

A Contrastive Move-analysis Study of the Abstracts of Humanities and Hard/Medical Sciences Based on Dudley-Evans' Model¹

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Abstract

This study is an attempt to explore the association between one major social class and part of its verbal behavior. This research focuses on analysis of the move structure of the abstracts of articles published in journals. The present study investigated 60 article abstracts written by Iranian university faculty members from humanities, hard science, and medical science faculties. In order to identify the kind and frequency of the moves in article abstracts, the study followed Dudley-Evans' (1989) model. The collected corpus was initially coded by two coders, then the non-parametric Mann-Whitney *U* test was employed to estimate move differences. The results revealed that there were not any significant differences in moves one to five, however there were some significant differences concerning the existence and frequency of the sixth move and its sub-moves in the chosen abstracts written in these three disciplines. The findings of this study can be useful for improvement of writing abstracts by researchers.

In general terms, discourse analysis accounts for global features of text and the organization of ideas in writing. Global features of L2 written discourse, such as discourse moves, organization, and structuring, as well as attendant issues of clarity, explicitness, fluidity, and contents of writing represent broader and more abstract constructs than those commonly examined in analyses of text (Grabe and Kaplan, 1996; Kaplan, 2000). One important concept to be considered in this regard is genre.

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The aim of genre analysis is to recognize the moves and how these moves are recognized in a given genre. So, the move analysis should be on the functional rather than on the formal characteristics of linguistic data and it is a reliable indicator of discourse values in a majority of discourse contexts (Bhatia, 1993). Move distinguishing is an operational question and there is not always a one to one correspondence between formal and functional aspect of language use. It has been seen that a particular formal feature to serve one or more discourse values in different context may be served by two different formal realizations (Dudley-Evans, 1994).

Connor and Mauranen (1999) pointed out that “the identification of moves in a text depends on both the rhetorical purpose of the texts and the division of the text into meaningful units on the basis of linguistic clues, which included discourse markers (connectors and other metatextual signals), marked themes, tense and modality changes, and introduction of new lexical references” (Connor & Mauranen, 1999, p. 52). Explicit text divisions in the personal statement, namely, the use of section boundaries, paragraph divisions, and subheadings, may serve as textual marks for move recognition. As moves serve rhetorical purposes, the introduction of new themes and lexical references can usually imply the start of a new move. In addition, the identification and counting of T units, main clause and any subordinate clause or non-clausal structure attached to or embedded in a sentence, can help to break down the text into moves because this examination can help to locate places for change of topics and themes. The analysis of lexical devices also can help to analyze the moves (Connor & Mauranen, 1999).

Academic research papers consist of different parts such as the abstract, introduction, and literature review. Abstracts are one of the most important parts in research articles because they are the gates to the article, based on which the reader decides to get involved with the article or not. As many scholars have pointed out, article abstracts have become one of the most important genres in academic discourse (Staheli, 1986; Swales, 1990; Salager- Mayer, 1990; Salager-Mayer, 1992). Considering its importance, the study of the structure of the abstracts in research articles written by members of the academic community can be fruitful. Move analysis, as a branch of genre analysis, provides the means for the analysis of the moves of abstracts. Dudley-Evans (1989), by looking at move-structure in introduction to Master of Science dissertations, discovered a six-move structure. According to Porush (1995), although abstracts take up the major part of professional and scientific papers, their study or methodology are not sufficient.

To this end and through a descriptive analytic approach, the researchers in this study aimed to explore the association between one major social class and part of its verbal behavior. This research focused on analysis of the move structure of the abstracts of articles published in journals. The present study investigated 60 article abstracts written by university faculty members from humanities, hard science, and medical science faculties.

The participants in this study consisted of sixty faculty members from Islamic Azad University, who had published articles in academic journals. They were chosen on availability basis. They were all male, except two. The material analyzed in this study was sixty abstracts published in academic journals. Furthermore, the researcher employed Dudley-Evans' Move analysis model (1989). This model consists of six moves, some of which are made up of some sub-moves. The collected corpus was initially coded by two coders, then the non-parametric Mann-Whitney *U*

test was employed to estimate move differences. The results revealed that there were not any significant differences in moves one to five, however there were some significant differences concerning the existence and frequency of the sixth move and its sub-moves in the chosen abstracts.

The general findings of this study reveal that the abstracts written by the scholars of the mentioned faculties followed the recommendations found in the two standards of ISO 214:1976 (en) Documentation and ANSI/NISO Z39.14-1997 (R2009), rather than Dudley-Evans' (1989) or Swales' (1990) models. In other words, the authors usually start their abstracts with a reference to the aim of their articles; they leave out the introduction of the general and specific topic; i.e. finding about the field of study and the general and specific field of research is considered as a responsibility of the readers. Therefore, in this regard, the abstracts follow a more reader-responsible model rather than a writer-responsible model. Furthermore, the niche of research is not among the moves with high frequency in the abstracts. However, there is a tendency to stating the aim of research and briefly describing the procedure carried out. Finally it should be noticed that the procedure is mentioned more clearly in the abstracts written by hard science, and medical science faculty members, rather than by the humanities ones.

Keywords: Discourse Community, Move, Move Analysis, Article Abstracts, Dudley-Evans' model