin-offs, even going so far as to rebaptize their MIT nerve center as the "Department of Linguistics & Philosophy." But I see the primary basis of language as neither philosophical nor psychological nor cognitive in nature--rather it is far more likely to emerge as primarily physiological, springing from the lungs and breath, the bronchi, the larynx, lips, and tongue, not to mention--at least in the case of trained speakers--almost every muscle in the body. Which is not to neglect all the ways these organs can fail to work harmoniously together nor the presence of other factors. This means that our study can probably never be any more (or less) precise than other physiological processes. More about this can be found in my material on Evidence Based Linguistics.

Here's something more about "physics envy" by the astrophysical engineer and satellite designer C.B. Pease. I wonder how many contributors to Linguist List may find his description familiar:

"Physics is widely regarded as Top Science, because it is `exact'. Its theories are simple and elegant. And they are always followed to the letter--except when they are not (Big Bang). I started out as a physicist, and I don't see what is so special about it at all.

"But many `inexact' scientists do. For generations they have been trying to raise the status of their respective sciences by attempting to prove that they are exact too. They devise simple elegant theories for the natural world to obey. And the natural world fails to oblige. The result is gargantuan battles between different camps, over which over-simplified theory (sometimes grossly so) is correct. And they are still doing it. One meets the phenomenon of the `acrimonious debate' quite often in the literature."

One also frequently finds a dismissal of "eloquence" in mainstream literature. But in a field so chaotically uprooted as linguistics today, eloquence may in fact be the closest we may come towards ever achieving clarity, perhaps even "science."

All the best to linguists everywhere!

alex
References:


Kravchenko, Alexander. An Intelligent Man's Answer to Linguistic Truisms. online at: http://linguist.emich.edu/issues/18/18-197.html#1