

Dissertation Abstracts of Doctor of Public Administration and Doctor of Education: An Academic Discourse Analysis

Dr. Jovelyn M. Cantina¹ and Dr. Quindhe M. Banquiao²

¹OIC Director for IMD, Jose Rizal Memorial State University Main Campus

²Dean, College of Arts and Sciences, JRMSU Main Campus

Abstract

As an important part-genre in the research article (RA), the abstract has gained significant attention from the academic community. A well-written abstract can attract more readers and increase the chances of the accompanying RA being indexed and cited. The study aimed to determine the rhetorical structures and the linguistic features employed in expressing the different communicative functions in writing dissertation abstracts in Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) and Doctor of Education (Ed. D.) for the Academic Year 2013-2016 of Jose Rizal Memorial State University Graduate School. Grammar errors and the pedagogical implications were also given attention. There were eighteen (18) dissertation abstracts used as corpus of the study. Descriptive research method using qualitative and quantitative approach was utilized. Using Hyland's moves structure model, the Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion (M2-M3-M4-M5) pattern emerged as the conventional schema in the abstracts in both DPA and Ed. D programs. The writers also did not use first person pronoun in the abstracts. The inconsistency of the tense of verb used in every move was evident and very limited transitional devices were used. The authors in both programs had a strong tendency to omit M1 in their abstracts. Thus, it is recommended that student writers may be accustomed with the rhetorical structures and conventions in dissertation abstracts with examples from different disciplines.

Keywords: *rhetorical structures, linguistic features, dissertation abstracts, abstract analysis*

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. As the most important genre in the academic community, the Dissertation Abstracts have received broad attention in genre analysis.

According to Lores (2004), 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. This genre is intended to communicate new factual knowledge for members of different academic communities. 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. It is important for researchers to be acquainted with the textual and rhetorical features that characterize the writing of any effective abstract.

A genre has been defined by Swales and Feak (2009) as “a type of text or discourse designed to achieve a set of communicative purposes”. They also pointed that the RA is a genre, and other components of the RA are part-genres, for example, the abstract of the RA. An abstract is a brief summary accompanying the RA. The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as cited in the study of Li (2011) defines it as follows: “ [it] is an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, preferably prepared by its author(s) for publication with it”. The importance of abstracts has been increasing in recent years due to the explosion of information in the academic world. Nowadays, more and more research articles are accompanied by an informative abstract.

According to Saeew & Tangkiengsirisin (2014) among all writing genres, abstracts are considered one important genre in disseminating new knowledge and discoveries in academic discourse communities. With limited cognitive capacity and the information explosion with new journals being launched, the succinct summary of the entire document, both print and electronic archives, has become an invaluable, informative tool for highly selective researchers to access pertinent scholarly literature. Given the pivotal role in scientific communication, abstracts not only facilitate information retrieval but also determine publication success, be it acceptance or rejection (Huckin, 2001). Submitting an abstract is the first requirement for an initial consideration of publication of a research article (RA). In information-rich environments, the strategic manipulation of rhetorical and linguistic features that conform to the standards of the target academia encountered can enhance opportunities for successful publication. In this respect, genre analysis serves as an approach to identifying the move structures including a cluster of linguistic features prevalent of a genre.

This study aimed to determine rhetorical structures and the linguistic features employed in expressing the different communicative functions in writing dissertation abstracts in Doctor of Public Administration (DPA) and Doctor of Education (Ed. D.) for the Academic Year 2013-2016 of Jose Rizal Memorial State University Graduate School. Specifically, it determined the rhetorical structures used by the writers in writing dissertation abstracts. It also determined the linguistic features used by the writers. It also determined the pedagogical implications that can be derived from the analysis of the abstracts. The findings of this study will provide insights into

how abstract writing can be done to achieve the commonalities in the two focused disciplines. A better understanding will encourage the writers to actively engage in such academic writing tasks; preparing them to become good writers which will be needed most especially when they are pursuing their endeavor in writing researches, business proposals, making reports, and others. Moreover, results of the study will also provide pedagogical implications for research instructors/professors to include in the teaching the appropriate rhetorical moves and the use of transitional devices in writing dissertation abstracts. This can be helpful to them to instruct their novice students these schematic pattern and students, in turn, can utilize the discovered model in their abstract writing.

Methods and Materials

This study utilized descriptive research method using qualitative and quantitative approach . To minimize variations across disciplinary boundaries, the corpus was solely restricted to the abstract sections written within the domain of public administration and education. Gnutzmann and Oldenburg as cited by Al-Zubaidi (2013) stated that the degree of uniformity of textual structures depends on the discipline to which the texts belong. More precisely, the abstract sections were selected from 8 Doctor of Public Administration and 8 Doctor of Education dissertations. This has been intentionally done for the systematic distribution of the study corpus. These dissertations have been written during the period 2013-2016. A letter to the Dean of the Graduate School JRMSU Main Campus was sought to have access to DAs. 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 adopted the move structure model proposed by Hyland (2000) to analyze the corpus of 16 DA texts written by DPA and Ed.D doctoral graduates. It consisted of introduction M1 (presenting prefatory background for the study; purpose M2 (presenting the goal of the study); methodology M3 (presenting the subjects and the research design, procedure or methods used in the study); product M4 (presenting the study results in general); and conclusion M5 (presenting restatement of aims, implication, and application of the findings). The corpuses of DAs were photocopied and coded for their move structures thoroughly by the researcher first. Secondly, a few linguistic features, namely the tense and voice of verbs, first personal pronouns, and transitional devices which characterize each move on the sentence level were identified. The data were treated using the frequency and percentage.

Results

Rhetorical Structure Analysis

Table 1. Frequency of the Occurrence of Moves in the Dissertation Abstracts

MOVES		DPA	Ed.D.
Introduction	(M1)	2 (25 %)	1 (12.5%)
Purpose	(M2)	8 (100%)	8 (100%)
Method	(M3)	8 (100%)	8 (100%)
Product	(M4)	8 (100%)	8 (100%)
Conclusion	(M5)	8 (100%)	7 (87.5%)

Table 1 presents the frequency of the occurrence of rhetorical moves in the dissertation abstracts of DPA and Ed.D. As shown on the table, the purpose move (M2), the method move (M3) and the product move (M4) were the most frequent and obligatory moves in both groups of abstracts. Such findings are in line with those of Li's (2011) with the purpose move and the method move

occurring in almost all the abstracts in English and Chinese. The introduction move (M1) also occurred less frequently.

In contrasts, Hyland (2000) determined that more than 95 percent of the abstracts had all the five moves in his study on 800 abstracts. This implies that student writers of JRMSU were not used in including introduction as one of the elements in writing dissertation abstracts since they are utilizing the institutional format of Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion.

Table 2. Move Structure of Eighteen Dissertation Abstracts of DPA and Ed.D.

DPA Dissertation Abstract	Move Structure	Ed.D. Dissertation Abstracts	Move Structure
1	M2-M3-M4-M5	1	M2-M3-M4-M5
2	M2-M3-M4-M5	2	M2-M3-M4-M5
3	M2-M3-M4-M5	3	M2-M3-M4-M5
4	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	M2-M3-M4-M5-M1
5	M2-M3-M4-M5	5	M2-M3-M5-M4
6	M2-M3-M4-M5	6	M2-M1-M3-M4-M5
7	M2-M3-M4-M5-M1	7	M2-M3-M4
8	M2-M3-M4-M2-M5	8	M2-M3-M4-M5

Extract 1

Based on the findings of the study, the researcher hereby concludes that biogas is not very familiar alternative of the people in Zamboanga Peninsula. Savings made out of biogas utilization is not maximized. *Biogas is a good source of electricity basically for home use depending on the number of heads of biogas producing animals.* It is then recommended that the Department of Agriculture.... (*Rhetorical Technology: Environmental and Economic Impact*)

Extract 2

HEIs may establish linkage with research organizations that can help build a strong research team ...*An unstrained work environment ensures a psychological condition which enables the employee to perform job and non-work related functions without inhibitions.*(*Quality of Work Life and Faculty Productivity: Their Relationship*)

Table 2 presents the move structure pattern of the dissertation abstracts of DPA and Ed. D. The M2-M3-M4-M5 pattern emerged as the conventional schema in the abstracts in both program. This means that the authors in both programs had omitted M1 in their abstracts because they were following the institutional format in which the introductory part is not obligatory.

This study supported the results of Pho's (2008) study; the occurrence of M1 is low in frequency, which is consistent with the results of this study. However, many authors such as Hyland (2000) and Martin-Martin (2003) had reported on the packed method unit. Hyland (2000) claimed that a high frequency of M1 is present in linguistics and claimed that research in soft disciplines usually need to provide more context due to its diversity and permeable boundaries, and readers would expect a clear introduction to help them make a decision on whether they will devote time to reading the abstracts or not; however, it usually does not happen in the field of hard disciplines,

which usually place more emphasis on the method move. They attributed this to space constraints in abstracts.

As an explanation for this phenomenon, Swales and Feak (2009) stated, “unless the contribution made by the paper lies principally in the methodology, method descriptions in dissertation abstracts, these may have to be squeezed to make room for more information in other moves.” According to Ren (2011), the different percentages of DA abstracts and theses abstracts containing different rhetorical moves and the different move structures show that DA abstracts tend to be selective in the use of the 5 basic moves. Thesis abstracts are often allowed more space than DA abstracts and experts confidently make choices to best serve their purpose; students usually tend to play safe by including every move. Therefore, the experts seem to pay more attention to the persuasive role rather than the informative role of DA abstracts, while student writers tend to pay more attention to the informative role rather than the persuasive role of thesis abstracts.

Extract 3

The study aimed to describe the Filipino repatriates and undocumented overseas workers from Malaysia. The descriptive method of research was utilized aided by data mining. The respondents of the study were....The study revealed that the irregular migrant workers repatriated were mostly men in their most productive age....These roles are shaping the socio-economic conditions of the provinces, strengthening migration policies and further increasing the role of... (*Meta-Analysis of the Filipino Repatriates from Malaysia: Basis for Policy Formulation*)

Extract 4

The study aimed to look into the relationship between the administrator’s leadership practices and the professional competence of teachers...The descriptive method of research was used with the aid of a questionnaire checklist. The study revealed that administrators’ leadership practices in terms of model....It is recommended that administrators improve (*Administrators’ Leadership Practices in Relation to Teachers’ Professional Competence*)

LINGUISTIC FEATURES ANALYSIS

Table 3 presents the use of first person pronoun in dissertations abstracts. The table shows that the writers do not use any first person pronoun in their abstracts. The findings refuted the study of Li (2011) in which among the forty abstracts, there were a total of nine first person pronouns: eight in linguistics abstracts and one in chemistry abstracts and contrasted the result with what Hyland and Bondi (2006) found in their study that soft disciplines contain 75% more stance items than the hard disciplines.

This means that in writing dissertation abstracts, authors’ rhetorical visibility in their abstract writing varies according to disciplines. Authors in disciplines, such as public administration and education, tend to hide their author stances in the study. Instead, they prefer to indicate the subjects, procedures, materials, and instruments of the study as the subject of the sentence to strengthen the objectivity of their study.

Hyland (2003) stated that using self-mention is a powerful rhetorical strategy to emphasize writers’ personal contribution to the research and strengthen his/her research credibility and

standing in the discipline. The use of first person pronoun is a common way to show the stance of the author in the research. Moreover, Bondi (2006) believed that, “this strategy conveys an empiricist ideology that suggests research outcomes would be the same irrespective of the individual conducting it”. Authors in linguistics are more willing to expose their presence in the study. Employing the first person pronoun in the study will present the author as “an informed and reliable colleague” and gain credit for “one’s individual perspective or research decisions” (Hyland, 2003).

Table 3. First Person Pronouns in Dissertation Abstracts

FIRST PERSON PRONOUN	DPA ABSTRACTS	Ed.D. ABSTRACTS	TOTAL
Singular	0	0	0
Plural	0	0	0

Table 4. Tenses and Voices of the Verb of Dissertation Abstracts

MOVES		PAST	PRESENT	PRESENT PASSIVE	PAST PASSIVE	FUTURE	PRESENT PERFECT
M1	DPA	0	2(is,has)	0	0	0	0
	Ed. D	0	2(ensures, enables)	0	0	0	0
		0	4	0	0	0	0
M2	DPA	10(aimed)	0	0	2(were used, was done)	0	0
	Ed. D	8(aimed)	0	0	0	0	0
		18	0	0	2	0	0
M3	DPA	21(employed, utilized,	0	0	15(was held, was used	0	0
	Ed.D	22(were, was)	1(are)	0	12(was used, were utilized)	0	0
		43	1	0	27	0	0
M4	DPA	31(revealed, was)	5(are,is, has, obtain)	0	8(were availed,were found, were implemented	0	2(has transformed, has changed)
	Ed.D	40(revealed,perceived)	19(is,founded, are)	1(are practiced)	9(were given,were linked)	0	0
		71	24	1	17	0	2
M5	DPA	2(increased,made)	11(is,has,concludes, recommends)	4(is recommended,is increased)	1(was recommended)	7(will help,shall implement)	1(has implemented,
	Ed.D	1(were)	16(concludes, have,provi	2(is recommended, is	2(were accepted,were emphasize)	12(will provide,shall continue)	0

			de)	recommen ded)			
		3	27	6	3	19	1

Table 4 presents the different tenses and voices of the verb used in every rhetorical move of DPA and Ed. D. abstracts. As shown on the table, in Move 1, a total of 4 present tense were used by the student writers. In Move 2, there were 18 past tense and 2 past passive used. In Move 3, a total of 43 past tense, 1 present tense, and 27 past passive were used. In Move 4, a total of 71 past tense, 24 present tense, 1 present passive, 17 past passive, and 2 present perfect tense were used. In Move 5, a total of 3 past tense, 27 present tense, 6 present passive, 3 past passive, 19 future tense, and 1 present perfect.

The findings refuted the results of Li (2011), findings were different since most sentences in the moves begin with subjects; active voice is more common than passive voice in M2. However, some moves take a present tense but uses passive voice.

This means that there were inconsistencies on the use of the tenses of the verb by move since in Move 1, a writer is expected to use present tense; in Move 2, past tense; in Move 3 past tense, present passive, and past passive; in Move 4, past tense; and in Move 5 present tense, and future tense.

Extract 5

It utilized the descriptive method of research coupled with documentary analysis. Questionnaires on the profile of the respondents were used in the collection of data. On site visit was done to validate the data gathered. (*Palau Tribe: Status, Problems, and Prospects as Basis for Development Program*) MOVE 2(Purpose)

Extract 6

There were two hundred thirty one public schools and eight private elementary schools included in the study. All these schools are in the divisions of Zamboanga del Norte. The descriptive-correlation method of research was utilized. There were two hundred ...(*School-Based Management in Relation to Teacher's Behavior: Basis for Educational Management Review*) MOVE 3(Method)

Extract 7

The physical infrastructure especially the buildings were less developed and were not given much attention granting the fact that this primarily caters the needs of the students when coming to school. This may also have affected that NAT performance of the students which is not good. On the other hand, school-based management practices in the schools were found to be not that evident as these are just sometimes...(*School-Based Management Practices of Administrators in Relation to Schools' Performance*) MOVE 4(Product)

Extract 8

Hence, this necessitates that Presidents of SUCs in Region IX should identify areas for reform and provide intervention along the institutional streams to level up their competence and ensure that quality of outcomes responds to theSUCs in Region IX should take all performance indicators

set forth but if not identify...(*Institutional Streams as Manifested along Lines of Leaders' Competence in Relation to School's Achievements*) MOVE 5 (Conclusion)

Table 5 presents the transitional devices used in the dissertation abstracts of DPA and Ed.D. As shown on the table, out of 8 DPA abstracts, there were only four (4) student writers who used transitional devices. The most frequent devices used were likewise and thus. On the other hand, out of eight Ed.D. abstracts, there were seven (7) student writers who used transitional devices. The most frequent devices were further, however, hence, and on the other hand. This means that DPA student writers limited themselves in the use of transitional devices.

Table 5. Transitional Devices Used

DPA ABSTRACTS	Transitional Device	Ed. D. ABSTRACTS	Transitional Device
A	0	A	0
B	1	B	2
C	1	C	2
D	1	D	1
E	0	E	2
F	0	F	4
G	0	G	2
H	1	H	3
TOTAL	4		7

The study is similar to the findings of Panogaling (2015) in which the undergraduate students utilized limited number of transitional device in their thesis abstracts. This implies that the use of transitional devices must be introduced to the students and teach them the proper way of including these devices in their abstracts.

Extract 9

The program implementation in Bayog needs strengthening by the Local Government Unit. Further, the barangay leaders and officials should be first to adopt the technology for the local farmers to follow.(*Integrated Agricultural Technologies: Policy Recommendation*)

Conclusion

The Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion (M2-M3-M4-M5) pattern emerged as the conventional schema in the abstracts in both DPA and Ed. D programs. The authors in both programs had a strong tendency to omit M1 in their abstracts. This refuted the claim of Hyland (2000) and Martin-Martin (2003) who have reported on the packed method unit.

Recommendation

Students maybe be taught of the conventions and the characteristics of abstracts so that they will be properly guided since they cannot do away with abstracts. Moreover, specific elements of rhetorical structure implying communicative function or purpose must also be taught. Lastly, there is a need to use authentic texts to add to student writers' learning.

On the other hand, student writers may utilize variation of the tense of the verb and transitional devices depending on the communicative purpose or type of moves should also be taught to them.

References

- Al-Ali, M. and Sahawneh, M. (2011) "Rhetorical and textual organization of English and Arabic PhD dissertation abstracts in linguistics". *SKY Journal of Linguistics*, 24: 7–39. Retrieved from http://www.just.edu.jo/admissionuploads/staff_cv/alali.doc on June 27, 2016
- Al-Zubaidi, N. (2013). analyzing the rhetorical structure of linguistics dissertation abstracts written by iraqi efl graduates. *al-ustath* no 204 volume two 2013ad, 1434ah. Retrieved from <http://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ed521873.pdf> on june 20, 2016.
- Behnam, B. (2014). A genre analysis of english and iranian research articles abstracts in applied linguistics and mathematics. **international journal of applied linguistics & english literature issn 2200-3592 (print), issn 2200-3452 (online) vol. 3 no. 5; september 2014 copyright © australian international academic centre, australia.** retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijalel.v.3n.5p.173> on july 1, 2016.
- Hyland, K (2000). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing. English for Specific Purposes*, 23: 303-324. Retrieved from <http://rel.sagepub.com/content/36/3/271.refson> June 19, 2016.
- Li, Y. (2011). A genre analysis of english and chinese research article abstracts in linguistic and chemistry. san diego university. Retrieved from <http://www.journals.aiac.org.au/index.php/IJALEL/article/view/1143> Retrieved on July 10, 2016.
- Lores, R. (2004) " On RA abstracts: From rhetorical structure to thematic organization". *English for Specific Purposes*, 23: 280-302. Retrieved from <http://www.mcser.org/journal/index.php/mjss/article/download/8913/8610> on July 3, 2016
- Martin-Martin, P. (2003) "A genre analysis of English and Spanish research paper abstracts in experimental social sciences". *English for Specific Purposes*, 22: 25–43. Retrieved from <https://journals.equinoxpub.com/index.php/WAP/article/view/30051> on June 28, 2016.
- Panogaling, M. (2015). Genre analysis of the undergraduate thesis abstracts of students. Retrieved from <http://stars.library.ucf.edu/etd/62/> on July 3, 2016.
- Porte, G. (2002) *Appraising research in second language learning: A practical approach to critical analysis of quantitative research*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins. Retrieved from https://www.ied.edu.hk/ele/research/resources/Research_Design_Methods.pdf on July 3, 2016
- Ren, X.J., Han, M.Y., Li, Y., & Xie, Z.X. (2009). Synthesis of 3 β -hydroxy-24-norchol-5-en-23-oic Acid. *ACTA CHIMICA SINICA*, 67(14),1700-1704.
- Swales, J. M., & Feak, C. B. (2009). *Abstracts and the writing of abstracts*. Ann Arbor, MI:University of Michigan Press. Retrieved from <http://writingcenter.unc.edu/esl/resources/writing-abstracts/> on July 10, 2016