Rhetorical moves structure employed in the research article abstracts: A genre analysis

[1]Mary Donnabelle R. Presto & [1]Khareen B. Culajara*
[1]Department of Arts and Sciences, UM Digos, Philippines
Corresponding author: khareen17@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Writing in academic genre is the most challenging part of the non-native student writers. Research article abstract have been a growing research in the past two decades. Thus, the aim of the present study was to examine and investigate the rhetorical moves employed in the research article abstracts. This study utilized Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2003) models of rhetorical moves of abstract written by the undergraduate students under the Liberal Arts departments of UM Digos College during the year 2017-2014. The results shows that there were 15 move patterns found in the 29 research articles abstracts being examined and none of the 15 move patterns were compatible with Bhatia (1993), Santos, (1996) and Hyland (2003) models of rhetorical moves of abstracts. This given the idea that the Liberal Arts department thesis abstracts do not follow or adopt any of the three influential people in the researches of abstracts. Ergo, the findings of the present study have pedagogical implication that the non-native student researchers need to realize the importance of applying any of the three proposed theory of the rhetorical move structure of abstracts by Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996), Hyland (2003) in their abstracts writing since these model's covey important information that should be available in the research abstracts.

Keywords: rhetorical, research article, abstracts, genre analysis, UMDC

INTRODUCTION

We cannot deny the fact that writing as academic activity is the very challenging part specially to the non-native student writers. Even though, non-native writers started writing in English as a Foreign Language during grade school up to now, but non-native student writers are still having difficulties in constructing and choosing of good words in English in any communicative purposes. Few non-native writers may be able to produce good write-ups in many different academic genres, but many are not engaged in good writing. One way to cope with these challenges and difficulties among non-native students have knowledge of linguistically acceptable writing through genre analysis. This has actually been the most important concern of the research in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) (Hammond & Derewianka, 2001).

In recent years, scholars working in the field of academic genre have become increasingly interested in investigating the discourse of different academic genre including book review, movie review, conference proposal, business report, grant application, letter to editor, reference letter, theses dissertation, proposal, lecture and seminar and research article. Abstracts and introduction section in the research article have been the most common analyzed genre. Analyzing a genre plays an important role in showing how language is used in particular context. Hyland (2003) defined abstract as genre a socially recognized ways of using language.

The abstract provides a lens through which research becomes available to larger audiences (Doro, 2013). However, according to (Bhatia, 1993) an abstract, as commonly understood, is a description or factual summary of the much longer report, and is meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full article. According to Hyland (2003), abstract in research is the first written text encountered by the readers. It is the key for the readers to decide whether to continue reading the complete research article. Thus, writing a good abstract catches the attention of the readers.

In the past decades, many researchers were investigating about genre analysis on abstract in different types of academic writing. But it is still unclear to the students who are doing research of what rhetorical structure to be used in order to write a good and effective abstract. It is very important for the researchers to be familiar with the rhetorical structure found in the abstract. According to Swales (1990), academic abstracts have been neglected as an important area of investigation and evidence of gatekeeping decisions.

The present study is aiming for investing the rhetorical moves structure employed in the research article (RA) abstract written by the undergraduate students of UMDC under the Arts and Sciences Education department. Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2003) Model of Rhetorical Moves of Abstract are adopted in analyzing the research article (RA) abstracts of the undergraduate students.

METHOD

The present study made us of the qualitative approach of research. A qualitative approach is employed when examining the content of texts. For example, the rhetorical moves of the research article abstract. One of the aims of the present study was to investigate the rhetorical moves employed in the research article abstracts written by undergraduate students of the Arts and Sciences Education department of UM Digos College. Since this is a corpus-based study, where it examined and investigated how the undergraduate students of the Arts and Sciences Education department write their research article abstracts.

The data sources of the study were taken from the abstracts written by the undergraduate students who took the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English Language and Bachelor of Arts in Political Science that fell under the Arts and Sciences Education Department of UM Digos College during the year 2005 – 2014. A total of 31 student theses during the year 2017 – 2014 but only 29 thesis abstracts were collected because two of the student theses do not have thesis abstracts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The present study analyzed and examine 29 research article abstracts written by the undergraduate students of the Arts and Sciences Education department of UM DIGOS College during 2007-24. The researcher adopted the three model of rhetorical structure proposed by the most influential people in analyzing abstracts who are Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2000).

The table 1 shows the presentation of I-P-M-R-C-Re moved used in the results found in the present study.

A thorough analysis was done to answer the first question in the present study, "what are the rhetorical moves structures employed in the research abstract written by the undergraduate students from Liberal Arts Department?"

Table 1. *Representation of Moves*

Code	Move
I	**Introduction**
P	**Purpose**
M	**Methodology**
R	**Result**
C	**Conclusion**
Re	**Recommendation**

As shown in Table 2, the results shows that out of 29 research article abstract being analyzed, there are 15 move patterns found in the research articles abstract being employed by undergraduate students of Arts and Sciences Education department, viz., M+P-MR-Re, P-M-R-Re, P-R, M+P-M-R, P-R, M+P-M-R, P+M-R, P-M+P-M+P-C, M+P-M-R-Re-M-R, I-R-P-R-Re, P-M-R-C -Re, M-P-M-R, P+M-P-R-Re, P-R-C, I-R-P-M-R-Re and I-M-P-R-C-Re.

In the 15 move patterns found in the research article abstracts, there are two moves present in all research article abstracts, namely, purpose move and result/product move (see table 2). And the most commonly used move found in the research article abstracts are the purpose move, methodology move, result/product move and recommendation move. On the other hand, the introduction move and conclusion move seem to be given little importance in the research article abstract by the undergraduate students of Arts and Sciences Education department for there are only three research article abstracts employed the introduction move and only four research article abstracts employed the conclusion move (see table 2).

The move pattern is commonly used in the present almost resembles Tseng's (2011) study, in which the results shows that there are three moves seemed to be obligatory, hence, *Aim/Purpose, Method and Result moves.*

Normally, a sentence contains only one move, however, there are some instances that one sentence contains two moves observed in the present study. Santos (1996) called it "move embedding." Move embedding or blending of moves is also found in the present study. Move embedding occurs when two moves are found in same sentence or in a phrase. Samraj (2005) also stated that a sentence many sometimes be a realization of more than one move". In the present study, the most common blending of moves is that the methodology is being embedded with the purpose. The presence of embedding of moves in the present study was seen in two ways:

Table 2. *Moves Structure Employed in the Research Article Abstract*

RA Abstracts Number	Moves Employed
1	M+P-MR-Re
2	P-M-R-Re
3	P-M-R
4	I-R-P-M-R-Re
5	M+P-M-R-Re
6	P-R
7	P-R-C
8	P+M-P-R-Re
9	P-R
10	M-P-M-R
11	P-M-R-C-Re
12	P-M-R-Re
13	P-M-R-Re
14	M+P-M-R-Re
15	M+P-M-R-Re
16	P-M-R
17	P-M-R
18	I-R-P-R-Re
19	P-M-R-Re
20	M+P-M-R
21	M+P-M-R-Re-M-R
22	M+P-M-R-Re
23	P-M-R
24	I-M-P-M-P-R-C-Re
25	M+P-M-R
26	P-M-R
27	P-R
28	P-M+P-M+P-C
29	P+M-R

embedding of methodology move with purpose move (M+P) and embedding purpose move with methodology move (P+M).

The following excerpts of abstract were methodology move embedded with purpose move (M+P).

1. This study *employed* a descriptive correlational type of research to *determine* the level of teacher-student relationship and the academic performance of the students.

2. The study *employed* a descriptive-correlational method to *determine* the quality of life and academic performance of the students of the UM Digos College.

The following excerpts of abstract were purpose embedded with methodology move (P+M).

1. The purpose of the study was to determine the organizational effectiveness of the Local Government Unit of Malalag using the Seven S (7S) Of Mckinsey's Framework (structure, system, skills, style, staff, strategy and shared values) […]
2. The upsetting certainty pushed for the researchers to do this study to determine the reading comprehension skills in the freshmen secondary students in Digos City which is our respondents.

Another thorough analysis was done to answer the second question of the present study "Is the rhetorical move structure compatible with Bhatia's (1194) four-move model, Hyland's (2000) five-move model and with Santo's (1996) five-move model? As shown in table 3, none of the 29 analyzed RA abstracts are compatible with Bhatia's (1993) IMRD model, Hyland's (2000) IPMPC model and Santos (1996) "Situating the research," "Presenting the research," "Describing the methodology," "Summarizing of findings," and "Discussing the findings". It only gave the idea that the Arts and Sciences Education undergraduate student thesis abstracts do not follow or adopt any of the three proposed theory of rhetorical moves of abstracts as mentioned in the present study. However, out of 15 move patterns found in the research article abstracts, there are 5 move patterns mostly used by the undergraduate students, namely, the M+P-M-R-Re move pattern which 5 of the abstracts used the same pattern, the P-M-R-Re move pattern which 4 of the abstracts used the same pattern, P-M-R move pattern which 5 of the abstracts used the same pattern, P-R move pattern which 3 of the abstracts used the same pattern and the M+P-M-R move pattern which 2 of the abstracts used the same pattern. And the rest were uniquely written research article abstracts.

The table shows the move distribution in Bhatia's (1993) model of rhetorical move structure of abstracts. In his proposed theory, it shows that there are three moves that are conventional, namely: move 1: Introducing purpose, move 2: Describing methodology and move 3: summarizing results which account the frequency of 33-36-31 respectively. The move 4: presenting conclusions found to be unconventional for it accounts the frequency of 4. In Bhatia's (1993) model of rhetorical moves, he only proposes 4 moves, however, in the present study there

Table 3. *Move Distribution according to Bhatia (1993)*

Move Type	Frequency
Move 1: Introducing Purpose	33
Move 2: Describing Methodology	36
Move 3: Summarizing results	31
Move 4: Presenting conclusions	4
Un-id: Introduction	3
Un-id: Recommendation	15

are two moves recognized in the student thesis abstract which are unidentified are the Introduction move and Recommendation move. Out of 29 student thesis abstracts, there are only three abstracts that used the introduction move, which means that this move is unconventional. On the other hand, the recommendation move seems to be conventional for it has a frequency of 15. Thus, some of the research article abstracts used recommendation move. To summarize, though Bhatia's (1993) model of rhetorical move structure of abstracts is not compatible with any of the thesis abstracts of undergraduate students, however, there are three moves which are conventional in the student thesis abstracts. There is only one move found to be unconventional. And most interestingly, there are two moves found to be unidentified in Bhatia's (1993) model of rhetorical moves structure of abstracts.

Table 4 shows the move distribution in Santos' (1996) model of rhetorical move structure of abstracts. Bhatia's (1993), and Santos' (1996) five move structure is also not compatible with any of the 29 student thesis abstracts. However, unlike Bhatia (1993), his five move structures are all employed in the student thesis abstracts. As shown in table 7, it shows that there are three moves that have the highest frequency, namely: move 2: Presenting the research which accounts a frequency of 33, move 3: Describing the methodology in which accounts a frequency 36 and move 4: Summarizing the findings which accounts a frequency of 31. This only means that the three moves are the most commonly employed moves in the student thesis abstracts and it is followed by the move 5: Discussing the findings that has a frequency of 19. There is a difference in the conclusion move in Bhatia (1993) and Santos (1996). In Santos (1996), the move 5: discussing the findings or the conclusion move, the recommendation move is included whereas in Bhatia (1993) recommendation move is another identified move. And the introduction move seems to have a little importance in the research article abstracts written by the undergraduate students of the Arts and Sciences Education department of UM Digos College.

Table 4. *Move Distribution according to Santos (1996)*

Move Type	Frequency
Move 1: Situating the research	3
Move 2: Presenting the research	33
Move 3: Describing the methodology	36
Move 4: Summarizing the findings	31
Move 5: Discussing the findings	19

In Hyland's (2000) model of rhetorical move structure of abstracts move distribution, it shows that there are also three moves that are commonly employed in the students thesis abstracts which are the same as Bhatia (1993) and Santos (1996) purpose move, methodology move and product move. Model of Rhetorical move structure of Santos (1996) and Hyland (2000) is almost similar with each other. However, the differ only in the conclusion move. In Hyland (2000) move 5: conclusion, he states that presenting restatement of aims, implications, and application of the findings. That is why the recommendation move is found to be unidentified move in Bhatia (1993) and Hyland (2000).

Table 5. Move Distribution according to Hyland (2000)

Move Type	Frequency
Move 1: Introduction	3
Move 2: Purpose	33
Move 3: Methodology	36
Move 4: Product	31
Move 5: Conclusion	4
Un-id: Recommendation	15

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATIONS

Regardless of the fact that the Arts and Sciences Education department of UMDC was not able to follow a rhetorical structure of constructing research abstract based on Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2003) it does not mean that the researches made by undergraduate students of Arts and Sciences Education are not worthy to be read. However, they are able to create 15 moves structure out of 29 research article abstracts that seem to have uniformity in the research article abstracts in the Arts and Sciences Education.

The findings of the present study have pedagogical implications. The non-native student researchers need to realize the importance of applying any of the three proposed theories of the rhetorical move structure of abstracts by Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2003) in their abstract writing since these models convey important information that should be available in the research abstracts. To attain this, they should be taught the rhetorical structures of research abstracts for them to realize and familiarize the specific features of each move and how the moves are employed in the academic genre setting particularly in abstract writing (Swales and Feak, 2009).

For further study regarding this research topic, the researcher recommends the following:

1. The present study only examined the specific genre, the research article abstracts. Other genre of research articles such as introduction and results need to examine and analyzed to show if they are consistent with the current models of genre analysis.
2. The present study focused on the research article abstracts under the Arts and Science Education department of UMDC. There is a need to conduct more studies in different departments such as Education department, Criminology department, CBA department, etc. in order to know how the student researchers from UMDC construct their thesis abstracts and also to identify if the UMDC research article abstracts follow rhetorical structures of research abstracts.
3. The researcher recommends for another research of the nonconformance of UMDC abstracts to Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996) and Hyland (2003).
4. And lastly, since the study only focused on textual analysis as a tool for qualitative research design, the researcher recommends a phenomenological inquiry as a research method to explain why there is nonconformance in ASED UMDC Abstracts.

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