

# CHAPTER 5

## The French research article: An analysis of the current state of affairs in the domains of linguistics and the humanities

*Mojca Schlamberger Brezar*

### Abstract

This paper discusses the structure of the French research article. The first part of this paper provides an overview of the guidelines for writing research articles in French and Francophone contexts. In the second part of the paper, an analysis of 47 French articles from the fields of linguistics, language teaching, literary studies, and translation studies is presented. The analysis reveals the macrostructure of the articles (the division into the introduction, body, and conclusion, as well as referencing and the bibliography section) and the microstructure of the individual sections, such as the most frequent textual prototypes, modality, and authorial presence. We show that the individual sections differ mostly with regards to macrostructure and citation style. The results reveal that the articles from the domain of literary studies are less structurally

rigid, while the linguistics articles are more in line with the trends from the natural sciences. A characteristic feature of all the analysed articles is authorship – individual authorship is by far the most common.

**Keywords:** research article, French, textual prototype, macrostructure, microstructure

### Izveleček

V članku obravnavamo zgradbo francoskega znanstvenega članka. V prvem delu podajamo pregled navodil za pisanje znanstvenega članka, ki izhaja iz francoskega oziroma frankofonega okolja. V drugem delu analiziramo 47 francoskih člankov s področja lingvistike, didaktike poučevanja jezika, literature in traduktologije. Analiza odkriva makrostrukturo člankov (delitev na uvodni, osrednji in sklepni del, prikazi, citiranje in bibliografija), pa tudi mikrostrukturo posameznih delov, kot je prototip besedilnega tipa, ki je najpogosteje uporabljen, modalizacija povedanega in oseba, ki jo pisec upošteva za pisanje članka. Vidimo, da pri različnih področjih raziskave prihaja do določenih razlik med pisanjem člankov, predvsem pri makrostrukturi in citiranju. Kaže, da so članki s področja literarnih raziskav bolj svobodni, medtem ko članki s področja lingvistike sledijo trendom, ki veljajo tudi za naravoslovne znanosti. Posebnost vseh analiziranih člankov pa je avtorstvo – prevladuje individualno avtorstvo.

**Ključne besede:** znanstveni članek, francoski jezik, besedilni prototip, makrostruktura, mikrostruktura

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Studies focusing on the structure of the research article in French approach this topic in different ways: in the form of guidelines on writing research articles aimed at future scientists (Robitaille and Vallée 2017; Saint-Luc 2012) or by means of a textual analysis of the article and its macro- and microstructures. The present article will encompass the following: first, an overview and analysis of several sets of guidelines on research article writing, second a review of the literature, and finally an analysis of a corpus of 47 research articles from four disciplines in the humanities (linguistics, language teaching, literary studies, and translation studies).

In the analysis of the macrostructure, the investigation will focus on whether the articles analysed contain all the sections, characteristic of the research article. The analysis of the microstructure will be based on the work of Adam (1997), who used discourse analysis, as well as on prescriptive style guides, which to an extent define the writing style and the use of the general as well as specialized language; and on our own corpus analysis.

As a final point, the results of the analysis will be contrasted with the writing instructions and non-cultural differences between different languages, as well as between different disciplines. Slovenian research articles, which traditionally do not differ strongly from the French practice, although they increasingly show the stylistic influence of the Anglo-Saxon tradition, will also be considered briefly from a contrastive perspective.

## 2 FRENCH GUIDELINES FOR WRITING RESEARCH ARTICLES

It is possible to find a number of guidelines for writing research articles on the Internet. These are usually included among guidelines aimed at young/novice researchers and undergraduate and post-graduate students who are at the beginning stages of writing their theses. Two French-language examples, one from France (Saint-Luc 2012) and one from the Francophone part of Canada (Robitaille and Vallée 2017), were chosen for our analysis.

The guidelines begin with pragmatic advice along the following lines: academic publishing is important for anyone who wants to work in academia;<sup>1</sup> a researcher has to publish at all stages of research and should not wait until the research has

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1 « Les publications sont très importantes pour ceux qui veulent travailler à l'université » (Saint-Luc 2012).

been fully carried out;<sup>2</sup> academic writing style differs from applied and creative writing in the sense that academic writing demands concise, direct, and short sentences; there exist precise rules on how to present research results and which part of the research should be in focus.<sup>3</sup>

The guidelines highlight three different types of research – qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-methods – since the type of research usually determines the structure of the article (Robitaille and Vallée 2017; Saint-Luc 2012). In quantitative research, the focus is generally on the results of the descriptive analysis as well as on the results of more complex analyses (e.g., the target and control groups in an experiment) – in such research, the inclusion of tables and other visual materials (*supports visuels*) is desirable (Robitaille and Vallée 2017).

Visual materials and tables are thus an important part of a research article. They are usually located in the results section and are directly integrated into the text itself (e.g., “Table 1 shows the results,” etc.). Most printed journals publish only a limited number of tables and visual materials (Robitaille and Vallée 2017), while more can be published in an electronic version of the same (*ibid.*).

In qualitative research, the data must be presented in relation to the hypotheses; such research involves a selection of examples that best represent the answers to a specific set of questions. In addition, the synthesis can be supported with matrices, tables, etc., but the structure of article presenting qualitative research is less standardized than that of articles presenting quantitative research (Robitaille and Vallée 2017). Qualitative research articles also give researchers more creative freedom (*ibid.*).

A research article must contain a central section comprising the discussion. The aim of this section is to establish a connection between the hypotheses presented at the beginning of the article and the research results, as well as to interpret them (Robitaille and Vallée 2017). In this section, the author can also compare the results that have been obtained by other researchers and presented in the related work (*ibid.*). In French articles, this section usually is not referred to as the discussion, but is divided into several subsections that summarize the individual stages of research.

The conclusion, which can be explicit (and explicitly labelled with the term *conclusion*) or implicit, follows the discussion. In some journals, a section labelled conclusion is required, in others it is not; nevertheless, the last part of the research article has to summarize the research question and/or the motivation and results.

2 « Un chercheur doit publier à tous les stades de sa recherche et ne pas attendre d'être arrivé à sa fin » (Saint-Luc 2012).

3 « L'écriture scientifique possède, en effet, son propre code qui diffère de celui qui s'applique à l'écriture utilitaire ou à l'écriture créative. L'écriture scientifique requiert des phrases courtes, concises et directes (...) est également régie par des règles précises concernant la présentation et les contenus à aborder » (Robitaille and Vallée 2017).

A good conclusion should highlight the importance of the study. Robitaille and Vallée (2017) propose that researchers should always determine what they want the readers to remember and what kind of message should be conveyed,<sup>4</sup> when writing the conclusion.

References are an integral part of all research articles, while the citation style is determined by the journal style guide or by the disciplinary conventions. For instance, literary scholars usually cite differently than linguists – that is, they place in-text references in footnotes instead of using the author-date style (see the analysis), which shows that such a citation style is unique to French articles, even in comparison to Slovenian articles, where the same citation style is consistently used in literary studies as well as other disciplines (Hladnik 2002).

These are the key sections of the research article, and there is little cross-disciplinary or cross-linguistic variation when it comes to the macrostructure. However, individual disciplinary community approaches to academic writing must also be taken into consideration. We can see that these approaches differ somewhat between French-Canadian and French researchers in that the former are more influenced by the Anglo-Saxon tradition (L'Encyclopédie canadienne, n. d.) than the latter researchers, whose writings have their own unique features (Saint-Luc 2012).

The style of research articles is also well-defined, and is a feature of the genre rather than of the language. The French author Florence Saint-Luc describes the style of academic writing as *s'acculturer à l'écriture d'un article scientifique*, which can be paraphrased as “one must adopt the culture of academic writing”. She also emphasizes the importance of being familiar with the established practice of academic writing (Saint-Luc 2012), as mastering the style enhances the comprehensibility of the article.

Academic writing is stylistically rooted in logical reasoning (« Le style doit être le plus logique possible! », Saitluc 2012), which stems from the traditional Cartesian approach to analysis and synthesis (Descartes 1637, 2011). With respect to text typology, Florence Saint-Luc claims that the introductory section is usually descriptive, whereas the discussion that follows in the central part of the article is argumentative. For the abstract, Saint-Luc proposes that a concise style that enables quick reading should be adopted.

The French-Canadian authors Robitaille and Vallée (2017) cite Anglo-American authors, who advocate the use simple words and short sentences, as well as a clear outline of the content in subsections and paragraphs, based on the “one idea, one paragraph” principle. The authors also believe that writers should dedicate a substantial amount of attention to linking the paragraphs. This seems to be the

4 In their words: « Pour rédiger cette section, il peut être utile de se poser la question suivante: En fin de compte, que voulez-vous que le lecteur retienne? Quel serait le message à retenir? »

stylistic influence of English, since French authors do not advocate the use of short and concise sentences, but rather highlight the importance of using connectors (see Saint-Luc 2012 below). The use of the active voice instead of the passive is recommended, as well as the use of the present tense with the sole exception of the abstract, where the use of the past tense is recommended (Robitaille and Vallée 2017, 27). Moreover, the authors are encouraged to clearly define the concepts discussed, and use the same term for the same concept consistently.

Research article writing also entails revision and correction, but a more detailed account of this stage is beyond the scope of the present article. In the last 12 years, the publishing of research articles has become the main way to measure research impact. However, according to the French agency AERES (*Agence de l'évaluation de la recherche et de l'enseignement supérieur*), books remain an important type of research publication primarily in the humanities.<sup>5</sup> Regardless of the form the publication, clarity and logical sentence structure are highlighted, above all in the abstract which is to be written in a style that enables quick and easy reading (Saint-Luc 2012). The French are adapting to the Anglo-American system more slowly than the rest of Europe, and continue to regard their own publications as the most central, especially in the humanities (without any attempt to assign points), while Canadians tend to be more integrated in the American research trends, which set the academic standard for the rest of the world. French academia continues to appreciate papers published in important local journals not indexed in international citation databases. This, however, is a problem for international researchers who study the French language, since such publications do not yield much research impact even though they help the researchers gain recognition in French academia. In recent years, the situation has been changing, as even French (as well as Slovenian) researchers can no longer ignore the Anglo-American research article structure. For instance, Saint-Luc (2012) discusses the IMRAD structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion), which is also referred to by Hladnik (2002) in his style guide for Slovenian authors.

To sum up, the guidelines of French-Canadian and French authors (Robitaille and Vallée 2017; Saint-Luc 2012) suggest that research articles should go through the process of revision. Such a revision is to, an extent, uniform. How such uniformity affects the text will be shown by the analysis presented in the central part of the article. Metatexts on research articles, referred to as academic writing (*écriture académique* in French), generally take either the historical perspective or that of text analysis as their starting points. The topics of the research article and its structure have been addressed by several Francophone authors, including Pollet (1997), Fernández, Liffourrena (2016), and Vold (2008), as well as the Lidilem research group at the Université Grenoble Alpes (Tutin et al., 2009). Pollet (1997) focuses

5 « Pour de nombreuses disciplines des sciences humaines et sociales, la production des livres reste la forme majeure de l'oeuvre scientifique. » (<https://www.aeres-evaluation.fr/>)

on the text types in research articles, while Fernández and Liffourrena (2016) analyse French and Spanish abstracts from a contrastive perspective. In addition, the authors highlight the use of specific terminology characteristic of a particular field, and investigate modality (Vold 2008), above all from a contrastive perspective.

### 3 MATERIALS AND METHODS

A corpus of 47 research articles published in various humanities disciplines was used in the analysis. The corpus comprises seven articles from *Langue française*, March 2012, Larousse, and eight articles from *Langages* 184, December 2011, Larousse), as well as the collected volume *Le proche et le lointain / The Near and the Far. Enseigner, apprendre et partager des cultures étrangères / Teaching, Learning and Sharing of Foreign Cultures* (Paris: Éditions des archives contemporaines), which contains articles on linguistics, translation studies, language teaching, and literary studies (18 articles), and the collected volume *Cahiers Claude Simon 10–2015* (Traduire Claude Simon), which contains articles on translation studies and literary studies (14 articles).

In our corpus analysis of the 47 articles, the macrostructure was analysed from the perspective of the explicit presentation of the individual sections, as well as the typical stylistic features (or rather the microstructure) of each section, immediately discernible from the subheadings corresponding to the above mentioned IMRAD structure (Saint-Luc 2012). The focus of the analysis was on the following textual features, which the authors above do not explicitly discuss even though they might refer to them in passing: the prototypical textual sequences in the analysed texts (cf. the following section), the basic constituent parts of the article – that is, the introduction, the body, and the conclusion – and their incorporation into the text, as well as the use of modality, which also covers the use of personal forms expressing authorial identity.

In addition, citation styles and the elements of the microstructural analysis characteristic of academic texts were examined: expression of modality, above all epistemic modality, including the author's presence in the text (as a first person singular or plural narrator), modality markers and the use of connectors.

The description of textual prototypes is based on the work of Adam (1997), who adapted Werlich's (1975) analytical framework. The German text linguist Egon Werlich (1975) proposed five text types (*Texttypen*) – description, narration, exposition, argumentation, and instruction. Adam's typology of prototypical textual sequences (1997) includes Werlich's (1975) descriptive, narrative, argumentative, and expository sequences, while the instructive sequence is analysed as a subtype

of the descriptive sequence. Adam (1997, 28–35) outlines prototypes based on the structure of sequences characteristic of each type of text, since texts comprise sequences which are relatively autonomous. The text is structurally heterogeneous, comprising various prototypical sequences (Adam 1998, 31).

## 4 PROTOTYPES OF TEXTUAL SEQUENCES IN AN ACADEMIC TEXT

From the perspective of discourse analysis, Adam (1997) primarily discusses textual prototypes, concretely the descriptive, argumentative and expository texts in a typical sequence. For the purposes of the present analysis, Adam's (1997) approach will be adopted.

### 4.1 Descriptive text

A descriptive text primarily involves the ascription of features to a particular entity that is described: Adam (1997, 85–95) lists four descriptive procedures (or rather macro operations) which are at the heart of this prototype: establishing the entity, which he labels with the French term *ancrage* ('rooting/establishing'); ascribing the features to this entity (French *affectation* 'ascription'); describing the entity from various perspectives (French *aspectualisation*); and rewording the same content by using different words (*reformulation*). Below, a description of these procedures is provided on the basis of an example taken from one of the articles in the corpus. Example 1 involves the so-called *ancrage* procedure, since it establishes the key entity *la rédaction d'une lettre*, while examples 2 and 3 constitute the *affectation* procedure in which relevant features are ascribed to the entity.

(1) Dans l'enseignement des langues étrangères, la rédaction d'une lettre constitue toujours d'un cours ou d'exercices écrits. (Comment correspond-on en coréen; Le proche et le lointain, 83)

'In foreign language teaching, the writing of a letter represents a course or a written exercise.'

(2) La plupart des unités d'une langue dont le sémantisme a été mis en rapport avec l'évidentialité sont des unités à plusieurs valeurs. (Langue française, 17)

'Most of the linguistic units whose meaning has been linked with the expression of evidentiality are units with several values...'



The entity is already established by the title. What follows is the stage in which the features are ascribed; in this case, ascription involves the verbs *être* ('be') and *avoir* ('have').

- (3) De plus, le conditionnel soulève un problème supplémentaire: la nature de la valeur dite « épistémique » est décrite différemment selon les linguistes. (Langue française, 17)

'The conditional raises an additional problem: the nature of the value called "epistemic" is described differently by linguists.'

## 4.2 Argumentative text

An argumentative text makes use of connectors in order to steer the presented theory towards a specific conclusion. Such a text can also involve substantiation, where all the arguments point towards a single conclusion and are introduced by causal connectors, or counter-argumentation, which is often introduced by adversative connectors of the *mais* type; in example 4 below, the adversative connector is *cependant* (see also Adam 197, 105–120; Schlamberger Brezar 2009).

Example 4 is a typical case of the argumentative prototype: the adversative connector *cependant* introduces the thesis (which by itself is a counterargument for the point made in the preceding paragraph, which we will not discuss at this point). What follows is the antithesis, introduced by *si d'un côté X, de l'autre Y*, the synthesis, introduced by the connector *or*, and finally the conclusion, introduced by the connector *donc*. The example also involves the use of the colon to introduce the consequence (a connector is not used in this case because the argumentative structure is explicit enough by itself). We can see here that the text is rich in its expression of causative and adversative relations, which are made explicit by connectors (*cependant, or, donc*) or the use of punctuation (:).

- (4) On remarquera, **cependant**, qu'il y a une petite zone d'ombre : si d'un côté, L. de Saussure et P. Morency (2011) posent (avec justesse) que le sens conjectural réside dans une croyance présente (e-INF<sub>1</sub>) distincte de l'état de fait exprimé par le contenu propositionnel de  $\psi$  l'énoncé au futur, de l'autre, ils assimilent la persistance temporelle d'e (événement décrit par  $\psi$ ) à la persistance dans le futur de la croyance e-INF<sub>1</sub>. **Or**, il est dans l'absolu possible que l'intervalle temporel où *Je crois que P* est valide diffère de celui où P est valide (cf. *Je crois que Pierre était malade*); la persistance de  $e_\psi$ , jusqu'à e-INF<sub>2</sub> n'implique **donc pas ipso facto** qu'un hiatus temporel soit impossible entre e-INF<sub>1</sub> et e-INF<sub>2</sub>. (Langue française, 124)

‘One will notice, however, that there exists a small grey area: if, on the one hand, L. de Saussure and P. Morency (2011) state (justifiably) that the conjectural sense lies in the present belief and is distinct from the state that is expressed by the propositional content of  $\psi$  the utterance in the future, on the other hand, they equate the temporal persistence of  $e$  (a written event described by  $\psi$ ) with the persistence of the belief  $e$ -INF in the future. However, it is absolutely possible that the temporal interval where *I believe that P* is valid differs from *where P is valid* (cf. I believe that Peter was ill); the persistence of  $e_\psi$  up to  $e$ -INF<sub>2</sub> does not *ipso facto* imply that a temporal hiatus is impossible between  $e$ -INF<sub>1</sub> and  $e$ -INF<sub>2</sub>.’

### 4.3 Expository text

Adam (1997, 127–138) argues that an expository text includes the following structural schema (Adam 1997, 132), where  $S_1$  stands for the initial sequence,  $S_q$  corresponds to the sequence in which a question of reason (i.e., Why?) is asked, and  $S_e$  corresponds to the expository sequence (*sequence explicative*), which provides the answer to the *Why* question (i.e., Because):

$S_1$       Pourquoi ? →       $S_q$                       Parce que →       $S_e$

In the sequence, the Why and Because can be expressed implicitly, as shown by example 5 below.

- (5) A partir de l'analyse des manuels roumains de FLE, nous avons constaté qu'avant 1989 l'humour était mis au service de l'enseignement du français et qu'il était envisagé comme un moyen agréable d'apprendre une langue étrangère par le recours aux émotions qui désinhibent et stimulent l'imagination. Car la fonction cathartique du rire est bien connue depuis l'Antiquité et on peut l'utiliser avec succès en classe de langue pour libérer les enseignés des pressions et des contraintes exercées par l'enseignant et /ou les enseignés (...) (Le proche et le lointain, 172)

‘In the analysis of Romanian textbooks for French as a foreign language (FFL), we found that before 1989 humour was used as a device for teaching French, and it was seen as a pleasant way to learn a foreign language via emotions that disinhibit and stimulate the imagination. The cathartic function of laughing has been well known since Antiquity, and it can be successfully used in the classroom in order to free the students from the stress and constraints created by the teacher or other students.’

In the first part of example 5, it is possible to understand an implicit *Why*; the connector *car* (‘because’) in the next sentence is explicit.

## 4.4 Narrative text

Narrative sequences are less frequent in academic texts as they are more typical of fiction than non-fiction, and because they require the use of the past tense and involve changes in the described entity brought about by the temporal shifts in the narrative. A narrative in an academic text can hypothetically be used to present a historical overview (see the beginning of the article cited below (example 6), which is a narrative in the past tense). It is usually employed in the introduction but not in the main discussion:

(6) Né en Inde britannique (1925-2004), Ashfaq Ahmad a migré à Lahore à l'âge de vingt ans juste avant l'indépendance de l'Inde en 1947. Dès son enfance, il a commencé à écrire des nouvelleset, plus tard, il s'est mis à écrire non seulement des fictions, mais aussi des essais. (Le proche et le lointain, 48)

'Born in the British Indian Empire (1925–2004), Ashfaq Ahmad migrated to Lahore at the age of twenty just before Indian independence in 1947. Since childhood, he wrote news articles and later started writing not only fiction but also essays.'

## 5 THE CORPUS ANALYSIS OF THE RESEARCH ARTICLES

In this section, we will first focus on the macrostructure of the analysed articles, and subsequently on their microstructure.

### 5.1 Macrostructure of the research article

#### 5.1.1 *The title*

Titles are generally long and describe the content of the article very precisely, because it is important that the reader is able to determine what the article is about from the title itself. Two examples of titles from the analysed corpus are given below:

(7) La parenthèse en suspens : notes sur la traduction italienne des Géorgiques (Cahiers Claude Simon, 169)

'The parenthesis in suspension: notes on the Italian translation of Georgiques'

- (8) Expériences de mobilité. Apports et limites des sciences sociales dans un dispositif institutionnel de formation en français langue étrangère (Le proche et le lointain, 18)  
 ‘Experiences of mobility. The contributions and limitations of the social sciences within an institutional system of teaching French as a foreign language’

The length of the titles in the corpus varies between five and 29 words, with the average length being 11. Many titles (45%) are divided into a general part in which the article is placed in the relevant research domain and into a specialized part in which the content of the article is defined more specifically, as illustrated by the examples below. Of the 47 articles analysed, 21 contain such two-part titles. The general and specialized parts are often divided by a colon or full stop – 15 titles employ a colon in this dividing role, two employ a full stop, two articles do not contain any punctuation at all, in which case the beginning of the second part is capitalized (e.g., *L’italien ecco et les français voici, voilà Regards croisés sur leurs emplois dans les textes écrits*), while two titles contain a question mark.

Four examples in total contain a question mark in the title. Two of these employ the question mark to divide the general and specialized parts, while the other two already reveal the main research question in the title:

- (9) Décidément et décidamente : une évolution à deux vitesses ? (9 words)  
 (Langages, 69)  
 ‘Décidément and décidamente : a two speed evolution?’
- (10) A la fin, in fine, au final : qu'est-ce qui fait la différence, finalement ?  
 (Langages, 111)  
 ‘A la fin, in fine, au final: What makes a difference in the end?’

This is quite different from the Slovenian conventions (Hladnik 2002), although it is being increasingly used by Slovenian researchers fluent in French, because of the succinctness of expression (e.g., Schlamberger Brezar 2009).

### 5.1.2 *The introductory section*

The introduction includes a description of what the authors aim to present in the article, or, as we can read in the guidelines, « Introduction permet de décrire ce qui fait le problème » (Robitaille and Vallée 2017). Referring to the introductory section with the explicit title *Introduction* is frequent but not obligatory. Out of 47 examples, 25 contain an introductory section with an explicit title – the most

common is *Introduction* (22 examples), while other variants include *Préliminaires*, *Généralités* and *Prologue*. As many as 22 articles lack an introductory title; in such cases, the first paragraph or the entire first part (without the title) serves as the introduction.

The analysed articles show that the type of publication does not affect the macrostructure – in other words, the macrostructure is not prescribed by the journal. The distribution of explicit and implicit introductory titles is as follows: in the journal *Langages*, the title *Introduction* is used in four texts, while three texts are without a title; in the journal *Langue française*, *Introduction* is used in five texts, *Préliminaires* is used in one text, *Généralités* is used in one text, and in one text there is no explicit title; the collected volume *Le proche et le lointain* contains 13 articles with an explicit introduction and five texts without one; finally, the collected volume *Cahiers Claude Simon* is somewhat of an exception, as it contains a single article with an explicit introduction titled *Prologue*, while the other articles lack such a title (13 examples).

### 5.1.3 *The central section*

The central section of the article contains the discussion. The titles are varied and never correspond to the generic title *Discussion*, but rather range from general titles such as *Quelques détails* and *Trois niveaux d'analyse* to very specific ones, such as *Le traitement de l'adresse en malgache* and *Pour une traduction « philologique »*.

This section begins with a description of the research problem and continues with the discussion, ultimately leading to new findings. The section is usually divided into at least two parts: the first part includes a thorough description of the problem and of previous research, which means that the authors typically make use of descriptive sequences. Examples of titles used for this first part are *Un bref aperçu descriptif et historique* and *Quelques données*. This part is usually descriptive or explicative. Some articles only contain the first part and merely describe the problem (e.g., 1. *Description diachronique de décidément*, 2. *Description diachronique de décidamente*; *Langages*, 69–87), omitting the second part, while both sections are compared in the conclusion.

The second part of the central section contains the discussion which introduces new perspectives on the problem that is the focus of the work. The discussion usually employs the argumentative prototype. Some articles also contain a third part in the central section which synthesizes the first and second parts. However, there is no strict adherence to the IMRAD scheme (see also Hladnik 2002), which is typical of articles written by authors from the Anglo-Saxon tradition

and is nowadays used all over the world because of the widespread influence of the English language.

However, some articles from the domains of translation studies and literary studies are an exception, in that they contain historical overviews which typically employ narrative sequences. An example of a narrative introduction which shifts into a descriptive sequence is provided below:

- (11) En 2008, le premier cours au format MOOC a vu le jour à l'Université de Manitoba (Canada). Cette initiative pionnière a été conçue dans le cadre du connectivisme qui est une des théories d'apprentissage actuelles prenant en considération l'influence et les possibilités des TOC. Le trait-principal de cette approche est la constitution autonome de la connaissance, basée sur la recherche de ressources accessibles de leur mise en relation par les étudiants eux-mêmes, les enseignants n'ayant qu'un rôle de supervision ou d'orientation du processus de « découverte » dans la direction souhaitable. (Le proche et le lointain, 206)

'In 2008, the first course in the MOOC format was launched at the University of Manitoba (Canada). This pioneering initiative was conceived in the context of connectivism, which is one of the current theories of learning that takes into consideration the influence and possibilities of TOC. The basic characteristic of this approach is the autonomous creation of knowledge, based on searching for available resources or their synthesis by the students themselves, while the teachers only supervise and guide the process of "discovery" in the desirable direction.'

The central part of a research article also provides concrete illustrations of the claims in the form of figures, which range from quotations to tables and other types of figures. Out of the 47 articles analysed, 40 contain figures in the form of textual examples (36), tables (six), other schemata (four), photographs (three) and illustrations (three). Seven articles contain no examples, tables or figures in general; instead, they just contain the discussion.

### 5.1.4 *The concluding section*

This section can be explicitly titled as *Conclusion*, *Conclusion partielle*, or *Bilan d'expérience* (37 examples). In ten examples, this section lacks an explicit title. Articles from the domains of literary theory and translation studies in the collected volume *Cahiers Claude Simon* are again an exception in this regard, as all the examples of implicit conclusion except for one are from this collected volume.

The conclusion contains a brief overview of the main findings and lists potential future perspectives (see examples below):

- (12) Il faudrait donc établir une banque des données sur la manière dont on a appris à apprendre dans les cultures données. (*Le proche et le lointain*, 124)  
 ‘It would therefore be necessary to establish a database on how we learned to learn in the given cultures.’
- (13) Sur le plan pédagogique, les enseignants devraient donc développer avant tout – sans ou avec un manuel, mais par des activités réellement authentiques et motivantes – la sensibilité interculturelle ainsi que la conscience de l’importance de celle-ci chez leurs étudiants. (*Le proche et le lointain*, 110)  
 ‘At the pedagogical level, teachers should, above all else – with or without a handbook, but with truly authentic and motivating activities – develop intercultural sensitivity and raise awareness of its importance amongst their students.’

### 5.1.5 Citations and bibliography

Citations employ the author-date style within the text (e.g., the journal *Langages*, C. Rossari et al. 2007, 207), while the bibliography is listed at the end of the article. This system has been adopted by the journals *Langages* and *Langue française*, as well as the collected volume *Le proche et le lointain* (33 articles out of the total 47). The journal *Cahiers Claude Simon* is an exception, as in-text citations are included in footnotes while the entire bibliography is not listed at the end of the article. This is due to the instructions of the editorial board, which are to an extent typical of academic publications in the domain of literary studies (and are a relic of a bygone era). For Slovenian, Hladnik (1990, 2002) for example suggests that authors should follow the standard citation style.

## 5.2 Microstructural analysis

The use of epistemic modality, which is typical of academic texts (Palmer 1985), as well as the use of personal pronouns which may often be stylistically marked were the main focus of the microstructural analysis. Based on our own experience, the use of the first-person is quite common, but there is a difference between the singular or plural. In Slovenian, the use of the plural first person pronoun is typical; this is also the case in French, while Anglo-Saxon academia favours the

first person singular. In Central Europe, such usage is generally less appropriate (Riegel, Pellat and Rioul 1994; Toporišič 2000).

### 5.2.1 *The responsibilities of the authors for the claims presented (Prise en charge énonciative)*

To begin with, the authorship of the articles needs to be briefly considered: among the analysed texts, 43 articles are written by a single author, four articles have two authors, while each journal or collected volume contains an article co-authored by several authors.

Articles written in French typically employ the *nous de modestie* pronoun (Riegel, Pellat, and Rioul 1994, 197)<sup>6</sup> – that is, the pragmatic use of the first person plural pronoun *nous* which rhetorically denotes a singular author in the first person singular *je* with whom plurality establishes a metaphoric link. The plural pronoun *nous* can highlight the meaning of royalty (i.e., the royal ‘we’, *Nous roi de France*), sympathy (*nous avons bien dormi*, cf. also ‘how are we today?’), while in research articles the modest use of *nous* stands for *je*, thus implying that the author is part of a collective whole, thereby deemphasizing the author’s individuality.<sup>7</sup> In this case, *nous* exhibits notional agreement with the singular gender and number of the author: *Nous sommes convaincu* (in case the author is male) / *convaincue* (in case the author is female). *Nous* is overwhelmingly used in such a way in most of the analysed articles (example 14).

(14) Nous abordons ici l'étude contrastive du fonctionnement de deux adverbes modaux épistémiques. (Langages, 91)

‘Here we discuss a contrastive study of the function of two epistemic modal adverbs.’

In two out of all 47 analysed articles the pronoun *je* is explicitly used, as shown in examples 15 and 16 below.

(15) J'ai d'abord tenté de clarifier (Langue française, 126)

‘First, I tried to clarify’

(16) Je tiens, pour conclure (Langue française, 127)

‘To conclude, I’d like (to) ...’

6 « Nous fonctionne également comme substitut rhétorique de *je* qui’il assimile métaphoriquement à une pluralité – nous de majesté, nous de modestie, nous de sympathie. »

7 « Dans les textes scientifiques, nous apparaît comme nous de modestie en remplaçant le *je* dont il estompe l’individualité derrière une entité collective. » (Riegel, Pellat and Rioul 1994, 197)



First-person structures can also be indirectly expressed with a personal pronoun:

- (17) Ma conviction, mes expériences (Le proche et le lointain, 109)  
 ‘My convictions, my experience’
- (18) Dans le cadre des entretiens semi-structurés que j’ai menés avec des collègues (Le proche et le lointain, 103)  
 ‘As part of the semi-structured interviews I conducted with my colleagues ...’

Because the broad focus of our research, other markers of epistemic modality that also convey the inclusion of the author in the text (as also discussed by e.g. Vold 2008, 32–35) were not included in the analysis.

Finally, the indefinite pronoun *on*, which is used to refer to an indefinite generalized agent, needs to be mentioned: note, however, that *on* cannot be substituted by *nous* in academic writing, although this type of substitution is common in contemporary French. This impersonal pronoun almost completely replaces the passive voice, which is often considered to be less acceptable in French except in a few discursive contexts where the passive improves clausal cohesion from the perspective of information structure (either by retaining the theme or by establishing a short theme and a long rheme) or helps avoid ambiguity of expression (Riegel, Pellat and Rioul 1994, 198). A more in-depth discussion of the passive is beyond the scope of the article.

### 5.2.2 *Logical connectors*

By definition, connectors are used to steer the argumentation towards a certain goal, either by introducing arguments in favour of a conclusion (e.g., causal connectors) or counter-arguments (adversative connectors), or they can even introduce the conclusions of an argument (resultative connectors) (Schlamberger Brezar 2009, 84). In Sperber and Wilson’s Relevance Theory (1986), connectors are used to improve the comprehensibility of information and to make more explicit the relations between linguistic utterances (Schlamberger Brezar 2009, 48–51). Consequently, logical connectors are used relatively frequently in research articles; Saint-Luc (2012) argues that such connectors are a defining characteristic of academic texts, as shown in example 4, above.

The use of connectors in French research articles is also linked to the fact that authors employ them to express themselves with precision and grace, as shown by the example below.

- (19) **Sans** vouloir être réducteur, il faut **néanmoins** constater que l'humour repose largement sur deux dispositifs qui font que son universalité **n'est que** relative: d'un côté, il s'agit des mécanismes métalinguistiques, de l'autre, de jeux de stéréotypes culturels. **Lorsqu'**on pratique sa langue maternelle, ces deux dispositifs ne constituent nullement un obstacle, bien **au contraire**, ils permettent de tisser des « connivences » entre locuteurs partageant le même contexte linguistico-culturel. **En effet**, la compétence métalinguistique, qui permet aux locuteurs de réfléchir sur la langue (...) qu'ils utilisent, semble être une capacité acquise spontanément par le locuteur dans un milieu socio-culturel donné. (Le proche et le lointain, 162)

'Without wanting to be reductive, we have to concede that humour largely relies on two devices that make its universality only relative: on the one hand, it is based on metalinguistic mechanisms, and on cultural stereotypes on the other. When one is speaking in his or her mother tongue, these mechanisms do not present an obstacle; on the contrary, they establish complicity between the speakers from the same socio-linguistic context. Indeed, the metalinguistic competence that allows the speakers to think about their own language (...) seems to be a spontaneously acquired ability within a socio-cultural background.'

### 5.2.3 *Expressing epistemic modality in a research article*

The level of the author's commitment to the truth is paradoxically highest when modal expressions conveying epistemic modality are not used. Such a lack of modal expressions is characteristic of the articles analysed here, and is shown by example 20:

- (20) La réponse est entièrement rhématique. *Vraiment* n'est pas réactif, il renforce la vérité d'un énoncé *p* indépendamment du contexte gauche. À la différence de *vraiment*, il n'est aucunement confirmatif ni polyphonique. Le locuteur se limite à asserter à partir de sa conviction personnelle. (Langages, 98)

'The response is a part of the rheme. *Vraiment* is not reactive but reinforces the truth of an utterance *p* independently from the left-side context. Unlike *vraiment*, it is neither confirmative nor polyphonic. The speaker only makes an assertion following his or her personal conviction.'

In general, academic language employs unmodalized statements; in Palmer's view (1986, 71), this denotes the highest possible degree of commitment. As pointed out above, such use is – in the context of academic writing – sometimes paradoxical (Palmer 1986), since researchers in most cases deal with (confirmed) hypotheses; in spite of this, such unmodalized use turns out to be very frequent in the articles analysed here. Given that one of the researcher's primary aims is to confirm his or her results, one would expect epistemic modal expressions to be very frequent in research articles. However, in our case most articles are in the indicative mood without any modal markers, as we can see in example 20 above. Nevertheless, there are a few cases when the authors employ modalizing expressions (example 21); in the example below, this is shown by the use of *nous pensons* ('we think'):

- (21) (...) Si modalité épistémique et évidentialité inférentielle sont souvent imbriquées, **nous pensons** qu'il est pertinent de distinguer les deux notions afin de rendre compte des emplois de certains marqueurs (...) (Langue française, 54)

'(...) Since epistemic modality and inferential evidentiality are often interlinked, we think that it is relevant to distinguish the two notions in order to account for the use of certain modality markers (...)'

## 6 CONCLUSION

An analysis of 47 research articles from the humanities (linguistics, translation studies and literary studies) reveals that the articles – in spite of the diversity of the presented topics – employ a fairly unified structure, characteristic of both French research articles and of research articles in general. Descriptive text sequences can be found in all 47 articles. Six of the 47 texts analysed (all of which are published in the collected volume *Le proche et le lointain*) contain a narrative sequence, and all the articles contain descriptive, argumentative and expository sequences. The heterogeneous nature of academic discourse has been addressed by Pollet (1997), although her primary focus is on the expository sequence. The IMRAD structure mentioned above is not always adhered to, in spite of the fact that it has become the recommended scheme, while all the articles analysed follow the logical structure of the presentation of arguments. All of this suggests that French research articles have, on the one hand, started to adopt the general structure used throughout the world (in light of the fact that the attitudes towards science are fast becoming more and more global), as reflected in the macrostructure, citation styles, and abstracts. On the other hand, French research articles remain a unified genre with French cultural

characteristics, revealed in the microstructure: the use of *nous* for *je* (hiding the author's identity behind the collective whole), the use of connectors for argumentation and, in part, for highlighting the craftsmanship of the text, and long multiclausal sentences, which deviate from the model proposed by Robitaille and Vallée (2017) for French-Canadian academia. We can conclude that the cultural characteristics, especially in humanities articles, are retained, and we believe that there exists a model of the French research article which has been adopted by researchers who are not native speakers of French but who wish to gain recognition in French academia. This model varies to some extent depending on the article type. Even though our attention was focused on humanities articles, which tend to present qualitative research, we have been able to show that there exists a small degree of divergence from the usual macrostructure of research articles. Articles from the domain of literary studies differ from the establish macrostructure most, as they do not adhere to the explicit division into the main sections and employ their own citation styles (see *Cahiers Claude Simon*). In contrast, there is no such divergence between disciplines in Slovenian if we follow academic writing guidelines for the humanities (Hladnik 2002).

The present article attempted to outline the main discursive features of the French research article, although a detailed analysis was beyond its scope. As research articles from the Francophone contexts have so far received very little attention in Slovenia researchers, future studies could provide more detailed contrastive comparisons between French and Slovenian research articles for each of the categories outlined above.

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