

Investigation of Rhetorical Move Structure of Theses Abstracts at Government College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan: A Genre Analysis

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In the current study, researchers investigated the rhetorical move structure of theses abstracts at Government College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan using qualitative analysis techniques of genre analysis. The study aimed to classify and distinguish the move-based generic structure of Sixty (60) English theses abstracts (20 from each program) written by students of Government College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan in Education, English Literature, and Physics programs using Bathia's four-move RA abstract structure and Swales & Feak's RA abstract five-move structure. Researchers analyzed the reliability of these cross-disciplinary abstracts and also identified the verb tense move frequently used in the abstracts of the students' theses. This study employed a Qualitative Case Study method. From the results, researchers concluded that out of 60 abstracts, there were 11 (18.33%) abstracts that followed the move structures as per Swales and Feak's (2004) five-move RA abstract structures, and no abstract followed the move structures of the four-move structure RA abstract by Bhatia's (1993).

Keywords: *genre analysis, move structure, theses abstract*

Introduction

The English language is one of the furthestmost important language used around the world, i.e., it viewed as a lingua franca since the late 19th and early 20th centuries. At the beginning of the 21st century, the role of English as internationally recognized mean of communication has rapidly risen. English language is now the leading or official language of numerous countries (Alcaraz Ariza & Navarro, 2006,). Further it is the main element in several linguistic varieties and main foreign language in many countries. The extensive usage of English language as the key means global communication has led to pay wide attention to academic writing in English language. The extensive attention is paid to the research articles (RA) published in internationally accredited journals to present new ideas in that particular field of study (Abarghooeinezhad & Simin, 2015). Similarly, academic writing is extremely important in all fields including applied linguistic domain as it is the main gate in presenting and communicating ideas and thoughts among members in the applied linguistics community (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002). Academic authorities worldwide attempt to compete in contributing to the development of various disciplines by measuring the productivity of their authors, university professors and research published articles in well-known international and national journals (Martin, 2003). Hence, Publication is the major channel for research community to share and present their ideas and contributions to that particular field. Swales (1990) argues that a scientific paper is not considered to be read, rather designed to be published. He added that publications are documentary indication that the writer qualifies for involvement in the discourse Community.

In Pakistan at the graduate and the postgraduate level in the field of academic writing, students need to write a thesis to complete their degree. In the process of thesis writing, abstract is the important component that attracts the reader attention toward the text (Emilia,2009). Busy examiners read abstract first than decide to move further or not (Paltridge & Srtartfield, 2007). Readers decide to read a full article or purchase it after reading its abstract (Alhuqbani,2013).

Abstract is the summary and a refined reflection of the entire text (Swales, 1990). According to Hayland (2009), abstract allows reader to choose, whether the full article is valuable for reading or not. The right selection of rhetorical structure by writer helps to influence the reader on reading the full text. (Ren,2011). Abstract is the shortened form of speech, article, which gives account to important facts or ideas (Walter, 2008). Abstract is an account of an actual summary of a long report, which gives the reader precise knowledge of whole article, and the writer has to use a chain of rhetorical moves and strategies (Bhattia, 1993).

There are two famous generic structure of research abstract writing, four move generic structure of Research article abstract writing by Bhatia (1993), in this model first move is an introduction, the second move is a description of the method, the third move is the summarization of results and the last one is presenting the conclusion. Swales & Feaks (2004), proposes a five move generic

structure for Research Article abstract, named as Background, Aim, Method, Results and Conclusion moves.

The two possible verb sentences used in writing a research article abstract. If abstract is a summary of the thesis, the present tense will be used and if abstract is the summary of the report that has been done in the past tense will use in it. (Starfield, 2007).

In the field of academic writings abstract is considered as a separate genre. According to Hayland (2004) a genre is a term which assembled texts together and described how writers characteristically use language in different situations. The major purpose of the genre analysis is the investigation of the sequence of patterns in research article abstract in English Language, (Martin-Martin 2005).

In 1980, Genre analysis was appeared as the field of English for specific purpose. From previous studies it is clear that the genre analysis has different influences like Social action, the examination of learners' writing, and genre as a new rhetoric (Paltridge, 2007). Notably, the word "genre" indicates various types of artistic and literary works; however, linguists have extended its usage to cover classes of language use and all areas of communication (Allison, 1999). According to Swales (1990) genre is a set of communicative events in which the members have some common purposes. Apparently, this definition reveals that a genre is classified due to its communicative purpose. The description of rhetorical structure of genre moves plays a vital role in the field of genre analysis.

The word "move" defined as segment consists of a group of linguistic features (lexical items etc.), (Nwogu. 1997). so, move is a discorsal or rhetorical unit of written or spoken discourse, performs a communication function (Swales, 2004). Thus, moves are test units that always present in a typical sequence (Martin-Martin 2005).

There are many researchers, research, and analysis of the rhetorical organization of the research thesis abstract. Stotsbury (2003) finds a difference between rhetorical structure and style but pays no attention to the degree of difference between the corpus of literary abstract he collected. Martin (2005) finds the link between deviations in Spanish abstracts as compared to the international standard of abstract writing in terms of the writer and discourse community, but he didn't focus on abstracts from a single city or institute of that community. Afshari (2005) reveals deviations from international standards in Persian writings but does not focus on the abstracts of students' theses from a single educational institution.

Research abstracts have gained extreme importance due to the huge academic information in the world. Abstracts are seen as the readers' doorway to view an article, journals' selection for contributions, and for conferences to accept or reject articles (Lores, 2004). Therefore, recent research articles are more likely to be accompanied by more and more informative abstracts that would enable them to get acceptance to internationally recognized journals. Taylor & Chen (1991)

emphasize the importance of move analysis in Contrastive Rhetoric (CR) as it studies the cultural variations in discourse structure. They also added that “the cultural background of the author might lead to variation of the rhetorical structures of texts, and that such variation should be considered in ESL teaching programs” (p. 319).

Therefore, authors of research articles need to be aware of the cultural differences in respect with text structure to succeed in international community. The concept of internalization has been growing in the academic community, meaning that more and more non-native speakers of English want to acquire awareness and mastery of the writing conventions of the Anglo-American academic community to get international recognition. Consequently, the vast majority RA linguistic analyses have always been compared between native speakers of English and their non-native counterparts (Li, 2011).

Tseng (2011), analyzed 90 research article abstracts move structure and verb tense. He finds out that commonly the writers followed four move generic structure to write their research article abstract. A genre-based study of abstracts from four disciplines law, linguistics mathematics, and medical by Alhuqbani (2013), the result of his analysis revealed that generic model of Bhatia and Hayland are common in abstracts of these four disciplines. Loan et al. (2014) studied 137 abstracts of TESOL conference Thailand and found the divergences between the actual composition of abstracts set by conference and writers’ knowledge. Kosasih (2018) studied forty English abstracts from four disciplines, public administration, fisheries, management and mathematics using Bhatia’s four-move structure and Swales and Freaks five-move structure, he concluded that only 15% abstracts follow Swales & Feak’s five-move model and only 4% contain Bhatia’s four-move model, present and past tenses are used by writers in their thesis abstracts.

From the above-mentioned previous studies, researchers found that there is a gap no other study is conducted to analyze English theses abstracts in Education, English Literature and Physics programs. However, abstract is an essential part of thesis writing in these disciplines. Therefore, considering this gap, this study focused on the generic analysis of theses abstracts from three disciplines on the bases of Bhatia’s (1993) four-move model and Swales & Feaks (2004) five-move model, by analyzing thesis abstracts of three disciplines in terms of generic moves, more this study analyzed preferred verb tense for each move.

Researchers were expecting that the results of this analysis will help us to enrich the move-based structure of thesis abstracts by non-native Pakistani scholars from three disciplines. It was also projected that this study will contribute to classify students English abstract writing skills at Govt. College Women University, Faisalabad, Pakistan.

Research Questions

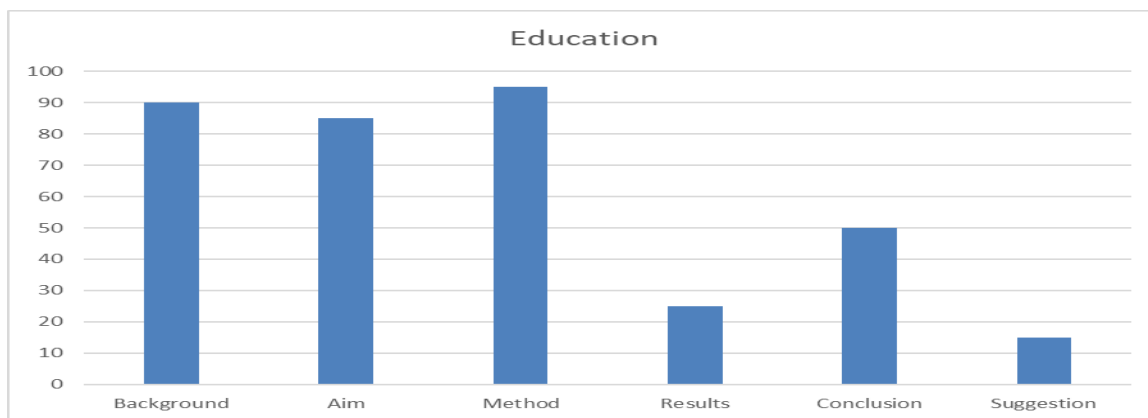
1. What is the preferred move structure in theses abstracts in three disciplines Education, English Literature and Physics?
2. What are the similar and different moves used in theses abstracts by researchers of three disciplines?
3. Which discipline abstracts followed move structures more and which discipline followed least?
4. What is the preferred verb tense used in thesis abstract used by researchers?

Method and Procedure

This qualitative case study analyzed generic structures of 60 post-graduate thesis abstracts, 20 from Physics, 20 from Education, and 20 from English literature from 2018 to 2020. Researchers picked up Bhatia's (1993) four move model and Swales and Feak's (2004) five-move model as a framework to analyze the move-based structure of the cross-disciplinary corpus. In this study, every abstract was coded and analyzed using these two frameworks. According to Paltridge and Starfield (2007), students constantly use two verb tenses to write their thesis or report abstract. If the abstract is a summary of the idea, then the present tense will be used. If the abstract is the outline of the report that has been done, the past tense will be used.

Results

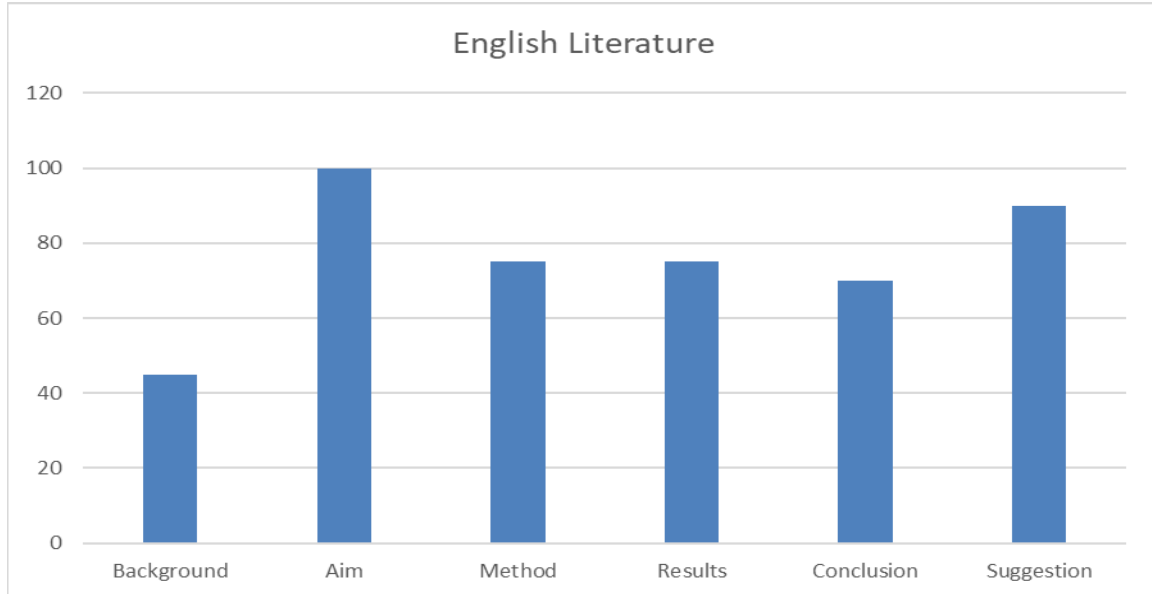
The Coding of Whole Corpus



Graph 1: Shows the Percentage of each Move Occurrence in Education Corpora

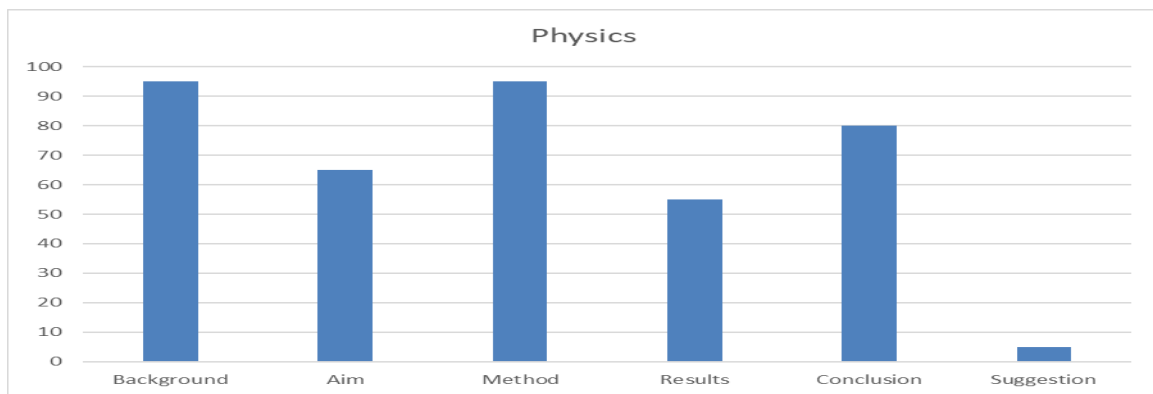
In the Education discipline, B-A-M is the most preferred move structure with the percentage of 35% present in 7 abstracts and the second preferred move structure is B-A-M-R-C with the ratio of 15% found in 3 abstracts, the third preferred structure is B-A-M-C with a percentage of 10%

used by two researchers. While A-M-R-C, M-R-C, B-A-R-C, B-M-A, B-M-S-C, and B-A-S-M used one time with a ratio of 5% each.



Graph 2 : Shows the Percentage of each Move Occurance in English Literature Corpora

In the English Literature discipline, the most preferred structure is A-M-R-C-S having a percentage of 30% found in six abstracts. While A-B-M-S, A-M-R-S, A-R-C-S, and A-B-M-S are second-most preferred move structures with a ratio of 10% and used two times respectively. While A-B-M-R-C, A-B-R-C, A-M-R-S, B-A-M-C-S, B-A-M-R-C-S, A-B-A-R-C-S used one time with a percentage of 5% each.



Graph 3: Shows the Percentage of each Move Occurance in Physics Corpora

In the Physics discipline, the most preferred move structure is B-A-M-R-C used five times with a percentage of 25%. B-M-R-C and B-A-M were used two times with a ratio of 10% each. B-M-S-C, A-M-C, B-A-R-C, A-M-B, and B-M-R each used one-time have a percentage of 5%.

Table 1

| Move | Tense | Education | English Literature | Physics |
|----------------------------|---------|-----------|--------------------|---------|
| Background 0(0%) | Past | | 6(30%) | 0(0%) |
| | Present | | 14(70%) | 18(90%) |
| Aim 0(0%) | Past | | 4(20%) | 0(0%) |
| | Present | | 10(50%) | 12(60%) |
| Method 0(0%) | Past | | 2(20%) | 14(70%) |
| | Present | | 16(80%) | 4(20%) |
| Results 0(0%) | Past | | 0(0%) | 2(10%) |
| | Present | | 0(0%) | 12(60%) |
| Conclusion 0(0%) | Past | | 8(40%) | 0(0%) |
| | Present | | 0(0%) | 16(80%) |

Table 1: Verb Tense Occurrence in each Move in English Theses Abstract

Discussion

According to the results of this qualitative case study the Background move used 44 times in 60 abstracts. Background is usually the origin of field from where a field originated. 18 abstracts from education discipline contained background move, while in Physics discipline 18 abstracts also used background move and in English Literature discipline only 9 abstracts contained background move. It showed that in discipline of Education and Physics there was more emphasis on giving the background knowledge of the study which was be used by students in their research.

Introduction is another important part of research thesis abstract (Bhatia 1993), which gives the introduction to the problem which researcher is going to tackle. But none of the thesis abstract from 60 abstracts contained this move.

The next move is Aim, this is the outline of author's purpose or aim of research which he/she wants to fulfil by completion of this research. 51 abstracts contained Aim move which means the researchers gave more emphasis to the purpose for which they were doing this research.

Methodology is the way, theory or method which researcher is going to use to solve research problem. 53 abstracts contained Methodology move, 19 from Education, 19 from Physics and 15 from English Literature. Which means that methodology is an essential part of research thesis abstract.

Results are the summary and interpretation of general findings. Total 25 abstracts contain result move, 4 abstracts of Education discipline, 11 from Physics and 15 from English Literature contained result move. Education abstracts put less emphasis on results explanation but Physics and English Literature emphasis more.

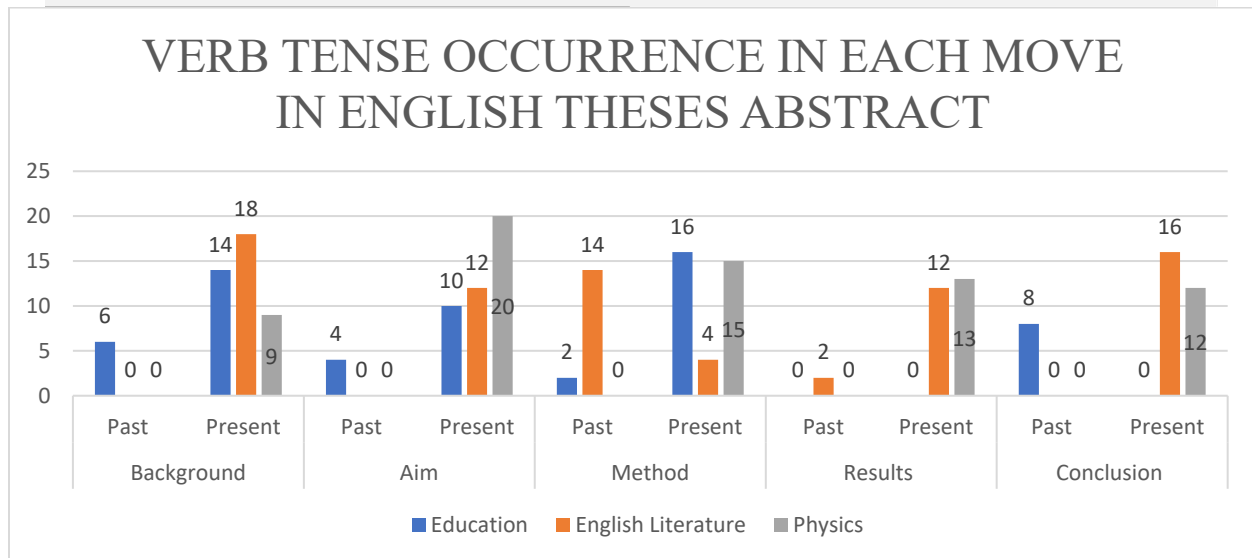
Conclusion is the final result of research. Total 40 abstracts contained conclusion move in which 10 are from education, 16 from physics and 14 from English Literature.

Suggestion is another move detected in these abstracts of Education and English Literature, 2 times in Education thesis abstracts.

In previous section it explained that there are two famous generic structure of research abstract writing, Four move generic structure of Research article abstract writing by Bhatia (1993), in this model first move is an introduction, the second move is a description of the method, the third move is the summarization of results and the last one is presenting the conclusion. Swales & Feaks (2004), proposes a five move generic structure for Research Article abstract, named as Background, Aim, Method, Results & Conclusion moves.

Concerning the two styles of RA generic move structures proposed by Bhatia (1993) and Swales and Feak (2004), the information of this examination additionally showed that out of 60 abstracts, there are just 11 (18.33%) abstract's move structures were as per Swales and Feak's (2004) five-move structures, and there was not a single abstract with the move structures followed Bhatia's (1993) four-move structure. It implied that solitary 11 (18.33%) abstracts from all out 60 English theory abstracts that conformed to the ordinary move structures of RA conceptual. Meanwhile 49 abstracts (81.67%) were not followed conventional move structure of RA abstract.

Most followed Verb tense in abstracts was present tense as shown in graphs below:



Graph 4: Present the Occurrence of Verb Tense Occurrence in English Theses Abstracts.

From the analysis, it is clear that the given move structures are not able to fulfill abstract needs nowadays. Suggestions or future recommendation moves must be added in move structures in the field of genre analysis, and Pakistani students have to pay more focus on the move structure of their theses abstract section.

Conclusion

Based on the result and discussion sections, researchers concluded that out of 60 theses abstracts from three programs only 11 (18.33%) abstracts followed the generic move structure of the research abstract proposed by Swales and Feak (2004), while no abstract followed the four-move model of the research abstract by Bhatia. It implied that only 11 (18.33%) abstracts from all-out 60 English theory abstracts that conformed to the ordinary move structures of RA abstract and 49 theses abstracts (81.67%) are not followed the conventional move structure of the RA abstract. The 45% of abstract moves followed past tense while 65% of abstract moves followed present tense.

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