

Analyzing the Rhetorical Structure of Linguistics Dissertation Abstracts Written by Iraqi EFL Graduates

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Abstract

An abstract is a research tool that serves a "gate-keeping function" in helping readers decide if they want to invest more time in the rest of a paper or a dissertation (Bhatia, 1993:78). Due to its significance as an unavoidable genre required for most published works in the academic circle, the present study investigates the generic structure of MA and PhD dissertation abstracts written in English by Iraqi EFL graduates within the linguistics domain. More specifically, it investigates the rhetorical organization or the move structure, and the linguistic resources employed in the realization of these moves in linguistics dissertation abstracts. The rhetorical micro-analysis has identified eleven component moves by means of which the schematic structures of Iraqi EFL graduates' dissertation abstracts are built around. Four of these moves are obligatory including the moves of announcing present research or stating study aims, stating hypotheses, summarizing results, and describing methodology. On the other hand, the rhetorical macro-analysis has identified five moves around which these DAs are built. Three of which are obligatory, viz., the moves of purpose, methodology, and result. Moreover, results show the prevalence of the use of simple sentences type, present tense, and passive voice in the articulation of the abstract texts analyzed. On the basis of these findings, a number of pedagogical implications are suggested.

تحليل التركيب البلاغي لمُلخصات اطاريح علم اللغة للخريجين العراقيين متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية

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الخلاصة

ملخص البحث او الدراسة هو النافذة التي من خلالها يستطيع القراء معرفة مضمون او محتوى البحث او الدراسة. نظراً لاهمية الملخصات في كونها ضرباً لغوياً اساسياً لأي بحث او دراسة اكااديمية منشورة , تتقصى الدراسة الحالية التركيب البلاغي لمُلخصات الاطاريح الجامعية للخريجين العراقيين متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية لغة اجنبية في مجال علم اللغة. وتحديدًا تتقصى الدراسة الحالية التركيب البلاغي والوسائل اللغوية المُستخدمة في صناعة هذه التراكيب البلاغية للاطاريح الجامعية. حددّ التحليل البلاغي الخاص احدى عشرة خطوة بلاغية تركز عليها مُلخصات الاطاريح الجامعية للخريجين العراقيين, فقد وجد ان هناك اربع خطوات اساسية تركز عليها هذه المُلخصات وهي خطوات تقديم الدراسة او عرض اهداف الدراسة وعرض الفرضيات و تلخيص النتائج ووصف طريقة جمع البيانات. ومن جهة اخرى حددّ التحليل البلاغي العام خمس خطوات بلاغية تركز عليه هذه المُلخصات □ ثلاث منها اساسية وهي خطوات هدف الدراسة وطريقة جمع البيانات والنتائج حيث يركز عليها هذا الضرب اللغوي.

فضلاً عن ذلك, اظهرت النتائج كثرّة استخدام الجمل البسيطة وصيغة المضارع البسيط والمبني للمجهول في بناء نصوص هذه المُلخصات. وفي ضوء هذه النتائج تم اقتراح عددٍ من المضامين والتوصيات التعليمية.

1. Introduction:

There has recently been an increasing interest in investigating different types of academic discourse types, including book blurbs, book reviews, research articles, dissertation acknowledgements, etc., among scholars working within the genre analysis domain. The analysis of academic genre plays a significant role in showing how language is used in such institutional contexts. Dissertation abstracts (henceforth, DAs) are a growing field in applied linguistics research in general, and in English for Specific Purposes (henceforth, ESP) in particular. The study of rhetorical characteristics of academic abstracts has captured growing attention among scholars working on identifying the shared texts characteristics in a given discourse community. The interest that applied linguists show in the genre of academic abstracts stems from the need to understand the mechanisms which underlie these multifunctional texts.

Abstracts accompanying research articles and dissertations are a notable practice in academic research as it constitutes a gateway to the reading or publication of a research article or a dissertation (Lores 2004: 281). This genre is intended to communicate new factual knowledge for members of different academic communities. According to Martin- Martin (2003), abstracts save time and effort by informing the readers about the exact content, indicating whether the full text merits their further attention (p. 26). It is important for researchers to be acquainted with the textual and rhetorical features that characterize the writing of any effective abstract. Swales (1990: 181) states that academic abstracts have been neglected as an important area for investigation and evidence of "*gatekeeping decisions*". In particular, little or no reference is made to the rhetorical differences in the organizational structure of abstracts written in English by

EFL graduates. Thus, the present study aims at investigating the rhetorical organization or the move structure, and the linguistic realizations of the moves used in linguistics DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates. On the basis of these aims, the following research questions are formulated:

1. What is the rhetorical move structure employed in linguistics DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates in terms of their micro- and macro-structure?
2. Is the rhetorical move structure of linguistics DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates compatible with Swales' (1990) introduction move model, Bhatia's (1993) abstract move model, and/or Hyland's (2000) abstract move model ?
3. What are the structural patterns employed to realize the rhetorical moves of linguistics DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates?

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the present study is the first of its type that solely addresses itself to the investigation of the academic genre of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates in English linguistics field. Accordingly, it is intended to fill a gap in applied linguistics research.

Following Hyland (2004), the term *dissertation* is defined as graduate students' research work required for both Master and Doctorate degrees. It is used as a cover term for both MA theses and PhD dissertations, with no significant difference between the two, though the terms *thesis* and *dissertation* are used differently in different countries. In most Australian and British universities, a thesis is written for a PhD and a shorter dissertation as a requirement for a Master degree, whereas in many American universities the terms are reversed (p.304). Besides, the term *graduate* is used in its general sense to include both speakers and learners.

2. The Academic Genre of Abstracts: Theoretical Underpinnings

The past decade or so has witnessed increasing attention given to the notion of genre and its application in language teaching and learning (Hyland, 2004: 303). Genre analysis has acquired tremendous significance in the research field of ESP. ESP genre analysis has been adopted to analyze the language that native and non-native speakers use in academic and professional settings. The ESP scholars define genre as a class of communicative events such as a university lecture, or an academic essay, etc. (cf. Paltridge, 2001). A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse, influences and constrains choice of content and style. Bhatia (1993: 75) asserts that a genre is a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purposes identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structured and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form, and functional value.

Research of various academic text types has recently received growing attention, and DAs are but one type among many. Abstracts have become widespread and an important feature of scholarly texts. They constitute a very essential rhetorical section in various genres of academic writing, and have recently attracted much attention in genre analysis research. The genre of DAs is an academic practice that all graduates from different fields have to adopt when they write a full dissertation while doing their postgraduate study. In most cases, writing a dissertation is only attempted once in a

graduate student's career. The great majority of dissertations are prefaced by an informative abstract, which contains a factual summary of the much longer report, and is meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full dissertation (ibid.: 78). As academic conventions, abstracts serve an important role in the academic community as any academic research requires this prefatory gate. According to Porte (2002), academic abstracts can serve the following functions:

- i.* A statement of the topic and aim of the paper, which may be accompanied by a statement more broadly situating the research.
- ii.* A concise description of the sample and materials used.
- iii.* Some information about the procedures used and the way the data analyzed.
- iv.* A brief summary of results, or the general trend of these results, and what conclusions are to be drawn from such results.

Ventola (1994: 333) states that abstracts have become a tool of mastering and managing the ever increasing information flow in the scientific community. Abstracts can serve as a key role in influencing readers to accept or reject the full-text document. The study of the generic and rhetorical structure of abstracts is of crucial importance in academic writing investigations. Most studies of this genre have concentrated on English-speaking background academics; however, Martin-Martin (2003) has investigated the rhetorical variation of abstracts written in English for scientific journals and abstracts written in Spanish for journals in the experimental social sciences. The results show that both employ the four basic structural units of *introduction-methods-results-discussion*. The variation of research article abstracts across disciplines and cultures has also been investigated quite extensively (cf. Samraj, 2005; Hyland, 2000; Melander et al., 1997; amongst many). Melander et al.'s (1997) study of

abstracts from three disciplines has revealed that linguistics and biology abstracts produced in American context are different in their overall organization. Samraj (2005) has concluded from her study of abstracts from the fields of conservation, biology, and wildlife behavior that texts from closely related disciplines can vary in overall organization and linguistic choices. In the same study, she has compared the abstracts to their respective introductions and found that research article introductions and abstracts in conservation biology bear a greater similarity in function and organization than the same two genres in wildlife behavior.

Generally speaking, the majority of available studies have mostly taken either one of the following two main tracks. Some studies have investigated the rhetorical structure of research article abstracts written by native and non-native English speakers in one discipline or across disciplines (cf. Zand-Vakili and Kashani, 2012; Hai-lin and Huan, 2010; amongst many). Others, on the other hand, have investigated the rhetorical structure of dissertation abstracts written by native and non-native English speakers in one discipline or across disciplines (cf. Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2011; Dindaeng, 2009; Tahririan and Jalilifar, 2004; amongst many). As to the present study, it takes the second track in that it investigates the rhetorical structure of DAs written by non-native speakers of English majoring in linguistics.

Most studies, mentioned above, have adopted Swales' (1990), Bhatia's (1993), and Hyland's pioneering frameworks of move structure in analyzing the component moves of this academic genre. In line with those studies, the present study is going to adopt Swales' (1990) and Bhatia's (1993) frameworks in the micro-analysis of the rhetorical structure of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates. On the other hand, Hyland's (2000) framework will be adopted in the macro-analysis of the rhetorical structure

of these DAs. The justification behind choosing these models of move structure is that they have been exploited with a great deal of success in substantial studies of various academic genres. For the sake of clarity and comprehensiveness, the following section is going to explicate these models as they constitute the grounding of the present corpus analysis.

3. Models of Rhetorical Structure Adopted:

For clarity and before going into the details of these models, it is noteworthy to define some operational terms which are relevant in any rhetorical or generic analysis. First, *move* is defined as a segment of text that is shaped and constrained by a specific communicative function. It varies in length but at least contains one proposition that may be conveyed by one sentence or more, and sometimes by a clause or a phrase. A move in genre analysis is a discursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse, i.e., it is a functional, not a formal unit (Swales, 2004: 228). Second, *step* is a lower level text unit than the move that provides a detailed perspective on the options open to the writer in setting out the moves in the introduction. In fact, a move can be realized by one step or a combination of steps (Holmes, 1997: 325).

Swales (1990) has examined a corpus of forty-eight introductions written in English from various articles, proposing a three-move structure for research article introductions. In brief, the model captures the ways in which academic writers justify and highlight their own contribution to the ongoing research profile of the field by first establishing a topic for the research and summarizing the key features of the previous research, then establishing a gap or possible extension of that work that will form the basis of the writers' claims (Dudley-Evans, 2000: 5). The model proposes

three main moves for the introduction and a number of steps used to realize each move as shown in Figure 1 below.

Move Type		Explanation
Move 1: Establishing a territory		Re-establishing significance of research field.
Step A1	Claiming centrality: <i>and/or</i>	
Step B1	Making topic generalizations: <i>and/or</i>	
Step C1	Reviewing items of previous research	
Move 2: Establishing a niche		Situating actual research in these terms.
Step A2	Counter-claiming: <i>or</i>	
Step B2	Indicating a gap: <i>or</i>	
Step C2	Question-raising: <i>or</i>	
Step D2	Continuing a tradition	
Move 3: Occupying the niche		Showing how this niche will be occupied and defended.
Step A3	Outlining purposes: <i>or</i>	
Step B3	Announcing present research: <i>and</i>	
Step C3	Announcing principal findings	
Step D3	Indicating article structure	

Figure 1: Swales' (1990) Model of Rhetorical Moves of Introductions.

As shown above, Swales' (1990) model has been applied to the analysis of rhetorical moves of article introductions. Bhatia's (1993) model, on the other hand, is another framework applied to the analysis of article abstracts. Though there is a difference between the academic genres of introductions

and abstracts as they serve different communicative purposes, Bhatia (1993: 76) argues that despite their similarities in context and format, there are some significant aspects of role that these two genres have played. An abstract 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. In Bhatia's (1993) study of the move structure of article abstracts, a four-move model has been proposed to answer the following four questions: (a) What the author did ; (b) How the author did it ; (c) What the author found ; and (d) What the author concluded. Accordingly, the following four moves are formulated in Figure 2 below:

Move Type	Explanation
Move 1: Introducing purpose	Presenting the goals of the research conducted.
Move 2: Describing methodology	Presenting the research design, procedures or methods used in the study.
Move 3: Summarizing results	Presenting the important findings of the research.
Move 4: Presenting conclusions	Presenting the results, and typically including some implications and application of the findings.

Figure 2: Bhatia s' (1990) Model of Rhetorical Moves of Abstracts.

Bhatia's model is widely known as the IMRC model, as these abbreviated letters stand for the initials of the four successive words respectively, namely, purpose, methodology, results, and conclusions. Saleger-Mayer (1990: 369) argues that a well-structured abstract should embody all these four component moves mentioned above which are

fundamental in the process of scientific inquiry in a logical order.

Another model is that of Hyland (2000). He has examined 800 abstracts across eight disciplines with his proposed model in which he identifies a five-move scheme of the rhetorical structure of abstracts, viz., introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion (henceforth, IPMPC model). He concludes that writers' selective representation of their articles in the abstracts through various patterns of rhetorical moves is determined by how they think they can best convince others, especially members in their discipline, of their work, and the general patterns of writers' choices which often vary across disciplines. Figure 3 below summarizes Hyland's model:

Move Type	Explanation
Move 1: Introduction	Presenting prefatory background for the study.
Move 2: Purpose	Presenting the goal(s) of the study.
Move 3: Methodology	Presenting the subjects and the research design, procedures or methods used in the study.
Move 4: Product	Presenting the study results in general.
Move 5: Conclusion	Presenting restatement of aims, implication, and application of the findings.

Figure 3: Hyland's (2000) Model of Rhetorical Moves of Abstracts.

4. Corpus and Procedures:

The present study is a corpus-based study. To achieve its aims, a corpus of DAs has been selected randomly from fifty dissertations written in English by Iraqi EFL graduates at the Department of English in the Faculty of Arts/University of Baghdad. These dissertations have been written by Iraqi EFL graduates as partial requirements for either the master or doctorate degree in linguistics. The rationale for the selection of Iraqi EFL graduates' DAs is their accessibility.

To minimize variations across disciplinary boundaries, the corpus has been solely restricted to the abstract sections written within the domain of English linguistics. Gnutzmann and Oldenburg (1991: 130) state that the degree of uniformity of textual structures depends on the discipline to which the texts belong. More precisely, the fifty abstract sections are equally selected from 25 MA and 25 PhD dissertations. This has been intentionally done for the systematic distribution of the study corpus. These dissertations have been written during the period 1995-2012. DAs have been collected and selected as hard copies from the library of the aforementioned Department. To avoid gender bias, both male and female graduates are equally considered in the present study.

To identify the rhetorical moves of DAs, the present study has adopted the move structure models proposed by Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), and Hyland (2000) to analyze the corpus of 50 DA texts written by Iraqi EFL master and doctoral graduates.

The corpus of DAs has been scanned and coded for their move structure thoroughly by the researcher himself first. After presenting a clear definition for each move, a PhD university professor majoring in English linguistics has been asked by the researcher to code a 50% of the present

corpus to guarantee a reasonable average of inter-rater reliability of corpus analysis. This has been made to maximize the objectivity of analysis as much as possible, since move analysis involves a degree of subjectivity that is perhaps unavoidable (Holmes 1997: 325). The researcher and the other rater have reached a 92% agreement on the coding of the present corpus. Then an analysis of linguistic features used to realize these moves has been performed.

The two models of Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) have been synthesized in a whole unified model to cope with the micro-analysis of the present corpus. More specifically, these models have undergone some modifications and adjustments to accommodate the entire present corpus (cf. Table 1 below). Thus, the moves of "*Stating hypotheses*" and "*Investigating hypotheses*" are added, while others are either merged together or not considered to cope with the present corpus. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, those two moves added have not been reported in previous research on the academic genre of DAs. For the macro-analysis of moves used in DAs, Hyland's (2000) model has been adopted. The move of "*Product*" in Hyland's model has been replaced by "*Result*" in the present study.

5. Results and Discussion:

For corpus analysis, both qualitative and quantitative types of analyses are performed. Overall, the quantitative analysis of generic structure confirms the importance of abstract sections in MA and PhD dissertations written by Iraqi EFL graduates as the entire corpus has this section with 100% text availability. This finding can lead to the inference that abstract sections are of crucial importance in this academic practice, being unavoidable section. Besides, the PhD abstract sections are relatively longer than MA ones. This can be due to the fact that PhD students are

more immersed in a longer process of research and possibly more familiar with scholarly practices than novice MA researchers (cf. Hyland, 2004: 307).

It is noteworthy that the researcher has used his inductive knowledge in identifying the component moves of the present corpus. That is, most of the moves in the present corpus have been explicitly signaled by certain lexical indicators. For example, lexical expressions like the *aim, objective, or purpose of the study* can indicate *the move of announcing present research or stating study aims*, whereas the *methods of data collection or the methodology employed* can indicate *the move of describing methodology*. Likewise, lexical items such as *come up with, or conclude* etc. can signal *the move of presenting conclusions*.

All in all, the generic micro-analysis identifies eleven component moves by means of which the schematic structures of dissertation abstracts are built around (cf. Table 1 below). The statistical results indicate differences in the type and frequency of component moves employed. Results show the high frequency of the following component moves: announcing present research or stating study aims, stating hypotheses, summarizing results, and describing methodology. The component moves are somehow sequentially ordered in the present corpus as orderly displayed in Table 1 below. On the other hand, the generic macro-analysis identifies five component moves employed in the construction of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates (cf. Table 2 below). Of these macro-moves, the moves of purpose, methodology and result are obligatory components of this academic genre. The following sub-sections will detail the way these DA sections are rhetorically realized.

5.1 Generic Micro-Structure of Dissertation Abstracts:

The corpus micro-analysis reveals some strategic moves employed by Iraqi EFL graduates in constructing their DAs. For intelligibility purpose, each component move will be defined and exemplified by illustrative examples from the present corpus. Overall, the statistical results show variation in terms of move type and frequency in the texts analyzed. The total raw frequencies and percentages of component moves employed in the present texts analyzed are (554-100%) (cf. Table 1 below).

Table 1: Raw Frequencies & Percentages of Micro-Moves of DAs.

Type of Component Moves	Frequencies & Percentages
Move 1: Claiming centrality	10 (1.80%)
Move 2: Making topic generalizations	23 (4.15%)
Move 3: Referring to previous research	18 (3.24%)
Move 4: Indicating a gap	13 (2.34%)
Move 5: Announcing present research or stating study aims	110 (19.85%)
Move 6: Presenting hypotheses	105(18.95%)
Move 7: Describing methodology	75 (13.53%)
Move 8: Summarizing results	85(15.34%)
Move 9: Investigating hypotheses	50 (9.02%)
Move 10: Presenting conclusions	40 (7.22%)
Move 11: Indicating thesis structure	25 (4.51%)

According to Swales (1990), the claiming centrality move is an appeal to the discourse community whereby members are asked to accept that the

research about to be reported is part of a lively, significant or well-established research area (p.144). This move accounts for (1.80%) of the present corpus. The low frequency of this move has also been reported in previous research. Al-Ali and Sahawneh's (2011) study of the rhetorical of English and Arabic linguistics PhD DAs has noted the low frequency of the move in question in their corpus as it accounts for only (6%) of their corpus. To claim centrality, Iraqi EFL graduates have adopted the strategy of claiming importance of the research to be reported. Due to its low frequency, this move can be regarded as an optional move in the present corpus. This move is mostly realized by verbs in the active present tense. Consider the following illustrative examples from the present corpus:

1. *Expressing gratitude is one of the most frequently occurring communicative acts in most human languages/cultures.*
2. *Implicature and presupposition play an important role in human communication.*

As to the making generalizations move, the researcher presents general statements about the knowledge or the phenomenon to be investigated, functioning as an introduction opener (Swales 1990:146). This move accounts for (4.15%) of the present corpus. Iraqi EFL graduates employ subjects that refer to a general topic in the field associated with verbs in the active present tense (cf. Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2011: 16). This move is optional due to its low frequency in the texts analyzed. Consider the following illustrative examples from the present corpus:

3. *Literary texts in general manifest more frequent violations of Grice's maxims than other types of texts.*
4. *Conversational discourse is a kind of language use which can be described as an activity where two or more people take turns at speaking.*

As for the move of referring to previous research, the researcher can achieve this move by referring to previous research work relevant to the

study being conducted. Iraqi EFL graduates achieve this move either by indicating the names of other researchers, or referring to previous studies in general. This move accounts for (3.24%) of the present corpus. As a result, it can be considered as an optional move. The infrequent use of this move in the present corpus might indicate that Iraqi EFL graduates prefer to place their work within the context of on-going research (Nwogu 1997: 126) in order to show that their research derives from a lively tradition of established related works in the field (Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2011:29). This may be also considered an attempt by the Iraqi EFL graduates in linguistics to situate the abstracts within a wider international academic community (cf. Martin-Martin, 2003). To realize this move, Iraqi EFL graduates use a stock of lexical verbs such as *argue*, *assert*, *state*, *propose*, etc. (i.e., *verbs of reporting*) mostly in the active present tense. Consider the following illustrative examples from the present corpus:

5. *Wilson (1979:160) proposes that amusement is achieved and consistency resorted, by accepting one meaning at the expense of the other.*

6. *Some scholars argue that the language communication is kept in the background for the sake of foregrounding particular features.*

The move of indicating a gap shows some incompleteness or limitations in previous work related to the current study being conducted. To express this move, Iraqi EFL graduates tend to use such lexical expressions like *little is known*, *being neglected*, *no attention given*, etc. This move accounts for (2.34%) of the present corpus, considered an optional move in the present texts analyzed. Consider the following illustrative examples:

7. *There has been no one single investigation that has studied the pragmatic aspects of humorous language.*

8. *There is no available study that has investigated the nature and structure of conversation in English and Arabic poetry.*

The move of announcing present research or stating study aims is employed either to announce the research to be presented or to outline the purpose of the study. Swales (1990: 36) states that after indicating a gap in

the related literature, researchers are expected to fill this gap by employing the move of occupying the niche. This move accounts for (19.85%) of the present corpus. The high frequency of this move in the present texts analyzed can lead to the conclusion that it is an obligatory move representing one of cornerstones of the academic genre of DAs. The obligatory status of this move has been confirmed by previous research's findings (cf. Swales, 1990, for example). To realize the move of announcing present research, Iraqi EFL graduates use expressions like *examine, investigate, present, provide, explore, analyze*, etc. in the active present tense for announcing present research. Besides, they use expressions like *aim, objective or purpose* for realizing the move of stating study aims. Consider the following illustrative examples from the present corpus:

9. *The present study investigates the ability of Iraqi EFL college students to recognize and produce different types of nominalization.*

10. *This study aims at investigating the strategies of complaints in English, and the linguistic realizations in which they are expressed.*

The onset of this move is typically signaled by using deictic expressions referring to the present study, which is either the *genre* (e.g., *dissertation or thesis*) or the type of *inquiry* (e.g., *study, research, or work*). The common deictic elements used in Iraqi EFL corpus are the demonstrative "*this*" (e.g., *this study*), and the definite article "*the*" (e.g., *the current study*). According to Santos (1996: 489), the clear preference for the deictic expression "*this*" is presumably to be explained in part by the author's effort to incorporate that abstract into the body of the paper, while the use of "*the*" suggests that the main article is viewed as standing apart from the abstract. He further states that the clear preference for "*this*" is presumably to be explained in part by the author's effort to incorporate that abstract into the body of the

work, while the use of "*the*" suggests that the main work is viewed as standing apart from the abstract (ibid.).

A closer look at this move, one can notice the frequent use of inanimate subjects with animate verbs in the active present tense. The following examples are extracted from the present corpus:

11. This work investigates the pragmatic choices the playwrights make in using humorous language.

12. This study examines how far Grice's maxims are abided by in English poetic language.

The move of stating hypotheses constitutes (18.95%) of the present corpus. Due to its significant frequency in the present corpus, this move can be considered obligatory for the skeletal layout of this academic genre. With this move, the researcher attempts to state the hypotheses to be investigated in the study being conducted. This move is generally realized by the use of the following lexical verb *hypothesize* in the passive present tense. Consider the following illustrative examples:

13. It is hypothesized that Arabic Friday and English Sunday sermons have certain common linguistic and literary aspects which points to the existence of language universals in the field of religious oratory.

14. It is hypothesized that conversation in poetry displays specific textual patterns which help in defining the whole text.

This component move has been solely employed by Iraqi EFL graduates in constructing the academic genre of DAs as no reference to this move has been reported in previous research. Such use can be attributed either to that Iraqi EFL graduates follow a specific rhetorical pattern of their own, i.e., they develop their own interlanguage rhetorical system which is neither like L1 nor L2 system (cf. Corder, 1971), or to that Iraqi EFL graduates may have not yet developed a mature view of the component moves that are used to articulate the communicative purpose of this discourse genre.

The component move of describing methodology includes information about the study subjects, the data collection, and procedures of data analysis that are employed to achieve the study aims. It constitutes (13.53%) of Iraqi EFL corpus. This move can be considered obligatory due to its high frequency in the present corpus. This move is generally realized by a number of lexical expressions like *data*, *corpus*, *subjects*, *study instruments*, *elicitation techniques*, etc. Following Al-Ali and Sahawneh's (2011) study findings, Iraqi EFL graduates follow one of the following strategic choices to realize this move;

(a) Sampling procedures: researchers tend to mention information about the study data in relation to the source, setting, size and characteristics of the sample and the tools and criteria of data collection. The following illustrative example is extracted from the present corpus:

15. *The data on which the analysis of the present study based are three absurd plays written by Beckett, Pinter, and Stoppard.*

(b) Identifying data analysis procedures: researchers tend to identify the procedures and/or techniques employed in the analysis of study data. The following illustrative example is extracted from the present corpus:

16. *A discourse completion task and a scaled-response task have been employed to elicit the production and perception data from 150 participants.*

Hyland (2000: 69) states that an English speaking reader expects that the abstract will indicate *how* the study has been conducted because sometimes *how* is seen as more important than *what* is found (i.e. results) to the extent that this move replaces the results move altogether in hard knowledge abstracts.

The component move of summarizing results accounts for (15.34%) of the present corpus. Here, researchers mention or present the most salient and striking findings of their research (Salager-Meyer, 1992: 105). This move can be considered as another canonical move of the academic genre

of DAs due to its high frequency. This result supports Bhatia's (1993) argument that this move is an important aspect of abstracts where researchers sum up their research findings. Hyland (2000: 67) points out that, as a means for gaining the reader's interest and acceptance, researchers are anxious to underline their most central claims by including results statements in their abstracts. According to the present corpus, this move can be realized by using the following lexical expressions like *finding(s)* or *result(s)*. Besides, reporting verbs like *find*, *show*, *reveal*, *confirm*, etc., mostly in their passive present tense, are used to realize this move in the texts analyzed. This move is introduced by using a deictic reference such as "this" or "the" or "anticipatory it". (e.g., *This study.....*). Consider the following illustrative examples from the present corpus:

17. *On the production level, it has been found that the three groups have generated relatively similar strategy type with some exception, and different amount of strategy use.* .

18. *It is found that negative transfer from Arabic leads to weakness in the learners' performance on the use of prepositions.*

As to the move of investigating hypotheses, it constitutes (9.02%) of the present corpus. Here, researchers attempt to examine the validation and/or falsification of the study hypotheses. That is, they intend to report that the results obtained can either confirm or refute the hypotheses set forth in their study. Due to its low frequency, this move can be considered peripheral in the texts analyzed. The occurrence of this move in the present corpus is specific to Iraqi EFL graduates as no reference has been made in previous research. Again, a possible explanation for the use of this move can be either that Iraqi EFL graduates develop their own interlanguage rhetorical system or that Iraqi EFL graduates may have not yet developed a mature view of the component moves that are used to articulate the

communicative purpose of this discourse genre. To realize this move, the following lexical verbs are employed; *confirm, validate, approve, refute, falsify*, etc in the active present tense. Consider the following examples:

19. *Results of the statistical analysis have confirmed five of the hypotheses of the study.*

20. *The data analysis has approved two hypotheses of the present study, and refuted only one.*

The rhetorical move of presenting conclusions typically includes some indications of the implications and applications of the present findings (Bhatia, 1993: 79). With this move, a definite and unhedged deduction indicating the generalizability of the results deduced is drawn out (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans 1988: 119). It constitutes (7.22%) of the present corpus, considered peripheral. By reporting results or findings of research obtained to academics in the field, Iraqi EFL candidates in linguistics seem to be more persuasive as the main function of this move is to take the reader from the text into the world by commenting on the implications of the research or its applications (Hyland, 2000: 33). This may be considered an attempt by Iraqi EFL graduates to situate their abstracts within a wider international academic community (cf. Martin-Martin 2003). Al-Ali and Sahawneh (2011:29) state that the tendency for the use of this move may be that graduates find it necessary to justify and discuss the merits of their research, as well as to exhibit its benefits. This move is realized by one of the following lexical verbs including *conclude, suggest, show, find, come up with*, etc. in their active present tense.

Iraqi EFL graduates initiate this move either with reference to the writer's own work micro-research outcome subjects (e.g., *The study results conclude that.....*) or with *anticipatory it* (e.g., *It is concluded that*)

(cf. Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2011: 25). Consider the following illustrative example from the present corpus:

21. *The results show that the political discourse tends to use certain linguistic strategies and tactics in persuasion its readers.*

Finally, the move of indicating thesis structure constitutes (4.51%) of Iraqi EFL corpus. It is considered an optional or marginal move in articulating the academic genre of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduate due to its low frequency. This move explains and details how the dissertation is organized in terms of structure and content. Here, Iraqi EFL graduates state the structure of their work in general, and the content of each chapter in particular. It has been observed that there are certain lexical expressions used to realize this move such as *fall, have, divide*, etc. in either their active or passive present tense. The following example is extracted from the

present corpus:

22. *The body of the study includes seven chapters. Chapter one is an introduction.....*

Figure 4 below sums up the entire distribution of moves employed in the construction of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates.

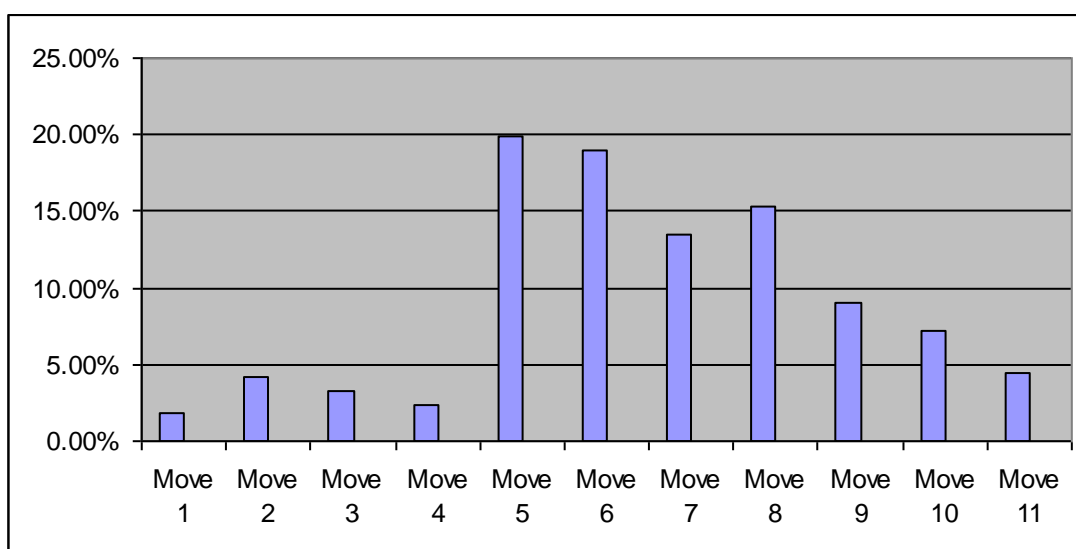


Figure 4: Distribution of Micro-Moves in the Present Corpus.

5.2 Generic Macro-Structure of Dissertation Abstracts:

The present section is intended to detail the rhetorical macro-structure of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates. Hyland's (2000) five-move model has been employed in the corpus analysis of those abstract texts. The statistical analysis reveals that Iraqi EFL graduates have employed (338 -100%) moves in constructing the macro-structure of their DAs (cf. Table 2 below).

Table 2: Raw Frequencies & Percentages of Macro-Moves of DAs.

Type of Component Move	Frequencies & Percentages
Move 1: Introduction	43 (12.72%)
Move 2: Purpose	95 (28.10%)
Move 3: Methodology	75 (22.18%)
Move 4: Result	85 (25.14%)
Move 5: Conclusion	40 (11.83%)

Before going into the details of corpus analysis, it is noteworthy that these moves are defined and exemplified in Section 5.1 above. The statistical results of analysis show in constructing their DAs, Iraqi EFL graduates have employed the assumed five moves but with relative differences in their distribution. More precisely, graduates have rarely employed these five moves altogether in their abstracts; consequently there is a variation in their frequency. The frequencies of the three moves of purpose, methodology and result are significantly higher in comparison to those of the other two moves of introduction and conclusion. Such result

can lead to the conclusion that these three frequent moves are mandatory in the articulation of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduate (cf. Dindaeng, 2009). In this regard, it has been observed that the compulsory status of a given move in previous research is decided in terms of the frequency of move type. Thus, there is no absolute agreement among scholars on the optionality of component moves, that is, variation exists among graduates from different linguistic backgrounds; and sometimes variation even within graduates from the same linguistic background can be found (cf. Al-Ali and Sahawneh, 2011; Hai-lin and Huan, 2010; Tahririan and Jalilifar, 2004; amongst many). Figure 5 below summarizes the distribution of the macro-moves employed in the present corpus.

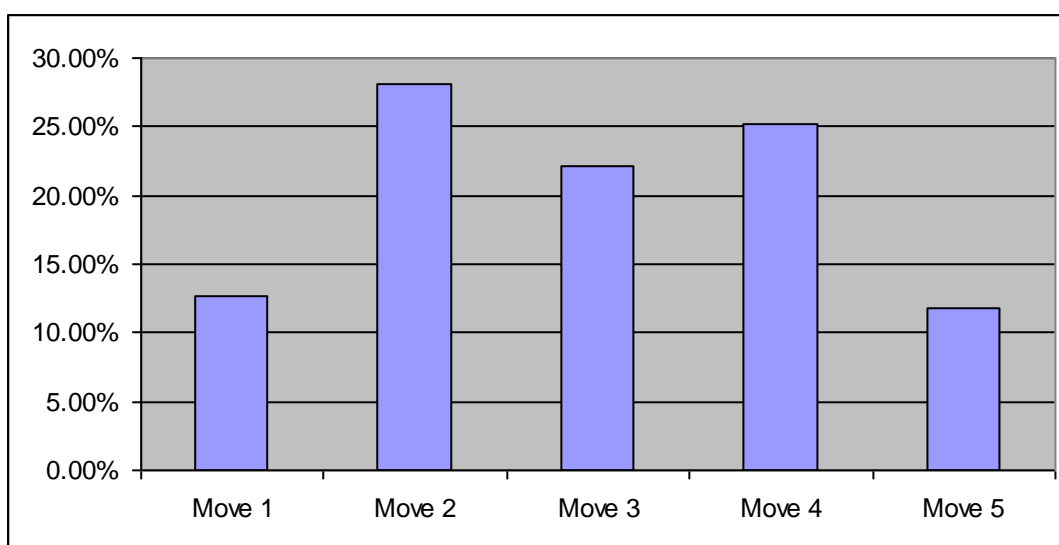


Figure 5: Distribution of Macro-Moves in the Present Corpus.

From a different angle, one can conclude that Iraqi EFL graduates have employed four main schematic layouts or formats in articulating their DAs, and these are:

1. IPMR layout: this format consists of the introduction, purpose, method, and result moves. It constitutes (16%) of the entire corpus.

2. PMR layout: this format consists of the purpose, methodology, and result moves. It constitutes (65%) of the entire corpus.

3. PMRC layout: this format consists of the purpose, methodology, result, and conclusion moves. It constitutes (14%) of the entire corpus.

4. IPMRC layout: this format includes all the five moves mentioned above, viz., introduction, purpose, methodology, result, and conclusion. It constitutes (5%) of the entire corpus.

Figure 6 below indicates that PMR layout of DAs is the most frequently employed one by Iraqi EFL graduates compared to the other three layouts. The same finding has been reported in Dindaeng's (2009) study of thesis abstracts written in English by Thai graduate students across two disciplines of applied linguistics and applied mathematics. He finds out that the PMR layout is the most frequent format employed by Thai graduates. In the same vein, Hai-lin and Huan (2010) have examined the generic structure of English research abstracts written by English native-speaking and Chinese EFL researchers. They have found that both groups show different tendencies in articulating the general formats or layouts of their abstracts.

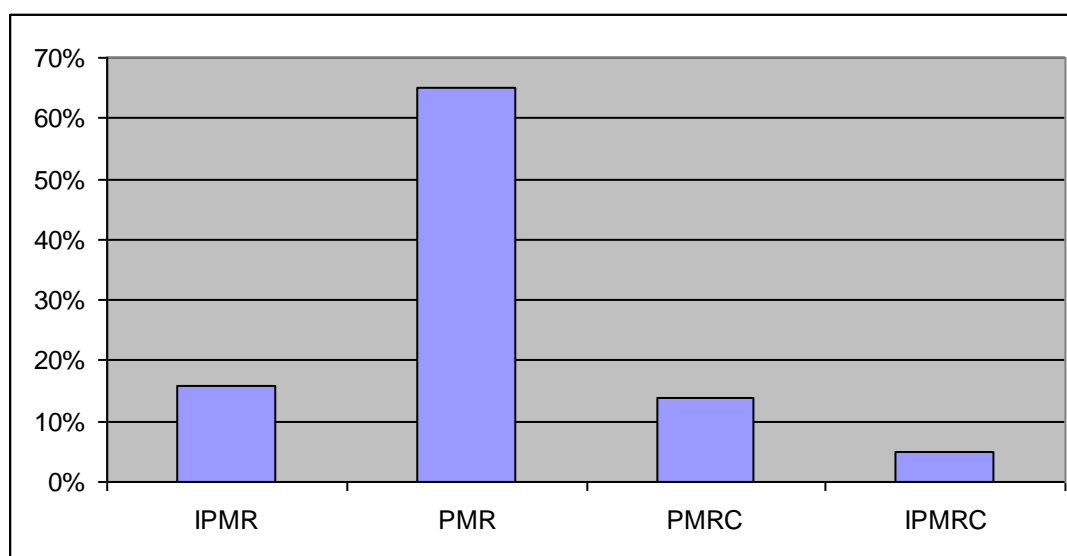


Figure 6: Distribution of Abstract Layouts in the Present Corpus.

As far as word counting is concerned, it has been observed that PhD DAs are longer than MA ones in the present corpus. It seems that Iraqi EFL graduates consider that their PhD DAs should be informative as much as possible in comparison to DAs written by MA graduates, and PhD DAs seem like a miniature parent document. That is, Iraqi EFL graduates faithfully follow the content of their parent document, and try to show the whole structure of the dissertation to help their readers appreciate the dissertation as accurately as possible. Such a tendency might risk the danger in losing the readers' attention. Jeon and Eun (2007:177) have reported the same tendency of writing lengthy DAs among Korean EFL graduates. They argue that DAs written by English native speakers are indicative rather than informative in that American writers are free from the thought that abstracts should be a miniature parent document. They normally write their main points in a creative way, and just seem to want to stimulate a reader's curiosity to read the parent document.

5.3 Linguistic Patterns of Dissertation Abstracts:

This section is designed to elucidate the use of some selected linguistic features employed in the moves construction of DAs. A closer look at the linguistic choices employed to realize the component moves of this genre has revealed some salient linguistic features in terms of sentence type, tense, and voice. Table 3 below summarizes the distribution of the linguistic features in question.

As to sentence type in the abstract texts analyzed, the quantitative analysis has shown the prevalence of simple sentence type compared to complex and compound ones. Simple sentences account for (50%) of the present corpus, followed by complex sentences type (35%), and then followed by compound sentences (15%). This finding does not support

Quirk et al's (1972: 795) argument that in spoken English, compound sentences are more frequently used than complex ones as they enable better comprehensibility than do complex ones.

The distribution pattern of verb tense across the component moves of the present corpus indicates that Iraqi EFL graduates employ present tense more frequently than past tense. The use of present tense accounts for (68%) of the present corpus, while the use of past tense accounts for (32%) only. Pho (2008:240) asserts that the use of present tense gives the idea that the writer is generalizing beyond the results of the study in order to give the impression that these are widely accepted findings. And the use of past tense, on the other hand, leaves the reader with the impression that the writer is plainly reporting the findings of the present research. Accordingly, one can argue that Iraqi EFL graduates' use of the present tense is to make generalizations based on their study findings. The same finding has been reported in Tahririan and Jalilifar's (2004) study of the generic structure of DAs written by Persian native speakers, English native speakers, and native speakers of other languages. They have found out that native speakers of English and of other languages exhibit significantly frequent use of present tense in comparison to past tense. Native speakers of Persian, on the other hand, show the opposite tendency.

The distribution of verb voice across the component moves shows that the passive voice is more frequently employed than the active. The distribution of passive voice is (57%) of the present corpus, whereas (43%) constitutes the active. The same finding has been asserted by Al-Ali and Sahawneh's (2011) study. They have reported that the frequent occurrence of passive voice, compared to active, conventionally functions to depersonalize the information in the DAs (p.32). Similarly, it seems that Iraqi EFL graduates prefer detaching themselves from the claims they have

made in their DAs, and this, in turn, gives objectivity to their abstracts which belong to the academic circle.

Table 3: Distribution of Linguistic Features across Moves of DAs.

Sentence Type (%)			Tense (%)		Voice (%)	
Simple	Compound	Complex	Present	Past	Active	Passive
50%	15%	35%	68%	32%	43%	57%

6. Conclusions:

DAs become one of the most important genres in academic written discourse. The present study has explored how Iraqi EFL graduates textualize the available generic resources of their DAs to achieve the communicative purpose of this academic genre. So far, it has been found that the rhetorical micro-structure of DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates is built around eleven moves; four of which are obligatory for the construction of this genre, viz., the moves of announcing present research or stating study aims, stating hypotheses, summarizing results, and describing methodology, whereas others are optional.

On the other hand, the rhetorical macro-structure centers around five moves, of which three are obligatory, viz., the moves of purpose, methodology, and result. The structural patterns employed to realize the rhetorical moves of linguistics DAs written by Iraqi EFL graduates indicate the frequent use of simple sentences, present tense, and passive voice.

As for pedagogical implications, it is hoped that the findings of the present study can be utilized to familiarize non-native speakers with the discourse conventions of English academic writing, and try to adopt them in their own writing, as non-native speakers may lack not only the necessary level of language proficiency, but also the necessary genre knowledge required in writing abstracts (cf. Bhatia, 1999). Besides, it is hoped that this study can provide some useful insights into the academic abstract writing for scholars, students or interested parties, especially in the Iraqi EFL academic context.

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