Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (*IJAL*)

Vol. 19, No. 1, March 2016, 1-34

The Prestigious World University on its Homepage: The Promotional Academic Genre of Overview

Mahmood Reza Atai*, Fatemeh Asadnia

Kharazmi University, Iran

Abstract

In response to the competitive demands for establishing their international academic and financial credentials, the universities globally distribute some online introductory information about themselves. To this end, the university homepages have increasingly turned into the rhetorical space for the development of promotional academic texts in recent years. In this study, we examined university overview genre that provides the visitors with brief presentation of the simple facts while endorsing a specific perspective of the university and strengthening its position in the academic community. The corpus comprised 70 overviews extracted from the academic websites of the first top 500 universities. We analyzed and coded the texts to specify their overall rhetorical framework, functional moves and constituting steps, and optimal order of moves. The findings indicated that overview genre incorporates six obligatory moves including 'source of reputation', 'historical origin', 'current status of development', 'commitments, goals and orientations', 'global state', and 'services and supports'. Also, the results demonstrated that the academic genre did not follow a single, invariant pattern of sequenced moves in a clearly linear order. The findings further suggest that the nature of overview genre could be characterized by its twofold informative and persuasive functions. Finally, implications of the findings of the study are presented.

Key words: Genre analysis; Promotional academic genre; Overview genre; Move patterns

Article Information:

Received:10 November 2015 **Revised:** 11 January 2016 **Accepted:** 20 February 2016

Corresponding author: Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran
Email address: *atai@khu.ac.ir*

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

1. Introduction

The marketization of education has inspired the prestigious world universities to establish their international reputation by participating in the competition for economically driven academic growth and putting the predominant promotional culture on their agendas (Barnett, 2011; Coulter & Mandell, 2012; Jarvis, 2007; Newman & Jahdi, 2009; Santoro & Snead, 2013). This significantly contributes to the attempts of the academic institutions for changing the role of students from co-producers to that of consumers and taking the control of the academic circles through their online introductory resources and advertising networks (Askehave, 2007; Mautner, 2005; Molesworth, Nixon, & Scullion, 2009; Osman, 2008; Xiong, 2012). The survival of universities in today's competitive and unpredictable world hinges on their tendency for adhering to the evolutionary marketing trends, marginalizing the true, scholarly mission, rising to the challenge of cutbacks in education and research budget and transforming into independent corporate bodies (Hamsley-Brown, 2011; Han, 2014; Pampaloni, 2010; Woodall, Hiller, & Resnick, 2014). In this light, as Bhatia (2004, p.84) maintains, the sovereignty of academic colonization has been precipitated by changing the role of universities from that of enjoying "special status and dignity in society" to the current condition in which many academic institutions "are finding it extremely difficult to maintain their privileged status of excellence".

As Fairclough (1993) argues, in their efforts to become financially autonomous by relying on private, non-governmental fundraising resources, academic institutions have established the communicative promotional discourse to direct the reconstruction of their social purposes. It was at this critical era that the promotional academic language recognized its importance and found its route of development through the immediate advancement of mass communications (Bhatia, 2005). Along this line, Constantinides and Stagno (2011) emphasized the significance of academic websites as the available media-based marketing platforms for maintaining the introductory interactions with the visitors who seek to make decisions about their future educational destination. From this perspective, Askehave (2007, p.725) acknowledged that "homepages on websites have become

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

fully promotional texts in their own rights, not trying to hide or disclose their main purpose: to attract fee-paying students to come to the university to study".

The recent norms of globalization have been shaped as the natural concomitant of internationalizing education, corporatizing academic practices, and privileging prominent research universities (Flowerdew & Li, 2009). In addition to both online and printed advertisements distributed by the academic centers in form of prospectuses and brochures, the university websites may practice the explicit information-giving and implicit persuasion-invoking mechanisms to strengthen their own status by means of some introductory generic resources. This indicates that the rhetorical organization of the academic texts produced by university websites conform to discourse context, actor involvement, and text function accordingly (Salager-Meyer, 1999, as cited in Li & Ge, 2009).

At the depth of its nature, genre is conceptualized as the relationship between communicative purposes, linguistic forms, and social interaction among the members of discourse community (Swales, 2004). In this sense, Swales and Rodgers (1995) clarified that the interpretation of genre detached from its sociocultural context is assumed to be incomplete and partial. As Martin and Perez (2014) similarly assert, the promotional, persuasive nature of academic genres is largely influenced by the cultural and contextual tendencies. Even though the academic community is the fertile realm for genre analysts to comprehend and produce discursive knowledge, promotional discourse has recently gained momentum to enhance our understanding of the world "at the academic-commercial interface" (Hyland & Tse, 2009, p.703). In the same vein, as Osman (2008, p.59) argues, "The use of promotional literature in academic institutions is a recent development".

Academic institutions are no longer "a modern sanctuary of fact and truth, supposedly immune to sociopolitical influences" (Xiong, 2012, p.319) by gradually marginalizing the ideals of intellectual scholarship and elitism. Bringing this perspective to the level of language affords the critical lens into the universities' initiatives, actions, and strategies for establishing their academic-financial status.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

However, only a dearth of studies has been conducted on promotional academic genres in the context of university despite their considerable importance to a variety of the potential academic discourse community members, such as scholars, professors, faculty members, researchers, and most notably students. For instance, Askehave (2007) analyzed four sample international student prospectuses and came up with a preliminary template consisting of six obligatory moves including identification of sender, description of university, description of courses/degrees, description of destination, provision of practical information, and provision of contact information. Furthermore, Osman (2008) examined the sample university brochures to demonstrate its constituent moves, i.e. name of the university, university slogan or motto, vision/mission statement, profile or background of the university, location and size of the university, academic programs offered at the university, facilities available to support the academic programs, entry requirements, fees charged and duration of the programs, career opportunities and recognition received by the university, and contact addresses and telephone numbers. In another investigation, Xiong (2012) explored the rhetorical structure of advertisements for academic posts and found the main moves, such as titling, establishing credentials, communicating future aspirations, announcing posts and requirements, offering remunerations and incentives, and providing contact details.

To bridge the present gaps in the literature of academic homepage genre analysis, this study addressed the macro-level generic structure of an introductory promotional academic genre. In essence, Swales (2004) drew on different aspects of the recent trends in education and research world, i.e. generification, technology, commodification, and globalization that shaped the fundamental properties of the homepage genre mainly concerned with the online university introduction. In practice, universities internationally disseminate the latest fresh factual information about themselves through their websites for the purpose of satisfying the expectations of online visitors totally unfamiliar with the worldwide academic institutions. For those online clients who need to get familiarized with universities, these webpages design a section usually known as “about us” which equips the visitors with the basic indispensable package of information that acts as a bridge to connect the past, present, and future of the university in form of overview genre. In

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

this study, the researchers investigated the rhetorical structure of university overview genre. To this end, the following research questions were proposed:

1) What is the generic structure of university overview?

2) Is there any conventional move sequence for university overview genre?

2. Method

2.1. Corpus

The corpus of this study included 70 overviews selected from the first top 500 universities based on purposive sampling procedures. In terms of length, the overviews ranged from 130-230 words. From among three major world-level university ranking systems including Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU), QS World University Ranking, and Times Higher Education World Universities, ARWU was selected. This ranking scale uses critical, objective indicators to rank the universities that incorporate the number of alumni and staff winning Nobel Prizes and Fields Medals, number of highly cited researchers selected by Thomson Scientific, number of articles published in journals of Nature and Science, number of articles indexed in Science Citation Index-Expanded and Social Sciences Index, and per capita performance with respect to the size of an institution.

The clarity and rationality of ranking, transparency of methodological perspectives, depth and breadth of international coverage, specificity of evaluation criteria in addressing the quality of education, quality of faculty and research output, and concentration on a large group of academic audience could validate ARWU as the appropriate ranking scale for meeting the requirements of this study. To this end, the latest updated ranking scale of ARWU published internationally in 2012-2013 was taken into consideration for the selection of universities.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

2.2. Procedures

This study sought to identify the rhetorical structure of university overview genre and its constituent move-step patterns on the basis of the main parameters of linguistic clues, boundary markers, and typographical cues (Ansari & Babaii, 2005, p.281). With no prototypical schematic model devised for the genre under study, the researchers started with the preliminary heuristic investigation and careful, manual analysis of the sample texts. To this end, three stages of initial coding, axial coding, and selective coding were deployed. At the first stage, the researchers described and categorized the overall set of moves in the process of constantly looking for the repeated patterns of their occurrence. Then, the axial coding was applied for the purpose of understanding the relationship between the categories of moves and the sub-categories of steps. At the next level, selective coding was used to demonstrate the systematic arrangement of the basic generic organization of university overview texts.

The standard criteria for the categorization of moves into obligatory and optional constituents according to their frequency of occurrence could not be definitely established due to different norms set by the researchers in the field. However, in this study, the cut-off point of 60% (Kanoksilapatham, 2005) was determined to represent the frequency of moves occurring at or above 60% as obligatory and below that level as optional. To enhance the reliability of the findings, one-third of the corpus was given to an inter-coder to independently specify the move-step patterns of the overview genre. The inter-coder consistency was estimated to be about 97%.

3. Results

3.1. Generic template of university overview genre

University overview genre represents one of the introductory resources that appear on the homepages of academic institutions for the purpose of equipping the potential visitors with the holistic picture of what they have to offer. This genre is a brief demonstration of the simple facts that construct the building blocks of the

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

educational and professional perspectives of the universities. In other words, the universities find this rhetorical space as the critical opportunity for giving the fundamentally convincing information about themselves. Practically, this genre highlights where the university was in the past, where it is now, and where it will go in future.

In spite of its condensed nature, overview genre presents the prospective customers with the most concise and precise source of information that they need to know in just a few minutes. Our analysis of the corpus of university overview revealed six moves in order, i.e. source of reputation, historical origin, current status of development, commitments, goals and orientations, global state, and services and supports (see Table1). All these moves were identified as obligatory, given the cut-off point of occurrence already set in this study. The obligatory state of moves and their accompanying steps are presented in bold type in Table 1 below. To illustrate the moves and their constituting steps, some typical examples extracted from the corpus follow.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Table1

Functional moves of university overview genre

Move	Steps	Frequency
Source of reputation(69)	**Scholarly status**	**57**
	Influential contributions	**62**
	Honors, awards and rankings	**47**
	Hallmarks	22
	Partnerships	37
Historical origin(43)	**Date of foundation**	**43**
	Name of founder	10
	Historical highlights	31
Current status of development(65)	Identity	27
	Demography	31
	Educational infrastructure	**60**
	Community perspective	26
	Location	43
Commitments, goals and orientations(52)	Commitments	27
	Ultimate goal	**52**
	Approaches to fulfillment of goal	40
Global state(44)	**International orientation**	**44**
	International scope of programs	26

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

	Admission of international members	32
	International partnerships	27
Services and supports(42)	Extracurricular activities	13
	Facilities	11
	Educational and financial supports	**42**

1. Source of reputation

This move establishes what the university assumes as its source of honor, respect, and prestige. At this stage, universities introduce themselves as the impressive, well-accredited, and highly acclaimed institutions by tracking their significant accomplishments and permeating their unrivalled reputation throughout the world. This move stands as the most convincing hidden evidence for substantiating the universities' claims which could go far beyond the influence of direct advertisements. As shown in Table 1, the move comprises five steps including scholarly status, influential contribution, honors and awards, hallmarks, and partnerships. The third step itself incorporates international and local rankings, prominent figures, graduates, and alumni, and awards. The fifth step also consists of academic associations, professional affiliations, and prestigious memberships.

- **Scholarly status**

Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, is a **leading** national public research **university and the state's preeminent, comprehensive** public **institution of higher education**. **(Rutgers University)**

McGill University is **one of Canada's best-known institutions of higher learning and one of the leading universities in the world. (McGill University)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **Influential contribution**

It is well-known for its excellent education, **ground-breaking fundamental research and for putting its new findings directly into practice. (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)**

Our activities focus on **building a distinctive profile, exceptional performance in research and teaching, excellent qualifications for our graduates and a forward-looking administration. (Berlin Technical University)**

- **Honors and awards**

❖ **Ranking**

The University of Reading **is ranked in the top 1% of universities in the world.(University of Reading)**

Kent State **is ranked among the nation's 77 public research universities** demonstrating high-research activity by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.**(Kent State University)**

❖ **Prominent figures**

To date, **the Nobel Prize has been conferred on twelve University of Zurikh scholars. (University of Zurikh)**

Vanderbilt alumni can be found in Congress, on the judicial bench, in the pulpit, heading corporations, conducting innovative medical research, writing for and appearing on the stage and screen, and playing in the NFL and major league baseball.(Vanderbilt University)

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

❖ **Awards**

The university's **recent success in the "Excellence" competitions, 2007 for research and 2009 for instruction**, testifies to its position as one of the leading universities of the 21st century. **(Freiburg University)**

The university **has won the Queen's Anniversary Prize** for Higher and further education on five occasions.**(Queen's University, Belfast)**

- **Hallmarks**

Stanford is known for its entrepreneurial character, drawn from 3 legacy of its founders, Jane and Leland Stanford, and its relationship to Silicon Valley.**(Stanford University)**

Since 1878, Stockholm University **has been characterized by openness and innovation**. **(Stockholm University)**

- **Partnership**

❖ **Academic association**

Lancaster's community **extends far beyond the campus with research, teaching and student exchange partnerships with leading universities and institutions in 24 countries around the world. (Lancaster University)**

York's 11 faculties and 28 research centers are thinking bigger, broader and more globally, **partnering with 288 leading universities worldwide. (York University)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

❖ **Professional affiliation**

With five campuses and a network of more than 200 affiliated healthcare and educational partners spanning the state, we touch the lives of almost every New Jerseyan every day. **(University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey)**

The university enjoys a strong international reputation, both for the quality of its research and the excellence of its education. This acclaim has been won in part due to **its strong ties to many national and international Geneva-based organizations, such as the World Health Organization, the International Telecommunications Union, the International Committee of the Red Cross, and the European Organization for Nuclear Research.(University of Geneva)**

❖ **Prestigious membership**

Darthmouth is a **member of the Ivy League.(Darthmouth University)**

UNSW is a **founding member of the Group of Eight**, **a coalition of Australia's leading research-intensive universities, and of the prestigious international network Universitas 21**. **(University of New South Wales)**

2. Historical Origin

This move underlines the appeal of world universities for acknowledging their prolonged contributions to scholarship, leadership and academic-professional partnership. This function is realized through highlighting their concomitantly long-lasting establishment and historical milestones. For surviving in the competitive atmosphere of international marketization and enhancing their global status, universities are inclined to track their glorious past for the purpose of constructing the future horizons of development. As shown in Table 1, this move includes three steps, i.e. date of foundation, name of founder(s), and historical highlights which itself underscores the importance of historical developments and historical traces.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **Date of foundation**

Established in 1636, Harvard is the oldest institution of higher education in the United States. **(Harvard University)**

Charted in 1746, Princeton is the fourth-oldest college in the United States. **(Princeton University)**

- **Name of founder**

Leland and Jane Stanford founded the University to "promote the public welfare by exercising an influence on behalf of humanity and civilization."**(Stanford University)**

Sun Yat-sen University, originally known as Guangdong University, was founded in 1924 **by Dr. Sun Yat-sen (also called Sun Zhongshan),** a great democratic revolutionary leader of the 20th century. **(Sun Yat-sen University)**

- **Historical highlights**

❖ **Historical development**

CU-Boulder **has blossomed in size and quality since we opened our doors in 1877. (University of Colorado)**

In 1887, **the inaugural class of the University of Oregon Medical School met in the school's lone building - a two-room converted grocery store in northwest Portland.**

From that small school we have grown into a world-class teaching hospital and research center.(Oregon Health & Science University)

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

❖ **Historical traces**

Liverpool has been home to explorers and revolutionaries **for over 800 years.(University of Liverpool)**

Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul(UFRGS) is a **century-old** educational institution nationally and internationally recognized. **(Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul).**

3. Current status of development

As illustrated in Table 1, this comprehensive move describes the unique assets that the universities enjoy in education and research at present. These available resources could significantly contribute to the attempts of students and faculty members for fulfilling their purposes in solving the greatest challenges of the day. The universities use this move to represent their superior position, condition and function in comparison to other educational bodies. The present move has five steps including identity, demography, educational infrastructure, community perspective, and location. Educational infrastructure move takes into account the educational programs at undergraduate, graduate, and post-graduate levels or academic degrees at B.A., M.A., and PhD levels. Academic centers, scope of education and research are among the other sub-constituents of this step.

- **Identity**

Founded in 1989, Northeastern University is **a private research university** located in the heart of Boston. **(Northeastern University)**

UW is **one of the oldest public universities** on theW22est Coast. **(University of Washington)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **Demography**

Founded in 1958, our research and education community is **16, 000 students and 3000 employees** strong, and one of the biggest and the most multidisciplinary universities in Finland. **(Oulu University)**At present, **there are more than 32,000 students** in University, receiving education in morethan 323 specialties in 20 faculties. University's **staff comprises almost 14,000 people, including nearly 6,000 teachers (*1,000 Doctors of Science, over 2,000 Candidates of Science, 42 Academicians of state academies)*** who represent 289 academic departments. **(Saint Petersburg University)**

- **Educational infrastructure**

❖ **Academic programs**

In just half a century, the University of Waterloo, located at the heart of Canada's technology hub, has become a leading comprehensive university with 34,000 full- and part-time students **in undergraduate and graduate programs. (University of Waterloo)**

Now in its third century, **the University offers 78 bachelor's, 112 master's, 68 doctorate and seven professional degree programs** through 14 schools and the College of Arts and Sciences.**(University of North Carolina)**

❖ **Academic centers**

The University **is an integrated system of senior and community colleges, graduate and professional schools, research centers, institutes and consortia. (City University of New York)**

-The University's 19,000 students can select from approximately 80 undergraduate and 110 graduate degree programs offered by **five colleges: Agriculture, Forestry and Life Sciences; Architecture, Arts and Humanities;**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Business and Behavioral Science; Engineering and Science; and Health, Education and Human Development. (Clemon University)

❖ **Scope of education**

It offers more than 60 undergraduate and 40 graduate programs in **fine and performing arts, liberal arts and sciences, business administration, education, urban and public affairs, social work, engineering and computer science. (Portland University)**

Vanderbilt offers undergraduate programs in **the liberal arts and sciences, engineering, music, education, and human development**. **(Vanderbilt University)**

❖ **Scope of research**

Over the past three years, research income has risen by approximately 100 percent, a development which is also thanks to the **five main research areas: Nano-sciences, Biomedical Sciences, Urban Systems, Empirical Research in Education, and Change of Contemporary Societies. (Duisburg-Essen University)**

The focal points of its **research include energy supply, risk management, developing the cities of the future, global food security and human health**. **(University of Zurikh)**

- **Community perspective**

With a strong legacy of excellence to guide us**,** the University of Manitoba and **its dynamic community of researchers, students, teachers and staff**, are addressing the challenges facing Canada and the world in the 21st century. **(University of Manitoba)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Our campus, overlooking the beautiful UNESCO World Heritage City of Bath, has a vibrant research culture driven by the enthusiasm and invention of **our academic community**. **(Bath University)**

- **Location**

Emory University, recognized internationally for its outstanding liberal arts colleges, graduate and professional schools, and one of the Southeast's leading health care systems, **is located on a beautiful, leafy campus in Atlanta, Georgia's historic Druid Hills suburb. (Emory University)**

The internationally renowned Technische Universitat Berlin **is located in Germany's capital city at the heart of Europe. (Technical University of Berlin)**

4. Commitments, goals, and orientations

This move is closely associated with the universities' obligations and principal purposes. More specifically, this move represents the commitments that the universities demonstrate, the ultimate goals that they are required to achieve and the approaches that they pursue to complete their missions.

- **Commitments**

Our unwavering dedication to intellectual exchange, multidisciplinary teamwork and innovation propels us ever forward in discoveries and advances to improve the human condition. **(Mount Sinai School)**

We are committed to creating and disseminating new knowledge as a university of growing national and international stature. **(University of Illonoise at Chicago)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **Ultimate goal**

As a world-renowned research university, Princeton **seeks to achieve the highest levels of distinction in the discovery and transmission of knowledge and understanding. (Princeton University)**

Our mission is to contribute to the improvement of human health through research and education. **(Karolinska Institute)**

- **Approaches to fulfillment of goals**

Today, CUNY faculty and staff members continue to benefit New York City — as well as the entire nation — **by serving as policy experts to business and government, advisers to nonprofit institutions, civic organizations and community groups. (City University of New York)**

We teach. We explore and we discover. We collaborate and lead. We innovate, inspire, and empower. We achieve our potential and create circumstances that help our students and others achieve theirs. (Michigan State University)

5. Global state

This move explicitly highlights and magnifies the global status of universities that operate on the world-level scale. It is through this stage that the universities respond to the international marketization of academic centers for the purpose of attracting more fee-paying student consumers. The global state move further foregrounds the role of the university as being a global community with international presence in different social, academic, professional, and cultural domains. This move addresses four primary steps, namely international orientation, international scope of programs, admission of international members, most notably students, and international partnerships (see Table 1).

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **International orientation**

The London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine is a **world-leading center** for research and postgraduate education in public and global health. **(London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine)**

Just like the city of Geneva itself, the university **enjoys a strong international reputation**, both for the quality of its research (it ranks among the top institutions among the League of European Research Universities) and the excellence of its education. **(University of Geneva)**

- **International scope of programs**

While the University maintain a strong and distinctive Tasmanian identity**, our programs and research are international in scope, vision and standards.(Tasmania University)**

Queen's University Belfast is a member of the Russell Group of 24 leading UK research- intensive universities, **providing world-class education underpinned by world-class research. (Queen's University, Belfast)**

- **Admission of international members**

The Ruhr-Universitat Bochum (RUB) with its 20 faculties, RUB's disciplinary institutional units **is home to 5000 employees and over 36500 students from 130 countries.(Ruhr University, Bochum)**

The University of Montana is a place **where top-tier students, educators and researchers from** across the country and **around the globe come and thrive**.**(University of Montana)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **International partnerships**

At Scuola Normale SuperioreUniversity, **great space is devoted to international exchanges**, according to the best models of higher instruction in Europe.**(Scuola Normale SuperioreUniversity)**

With numerous international partnerships and study programs, the world is our campus, and what we do has a global impact.**(Darthmouth University)**

6. Services and supports

This move shows the supportive facilities of the universities that lead to the students' progress in both academic and extracurricular programs. At this phase, the universities compete with each other over demonstrating their potentials for providing the faculty and students with the modern services. The more the universities inform the consumers about their high-level and senior facilities, the more they are tended to encourage the future customers to join. According to Table 1, this move consists of three major steps including extracurricular activities, facilities, and educational and financial supports.

- **Extracurricular activities**

Anyone can enjoy and be enriched by all the UW has to offer, **including world-class libraries, art, music, drama, sports and the highest quality medical care in Washington state. (University of Washington)**

Students are attracted by **our world-class sports facilities**, **and the wide array of other social, recreational and personal development opportunities we offer.(Bath University)**

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

- **Facilities**

Our campus is a memorable place to visit, with its beautiful historic buildings alongside **ultra-modern institutes, teaching laboratories and residences.(University of Liverpool)**

In addition to granting the general public access to its twelve museums and many of its libraries, the University makes findings from cutting-edge research available to the public in accessible and engaging lecture series and panel discussions.**(University of Zurikh)**

- **Educational and financial supports**

❖ **Educational supports**

It **offers researchers an inspiring working environment and its students a comprehensive education. (Swiss Federal Institute of Technology)**

Undergraduates, from the very first year, **enjoy leadership positions and research opportunities typically available only to upperclass and graduate students**.(**Brandeis University)**

❖ **Financial supports**

For students who are excited to investigate the biggest issues of the 21st century, Harvard offers an unparalleled student experience and **a generous financial aid program, with over $160 million awarded to more than 60% of our undergraduate students.(Harvard University)**

The University's generous financial aid program ensures that talented students from all economic backgrounds can afford a Princeton education.(Princeton University)

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

3.2. Conventional Move Sequence of University Overview Genre

The most conventional move sequences in university overview genre were determined by examining the occurrence of the most frequent order of two, three, four, and five moves. The most frequent conventional move sequences occurred at the level of two moves with M1-M3 as the most repeated pattern that happened 24 times in overview genre. In addressing the occurrence of the most common three moves, the sequence of M1-M5-M3 had the highest level of frequency that happened 9 times. The move sequences M1-M3-M5-M4 and M1-M4-M3-M6 occupied the most recurring pattern of four moves with 3 cases of appearance. Finally, M3-M1-M4-M6-M5 showed the most conventional sequence with 5 moves happening 2 times in order.

Table 2

Conventional move sequence in university overview genre

Conventional Move Sequence	**Frequency**
M1-M2	6
M1-M3	24
M1-M4	15
M1-M5	15
M1-M6	6
M2-M1	5
M3-M1	13
M3-M4	6
M3-M5	7
M3-M6	2
M4-M1	5
M4-M3	2
M5-M1	4
M6-M1	3

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

M1-M2-M3	3
M1-M3-M2	2
M1-M3-M4	3
M1-M3-M5	6
M1-M4-M2	3
M1-M4-M3	3
M1-M4-M6	2
M1-M5-M2	3
M1-M5-M3	9
M1-M6-M3	4
M2-M1-M3	2
M2-M3-M1	4
M3-M1-M2	3
M3-M1-M4	2
M3-M1-M5	8
M3-M1-M6	3
M3-M4-M1	4
M3-M5-M1	4
M3-M5-M4	2
M3-M6-M1	2
M4-M6-M3	2
M5-M1-M3	2
M5-M1-M3	3
M1-M3-M5-M4	3
M1-M4-M3-M6	3
M1-M3-M4-M2	2
M2-M1-M3-M6	2
M3-M1-M5-M4	2
M3-M6-M1-M5	2
M3-M1-M4-M6-M5	2

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

4. Discussion

The present study was conducted to probe the generic structure of university overview. This promotional academic genre seeks to familiarize the potential visitors of the university websites with its different perspectives in a few minutes. As Hyland and Tse (2009) put forth, the academic genres produced by universities are not only informative, but also promotional in a sense of representing, advocating, and anticipating certain features of the given information. The purpose of this study was to explore the twofold communicative functions of university overview genre, i.e. description and persuasion.

In practice, overview genre works as an academic digest in the form of a short written report that draws on the brief compilation of facts about the universities. The analysis of the corpus of overviews displayed that although this genre was not lengthy enough to include all details about the university, it had the capacity to incorporate some general yet inclusive information that the prospective visitors, especially students need to know. The results further revealed the presence of six obligatory moves in the generic organization of this genre, i.e. source of reputation, historical origin, current status of development, commitments, goals and orientations, global state as well as services and supports. The first move, namely source of reputation included certain steps, such as scholarly status, influential contribution, honors and awards, hallmarks, and partnerships. This move described different sources of pride, dignity, and eminence that distinguished a university from others by directly or indirectly positioning it among one of the unrivalled, top-tier academic centers in the world. The second move, i.e. historical origin incorporated date of foundation, name of founder, and historical highlights as its profound steps. This move was shown to be a flashback to the past and a clear-cut representation of the university's depth of originality and long-term presence in education and research. The third move built the backbone of the practical initiatives in form of the present institutional, demographical, educational, and geographical conditions prerequisite for the development of university. This forward-looking move which was planned to be fulfilled by means of the current status, quality, and infrastructure of the university had certain steps, such as

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

identity, demography, educational infrastructure, community perspective, and location. Commitments, goals, and orientations strongly supported the obligations, aims, and practical strategies that the universities employed for constructing a productive future. In addition, the recent trends of globalization significantly contributed to the fifth move that conceptualized the university as the microcosm of the world, whereby the university is the world and the world is the university. The move of globalization was realized by international orientation, international scope of programs, admission of international members, and international partnerships. As another move, the inevitable trends of support and cooperation at universities encouraged their members to solve more and more problems with the help and collaboration of each other on the one hand and by means of the facilities and resources that university maintains for them on the other hand.

In this line, as Briggs and Bauman (1992, p. 141) aptly contended, genres are "conventionalized yet highly flexible organizations of formal means and structures that constitute complex frames of reference for communicative practice". This contributes to the changing nature of overview genre in response to the current needs of the academic world. From this perspective, the rhetorical organization of the university overview genre works as the vehicle for spreading the prominence of indirect persuasion that does not resemble the established prototypical advertisements (Halmari &Virtanen, 2005). As Ostman (2005) asserted, implicit persuasion is favored as more impressive because the readers are not fully conscious of the main purpose of the texts. By listing their considerable accomplishments, significant historical milestones, current academic perspectives, ambitious goals and prime obligations, global trends in scope and practice, and available first-class facilities, the universities introduce themselves in the process of promoting their services in the generic structure of overview that they concomitantly produce. More specifically, the gradual movement of academic introduction in the direction of promotional properties was triggered by the corporatization of education that marginalized the mere presentation of information in introductory terms and steadily followed the linear track of evaluation, persuasion, positive evaluation, promotion, and marketing without completely

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

losing the informative function of discourse altogether (Bhatia, 2004). In this light, as Tse and Hyland (2009, p.119) acknowledged, "To be persuasive, writers need to connect with a community value system, making rhetorical choices which evaluate both their propositions and their audience". This may indicate that in promotional academic genres, the convincing description of content could appropriately meet the readership expectations by giving general information while inviting the potential visitors to try the services (Basturkmen, 2009; Gea-Valor, 2005). Similar to academic book introduction that combines informative and persuasive communicative purposes (Andersen, 2012), the overview genre signified the twofold functions of its content in both descriptive and promotional terms. This may lead to the application of interactive strategies for the purpose of involving the target group of readers and grasping their attention (Onder, 2013).

The importance of each move and step in university overview genre could be manifested by reference to their frequency of occurrence. More tangibly, the genre gave its highest frequency to source of reputation, current status of development, commitments, goals, and orientations, global state, historical origin, and services and supports, respectively. With respect to the appearance of steps located within each of the moves in overview genre, it was revealed that in the first move, influential contributions, scholarly status, and honors and awards had respectively the most transparent frequency of occurrence. Partnerships and hallmarks were located at the next level. In the second move known as historical origin, date of foundation enjoyed the most recurring pattern. However, historical highlights and name of founder were among the other steps with less frequency in order. In current status of development move, educational infrastructure and location were the major steps that had the most transparent occurrence. But, demography, identity, and community perspective were among the other less frequent steps. The fourth move placed universities' ultimate goals at the depth of its functioning. This was accompanied by approaches to the fulfillment of goals and the presentation of commitments, respectively. In addition, global state move assumed international orientation as its most tangible step. This was followed by the admission of international members, international partnerships, and international scope of

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

programs. Services and supports move favored the step of educational and financial supports as the most dominant. The specification of extracurricular activities and facilities showed themselves at the next level of frequency.

Investigating the conventional sequence of moves in overview genre was another area of consideration in this study. In this sense, it was found that the generic organization of university overview followed the specific order of moves, i.e. source of reputation, historical origin, current status of development, commitments, goals, and orientations, global state, and services and supports. This sequence may be indicative of the universities' demands for acknowledging their highly acclaimed position in the light of the honors and awards that have brought them honor and pride in the first place. To this end, the academic institutions preferred to list their far-reaching accomplishments before making commitments, accentuating goals, and asserting their claims of firmly living up to the expectations of their potential members. The first move preceded historical origin move by means of which the universities make an instant flashback to their points of departure in the past for the purpose of connecting this move to the next one, namely current status of development. The move addressing the present perspectives of the university is a bridge to future which is highlighted by the following move, namely commitments, goals, and orientations. It should be acknowledged that at this level, the universities presented themselves to online visitors by gradually moving from past to present to future, i.e. from the first and second move to the third and then the fourth one. The next stage witnessed the prominence of internationalization orientations among the universities followed by the supportive services and facilities that they provide for their academic community.

Different kinds of introductory academic genres may share certain moves in their generic organization. For instance, some of the moves that we identified in the overview genre were similar to the moves recognized by Osman (2008) in exploring the rhetorical organization of university brochures. These moves include vision/mission statement, background of the university, academic programs offered at the university, and facilities available to support the academic programs that

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

respectively correspond to commitments, goals, and orientations, historical origin, current status of development, and services and supports move in the present investigation. Furthermore, Askehave (2007) highlighted the prominence of course/degree description and destination description moves in international university prospectus that are incorporated into one move known as current status of development in this study.

Analyzing the rhetorical structure of overview genre revealed the most important characteristics that it reflected. These included communicative purpose, socio-cultural context, information distribution technology, and discourse community membership. More specifically, this genre was one of the introductory resources that consistently attempted to present some general information about the academic institutions for the purpose of meeting the communicative needs of a convincing introduction and attracting a large number of fee-paying clients on an international scale. In practice, the traditionally non-promotional and informative discourse produced by universities has approached the promotional generic structure. In addition, the generic texts addressed the practical use of descriptive language with the observable function of providing information and the hidden intention of selling the products and services of academic institutions to the target audience. This is due to the universities' endeavor for maintaining their privileged and distinguished status in the competitive environment of attracting the attention of clients (Bhatia, 2005). Furthermore, overview genre occurred at the socio-academic context of the universities that struggled over presenting the most representative yet persuasive introduction of themselves. More importantly, it should be acknowledged that the universities disseminated overview texts on their online homepages through the instant technology of the Internet that could make the academic exchanges and communication channels available and easily transferable. Additionally, the universities produced overview genre not for the public audience, but for the intellectual members of the academic discourse community whether they were scientists, scholars, researchers, faculty members or students.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

5. Conclusion

This study explored the generic structure of university overview genre in terms of its move-step patterns. Along this line, the researchers identified six moves including source of reputation, historical origin, current status of development, commitments, goals and orientations, global state, and services and supports. Moreover, the conventional sequences of two, three, four, and five moves were determined in order. In addition, no clear linear structure of move 1+2+3+4+5 was found in the corpus.

In practice, we highlighted the significance of the generic organization of university overview texts in accordance with certain criteria, such as participants, product, specific communicative purpose, general communicative purpose, and rhetorical act (Bhatia, 2004). From this perspective, the participants of the promotional academic genre were the online visitors of university websites, most transparently scholars, researchers, students and their parents. Moreover, this academic genre had the informative, promotional texts as its main product. It is worth accentuating that overview genre had the general purpose of giving information and the specific purpose of persuading the potential consumers to buy their academic services.

This study could be of great interest to a wide range of academic discourse community members. First of all, it may help the university students to find the information required before their application for and admission to different institutions. Similarly, it could be of importance to both experienced and novice researchers who look for the universities that could equip them with the most fundamental, ultra-modern facilities for conducting research projects. Moreover, graduates need to know different world-wide universities for the purpose of getting informed about their employability prospects. More practically, students of Applied Linguistics could benefit from the pedagogical implications of this study mainly concerned with specifying the close relationships between language, discourse, and society.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

This investigation was carried out according to the conventional textual analysis and genre analysis model. The findings of this study highlighted the rhetorical nature of the overview genre and provided a preliminary basis for further examination of online promotional academic genres by the prospective researchers. Further research could address the multimodality of the university introduction resources. Other studies could also compare the distinguishing nature of implicit and explicit academic advertisements in the context of universities. In addition, follow-up studies could make a link between the internal text-based linguistic properties of the genre and its external dynamic socio-academic context. Future studies may also focus on the nature of promotional academic and professional genres, such as mission statements and annual reports in order to locate their similarities and differences.

6. References

Andersen, B. (2012). What web ads, blurbs and introductions tell potential dictionary buyers about users, user needs and lexicographic functions. *Journal of Language and Communication in Business, 49*, 119-149.

Ansari, H., & Babaii, E. (2005). The generic integrity of newspaper editorials: A systemic functional perspective, *RELC Journal, 36* (3), 271-295.

Askehave, I. (2007). The impact of marketization on higher education genres-the international student prospectus as a case in point. *Discourse Studies*, *9*(6), 723-742.

Barnett, R. (2011). The marketized university: defending the indefensible. In M. Molesworth, R. Scullion, & E. Nixon (Eds.), *The Marketisation of Higher Education and the Student as Consumer* (pp.39-51). New York: Routledge.

Basturkmen, H. (2009). Back Cover Blurbs: Puff Pieces and Windows on Cultural Values. In K. Hyland & G. Diani (Eds.). *Academic Evaluation Review Genres in University Settings* (pp.68-83). England: Palgrave MacMillan.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Bhatia, V.K. (2004). *Worlds of Written Discourse*. London: Continuum.

Bhatia, V.K. (2005). Generic patterns in promotional discourse. In H. Halmari & T. Virtanen (Eds.), *Persuasion Across Genres* (pp. 213-229). Philadelphia : John Benjamins.

Briggs, C.L. & Bauman, R. (1992). "Genre, intertextuality, and social power". *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology, 2* (2), 131-172.

Constantinides, E. & Stagno, M.C.Z. (2011). Potential of the social media as instruments of higher education marketing: a segmentation study. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 21*(1), 7-24.

Coulter, X. & Mandell, A. (2012). Adult Higher Education: Are We Moving in the Wrong Direction?, *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education, 60*(1), 40-42.

Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: The universities. *Discourse and Society, 4*(2), 133-168.

Flowerdew, J., & Li, Y. (2009) The Globalisation of Scholarship: Studying Chinese Scholars Writing for International Publication. In R. Manchon (Ed.), *Writing in Foreign Language Contexts Learning, Teaching and Research* (pp.156-182). Bristol: Multilingual Matters.

Gea-Valor, M. L. (2005). Advertising books: A linguistic analysis of blurbs, *Ibérica*, *10*, 41–62.

Halmari, H. & Virtanen, T. (2005). Towards understanding modern persuasion. In H. Halmari & T. Virtanen (Eds.), *Persuasion Across Genres* (pp. 229-245). Philadelphia : John Benjamins.

Han, Z. (2014). The marketization of public discourse: The Chinese universities. *Discourse & Communication, 8* (1), 85-103.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Hemsley-Brown, J. (2011). Market heal thyself: the challenges of a free market in higher Education. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education, 21*(2), 115-132.

Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2009). 'The leading journal in its field': evaluation in journal descriptions. *Discourse Studies*, *11*(6), 703-720.

Jarvis, P. (2007). *Globalization, Life-long Learning, and the Learning Society*. Routledge: Taylor& Francis.

Kanoksilapatham, B. (2005). Rhetorical structure of biochemistry research articles. *English for specific purposes,* 24, 269 - 292.

Li, L.J. ,& Ge, G.C. (2009). Genre analysis: Structural and linguistic evolution of the English-medium medical research article (1985-2004). *English for Specific Purposes, 28*(2), 93-104.

Martin, P., & Perez, I.K.L. (2014). Convincing peers of the value of one's research: A genre analysis of rhetorical promotion in academic texts. *English for Specific Purposes, 34*(1), 1-13.

Mautner, G. (2005). The entrepreneurial university: A discursive profile of higher education buzzwords. *Critical Discourse Studies*, *2*(2), 95–120.

Molesworth, M., Nixon, E., & Scullion, R. (2009). Having, being and higher education: the marketisation of the university and the transformation of the student into consumer. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *14*(3), 277-287.

Newman, S., & Jahdi, K.H. (2009). Marketization of education: marketing, rhetoric, and reality. *Journal of Further & Higher Education*, *33*(1), 1-11.

Onder, N. (2013). Generic structure and promotional elements in best-selling online book blurbs: A cross-cultural study. *Ibérica*, *25*, 171-194.

Osman, H. (2008), Re-branding academic institutions with corporate advertising: a genre perspective. *Discourse & Communication*, *2*(1), 57-77.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Ostman, J.O. (2005). Persuasion as implicit anchoring: The case of collocations. In H. Halmari & T. Virtanen (Eds.), *Persuasion Across Genres* (pp. 183-213). Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

Pampaloni, A.M. (2010). The influence of organizational image on college selection: What students seek in institutions of higher education. *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education*, *20*(1), 19-48.

Salager-Meyer, F. (1999). Referential behavior in scientific writing: A diachronic study (1810– 1995). *English for Specific Purposes*, *8*(3), 279–305.

Santoro, N., & Snead, S.L. (2013). "I am not a real academic": A career from industry to academia. *Journal of Further and Higher Education, 37*(3), 384-396.

Swales, J. M. (2004). *The manuscript version of chapter seven of Research genres:Explorations and application.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J.M., & Rodgers, P.S.(1995). Discourse and the projection of corporate culture: The mission statement. *Discourse& Society*, *6*(2), 223- 242.

Tse, P., & Hyland, k. (2009). Discipline and Gender: Constructing Rhetorical Identity in Book Reviews. In K. Hyland & G. Diani (Eds.). *Academic Evaluation Review Genres in University Settings* (pp.105-121). England: Palgrave MacMillan.

Woodall, T. Hiller, A., & Resnick, S. (2014). Making sense of higher education: students as consumers and the value of the university experience. *Studies in Higher Education, 39*(1), 48-67.

Xiong, T.(2012). Discourse and marketization of higher education in China: The genre of advertisements for academic posts. *Discourse & Society*, *23*(3), 318-337.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]

Notes on Contributors:

Mahmood Reza Atai is professor of Applied Linguistics at Kharazmi University, Tehran, Iran. His research interests include ESP, needs analysis, genre analysis, and EAP teacher education and he has published on these themes in international and national journals.

Fatemeh Asadnia is a PhD candidate of Applied Linguistics at Kharazmi University. Her areas of research include ESP and teacher education. She has co-authored some articles on these themes.

[Downloaded from c4i2016.khu.ac.ir on 2026-11-04]

[DOI: 10.18869/acadpub.ijal.19.1.1]