



al-Burhān

JOURNAL OF QUR'ĀN AND SUNNAH STUDIES

VOLUME 6, NUMBER 2, AUGUST 2022



INTERNATIONAL ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY MALAYSIA

eISSN: 2600-8386

al-Burhān Journal of Qurʾān and Sunnah Studies

AbdulHamid AbuSulayman Kulliyah of Islamic Revealed Knowledge and Human Sciences
International Islamic University Malaysia
Volume 6, Number 2, 2022

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e-ISSN 2600-8386

Published Online by:

IIUM Press, International Islamic University
Malaysia, P.O. Box 10, 50728 Kuala Lumpur,
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Phone (+603) 6421 5014
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Indexing and Abstracting: al-Burhān is currently indexed in and abstracted by MyJurnal and Directory of Open Access Journal (DOAJ).

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Rhetorical Moves and Linguistic Complexity of Abstracts on Theology Articles in Journals on Qurʾanic Studies

Fahimeh Kalbasi*

ABSTRACT: The present study attempts to discuss the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of theology research articles (RAs). The present study is aimed at finding the rhetorical structure of the translated abstract from Persian into English and comparing them with the original written in English and published in internal journals in theology sciences. This paper aims to investigate the rhetorical moves and linguistic complexity of abstracts in limited theological RAs. The researchers randomly chose 100 abstracts of research articles extracted from two Iranian journals of theology, i.e., *Theology and Islamic Sciences of the Qurʾān and Religious Enlightenment* and *Journal of Qurʾanic Interpretation and Language*. Based on the convenience and accessibility of the first journal, only 10 RAs were selected, and another 90 abstracts were drawn from the second corpus. The framework used in this article is Pho's (2008) framework. The analysis was conducted on the rhetorical moves and their linguistic realizations in these selected corpora. It was found that three moves, i.e., Introduction (I), Purpose (P), Discussion (D), were the conventional moves in the abstracts of RAs extracted from the mentioned journal. The frequency of occurrence Introduction (I) move in the corpus was three-time that of Finding (F) and about twice the Method (M) and Discussion (D) moves. The results also suggested that the present simple tense inactive form was the preferred choice to present the rhetorical moves. The other tenses and voices, such as passive and past tense, have a shallow frequency in the selected corpus. Furthermore, the simultaneous occurrence of two agents, i.e., active and passive, was only observed in the Introduction (I) and Discussion (D) moves. These two journals are published by Payame Noor University, which have the same and specific style, and following the instructions is mandatory for the authors of articles. However, by reviewing the articles of both journals and paying attention to the specific admission criteria in the context and related structure, there are obvious differences between the abstracts of articles in terms of applying the writing style and articulating the research method and other related matters, which in addition to the above reasons, also indicate the extent to which the authors of the articles do not pay attention to the research method. Some variations were observed in the introduction unit and language features. The data revealed that the translated abstracts from Persian into English in the theological research articles meet the determined criteria for scientific writing while the original ones often ignore the criteria although they are linguistically superior to the original English ones. With greater awareness of rhetorical moves and linguistic realizations, it is believed that writers can structure their abstracts more naturally to the conventional style used in their fields.

Keywords & Phrases: Theology; linguistic complexity; Qurʾanic studies; Islamic research articles; rhetorical moves.

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Introduction

The authors' native language can influence their writing methods and styles in preparing English research articles. Linguistically speaking, most of the authors are engaged with their native language. The most influential aspects of being engaged with the native language are style, vocabulary, and linguistic similarities. Rhetorical elements used to accomplish a perceivable communicative role in a written or spoken discourse are called "rhetorical moves."¹ These moves can be recognised through different linguistic features, either native or second language. The analysis of moves is considered a genre-based approach employed to characterise the structure of the research articles (RAs). According to Nwogu, move is defined as "a text segment made up of a bundle of linguistic features (lexical meaning, propositional meanings, illocutionary forces, etc.) which give the segment a uniform orientation and signal the content of discourse in it."² More generally, identifying the rhetorical moves and lingual complexity in theological abstracts are methods of focusing the readers' attention from the surface structures of the text to the social and theological aspects of the text used with particular purposes.³

More specifically, the abstract section of the research articles is the part that has been exclusively undergone a move-based analysis in different studies. Because the abstract is a vital and indispensable element of research work that pre-set a gist summary of the research and employed to capture the essence of the whole article, it is highly effective in contributing to the reader pursuing the line of discussion in the RA. Hence, this section of RAs should be well-formed and informative, and organised in the best way.⁴ Furthermore, many journals published in languages other than English require authors to submit an English abstract highlighting the abstract's role and significance.⁵

In addition to the analysis of the rhetorical structure, scrutinizing the linguistic realisations and complexity in RAs abstracts have also been carried out by a large number of researchers since these linguistic elements can be a more excellent reflection of the written genre.⁶ Concerning the verb tense, Cooley and Lewkowicz contended that three

¹ John M. Swales, *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*, *Research Genres* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524827>.

² Kevin Ngozi Nwogu, 'The Medical Research Paper: Structure and Functions', *English for Specific Purposes* 16, no. 2 (1997): 122.

³ Anchalee Wannaruk and Wirada Amnuai, 'A Comparison of Rhetorical Move Structure of Applied Linguistics Research Articles Published in International and National Thai Journals', *RELC Journal* 47, no. 2 (2016): 193–211, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0033688215609230>.

⁴ Ken Hyland and Polly Tse, 'Hooking the Reader: A Corpus Study of Evaluative That in Abstracts', *English for Specific Purposes* 24, no. 2 (2005): 123–39, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ESP.2004.02.002>.

⁵ Rosa Loes, 'On RA Abstracts: From Rhetorical Structure to Thematic Organisation', *English for Specific Purposes* 23, no. 3 (2004): 280–302, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ESP.2003.06.001>.

⁶ Ramin Esfandiari, 'Realization of Rhetorical Moves and Verb Tense Variation in Two Disciplines of Computer Sciences: Artificial Intelligence and Architecture', *International Journal of Language Learning*

moves of Background, Purpose, and Conclusion were realised through the present tense while the past tense presented Methods and Results.⁷ Zhang, Thuc, and Pramoolsook also found that the active voice in the moves was nearly twice the passive voice.⁸ Wannaruk and Amnuai highlighted the significance of rhetorical activities and their linguistics realisations.⁹ They argued that even if a writer is highly proficient and skilled in general English, his/her deficiencies and problems in recognising the generic types can make the task of RAs composition complicated for them, specifically when the writer is a novice non-native language learner who is about to write in English.¹⁰

In recent years, a substantial body of research has been carried out to investigate the rhetorical moves in RAs, some of them emphasised on the particular sections¹¹ and some others explored the whole RA.¹² Despite all research attempts in this respect, there are no research works in which the rhetorical moves and linguistic realisations have been investigated in the abstract of RAs published in journals of theology. The abstracts of the Iranian scholars in theology were analysed to determine how they organised this section of their RAs. The present study was mainly intended to identify the rhetorical moves and their linguistic realisations exerted in the abstracts of a group of theology RAs in Iranian journals.

and Applied Linguistics World 5 (2014): 564–73; Sharifah Hanidar, 'Rhetorical Patterns, Verb Tense, and Voice in Cross Disciplinary Research Article Abstract', *Humaniora* 28, no. 1 (2016): 12–27, <https://doi.org/10.22146/JH.11410>; Pin-Ning Tu and Shih-Ping Wang, 'Corpus-Based Research on Tense Analysis and Rhetorical Structure in Journal Article Abstracts', in *27th Pacific Asia Conference on Language, Information, and Computation (PACLIC 27)*, 2013, 102–7.

⁷ Linda Cooley and Jo Lewkowicz, *Dissertation Writing in Practice : Turning Ideas into Text* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

⁸ Baoya Zhang, Q.B.T. Thuc, and I. Pramoolsook, 'Moves and Linguistic Realizations: English Research Article Abstracts by Vietnamese Agricultural Researchers', *Asian ESP Journal* 8 (2012): 126–49.

⁹ Wannaruk and Amnuai, 'A Comparison of Rhetorical Move Structure of Applied Linguistics Research Articles Published in International and National Thai Journals':

¹⁰ Wirada Amnuai, 'The Textual Organization of the Discussion Sections of Accounting Research Articles', *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 40, no. 2 (2017): 389–94, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2017.07.013>.

¹¹ Mohammad Hossein Keshavarz, Mahmood Reza Atai, and Vahid Barzegar, 'A Contrastive Study of Generic Organization of Research Article Introductions Written by Iranian and Non-Iranian Writers in Applied Linguistics', *Teaching English Language* 1, no. 2 (August 2007): 13–33; Wirada Amnuai and Anchalee Wannaruk, 'Investigating Move Structure of English Applied Linguistics Research Article Discussions Published in International and Thai Journals', *English Language Teaching* 6, no. 2 (2013): 1–13, <https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n2p1>.

¹² Budsaba Kanoksilapatham, 'Writing Scientific Research Articles in Thai and English: Similarities and Differences', *Budsaba Kanoksilapatham Silpakorn University International Journal* 7 (2007): 172–203; Yun Li, 'A Genre Analysis of English and Chinese Research Article Abstracts in Linguistics and Chemistry' (San Diego State University, 2011).

1. Review of Literature

1.1. Rhetorical Analysis

Genre analysis has been considered an important way for text analysis, particularly in English, for specific purposes.¹³ Swales was the first person who used the term “genre analysis” in an ESP context.¹⁴ Bhatia defined “genre analysis” as studying language in the situation. He also emphasised that this kind of analysis can elaborate on the construction and the interpretation of the texts.¹⁵ More specifically, in applied linguistics, such an analysis accounts for the particular organisation and the structural features of texts.¹⁶

Kaplan claimed that the rhetorical pattern or what Swales called “schematic structure” of the exact text in different languages may be different other.¹⁷ So, authors’ native language may potentially influence their ways and styles of writing English research articles. Rhetorical segments that fulfil a comprehensible communicative function in a written or spoken discourse are called “rhetorical moves.”¹⁸ These moves can be recognised through different linguistic features.

“Move analysis” is one of the genre-based approaches for identifying the structural patterns of RAs. This unique form of analysis has become the subject of many recent studies in applied linguistics. Swales defined “move” as a textual unit associated with the writer’s purpose.¹⁹ According to Nwogu, discovering the conventional structure of texts is the primary purpose of move-based analysis.²⁰ Move-based studies have been extensively applied to different genres, significantly research articles (RAs). Several researchers have conducted investigations on different sections of RAs (Abstract, Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion). Some of these studies emphasised specific

¹³ Tony Dudley-Evans, ‘Genre Analysis: An Approach to Text Analysis for ESP’, in *Advances in Written Text Analysis*, ed. Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1994), 233–42, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203422656-17>.

¹⁴ John M. Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*, *English in Academic and Research Settings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

¹⁵ Vijay K Bhatia, ‘Applied Genre Analysis: A Multi-Perspective Model’, *Ibérica* 4 (2002): 3–19.

¹⁶ Caroline Coffine, ‘Theoretical Approaches to Written Language: A TESOL Perspective’, in *Analysing English in a Global Context: A Reader*, ed. Anne Burns and Caroline Coffin (London: Routledge, 2001).

¹⁷ R. Kaplan, ‘Cultural Thought Patterns Revisited.’, in *Writing across Languages Analysis of L2 Text*, ed. U. Connor and R. Kaplan (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1987), 9–21; Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*.

¹⁸ Swales, *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*.

¹⁹ Swales.

²⁰ Nwogu, ‘The Medical Research Paper: Structure and Functions’.

areas of RAs²¹ and some others preferred to analyse the overall structure of RAs.²² Also, the concept of move analysis has been extended to comparing rhetorical moves used in research articles across two languages.²³

1.2. Previous Studies on Rhetorical Moves

The study of the rhetorical structure of RAs has received considerable research interest in recent years. Numerous studies have been conducted in this regard. For example, Can, Karabacak and Qin examined move structures in the abstracts of 50 RAs presented in the ESP journal for two years.²⁴ The sentences were analysed to identify the pattern of rhetorical moves using a five-section scheme. The results revealed that a large portion of scrutinized abstracts provides information on the purpose, methodology, and findings, while in other articles, the moves associated with Introduction and discussions were omitted.

Zand-Moghadam and Meihami both had attempted to investigate the rhetorical moves in abstracts of TEFL master theses in Allameh Tabataba'i University (ATU).²⁵ They extracted 300 abstracts and used Ken Hyland's 2000 rhetorical move framework to analyse them in three-time intervals.²⁶ The findings suggested that the three moves of Purpose, Method, and Product were the most frequent ones in theses written from 1988 to 1997. While in the second- and third-time interval (i.e., 1998-2007 and 2008-2015), it was the "Purpose" which had the most frequently used rhetorical move. In addition, the least frequent rhetorical moves were the "Introduction" and "Conclusion" for the three

²¹ Keshavarz, Atai, and Barzegar, 'A Contrastive Study of Generic Organization of Research Article Introductions Written by Iranian and Non-Iranian Writers in Applied Linguistics'; Matthew Peacock, 'The Structure of the Methods Section in Research Articles across Eight Disciplines', *The Asian ESP Journal* 7, no. 2 (2011): 99–124; Amnuai and Wannaruk, 'Investigating Move Structure of English Applied Linguistics Research Article Discussions Published in International and Thai Journals'.

²² Ali Mohammad Fazilatfar and Zeinab Sadat Naseri, 'Rhetorical Moves in Applied Linguistics Articles and Their Corresponding Iranian Writer Identity', *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 98 (2014): 489–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SBSPRO.2014.03.444>; Kanoksilapatham, 'Writing Scientific Research Articles in Thai and English: Similarities and Differences'.

²³ Chek Kim Loi and Moyra Sweetnam Evans, 'Cultural Differences in the Organization of Research Article Introductions from the Field of Educational Psychology: English and Chinese | Enhanced Reader', *Journal of Pragmatics* 42 (2010): 2814–25; Tatyana Yakhontova, 'Cultural and Disciplinary Variation in Academic Discourse: The Issue of Influencing Factors', *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 5, no. 2 (2006): 153–67, <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JEAP.2006.03.002>.

²⁴ Seden Can, Erkan Karabacak, and Jingjing Qin, 'Structure of Moves in Research Article Abstracts in Applied Linguistics', *Publications* 4, no. 3 (2016): 23, <https://doi.org/10.3390/publications4030023>.

²⁵ Zand Moghadam Amir and Meihami Hussein, 'A Rhetorical Move Analysis Of TEFL Thesis Abstracts: The Case Of Allameh Tabataba'i University', *Issues in Language Teaching (ILT)*, 2016.

²⁶ Ken Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interaction in Academic Writing* (London: Longman, 2000).

intervals. Further, it was found that the ornamental move patterns of thesis abstracts moved from Purpose-Method-Product (P-M-PR) to Introduction-Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion (I-P-M-PR-C).

Zhang and Wannaruk investigated the rhetorical move structure of the method section in a group of RAs adopting Swales' 2004 framework of move analysis.²⁷ For this purpose, a corpus consisting of 120 RAs was used and analysed. The results indicated that the methods section is characterised by structural complexity and full description. In the selected research articles, three frequently used rhetorical moves described the research design, describing data collection and analysis procedures.

Fazilatfar and Naseri explored the dominant movement patterns and subsequent elements of different sections of applied linguistics research articles.²⁸ As a matter of progress, a corpus of 30 research studies was randomly selected from four Iranian linguistics journals. The analysis was conducted based on Phuong Dzung Pho's model of move analysis, and the results revealed that the rhetorical structure of the Iranian papers at the macro-level is relatively similar to the foreign RAs.²⁹ However, the rhetorical moves in various sections of the two groups of RAs are somewhat different.

Amnuai, -based on Hyland's framework-, investigated and compared the rhetorical moves of English RA abstracts of an international corpus and Thai corpus in the field of accounting.³⁰ For this purpose, the abstracts published in international scholarly journals and indexed Thailand-based journals were gathered as the corpus for this study. The similarities and differences were examined in rhetorical moves and linguistic realisations. A considerable difference was found in tenses and voices between the two corpora and the previous studies.

Muangsamai investigated the moves, rhetorical patterns, and linguistic complexity based on Swales' genre analysis research papers published in health and medical science journals.³¹ The corpus of this study was twenty-four articles, one from each weekly issue, which was selected randomly and analysed in terms of content,

²⁷ Baoya Zhang and Anchalee Wannaruk, 'Rhetorical Structure of Education Research Article Methods Sections', *PASAA: Journal of Language Teaching and Learning in Thailand* 51 (2016): 155–84; Swales, *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*.

²⁸ Fazilatfar and Naseri, 'Rhetorical Moves in Applied Linguistics Articles and Their Corresponding Iranian Writer Identity'.

²⁹ Phuong Dzung Pho, 'Research Article Abstracts in Applied Linguistics and Educational Technology: A Study of Linguistic Realizations of Rhetorical Structure and Authorial Stance', *Discourse Studies* 10, no. 2 (April 2008): 231–50, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1461445607087010>.

³⁰ Wirada Amnuai, 'Analyses of Rhetorical Moves and Linguistic Realizations in Accounting Research Article Abstracts Published in International and Thai-Based Journals', *SAGE Open* 9, no. 1 (2019): 1–9, <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018822384>.

³¹ Pornsiri Muangsamai, 'Analysis of Moves, Rhetorical Patterns and Linguistic Features in New Scientist Articles', *Kasetsart Journal of Social Sciences* 39, no. 2 (May 2018): 236–43, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.kjss.2018.03.006>.

categorized, and coded with corresponding descriptions. The obtained results indicate seven obligatory and two optional moves. Further, modals and voice were two frequently occurring linguistic features in the selected articles.

Fauzan, Lubis, and Kurniawan examined rhetorical moves and their linguistic complexity in applied linguistics abstracts in a more recent research study.³² One hundred twelve abstracts from four international journals were selected to be the corpus of this study by using a genre-approach move analysis. In the chosen abstracts, clauses, phrases and sentences were analysed to achieve desired results. The rhetorical moves were examined through a top-down approach, while the linguistic realisation was analysed adopting a bottom-up approach. The findings showed that rhetorical actions could influence the coincidences of linguistic realisations as verb tense, verb type, verb function, and sentence voice. Communicative functions of the moves and steps also influenced lexical density levels typically caused by more complex noun phrases than complex clauses. Most importantly, this research study wants to answer the upcoming questions: 1. What are the moves and their rhetorical patterns used in the abstracts of RAs in the field of theology? 2. What are the linguistic features complexities commonly found in the abstracts of RAs in the field of theology?

There are multiple kinds of research performed on rhetorical moves and the abstraction of the English Language. However, not all research has covered all rhetorical analysis and theology abstracts. However, the researchers in this respect had done their best. There are no research works in which the rhetorical moves and linguistic realisation have been investigated in the abstracts of RAs published in the theology journals. The abstract section of RAs in theology research is considered to determine how theology students formulate this component in their studies. There are some weaknesses in this respect for Rhetorical Analysis in theological works. First, Swales was the first person who used the term 'genre analysis' in his study.³³ He mentioned that 'genre analysis' is an important term for theology students while they attempt to write research in theology. The most crucial weakness about Swales' approach is that the faculty of genre analysis can only be the top section in analysing the theology studies. Swales had provided redundant examples, plots, and anecdotes about genre analysis. Genre analysis is not the only a significant section in theology abstracts. The weakness of previous research studies is ignoring the importance of jargon, exceptional style, denotation, and the connotation in theology abstracts. The students of theology have different understandings and research topics in a specific genre. They consider the denotation and connotation of English words while writing their research abstracts. The denotation is the primary and literal meaning of English words, and connotation is the secondary or deep meaning of English words. Jargon is the particular style or language used by researchers and technicians in a specific

³² Umar Fauzan, Arif Lubis, and Eri Kurniawan, 'Rhetorical Moves and Linguistic Complexity of Research Article Abstracts in International Applied Linguistics Journals for English Reading Materials Development', *Journals for English Reading Material Development* 16 (6 November 2020): 219–47.

³³ Swales, *Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings*.

field of study. For example, the word 'law' in Islamic studies is replaced with 'jurisprudence.' Jurisprudence means the Islamic rules, the presence of Islamic rules.

2. Theoretical Frameworks

Corpus-based approach investigates and compares the existing features in a prototypical assembly of texts of a particular genre. As Baker noted, encoding these texts is done electronically to have more generalizable findings.³⁴ Doing such a process by hand is too demanding on researchers. In other words, a statistical overview of large amounts of the data in question with a more quantitative approach is typical of corpus-based techniques to move analysis.

2.1. Data Collection/Corpus

The required corpus for the present study was 100 RAs abstracts selected from two journals in the field of theology, i.e., *Theology and Islamic Sciences of the Qur'an and Religious Enlightenment* and *Journal of Qur'anic Interpretation and Language*. From the first journal, only ten abstracts were extracted due to the convenience and accessibility of its English version of abstracts in the journal database. Another 90 abstracts were selected from all the issues of the second journal, published from 2012 to 2020.

2.2. Data Analysis

To analyse the selected 100 abstracts in terms of rhetorical moves and linguistic realisations, they were coded based on Pho's move framework, which was adapted from Hyland's five-move pattern.³⁵ This model contains five significant moves, including Introduction, Purpose, Method, Result, and Discussion.

| Abstract Moves Pho (2008) | Setting the Scene for the Current Research | Question Asked | Move Labels along with Abbreviations in the Present Study |
|----------------------------|---|-----------------------------|---|
| Situating the research | Discussing the research | What is known in the field? | Introduction (I) |
| Presenting the research | Stating the purpose of the study, research questions and hypotheses | What is the study about? | Purpose (P) |
| Describing the methodology | Describing the materials, subjects, | How was the research done? | Method (M) |

³⁴ Paul Baker, *Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis, Using Corpora in Discourse Analysis* (London: Continuum, 2006), <https://doi.org/10.5040/9781350933996>.

³⁵ Pho, 'Research Article Abstracts in Applied Linguistics and Educational Technology: A Study of Linguistic Realizations of Rhetorical Structure and Authorial Stance'; Hyland, *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interaction in Academic Writing*.

| | | | |
|--------------------------|--|-------------------------------|----------------|
| | variables, procedures, etc. | | |
| Summarising the findings | Reporting the main results of the study | What did the researcher find? | Findings (F) |
| Discussing the research | Interpreting the results/findings and giving recommendations | What do the results mean? | Discussion (D) |

Table 1: Rhetorical Moves Categories of Abstract Proposed by Pho (2008)

For convenience, the more transparent and short abbreviations, I, P, M, F, and D, were used to indicate each move, as shown in the above table.

2.3. Inter-Coder Reliability

To ensure the reliability of the move coding process, 15 of the corpus abstracts coded previously by the researcher, randomly selected, and were given to be coded by another reviewer once again to run inter-coder reliability to obtain inter-rater reliability indexes. One of the rate providers was the researcher herself, and the other was another MA TEFL student with some years of experience in language teaching. Summarising Alpha (KALPHA) as an appropriate reliability measure was computed using SPSS 19, and the results showed an acceptable and satisfactory index of reliability ($r=.74$) based on Cohen's interpretation.³⁶

3. Analysis and Discussion

The results of the data analysis on the rhetorical moves and the linguistics realisations (i.e., linguistic complexity) of them based on the Pho framework have been presented in the following sections to answer the two research questions of the present study.³⁷

3.1. Rhetorical Moves Occurrence and Patterns

3.1.1. Move Occurrence in Whole Corpus

Abstracts were reviewed carefully one by one, and the occurrence of any single movement was manually counted, and the results are summarised in Table 2 below.

³⁶ Jacob Cohen, *Statistical Power Analysis for the Behavioral Sciences* (New York: Routledge Academic, 1988).

³⁷ Pho, 'Research Article Abstracts in Applied Linguistics and Educational Technology: A Study of Linguistic Realizations of Rhetorical Structure and Authorial Stance'.

| Move | Frequency | Percentage |
|-------------------------|-----------|------------|
| Introduction (I) | 95 | 95% |
| Purpose (P) | 85 | 85% |
| Method (M) | 54 | 55% |
| Findings (F) | 34 | 34% |
| Discussion (D) | 58 | 58% |

Table 2: Frequency of Moves Found in the Abstracts of the Corpora (N=100)

The analysis of the abstracts shows that only 8 (8%) of them encompassed all the predetermined move categories. Hyland reported an even lower percentage (5%) from different fields in this respect. From 100 reviewed articles, 11 (11%) lack at least one move.³⁸ As the above table shows, the most frequently used move types in theology abstracts are Introduction (I), presented in 95% of the abstracts. Due to the nature of the theology field and the dominant topics in this realm of study, the high frequency of this category seems to be a customarily expected result. In many studies in the field of theology, the abstract should contain solid and rich introductory expressions to be informative and motivating enough. Overall, the results indicate that Introduction (I) is a conventional move in theology articles.

The second most frequent move was Purpose (P) which was demonstrated in 85 (85%) selected RAs. The high frequency of purpose in RAs is justifiable because the author needs to provide the readers with some essential hints and key points to convey the study's objectives. Further, Discussion (D) move was the third most frequently occurred category in 58 (58%) of the included theology RAs abstracts. In fact, due to the analytical and interpretative nature of many articles in the theology field, the authors are required to provide some arguments and present some analytical expressions to clarify the overall summary of the findings. The next moves which follow the Discussion category were Method (M) with 54% and Finding (F) with 34% of occurrence in the abstracts of the theology RAs. The high frequency of I, P, and D moves suggests the significance attached to these categories of rhetorical moves by the authors of RAs in the theology field. To sum up, it can be said that the obtained ranking of frequency for the intended activities seems to be reasonable and convenient enough in the RAs abstract written in the realm of theology.

3.2. Move Pattern

The result of reviewing 100 theology RAs abstracts shows more than ten rhetorical patterns in these abstracts; Among them, the movement patterns that occurred in more than five articles have been presented in Table 3 below. As illustrated in the table, the

³⁸ Ken Hyland, 'Graduates' Gratitude: The Generic Structure of Dissertation Acknowledgements', *English for Specific Purposes* 23, no. 3 (2004): 303–24, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(03\)00051-6](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(03)00051-6).

sequential way of I - P - F was the most frequent pattern appearing in 18 (18%) of the articles. The second routine move pattern was I- P- M- D, which occurred in 14 (14%) articles, followed by I - M- P, which was found to have a 12 (12%) frequency in the reviewed abstracts. There were also two unexpected and perhaps unusual movement patterns, i.e., I - D and I - P.

| No | Organisation Pattern | Frequency | Percentage |
|----|----------------------|-----------|------------|
| 1 | I - P- M - F - D | 6 | 6% |
| 2 | I - P-M- F | 12 | 12% |
| 3 | I P M D | 14 | 14% |
| 4 | I - P - F | 16 | 16% |
| 5 | I - D | 9 | 9% |
| 6 | I - M - P | 12 | 12% |
| 8 | P - M - F | 8 | 6% |
| 9 | I - P | 7 | 9% |

Note. I= introduction; P = purpose; M = method; F = Finding; D = Discussion

Table 3: Five Most Frequent Linear Move Patterns Found in the Two Corpora.

However, based on the nature of most studies conducted in this field, the occurrence of these two patterns seems not to be very unexpected. As it is put forward in the previous section, the entire organisation of theology studies is primarily based on the analytical interpretations largely from the Qur'anic verses, which demands resorting to deep and mindful opening sentences and interpretative closing arguments.

3.3. Linguistic Realisations

3.3.1. Frequency of Tenses

As demonstrated in Table 4 below, most theology RAs abstracts were only written using two tenses, i.e., simple present and past tense. However, the present simple tense was the most dominant and frequently utilized tense in developing their RAs abstract.

| Move | Past | | Present | |
|-------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| | <i>F</i> | <i>p</i> | <i>F</i> | <i>P</i> |
| Introduction (I) | 12 | 12% | 88 | 88% |

| | | | | |
|-----------------------|---|----|-----|------|
| Purpose (P) | 3 | 3% | 97 | 97% |
| Method (M) | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100% |
| Findings (F) | 0 | 0 | 100 | 99% |
| Discussion (D) | 0 | 0 | 100 | 100% |

Table 4. Verb Tense Frequency in Each Move in the Selected Corpus

The present simple tense was frequently used in all five moves in the present corpus (i.e., abstracts of theology RAs). The differences of tense usage of these two corpora were in the Purpose and Method moves. As the table suggests, the Method (M), Finding (F), and Discussion (D) move in all 100 reviewed RAs were written totally in the present tense, and there are no cases of past tense in this category. The higher frequency of past tense among the moves is Introduction (I), with 12 (12%) using this tense. The second move category with past tense is Method (M) which only in 3 (3%) RAs possess past tense. There was no past tense used in the Purpose move in the international corpus. Only one international abstract was presented in the past tense form for the Method move. However, several previous research studies (e.g., Zhang et al)³⁹ reported that the past tense was dominant in the Method move. However, the regulation of each journal and the authors' awareness of tense usage might be other factors in these differences.

3.4. Frequency of Voices

As Table 5 shows, the active voice was the foremost preference of the authors in composing the abstracts of the RAs in theology. In fact, in all five rhetorical moves, the active voice was the dominant and preferred one. The most frequent occurrence of this voice was in Method (M) and Finding (F) moves, with 95 and 94 active voices respectively. The highest frequency of the passive voice also belongs to the Purpose (P) move (33%) followed by Introduction (I) (11%) and Discussion (D) (10%).

| Move | Passive | Active | Active + Passive |
|-------------------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------|
| Introduction (I) | 11 (11%) | 82 (82%) | 7 (7%) |
| Purpose (P) | 33 (33%) | 67 (65%) | --- |
| Method (M) | 5 (5%) | 95 (95%) | --- |

³⁹ Zhang, Thuc, and Pramoolsook, 'Moves and Linguistic Realizations: English Research Article Abstracts by Vietnamese Agricultural Researchers'.

| | | | |
|-----------------------|----------|----------|--------|
| Findings (F) | 5 (5%) | 94 (94%) | 1 (1%) |
| Discussion (D) | 10 (10%) | 87 (87%) | 3 (3%) |

Table 5: Summary of Voice Used in the Two Datasets

The findings of this study regarding the frequencies of active and passive voice seem to be consistent with those of Zhang et al.'s study⁴⁰ in which they revealed that the active agent was twice as frequent as the passive voice, and it appeared as the dominant voice in all the five moves. On the other hand, the finding in this section is not in line with the obtained results by Tu and Wang, who discovered that the passive form was frequently used to report findings in applied linguistics RAs abstracts.⁴¹ Sharifah Hanidar in 2016 also demonstrated that presenting research procedures and announcing determination was written in a passive voice.⁴² Accordingly, it can be concluded that a large number of authors tend to write their abstracts instantly rather than using an impersonalized style.

Conclusion

This study was intended to identify the rhetorical structure used in the RAs abstracts written in the field of theology. The rhetorical analysis, which encompassed move analysis and its linguistic realisation, was conducted based on Pho's 2008 framework. Three moves, i.e., Introduction (I), Purpose (P), Discussion (D) were the conventional moves in the abstracts of RAs extracted from two journals in the theology field (i.e., *Theology and Islamic Sciences of the Qur'an and Religious Enlightenment* and *Journal of Qur'anic Interpretation and Language*). The frequency of occurrence Introduction (I) move in the corpus was three-time that of Finding (F) and about twice the Method (M) and Discussion (D) moves. It was also found that the present simple tense inactive form was the preferred and favoured choice utilized to present the moves concerning the tense and voice. The other tenses and representatives, such as passive and past tenses, have a shallow frequency in the selected corpus. A mixture of active and passive agents appeared in the Introduction (I) and Discussion (D) moves. The findings would help in the pedagogical practice. The RA genre structures can develop teaching materials and be a reference source for genre-related writing classes. As we know, novice non-native writers or graduate students, particularly those with less English experience, face serious problems writing English abstracts for conference presentations or publications. With the complete understanding of discoursal and grammatical features, it is believed that they will be able to compose their abstracts effectively. The findings from this genre-based approach will provide researchers, especially those in the field of theology, with some knowledge of the genre of RA abstracts. With greater awareness of rhetorical moves and linguistic realisations, it is believed that

⁴⁰ Zhang, Thuc, and Pramoolsook.

⁴¹ Tu and Wang, 'Corpus-Based Research on Tense Analysis and Rhetorical Structure in Journal Article Abstracts'.

⁴² Hanidar, 'Rhetorical Patterns, Verb Tense, and Voice in Cross Disciplinary Research Article Abstract'.

authors can formulate their abstracts more naturally to the conventional pattern used in their respective fields.

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