



## Research Article

© 2023 Mokhtar Hamadouche.

This is an open access article licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>)

Received: 30 August 2023 / Accepted: 23 October 2023 / Published: 5 November 2023

# A Rhetorical Move Analysis of Algerian Academics' Research Article Abstracts

Mokhtar Hamadouche

Associate professor,  
Oum El Bouaghi University,  
Algeria

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.36941/mjss-2023-0033>

## Abstract

The research article abstract, generally considered as a miniature representation of the whole article, is of paramount significance and serves as a selection, screening and an indexing tool. Despite its importance, this part-genre has not received adequate academic interest in the Algerian context. Accordingly, the present paper examines 43 abstracts from articles published in applied linguistics by Algerian academics in terms of conventional rhetorical organization. The main purpose of the study is to investigate the academics' commitment to any of the widely accepted models, and to explore their specific traits and idiosyncrasies while writing an abstract for their research papers. The abstracts have been quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed with reference to Bhatia's (1993), Hyland's (2000) and Santos's (1996) generic models. The findings show some deviations at the level of generic structure, function and content of moves. The predominant pattern of writing abstracts is found to be purpose-methodology-findings where these moves (2, 3 & 4) are more recurrent than 'introduction' and 'conclusion' (moves 1 and 5 respectively). Furthermore, despite the textual existence of certain moves, they do not correspond to their actual rhetorical role. It has also been observed that one-third of the abstracts display an unconventional move of reviewing the literature that does not belong in a research article abstract. These tendencies could be related to the lack of research and instruction on the different part-genres of a research article, and academic writing in general in Algerian higher education institutions.

**Keywords:** abstract, academic writing, moves, move pattern, research article

## 1. Introduction

The research article (RA) published in a peer-reviewed scientific journal remains the most widely accepted vehicle for scholarly communication (APA, 2020; El-Dakhs, 2020; Van Bonn & Swales 2007). With the increasing number of journals striving to meet the demands of researchers and academic institutions, more articles are published today than ever, whether on paper, online or in both modes. Writing an RA requires writing an abstract. In fact, the American Psychological Association considers the abstract as the most important paragraph in the RA which provides a concise and comprehensive summary of its contents (APA, 2020).

The research article abstract (RAA) provides a brief synopsis of the text by outlining its major points and providing central information to attract the prospective readers' attention. To use

Vintzileos and Ananth's (2010) words, the abstract is "the 'mirror' of the full manuscript" (p. 344 e2); it is a central section in any academic paper that draws attention to the value of the work. RAAs need to be dense with information but also readable, well organized, brief and self-contained. They "constitute the gateway that leads readers to take up an article, journal to select contributions, or organisers of conferences to accept or reject papers" (Lorés, 2004, p. 281). An abstract serves for more than providing the gist of the article or offering a representation of it. Thus, the RAA should be written in a way that persuades readers that the article is worth reading by "highlighting important information and framing the article that it precedes, but it does so in such a way as to encourage further examination and draw the reader into the more detailed exposition" (Harmer, 2000, p. 64). In a sense, an abstract for an article is becoming like a trailer for a movie; both the abstract and trailer seek to promote the works they represent.

The RAA is therefore considered as the first most important part of a manuscript that entices the reader to continue reading the whole paper. In other words, the RAA is characterized by specificity, clarity, accuracy and straight-forwardness to convince the reader about the worth of the extended text. Since the RA is a form of a planned research paper, the abstract is the part that describes the main steps and contributions of that article. Having to do all that in a restricted number of words, makes even experienced and widely published authors usually have to produce several versions before they are satisfied that they have summarized their longer texts with maximum efficiency, clarity, and economy" (Swales & Feak, 2009, p. xiii).

Writing an abstract can be a challenging task for many researchers who aspire to publish their research works in the form of an RA in a peer-reviewed journal. The lack of knowledge and mastery of the generic structure of the RAA may stand in the way of having the article published. Proficiency in academic writing does not always lead to success in writing an RAA. Appropriate use of academic language and jargon is absolutely essential for writing effective abstracts as it is for any other academic genre or part-genre, but there are other aspects that contribute to the success or failure of an abstract. Abstracts need to be concise, hence limited by numbers of words, yet clear and dense with information. They should also be structured according to certain rhetorical moves that may vary across disciplines, languages, institutions and genres.

Despite the academic contributions of papers published by Algerian journals, authors seem to write their abstracts paying no attention to rhetorical and conventional organization. According to Drid (2020), writers must conform to the norms that their readers expect as appropriate in order to achieve academic success. Furthermore, research in the area is almost inexistent, and even recognized Algerian journals do not have any specific requirements for RAAs. Another thing is the absence of genre pedagogy in higher education curricula. Such considerations make the abstract a section in the article that is written arbitrarily based on one's common practice or through making recourse to already published papers that might not embody the best model. The present paper investigates a sample of RAAs written by Algerian authors in the field of applied linguistics published in the *Human Sciences Journal*, and compares them to the acknowledged models of generic structure. The main purpose is to gauge scholars' traits and to uncover the common rhetorical deviations that have negative impacts on the readability of papers and on academics' participation in scholarly work.

## 2. Literature Review

Advances in genre-specific studies allowed researchers to examine the RA as a definite genre as well as its constituent sections. As a fundamental part-genre of an RA, the RAA is attracting substantial attention lately. Abstracts are often studied in terms of rhetorical and structural functions by analyzing large samples and establishing original models of moves (Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Santos, 1996); analyzing the commitment of selected samples to the common models (Al-Shujairi et al., 2016; Drid, 2020; Lorés, 2004; Tseng, 2011); comparing and contrasting abstracts written in different languages (Alharbi & Swales, 2011; Van Bonn & Swales 2007), disciplines (Darabad, 2016; Pho, 2008; Suntara & Usaha, 2013), by different populations such as native speakers and foreign

language learners (Amnuai, 2019; El-Dakhs, 2020); or through combining more than one of the aforementioned approaches.

Since Graetz's (1985) seminal work on the properties of RAAs, a wealth of research has followed focusing on the linguistic and rhetorical features of abstracts. Some research works were more significant than others and resulted in developing their own models. Generally, models contain four to five moves in a pre-determined order and the most influential are Bhatia's (1993), Santos's (1996), and Hyland's (2000). Bhatia's model distinguishes four main moves, namely 'introducing purpose', 'describing methodology', 'summarizing results' and 'presenting conclusions'. Table 1 below summarizes the model including the moves, their functions and the implied question of each move.

**Table 1:** Bhatia's Model of RAAs

	Moves	Functions	Implied Questions
Move 1	Introducing Purpose	An indication of the author's intention, thesis or hypothesis. It may also include the goals or objectives of research or the problem that the author wishes to tackle.	What the author did
Move 2	Describing Methodology	An indication of the experimental design, including information on the data, procedures or method(s) used and scope.	How the author did it
Move 3	Summarizing Results	The author mentions his/her observations and findings and also suggests solutions to the problem, if any, posed in the first move.	What the author found
Move 4	Presenting Conclusions	Devoted to interpreting results and drawing inferences. It typically includes some indication of the implications and applications of the present findings.	What the author concluded

**Source:** Adopted from Bhatia (1993, pp. 147-149)

Santos (1996), for his part, identifies five moves and a number of sub-moves that authors can use any or all to compose each move. Santos (1996) and Bhatia (1993) have three moves in common. 'Describing methodology' and 'summarizing results' are called the same in both models. The last move for Bhatia is 'presenting conclusions', whereas for Santos it is 'discussing the research'; however, they revolve around the same idea that is drawing conclusions and suggesting recommendations and implications. The difference between Bhatia's and Santos's models is that the latter distinguishes between introducing the research and presenting its purpose.

**Table 2:** Santos's Model of RAAs

	Moves	Sub-moves
Move 1	Situating the research	1.a. Stating current knowledge <i>and/or</i> 1.b. Citing previous research <i>and/or</i> 1.c. Extended previous research <i>and/or</i> 2. Stating a problem
Move 2	Presenting the research	1.a. Indicating main features <i>and/or</i> 1.b. Indicating main purpose <i>and/or</i> 2. Hypothesis raising
Move 3	Describing the methodology	
Move 4	Summarizing the results	
Move 5	Discussing the research	1. Drawing conclusions <i>and/or</i> 2. Giving recommendations

**Source:** Santos (1996, p. 485)

Acknowledging the significance of Bhatia's (1993) model of four moves, Hyland (2000), similar to Santos (1996), separates the author's purpose from the introduction. According to him, 'introduction' and 'purpose' are two different moves. While the introduction advances the general context of the research and what motivated it, the purpose emphasizes the intention behind the research and indicates the thesis or hypothesis (Hyland, 2000).

**Table 3:** Hyland's Model of RAAs

	Moves	Functions
Move 1	Introduction	Establishes context of the paper and motivates the research or discussion.
Move 2	Purpose	Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper.
Move 3	Method	Provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc.
Move 4	Product	States main findings or results, the argument, or what was accomplished.
Move 5	Conclusion	Interprets or extends results beyond scope of paper, draws inferences, points to applications or wider implications.

**Source:** Hyalnd (2000, p. 67)

Swales and Feak (2009) do not have their own unique model, they rather suggest a number of options for each move based on the prevailing models and the most identifiable rhetorical moves in the literature.

**Table 4:** Swales and Feak's Model of Potential Moves in RAAs

	Typical Label	Implied Questions
Move 1	Background/introduction/situation	what do we know about the topic?
Move 2	Present research/purpose	what is this study about?
Move 3	Methods/materials/subjects/procedures	how was it done?
Move 4	Results/findings	what was discovered?
Move 5	Discussion/conclusion/significance	what do the findings mean?

**Source:** Swales and Feak (2009, p. 5)

The aforementioned models gained a wide recognition in the literature and have been used as a reference to investigate the rhetorical moves of RAAs in various disciplines and contexts. Tseng (2011), for instance, adopted Santos's (1996) five-move pattern to examine 90 RAAs from three international applied linguistics journals published between 2005 and 2007. The analysis demonstrated that move 2 (presenting the research), move 3 (describing the methodology) and move 4 (summarizing the results) occurred in over 90% of the abstracts, whereas the first move (situating the research) and the last one (discussing the research) took place in 41% and 74% of the abstracts respectively. Supporting Santos's (1996) findings, Tseng (2011) concluded that moves 2, 3 and 4, and to a lesser degree move 5, are considered obligatory by authors of applied linguistics articles, while move 1 is considered optional.

In a similar study, Al-Shujairi et al. (2016) explored the rhetorical moves of 60 RAAs published between 2011 and 2015 in *Pertanika Journal of Social Science and Humanities*. Though the articles were published in two disciplines, applied linguistics and teaching English as a second language, they were analyzed together with focus on their adherence to Hyland's (2000) model, rather than the analysis of differences across disciplines. Comparing their results to Santos's (2006) benchmark, Al-Shujairi et al. (2016) observed that "some rhetorical moves appeared to have higher incidence of occurrences than

the others” (p. 384) in a sense that moves 2, 3 and 4 were manifested in 80% of the abstracts, while moves 1 and 5 appeared in just over half of the abstracts. They explained the low incidence of move 1 by the claim that it does not support the direct approach of stating what the paper is about in the introductory line. For move 5, their explanation is that authors consider it unnecessary since it only restates what has already been mentioned.

Studying how different languages have different patterns for writing RAAs, Swales in collaboration with Van Bonn and Alharbi investigated rhetorical variations across French and English, and Arabic and English respectively. Van Bonn and Swales (2007) studied not only the moves, but also the functions and structures of 30 abstracts from a French journal and 30 abstracts from an English journal, both in the general field of the language sciences. A second comparison was made between 30 paired French and English abstracts from a bilingual journal published by a group of EAP/ESP experts in France. As far as the monolingual journals are concerned, one of the main differences between the two sets of abstracts was noticed in the way research was situated. In over 80% of the English abstracts, the authors situated their research by answering “why this research”, occasionally citing related research works. On the other hand, only around 45% of French abstracts explained the rationale behind conducting the research. Van Bonn and Swales (2007) identified other stylistic differences in the two corpora, for instance the use of metadiscoursal statements, first-person pronouns and transition words. These differences were attributed to cultural expectations of what constitutes appropriate formal academic style in a given academic community. For the bilingual abstracts, it was evidenced that 24 of the 30 pairs looked like translations which, according to the authors, adds relatively little about the rhetorical differences between English and French as far as writing an abstract is concerned.

Alharbi and Swales (2011) examined the move structures of 28 Arabic and English paired abstracts written by native-Arabic speaking academics from language sciences articles published in three journals. The study examined how Arab academics organized their abstracts in Arabic and English. The results showed that nearly half of the Arabic abstracts and almost 60% of the English abstracts were written in only two moves, typically ‘background’ and ‘findings’. Additionally, only 22% of the Arabic abstracts and 17% of the English ones contained four or five moves. Other aspects of variation between the pairs of abstracts include promotional features and evaluative language, the degree of hedging and the use of pronouns.

Analyzing the similarities and differences of RAAs across disciplines has also attracted considerable attention. Pho (2008) investigated the rhetorical structures of 40 articles published in English by international students in applied linguistics and educational technology. The findings revealed that differences between the two disciplines were more apparent in the other sections of RAs, namely introduction, methodology, results, and conclusion rather than the abstract. Regarding the abstracts, all of them had moves 2, 3 and 4 of Santos’s (1996) model. In contrast, move 1 appeared in about half of the abstracts and move 5 in a little more than that. More abstracts in educational technology situated research than in applied linguistics and the opposite for results discussion. It was also observed that moves with two different textual functions were slightly more common in applied linguistics abstracts. Pho (2008) concluded that the reason behind similarities in the structure of abstracts from the two disciplines is their empirical nature. In contrast, the minor differences were related to the fact that applied linguistics and educational technology belong to different fields, namely social sciences and computer science.

Starting from the assumption that disciplines vary in the structure of abstracts, Suntara and Usaha (2013) explored the rhetorical moves of abstracts in the closely linked fields of linguistics and applied linguistics. They investigated 200 RAs published between 2009 and 2012 according to Hyland’s analytical framework and identified the most common pattern in the two disciplines as purpose-method-product-conclusion. The introduction move was considered optional in both fields; the conclusion move, however, was “optional in the field of linguistics but was conventional in the field of applied linguistics” (Suntara & Usaha, 2013, p. 97). According to them, the importance of the conclusion in applied linguistics articles’ abstracts comes from the practice-driven nature of

discipline. This usually requires some implications and applications of the research findings as opposed to linguistics research that commonly aims at developing theories and accounting for linguistic phenomena.

Darabad (2016), for his part, selected 63 abstracts published in recognized international applied linguistics, applied mathematics and applied chemistry journals (21 in each field) and analyzed their rhetorical structure based on Hyland's (2000) model of introduction-purpose-method-product-conclusion. The move analysis revealed a considerable degree of conformity among the three sub-corpora. The first shared feature is that 'introduction' was the least frequent move in abstracts of the three disciplines and that the common pattern was consistent with Bhatia's (1993) four moves model. Furthermore, 'purpose' and 'product' were identified in almost all the abstracts making them, according to Darabad (2016), mandatory constituents in the respective disciplines. The major difference was that applied linguistics abstracts were the most consistent in terms of moves and included no instances of move repetition as opposed to the other disciplines. Moreover, mixed or hybrid moves were more common in applied linguistics and applied chemistry abstracts, generally combining the 'purpose' and 'method' moves. Finally, some moves had a fewer frequency of occurrence in certain disciplines compared to the others, for instance, 'introduction' and 'method' in applied mathematics, and 'conclusion' in applied chemistry. Darabad (2016) referred that to disciplinary variances concluding that moves have different roles in different disciplines.

Based on the assumption that abstracts written by native speakers differ from those written by non-native speakers with respect to rhetorical and linguistic features, Amnuai (2019) examined 60 RAAs written in English in the field of accounting by Thai and international authors based on Hyland's (2000) framework. Though the intention was to compare native and non-native English speakers' tendencies while writing an abstract, the corpora did not exactly reflect that. Amnuai (2019) analyzed abstracts of articles published in international journals without checking the nationality of authors if they are native speakers or not, and compared them to abstracts of articles published in Thailand-based journals. Results revealed a similarity in the frequency of three moves, namely 'purpose', 'method' and 'product'. The 'introduction' and 'conclusion' appeared in more articles of the international corpus than the Thai corpus, twice as high in fact. Amnuai (2019) considered the relative negligence of the two moves by Thai scholars as a sign of inadequate rhetorical knowledge and awareness.

In a closely related study, El-Dakhs (2020) collected a total of 400 RAAs from Arab and international journals in the field of education and examined the structural differences between Arabic and English. Same as Amnuai (2019), El-Dakhs (2020) did nothing to check the identity of authors and considered that factor irrelevant as long as their articles have been accepted for publication in prestigious journals which means that the papers, and their abstracts included, conform to the norms expected by the disciplinary community. As to the results, it was noticed that the English abstracts were more committed to the conventional moves compared to their Arabic counterparts. Besides, some differences have been described at the level of moves length across the two corpora. In interpreting the results, El-Dakhs (2020) associated such variances in abstract moves to sociocultural factors and rhetorical traditions, and highlighted the importance of cross-linguistic/cultural awareness of differences for Arab scholars to achieve publishable work that meets the international standards.

As far as the Algerian context is concerned, the introduction part-genre, whether of RAs or dissertations, seem to attract most of the attention in genre studies (e.g., Aggoun & Ghouar, 2018; Bensalem, 2016; Slaim & Mostari, 2019; Zerka, 2017). Studies on RAAs, however, are scarce to say the least. The most influential in exploring Algerian researchers' rhetorical practices and organizational patters in writing abstracts is Drid's (2020) work.

With the intention of examining move units of RAAs, Drid (2020) investigated 42 abstracts of papers written in English by Algerian researchers and published in *Al-Athar*, a bi-annual peer-reviewed journal associated to Kasdi Merbah University, Ouargla (Algeria). Her research was focused on identifying the moves Algerian authors use to construct abstracts and compare them to the

conventional move structure in English language studies, particularly to Hyland's (2000) model. The main findings of the study indicate that not a single abstract incorporated all five moves together and that the predominant pattern was that of introduction-purpose where the other moves were inconsistently employed. More detailed results show that 21.24% of the examined papers were accepted for publication even without an abstract. Only 18.18% of the corpus entailed the use of four moves, while the remaining majority of texts used less. 'Purpose' was the predominant move in the corpus and appeared in almost all abstracts (96.96%). 'Method', 'product' and 'conclusion' had lower rates of frequency (42.42%, 24.24%, and 24.24% respectively). Drid (2020) concluded that the texts exhibited "marked deficiencies in the generic structure" (p. 192) with reference to the frequency of moves, their inconsistency in committing to their purposes as well as the use of additional non-conventional moves, and highlighted "the importance of raising genre awareness among EFL writers ... as a means to enhance the quality of published discourse" (p. 175).

### 3. This Study

The present inquiry analyzes the rhetorical moves of 43 abstracts from articles written by Algerian academics and published in *Human Sciences Journal*, a bi-annual, peer-reviewed and indexed academic journal associated to the University of Constantine 1. The sample of the study comprises all articles published in the field of applied linguistics between 2017 and 2022. The journal was chosen among the many others available at the Algerian Scientific Journal Platform (ASJP) because it publishes articles in the English language in a wide range of areas since it was created in 1990. Furthermore, it is an international journal; it publishes for Algerian and non-Algerian academics regardless to their institutional affiliations.

Concerning the model of analysis, the present investigation does not draw on a single model per se, it rather strives to identify the common patterns that Algerian authors use to structure their abstracts with reference to all the aforementioned models (Bhatia's, 1993; Santos's, 1996; Hyland's 2000). In other words, the focus is on identifying the existence or absence and the characteristics of the common moves irrespective to the precise label or other specificities in the three main models, but rather taking into consideration all the options for each move as put forward by Swales and Feak (2009).

### 4. Findings and Discussion

#### 4.1 Analysis of Moves

The analysis of the corpus reveals some interesting findings about the move pattern that Algerian academics follow to write an abstract for a research article in applied linguistics. To begin with, none of the abstracts include all the five moves. Fifteen abstracts (34.88%) are written in four moves, and six abstracts (13.95%) in two moves. One abstract was accepted for publication with one move, and another with no moves at all, just a theoretical discussion of the broad area under investigation. On the other hand, a three-move structure has been identified in 20 texts (46.51%) making it the most recurrent pattern. Except for one text that follows an unusual combination (moves 1, 2 & 5), 19 abstracts (44.18%) are composed of moves 2, 3 and 4 or according to Hyland's (2000) model, for instance, purpose-method-product. These findings corroborate several research works (e.g., Al-Shujairi et al., 2016; Darabad, 2016; Pho, 2008; Santos, 1996; Tseng, 2011) vis-à-vis the most common pattern for writing an abstract in applied linguistics and that move 1 (introduction) and move 5 (conclusion) are rather considered optional. Table 5 below summarizes the move patterns in all 43 abstracts.

Table 5: Frequency of Occurrence of Moves

Abstract	Move1	Move2	Move3	Move4	Move5	Literature	Number of moves
01	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
02	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
03	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
04	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
05	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
06	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
07	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
08	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
09	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
10	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
11	+	+	-	-	-	+	2
12	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
13	+	+	-	-	-	-	2
14	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
15	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
16	+	+	-	-	+	-	3
17	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
18	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
19	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
20	-	+	+	+	+	+	4
21	-	+	-	-	+	+	2
22	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
23	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
24	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
25	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
26	+	+	-	-	-	+	2
27	-	+	+	+	+	+	4
28	-	+	+	+	+	-	4
29	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
30	+	+	-	-	-	-	2
31	-	+	+	+	+	+	4
32	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
33	+	+	+	+	-	+	4
34	-	+	+	-	-	-	2
35	+	+	+	-	+	-	4
36	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
37	-	+	+	+	-	-	3
38	-	+	-	-	-	+	1
39	+	+	+	+	-	-	4
40	-	+	+	+	+	+	4
41	-	+	+	+	+	-	4
42	-	+	+	+	-	+	3
43	-	+	+	+	-	-	3

These findings and the possibility of accepting certain moves as optional contradicts the literature that emphasizes the importance and functions of every single move. Bhatia's (1993) is the only model with 4 moves; nonetheless, it encompasses a move for 'presenting conclusions'. Move 1 of the same model (introducing purpose) can serve as an indication of the thesis, hypothesis, goals, objectives. It can also serve as a statement of the author's intention or problem they wish to tackle. Such elements represent the aim behind the work but also include some introduction or background to the paper. In the other models, 'introduction' and 'purpose' are considered as a separate move, whereas in Bhatia's, moves 1 and 2 are rather combined. Eventually, talking about obligatory and optional moves seems to be inconvenient. It makes more sense to talk about the standards of writing an abstract and the deviations noticed in certain samples.

One of the reasons that all the moves of an abstract are considered necessary in the literature is that the latter can serve as a stand-alone text. Without any of the moves, the reader may find it difficult to understand the relevance, significance or context of a certain research. In this respect, move 1 provides the reader with some background, introduction or a controversy before presenting the main aim of the study as it can serve for promoting the importance of the topic. Move 5, which is an interpretation of the findings, is also considered essential. A reader without expertise in the area of

research may fail in drawing the right interpretations of the findings or in grasping the significance of the research. It is, therefore, the duty of the author to end the abstract with an adequate interpretation of the findings based on their aims and methodologies, or with practical recommendations derived from the practical investigation. In fact, these 'opening' and 'closing' moves are becoming more and more important in today's increasing competition to get one's paper published and to subsequently attract readers (Hyland, as cited in Swales & Feak, 2009).

Until research provides conclusive evidence on the reasons behind such tendencies in writing an abstract in applied linguistics, it could be interpreted in two possibilities. The first is that disciplinary requirements determine the number of moves. That being the case, what can be said about abstracts written in four or five moves? Does this mean that they are redundant and communicate more information than needed? The other possibility is that academics are not aware about the conventions of this part-genre despite the rich literature, and they have developed faulty habits by following inadequate examples.

If abstracts of three moves are rather generally accepted, less than that is absolutely not. In the present study's corpus, 6 texts are composed of only two moves. Four of them discuss 'introduction' and 'purpose', one 'purpose' and 'methodology', and one 'introduction' and 'conclusion' with nothing in between. Two abstracts include even less than two moves. One abstract is written in one move, which is 'purpose'; whereas the other has no conventional moves but some theoretical discussions of the field of study. While a three-move pattern may provide to some extent the necessary information to understand the gist of an article, less than that is not enough and would never reflect the value of the paper or its contributions.

It is true that the present article reports more favorable results compared to when articles used to be published without an abstract in some journals as found by Drid (2020); however, this area of research requires more attention and formal research to identify Algerian academics' traits while writing an RAA in an extensive and comprehensive manner. Now all Algerian journals require an abstract in the language of the article and another in English if the article is written in a different language. Yet, other than the necessity of an abstract and its word limitations, no further guidelines are communicated to either authors or reviewers. All articles in all journals in Algeria, when submitted, evaluated and published through the Algerian Scientific Journal Platform (ASJP). When a reviewer accesses the platform to review an article, they will find the article in a downloadable format in addition to a checklist pertaining to the novelty of the article, the type of contributions (theoretical or practical), the quality of writing, etc., but no reference is made to the requirements of an abstract or any other part-genre (for instance, introduction, literature review, discussion, etc.).

Another finding regarding the move pattern of the selected abstracts is the recurrence of a non-conventional move that embodies the discussion of the literature or some theoretical aspects related to the topic of research. At times when not all the conventional moves are covered, not even those widely considered as obligatory, authors define the variables, insist on their importance or pertinence, or even trace their historical development. The literature review is found in more than one-third of the corpus (34.88%). This move -if it is to be considered so- occurs even more than move 1 (32.55%) and move 5 (20.93%). It is worth mentioning that it is inconsistently placed at the beginning, middle or end of the abstracts. The following is an example of this non-conventional move as exhibited in one of the texts:

- Over the last fifty years or thereabouts, there has been an upsurge in SL/FL rhetoric studies that have given rise to a panoply of theories and approaches that have contributed and still contribute to a better teaching and learning of writing [move 1]. This paper aims at offering an account of the ingenious methods to teach writing [move 2]. In actual fact, such theoretical frameworks draw heavily upon the various learning processes which were put forward all along the twentieth century, viz. behaviorism (habit formation) and cognitivism (cognitive science). What truly characterized the evolution of such spectrum is the shift from focusing on the final product to focusing on the composing processes. Indeed, the shift was from a focus on syntactic maturity and grammatical accuracy at the sentence level, to a

focus on the different rhetorical functions at the discourse level (RAA 11).

As the nature of scholarly writing varies across disciplines, it also does across socio-linguistic and cultural contexts. According to Alharbi and Swales (2011), several languages, including Arabic, prefer “a greater preponderance of abstracts generalities” (p. 70) as compared to English. The need for rationalizing the research by presenting a theoretical discussion may be attributed to the authors’ cultural background and first language transfer. Though the abstract part-genre, along with the other academic part-genres, should meet the universal expectations, academics exhibit their local rhetorical traditions in the texts they write (Kramsch & Thorne, 2002). The desire to participate in discourse communities should be met by scholars’ accommodation to the rhetorical style associated to the English language as a global means of academic communications while alleviating cultural differences in favor of a professional-academic culture (Clyne, 1987; Martin, 2003).

## 5. Move Specifications

### 5.1 Move 1

The main aim of move 1 is to open the abstract by providing background, introduction or situation. In other words, the function of this move is to answer the question of ‘what do we know about the topic’ before the current research (Swales & Feak, 2009). Despite its importance, it appears in only 14 abstracts which is 32.55% of the corpus. Further than the fact that less than one-third of the texts comprise this move, a number of authors are observed to be too general or too brief in introducing their papers. For instance, RAA 24 starts with the following sentence: “Many researchers make it evident that culture and language and intertwined.” The article in question is an investigation of the usefulness of incorporating learners’ own culture in the teaching of English as a foreign language. As a matter of fact, this one-sentence introductory move is vague. The article is about one of the strategies of teaching foreign culture/language, not about the language-culture relationship. Therefore, it would have been more convenient to discuss some recent orientations/controversies in culture teaching, state some of the most effective approaches to teaching culture, or briefly introduce the specific method inspected in the article. Another example to illustrate this tendency is taken from RAA 6: “Collocations are an inherent and indispensable part of the language continuum.” This article describes a sample of Algerian EFL students’ mastery of verb + noun lexical collocations. Again, there could be a number of alternatives to introduce the specific topic of investigation rather than just a broad statement about the general area of interest.

Initially, 20 abstracts were found to contain move 1. After a more focused analysis, 6 were identified as a theoretical discussion irrelevant to the purpose of the respective articles and were therefore not counted. Out the 14 left, 5 are a one-sentence general statement like the examples cited above. Eventually, move 1 is not only neglected as an opening move, it is also, generally, inadequately written.

### 5.2 Move 2

This move is part of all abstracts except one (97.67%) and the opening move in 46.51% of them. Two main patterns are identified when it comes to this move. The first one is indicating the article’s main purpose or the author’s intention such as: “This research aim at investigating whether the implementation of cooperative learning (CL) activities ... will have a positive effect on pupils’ English language proficiency ...” (RAA 28), or “This study is an attempt to highlight the role working memory capacity plays in developing language learners’ oral proficiency ...” (RAA 29). The other pattern involves advancing a research action like: “The present study investigates the teaching of critical thinking (CT) in the Algerian secondary school EFL classes ...” (RAA 2), or “This study investigates explicit and implicit methods of vocabulary instruction in an Algerian EFL context; namely l’ENS Assia Djebar of Constantine ...” (RAA 10).

Though in the majority of texts the authors presentation of purpose correspond to the formal layout and function of the move, some discrepancies are noticed. In 11.60% of the abstracts, authors have failed in indicating that the associated studies are empirical and in specifying their orientations:

- "This study investigates explicit and implicit methods of vocabulary instruction in an Algerian EFL context" (RAA 10).
- "This paper reports on the outcomes of a study that investigates the lecturing mode at the English Department, Oum El Bouaghi University, Algeria" (RAA 35).

Two other types of deviation are detected in other abstracts. The first is the inclusion of a reader-based purpose, not a research-based purpose. In RAA 5, for instance, the author discusses how their paper can be beneficial for their potential readers by saying: "The present study aims at motivating Algerian university students and fostering their autonomy to use e-learning effectively." The second is the excessiveness in stating the detailed aims as indicated in the extract below:

- In the present study, the author will attempt to: (1) account for some of Piaget's basic concepts within the context of general learning, namely action, adaptation (through the interplay of two processes of assimilation and accommodation) and equilibration, (2) show how these may be used in the area of language learning and communication, (3) show how affective influences have some bearing in action, and (4) suggest and discuss some pedagogical implications with respect to interest, personality, learning style, streaming, and learning strategies along with their teachability (RAA 13).

### 5.3 Move 3

Despite the nature of applied linguistics as a problem-driven discipline and the fact that all the selected articles are empirical investigations, 18.60% of the articles do not discuss their research methodologies. Methodology is the move with widest number of options or sub-moves that may include design, procedures, scope, participants, etc. The dominant pattern for the corpus under study is research tools and participants (48.48%), most of the time in a very brief manner like in the following two examples:

- "Tools of data collection consist of an analysis of course curricula, in addition to a questionnaire administered to 14 teachers at the English Department, ENSC" (RAA 10).
- "To achieve these aims, a questionnaire was administered to 35 first-year students" (RAA 15).

Apart from this, the rest of the abstracts follow no consistent pattern. For instance, in three abstracts, the methodology move consists of tools, participants, and hypothesis. Further patterns are tools-hypothesis (two abstracts), participants-treatment-hypothesis (two abstracts), etc. Other anomalies relative to move 3 entail the absence of the context and the lack of precision. In abstracts 17, 34 and 41, no research context is mentioned neither in the methodology move -where it should be- nor anywhere else in the abstract. For other abstracts, move 3 is simply a broad description of the research design or a specific detail of the methodology that is insufficient on its own.

- "A descriptive quantitative study has been carried out using a teachers' questionnaire as a tool for collecting data" (RAA 39).
- "A systematic comparison, then, is carried out between the two morphological systems." (RAA 40).

### 5.4 Move 4

Move 4 has a place in 76.74% of the texts, as the second most persistent after move 2 (97.67%). After analyzing the content of this move, it is observed that the ways findings are presented do not meet the required rhetorical standards. Out of the 34 abstracts that discuss the results of their practical investigations, only five provide pertinent numerical data along with appropriate interpretations and reflections on the research outcomes. On the other hand, the majority of attempts to discuss the findings are superficial statements without any numerical values or statistical reference such as: "It

was revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between the study variables” (RAA 3) or: “The results show that the written compositions of the experimental group are highly improved compared to the control group” (RAA 23) and examples like these are many. This recurrent pattern is far from being adequate, especially that in 28 articles, this move is the last in the abstract without further interpretations or conclusions.

### 5.5 Move 5

Move 5 in an abstract is generally devoted to interpreting the findings, drawing inferences, pointing to implications or recommendations and extending the results beyond the scope of the paper (Bhatia 1993; Hyland 2000; Santos 1996; Swales & Feak, 2009). Regarding the corpus under investigation, only 9 out of the 43 abstracts include this move with a percentage of 20.93%. Besides, none of the attempts served any of the aforementioned functions clearly and effectively. On the whole, this move embodies an assertion of some broad recommendations, a restatement of the main findings, or a declaration that the paper entails some recommendations like in the examples below:

- “As the effect of the combined fluency instructional strategies is higher than the effect of a fluency instruction working individually, we recommend the Fluency Oriented Reading Instruction as the most effective literacy program for EFL learners” (RAA 16).
- “Some practical suggestions are made to use the phonetic transcript in a much more practical way covering both the productive and receptive oral skills” (RAA 21).
- “Techniques are eventually suggested to make lectures a true learning experience” (RAA 35).
- “It is noteworthy that the results of this study are majorly applicable in the fields of second language acquisition, translation and machine translation” (RAA 40).

## 6. Conclusion

This small-scale study has shown that none of the abstracts of applied linguistics papers display all the rhetorical moves as recognized by the traditionally accepted models, namely Hyland’s (2000) and Santos’s (1996). Though 15 abstracts comprise four moves (34.88% of the corpus), only six of them conform to Bhatia’s (1993) model. By the same token, 46.51% of the texts are constructed in three moves, and 18.61% of them in two moves or less. Considering that several studies distinguish some moves to be obligatory and others to be conventional or optional (e.g., Al-Shujairi et al., 2016; Suntara & Usaha, 2013; Tseng, 2011), the majority of the abstracts (76.74%) analyzed in the present study comply with the rhetorical structure commonly accepted in the area by having at least the three so called obligatory moves of ‘purpose’, ‘methodology’ and ‘findings’. It has also been observed that in certain occasions, moves have failed to fulfil their rhetorical function. Instead of describing the immediate purpose, methodology, results or recommendations; scholars simply provide vague statements that can fit in any research work or even discuss irrelevant theoretical aspects.

Eventually, it is recommended that further research be conducted in the area to have a clearer picture about Algerian scholars’ tendencies and deficiencies while writing in an academic context. The rhetorical differences across Algerians first language/culture and English with its associated culture(s) are worth investigating. Oftentimes, rhetorical deviations come from the transfer of written discourse conventions that are shaped by a different cultural context from the target one (Connor, 1996; Hamadouche, 2013). Likewise, specialists in EAP and genre studies are invited to elaborate academic writing courses in order to prepare graduate students for research and publication and compensate for the lack of knowledge with regard to scholarly genres. Academic institutions and journals, on the other hand, should encourage senior researchers to prepare manuals and templates to unify and standardize the different academic contributions in order to meet the international norms.

## References

- Aggoun, W., & Ghouar, A. (2018). A Comparative Genre Analysis of Introduction Between National and International Journals: Case of Applied Linguistics Research Articles. *Human and Social Sciences Journal*, 19(1), 385-410. <https://www.asjp.cerist.dz/en/article/55178>
- Alharbi, L. M., & Swales, J. M. (2011). Arabic and English Abstracts in Bilingual Language Science Journals: Same or Different? *Languages in Contrast*, 11(1), 70-86. <https://doi.org/10.1075/lic.11.1.06alh>
- Amnuai, W. (2019). Analyses of Rhetorical Moves and Linguistic Realizations in Accounting Research Article Abstracts Published in International and Thai-Based Journals. *SAGE Open*, 9(1), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244018822384>
- Al-Shujairi, Y. B. J., Ya'u, M. S., & Buba, J. A. (2016). Roles of Moves, Tenses, and Metadiscourse in the Abstract of an Acceptable Research Article. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 379-386. <https://doi.org/DOI:10.5901/mjss.2016.v7n2s1p379>
- APA. (2020). *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (7th ed.). American Psychological Association.
- Bensalem, I. (2016). *Beginnings across Cultures: A Contrastive Genre Analysis of English Native and Nonnative Speakers' MA Theses General Introductions* [Master's thesis, University of Oum El Bouaghi]. <http://bib.univ-ueb.dz:8080/jspui/handle/123456789/3489>
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing Genre: Language Use in Professional Settings*. Routledge.
- Clyne, M. (1987). Cultural Differences in the Organization of Academic Texts. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 11(2), 211-247. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(87\)90196-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(87)90196-2)
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive Rhetoric: Cross-cultural Aspects of Second-language Writing*. Cambridge University Press.
- Darabad, A. M. (2016). Move Analysis of Research Article Abstracts: A Cross-Disciplinary Study. *International Journal of Linguistics*, 8(2), 125-140. <https://doi.org/10.5296/ijl.v8i2.9379>
- Drid, T. (2020). A Genre-Based Study of Algerian EFL Writers' Academic Texts: Move Structure in Research Article Abstracts. In E.Y. El-Sadig & T. Drid (Eds.), *Teaching Academic Writing as a Discipline-Specific Skill in Higher Education* (pp. 175-198). IGI Global.
- El-Dakhs, D.A.S. (2020). Are Arabic and English Research Article Abstracts Different? Rhetorical Structure and Interaction in Focus. *The Asian ESP Journal* 16(5,1), 6-32. Retrieved from <https://www.asian-esp-journal.com/volume-16-issue-5-1-october-2020/>
- Graetz, N. (1985). Teaching EFL Students to Extract Structural Information from Abstracts. In J.M. Ulijn & A.K. Pugh (Eds.) *Reading for Professional Purposes: Methods and Materials in Teaching Language* (pp. 123-135). ACCO.
- Hamadouche, M. (2013). Intercultural Studies in the Arab World from a Contrastive Rhetoric Perspective. *Arab World English Journal*, [special issue on translation, 2], 181-188.
- Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary Discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. Longman.
- Kramsch, C. & Thorne, S. (2002). Foreign Language Learning as Global Communicative Practice. In D. Block & D. Cameron (Eds.), *Globalization and Language Teaching* (pp. 83-100). Routledge.
- Lorés, R. (2004). On RA Abstracts: From Rhetorical Structure to Thematic Organisation. *English for Specific Purposes*, 23(3), 280-302. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2003.06.001>
- Martin, P. M. (2003). A genre Analysis of English and Spanish Research Paper Abstracts in Experimental Social Sciences. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(1), 25-43. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906\(01\)00033-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0889-4906(01)00033-3)
- Pho, P.D. (2008). How can Learning about the Structure of Research Articles Help International Students? Conference Proceedings of the 19th ISANA International Education Conference, 2-5 December 2008, ISANA International Education Association. Retrieved from [http://isana.proceedings.com.au/docs/2008/paper\\_Dzung.pdf](http://isana.proceedings.com.au/docs/2008/paper_Dzung.pdf)
- Santos, M. B. D. (1996). The Textual Organization of Research Paper Abstracts in Applied Linguistics. *Text*, 16(4), 481-499. <https://doi.org/10.1515/text.1.1996.16.4.481>
- Slaim, S., & Mostari, H. A. (2019). Rhetorical Structure of Economics Research Articles' Introductions. *Revue des Lettres et Sciences Sociales*, 16(3), 262-270. <http://dspace.univ-setif2.dz/xmlui/handle/123456789/1397>
- Suntara, W., & Usaha, S. (2013). Research Article Abstracts in Two Related Disciplines: Rhetorical Variation between Linguistics and Applied Linguistics. *English Language Teaching*, 6(2), 84-99. <http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v6n2p84>
- Swales, J.M. & Feak, C.B. (2009). *Abstracts and the Writing of Abstracts*. The University of Michigan Press.
- Tseng, F. (2011). Analyses of Move Structure and Verb Tense of Research Article Abstracts in Applied Linguistics Journals. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 1(2), 27-39. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v1n2p27>

- Van Bonn, S., & Swales, J. M. (2007). English and French Journal Abstracts in the Language Sciences: Three Exploratory Studies. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 6, 93-108. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2007.04.001>
- Vintzileos, A.M., & Ananth, C.V. (2010). How to Write and Publish an Original Research Article. *American Journal of Obstetrics & Gynecology*, 202(4), 344 e1-6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajog.2009.06.038>
- Zerka, H. (2018). A Contrastive Genre Analysis Study of Dissertation Introductions Written by Literature Postgraduates of Bejaia University and Natives [Magister's thesis, University of Tizi-Ouzou]. <https://www.ummo.dz/dspace/handle/ummo/1697>