

Original Article

An Exploration of the Rhetorical Moves Used in M.A. Students' Theses in TEFL and Nursery: A Genre Analysis

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Abstract

Abstracts in research papers are one of the focal parts of academic research, and they are one of the first things that a reader reads to determine the value of the research. Furthermore, acknowledgments appreciate those who have helped in writing a thesis. The present study investigated rhetorical moves in the acknowledgment and abstract sections of Iranian English language teaching and nursery students' M.A. theses. In addition, it investigated if there were any significant differences between rhetorical moves observed in the acknowledgment and abstract sections of Iranian TEFL and nursery students' M.A. theses in these two fields. Some of the 80 theses from the two disciplines, 40 each, were investigated. Hyland's (2000) models of the abstract rhetoric structure and acknowledgment structure were adopted to investigate the corpora under study. The results revealed that different steps and moves were used in theses from both disciplines. However, the results of *Chi-square* tests revealed that the differences between different moves and steps of these acknowledgments and abstracts from the two disciplines were insignificant. The findings have some implications for post-graduate students to be more aware of their addressees and language teachers to teach students about genre-based writing.

Keywords: Moves and Steps, Nursery Theses, Rhetorical Structure, TEFL Theses

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1. Introduction

Writing a thesis is considered a time-taking task that needs much planning and research. In academic settings, all students must produce well-written pieces for assigned academic writing tasks (Swales & Feak, 2012). The writing tasks also must be structured with the effective organization. In academic settings, writing can be challenging for native and non-native speakers. Additionally, academic writing is an important subfield in applied linguistics. Post-graduate students encounter difficulties writing academic texts that are requirements of academic contexts (Burrough-Boenisch, 2003; Cho, 2004).

Despite various techniques or strategies for academic writing, EFL writers may have different problems when writing their theses. Instances of such problems include textual organization, ways to make knowledge claims, and relating text to the audience (Flowerdew, 1999). From 1990, following Swales' (1990) persuasive study on the scope of genre analysis, numerous researchers (e.g., Fazilatfar & Naseri, 2016; Ren & Li, 2011; Yang & Allison, 2003) investigated the genre of academic writing. Swales (1990) identified genre as an identifiable communicative incident categorized by a group of communicative objectives acknowledged and reciprocally recognized by those in the academic or specialized community where it regularly happens.

According to Derakhshan and Nadi (2019), genre can be viewed as a class of texts with a particular communicative objective and intent to make a particular structural method. Furthermore, for learners to be professional writers, knowledge of genre awareness is required. Accordingly, Bawarshi (2003) claimed that genre knowledge could make learners "do writing tasks more successfully during a particular writing course, and this genre knowledge and success can sail beyond their current language learning courses and transfer to their professional world" (p.481).

An MA thesis is compulsory for students to complete their post-graduate degrees within the academic genre. Yet, this task is a great challenge for post-graduate students, chiefly EFL students. This is because the students are expected to present their thoughts logically and coherently through their theses besides language considerations. Post-graduate students need assistance to write their theses effectively. Such needs have led to an increasing number of genre analysis studies investigating different chapters of the theses. Lack of knowledge about the rhetorical structure of academic texts and insufficient knowledge of conventions about each rhetorical move is considered a problem for writers

(Curry & Lillis, 2004; Flowerdew, 2001). Therefore, raising post-graduate EFL students' awareness seems necessary by providing them with more rhetorical knowledge and guidelines to develop better-structured theses. Move analysis is one method for investigating language use, text organization, and rhetoric. To solve EFL students' problems in writing their theses, move analysis is an approach employed to investigate the structural organization of the theses.

According to Fazilatfar and Naseri (2016), move analysis helps to identify the structural patterns of research articles. Moves are considered functional roles in communication which in the present case is academic writing. For instance, when writers express the missing points in the existing literature, the objective is probably to show that their research will fill this gap. Therefore, we can recognize these instances and consider them as gap-move. Past studies have proposed different move schemes for various sections of academic essays such as articles. These schemes include different moves and sub-moves.

Most studies in the field of genre analysis have studied only one section. For instance, Jalilifar (2010) investigated the introduction sections. Compared with other studies, M.A. theses written by Iranian post-graduate students have not attracted due attention. The possible factors that may affect how graduate students use various steps and moves and their choice of lexicon and grammatical structures must be taught to them. By showing the generic structure of masters' theses and demonstrating how the writers formulate their theses, the researcher intended to add something to the existing literature, show the importance of the genre, provide post-graduate students with a full image of the genre, and provide EFL students with the help to write their M.A. thesis academically and fluently. Moreover, several studies have been conducted on genre analysis of different sections of M.A. theses worldwide. However, to the best of the researcher's knowledge, regarding the genre analysis of M.A. theses, not much study has been done yet in Iran and other countries. Therefore, this study aimed to investigate the theses comprehensively.

2. Literature Review

The word genre is a French word meaning kind. According to Swales (1990), the genre includes a group of communicative events with common communicative goals. The discourse community members recognize these objectives, and through this process, they

shape the underlying rationale of the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic basis of the discourse.

Some studies (e.g., Swales, 1990, 2004) have so far been conducted in the genre analysis field. These studies focused on various sections of theses or research articles, including introduction, method, results, and discussion (IMRD). Soodmand Afshar et al. (2018) stated that the introduction, which is the first move, sets the general topic. In this move, the writers ensure the readers that their research topic is important to the discourse community. According to Zhang and Wannaruk (2016), a review of previous studies is usually given in this move to support the writers' claims.

The details of how the study was carried out are presented in the method. This move sets the ground to replicate the study (Jalilifar, 2010). According to Swales (1990, as cited in Zhang & Wannaruk, 2016), the method presents sampling and participants, the research setting, the research instruments or materials used, and the data collection procedures.

Genre analysis has mostly investigated research articles as a specific genre (Dudley-Evans, 1998). A review of the existing literature reveals that several move analyses and genre-based studies have been conducted on various sections of research articles, including an abstract (e.g., Ren & Li, 2011), introduction (e.g., Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013; Kafes, 2018; Soodmand Afshar et al., 2018; Swales, 1990), methods (e.g., Peacock, 2011; Zhang & Wannaruk, 2016), results and discussion (e.g., Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2013; Yang & Allison, 2003), and conclusion (e.g., Vazifehdan & Amjadiparvar, 2016).

Nikpei (2016) compared thesis abstracts of molecular biology and TEFL articles. The corpus included 48 abstracts that were randomly chosen. It was shown that the abstracts in both fields of the study follow a similar generic four moves structure to show the communicative purposes of the abstracts based on Bhatia's (1993, as cited in Bhatia, 2014) move structure. Certain moves were different in the two disciplines.

Researchers in the field of L2 writing have investigated rhetorical structures of individual thesis chapters, for instance, thesis acknowledgments (e.g., Estaji & Nosrati, 2018), abstracts (e.g., Amalia et al., 2018; Derakhshan & Nadi, 2019; Ebadi et al., 2019; Siyaswati & Rochmawati, 2017; Zand-Moghadam & Meihami, 2016), introduction (e.g., Ebadi et al., 2019; Samraj, 2008; Wuttisrisiriporn, 2017), literature review (e.g., Kwan, 2006; Pieketeleyee & Taghipour Bazargani, 2018), discussion (e.g., Massoum & Yazdanmehr, 2019; Wasito et al., 2017; Wuttisrisiriporn, 2015).

Massoum and Yazdanmehr (2019) compared the rhetorical structure of discussion sections of 20 English language teaching M.A. theses by Iranian students and 20 theses by native English students, while Wasito et al. (2017) investigated discussion sections of 20 M.A. theses in applied linguistics written by Indonesian post-graduate students. The findings of these studies showed similarities and differences in move-step occurrences in discussion moves in M.A. theses written by different L2 English students.

The studies mentioned above have investigated various sections of masters' theses and research articles. However, not many studies have investigated the rhetorical structure of the whole masters' theses. These studies' findings have indicated that each section follows relatively fixed conventions across different disciplines. However, to the researchers' knowledge, comparisons of rhetorical moves of masters' theses written by Iranian EFL students and students of other majors are rare. To fill the existing gap, the main purpose of the present study was to compare the rhetorical structure of acknowledgments and abstract sections of M.A. theses written by Iranian post-graduate EFL and nursery students. Accordingly, following the gap that was illustrated in the pertinent literature, the current study intended to address the subsequent research questions:

1. What is the rhetorical structure of the acknowledgment sections of M.A. theses written by Iranian EFL and nursery students?
2. Is there any significant difference between rhetorical moves observed in the acknowledgment section of Iranian EFL and nursery students' M.A. theses?
3. What is the rhetorical structure of the abstract sections of M.A. theses written by Iranian EFL and nursery students?
4. Is there any significant difference between rhetorical moves in the abstract section of Iranian EFL and nursery students' M.A. theses?

3. Methodology

This section presents the instruments, data collection procedures, and the corpus.

3.1. Design of the Study

The descriptive, qualitative research design was employed in the present research, which relied on the text analysis in the form of thesis acknowledgments and abstract sections. As one of the most important methods of text-level analysis, genre analysis was utilized to examine thesis sections as a genre.

3.2. Corpus of the Study

To conduct this study, some M.A. theses (40 M.A. theses written by students of nursery and 40 written by TEFL students) from four branches of the Islamic Azad University of Fars province, namely, Shiraz, Abadeh, Marvdasht, and Fasa branches, were chosen through criterion sampling. According to Patton (2002), "by criterion sampling, all cases that have some predetermined criterion of importance are reviewed" (p. 238). Thus, to observe this assumption, the selected theses were chosen from among experimental research studies in TEFL and nursery. In addition, the chosen M.A. theses were constrained to a time interval of six years (from 2014 to 2020). Finally, to consider the ethical issue, the identity of learners and their advisors was not identified.

3.3. Instruments

The researcher utilized two conceptual models to gather the required data. They are as follows:

A model developed by Hyland (2004) was adopted to reach an analytic view. This model consists of three Moves:

Reflecting Move:

- The writer's research experience and the challenges that have been encountered and overcome

Thanking Move:

- Presenting participants: mapping credit to individuals and institutions, introducing those to be thanked
- Thanking for academic assistance: thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses, feedback, etc.
- Thanking for resources: thanks for data access and clerical, technical, or financial support
- Thanking for moral support: thanks for the encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience, etc.

Announcing Move:

- Accepting responsibility: statements delineating responsibility and inspiration, an assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws or errors
- Dedicating the thesis: a formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)" (p.307).

A model developed by Hyland (2000) was implemented to reach an analytic view for the Abstract section. This model consists of five Moves:

Introduction: establishes the context of the paper and motivates the research.

Step 1. Arguing for topic prominence,

Step 2. Making topic generalizations,

Step 3. Defining terms, objects, or processes, and

Step 4. Identifying a gap in current knowledge

Purpose: indicates purpose, thesis, or hypothesis and outlines the paper's intention.

Step 1. Stating the purpose directly

Method: provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc.

Step 1. Describing the participants,

Step 2. Describing the instruments or equipment, and

Step 3. Describing the procedure and conditions

Product: states main findings or results, the argument, or what was accomplished.

Step 1. Describing the main features or properties of the solution or product

Conclusion: interprets or extends results beyond the scope of the paper, draws inferences, and points to applications or wider applications.

Step 1. Deducing conclusions from results,

Step 2. Evaluating the value of the research, and

Step 3. Presenting recommendations. (p.16)

3.4. Data Collection Procedures

The present study attempted to compare acknowledgments and abstract sections of the theses written by TEFL students and those written by students of the nursery in terms of their rhetorical structures or moves. Consequently, the corpus was collected from the theses from the libraries of four branches of the Islamic Azad University of Fars province, namely, Shiraz branch, Abadeh Branch, Marvdasht branch, and Fasa Branch. Some theses in the fields of TEFL and nursery were randomly selected. To assure inter-coder reliability of the gathered data, two M.A. holders in TEFL analyzed the corpus. Before the coding process, the two raters coordinated with each other about the data analysis process to improve the agreement. Cronbach's alpha was administered to evaluate inter-rater reliability. The results revealed the reliability index of ($r = .79$).

3.5. Data Analysis Procedures

The acknowledgments and abstract sections of the theses from both majors were printed. Then the researcher coded each text to analyze the generic moves based on the conceptual frameworks given above. The moves and their steps were defined, coded, and tabulated. Moreover, the linguistic features were highlighted as key codes for realizing the moves and steps. Descriptive statistical methods were used to report the results, including frequency and percentage.

4. Results

4.1. Rhetorical Structure of Acknowledgement Sections of TEFL and Nursery Theses

The first question of the present study aimed to analyze the rhetorical structure of the acknowledgment section of Iranian EFL and nursery students' M.A. theses. In so doing, the acknowledgment section of 80 theses in the field of TEFL and nursery were analyzed using Hyland's (2004) model. The results of the data analysis are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Frequency and Percentages of Moves in Acknowledgement Sections of TEFL and Nursery

Moves and Steps			TEFL		Nursery	
			F	P	F	P
Reflecting Move			14	35%	12	30%
Thanking Move	Step 1	Presenting participants	36	90	29	72%
	Step 2	Thanking for academic assistance	40	100%	40	100%
	Step 3	Thanking for resources	36	90%	38	95%
	Step 4	Thanking for moral support	40	100%	40	100%
	Step 5	Thanking God	38	95%	31	77%
Announcing Move	Step 1	Accepting responsibility	0	0	4	10%
	Step 2	Dedicating the thesis	4	10%	3	7.5%
Total			40	100%	40	100%

Finally, sentences in the thanking move mostly include expressions such as:

I would like to express my deepest appreciation to my committee

I'm deeply indebted to I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to

I'm extremely grateful to....

As shown, the first move, the reflective, was found in the acknowledgment section of TEFL MA theses with a percentage of 35% of the total number of moves and steps found in the abstract section of TEFL MA theses. Similarly, this move was observed in 30% of the

whole frequency of moves and steps in nursery M.A. theses. Examples of this found in a nursery thesis are presented below:

Knowledge is empty save without labor. Labor is empty save without love. Love is empty save without others who willingly and selflessly share their thoughts, time, effort, and resources in making this thesis a success.

With the greatest joy, I have been able to bring this work to an end.

The next move, the thanking move, comprises five steps. The first step is presenting participants found in nearly all (40%) theses in the field of TEFL and 72% of theses in the field of the nursery. Here is an example of this move used in the nursery thesis:

It would be impossible for me to thank everyone who contributed to completing this thesis. Then I would like to express my most sincere appreciation to those who contributed to the completion of this project.

Two of the five steps of thanking move, namely, thanking academic assistance and thanking for moral support, were found in all theses (100%) in the two corpora under study.

It's my pleasure, first of all, to be thankful to Dr. Mohammad Ali Heidari, my dear supervisor, for his helpful guidance, pertinent observation, and precious time he devoted to my work. Thanking for resources was also used in 90% of the TEFL and 95% of nursery theses. Finally, my M.A. program would never have been completed without the support of my family. My Wife, and my son, Mohammad Taahaa, have been my cheering squad.

The last step, thanking God, was used in 95% of TEFL and 77% of nursery theses.

I thank God, the Almighty, who gave me enough strength, knowledge, and faith to accomplish this task.

Particular thanks are also owed to all the instructors teaching in Foreign Language Department at the Islamic Azad University, Shiraz branch, for their kind efforts during my education.

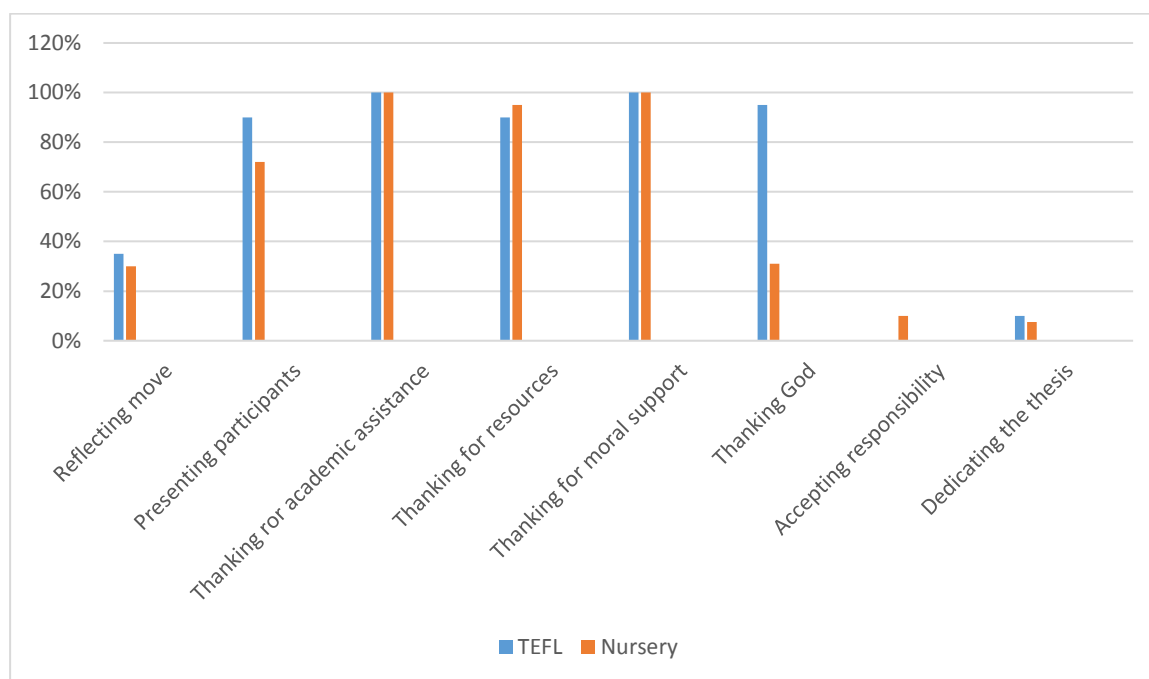
Announcing the move, which consists of two steps, was found to be used by TEFL M. A. students more than nursery students, with percentages of 10% and 17.5%, respectively. As the first step, accepting responsibility was not used by TEFL students but was employed by nursery students in 10% of the whole corpus.

Although many people have assisted me in my work, I would like to say that I am solely responsible for any errors to be found.

Dedicating the thesis as the last step of this move was observed in 10% of the corpus of TEFL theses and 7.5% of the nursery corpus.

Figure 1.

Percentages of Moves in Acknowledgement Sections of TEFL and Nursery (N=80)



In order to investigate the (in)significance of the theses in the two fields, a *Chi-square* test was administered, the results of which are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Chi-Square Test between TEFL and Nursery Master Theses in Terms of Rhetorical Features in Acknowledgement Sections

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	5.520 ^a	7	.597
Likelihood Ratio	7.064	7	.422
Linear-by-Linear Association	.161	1	.688
N of Valid Cases	405		

The *Chi-square* value was calculated to be 5.520 with the p Value of .597. Therefore, there was no significant difference between these acknowledgments from the two disciplines $.05 < p$.

4.2. Rhetorical Structure of Abstract Sections of TEFL and Nursery Theses

The second research question investigated the rhetorical structure of TEFL and nursery M.A.'s abstract section. In so doing, a model developed by Hyland (2000, p.16) was implemented. This model consists of five Moves:

Table 3.

Frequency and Percentages of Moves in Abstract Sections of TEFL and Nursery

Moves and Steps			TEFL		Nursery	
			F	P	F	P
Introduction	Step 1	Arguing for topic prominence	30	75%	27	67.5%
	Step 2	Making topic generalizations	33	82.5%	28	70%
	Step 3	Defining terms, objects, or processes	38	95%	30	75%
	Step 4	Identifying a gap in current knowledge	37	92.5%	29	72.5%
Purpose	Step 1	Stating the purpose directly	40	100%	40	100%
Method	Step 1	Describing the participants	40	100%	40	100%
	Step 2	Describing the instruments or equipment	40	100%	40	100%
	Step 3	Describing the procedure and conditions	40	100%	40	100%
Product	Step 1	Describing the main features or properties of the solution or product	40	100%	40	100%
Conclusion	Step 1	Deducing conclusions from results	30	75%	27	67.5%
	Step 2	Evaluating value of the research	32	80%	21	52.50%
	Step 3	Presenting recommendations	16	40%	12	30%
Total			40		40	

The analysis results in Table 3 indicate that all of the M. A. thesis abstracts from the two corpora under study contained all of the moves and steps presented in Hyland (2000). The significant point drawn from the analysis was that all theses (100%) employed all steps of purpose and method moves. The four steps of the introduction move include arguing for topic prominence (75%), making topic generalizations (82%), defining terms, objects, or processes (95%), and identifying a gap in current knowledge (92.5%) were used in TEFL thesis abstract more than theses in the field of the nursery which contained arguing for topic prominence (67%), making topic generalizations (70%), defining terms, objects, or processes (75%) and identifying a gap in current knowledge (72.5%). The product move was also found in all abstracts written by students from both fields.

Similar to the introduction, the conclusion move was also found to be more frequent in TEFL abstracts than in nursery ones. The first step of the conclusion move, namely, deducing conclusions from results, was found in 75% of the TEFL thesis, while it was observed in 67.5% of nursery theses. Evaluating the value of the research was employed in TEFL abstracts with a percentage of 80% and nursery abstracts with 52.5%. As the last step of the conclusion move, presenting recommendations were found in both TEFL and nursery theses with 40% and 30%, respectively. Examples of different moves are presented below:

Introduction Move: Pragmatics emerged to capture the sociological and other nonlinguistic dimensions of verbal communication.

Introduction Move: The p-frame variants may be considered in terms of their uniqueness to individual disciplines

Purpose Move: The present study aimed to investigate the rhetorical functions of p frames in Chemistry research articles (R. A. s) introduction sections published in Iranian academic journals.

Method Move: In so doing, a corpus of 408907 words was drawn from published R.A. introduction sections from ten journals in the field of Chemistry, from which around one-fifth (82000 words) comprised the Introduction sections. All the composed Chemistry relevant articles in the corpus were adopted from online journals for Chemistry professionals with open accessibility. They were investigated using Swales' (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model. This framework was validated by Lu et al. (2020). To match the p-frames to the rhetorical move, following the common practice in previous studies (e.g., Lu et al., 2020; Moreno & Swales, 2018), the main function of each p-frame that was seen in a multifunctional sentence was identified.

Product Move: The results revealed a positive correlation between EFL learners' performance in the reading comprehension test and their performance on the critical thinking scale ($r=0.76$, $P \text{ value}=0.000<0.05$). In addition, it was shown that the participants' overall critical thinking score is strongly correlated ($r=0.52$, $P \text{ value}=0.000<0.05$) with their total score on the reading comprehension test. Finally, it was observed that there was a positive correlation between the reading comprehension test scores of the participants and their use of metacognitive strategies ($r=0.25$, $P \text{ value}=0.04<0.05$).

Conclusion Move: It can be concluded that understanding linguistic variation across sub-sections of genres is important to developing knowledge among L2 learners.

A Chi-square test was administered to check the significance of the differences between the abstract sections. The results of which are presented in Table 4.

Table 4.

Chi-Square Test between TEFL and Nursery Master Theses in Terms of Rhetorical Features in Abstract Sections

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	3.417 ^a	11	.984
Likelihood Ratio	3.429	11	.984
Linear-by-Linear Association	.122	1	.727
N of Valid Cases	746		

Table 4 shows no significant difference $\chi^2 (1=3.417), p > .05$ was observed between the abstract sections of theses from the two disciplines under study.

5. Discussion

The present study investigated the rhetorical moves in the acknowledgment and abstract sections of Iranian EFL and nursery students' M. A. theses. In addition, it intended to investigate if any significant differences between rhetorical moves were observed in the acknowledgment and abstract sections of the two corpora. In so doing, a number of 80 theses from the two disciplines were investigated. Hyland's (2000) model for the abstract rhetoric structure and acknowledgment structure were adopted to investigate the corpora under study. The results revealed that different moves and steps were used in theses from both disciplines. However, there was no significant difference between the different moves and steps of these acknowledgments and abstracts from the two disciplines

As mentioned earlier, the first move of acknowledgment, namely, the reflecting move, was found less than other moves in the acknowledgment section of theses in both TEFL and nursery disciplines. As shown in the move structures of the corpora, it seemed that the writers followed their pattern of writing, and their educational background was not a determining factor in their writing style. Although universities usually present a guideline for researchers to follow, researchers follow their styles in writing. This is in line with some previous studies in genre analysis, such as Alibangbang and Tulud (2020). The results lend support to the

studies by Hyland (2003, 2004), Hyland and Tse (2004), and Zhao and Jiang (2010), which showed that there are variations in presenting moves and steps.

This variety can be attributed to academic standards, contextualized values, individual viewpoints, different writing styles, English language learning experiences, and associations with those acknowledged. Accordingly, the results of this paper lend support to the claims that the acknowledgment section may change due to the writer's style and opinions. Therefore, rhetorical styles depend on the settings of the writers' choices and values.

As with abstracts, it was revealed that the four major moves were employed in all abstracts. Therefore, the thesis abstracts written by nursery and TEFL students explained the purpose of the thesis, the procedures, and the findings. This finding lends support to some previous studies, such as Zand-Moghadam and Meihami (2016), Tseng (2011), and Ren and Li (2011).

The inclusion of the three moves mentioned above can be attributed to the fact that these moves are regular parts of rhetorical structures. Swales (1981) introduced the first move analysis model, which included these three moves. Since then, various move analysis models have included these three moves with different names. According to Hyland (2000), research problem, research objectives, methodology, and findings are considered the most important sections of academic writing, and this affects writers' choice of these moves, which can be another justification for the results obtained about the employment of the three moves in the corpus under study. In addition, the introduction and conclusion sections were not employed as much as the other three moves, which is in line with Suntara and Usaha (2013). This can be explained in light of the introduction and conclusion moves very close to the product and the purpose moves, respectively. Thus, such moves are usually included in the purpose and product moves.

6. Conclusion

Abstracts are the short forms of academic texts and sections that can persuade or prevent the reader from reading the thesis. Thus, acquiring the conventions of the rhetorical structure of abstracts is necessary to develop theses. Thesis acknowledgments and abstracts are considered as a genre. Therefore, the present study's findings are significant for post-graduate students of hard and soft disciplines. Awareness of each field's genre helps students

of that field to be familiar with their addressees, which can help writers to employ their knowledge of the genre to be able to write more academically.

Furthermore, the results of this study can help the production of academic texts and the content of academic writing courses by providing learners with explanations of the importance of genres. According to Pho (2008), the rhetorical moves of abstracts can be taught. This study investigated theses from only two fields of study; further studies may expand the scope of the current study and compare abstracts in different fields. In addition, investigating more thesis abstracts may lead to more comprehensive results. Finally, this study was carried out on a corpus from one area of Iran, Fars province. Thus, future studies can be conducted to investigate the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of theses in universities from other parts of Iran, or even the world can be insightful. The present study's findings can improve researchers' understanding of the rhetorical structures of M.A. theses by Iranian EFL students. This may help identify post-graduate students' main problems in academic writing. EFL students learn about other students' writing styles.

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