



A study on linguistics Structures of research article abstracts by Malaysian ESL writers

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Abstract

Studies on genre analysis have become a current issue in research study. One of the studies in genre analysis that has attracted many researchers is research article abstract. The aim of this article is to analyse the linguistic features used by Malaysian authors in their research article abstracts. 20 abstracts were analysed using the framework developed by Weissburg and Buker (1990). The linguistic features analysed are tenses, hedges and transition words. Findings reveal that not all Malaysian authors adhered to the Weissberg and Buker's framework in writing the research article abstracts. The findings are later discussed and the implications of the study are presented.

Keywords: genre analysis, research articles, linguistic features, tenses, hedges, transition words

Introduction

Research in academic genre has quite recently attracted researchers to involve more deeply specifically in examining a research article. Research article is one of the academic genres that play a significant role in disseminating new knowledge within academic communities, both national and international. Swales (1990) [7] defines research article as a written text, usually limited to a few thousand words that reports on some investigation carried out by its author or authors. The study on a research article begins with Swales' pioneering work on the Introduction section, then led to parallel research into other sections of the research article such as Results, and Discussion of Results. There is one section in a research article, which is the abstract that lately aroused great interest due to the important role it fulfils for the academic communities. Abstract has been seen as a "concise summary" of the accompanying paper (Lores 2004: 281) [5], and its main function as "informing about the exact content of the article" (Martin 2003: 26) [6].

Abstract is located at the first section of the report which provides the readers with a brief preview of a text and it determines either readers will read the entire article or not based on the given information in the abstract. Further, abstract has attained the status of an independent academic genre which is crucial to knowledge making. Van Dijk (as cited in Swales 1990: 179) [7] mentioned that abstracts function as independent discourses as well as being advance indicators of the content and structure of the following text. Journals, theses, dissertations, edited volumes of papers, conferences, congresses and seminars, all of them consist of an abstract. Due to its pivotal role, the genre of the abstract has attracted considerable attention from text analysis and its rhetorical organization has become the subject of extensive research.

An abstract is basically a concise summary of a longer report. Bhatia (1993) [1] claims that abstract contain information on

the following aspects of the research that it describes:

1. What the author did
2. How the author did it
3. What the author found
4. What the author concluded

Weissberg and Buker (1990) [9] suggest that there are five rhetorical structures in the abstract: Background, Purpose, Method, Results and Conclusion.

The aim of this study is to identify the use of linguistic features such as tenses, hedges and transition words in the abstracts written by Malaysian writers. This study is significant as that it will contribute to the current body of research on the abstracts written by Malaysian writers and indirectly towards research on the abstract writing as a whole. There was not much study found on the abstract in the context of Malaysian writers, and hopefully this study will encourage more studies in this field. This is due to the fact that the research article is the most used medium for communication as research output in all fields of study. Apart from that, this research is significant to the pedagogical aspect of a genre based approach in teaching academic writing. It provides students with knowledge of the linguistic features of genre that they need to have command of when writing their research article abstract. The students then will have the ability to use the relevant linguistic features when writing the abstract. Hence, students will benefit from such research as it helps in the writing of their abstracts. By being able to identify the structure of that abstracts, students can write and understand well the textual features of the abstracts.

Finally, the findings are certainly prominent especially for researchers and academicians making aware of the linguistic features of the abstracts. This will enable them to have a better understanding of what are the important things that should be included in the abstract and benefit from the language conventions where they can use the appropriate tenses in

writing the abstract. The framework by Weissberg and Buker (1990)^[9] can be used as a guideline to write the right abstract in order to ensure its quality and then, it is hope that it will attract the editors of the journals to accept their research articles to be published.

Linguistic Analysis

The article will review the linguistic features used in the abstracts such as tenses, hedges and transition words written by Malaysian writers.

Tenses

Scientific English has certain verb tense conventions as Day (1995) in Burrough-Boenisch (2003: 5)^[2] often presented as ‘‘rules’’:

1. Established knowledge (previous results) should be given in the present tense.
2. Description of methods and results in the current paper should be in the past tense.

3. Presentation (Table 1 shows that...) is given in the present tense.
4. Attribution (Jones reported that...) is given in the past tense.

Day (1995) stresses that these ‘‘rules’’ must be adhered to, to prevent readers having difficulty in distinguishing between an author’s own findings and what is accepted scientific knowledge or universal truth. Rules 1 and 2 encapsulate a paradigm of science writing in English, that past tense signals the specific (the method used and the results obtained in a given experiment or research project) whereas present tense signals the universal (that a method is standard, that a statement is irrefutable).

Weissberg and Buker (1990)^[9] state that the verb tenses used in writing sentences in the abstract are directly related to those used in the corresponding sections earlier in the report. Hence, this present study will used the language conventions suggested by Weissberg and Buker (1990)^[9] to analyse the used of tenses in the abstracts by Malaysian writers.

Table 1: Tenses used in the abstract

Moves/Units	Tenses
B – Background information	Present Tense
P – Principal activity	Past Tense / Present Perfect Tense
M – Methodology	Past Tense
R – Results	Past Tense
C – Conclusions	Present Tense / Tentative Verbs / Modal Auxiliaries

From the table above, Weissberg and Buker (1990)^[9] suggest the use of Present Tense in Background unit while in Purpose unit; they suggest the use of Past Tense or Present Perfect Tense. As for the Methodology unit, they suggest the use of Past Tense and this is similar with the uses of tenses in Results unit. Finally, for the Conclusion unit, they suggest the use of Present Tense, or we can also use tentative verbs or modal auxiliaries in Conclusion unit. As can be seen from the table, there is a close relationship between the rhetorical function of each unit and the uses of verb tenses in the abstract.

Hedges

In context of academic writing, hedging is the expression of tentativeness and possibility in language used and it is crucial to scientific writing because statements are rarely made without subjective assessments of truth. Meanwhile, Ming and Hsien (2006)^[10] define hedging as a type of interpersonal metadiscourse markers demonstrate the research article writer’s modesty and politeness in academic written discourse by encoding their claims into tentative propositions rather than definite facts. Essentially hedges in academic writing signal a writer’s anticipation of the possibility of opposition to his or her statements.

Hyland (1995)^[4] claims that hedges serve three main functions in gaining reader acceptance of the claims. Firstly, hedges allow writers to express propositions with greater precision in areas often characterized by reformulation and reinterpretation. Hedging here is an important mean of accurately stating uncertain scientific claims with appropriate caution. Scientific writing is a balance of fact and evaluation as the writer tries to present information as fully, accurately

and objectively as possible. Therefore, writers often say "X may cause Y" than "X causes Y" to specify the actual state of knowledge on the subject. Hedges here distinguish the actual from the potential or inferential and imply that a proposition is based on the writer's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge. Readers are expected to understand that the proposition is true as far as can be determined.

The second reason concern the writer's desire to anticipate possible negative consequences of being proven wrong. We gain our academic credibility by stating the strongest claims we can for our evidence, but we also need to cover ourselves against overstating our case. Hedges here help writers avoid personal responsibility for statements in order to protect their reputations and limit the damage which may result from categorical commitments. Here hedges are used to blur the relationship between a writer and a proposition when referring to speculative possibilities. This is usually achieved through modal devices used in non-agentive environments either by use of the passive, existential subjects or of ‘abstract rhetors’ which attribute judgements to the text or the findings. In science, writers may hedge in this way because of preliminary results, small samples, doubtful evidence, uncertain predictions, and imperfect measuring techniques.

Finally hedges contribute to the development of the writer-reader relationship, addressing the need for deference and cooperation in gaining reader agreement of claims. In science however, writers must consider both the reader's role in ratifying knowledge, and the need to conform to community expectations on limits of self-assurance. Quite simply, categorical assertions leave no room for dialogue and are inherently face-threatening to others. They indicate that the

arguments need no feedback and relegate the reader to a passive role. Explicit reference to the writer seems to mark the statement as an alternative view than a definitive statement of truth, indicating a personal opinion awaiting verification. Here hedges appeal to readers as intelligent colleagues, capable of deciding about the issues, and indicate that statements are provisional, pending acceptance by one's peers. This interpersonal role is backed up by institutionally reinforced obligations concerning the need to defer to and engage in debate with the scientific community. In brief, hedging looks three ways: towards the proposition, the writer and the reader.

Transition words

In academic writing, transition words help establish clear connections between ideas and ensure that sentences and paragraphs flow together smoothly, making them easier to read. Paragraph coherence and continuity can be achieved with the use of appropriate transition words. In other words, transition words tell readers what to do with the information that the writers present. They function as signs for readers that tell them how to think about, organize, and react to old and new ideas as they read through what the writers have written.

Basically, transition words provide the reader with directions for how to piece together the ideas into a logically coherent argument. They are words with particular meanings that tell the reader to think and react in a particular way to the writers' ideas. In providing the reader with these important cues, transition words help readers understand the logic of how the ideas fit together. Transition words can be a single word, a phrase, a sentence, or an entire paragraph. In each case, it functions the same way: first, the transition either directly summarizes the content of a preceding sentence, paragraph, or section, or it implies that summary. Then it helps the readers anticipate or comprehend the new information that the writers wish to present.

There are three types of transition words. Firstly, transitions between sections are particularly in longer works, it may be necessary to include transitional paragraphs that summarize for the reader the information just covered and specify the relevance of this information to the discussion in the following section. Secondly, transitions between paragraphs, if the writers have done a good job of arranging paragraphs so that the content of one leads logically to the next, the transition will highlight a relationship that already exists by summarizing the previous paragraph and suggesting something of the content of the paragraph that follows. A transition between paragraphs can be a word or two (however, for example, similarly), a phrase, or a sentence. Transitions can be at the end of the first paragraph, at the beginning of the second paragraph, or in both places. Lastly, transitions within paragraphs act as cues by helping readers to anticipate what is coming before they read it. Within paragraphs, transitions tend to be single words or short phrases.

Previous studies in linguistic analysis

This part began to look at the studies on the linguistic analysis of the abstracts. Busch-Lauer (1995) ^[3] compared the linguistic devices of German abstracts and their English equivalents written by German medical scholars to English native speaker abstracts. The analysis indicated that the

German abstracts frequently contained lexical hedges, complex and enumerating sentence structures, passive voice and past tense as well as linkers of adversative, concessive and consecutive characters. As a result, these may influence their GNNs (German Non-Native Speaker) English abstracts when they translated the abstracts into English which may hamper readability for the English-speaking community.

Martin (2003) ^[6] examined the linguistic device in the English and Spanish research paper abstracts in experimental social sciences and the difference was found in the used of hedging among English writers than the Spanish writers. The writers in English tend to generalize knowledge claims by using a greater number of hedging devices to diminish discursual argumentative strength and protect themselves against criticism from the international scientific community. Considering the number of members of the Spanish scientific community was quite small, most Spanish writers may feel more confident about stating their conclusions directly as the need to avoid face threatening acts was much lower than in the international community. He provided possible explanation for this linguistic variation across two languages was concerned with the context of publication and the relationship between the writer and the discourse community. Another explanation for this difference might be that the practice of using a non-hedged style had become institutionalized by most Spanish academics as part of a long-established writing style.

Van Bonn and Swales (2007) ^[8] compared the linguistic devices of French and English academic article abstracts from the language sciences and found that personal pronoun used, sentence length and transition words selection can be aligned with expectations as to what constitutes appropriate academic style. In terms of transition words, majority of the French fell into the addition category while the most common transition words for English was contrast category. Van Bonn and Swales stated that similar findings also found in Bachschmidt (1999), Golebiowski (2006) and Flottum (2005) that English texts make more frequent used of contrast markers which Van Bonn and Swales claimed that French texts acts as a sort of unrolling of facts while the stronger contrastive in the English texts can be aligned with English authors' concern to justify their contributions by indicating gaps in the prior research record.

Methodology

This study utilized both quantitative and qualitative methods whereby the researcher collected quantitative data to indicate the frequency and percentage of types of linguistic features in the abstracts by Malaysian writers. While qualitative method was used to explain the presence of the highest and lowest frequency and then a comparative analysis was made between Malaysian and Western abstracts.

The samples of this study were 20 abstracts that were taken from 20 research articles written by Malaysian writers. Previous studies such as Van Bonn and Swales (2007) ^[8] also employed 60 research articles abstracts which comprised of 30 abstracts from French writers and another 30 were from English writers and Busch-Lauer (1995) ^[3] only employed 20 abstracts written by German medical scholars in his study. Hence, the number (20) was deemed suitable for the purposes of study.

Finally, the abstracts were randomly selected from research articles published in a variety of English language journals between the years of 2000 to 2009. In addition, a variety of journals were selected to observe the differences on how the different journals required the abstracts to be published. The selections of abstracts were mainly from the English Language Studies field because the field of study was familiar to the researcher.

Apart from that, Weissberg and Buker (1990) [9] also introduced language conventions that accompanying the abstracts. They claimed that verb tenses used in writing sentences in the abstract were directly related to those used in the corresponding sections earlier in the report. Weissberg's and Buker's (1990) [9] language conventions in writing the abstract are presented in the table below.

Table 2: Tenses used in the abstract

Moves/Units	Tenses
B – Background information	Present Tense
P – Principal activity	Past Tense / Present Perfect Tense
M – Methodology	Past Tense
R – Results	Past Tense
C – Conclusion	Present Tense / Tentative Verbs / Modal Auxiliaries

From the table above, Weissberg and Buker (1990) [9] suggested the use of Present Tense in Background unit while in Purpose unit, they suggested the use of Past Tense or Present Perfect Tense. As for the Methodology unit, they suggested the use of Past Tense and this was similar with the use of tenses in Results unit. Finally, for the Conclusion unit, they suggested the use of Present Tense, or we can also use the tentative verbs or modal auxiliaries in Conclusion unit. As can be seen from the table, there was a close relationship between the rhetorical function of each move and the used of verb tenses in the abstract.

In term of linguistic analysis, the researcher analysed it one by one according to the research question which began with tenses followed by hedges and then transition words. In classifying the linguistic devices, the researcher examined the overall texts and then classified it to its types. The researcher used language conventions as suggested by Weissberg's and Buker's (1990) [9] to analyse the use of tenses in the abstracts by Malaysian. Next, in analysing hedges, the researcher examined the use of hedges in the abstracts according to its types such as lexical verbs, modal verbs, adverb of frequency, modal adverbs, modal adjectives, modal nouns, that clauses, to-clause and adjective and compound hedges. Similar to analysing hedges, there were 11 types of transition words such as addition, results, opposition, examples, similarity, time, chronological sequences, emphasis, summary, exception and generalizing that needed to be identified in both abstracts. It was necessary for researcher to reexamine the analysis to avoid any mistakes in categorizing the data.

Findings of the linguistic features of the abstracts

This section was divided into three categories. It started with the findings of the use of tenses in the abstracts, followed by the findings of the use of hedges and then the findings of the use of transition words in the abstracts.

Findings of the use of tenses in the abstracts

The tenses of the abstracts written by Malaysian writers were analysed using Weissberg's and Buker's (1990) [9] language conventions. The use of tenses here were constituted with the rhetorical structures of Weissberg's and Buker's (1990) [9] framework that was Background-Purpose-Method-Results-Conclusion (BPMRC) as stated earlier in chapter two.

The use of tenses by Malaysian writers

Table 1 below presented the frequency of tenses used in the abstracts by Malaysian writers.

Table 3: Frequency of the use of tenses in the abstracts by Malaysian writers

Units	Frequency	Tenses
Background	8	Present Tense
	3	Present Perfect Tense
Purpose	5	Past Tense
	15	Present Tense
Method	9	Past Tense
	9	Present Tense
	1	Present Perfect Tense
	1	Future Tense
Results	5	Past Tense
	12	Present Tense
	1	Present Perfect Tense
Conclusion	10	Present Tense
	3	Past Tense

As suggested by Weissberg's and Buker's (1990) [9] in the use of Present Tense in the Background unit, the findings revealed that only eight of 11 Malaysian writers used Present Tense in writing their Background unit while another three of them preferred to use Present Perfect Tense. The following examples are the use of tenses in the Background unit for Malaysian writers:

Present tense

MA 20: Although journal writing is a popular pedagogical class assignment required by teachers in EFL classes, there is still room for research into the use of journal writing by teachers themselves to monitor the effectiveness of their teaching practice.

Present perfect tense

MA 5: Studies on computer use in education have taken into account the gender factor since the 1980s. However, results regarding gender differences have not been consistent, especially from the aspect of attitudes towards computers. In the Purpose unit, Weissberg and Buker (1990) [9] had suggested the use of Past Tense or Present Perfect Tense to describe this unit and the findings showed that out of 20 Malaysian writers, only five of them used Past Tense while the rest of them preferred to use Present Tense to describe their Purpose unit. The examples below indicate the tenses use in the Purpose unit for Malaysian writers:

Past tense

MA 7: The objective was to find out to what extent these institutes utilize the available Information Communication

Technology (ICT) in the teaching and learning of English as well as for research purposes.

Present Tense

MA 1: This paper attempts to explore learner engagement and literacy-related issues among adult learners in a higher education context in a public university in Malaysia.

As for the Method unit, the findings showed that Malaysian writers used four different types of tenses in this unit. Out of 20 Malaysian writers, nine of them used Past Tense while another nine used Present Tense in writing their Method unit. The two other tenses found in the Method unit were Present Perfect Tense and Future Tense. Only a small number presented the use of these tenses, one writer used Present Perfect Tense and one writer used Future Tense in writing their Method unit. The examples below show the tenses use in the Method unit by the Malaysian writers:

Past tense

MA 19: A language attitudes questionnaire adapted from Baker (1992) was used to elicit the participants’ beliefs regarding the importance of English in their daily lives, and their attitudes towards the use of English and Bahasa Malaysia.

Present tense

MA 16: The translation method is used in the study because it uses the learners’ L1 as the medium of instruction and it involves explicit learning.

Present perfect tense

MA 5: Information for this study has been gathered from a survey on 556 students in the district of Kubang Pasu, Kedah.

Future tense

MA 12: In this study, I will examine several extracts from talk exchanges amongst working adults during office meetings. Weissberg and Buker (1990) ^[9] had suggested the use of Past Tense in the Results unit and the data showed that out of 18 Malaysian writers who had the Results unit, only five of them preferred to use Past Tense while another 12 preferred to use Present Tense. The examples below present the tenses use in the Results unit for Malaysian writers:

Past tense

MA 10: Results of the study confirmed the hypothesis, which was further supported by the teachers’ claims that their need to focus on subject matter content when providing feedback to their students limited their opportunities to meet the L2 condition.

Present tense

MA 6: The finding of this study shows that secondary school children in Malaysia tend to use reflective observation in their learning mode orientation.

However, the data also revealed that there was one Malaysian writer used Present Perfect Tense in the Results unit. The example as shown below:

Present perfect tense

MA 9: However, in using poetry, I have discovered a stimulus

that encourages greater student participation.

The final unit in the abstract, the Conclusion unit in which the findings showed that half of Malaysian writers used Present Tense in this unit as suggested by Weissberg’s and Buker’s (1990) ^[9] language conventions for writing the tenses in the abstract and this unit appeared in 10 abstracts analysed. On the other hand, there were some of Malaysian writers preferred to use Past Tense in writing their Conclusion unit and this unit appeared in three abstracts analysed. The examples below present the tenses use in the Conclusion unit for Malaysian writers:

Present tense

MA 15: This paper concludes by identifying some key strategic implications for the university in order to focus its efforts to improve students’ undergraduate educational experiences.

Past tense

MA 5: This article offered suggestions to strengthen the positive attitudes and expand the skills of using computers among students.

The use of hedges by Malaysian writers

Table 4 below showed the frequency of hedges used in the abstracts by Malaysian writers.

Table 4: Frequency of the use of hedges in the abstracts by Malaysian writers

Types	Frequency
Lexical verbs	14
Modal verbs	9
Adverb of frequency	5
Modal adverbs	2
Modal adjectives	-
Modal nouns	-
That clauses	-
To-clause+adjective	2
Compound hedges	-

Out of nine types of hedges, lexical verbs constituted the greatest range of frequency of hedges used for Malaysian writers in which it appeared in 14 abstracts analysed. More than half of the Malaysian writers utilized the lexical verbs to avoid personal responsibility for the statements if it was wrong. The verb such as “suggest” appeared to be more prominent in the Malaysian abstracts as in the following examples:

MA 8: The findings suggest that a teacher’s responding style could influence a student’s revision style.

MA 2: These results suggest the need for adjustments by the teachers during the classroom interaction process to encourage communication and enhance language learning.

MA 19: The findings suggest that the prevailing language attitudes were in tandem with the goals of the national language policy but the full impact of language planning has not been realized.

Next, it was followed by the used of modal verbs in which it appeared in nine abstracts analysed. Malaysian writers made less used of modal verbs such as may, might, can, could,

would, should and shall to show that they were confidence in presenting their ideas in the abstracts. The example below shows the modal verbs use in the abstracts by Malaysian writers:

MA 16: This is motivated by studies which suggest that for effective vocabulary learning process to occur explicit learning should be complemented with implicit learning.

In addition, Malaysian writers also used less adverb of frequency in their abstracts. It appeared in only five abstracts analysed. Below is the example of the use of adverb of frequency in the abstracts by Malaysian writers:

MA 5: Results show that generally, students have positive attitudes toward computers, but they have low skills in using computers.

Apart from that, Malaysian writers used fewer hedges of “modal adverbs” and “to clause and adjective” in writing their abstracts. These two types of hedges shared similar frequency in which it appeared in only two abstracts analysed. The example as shown below:

Modal adverbs

MA 11: Large classes, lack of time and multiple learning behaviours of language learners make learning and teaching of pronunciation an extremely tedious and costly task.

To clause and adjective

MA 2: One of the conditions that have been claimed to be theoretically necessary for Second Language Acquisition is the production of modified output by learners.

The data revealed that none of the Malaysian writers used hedges such as modal adjectives, modal nouns, that clauses and compound hedges in their abstracts.

The use of transition words by Malaysian writers

Table 5 below showed the frequency of transition words used in the abstracts by Malaysian writers.

Table 5: Frequency of the use of transition words in the abstracts by Malaysian writers

Types	Frequency
Addition	20
Results	2
Opposition	11
Examples	4
Similarity	-
Time	2
Chronological sequences	2
Emphasis	4
Summary	2
Exception	-
Generalizing	-

As can be seen from the table, the addition type was the most frequently and commonly used among Malaysian writers as it appeared in all 20 abstracts analysed. The frequent forms of addition type such as “and”, “in addition”, “also”, “furthermore” were used by the writers to show the continuation of the ideas as in this example below:

MA 15: In addition, it also examines the relationship between engagement levels and academic performance.

Next, the opposition type was the second frequently used by Malaysian writers in which it was presented in 11 abstracts analysed. “But”, “however”, and “although” appeared to be the most prominently used by the writers in the abstracts to express that there was evidence to the contrary ideas and thus introduced a change of line reasoning. The example below shows the use of opposition type in the abstracts by Malaysian writers:

MA 20: Although journal writing is a popular pedagogical class assignment required by teachers in EFL classes, there is still room for research into the use of journal writing by teachers themselves to monitor the effectiveness of their teaching practice.

Besides that, a small number presented the use of transition words such as “examples”, “emphasis”, “results”, “time”, “chronological sequences”, and “summary” in the abstracts by Malaysian writers. In terms of examples type, it appeared in only four abstracts analysed. The examples type was used to introduce examples as supporting to the main idea, to indicate importance or as an illustration so that an idea was cued to the reader as shown in the example below:

MA 14: They formed four randomly chosen groups, each received different treatments, namely the strategy instruction and attribution retraining, strategy instruction only, attribution retraining only, and the non-treatment.

Similarly, the use of emphasis type by Malaysian writers also appeared in four abstracts analysed. This type of transition word was used to indicate the importance of the fact that they made. Malaysian writers made less use of emphasis type like “in fact”, “in particular” and “i.e.” in their abstracts. Below is the example of the emphasis used in the abstracts by Malaysian writers:

MA 13: Although the forms vary, the function is constant, i.e. asking for something.

The data showed that these types of transition words such as “results”, “time”, “chronological sequences” and “summary” shared similar frequency and they merely appeared in only two abstracts analysed. Below is the example of the use of results type in the abstracts by Malaysian writers. This type of transition word was used to show that after a particular time there was a consequence or an effect occurred as in the example below:

MA 6: Consequently, the learning styles of these students are of Diverges.

The use of transition words of time type like “since”, “after”, “while” and “when” can function as limiting, restricting, and defining time. They can be used either alone or as part of adverbial expressions. This type of transition words was presented by Malaysian writers in only two abstracts analysed. The example as shown below:

MA 5: Studies on computer use in education have taken into account the gender factor since the 1980s.

The chronological sequences were used to add information or list the examples and this type of transition words was found in only two abstracts analysed by Malaysian writers. The example as shown below:

MA 4: This paper describes a preliminary study designed: a) to identify..., b) to explicate..., and c) to suggest...

Only a few of Malaysian writers used the type of summary like “finally”, “therefore” and “hence” to signal the conclusion

in their abstracts in which it presented in two abstracts analysed. The example below shows the use of summary type in the abstracts by Malaysian writers:

MA 7: Finally, it suggests some measures to overcome these problems and to promote the use of ICT in a wider and more meaningful manner for ELT programmes.

Finally, the data revealed that none of the Malaysian writers utilized these types of transition words in their abstracts such as “similarity”, “exception” and “generalizing”.

Conclusion

Knowledge of rhetorical structure and linguistic features of the genres are clearly significant for the teaching of English for Specific Purposes especially in teaching genres to students of research writing. Genre analysis can provide students with both rhetorical and linguistic awareness of genres that they need to command of in their research writing. Hence, it will provide information about genres that is useful for both teachers and students.

The findings of this study highlight the use of linguistics features for each section of the article abstracts written by 20 Malaysian writers. The findings of this study have added to our understanding of genre conventions in research writing and will improve our knowledge of the nature of research articles are written.

Moreover, the findings will have relevance for the teaching of research writing to non-native speakers of English and help English for Specific Purposes teachers and course designers to prepare discipline specific research writing courses. Findings from genre analysis have also contributed to the developments in curricula for ESP.

Finally, it is crucial that more study need to be conducted into the research article abstracts using more samples from various fields of studies and by various writers from different cultures background. Without more research, academic writing courses will suffer and it will affect non-native writers of English who lack the language ability to understand the knowledge of genres in research writing.

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