

A Genre Analysis of Research Article Abstracts in Forensic Linguistics

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Abstract

As a key genre in the academic discourse community, research articles (RA) have enjoyed great popularity over the years. A key component of the RA is the RA abstract. Its essence is seen in its objective of giving an overview of the study. Given the dearth of genre analysis in the Forensic Linguistics discipline, the study aimed at exploring the move structure and lexicogrammatical features of RA abstracts published in Forensic Linguistics. Adopting Hyland's five-move model for analysing abstracts, the study randomly sampled ninety (90) RA abstracts from three different Forensic Linguistics journals. Guided by Hüttner's classification model, the study identified the Purpose move as an obligatory move with 100%. It was revealed that the abstracts follow the semi-linear move sequence, i.e., M1>M2>M3>M4, which was the preferred pattern. The highest textual space was allocated to the Introduction move, and the average number of words in the abstract was 264. With the linguistic realisation of the moves, the present verb tense was preferred, occurring frequently in the Introduction, Purpose, Product and Conclusion moves. Adjunct adverbials were found to dominate the Introduction move, while disjunct adverbials never occurred in any of the moves. The study has insightful implications for pedagogy, knowledge in the field of Forensic linguistics, and further research.

Keywords: abstract, academic discourse, forensic linguistics, genre studies, research articles

INTRODUCTION

Research articles (hereinafter, RA) have been a main source of sharing knowledge and building a discourse community (Bonsu & Afful, 2022). Holtz (2011) traces the existence of RA from over 350 years, accounting for the number of words, dense use of references, and division into sections. Melander (1998) argues that RA do not belong to the same genre irrespective of the language they are written since the diction sometimes determines the choice of genre. Swales (1990) states that RA has become a genre which most journals outline some requirements and policies to maintain a suitable standard among all the articles. Swales and Feak (2009) note that abstracts of RA were introduced in the 1960s in the medical discourse community. It has grown to become a major focus in academic writing (Pho, 2008). The aim has been to report the results of a scientific investigation (Biber & Conrad, 2009). Bhatia (1993) explains that a RA abstract is “a description or factual summary of much longer report, and is

meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full article” (p. 78). Salager-Meyer (1990) and Santos (1996) share similar ideas pertaining to the function of the RA abstract. Hyland (2000) adds that the main function of the RA abstracts is to highlight the salient information and present the main findings of the work.

Indeed, the usefulness of RA abstracts cannot be underestimated. For example, Alhuqbani (2013) reveals that, after the title of a RA, most readers pay attention to abstracts. This is because, through the abstract, authors can persuade an audience to read their entire work and establish themselves as qualified members of a discourse community (Hyland, 2000; Martin-Martin, 2005; Swales, 2004). It represents an associated text which settles the fate of a RA (Bazerman, 1984; Hyland, 2004). Hyland (2004) asserts that RA abstracts make a research work unique, while providing a summary of the research. While Bonsu and Afful (2022) contend that the abstract advertises the entire study, Hyland (2000) hints that the abstract subjects the research and the author(s) to scrutiny. In this regard, the relevance placed on RA abstracts makes them almost impossible to be ignored in RA (Swales, 1990, 2004).

Regarding RA abstracts as a genre, their generic structure and lexicogrammatical features have been studied in various disciplines such as Medicine (Salager-Meyer, 1992; Skelton, 1994), Wildlife Behaviour and Conservation Biology (Samraj, 2002), Language Education (Imsa-ard, 2021), Biostatistics (Bonsu & Afful, 2022), among several others. While Applied Linguistics is itself a broad term incorporating specific identifiable subfields such as Corpus Linguistics, Lexicography, Language Testing, Forensic Linguistics, among others, the focus of most researchers has been on the generality of Applied Linguistics as a branch of Linguistics, but scarcely on any of its specific subfields as mentioned above. As an interesting subfield of Applied Linguistics, Forensic Linguistics (hereinafter, FL) has not enjoyed considerable scholarly attention regarding RA abstracts. Presently, there are no genre studies conducted on FL RA abstracts. This is quite surprising because considering the technicality of the discipline, as well as the sensitivity of the matters (mostly criminal in nature) necessitating Forensic studies, researchers ought to have been interested in the structure of abstracts of RA written in that field, and the linguistic choices employed therein. The research contributes to the growing scholarship of Genre Studies while addressing the dearth of research in the identified field. With these concerns, the study has two main objectives, which are to:

1. conduct a move analysis of RA abstracts published in Forensic Linguistics; and
2. identify the lexicogrammatical features that characterize the moves in the abstracts.

From the objectives, the Genre theory is adopted as a framework for this research. As far as Genre Studies is concerned, a number of approaches (or schools) have been developed over the years for analysing genres. In genre literature, the three most popular ones among them are English for Specific Purposes (ESP), Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), and New Rhetoric (Afful, 2005; Afful & Kyei, 2020; Bonsu, 2021a). But these are not the only models. As knowledge in genre theory keeps enlarging, there have been other theories (Critical Genre Approach, the Corpus-Based Genre Approach and Cognitive Genre Approach) (Lin et al., 2020) which have also been useful in the wider milieu of genre studies. Admittedly, the popularity of the first three set of approaches supersedes that of the much newer approaches. In line with the objectives of the study, the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approach is employed as the theoretical framework, as it will be more easily applicable to the genre the study seeks to analyse.

As a linguistic discipline, Genre Studies falls under applied linguistics, and is generally an enquiry into contextual use of language, the linguistic choices of which is discipline-specifically defined. Swales and Feak (2009) define a genre as “a type of text or discourse designed to achieve a set of communicative purposes” (p. 1). The typicality of any genre as

being designed to achieve a specific communicative purpose is emphasised by Swales (1990), who, in his definition, described genre as “a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes” (p. 58). From a schematic viewpoint, Swales (1990) further described the communicative purpose of genre as typically achieved by the use of different rhetorical units—which he calls “moves”—key in ESP. The purpose of each move, according to him, is achieved with smaller moves, which he calls “stages”, and Bhatia (1993) refers to as “steps”. In the view of Li (2017), steps and moves function in an orderly manner, such that each step’s function works toward fulfilling the larger purpose of a move, and each move works towards achieving the larger communicative purpose of a genre.

After Swales’s seminal move-structure works (Swales 1981, 1990) and other scholars’ (Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2000) work also contributed significantly to the popularity of the ESP school. While Swales advocated a four-move (Swales, 1981) and a revised three-move (the CARS model) (Swales, 1990) structures for writing RA introductions, Bhatia (1993) adopted them to propose a four-move structure: introducing purpose (Move 1); describing methodology (Move 2); summarizing the results (Move 3); presenting conclusions (Move 4). Shifting the genre from RA introductions to RA abstracts, Hyland (2000) proposed the final model in the ESP, which was a five-move model consisting of Introduction (M1), Purpose (M2), Methodology (M3), Product (M4), and Conclusion (M5). With the same objective of analysing RA abstracts, In Hyland’s (2000) study of abstracts, he proposed a five-move model which is highly commended by El-Dakhs (2018) given the study’s comprehensiveness, verifiability, reliability and easy-to-apply approach. His model has been a leading one in analysing RA abstracts (Agbaglo & Fiadzomor, 2021; Lee, 2017; Saidi & Talebi, 2021). Hyland’s model is employed in this study.

As an academic genre, RA abstracts have been explored quite exhaustively (Suntara & Usaha, 2013; Al-Khasawneh, 2017; Gustina, 2020; Agbaglo & Fiadzomor, 2021; Sukhapabsuk, 2021; Saidi & Talebi, 2021). Employing Hyland’s (2000) five-move framework to identify the rhetorical structure of some selected corpus, Al-Khasawneh (2017) used a total of twenty abstracts from two journals, namely, *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, and *The Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics* to identify the rhetorical structure of the selected corpus. His findings revealed that the Purpose move (M2), the Method move (M3), and the Product move (M4) were the most frequently-occurring moves in the abstracts written by both native and non-native speakers of English, with the Introduction (M1) and the conclusion (M5) moves occurring less frequently. It was obvious in his findings, therefore, that not all authors follow the conventional structure of abstracts.

Darabad (2016) also performed an interdisciplinary move analysis of RA abstracts using 63 RA abstracts from Applied Linguistics, Applied Mathematics, and Applied Chemistry. His findings show that the three sets of abstracts show a reasonable degree of agreement with Hyland’s (2000) five-move model. However, Darabad found that, in addition to the most infrequent introductory moves, method moves appear to be less valued in Applied Mathematics, and the Conclusion move in Applied Chemistry is also unpopular. Darabad’s results show that not all disciplines strictly follow all the moves of Hyland (2000) to create their RA abstracts. Contrastively, Suntara and Usaha (2013) report a four-move with M2>M3>M4>M5. The purpose, method, and product were obligatory moves in their study. Similarly, El-Dakhs (2018) identifies a frequent four-move pattern same as Suntara and Usaha (2013) which was M2>M3>M4>M5.

In another study by Saidi and Talebi (2021), they explored the constituent moves and move patterns of RA abstracts published in two journals. The Purpose, Method and Product moves were the most frequent in the two corpora. Not quite different, Agbaglo and Fiadzomor (2021) analysed 100 RA abstracts published in TESOL Quarterly. While they identified the

Purpose and Product moves as obligatory, a five-move sequence of M1>M2>M3>M4>M5 was frequent. Concurrently, Sukhapabsuk's (2021) application of Hyland's (2000) model to analyse 100 RA abstracts identified a preferred three-move sequence as M2>M3>M4 where the Purpose move occurred frequently.

These and several other studies have popularised literature in RA abstract genres in Applied Linguistics, especially in language teaching. Searching keenly but not having found any studies on RA abstracts in such a key subfield of Applied Linguistics (Forensic Linguistics), this study seeks to be the first to tap this interesting yet unexplored field, and analyse the generic structure and lexicogrammatical features that characterise the moves.

METHOD

Research Design and Source of Data

The research adopts a qualitative research design. The qualitative research, which is within the interpretivist paradigm offers in-depth understanding to social constructions for meaning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Aside from adopting the textual analysis approach to identify the schematic structure of the data, the qualitative research was mainly used to map the analysis of the lexicogrammatical features and documenting protocols of documenting and ensuring validity in the data.

The data that were used in this study comprised ninety (90) abstracts extracted from research articles downloaded from three prestigious journals in Forensic Linguistics. Ninety (90) abstracts were acquired from each of the three journals. The journals are International Journal of Forensic Linguistics, International Journal of Law, Language and Discourse, and Journal of Language and Law. These journals were chosen because of their prestige in the field of Forensic Linguistics. Additionally, the published articles have been double-blind reviewed to contribute to existing knowledge. The currency (chosen between January 2020 and April 2022) in the dataset adds to the choice of these journals as well.

Analytical Framework

This study uses Hyland's model for analysing research article abstracts which has been popularized in the genre literature. The model is chosen based on its comprehensiveness and identification of the moves inherent in the abstracts (Bonsu & Afful, 2022; El-Dakhs, 2018). The moves and their communicative purposes are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Hyland's Framework for Analysing Abstracts

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

Source: Adapted from Bonsu and Afful (2022)

Additionally, while the identification of the move is important, determining their status is also significant to justify their necessity in the abstracts. The status of the moves is identified based on their frequency which is also aided by Hüttner's (2010) model. The model provides an in-depth classification for the status of the moves as compared to other models from scholars such as Swales (1990) and Hyland (2000). The percentage of occurrence and status of the moves are presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Determining the Status of Moves

Percentage of Occurrence	Status
90% - 100%	Obligatory
50% - 89%	Core
30% - 49%	Ambiguous
1% - 29%	Optional

Source: Hüttner (2010)

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis procedure of the abstracts was facilitated by the analytical framework adopted. The journals were coded based on the initials of the content words; i.e., IJFL (International Journal of Forensic Linguistics), IJLLD (International Journal of Law, Language and Discourse), and JLL (Journal of Language and Law). After this procedure, RA abstracts from IJFL were tagged as IJFL1, IJFL2, IJFL3 to the last number. Same approach was adopted for the remaining journals. The researchers then undertook a textual analysis in the identification of the moves and their sequencing. For the textual space, the researchers enhanced the process by copying the sections of the moves into a different Microsoft Word document for the software to provide the word count. For accuracy in the data, the researchers exempted repeated words from the count. The percentage of the textual space for each move was calculated against the total occurrence of the moves in the abstracts. The results were approximated to the nearest number.

On the analysis of the lexicogrammatical features, the researchers focused on adverbials and tense in the abstracts. For the adverbials, the researchers considered adjunct and disjuncts and tabulated their occurrence in relation to each of moves and analysed their functions in the abstracts. That said, on the tense analysis, the researcher excluded auxiliary verbs and paid attention to the lexical verbs. The past and present tense forms were identified and discussed in relation to their occurrence in the moves. The analysis of the tense was highly influenced by Tseng's (2011) model which features each move. Most importantly, after the analysis, the researchers analysed the data independently to confirm the schematic structure and lexicogrammatical features. This helped to achieve inter-rater reliability. While minimal corrections were made, the researchers factored their comments into the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

As indicated in the methodology section of this paper, Hyland's (2000) model for analysing abstracts and Hüttner's (2010) classificatory model for determining the status of moves facilitated the analysis and discussion. The results and discussion follow the research objectives by first presenting the schematic structure (that is, the frequency, sequencing and textual space of the moves), and second, analysing the lexicogrammatical features characterizing the moves.

Frequency of the Moves

The present research explores the frequency of moves of the analysed abstracts in Forensic Linguistics. With a total of ninety (90) abstracts analysed, the results of the occurrence of the moves are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3. Frequency of the Moves

Moves	Frequency (Percentage)	Status of Move
Introduction	75 (83.3%)	Core
Purpose	90 (100%)	Obligatory
Methods	78 (86.7%)	Core
Product	54 (60%)	Core
Conclusion	42 (46.7%)	Ambiguous

The study reports a five-move structure in the abstracts following an introduction, purpose, methods, product, and conclusion. It is interesting that other researchers also report a five-move structure in their analysis of abstracts (Agbaglo & Fiadzomor, 2021; Ahmed, 2015; Bonsu & Afful, 2022; Fryer, 2012). Table 1 reveals that the Purpose move is the most frequent with a 100% occurrence achieving an obligatory status. With a percentage of 86.7%, 83.3%, and 60%, the Methods, Introduction and Product moves were core respectively. The Conclusion move was however ambiguous. In this regard, the researchers emphasize the exemplariness of the Purpose move in the abstracts.

Move 1 - Introduction

From Hyland's (2000) model, the first move is the introduction which establishes the background of the research, the problem to be addressed, or perhaps, the niche to be occupied (Swales, 1990). Within the first move, authors incorporate the objectives and research questions of the study. In Table 3, the Introduction move achieved an 83.3% frequency as a core move. Illustrations are given with Extract 1 and 2.

Extract 1

In spite of the plethora of possibilities offered by Corpus Linguistics to the study of legal English, the research devoted to the study of this English variety based on this discipline is not as fruitful as that dedicated to other branches of ESP. (JLL 6)

Extract 2

Many researchers do their research related to Kurt Cobain's suicide note from Psychology, Public Health or media point of views, but it is limited research related to Forensic Linguistics (FL) and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). (IJFL 8)

From Extracts 1 and 2, some background is provided in the introduction. In Extract 1, the information presented identifies problem in the scholarship of Forensic Linguistics that needs to be addressed. Similar can be said for Extract 2 where a dearth of research in an area is identified. Generally, there is an orientation of readers towards what is being done in the project undertaken (Bonsu & Afful, 2022).

Move 2 - Purpose

Move 2 is the Purpose of the research which outlines the intention or specific aim of the research. It discusses what the research hopes to achieve after its conduct. It presents some

novelty in the conduct of the research. Sometimes, a connection is built with the Purpose move of the present research to other previous studies which establishes a network of literature. From Table 3, the Purpose move achieved 100% occurrence establishing it as an obligatory move. In this regard, it is an exemplar of the abstracts in Forensic Linguistics. Extracts 3 and 4 are textual instances of this move.

Extract 3

This exploratory study examines Arab lawyers' awareness of the work of FLs and gauges their perceptions towards the use of forensic linguistic evidence and its admissibility in courts in Arab countries. (IJLLD 9)

Extract 4

The article aims to provide a survey of key theoretical and methodological issues in the field of veracity evaluation from the linguistic point of view – a currently popular field where fast results are expected and a lot of publicity is to be gained. (JLL 26)

Hyland (2000) asserts that the Purpose move provides the intention of the research conducted. Extracts 3 and 4 presents instances of the Purpose move in the data. Saidi and Talebi (2021) identified two forms of writing the Purpose move in the abstract: the purposive and descriptive forms. From the extracts in this section, the Purpose moves were written in the descriptive forms using expressions such as “the exploratory study examines...” and “the article aims to...”. The findings corroborate with Li (2017) and Agbaglo and Fiazomor (2021).

Move 3 - Method

The Method move fleshes out the research design, approach, data collection and analysis, and analytical frameworks. It is through the Method move that authors indicate the procedures and processes they went through for the conduct of their study using empirical study. As a core move, it had the second-highest occurrence in the frequency. Instances of the Method move are presented in Extract 5 and 6.

Extract 5

Illustrating these points, I use the dissenting opinion of Judge Weeramantry in the Nuclear Weapons case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and international criminal law. (JLL 10)

Extract 6

The research method used in this study used the Forensic audio method. However, in this study, researchers only focus on identifying pitch and formants in the data to be analyzed. In addition, the data was descriptive analysis with the presentation of data in the form of numerical tables and graphs. (IJFL 7)

From Extract 5 and 6, the researchers use disciplinary specific methods in their study. That is, while in Extract 5 the researcher draws on legal cases as data for his analysis, in Extract 6, the researchers use the Praat tool to analyse the pitch and formants. They further elaborate on the analysis procedures adopted. The present study deduces that the Method move is very typical in the abstract. This follows Pho's (2008) assertion that the thrust of a research will be

hollow without the Method move. The findings concur with Agbaglo and Fiadzomor (2021) who identified the Method move as core in the analysis.

Move 4 - Product

Hyland (2000) identifies Move 4 of abstracts as the ‘Product’ move. Swales and Feak (2004) conventionalises this move as the ‘Results’. It is at the results that researchers present the discussion of their data analysis and in an effort to point out what they hoped to achieve or otherwise. Empirical researches are incomplete without the results (Bonsu & Afful, 2022). With a 60% of occurrence, it was a core move. Extract 8 exemplifies this move.

Extract 7

In this study, it was revealed that public policies are used in the online news articles as an extension of the 5Ws and H of the story. This study also revealed that although public policy related news articles have similar dominant presentation styles, it can be noted that they also have differences.
(IJLLD 15)

From Extract 7, the results of the studies conducted by the researchers were informed by the purpose of the study. Nonetheless, primarily, they report what was achieved as stated by Hyland (2000). In line with Imsa-ard (2021) and Fryer (2012) studies, this present study found the importance of the Product move in the abstracts analysed.

Move 5 - Conclusion

The Conclusion move had the least frequency in the analysis (46.7%). Although the Conclusion move in this study was ambiguous, it, however reports and extends the findings of the research beyond its scope. Additionally, inferences are drawn and implications are provided for practice, theory, and further research.

Extract 8

The research concludes with the underlying idea that the transformation of the system of law and, especially, the field of punishments from affecting primarily the body to affecting primarily the mind requires reconsideration and, in such instances as that of a reprimand, rehabilitation of the overall linguistic performativity of law and its socio-holistic educational role.
(IJLLD 30)

Extract 9

I conclude with some reflections on law and language more generally and propose themes for further research and offer practical suggestions for a more pluralistic knowledge production in international law. (JLL 24)

The conclusions of these abstract offered insights to practice and further research. Their recommendations are discipline specific drawing on legal lexemes such as ‘system of law’, ‘reprimand’, ‘law’ and ‘international law’. The next section of the schematic structure analysis is on the sequencing of the moves.

Sequencing of the Moves

Sequencing of moves constitute an important part of the schematic structure of a genre. From the analysis of the abstracts, the study presents the identified sequencing types available in the abstracts. The move sequence and frequency of occurrence are hierarchically presented in Table 4. The patterns are further illustrated under the sequences.

Table 4. Sequencing of the Moves

Move Sequence	Frequency (Percentage)
<i>5-move sequence</i>	18 (20)
1>2>3>4>5	15
2>1>3>4>5	3
<i>4-move sequence</i>	42 (46.7)
2>3>4>5	9
1>2>3>4	18
2>1>3>5	6
1>2>4>3	3
1>2>3>2	3
1>2>3>5	3
<i>3-move sequence</i>	24 (26.7)
2>1>3	3
1>2>3	9
1>3>2	3
2>3>4	3
2>4>5	3
1>2>5	3
<i>2-move sequence</i>	6 (6.6)
1>2	6
Total	90 (100%)

Regarding the sequencing of the moves, Table 4 illustrates four different kinds of sequencing patterns each with sub-configurations. Generally, the four-move sequence was the preferred move sequence with a 46.7% occurrence in the abstract. Specifically, the semi-linear sequencing pattern, 1>2>3>4 was identified to be the most occurring patterning. The next frequent pattern was the three-move sequence (26.7%) and the five-move sequence (20%). The instances in the five-move sequence were completely linear and non-linear. The two-move sequence had the least occurrence in the study. From the analysis, the researchers infer that the four-move sequence is preferred given the nature of the discipline being related to the legal discourse. The findings from this study, however, contrast other studies by Saidi and Talebi (2021), Fryer (2012), and Agbaglo and Fiadzomor (2021). That notwithstanding, the findings corroborate generally with El-Dakhs (2018) and Suntara and Usaha (2013) on their identification of a preferred four-move sequence, but deviates on 1>2>3>4 as a typical pattern. A textual instance is provided in Extract 11. The next portion of the schematic analysis is on textual space.

Textual Space

In this paper, the textual space considers the number of words allocated to each move in the RA abstract. The space allocated to a move determines its significance in the abstract. The results are presented in Table 5.

Table 5. Textual Space for each Move

Moves	Textual Space	Average No. of Words in a Move
Introduction	5727 (31.9%)	5727/75 = 76
Purpose	3849 (21.4%)	3849/90 = 43

Methods	3387 (18.8)	3387/78 = 43
Product	3429 (19.1%)	3429/54 = 64
Conclusion	1584 (8.8%)	1584/42 = 38
Total	5992 (100%)	264

From Table 5, the third frequent move, the Introduction, was allotted the most textual space in the abstracts with a total of 5727-word count. That is, researchers spent much time providing information to contextualize their research, flesh out the problem or identify a niche in to be filled. Swales (1990) advocates that, researchers should provide the necessary information per the function of the move in the abstract. From the analysis, it is confirmed that the Introduction is the significant move in abstracts in Forensic Linguistics. Further, the Purpose move, which was the most frequent received the second highest space in the abstract. The Product and Methods move nearly had the same textual space in the abstracts. The Conclusion move had the least textual space in the data. Interestingly, similar findings were presented by El-Dakhs (2018) and Bonsu and Afful (2022) where the Introduction move had the highest textual space with the Conclusion move having the least.

Although there is disciplinary variation in writing, Samraj (2002) proposed that a typical abstract should be constructed between 150 and 250 words limit. Presently, the academic writing landscape has changed and resulted to several modifications where most journals stipulate for abstracts to be written in not more than 250 words. It has been contended that identifying the textual space in abstracts informs researchers in structuring their abstracts (Djuwari, 2012). Interrelatedly, the study identified the four-move sequence (46.7%), specifically, 1>2>3>4 as the preferred move pattern, and this informs researchers in the area of Forensic Linguistics to construct their abstracts with a total number of 264. It is interesting to note that the findings presented in this study deviates from previous research (Agbaglo & Fiadzomor, 2021; El-Dakhs, 2018) in the area of Applied Linguistics, where the textual space for an abstract was within the current word limit of 250. This implies that RA abstracts in Forensic Linguistics deviate from the style of writing abstracts. Perhaps, this could be attributed to journal variations.

Lexico-grammatical Features

In this section, the researchers discuss the linguistic choices found in the moves. The focus is on tense and adverbials (specifically adjuncts and disjuncts) realised in the moves.

Tense

The analysis and discussion of the moves are summarized based on Tseng's (2011) classification of verb tense in moves. As stated in the analysis procedure, the study focused on the past and present verb tenses in the data. The analysis revealed the dominance of the use of past tense in the Method move, and the present tense form occurring frequently across Moves 1, 2, 4 and 5. The researchers account for this variation by stating that the Method move is where the authors of the abstract discusses the procedures and approaches, he or she used in carrying out the research. Generally, such procedures are accounted for by using the past tense verb forms in abstracts. Interestingly, however, the present tense forms were used for the Product move to indicate the current relevance of the findings in relation to disciplinary practice. Table 6 presents a summary of the dominance of tense in each of the moves in the abstracts.

Table 6. Summary of Tense in the Moves

Moves	Verb Tense
Introduction	Present

Purpose	Present
Method	Past
Product	Present
Conclusion	Present

Table 6 illustrates the dominance of the verb tense in the moves. Extract 12 and 13 are textual instances to support the verb tense in the data.

Extract 10

*This article first **examines** the Hong Kong courts’ approach towards bilingual discrepancies via a study of the legislative framework and a case trilogy—Chan Fung Lan, Tam Yuk Ha, and Re Madam L—and argues that the “mere translation” reasoning in Hong Kong courts tends to undermine the principle of equal authenticity between the two official texts (i.e., English and Chinese). Second, the present article **considers** the Canadian approach, which **ensures** linguistic equality between English and French legislation by strictly disregarding the enactment history of legislation. (JLL1)*

Extract 11

*The study was **conducted** in the cities of Tanga and Dodoma. Data were **collected** through observations and interviews. (IJLLD19)*

Extract 10 illustrates the Purpose move in the data. From the extract, the boldened words (such as examines, argues and ensures) reflect the use of present tense forms in the data sampled. However, the Method move (Extract 11) was dominated by past tense forms, and the boldened instances (conducted and collected) reflect the use of past tense forms. The findings corroborate with that of Agbaglo and Fiadzomor (2021), Salager-Meyer (1992), Swales and Feak (2004), and Bonsu and Afful (2022) who found the past tense form to be dominant in the Method move.

Adverbials

Speaking from a functional viewpoint, adverbs have two main functions—as modifiers and as adverbials. In this section, the focus is on the use of adverbs as adverbials. Within the adverbial group, we further distinguish three specific functions—adjuncts, conjuncts and disjuncts. For the purpose of this study, adjuncts and disjuncts were analysed as realised in the moves. The analysis revealed the prevalence of the use of adjuncts, in general, but no single recorded use of disjuncts in any of the moves. First of all, the researchers account for the general prevalence of adjuncts over disjuncts to suggest the writers’ tendency to describe the events in the moves in terms of, among others, the manner, place, frequency and reason behind them. Since disjuncts reveal the personal views of speakers, it is likely that throughout the moves, the researchers detached their personalities.

Table 7. Summary of Adverbials in the Moves

Moves	Adverbials	
	Adjuncts	Disjuncts
Introduction	66	0
Purpose	21	0
Method	36	0
Product	12	0
Conclusion	12	0

Total**147****0**

Table 7 illustrates the distribution of adverbials in the moves. From the analysis of the data, the adverbials were predominantly occupied by adjuncts. There was no occurrence of disjuncts in the data. Moreover, the adjuncts were mostly realised by words that indicated a time reference. From Table 7, the researchers report the dominance of adjuncts in the Introduction move. There were 66 occurrences of adjuncts in the introduction and 36 occurrences in the Method move. While the Purpose move had 21 occurrences, the Product and Conclusion moves respectively achieved 12 occurrences. The researchers deduces that the textual space of the move influences the words used rather than the frequency of the move in abstract.

Extract 12

*Nowadays, the advances of technology have affected all the aspects in human life, especially the existence of smartphone and computer, it is very helpful in the process of communication, education, and even forensic stuff. **In this case** Praat program which can change the sound waves that used to be heard only now become visible to the human eye. (IJFL3)*

Extract 13

***Recently**, advances in corpus linguistics have been adduced by judges and legal scholars in this regard. Furthermore, open-textured legal terms, including the word “pattern” itself, are by their nature more describable in terms of patterns of their application than in terms of hard-and-fast rules. Apart from linguistic issues in legal interpretation, legal systems value coherence, requiring that like things be treated alike, often focusing on patterns of how laws are applied. **At times**, however, these patterns uncover biases in a law’s application. (JLL17)*

Extract 12 and 13 are textual illustrations of the use of adjuncts in the abstracts. In Extract 14, the examples are *nowadays* and *in this case* are adjuncts that are characterised in the Move 1 of the abstracts. *Nowadays* is used as a time reference that helps contextualize the background of the research in the introductory move. For Extract 13, the examples are *recently* and *at times* as boldened in the text. These instances also provide a time scope pointing out the definiteness of a time reference and anteriority of events based on current relevance (Downing, 2015). Further, the dominance of adjuncts in Move 1 (Introduction) is suggestive that the researchers tend to be more descriptive when giving a general background to the abstracts. This is followed Move 3 (Method) and Move 2 (Purpose). No detailed description is done in Move 4 (Product) and Move 5 (Conclusion), which is evidenced by the less occurrence of adjunct adverbials in them. Table 7 presents a summary of the dominance of tense in each of the moves in the abstracts.

CONCLUSION

The present study aimed at examining the move structure and lexico-grammatical features of RA abstracts published in Forensic Linguistics. The study revealed that the most frequent move in the abstracts is the Purpose move, which outlines the objective(s) of the RA and what is sets out to accomplish. The Purpose was an obligatory move, while the Introduction, Methods and Product moves were core. M1>M2>M3>M4 was the preferred sequencing pattern of the moves in the abstracts. The form of the RA abstracts was, thus, semi-linear given the absence of the Conclusion move in the preferred sequence. The highest textual space was allocated to the Introduction move and the average number of words in the abstract

was 264. This figure exceeds the usual range of 250-word limit of abstracts in the present academic discourse community. The study identified present verb tense to be dominant in all the moves except the Method move, in which the past tense frequently occurred. Adjunct adverbials were found to dominate the Introduction move, while disjunct adverbials never occurred in any of the moves. The study has insightful implications for pedagogy, knowledge and further research.

First, the study is a novel one in Forensic Linguistics, a less popular field in applied linguistics in terms of RA abstracts. The study used three different kinds of journals in this study, therefore, the results are applicable to the focus on the abstracts in the journals. Forensic Linguistics has not received much attention in terms of RA abstracts research, so the study will open the door for a plethora of innovative studies in the field. In terms of pedagogy, the study will serve as a resource for learners, researchers, scholars and professionals in the Forensic Linguistics discourse community. This is informed by the model that guided the study. Instructors and learners will find the move structure and lexico-grammatical features analysed as a useful resource to reading and writing Forensic Linguistics RA abstracts. Again, taking cues from Bonsu (2021b), the results serve as feedback to improving writing skills generally. The researcher finally proffers some recommendations for further studies. This study used 90 abstracts; further studies can expand the data and make the findings more generalizable. Subsequent researchers may also do a comparative genre analysis, featuring Forensic Linguistics and another field in applied linguistics, say Corpus Linguistics, Lexicography or Language, with the view of exploring any variations in the move structure and lexicogrammatical realisations of the moves.

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