Technical Writing for Professionals

Aim: To interrogate an academic article’s style, tone, structure, and rhetoric to better understand how to construct an article.

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|  | Name of the database the article is in |  |
|  | Name of the journal |  |
|  | Name of the article |  |
|  | Does the article cover theoretical research, applied research, or meta-analysis?  See the link from the assignment page |  |
|  | Is the title one long title, or is it broken into main title: subtitle ?  Many times titles are written as Creative: Descriptive, such as the following:  Surviving at any cost: guilt expression following extreme ethical conflicts in a virtual setting.  The Creative part tends toward meaningfulness and the Descriptive part toward defining the research or revealing the process of research |  |
|  | Names of the authors:  Does the article list the full names of the authors or just first and middle initials with full last names? |  |
|  | How many authors?  What are those authors’ professions? |  |
|  | Is the list of authors traditional or modern? The tradition is that the most important author (most likely the one who started the research and managed all the parts and people to compile the research) is the LAST person in the list. It’s a reflection of humility or even subordination of the main author to the research. However, the more modern approach over the last few decades lists authors as a measure of importance, the most important, central, person is listed FIRST and on down the line to the least important at the end of the list. |  |
|  | If there is an introduction to the article, what tone does the introduction use? Tones can be demanding, inquisitive, incredulous, declarative, plain-metered, awe filled, etc.  One way to think about is this: if the paper was being presented aloud, what is the personality/emotional mood/disposition of the speaker? |  |
|  | How many sources are mentioned in the article’s literature review? |  |
|  | What type of literature review does the article use (see the link for Type of Literature Reviews on the assignment page) |  |
|  | Does the article use pronouns such as I, Me, We, Us?  If so, which ones. If not, how does the author or authors self-reference? Do they use phrases such as “In this research” or “In this paper”? |  |
|  | Does the article use any of the following words: it, thing, or things. |  |
|  | Does the article use any contractions? |  |
|  | Does the article directly define terms?  Articles define terms/words depending on how focused or broad their audiences are. The more a journal focuses on a specific field of research, the less they are apt to define terms. If a Journal has an audience whose members have wide ranging fields of study, the more apt the journal is to have articles define terms. such as journal that the article is in usually has |  |

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|  | Does the article use appositives to subtlety define terms.  When a writer, someone who puts word to paper, uses an appositive, a term that means to redefine something or rename something, the writer is trying to avoid blunt definitions.  Above, the “someone who puts words to paper” is an appositive; it re-defines/renames what a writer is. The phrase “a term that means…something” is an appositive too. |  |
|  | Does the article use the Oxford Comma?  The Oxford comma means adding a comma before the word and in a list. The convention in APA style is to NOT use the Oxford comma. Sometimes, omitting the Oxford comma can cause problems.  I admire my parents Neil deGrasse Tyson and Wonder Woman.  With the Oxford comma, I admire three people: I admire my parents, Neil deGrasse Tyson, and Wonder Woman.  Without the Oxford comma, my parents ARE Tyson and Wonder Woman: I admire my parents, Neil deGrasse Tyson and Wonder Woman. |  |
|  | Does the article use passive voice?  Passive voice is the use of to-be verbs and, usually, an –ed ending on a verb.  Passive voice is not wrong; it’s tricky.  The Earth was created billions of years ago.  If we say you cannot use passive voice then we cannot say “was created,” so then we get in sticky wicket of who or what created the earth. The universe created the earth long ago (that sounds weird). God created the earth billions…(whoa! Now we’ve brought in a whole religious argument to a geology paper)  Passive voice can cause problems.  He was killed by the river. Wait, did the river kill him? Or was it that he was next to (by) the river when he was killed. |  |
|  | Are subsections descriptively or creatively named? And do those subsections use any type of numbering or lettering system.  (For instance a textbook might have Chapter One, then each sub-section is 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc) |  |
|  | How close does the order the subsections in the article follow the six steps of the scientific method. |  |
|  | Does the article have a Discussion section and/or a Conclusion section? |  |
|  | Does the conclusion summarize the entire paper or does it suggest where and in which direction the research should continue? |  |
|  | Does the article use Tables? |  |
|  | How are the tables positioned: left, center, right? |  |
|  | How are the tables labeled and where are they labeled? |  |
|  | How are tables mentioned or labeled IN the writing? |  |
|  | Graphs? |  |
|  | How are the graphs positioned: left, center, right? |  |
|  | How are the graphs labeled and where are they labeled? |  |
|  | How are graphs mentioned or labeled IN the writing? |  |
|  | Does the article use endnotes? |  |
|  | If so, what kind of information are they putting in the endnotes? |  |
|  | Does the article use footnotes? |  |
|  | If so, what kind of information are they putting in the footnotes? |  |
|  | What is the review process for that article’s journal?  Find the journal’s website and look for the submissions page; that page should say how the articles are evaluated. |  |
|  | What disciplines does the journal focus on? One, many? What are they? |  |
|  | According to the journal’s submission page, what citation style, or amended style, does the journal use? (MLA, APA, IEEE, Chicago) |  |
|  | Does the article (in sections other than the literature review) use direct quotes, paraphrasing, a mix of both? |  |
|  | How are in-text citations listed? Are the names or sources listed IN the writing or just given a (name, date) or such at the end of the passage? |  |
|  | The reference page is called what? |  |