MOVE ANALYSIS OF THESIS ABSTRACTS OF THE AB ENGLISH GRADUATES IN MSU-BUUG

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ABSTRACT

An abstract is an overview of completed research that is very important in research articles because it provides a lens and quick summary of a research paper, making the study accessible to a larger audience. This study aims to investigate the formulation of the AB English undergraduate thesis in the 2018-2019 academic year, which consists of a total of 20 abstracts. It used a qualitative research method with the sole purpose of examining the rhetorical structure on how these moves and steps were used using John Swales' approach, the CARS model, which has three moves with its own set of steps to follow. The results revealed that the abstracts used and presented rhetorical moves, but not all of the steps were discovered and used in each abstract, with some steps being more frequently found and less frequently found in the analyzed abstracts, as well as some steps not being used in the abstracts. Thus, this implies that research found out that the abstract in AB English graduates is not all bound to reveal the moves and steps.

Keywords : move analysis, thesis abstracts, rhetorical moves, niche

1. INTRODUCTION

Abstract is a brief summary of the main components of a research project. It functions to save time in reading and gives salient information about the article and enables the readers to decide as to whether they would want to further pursue a full reading (Ali & Sahawneh, 2011). Partlidge and Starfield (2007) pointed out that the abstract is an important piece of work as it is one of the first things an examiner will look at. The use of abstracts is less time-consuming and space for it already provides the aim, methodology, and results of a particular study and provides prospective readers the opportunity to judge the relevance and significance of the paper. Hence, the abstract is not only the summary of the whole paper, but it also plays an important role in attracting readers and providing them with the main research contents (Ge& Yang, 2005).

An abstract is consequential in research articles for it provides a lens and quick overview of a research paper in which research becomes available to a larger audience. It is very useful in a way of storing research and scholarly information in a concise and centered form. It is the essential part of the research paper or article, which offers a preliminary overview and captures the essence of the whole study (Salager-Meyer, 1990,; Hartley, 2003).

Another aspect from Ventola (1994) emphasized about abstract is its function as an efficient organizing tool of information for the discourse community. According to Swales (1990) "abstracts function as independent as well as being advanced indicates the content and structure of the following text" (p. 179). Unlike any other sections of research articles, the research abstract is considered to be an individual genre (Biber& Conrad, 2009). The abstract section is the first paragraph that shows a brief description of all the contents in research studies incorporating their own forms and structures. It is a specific genre in academic writing that involves the use of appropriate linguistic realizations.

MSU-Buug has been storing multidisciplinary research and there was a transition of changes most especially in summarizing the whole study that refers to thesis abstracts. In relation, analyzing the moves and steps of the thesis abstracts was the primary aim of this study which hopes to bring benefits to the researchers especially when it comes to the writing conventions and rhetorical structures.

Over the last decade, there has been a shift in the way academic writing is perceived based on the view that writing is a social and communicative engagement between the writer and the reader. As a result of this social view of academic discourse, there has been an increasing interest in the study of move analysis as a tool that can be used to explore the nature of texts used in writing thesis abstracts, thus, the conception of this study was realized.

For a two-year consecutive studies, twenty abstracts of the AB English theses were utilized in the analysis. Move Analysis is used to describe and probe the rhetorical structures particularly in the abstracts of the AB English graduates in MSU-Buug, the only study that pioneered discourse analysis specifically the Move Analysis in the campus. This study is focused in the year 2018 and 2019 abstracts because to consider the uniformity of the new format (concise form), unlike the previous years due to the several factors such as the length and its format that may bias the collection of thesis abstracts; thus, complicate the present study.

Swales (1981) had initially proposed a four-move schema to describe a rhetorical organization in research article introductions. Eventually, in 1990 he revised his model and replaced it with a Create a Research Space (CARS) communication move schema. This new model is based on the analysis of 158 article introductions, 48 of Swales' 1981 study, and 110 new introductions, drawn from physics and educational psychology journals from the years 1943, 1963 and 1983 (Swales and Ninjar, 1987). This type of model allows us to follow rhetorical moves and steps as a pattern of approach to discourse analysis to grasp the rhetorical patterns of the AB English thesis abstracts. These selected abstracts were analyzed in terms of Swales' model. This model consists of the following three communicative modes and its steps Swales (1990: 141).

Table 1. Swale's Create a Research Space (CARS) Model

MOVES	STEPS
1) Establishing a territory	1. Claiming centrality 2. Making topic generalization(s) 3. Reviewing items of previous research
2) Establishing a niche	1. Counter-claiming 2. Indicating a gap 3. Question-raising 4. Continuing a tradition
3) Occupying the niche	1. Outlining purposes 2. Announcing present research 3. Announcing principal findings 4. Indicating research article structure

The CARS model has been adopted as a guide in investigating the structure of the thesis abstracts (Bhatia, 1997; Samraj, 2002, 2005). Swales' revised model consists of three rhetorical moves. Each of these moves is divided into several steps. The components of the CARS model are outlined in Table 1.

In move analysis, the general organizational patterns of texts are typically described as consisting of a series of moves, with moves being functional units in a text which together fulfill the overall communicative purpose of the genre (Connor, Davis, & De Rycker, 1995). Some move types occur more frequently than the others in a genre and can be described as conventional, whereas other moves occurring not as frequently can be described as optional. Moves may contain multiple elements that together, or in some combination, realize the move. These elements are referred to as 'steps' by Swales (1990). In short, moves represent semantic and functional units of texts that have specific communicative purposes and generally have distinctive linguistic boundaries that can be objectively analyzed.

Move 1: Establishing a territory step [the situation].This is generally accomplished in two ways: by demonstrating that a general area of research is important, critical, interesting, problematic, relevant, or otherwise worthy of investigation and by introducing and reviewing key sources of prior research in that area to show where gaps exist or where prior research has been inadequate in addressing the research problem.

Step 1: Claiming centrality [the situation]. The author can make a centrality claim by claiming interest or importance in referring to the classic, favorite or central perspective, or by claiming that there are many investigations in the area.

Step 2: Making topic generalizations. This represents a neutral kind of general statement. It usually takes the form of either statements about knowledge or practice, or statements about phenomena and this step seeks to establish territory by emphasizing the frequency and completeness of the data.

Step 3: Reviewing items of previous research. This is where the author reviews selected relevant groups of previous research. Here, the author specifies the important findings of the study and situates his/her own current research study.

Move 2: Establishing a niche [the problem].This action refers to making a clear and cogent argument that your particular piece of research is important and possesses value. This can be done by indicating a specific gap in previous research, by challenging a broadly accepted assumption, by raising a question, a hypothesis, or need, or by extending previous knowledge in some way.

Step 1:Counter-claiming.This is to introduce an opposing viewpoint or perspective or identify a gap in prior research that you believe has weakened or undermined the prevailing argument.

Step 2: Indicating a gap. This is to develop the research problem around a gap or understudied area of the literature.

Step 3: Question-raising. This is similar to gap identification which involves presenting key questions about the consequences of gaps and prior research that will be addressed by your study.

Step 4: Continuing a tradition. This is to extend prior research to expand upon or clarify a research problem and often signaled with logical connecting terminology, such as, "hence", "therefore", "consequently", "thus", or language that indicates a need.

Move 3: Occupying the niche [the solution].The final move is to announce the means by which your study will contribute new knowledge or new understanding in Step 2: Announcing present research. This is to describe the purpose of the study in terms of what the research is going to do or accomplish.

Step 3: Announcing principal findings. This is to present a brief, general summary of key findings written, such as, "The findings indicate a need for."

Step 4: Indicating Research article structure. This is to state how the remainder of your paper is organized and ended.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive-qualitative method, specifically a move analysis, an approach to discourse analysis in determining the communicative purposes referred to as moves and rhetorical strategies called steps. Moves and steps are used to describe and scrutinize the rhetorical structure of thesis abstracts. Hence, this study aimed to present move analysis from the perspectives of research and pedagogy.

The abstracts were gathered from the undergraduate theses of AB English graduates in Mindanao State University- Buug specifically from the Campus library with the librarian's consent and had to ensure that before the collection of data, a permission letter was sent to the librarian informing about the study.

The researchers began searching the thesis abstracts of AB English who graduated from 2018-2019 and centrally chosen since it is the new format and more concise compared to the previous years. In selecting the abstracts, the objective task that was considered by the researchers was to determine the presence of rhetorical moves and steps and how they are conveyed in the abstracts which consisted of twenty abstracts of the AB English theses that were subjected to move analysis, following the analytical approach of John Swales, the CARS model. The identity of the researchers who wrote the abstracts and the results are kept with confidentiality too. Results of the study are not disposed anywhere else, but they are for educational purposes only specifically for research studies. Thus, some of the ethical principles of research ethics were sufficiently followed such as honesty, objectivity, integrity, carefulness, openness and non-discrimination.

The thesis abstracts of the AB English graduates had

carefully read and gathered, then analyzed them individually by using John Swales' model in 1990, the Create a Research Space (CARS) to determine what are the rhetorical structures presented in the abstracts based on the aims of moves and steps. Considering all the moves and steps infused in the analysis, the results of the abstracts have utilized the following:

Table 2. Moves and Steps Utilized in the Thesis Abstracts of AB English

As shown in Table 2, the majority of the thesis abstracts of the AB English graduates in MSU-Buug utilized the three moves. However, not all steps are evident. In addition, there is the absence of move 2 that did not meet its functions in which it failed to establish the niche (the problem) such as abstracts 5,7,12, and 13.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The steps that are commonly used in the abstracts in move 1 (establishing a territory) are: step 1 (claiming centrality) which it demonstrates the general area of the research that is important, interesting, and relevant, and step 2 (making topic generalization) that function as the presentation of a neutral general statement that establishes territory by emphasizing the completeness of data.

In Move 2 (establishing the niche), the steps that are commonly used are: step 3 (question-raising) which functions as enumerating the queries that were addressed in the exploration of the study and step 4 (continuing the tradition) which functions to extend the idea of the prior research that supports the previous idea that was presented.

While in Move 3 (occupying the niche), the steps that were commonly used are: step 1 (outlining purposes) is evident also in some abstracts, this functioned as to answer the "so what" question and explain in clear language the objectives of the study, step 2 (announcing present research) used as an additional declaration of the purpose of the study in terms of what the research is going to do or accomplish, step 3 (announcing present research) functioned as a niche or avenue to present a brief, general summary of the findings of the study, and step 4 (indicating research article structure) utilized as a concluding statement, stating how the remainder of the study is organized and ended. Hence, the abstracts are not individually consistent of these moves and steps used, the table above is the presentation of the result of whole (20) abstracts.

Nonetheless, there are some steps also that are not utilized in the abstracts namely: step 3 (reviewing topics of previous research) in move 1, where the author reviewed the selected relevant groups of previous research, specifies the important findings of the study and situates the current research study cannot be found in the abstracts. Moreover, step 1 (counter claiming) introduces an opposing viewpoint or perspective or identify a gap in prior research that the researchers believe has weakened or undermined the prevailing argument and step 2 (indicating the gap) is to develop the research problem around a gap or understudied area of the literature in move 2 are not found.

The three moves are found to be useful in the thesis abstracts and serve different communication purposes in writing. For instance, move 1 was used to cite the situation of the research by establishing the territory with the help of its steps like claiming centrality and making topic generalizations. On the other hand, move 2 was used to locate the problem by establishing the niche with the help of the steps such as question-raising and continuing a tradition; and lastly, move 3 was used to anchor the solution by occupying the niche with the help of the steps like outlining purposes, announcing the present study, announcing the principal findings and indicating the article structure. However, some thesis abstracts failed to exemplify the move 2 especially to the abstracts 5,7,12, and 13.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of the study, the researchers arrived at the following conclusions:

1. The absence of move 2 and other steps from the three moves may be attributed to the brevity of the thesis abstracts which were written in a concise form where each abstract mostly consists of one page only.
2. Despite the absence of other move and steps, Swales' CARS Model still fulfill its function commonly to the abstracts 1,2,3,4,6,8,9,10,11,14,15,16,17,18,19, and 20, that is to provide an essential rhetorical structure of discoursal writing.
3. Since the majority of the abstracts utilized all moves, it can be concluded that the thesis abstracts followed the pattern: Situation-Problem-Solution.

4. IMPLICATIONS

The findings would have contributed to a better understanding of why abstracts are important in research since they highlight key points from major sections of the paper. As a result, it must provide sufficient details, precisely and concisely include all of the important details of the research. Thus, using John Swales' CARS model, it is possible to provide an effective abstract that follows a sequential order – moves and steps.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, conclusions and implications of the study, the researchers offered the following recommendations:

1. Teachers and students may use the CARS model as a foundation and basis of writing abstracts of research in the future.
2. Future researchers may use this study as a source to hearten them to conduct quantitative studies to converge with the findings of this study or to see the differences.
3. Future researchers may also try to explore using Swales' CARS Model in analyzing the introduction of theses or dissertations because their length is sufficient for discoursal analysis.

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