

## **An Investigation into the Macro Rhetorical Structures of the EFL Research Abstracts of Graduates of 2013: The Case of Bahir Dar University in Ethiopia**

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### **Abstract**

This study was an attempt to find out the rhetorical structures which were used in the abstracts of the graduates' M.A. and M.Sc. theses that were drawn from nine programmes of four disciplines of two Universities. Consequently, 9 sets of 87 corpora of abstracts were collected and analysed employing Hyland's (1996) Five-Move Model of genre analyses. It was thought to be more descriptive to analyse the messages of the research abstracts which were communicated to the graduates' theses supervisors, advisors, invigilators and others who destined to employ these extracts as one medium of communication among the discourse community. These analyses focused on macrostructures of the abstracts of the M.A. and M.Sc. theses. With a handful of variations that were noted in the segments of the findings tapped from the abstracts of the Public Health and Micro-Biology, all the evidence suggested that a move structure of M2, M3, and M4 was utilised while these abstracts were structured, organised. Irrespective of the field of studies, the programmes, and the analogous disciplines that the research abstracts were collected, the rhetorical structures that focused on the descriptions of the moves of the objectives, methods, and products/results were the most frequently communicated ones. These schematic units were considered as mandatory moves that were used to communicate the messages to the intended audiences from multi-disciplinary and cross disciplinary perspectives. These were taken as mandatory moves unlike the M1 and M5 rhetorical structures which were identified as the least utilised in the same abstracts to address the intended/assumed messages to the anticipated audience. The findings also showed implications to academic EFL writing teachers whereby the observed commonalities and/or differences in the anatomies of these pieces of the academic writings should be considered while teaching how to write the abstracts to achieve the intended communication ends. Except the abstracts which were collected from the College of Medical Sciences, nearly all were found out to be structured ones.

**Keywords:** Research Abstracts, Move/Rhetorical Structures, Move Analyses and Genre Analyses

## **Background of the Study**

English is being used as a medium of instructions in course delivery, research endeavours, as well as other concomitant academic activities in the graduate programmes in many of the Ethiopian universities. Adult EFL learners are expected to have a good mastery of the English language to successfully accomplish a range of academic activities. One area of these could be the course-based research and the stand-alone research projects which these adult EFL learners are expected to accomplish mainly towards the end of their studies. EFL learners of the graduate programme are required to demonstrate a good level of academic writing proficiency in the target language to successfully write their final research projects. Experience has shown that adult EFL students in the graduate programmes have to meet many academic requirements and expectations which the universities and the respective graduate and research schools have inscribed in their respective legislations and bylaws. Irrespective of the adult learners' field of studies and areas of research, many of the graduate and research programmes encourage their trainees to demonstrate acceptable level of writing proficiency that has been stated as mandatory by each graduate and research schools. The purposes of these academic activities could vary from the graduates' EFL literacy needs to the different project works that required them to show up their writing proficiency. This could help these EFL learners to address their arguments either for, or against on a range of issues and structure and frame research works via scholastically.

Some of the field of specialisations are course-based M.A. or M.Sc. degree programmes whereas some others are a stand-alone research programmes. Many of the programmes, however, require the learners to attend courses for one or so years. Equally these programmes require the graduates to carry out a research when they are a semester or half a semester away to accomplish their studies. Especially, the adult learners who conduct research in the graduate programme are required to produce an “original” research which would lead them to the pathways to the successful accomplish of their studies. However, it is usually unfortunate to experience while this success happens. Well-cultivated academic writing skills on a variety of genres are imperative to non-native EFL learners to become successful in their graduate studies regardless of the programmes are course-based and research driven ones. EFL learners in the graduate programmes are required to do a lot of activities where the research endeavours are one. Most of all, EFL learners have to write good abstracts for their project works. These along with other activities herald the accomplishment of the research.

No matter how students in the graduate programme carry out their research activities on varied genres across disciplines, structuring academic research abstracts are one of the challenging components of the research endeavour. These academic activities require them to apply advanced academic writings skills whereby the audiences of their research such as their theses supervisors, academic advisors, invigilators, and the larger discourse community can understand what their researches are all about. Consequently, the latter can easily identify why the research has been conducted, how it has been conducted, where it has been conducted, and so forth priorities of a particular research report. In other words, adult EFL learners are required to present all these segments of their research reports in a half of a page or so irrespective of the variations in the disciplines of the respective universities and the institutions. On this account, Li (2011) acknowledges that EFL trainees try to acquire the writing proficiency of English language conventions though rhetorical variations across disciplines and even in closely related disciplines have been observed.

### **Research Abstracts: A Birds Eye View**

In view of the concept of an abstract much could be said vis-à-vis the available literature. However, to materialise this, a bird's eye view of its definitions are made. The publication manual of the American Psychological Association (2010:25-26), for example, has defined an abstract as "... a brief, comprehensive summary of the contents of the article; it allows readers to survey the contents of an article quickly and, ..., it enables persons interested in the document to retrieve it from abstracting ... databases. Most scholarly journals require an abstract. ...". Readers frequently decide on the basis of the abstract whether to read the entire article. Hyland and Tse(2005) also appeared to hold the same argument as regards to the research activities which should be enshrined in the research abstracts.

Likewise, Li (2011) has defined an abstract as a stand-alone genre and underlined that it has become a research attention among scholars. Li (2011:1) goes on to say that: "The abstract, a part-genre of the RA, has gained significant attention in recent years. Also, as Li (2011:1) has stated an abstract is a brief summary accompanying the RA and further extended its definition by citing Lorés (2004) as it is: "...an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, preferably prepared by its author(s) for publication ...".

However, my experience in the graduate programme has taught me that many of the EFL practitioners tend to have poor writing proficiency in the codes of writing and conventions of the development of the research abstracts. Hence many of the academic conventions limit researchers to structure their research abstracts in a few words of half of a page to a page and half, it appears to be difficult to mainly first-time researchers to frame their thought accordingly where readers could get what has been written in 400 pages, for example. The conventions might restrict the candidates to write their abstracts in 150-300 on a 4 size paper. This implies that abstract structuring requires the learners to develop good mastery of academic English writing proficiency. The applications of such writing proficiency may play a factor in writing the academic research articles that will help the EFL learners meet the academic requirements and play the game accordingly, abstract writing. The practitioners could be abided by conventions which stipulate the entire processes in abstracting the research out puts in the abstract sections of their research. Thus, EFL graduates have to utilise the academic writing tools which are prerequisite to communicate their research findings to their academic thesis supervisors, advisors, invigilators, and the discourse community all over the world.

In support of the above thinking, Li (2011) has put forward that the research abstracts across disciplines, in an era of the explosion of knowledge, are signals to readers where they can make a choice either to continue, or withdraw from their readership of the researchers' compilations. Citing Swales (2007) and Lorés (2004), Li (2011) further observes that the abstract genres are distinct from the other components of research activities and have become a focus of research. In the words of Li (2011:6-7), this goes as:

Millions of RAs are being published around the research world every year, and abstracts have become [a] crucial element to help readers make a decision in selecting readings. Lorés (2004) has stated that RA abstracts are different from RAs in the following three aspects: function, rhetorical structure, and linguistic realizations. Because of the increasing interest in abstracts, quite a few analyses on the part-genre have been conducted.

Li (2011) also states that research abstracts have administrative functions, for research editorial authorities or reviewers use them as gateways to either accept, or to reject the contribution of researchers. This is to say, regardless of the quality and the quantity of the information that has revealed in the entire work of a particular research, research abstracts

play decisive roles in deciding whether a report of a particular research is to the standard of a particular publishing house. According to the internal structure of the rhetorical moves, abstracts can be divided into two: conventional or unstructured, or uninformative and structured ones (Gustavii, 2008). Gustavii (2008) also points out that the former types are found to be uninformative and have much editorial trouble compared with the latter ones. The latter were reported by having a heading for each major section of the abstract or macro structures. These are also known for conveying accurate information no matter how they were found to have rigid format which may cause much pressure on the writer/author of the respective abstracts.

Irrespective of the inconsistencies in the format and internal structure of the research abstracts across disciplines, findings indicate that there are specific components of a research which each abstract has to address to its respective readers. Day (1998:29), for example, argues that: “Abstracts should provide a brief summary of each main sections of the paper: Introduction, Materials and Methods, Results, and Discussions.” Gravitti (2008:58) also seems to agree with the views of Day (2008), for the former goes on to repeat the same thing saying that: “In both types of abstract, the conventional (unstructured) and the formally structured, the same four basic sections are required: background (including the purpose of the study), methods, results, and conclusions.”

As could be inferred from the above two quotations, four/five sections of a research report are indicated as obligatory components of the scientific communication that the research abstracts from and within different field of studies convey to the larger research community. On the bases of the occurrence of the “moves”, or a complete structures, or macro rhetorical units regardless of the number of syntactic structures that formed the texts of the abstracts, they may be classified as “obligatory moves” and “optional ones”. Those structures which usually form the text of the abstracts can be taken as mandatory “moves”. Others that are less frequently used to summarise/structure the major points of the research endeavour might be considered as “optional moves” (Johns, 2002; Swales, 2004; and Li, 2011). As an illustration to this, Li (2011) who conducted comparative rhetorical analyses on English and Chinese abstracts found out that some of the moves with frequent happening were reported as mandatory ones. The same study also indicated that others which were infrequently observed were considered as “optional moves”.

### **The Statement of the Problem**

Like any aspects in the research processes, abstract writing has its own language and organising principles which requires authors to apply hyphenated writing skills. As a result, readers can easily examine what has been researched before they indulge into the whole research report as has been addressed in few words. Accordingly, abstracting requires researchers to apply special writing skills which are imperative to present the core themes of a research to the readers. This is possible via few, but evocative language structures and functions. Metaphorically, abstracts might be equated with the eyes, ears, noses and other functional organs of human beings. In other words, well written or argued abstracts appear to serve as lenses to understand what has been studied, how it has been studied where it has been studied why it has been studied, who has studied it, which aspect of the phenomena/problem has been studied and the like. As scientific communication genres, the quantity and the quality of the messages that the abstracts convey to their discourse communities in the respective disciplines remain the centre of gravity of success of the authors in academia of either ‘you publish, or you parish’.

The teaching and learning of academic writing in an EFL context has been constrained by many factors which might be shown on a continuum from appropriate classroom applications of linguistic skills of the language to the larger social context. Graduate programmes require the learners to go through different academic requirements; for example, practise structuring arguments in academic writing tasks, such as writing well-structured seminars on a range of issues. Thus, rhetorical structuring plays crucial roles in the development of the research abstracts to get across the intended messages (knowledge, skills and attitudes) of the study to the intended audience to whom the abstracts have been written. However, EFL learners’ poor proficiency has been reported as major causes for their inefficiencies to communicate their research findings via abstracts to the intended academics. This has restricted the participations of the L2 academics in the international forums (Pennycook, 1994). Hyland (2008) also argues that abstracts are one the major mediums of the academic communications which require the applications of both shared and unshared linguistic codes that are easily understood by discourse community of each discipline.

Studies also indicate a number of clarity problems in the quality of the research abstracts that

have been produced by different academicians who range from native speakers to non-natives. For example, McNab as has been quoted in Hyland (2009:29) has expressed his concerns about the poor quality of the abstracts as he puts it as: “I have the strong impression that scientific communication is being seriously hindered by poor quality of the abstracts written in jargon-ridden mumbo-jumbo.”

As Lorés (2004) appeared in Li (2011), the functions, rhetorical structures, and linguistic realisations were used as the most differentiation criteria between the research articles abstracts and research abstracts. Of which, the explorations of the rhetorical structures of the academic research abstracts are made a focus the present study. The trajectories of the variations should be considered as inevitable manifestations of the academic writing processes. These could be observed when English is being used in an EFL context to teach academic writing which would further be compounded by a number linguistic and socio-cultural factors. Li (2011) also observed that the researchers who want to get their works easily published in reputable journals have to develop awareness about the cross linguistic variations in abstracting/structuring research articles. Moreover, Li (2011) points out that there are a few cross disciplinary studies. Most of all, Li (2011) has found out that the influences of disciplines on the rhetorical move structures have been explored in quite a few studies.

In this context of the teaching of English, therefore, one might set the following questions to academicians in the field. Are there variations in the major rhetorical components of the academic research abstracts of the graduates from various fields of studies? Are there obligatory and/or optional rhetorical units in the research abstracts of the graduates? How do the graduates use the move structures while summarising research findings in their research abstracts? Which of these rhetorical units are the most commonly used by graduate students while framing the problem in their abstracts? What are the other abstract structuring/framing mechanisms students use to communicate to their readers? How adequately do the adult EFL learners communicate all the required components of a research report to their audiences via their research abstracts? What are instructional implications of studying rhetorical structuring in academic writing? This study is, thus, an attempt to fill the void in the genre analyses fields by examining the rhetorical structures of the abstracts across four disciplines of M.A. and M.Sc. Programmes: Humanities (TEFL and Literature); Medicine (General Public Health);

Educational and Behavioural Sciences (Educational Psychology, Curriculum studies, School Leadership, Educational Management and Planning; and Hard Sciences (Mathematics and Biology).

### **Major Objective of the Study**

The goal of this study is to examine the rhetorical structures as utilised in the academic research abstracts of EFL learners that were written in English for impartial fulfilment of an integrated course-based and research degree M.A. and MSc. programmes. This is done in the realm of the identified problem on the identifications of rhetorical units which were used to structure the respective abstracts across the four disciplines.

### **Specific Objectives of the Study**

The following constituted the specific objective of this study. These were to:

- ❖ examine the most commonly utilised rhetorical units in abstracts that were written by EFL adult practitioners of the M.A. and M.Sc. programmes?
- ❖ investigate whether there exist differences between the rhetorical device types used by graduates from different fields of specialisations, and
- ❖ point out the most commonly used rhetorical structures in the research abstracts the graduates from the various field of studies.

On the accounts of the major and specific research objectives formed in sections 4-5 of this report, the following specific research questions were hoisted.

### **Specific Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions.

- ❖ What were the most commonly used macro-rhetorical structures in the academic research abstracts of graduates in the M.A. and M.Sc. programmes?
- ❖ Were there differences in the rhetorical structures of the practitioners' research abstracts across fields of specializations? How far do the rhetorical structuring units which have been employed in abstracts vary across disciplines?
- ❖ Which of the abstract types were commonly used in the graduates' academic research abstracts?



## **Significance of the Study**

The investigations of thought structuring in academic research abstracts could be of significant to EFL teachers, practitioners, research supervisors and policy developers as well as implementers of EFL education in higher learning/teaching institutions. The following insights could guide the significance of this study. In other words, this study was conducted to:

- ❖ make aware both the research supervisees and their supervisors about the quality of the research abstracts on the bases of the most commonly used rhetorical moves;
- ❖ provide research insights to both practitioners and their supervisors about the commonly used rhetorical units while the “new” knowledge is communicated to the different discourse communities across the respective disciplines;
- ❖ point out directions to academic writing EFL teachers about the extent to which the rhetorical units in the research abstracts of the graduates converge with, or diverge from the different fields of disciplines of the programmes;
- ❖ give information to both research supervisees and their supervisors about the most commonly used rhetorical structures so that either of the stakeholders can apply them as per the conventions dictate them to do so;
- ❖ make available research insights to research supervisors and their supervisees about the thought structuring device types that could emerge from the abstracts of the graduates;
- ❖ guide material developers and research supervisions about the most prevalent rhetorical units in the graduates’ research abstract across disciplines;
- ❖ indicate directions and areas of interventions to research supervisors and their supervisees about the gaps observed in rhetorical structures of the graduates’ abstracts; and
- ❖ 1.6.8 serve as an input for any other researchers who would like to study graduates’ abstract structuring skills and applications of rhetorical units so that the assumed communications among the discourse communities could meet its objectives.

## **Research Designs and the Methods**

### **The Research Designs**

The study was descriptive and exploratory in its nature. A descriptive study was employed to describe the macro rhetorical structures of the abstracts which were written in English by the Ethiopian M.A. and MSc. trainees of the graduate programme across fields of studies

from five disciplines. These abstracts were described on the bases of messages that were communicated to the intended audiences which they were meant for. The study focused on the descriptions of the macro internal structures of the abstracts. The abstracts were described vis-à-vis the existing rhetorical units in the literature as Move 1, Move 2, Move 3, Move 4, and Move 5 for the background/introductions, purposes/objectives, methods, products, and conclusions, and recommendations components of the report, respectively. The same study also explored the rhetorical structures that circumvented the internal structures of the research abstracts of the adult EFL learners who graduated in 2013. After all, the main objective of the study was to explore the most commonly used rhetorical structures in the research abstracts and whether these vary across the field of studies of the M.A. and MSc programmes.

For a descriptive was employed, it provided full accounts of the descriptions of the macro structures of the research abstracts that students in the graduate programme applied in their research abstracts. The study also explored those rhetorical structures which were used in the graduates' research abstracts. Moreover, the types of the rhetorical structures were also explored if/whether they diverged from or converged with the research abstracts from different fields of studies. Interestingly enough, the descriptive study was crucial to describe those structures which were commonly employed by the graduates to frame their thoughts in their research abstracts. Added more to the design of the study, the researcher also explored and described the most commonly used structures the types of the research abstracts.

## **The Research Methods**

### **The Research Sites**

The University of Bahir Dar was the research settings of this study. It was chosen as research site, for the researcher was a fulltime lecturer at the humanities' faculty of the same university. The other faculties and programmes had also close geographical affinities to the workplace of the researcher. No matter how there were a number of similar institutions with similar programmes where this research could have been conducted, it was thought to be suffice to focus on some of the research abstracts of the graduates in one University, for all the remaining Universities appeared to be engaged in running similar curricular activities. The sketches of the specifications of the samples by disciplines and by field of studies in the same discipline and across disciplines are given below in Table 1.

**Table 1: The Textual Population of the Research Abstracts by Disciplines**

No	Classification of the Corpora, the Research Abstracts	Frequency	Per Cent
1.	General Public Health	12	13.79
2.	Teaching English as a Foreign Language	10	11.50
3.	Foreign Literature (English)	7	8.04
4.	Mathematics	10	11.50
5.	Biology	8	9.19
6.	Psychology	10	11.50
7.	Curriculum Studies	10	11.50
8.	Educational Leadership	10	11.50
9.	Educational Planning and Management	10	11.50
Total		87	100.00

**The Samples and Sampling Technique: Corpora, Decisions, and Procedures**

Regular M.A. and M.Sc. graduates of the 2013 classes of four faculties/schools of Bahir Dar were used as the samples of the study. Obviously, the research abstracts of these graduates were used as sources of data for the study. The corpora across nine different fields of studies from four disciplines were collected depending on the degrees of conveniences which were shown by the respective Coordinating Officers for the Research, Graduate Programme, and Community Services of the Faculties and Colleges of the University. On the other hand, abstracts were not collected from those programmes' coordinating officers who were resentful of giving out their students' research abstracts for a range of personal and institutional codes of conducts. Coordinating officers for History and Physics programmes, of the Bahir Dar were typical examples. Nonetheless, all the corpora of the research abstracts were collected from those coordinating officers who volunteered to do so. Consequently, sample corpora that ranged from seven to twelve research abstracts constituted the whole set of the corpora that were collected from nine programmes of four disciplines.

Wholly, a textual population of 87 research abstracts were used as data sources. These texts, were collected from nine M.A. and M.Sc. programmes which were drawn from four disciplines. This included Humanities (TEFL and Literature); Educational and Behavioural Sciences (Educational Psychology, Curriculum Studies, School Leadership, Educational

Planning and Management); Medical Sciences (General Public Health); and Hard Sciences (Mathematics and Biology). After the texts of the research abstracts were collected, five major segments of the abstracts that were thought to be communicated to the assumed audience/readers were used as the bases for the analyses of the texts. These were drawn from the critical reading that was done on the internal structures of the abstracts that were collected from the respective field of studies. In other words, the most recurred segments of the texts that were thought to constitute the rhetorical structures/moves were used as bases for the classifications and explanations of the abstracts.

### **Framework of Analyses**

There seemed to be a number of move analyses models of the academic genres. Of these, the revised Swales's (1991) a three- move pattern of the CARS Model (create-a-research-space model), the IMRD (Introduction, Methods, Results and Discussion) models could be used to analyse texts at the macro level of textual organisations such as research abstracts (Li, 2011). This study heavily depended on the five move rhetorical organisations of the research abstracts that were further developed by Hyland (2008). Hyland's (2008) model was the most elaborated one. Moreover, as Hyland (2008) quoted in Li (2011:3), the latter framework describes the structures that: "... better account for abstracts from the social science fields, which sometimes include not only a statement of empirical results but also a statement of the argument." Thus, five-move framework analyses were employed in the study as illustrated in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Framework of Analyses for the Textual Population of the Research Abstracts across Disciplines**

No	Assumed Moves in the Abstracts	Functions of Moves
1.	Move 1: Introductions	Establishes contexts of the paper and motivates the research or discussion
2.	Move 2: Purposes/Objective	Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper.
3.	Move 3: Methods	Provides information design, procedures, assumptions, approaches, data, etc.
4.	Move 4: Products/Results	States main findings or results, the argument, or what was accomplished.
5.	Move5: Conclusions/Recommendations	Integrates or extends results beyond scope of paper, draws inferences, points to applications

Hyland (2008) in Li (2011:15)

In line with this framework, all the collected corpora were analysed and the analogous results and findings were presented sequentially, one after the other. The discussions of these are made materialised in the following successive pages of the report.

### **Presentations, Results, Findings, and Discussions of the Textual Population of the Research Abstracts**

All the 87 corpora that were collected from nine M.A. and M.Sc. Programmes of four disciplines were critically read three to four times before the boundaries of the structures of the moves were delineated. Next, the moves regardless of the number and length of the syntactic structures of the abstract were labelled as M1 (Introductions), M2 (Purposes/Objectives), M3 (Methods), M4 (Products/Results), and M5 (Conclusions and Recommendations). Consequently, these labelled moves were counted as appeared in all the abstracts of the M.A. and M.Sc. programmes. At last, the textual data were transformed into a numerical one and the corresponding presentations of the results, findings, discussions of the transformed data are presented in the following successive pages.

**Table 3: The Observed Structures/Moves in the Abstracts of the General Public Health M.Sc.Programme**

No.	The Anatomy of the Research Abstracts	Frequencies and Per Cent of the Observed Moves/Structures	
		F	%
1.	Introduction/background	12	100.0
2.	Objectives	11	91.6
3.	Methods	12	100.0
4.	Products/Results	12	100.0
5.	Conclusions/recommendations	08	66.6

As shown in the above table, the research abstracts collected from the General Public Health programme were mainly inclusive of those five major components that a certain academic abstract assumed to present to its audience. The texts of these abstracts also made it evident that all were classified from the structured types of the abstracts. What was peculiar about these abstracts was that each move was used as titles for all the structures and forms that constituted each move. Despite the abstracts from this field of the study appeared to include all the structures, there were some differences in the messages which were communicated to their respective readers across the texts. For example, nearly all the abstracts were found to have the first four moves unlike the last type that stood for conclusions/recommendations. The latter were not made part of the communicative act of some of these research abstracts. The 5th, 7th, 9th, and 10th abstracts could be mentioned, for the structures of the conclusions and recommendations were overlooked by the graduates while structuring their abstracts. Nonetheless, the rhetorical genres of these abstracts were unique, for the graduates appeared to give much emphasis on the descriptions of the background of their research problems unlike the abstracts for the remaining genres. The descriptions the backgrounds of the research problems in the latter rhetorical genres were overlooked, or were addressed not beyond a sentence level organisation. The abstracts from the faculty of the humanities could be cited.

**Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of the Rhetorical Structures/Moves in Abstracts of the Humanities**

Moves/ Structures	Observed Moves in the Abstracts of the TEFL and Foreign Literature Programmes			
	TEFL		Foreign Literature (English)	
	F	%	F	%
Move 1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Move 2	10	100.0	7	100.0
Move 3	10	100.0	7	100.0
Move 4	9	90.0	7	100.0
Move 5	4	40.0	0	0.0

As presented above, the move structures of the texts of the TEFL and Literature abstracts were reported as M2, M3, and M4. This is to say, the abstracts from the humanities' faculty were engaged in communicating the objectives, the procedures employed in the methods, and the results of the research activities. Issues related to the background of the study and nearly all the conclusions of these abstracts were not totally communicated to the assumed audiences, for there were not any language structures that were devoted to address these segments of the research; except, 4, or 40 per cent of the abstracts. Unlike the results of the textual analyses of the abstracts from the General Public Health, the background and the conclusions components of these rhetorical genres were not included as components of the larger abstract structuring communicative act. The reasons for these could be many though none of these fell in either of the research objectives of the present study. And yet, the abstracts from the humanities' discipline made the descriptions of the objectives and methods of the research processes as primary components of the scientific communication processes that were done by the research abstracts. Similar results were also observed in the anatomies of the research abstracts of Foreign Literature Programme. The introductions and conclusions were not observed in any of the rhetorical units of these abstracts. The rhetorical structures of the abstracts of the Foreign Literature Programme were purely found out to be M2, M3, and M4. The objective, methods, and results were the main priorities that constituted the rhetorical moves of these research abstracts.

**Table 5: Frequency and Percentage of the Moves/Structures in Mathematics and Micro-Biology Abstracts**

Moves/Structures	Observed Moves			
	Mathematics		Micro-Biology	
	F	%	F	%
Move 1	0	0.0	0	0.0
Move 2	10	100.0	7	100.0
Move 3	10	100.0	7	100.0
Move 4	9	90.0	7	100.0
Move 5	0	0.0	0	0.0

As the case for the rhetorical structures of the abstracts of the humanities' discipline, M2, M3, and M4 methods of thought structuring units were followed when the abstracts in Mathematics and Micro-Biology M.Sc. programmes were constructed. The background and conclusions were excluded from the entire abstracts. This might indicate that the objectives, methods, and results of the research activities were reported as felt necessities of these textual populations/genres. Further textual populations are needed whether the indicated priorities of the messages of the abstracts from the hard sciences might be reported.

Moreover, for the objectives set had the power to inform methods and the results, nearly an intact percentage is reported among these units of the abstracts. The reasons for the unobserved rhetorical components of the abstracts might be of worth researching. It might be useful to understand the effects the unobserved moves could have on the quality and quantity of the discipline specific academic communication that took place between the authors and readers of the research abstracts.



**Table 6: Frequency and Percentage of the Moves/Structures in the Abstract of the Educational and Behavioural Sciences**

Structure of the Abstracts	Observed Moves							
	Educational Psychology		Curriculum Studies		Educational Leadership		Educational Planning and Management	
	F	%	F	%	f	%	f	%
Move 1	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	3	30.0
Move 2	10	100.0	7	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0
Move 3	10	100.0	7	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0
Move 4	9	90.0	7	100.0	10	100.0	10	100.0
Move 5	0	0.0	0	0.0	10	100.0	8	80.0

Nearly similar rhetorical structures were observed across the textual populations of the research abstracts that were drawn from four M.A. programmes of the Faculty of Educational and Behaviour Sciences. The conclusion moves, however, were inclusive of the segments of the messages which were communicated to graduates' theses supervisors and any others. It was found out that these structures constituted 100 per cent and 80 per cent of the structures of the academic texts of the research abstracts of the Educational Leadership and Educational Planning and Management programmes, respectively. As with the rhetorical organisations illustrated by abstracts of the researches of the General Public Health, these were the only rhetorical genres where the conclusions were made part of the texts of the abstracts. However, these were hardly observed in the abstracts that were produced for the different programmes of the Faculty of the Humanities and the Hard Sciences.

M2, M3, and M4 were the most commonly observed organisational structures across all the abstracts with a handful of exceptions as could be sketched in the introduction moves of the abstracts of the Educational Leadership and Educational Planning and Management Programmes. Unlike the most commonly used rhetorical organisations which were observed in the previous disciplines, the introduction and the conclusion moves were paid a scant attention. As to why these moves were scanty across the abstracts that were produced by the graduates of these four disciplines might need a research of some kind to be conducted.

**Table 7: A Summary of the Frequencies and Percentages of the Observed Moves across the Abstracts of the Nine M.A./MSc. Programmes of Four Field of Studies**

Structure of the Abstracts	Observed Moves							
	General Public Health		Humanities		Educational and Behavioural sciences		Sciences	
	F	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Move 1	12	13.79	01	1.14	02	2.29	08	9.19
Move 2	11	12.64	09	10.34	10	11.49	08	9.19
Move 3	12	13.79	09	10.34	10	11.49	07	8.04
Move 4	12	13.79	08	9.19	10	11.49	08	9.19
Move 5	08	9.19	03	3.44	03	3.44	03	3.44
Total	55	63.41	30	34.85	35	40.20	34	39.13

As could be inferred from the above table, Table 8, the summary of the percentages of rhetorical structures in the abstracts across four disciplines were computed. As a result, it was found that the structure of M2, M3, and M4 were the most frequently used units across the abstracts which were collected from these nine M.A. and M.Sc. programmes across the four disciplines. As the case was true for the results which were reported for textual population of the abstracts in each M.A. and/or M.Sc. programme, the structures of M1 and M5 were hardly utilised while the graduates communicate their research findings to their readers. It was only in the abstracts of General Public Health and Educational Planning and Management that Move-one structures with percentages of 13.79 and 9.19, respectively, were utilised to get across the analogous messages to the assumed audiences from these field of studies.

The summary results as displayed in the previous table showed that the abstracts that were produced by the graduate of the College of Medical Sciences, College of Sciences, Faculty of Educational, and Behavioural Sciences were with total moves of percentages of 63.41, 40.20, 39.13, and 34.85, respectively. These could indicate that nearly the highest percentages of the move structures were observed in the abstracts that were organised by the graduates from the College of Medical Sciences with the highest percentages. Nevertheless, whether these might have connections with the quality of the abstracts could remain questionable. Further research is needed to contribute to the development of genre analyses in EFL academia

communication contexts. As opposed to the moves/structures observed in the abstracts of the graduates of the College of Medical sciences, the same summary showed that the smallest percentage, i.e., 34.85 per cent of the moves/structures were exhibited in the abstracts that were developed by the graduates of the Faculty of Humanities. Nearly similar percentages of the moves (39.13 per cent) were also shown in the abstracts which were collected from the College of Sciences. The reasons for the variations in the applications of the moves/structures across the programmes and disciplines could remain a fertile area for further research.

More insights into the schematic structures of the graduates' abstracts could also be made. For example, all the abstracts across the programmes and disciplines were found to be with move structures of M2, M3, and M4. These frequently recurred schematic structures could be taken as obligatory moves to get across the intended messages to the intended readers (Johns, 2002; and Li, 2011). In contrast, M1 and M5, the introductions/background, on the one hand, and conclusions/recommendations, on the other hand, were considered as optional thought structuring units nearly across all the abstracts of the programmes of all the disciplines.

### **Conclusions**

This study was designed to study the macro and anatomical structures of the research abstracts of the graduates from nine M.A. and M.Sc. programmes in four disciplines. To this end, the results, discussions and findings of the study solely depended on those set of corpora of the textual populations that were collected from the defended M.A. and M.Sc. theses of the graduates. All the corpora were collected on the basis of the conveniences which were shown by the Coordinating Officers of the M.A. and M.Sc. programmes. The textual data was transformed into the numerical data and the analogous analyses were done through frequencies and percentages.

Mixed findings were drawn from results of the study, except the rhetorical moves or themes of organising structures that were observed in the abstracts of the College of Medical Sciences and somehow the Behavioural and Educational Sciences. For example, approximately all the percentages of the abstracts of the College of Medical Sciences were inclusive of all the major components that accounted for the themes of an abstract as shown in all the moves that were utilised while structuring the underlined messages throughout these abstracts. The schematic structures of M1, M2, M3, M4, and M5 were found out to be

mandatory moves in the abstracts of the Health Sciences where the theme of each move was used as a title for each section throughout the abstracts. However, a different schematic structure was utilised in the corpora of the abstracts that were drawn from the M.A. programmes of the Teaching of English as a Foreign Language, Foreign Literature (English). The study indicated that move-structure of M2, M3, and M4 were used when these abstracts were organised. The findings drawn from the analyses of the rhetorical units of the abstracts of the Educational and Behavioural Sciences showed that move-patterns of M2, M3, M4, and M5 were consistently used. The comparison of the move structures of the abstracts that were drawn from the M.A. programmes of the Humanities and the Educational and Behavioural Sciences made it evident that different rhetorical organisations were used by the graduate from these two disciplines. The reasons for the sources of the observed differences could call for a further research to be conducted.

Similar findings were also drawn from the corpora of the articles that were collected from the abstracts of the M.Sc. programmes of Mathematics, and Biology. Just like the findings that were learnt from the research abstracts of the College of Medical sciences, with the exception of M5 which were infrequently observed, the M2, M3, and M4 rhetorical structures shaped the communicative acts that were presented in these abstracts. These could also be taken as “mandatory moves”. However, whether this might be true for other abstracts of the other programmes of the same disciplines such as Physics, Chemistry, and so forth would remain wide-open for further research. On the contrary, the messages revealed in the set of abstracts of the Behavioural sciences were communicated to the respective audiences with “obligatory move” structures of M2, M3, M4, and M5.

All in all, though there were differences observed in the rhetorical units that shaped the internal anatomy of the graduates’ research abstracts, move structures of M2, M3, and M4 were quite common across the corpora that were collected from all programmes of the disciplines. Finally, the move structures of M1 and M5, with the exceptions of the abstracts that were collected from the College of Sciences, were the least utilised/observed across all disciplines

### **Pedagogical Implications and Future research Directions**

All EFL teachers in the academic EFL writing discourse of theses supervision and invigilation should be aware of the macro structures (e.g., introductions, objectives and so forth) and micro structures (e.g., sentence structures) of the research abstracts. On the one hand, these insights would be of crucial to anchor not only their these supervision and invigilation but also their teaching of English for academic writing purposes. This should be done on grounds of discipline sensitive orientations. EFL teachers need to have both theoretical and practical knowledge on the shared linguistic codes which are crucial to communicate the messages of the academic research abstracts to the intended audience. On the other hand, EFL teachers, practitioner (graduates), theses supervisors and journal critiques should also develop insights about the varied linguistic codes, or writing conventions across the disciplines. These are key to the construction and evaluation of the academic research abstracts across disciplines. These could have impact on the quality and quantity of the communications which are done through the research abstracts. In fact, these could call for further research to be conducted.

Both the macro and micro structures of the EFL research abstracts should be studied to make sure that the research abstracts do their intended objectives. The shared linguistic codes, on the one hand, and the non-shared linguistic codes, on the other, should also be studied to help EFL researchers articulate their thoughts and increase their voice of acceptance on the international journals. The linguistic realisations of the moves might be of worth studying. These could include the realisations of verb tense, nominalisation, mode and tenure. Further research might be of relevant to study the communication implications of the different types of the research abstracts that are utilised to articulate findings of the research abstracts of the graduates.

The reasons for the unobserved rhetorical components of the abstracts might be of worth researching, too. This could be central to understand better the effects the research abstracts could have on the quality and quantity of the academic communication that took place between the authors and readers in and across the disciplines. Last of all, whether the findings could characterise schematic organisations of the abstracts of the graduates across the studied disciplines need to be confirmed with more corpora which could include representative fields of studies with similar programmes across all the disciplines.

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