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Rhetorical and Textual Organization of English and Arabic PhD Dissertation Abstracts in Linguistics

Abstract

This study compares English and Arabic PhD dissertation abstracts in the field of linguistics in an attempt to study the rhetorical and linguistic variations between the abstracts written in English and those written in Arabic. To this end, we have analyzed the rhetorical components that constitute the macrostructure of fifty English PhD dissertation abstracts written by English native speakers and those underlying fifty Arabic PhD dissertations written by native Arabic speakers following Swales' (1990) CARS model of RA introductions and Bhatia's (1993) IMRD move structure. The results showed differences between the two sets of data in generic structure preferences in terms of the type and frequency of moves and the linguistic realizations of these moves. The rhetorical variations across the two languages are most likely due to socio-cultural and academic expectations. The differences related to certain linguistic realizations such as voice and tense choice are ascribed either to inherent linguistic differences between the two languages or to academic practice. The study highlights the importance of teaching abstracts writing skills to PhD candidates.

1.   Abstract genre as an academic practice

The abstract that accompanies research articles and dissertations is a notable practice in academic research as it constitutes a gateway to the reading or publication of a research article or a thesis (Lores 2004: 281). Salager-Mayer (1992) perceives this genre as a distinctive category of discourse intended to communicate factual new knowledge for members of different academic communities. The abstracts play a pivotal role in professional reading as they help readers decide on the relevance of an article to their interests (Busa 2005) and give researchers an adequate view of whether a particular longer text is worth reading. Similarly, Martin-Martin (2003, 2005) notes that abstracts function as a time saving device by informing the readers about the content of the article, indicating whether the full text merits further attention.

PhD dissertation abstract writing is an academic practice that all candidates from different fields have to adopt when they write a full PhD thesis while doing their postgraduate course or research. In most cases writing a PhD dissertation is only attempted once in a graduate student's career. The great majority of dissertations are prefaced by an informative abstract, which contains a "factual summary of the much longer report, and is meant to give the reader an exact and concise knowledge of the full [dissertation]" (Bhatia 1993: 78).

The dissertation and research article abstract, as a genre, is a recognizable situated linguistic behavior in an institutionalized academic setting, having a set of communicative functions mutually-understood by established members of the academic community. Irrespective of the subject they serve, abstracts function as being "advance indicators of the content and structure of the following text" (Swales 1990: 179). The abstract is meant to function as a *representation* as in Bazerman (1984: 58), *front matters* as in Swales (1990: 179), as a *summary* as in Bhatia (1993: 78) and Kaplan et al. (1994: 405).

Though each dissertation is prefaced by an abstract and both are prepared by the same author, meant for the same readership and share the same contextual configuration, the abstract is thought of as a distinct and independent discourse genre of an associated text (i.e. dissertation or research article). Each genre has a well-defined communicative purpose articulated by its overall rhetorical organization. As stated by Van Dijk (1980), the abstract can be viewed as an integral piece of discourse; it can appear in abstracting journals and in on-line retrieval systems which publish paper abstracts. Its appearance in abstracting journals is designed to lead the readers back to the original text (Swales 1990). Given this merit, information scientists have been interested in the standards that would increase the quality and retrievability of abstracts (Chan & Foo 2004) and that would assess the content of a publication and facilitate the retrieval process (Lin et al. 2006). For Ventola (1994: 333), abstracts "have become a tool of mastering and managing the ever increasing information flow in the scientific community" as they are the first part of the dissertation or the research article to be read.

2.   The features of abstracts in previous literature

Previous studies have mainly focused on investigating the rhetorical and linguistic features of research article abstracts attempting to identify and describe the relation between the different moves that constitute this genre and the linguistic features that indicate each of its component moves. Some of these studies focused on research article abstract in specific disciplines, other studies shed light on variations across disciplines and cultures, and others examined the possible impact of language choice in abstracts. For instance, Salager-Meyer (1990, 1992), Busch-Lauer (1995), Anderson & Maclean (1997) and Lin et al. (2006) focused on the rhetorical structure of medical English abstracts; Huckin (2001) on biomedicine; Gibson (1993) explored certain linguistic variables that affect the success of abstract in the field of information and library science; Santos (1996), Hyland (2000), Dahl (2004) and Lores (2004) investigated the textual and rhetorical moves along with some of the linguistic features that express abstracts in linguistics, and Pho (2008) considered the rhetorical moves and the authorial stance in the fields of applied linguistics and educational technology.

Variation of abstracts across disciplines has been studied by different researchers (e.g. Melander et al. 1997, Hyland 2000, Huckin 2001, Samarj 2002, Stotesbury 2003, Dahl 2004, Bondi, 2005, and Busa 2005). For example, Melander et al. (1997) examined the possible impact of language choice in abstracts from three different disciplines and find that linguistics and biology abstracts produced in "the American context are different in their overall organization". Huckin (2001) found that biomedical research article abstracts often do not include the purpose move. Along the same lines, Samraj (2002) showed that the centrality claim moves are more crucial in the abstracts of Conservation Biology than those in Wildlife Behavior. Stotesbury (2003) demonstrated that evaluation attributes were twice as common in the humanities and social science abstracts as in those from the natural sciences. Bondi (2005) found that scientific procedures are foregrounded in economics abstracts. This tendency was also confirmed by Busa (2005), who confirmed a preference for the thematization of discourse products and procedures in economics abstracts. In contrast, psychology abstracts, as reported by Busa, reflected a preference for the foregrounding of the discourse objects over discourse products and procedures.

Martin-Martin (2005) pointed out that the choice of certain rhetorical options to convey knowledge claims vary across a number of dimensions, including languages and cultures. Regarding language, there has been a number of contrastive or comparative studies that have investigated variations in rhetorical strategies of written abstracts in English and those in other languages (e.g. Melander et al. 1997; Martin-Martin 2003; Martin-Martin & Burgess 2004; Bonn & Swales (2007). In an attempt to find the impact of language choice in abstracts from three different disciplines in the United States and Sweden, Melander et al. (1997) reported that linguistics abstracts showed strong national and cultural differences, and biology abstracts produced in "the American context are different in their overall organization". Martin-Martin (2003) investigated the rhetorical variation between the research article abstracts written in English and those written in Spanish in the field of experimental social sciences. The results revealed a strong tendency on the part of Spanish writers to exclude the Results section as opposed to the high frequency of this unit (86%) in the abstracts written in English. Likewise, Establishing a niche was selected in 42% of English abstracts whereas it is considerably lower (15%) in Spanish abstracts. The researcher relates the latter differences to socio-cultural factors such as the relationship between the writer and the academic community he addresses. In a subsequent study in the field of experimental social sciences, Martin-Martin (2005) offered an account of how the rhetorical practices including hedging devices, the use of first pronouns and the expressions of criticism that academics in English and Spanish use in the area of phonetics and psychology are a reflection of the social relations between writers and readers within different discourse communities and different cultures.

In a comparison between Spanish and English abstracts, Martin-Martin and Burgess (2004) found that English abstracts showed more criticism than their Spanish counterparts. In particular, English abstracts tended to make more use of impersonal and indirect ways of criticizing than their Spanish counterparts. In their analysis of English and French abstracts selected from English and French monolingual journals, Bonn and Swales (2007) found that French abstracts displayed less instances of use of first person singular pronouns; instead, they preferred using first person plural pronouns even though all the abstracts were single-authored,

whereas in the English abstracts, the choice was determined by the number of authors.

All of the studies of abstracts considered so far have focused on what has been written in English and other languages, apart from Arabic. Except, perhaps, for books compiling PhD dissertation abstracts in Arabic (e.g. Ali 1979) and another about abstracting as a genre in Arabic (Abdel Hadi and Zayed 2000), no published studies, as far as we know, appear to have specifically analyzed PhD abstracts written in Arabic in terms of their sequential component organizational patterns and the lexico-grammatical exponents used to express these patterns. Abdel Hadi and Zayed (2000) proposed schematic patterns as pedagogic tools that may present potential advantages for novice writers by giving them a picture about the different types of abstracts and their components, and how to prepare abstracts in terms of style, length and content, as well as how information is typically organized.

The literature review has revealed that research article abstracts have been the focus of a number of studies. Despite the fact that writing a PhD dissertation accompanied by an abstract is considered a formidable task for any graduate student and as such deserves greater attention, no work of which we are aware has attempted to analyze the rhetorical components of the dissertation abstracts in Arabic and English linguistics or has looked for the linguistic and socio-cultural norms and options that govern their rhetorical organization. Therefore, this paper is an attempt to examine comparatively the generic structure and the linguistic options in English PhD dissertation abstracts and those written in Arabic, with the aim of finding out the generic options and linguistic choices that characterize the two academic communities (i.e. the writers of English dissertation abstract and Arab writers). A further purpose of this study is to find out to what extent the linguistic and socio-cultural factors may condition the writers' rhetorical and linguistic choices.

3.   The construction of the corpus

A total of 100 PhD dissertation abstracts written in English and Arabic were used in the present study. The corpus in English is made up of fifty English abstracts written by native speakers of English and submitted during the period 1984–2009. Seventy percent of the texts were selected

from seventeen American universities, and thirty percent were from seven British universities. This unequal distribution of English corpus (i.e. 70% from US universities and 30% from British ones) would be more representative of the data than taking 50–50% if we take into consideration the percentage of population of these two countries. It is worth noting that the British and American writers of abstracts do not have a completely homogeneous culture. However, they are likely to maintain the generic structure of abstracts irrespective of cultural values in order to operate in a manner acceptable to the members of the academic community who share core academic discourses, textual practices and organizational generic patterns, irrespective of stylistic or linguistic variations, which are beyond the scope of this study. The English corpus was collected from ProQuest Dissertations & Thesis Databases (http://www.proquest.com/en-US/catalogs/databases) and The Linguistlist (http://linguistlist.org/pubs/diss/index.cfm).

The corpus in Arabic consists of 50 PhD dissertation abstracts written by doctoral Arabic native speakers from Jordanian universities and submitted during the period 1994–2009. All the texts collected were in paper-written format, most of which were collected from the Theses & Dissertation Depository Center in the University of Jordan Library. This Center contains thousands of PhD dissertations from different well-known universities in the Arab world. Surprisingly, we found that not all Arabic linguistics dissertations deposited in this center included abstracts, especially those deposited from Arab countries other than Jordan. The major criterion guiding the selection of Arabic abstracts was 'accessibility' of the data. Since the Jordanian PhD candidates in linguistics were the only ones who were found to include abstracts in their dissertations deposited in the center, the Arabic sample was selected only from Jordanian public universities that have PhD programs in Arabic linguistics, such as Yarmouk University, The University of Jordan and Muta University.

Considering that the rhetorical structure of linguistic features of one discipline can be different from those of other disciplines, and in order to avoid variations across disciplinary boundaries (Al-Ali 2010), the researchers gathered the sample only from texts belonging to the field of linguistics. According to Gnutzmann & Oldenburg (1991), the degree of uniformity of textual structures depends on the discipline to which the texts belong.

4. Theoretical framework and procedure of data analysis

The present study is conducted within the framework of genre analysis. According to Miller (1984), genres are developed by communities around sets of communicative events. The essence of the notion of genre analysis is to consider a genre text as a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of a communicative purpose(s) reflected in the cognitive structuring of the genre (Swales 1990; Bhatia 1993).

The data analysis of this study drew mainly on Bhatia's (1993) four-move model (i.e. introducing purpose, describing methodology, summarizing results and presenting conclusions) mirroring the structure of the research article (RA) and Swales' CARS (Creating a Research Space) model for research article introductions, which consists of the following three moves, each made up of different constituent steps:

> Move 1 Establishing a territory: claiming centrality, making topic generalization, reviewing items of previous literature.
> Move 2 Creating a niche: counter-claiming, indicating a gap, question raising, continuing a tradition.
> Move 3 Occupying the niche: outlining purpose or announcing present research, announcing principle findings, indicating RA structure.

However, the researchers found that Swales' and Bhatia's models did not accommodate all the component moves found in the data analyzed. That is to say, the Arabic and English texts analyzed were found to include some component moves that have not been identified in Swales' and Bhatia's data. Therefore, the researchers found it necessary to modify some of these moves and add other new components to the model of analysis. For example, the researchers added the 'Promoting thesis' move to achieve a strategic function specific to the Arabic abstracts and the 'Introducing benefits'. Furthermore, we modified Step 4 of Swales model, which came to be termed 'Indicating thesis structure and content'. Likewise, we modified Bhatia's 'Describing methodology' and 'Presenting conclusions', which came to be termed 'Describing methodology and analysis procedures' and 'Presenting conclusions and recommendations', respectively.

The rhetorical structure of abstracts of the current study was analyzed in terms of the component moves that make up each individual text. The

term 'move', as used by Swales (1981, 1990), varies in length but at least contains one proposition that may be conveyed by one sentence or more and sometimes by a clause or a phrase, as noted by Bhatia (1993), Holmes (1997) and Al-Ali (1999, 2004). Therefore, it is difficult to identify move boundaries on formal linguistic criteria only. Consequently, assigning a function for a particular move is mainly guided by both implicit knowledge (Sandig 1986, quoted in Szurawitzki 2008) of generic conventions and explicit lexical items and phrases signaling information contained in each text portion (i.e. move) (Al-Ali 2009). Implicit knowledge, according to Sandig (1986: 132), might be brought about by drawing on the textual conventions of a particular genre, establishing relations of different textual elements and the theme and understanding how textual elements are related in a greater linguistic context. When we turned to the examination of the constituent moves of this genre, we drew on our background knowledge of the generic rhetorical organizational conventions, inference from content and knowledge of the context. That is because, according to Bhatia (2004), the schematic generic patterns of a text are the result of the conventions of the socio-cultural contexts in which genres are written. However, we noted that most of the moves have been signaled explicitly in indicative lexical phrasal expressions. For example, lexical signals like 'the *aim* or *purpose* of the study' indicate *occupying the niche* move, whereas 'the *methods* used to *collect data*' signals *describing methodology* move. Likewise, lexical items such as *find*, *reveal*, *indicate,* et ct. suggest *summarizing results* move, or *presenting conclusions*. Since move analysis involves a degree of subjectivity that is perhaps unavoidable (Holmes 1997: 325), another trained linguist was asked to identify the component moves of fifty abstracts selected randomly from the sample. Then the researchers themselves and the other linguist set together to check the degree of conformity in their analysis. There were slight differences found, but a consensus was reached after discussing the differences. The researchers compared and contrasted the Arabic corpus with the English corpus in order to find the similarities and differences between the two groups in terms of the type, frequency, number and language used to express the component moves employed by the writers.

5. Results of data analysis

5.1 Component Moves of English and Arabic PhD dissertation abstracts

The results of the generic structure of dissertation abstracts revealed the component strategic moves that tend to occur in the corpus texts analyzed (see Table 1). Each component will be defined, illustrated and exemplified by instances from the corpus. For purposes of illustration, examples of linguistic exponents and signals are often italicized or underlined.

Table 1. Component Moves of English and Arabic PhD dissertation abstracts

Component moves of English abstracts	Frequency of moves (%)	Component moves of Arabic abstracts	Frequency of moves (%)
1. Claiming centrality	6	1. Claiming centrality	12
2. Making a topic generalization	24	2. Making a topic generalization	30
3. Referring to previous research	20		
4. Indicating a gap	16	4. Indicating a gap	12
5. Announcing present research or Outlining purpose	96	5. Announcing present research or Outlining purpose	86
6. Indicating thesis structure and content	28	6. Indicating thesis structure and content	78
7. Describing methods and Analysis Procedures	70	7. Describing methods and Analysis Procedures	42
8. Summarizing results	82	8. Summarizing results	40
		9. Promoting thesis	16
10. Introducing benefits	26	10. Introducing benefits	10
11.Presenting conclusions and recommendations	46	11. Presenting conclusions and recommendations	6

5.1.1 Claiming centrality

Authors, in this move, appeal to the peer members of the academic discourse community that "the research about to be presented is part of a lively, significant or well-established research area" (Swales 1990: 144). The frequency of occurrence of this move in Arabic abstracts (12%) is

relatively higher than that in English corpus (6%). Our analysis of this move indicated that the authors use more than one strategy to claim the centrality of their work; they utilize 'claiming importance of the research to be reported' as in examples 1 and 2, and 'indicating continuing interest' as in 3. In the following examples the lexical signals indicating this move are italicized.

(1)   Neutralization is a *fundamental* construct in the history of phonological theory. (EA 11)

(2)   (AA 38)   ظاهرة الخلاف في النحو العربي من *أبرز* ما تناول الدرس النحوي.
       'The phenomenon of disagreement in Arabic grammar is one of the *prominent* issues that have been dealt with in grammar research.'

(3)   (AA 31)   ...الإعلامية موضوع *تتنامى أهميّته*
       'Media is a topic of *increasing importance*...'

As is shown in the examples above, the writers tend to indicate the importance of the topic by using the key signal lexical items: *fundamental* or *أبرز* 'prominent', whereas the continuing interest claims are expressed by the lexical item *تتنامى أهميّته* 'increasing importance'.

5.1.2 Making a topic generalization

The second option of introduction openers is making "statements about knowledge or practice" (Swales 1990:146). This component occurred in 30% of Arabic data, whereas it occurred in 24% of the English sample. Typically, the following examples express in general terms the current state of knowledge or techniques (i.e. tools) as in the case of example 4, or refer to phenomena as in instances 5 and 6.

Both English and Arab PhD candidates in linguistics used subjects that refer to a general topic in the field associated with verbs in the present tense. In the following examples the lexical signals indicating this move are italicized and the tenses are underlined.

(4)   Propositions <u>are</u> one of the *tools* languages can use to work and distinguish roles associated with… (EA 23)

(5)   (AA 30)   ...تمثل *ظاهرة* الحذف الصرفي نوعا من التطور اللغوي

'The *phenomenon* of morphological deletion <u>represents</u> a type of language development'

(6)   (AA 24)   يعد العدول النحوي في السياق القراني *ظاهرة* اسلوبية لغوية
       'Grammatical deviation in the Qur'anic context <u>is considered</u> a stylistic *phenomenon…*'

5.1.3 Referring to previous research

The aim of this move is to indicate that the thesis derives from a lively tradition of established works in the field (Nwogu 1997: 126). This component move was found in 20% of English abstracts, but it was not present in the Arabic texts. The analysis revealed that English PhD candidates in linguistics either specify the names of other researchers, as in example 7, or refer to previous studies in general (e.g. *recent debates, previous studies…*). The verb tense accompanying these subjects is the present simple.

(7)   *Bickerton (1981) and others* <u>claim</u> that children can become proficient in a language even when they are exposed only to non-proficient speakers. (EA 3)

5.1.4 Indicating a gap

This move points out that the previous research has some limitations that need investigation. The data revealed that this component occurred in 12% of the Arabic data in contrast to 16% in the English sample. Representative abbreviated examples with the lexical signals italicized and the tense underlined are given in examples 8 and 9.

(8)   Existing research has focused on abstract mental representation of grammar, and *little* <u>is known</u> about…(EA 17)

(9)   (AA 34)   لا نجد دراسة وصفية احصائية وافية لكل مظاهر بناء الجملة.
       'We *do not find* a comprehensive descriptive and statistical study of the different aspects of sentence structure…'

To express this move, English PhD candidates in linguistics tend to use restricting quantifiers such as *little*, as in example 8, or other qualifying expressions indicating negative meaning, such as *short*. The Arab PhD candidates in linguistics, on the other hand, negate the verb phrase by making use of negative articles such as لا (*laa*) as in 9, or لم *(lamm)* both of which mean 'not'. We also notice that English and Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to use the simple present tense to express this move.

5.1.5 Announcing present research or Outlining purpose

According to Swales' CARS model, after indicating a gap in the related literature, research writers are expected to fill this gap (i.e. *occupying the niche*). This move was found to be almost obligatory (96%) in the English abstracts, while it occurred in 86% of the Arabic ones.

One of the most likely options a writer could employ to occupy the niche is to announce the research to be presented, which occurred in 76% of the English and Arabic data. Utilizing this option, English PhD candidates in linguistics describe what they consider to be the main features of their research using English verbs such as *investigate*, *describe*, *present and defend*, *examine*, *address*, *provide*, *explore*, *survey*, *show*, *deal with*, *argue*, *discuss* and *analyze*, without using a purposive lexical item like *aim* or *purpose*, while Arab candidates utilize verbs like يبحث 'investigate', تهدف 'aims', يتناول 'deals with' and يناقش 'discuss'. The second option is outlining the purpose of the study, where the writers tend to use purposive statements containing lexical items such as *aim*, *goal*, *purpose,* الهدف 'the purpose', هدفت 'it aimed' to state the purpose explicitly. This option was seen only in 24% of the data.

The onset of this move is typically marked by the use of deictic references to the present text, which is either the *genre* or the type of *inquiry*. The common deictic elements used in English data are: *this* (86%), and *the/present* (14%). The cases where the deictic refers to the genre (e.g. dissertation, thesis (70%)) are more frequent than those where it refers to the type of inquiry (e.g. study, investigation, research, work (30%)). In contrast, in Arabic there is a strong tendency (70%) for the two deictic signals (the demonstrative pronoun هذا 'this' and the definite article ال 'the' to occur together (e.g. ... تناول هذا البحث 'This research deals with…'), whereas the definite article ال (the) (e.g. ...تناول البحث 'The research deals

with…') was only used in 14%. It is worthwhile noting that in 16% of Arabic abstracts the writers refer neither to the genre nor to the type of inquiry. Furthermore, in Arabic the cases where the deictic refers to the genre are significantly less frequent (10%) than those that refer to the type of inquiry (90%).

According to Santos (1996: 489), the clear preference for *this* is presumably to be explained in part by the author's effort to incorporate that abstract into the body of the paper, while the use of *the* suggests that the main article is viewed as standing apart from the abstract.

A further observation concerns the co-occurrence of inanimate subjects with animate verbs in both languages, but it varies from one language to another in frequency. The writers tend to use the collapsed structure, through which they use 'Reference to writer's own work macro-research outcome' subjects (e.g. This dissertation examines/ provides/…) as is shown in examples 10 and 11, instead of the standard descriptive form, where they employ 'self-reference' subjects indicated by the first-person singular pronoun *I* (e.g. In this dissertation, *I* provide/ explore…) as indicated in examples 12 and 13.

(10) *This study* explores… (EA 14)

(11) (AA 43)   تهدف هذه الرسالة...
      '*This thesis* aims at…'

(12) In this dissertation, *I* argue… (EA 6)

(13) (AA 30)   تناولت في هذا البحث...
      'In this research, *I* dealt with…'

It is worth pointing out that the percentage of collapsed structures (86%) used by the writers was remarkably much more than that of the standard descriptive form (14%). The English PhD candidates in linguistics used the former structure more frequently (96%) than the Arab PhD candidates (76%). However, the Arab candidates employed the standard form (i.e. the co-occurrence of animate subjects with animate verbs) more frequently (24%) than English PhD candidates who did so with the percentage of 4%. This may indicate that this tendency varies in its acceptability from one language to another.

As for the tense used in the texts analyzed, English PhD candidates in linguistics only used the present simple tense. However, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics used either present or past tense, but they showed a tendency for using the present tense. Moreover, English PhD candidates in linguistics tended to use active voice (96%) more than passive and simple present tense more than the past tense. For example,

(14)   The effects of linguistic experience on the perceptual classification of phonological dialect variation <u>are investigated</u>. (EA 24)

However, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics employed both tenses, with a percentage of 55% for present simple and 45% for past simple, and never employed the passive voice. A further observation is that English and Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tended to initiate this move by a general statement of purpose followed by a more precise one. English PhD candidates in linguistics employed this option much more frequently than Arabs (42% vs. 8%, respectively).

5.1.6 Indicating thesis structure and content

In this move, the writers indicate the thesis structure in varying degrees of detail in terms of the chapters constituting it and they often provide a summary of each chapter. This component was found in 78% of the Arabic data in contrast to 28% in the English abstracts. A detailed analysis of the occurrence of this move showed that the onset and the type of information included in this move differ in the two sets of data. In Arabic abstracts, this move usually includes the following three component steps: Signposting, Denominating and Indicating content. The first is a one sentence step indicating the number of chapters that make up the thesis. It provides scaffolding on which writers hang the following two steps. The second step designates the title of each chapter, while the third usually indicates the purpose followed by a summary of each chapter. Example 16 illustrates this move. Sometimes, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics indicate the number of chapters followed by the title of each chapter and its content. Surprisingly, in 6% of the abstracts those writers employed a one-move abstract realized by *Indicating thesis structure*. Seventy-percent of this move occurs as a second move immediately after *Outlining Purpose*.

However, English PhD candidates in linguistics directly state the content of each chapter, as in 15.

(15) *The first chapter* proposes a unifying typology for relating types of language… *Chapter 2* provides a macrosociolinguistic account of…*Chapter 3* investigates the contemporary forces promoting large-scale contact with English… (EA 38)

(16) (AA 9)

تحوي هذه الرساله مقدمة وثلاثة فصول. اما المقدمه فقد بينت فيها ان سبب دراستي موضوع الاخطاء اللغوية عائد الى ... في الفصل الاول بينت اهمية دراسة موضوع الاخطاء اللغوية ووضحت المصطلحات الاخرى الدالة على المخالفات اللغوية . اما الفصل الثاني، فتناولت فية اتجاهات تحليل الاخطاء اللغوية: وهي ... اما الفصل الثالث فهو دراسة تطبيقية في تحليل الأخطاء الكتابية لدى مستوى...

'This thesis contains an introduction and three chapters [Signposting]. In the introduction [Denominating], I showed that the reason for studying grammatical errors is due to… [Content of Introduction]. In the first chapter, I showed the importance of studying grammatical errors, and clarified the other terminologies denoting linguistic deviations… [Content of chapter 1]. In the second chapter, I addressed the analytical views of linguistic error analysis: They are:… [Content of chapter 2]. The third chapter is an applied study of the analysis of written errors at the level of… [Content of Chapter 3].'

5.1.7 Describing methods and analysis procedures

This move includes information about the data, methods and procedures of data analysis that are used to achieve the goals of the study. It was present in 70% of the English abstracts in contrast to 42% in the Arabic ones. The predominant tense used across the English and Arabic linguistics abstracts is the past. The abstracts displayed that this generic move tends to be realized by one or more of the following constituent components:

a) Sampling procedures: The writers tend to include information about the population of the study related to the source, setting, size and characteristics of the sample and the tools and criteria of data collection. The following examples illustrate this constituent step. The lexical items indicating this step are italicized and the verb tense and voice are underlined.

(17) *Research articles from the Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London*, the oldest continuing journal of general scientific research, <u>constituted</u> the corpus of data in this study. (Sample source) (EA 30)

(18)   The data for this subject <u>came</u> from *map task dialogues collected from 20 native Southern California speakers…* (Source and sample size) (EA 47)

(19)   (AA 10)   . استمدت الدراسة مادتها اللغوية من نماذج نصية سياقية متنوعة
       'The study <u>derived</u> its linguistic data from *a variety of contextual text models*' (Source and Characteristics of the sample)

b) Identifying data analysis procedures: The function of this constituent step is to specify which procedures or experimental methods and techniques were used to analyze data. The following are examples extracted from both types of data. The lexical items indicating this step are italicized and the verb tense and voice are underlined.

(20)   *Ultrasound imaging techniques and F2 measurements* <u>were employed</u> to see how much further front of the articulation… (EA 4)

(21)   (AA 1)   *CSL* توصلت الدراسة الى بعض النتائج بعد تحليل عدد من الجمل العربية والانجليزية بجهاز
       'The study <u>showed</u> some results after analyzing a number of Arabic and English sentences using *the CSL apparatus*.'

A major difference between English and Arab data is that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics always employed the active voice, whereas English PhD candidates tended to use the passive voice with a percentage of 77%, as is shown in the examples above. A further observation is that both groups of writers differ in the type of information they include in this move. While English PhD candidates in linguistics include information about the source, setting, size, characteristics of the sample, tools and criteria of data collection, Arab PhD candidates restrict their choice to one sub-component (i.e. Source Sample of the study).

5.1.8 Summarizing Results

This component highlights the achievement of some significant results. It mentions the most salient and striking findings (Salager-Meyer 1992: 105). The data showed that this move has a higher frequency of occurrence in English (82%) than in Arabic data (40%).

The analysis of abstracts demonstrated that the subjects of the sentences introducing this move differ in both groups of data. English PhD

candidates in linguistics initiate this move with subjects that refer to writer's own work micro-research outcome as in example (22), or to objects of research and their attributes as in (23). The writers also tend to start with 'anticipatory *it*' subjects as in (24) or self-reference subjects as in (25). These subjects occurred with verbs such as *show*, *reveal*, *demonstrate*, *confirm*, *find* and *indicate*:

(22) *Results* confirm the strong relationship between prosodic structure and care of articulation as well as an inverse relationship between language redundancy and care of articulation. (EA 46)

(23) *Utterance-final lengthening* is found to be progressive. (EA 41)

(24) *It* is found that occlusive realizations of intervocalic /d/ are favored in word-initial, stressed syllables… (EA 25)

(25) *We* show how a verb's extended projection may be extended by restructuring verbs… (EA 39)

Arab PhD candidates in linguistics, on the other hand, restricted their choices to 'Reference to writer's own work macro-research outcome' subjects, as in example (26), and 'self-reference' subjects. Besides, they used only the verbs بين 'showed', أظهر 'reveal', كشف 'uncovers', وجد 'found', توصل 'reached' to express this move.

(26) (AA 3)   أظهر *البحث* أن الخلاف النحوي الكوفي يكاد يشمل جميع الأبواب النحوية،...
      '*The research* <u>revealed</u> the Kufi's controversial grammar almost includes all grammatical issues …'

Our analysis also revealed that English PhD candidates in linguistics utilized active voice more than passive (77% vs. 23%) respectively. While the active voice is accompanied with 'Reference to writer's own work micro-research outcome' subjects, it is the passive voice that is associated with 'anticipatory *it*'. However, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics never employed the passive voice in this move. Moreover, the distribution of verb tenses differs in both groups of abstracts. In English abstracts, there was a preference for the present simple tense (66%) in contrast to the past simple tense (73%) in Arabic corpus.

5.1.9 Promoting the thesis

In this move, the writer promotes the value of the study in an attempt to persuade the readers to read the whole thesis. This component was only found in the abstracts written by Arab authors with a percentage of 16%. It was realized by the use of predicative adjectives that describe the current research. The lexical items indicating this move are underlined in the following examples to illustrate this move.

(27) (AA 12)

رغم وجود العديد من الدراسات التي تتناول الظواهر النحوية للتفسيرات الصوتية لكنها لم تكن بهذا <u>التنظيم</u>
<u>والسعه</u> كما كانت هنا

'Despite the presence of many studies that have dealt with grammatical phenomena of acoustic interpretations, they were not <u>as organized and comprehensive</u> as the study presented here.'

(28) (AA 9)

ازعم ان هذه الدراسة استطاعت في مستويي بحثها النظري والتطبيقي ان تخرج بمجموعة من النتائج مما
يدفعنا الى القول ان هذا البحث كان <u>رائدا</u> في موضوعه

'I argue that this study, in its theoretical and practical levels, has come up with a set of results that lead us to say that this research was a <u>pioneering</u> topic of its kind.'

5.1.10 Introducing benefits

This move comprises the intended or projected outcomes of the study presented in terms of their benefit to the "real world" outside the study itself, or even outside the research field (Connor & Mauranen 1999, Halleck & Connor 2006). The statement of benefit may also emphasize the theoretical importance of the study in advancing the state of knowledge in a specific area of research (Weissberg & Buker 1990). As pointed out by Weissberg & Buker (1990), this component should be included in the introductions when one writes a thesis or thesis proposal, but in reports written up as journal articles this move is often omitted. English PhD candidates in linguistics employed this move more often (26%) than the Arab PhD candidates (10%). The latter start this move with a nominal clause referring to the subject of the study itself always marked by the use of the noun أهمية 'importance'. For example,

(29) (AA 38)

للدراسة اهمية كبيرة لعلها ستلقي كثيرا من الاضواء على مناطق مظلمة في النحو العربي .

'This study is of <u>great importance</u> in that it sheds lights on many controversial issues of Kufi's grammar.'

English PhD candidates, on the other hand, primarily initiate this move either with subjects that refer to the study itself, as in example (30), or research-related events/processes, as in (31). These subjects tend to be followed by verbs indicating advantages or benefits such as *provide*, *develop*, *solve*, *support* and *help*. The predominant tense used in this move was the present simple, as is illustrated in the following examples:

(30) *This study* <u>solves</u> several outstanding problems that traditional phonological constituents cannot handle. (EA 22)

(31) *The interpretations* which these two resultatives receive <u>support</u> one type of structure within the meanings of certain verbs. (EA 8)

5.1.11 Presenting conclusions and recommendations

As is shown in Table 1, this move appears in 46% of English data, while it is rare in Arabic texts (6%). In the conclusion move, the writers attempt to draw either a definite and unhedged deduction (Hopkins and Dudley-Evans 1988) indicating the generalizability of the results deduced, as in instances 32 and 34, or a hedged claim that aroused from the results. In example 34, the verb *suggest* carries a hedged meaning similar to that of the modal verb. This move sometimes includes a statement about the recommendations indicating a need for further research.

English PhD candidates in linguistics initiate this move either with 'Reference to writer's own work micro-research outcome' subjects (57%) or with 'anticipatory *it*' (36%). In the following examples, the subjects are italicized and the lexical items indicating this move are underlined.

(32) *It* [anticipatory it] <u>is concluded</u> that tone perception is language dependent and strongly influenced by musical expertise- musical aptitude and musical theory, not musical training as such. (EA 42)

(33) *This leads to the <u>conclusion</u>* that, within English, prosodic structure is the means with which constraints caused by requiring a robust signal are expressed in spontaneous speech. (EA 46)

(34) *The results* [Reference to writer's own work micro-research outcome] <u>suggest</u> that the learners are by and large incapable of producing the L2 vowels accurately. (EA 49)

However, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to employ the grammatical subject that refers to the study itself (i.e. Reference to writer's own work macro-research outcome). It is usually accompanied with the verb خلص 'concluded' that directly signals the conclusion move. The following is an example:

(35) (AA 42)   ،خلص<u>ت الدراسة</u> الى ضرورة فصل الجوانب النظرية عن الجوانب التطبيقية
'*The study* <u>concluded</u> that it is necessary to separate the theoretical aspects from the applied ones.'

It was also found that while the tense used in English data was the present, the past tense was employed in Arabic. Arab authors employed the active voice, while English PhD candidates in linguistics employed both active (64%) and passive (36%).

5.2 Dissertation formats

Our analysis of the two sets of data revealed that the dissertation abstracts reflected three different dissertation formats:

a) The IMRD format: This stands for the basic structural components that typically constitute a research article (Introduction- Methods- Results-Discussion) and is taken to be the standard or traditional format for the PhD dissertations (Dudley-Evans, 1999). As pointed out by Swales (2004), this structure is essentially a blown up version of the IMRD structure of research articles. This type is the most representative in our corpus; IMRD structure constitutes 86% of the total number of the English sample and 42% of the Arabic abstracts analyzed.

b) Topic-based format: The body of the dissertation is a compilation of a series of publishable articles, each of which examines a particular topic presented in a chapter, and the collection of these specific topics has a

coherent topic or theme. The writers utilize this type to "report and discuss their analysis in multiple chapters (ranging from three to seven) with topic-specific titles" (Bunton 1998: 114). A small percentage of abstracts (12%) in Arabic and (10%) in English was found to follow this pattern. The writers tended to write abstracts typically opened with a component step of the CARS structure (e.g. the general purpose of the study followed by indicating a gap in literature and/or indicating thesis structure, etc.) followed by the Methods move. They then present, in sequence, the purpose of each topic followed by the results pertaining to each topic. Finally, the writers close the sequence of topic-specific titles with a general conclusion. In this pattern, the Methods move is optional, depending on whether the core methods is used for most of the topics discussed; otherwise, the methods component, if used, is given immediately after the purpose of each topic. This structure can be represented as follows:

> General purpose + (indicating a gap) + (indicating thesis structure) + (methods) + Specific purpose or title of each topic + (methods) + results of each topic… + (conclusion).

c) A third set of abstracts, with the highest representation in Arabic corpus (46%) in comparison to 4% in English, did not match either of the two structures indicated above. Forty percent of the Arabic abstracts were found to include only two components, the first of which is *outlining purposes* followed by *indicating dissertation structure*. The other 6% of the Arabic abstracts (3 instances) included only one sub-move (*Indicating dissertation structure*). A further analysis of the former sub-set of abstracts revealed that the writers first present the general goal of the study followed by *Indicating dissertation structure*, which in turn includes three component steps; a one-sentence step indicates the number of chapters that make up the thesis, the second step designates the title of each chapter, and the third usually takes each chapter in sequence presenting its particular purpose followed by a summary of its content.

6. Discussion

The analysis of the English and Arabic dissertation abstracts has shown variations in terms of the generic components utilized by the two groups of writers and the linguistic features used in the two sets of data.

6.1   Generic structure variations

Our analysis indicated that there are eleven component moves by means of which the schematic structures of dissertation abstracts are built, as shown in Table 1. A comparison between Arabic linguistics dissertation abstracts and English abstracts shows differences in the type and frequency of the component moves employed to articulate this genre. For example, we identified *Promoting thesis* move in the Arabic texts, but not in English data. However, this promotion move does not include factual promotional evidence to support this strategy. This may be used to reflect a kind of appraisal for both the writers themselves and their contribution (cf. Al-Ali & Sahawneh 2008). For English native speakers, promotion which is based simply on feelings or desires rather than on rational judgment lacks credibility and is likely to be viewed by the reader as purely subjective (Bhatia 1993: 70). As an alternative strategic component, English PhD candidates in linguistics find it necessary to exhibit the benefits and applications of their research in order to promote their abstracts to the wider international academic community employing a variety of lexical options. This component was evident in 26% of the English PhD candidates' data as compared to 10% in the Arabic texts. The most frequent rhetorical appeals found in English abstracts were to what can be glossed as *benefit*, *facilitate*, *provide*, *help*, *support*, *allow* and *solve*. Such positive attitudinal items indicate the function of 'promotion' or 'selling'. Arab PhD candidates in linguistics, on the other hand, make a very restricted use of this move and utilize only the noun أهمية 'importance' to signal the importance of their work without any specification of this importance. A further instance supporting the element of objective promotion of the English PhD candidates' abstracts is the high frequency of the conclusions and recommendations move which is used to advance the researchers' claims. This move occurred more often in the English data (46%) in comparison to 6% in Arabic texts. By showing the value of the results obtained to academics in the field, English PhD candidates in linguistics seem to be more persuasive since the main function of this move, as stated by Hyland (2000), is to take the reader from the text into the world by commenting on the implications of the research or its applications.

On the other hand, the English PhD candidates employ 'Referring to previous research', a component that is not utilized in Arabic texts. The

occurrence of this infrequent move (20%) in the English data may indicate English PhD candidates' preference to place their work within the context of on-going research (Nwogu 1997: 126) in order to show that their research derives from a lively tradition of established related works in the field. This may be also considered an attempt by the English PhD candidates in linguistics to situate the abstracts within a wider international academic community (Bonn & Swales 2007; Martin-Martin 2003) in comparison to the reduced number of Arab readers as a target community. This distinction is evinced in the frequency of the component moves employed by the two groups of writers. One possible justification for such a tendency may be that English PhD candidates in linguistics find it necessary to justify and discuss the merits of their research, as well as to exhibit its benefits. This practice, in turn, indicates that what matters for English PhD candidates in linguistics is *why* (Regent 1985) and *selling* (Yakhnotova 2002). In contrast, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to use instances that embody general statements indicating either the scarcity or unavailability of the studies that have dealt with the author's current study without citing previous researches.

Another significant difference between English and Arabic texts is the tendency to omit the results and methods moves in the Arabic abstracts. The frequencies of occurrence of these moves in Arabic data are 40% and 42%, respectively, as opposed to 82% in results and 70% in methods in the abstracts written in English. It is obvious that most English abstracts include a results move foregrounding the main findings, telling the readers what they can get of the dissertation and whether it will be beneficial to them. Hyland (2000) points out that, as a means for gaining the reader's interest and acceptance, writers are anxious to underline their most central claims by including results statements in their abstracts. In contrast, Arabic abstracts, for the most part, are characterized by the relative absence of this move, which supposedly involves providing information that the readers anticipate will be given.

Regarding the methods move, English PhD candidates in linguistics used this component in 70% of their abstracts as a way of reporting their methods sections, whereas this practice is used in 42% of cases in Arabic. An English speaking reader expects that the abstract will indicate *how* the study was conducted because sometimes *how* is seen as more important than *what* is found (i.e. results) to the extent that this move replaces the

results move altogether in the hard knowledge abstracts (Hyland 2000). One possible explanation of the relative absence of the methods move in Arabic abstracts is that methods in Arabic data generally involve the elaboration of concepts and arguments through analogy, explanation, illustration and detailed exemplification rather than modes of inquiry that adopt empirical procedures.

Unlike English PhD candidates in linguistics, Arab PhD candidates tend to place more emphasis on *what*. In other words, they focus on *telling* the reader about the content of their research. What illustrates this tendency is the considerable variation between the two sets of data regarding the frequency of *Indicating thesis structure*. This move was evident in 78% of the Arabic data as compared to (28%) in the English texts. A major difference between Arabic and English abstracts lies in the fact that 40% of the Arabic abstracts in contrast to 4% in English were found to include only two moves, the first of which is *Outlining purposes* followed by *Indicating thesis structure and content*. A further analysis of the latter revealed that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to utilize three steps to articulate this move. The first step indicates the number of chapters that make up the thesis. The second step designates the title of each chapter, and the third usually takes each chapter in sequence presenting its particular purpose followed by a summary of its content. This difference in rhetorical structure leads to the argument that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to place more emphasis on giving information, particularly in the third step, where the writers focus on *telling* readers *what* factual or propositional content each chapter includes. That is to say, they tend to fulfill the transactional rather than the interpersonal function of language (Brown & Yule 1983).

A possible explanation for the high frequency of *Indicating thesis structure* in the Arabic data may be related to the claim that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics may have not yet developed a mature view of the component moves that are used to articulate the communicative purpose of this discourse genre. This may lend support to Swales' conclusion regarding the high incidence of *Indicating article structure* in Cooper's (1985) study of computer technology field, who found that 10 out of her 15 IEEE introductions included this move. Swales attributed the high frequency of this move to the absence of an established schema for research reporting in that new and rapidly evolving field. This may apply to

Arabic texts since abstract writing in PhD dissertations in Arabic linguistics started to surface in Jordanian PhD dissertations only in 1994. In contrast, the abstract accompanying English dissertations is considered a well-established practice and an essential part of academic writing (Salager-Meyer 1992; Hartley 2003; Pho 2008).

6.2   Linguistic features variations

An examination of the linguistic choices used to express the moves articulating the abstract genre reveals similarities and differences between the two sets of data in terms of the use of tense and voice.

Regarding the use of tense, both English and Arab PhD candidates in linguistics showed similarities in using tense in *Making topic generalization*, *Indicating a gap* and *Describing methods* moves. They used present tense verbs to refer to general topics in the field and to gaps in previous studies. The use of the present tense appears to be acceptable in the two languages since the main function of this move is to claim about the present state of knowledge generalization (Swales 1990; Santos 1996). Likewise, in the methods move both English and Arab PhD candidates in linguistics utilized the simple past. This is not surprising, as the purpose of this move is to report the research methodology that has already been employed in the study (Salager-Meyer 1992; Martin-Martin 2003; Pho 2008).

However, the two groups of writers showed remarkable variations in tense use in *Outlining purpose*, *Summarizing results*, and *Presenting conclusions and recommendations* moves. In *Outlining purpose*, English PhD candidates in linguistics only used the present tense, while Arab PhD candidates utilized both tenses, the simple past tense with a percentage of 45% vs. 55% for the simple present. It seems that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to use simple past to report what their research was about since they make frequent reference (78%) to the type of inquiry (i.e. study investigation) rather than the genre (dissertation or thesis). The reference to genre, in contrast, indicates a sense of the immediate physical object in front of the reader and thus takes the present tense (Pho 2008).

The distribution pattern of verb tenses in *Presenting conclusions and recommendations* showed a preference for present tense by English PhD candidates in linguistics. For instance, the present was the only tense used

in the conclusions move. Present tense was also utilized with a high frequency (66%) in *Summarizing results*. However, in Arabic abstracts the past was the only tense employed in the conclusions moves and there was a preference for this tense in the results (73%) over present tense.

According to Pho (2008), the use of present tense gives the idea that the writer is generalizing beyond the results of the study in order to give the impression that these are widely accepted findings. The use of past tense, on the other hand, leaves the reader with the impression that the writer is plainly reporting the findings of the present research. Regarding *Presenting conclusions and recommendations*, the present tense was employed by English PhD candidates in linguistics to make generalizations based on the findings in the results move (Salager-Meyer 1992; Pho, 2008). In contrast, the past tense was exploited in the Arabic abstracts because the study may "have not yet entered the Pantheon of received knowledge" (Heslot, 1985: 214), or the conclusions do not bear directly in terms of importance on the work described (Lackstrom et al., 1970, cited in Salager-Meyer 1992).

Regarding the choice of voice (i.e. active or passive voice), we found significant differences between the two sets of data in using the verb voice. The past passive is overwhelmingly used (77%) in English *Describing methods* move, while the active is the only voice used in Arabic methods moves. The frequent occurrence of passive voice conventionally functions to depersonalize the information in the methods and procedures. Our data analysis revealed that English PhD candidates in linguistics' primary concern was placing emphasis on the entities that refer to the participants in the study, objects studied, variables and data collected (77%) followed by what was done to them; therefore, the passive was used. This tendency allows writers to omit the logical agent and place emphasis on the procedure. However, Arab PhD candidates in linguistics concentrated on using subjects that refer either to the study itself or the researcher followed by what those subjects did, thus, the active voice was exploited.

The passive voice was also used in the English results, and conclusion and recommendation moves. The 'anticipatory *it*' subjects, which is associated with passive sentences, occurred in 21% of the results and in 36% of the conclusion moves of the English sample. Since the 'anticipatory *it*' is associated with passive sentences, the more frequent use of *it* means the more frequent use of the passive voice. However, no instances of the passive were encountered in the Arabic sample. One possible explanation

for the greater use of the passive by English PhD candidates in linguistics in the conclusion moves is that the authors in this unit give their own interpretations that may not be the only ones. Therefore, they seem to prefer detaching themselves from the claims they made by using the passive voice as they know their claims are to be questioned (Salager-Meyer 1992).

English passive allows both the mention and the deletion of the agent. This means that English has two passive constructions: agentive and agentless. In contrast, the Arabic passive, according to (Khalill 1999), is always agentless; this means that Standard written Arabic does not allow the agent to appear. Therefore, a possible explanation of the dearth of passive constructions in Arabic texts might be found in the inherent linguistic nature of passive in Arabic, which does not allow the agent to appear, in contrast to English passive which allows the writers not only to mention the agent but also to highlight it. The fact that the Arabic passive is agentless also provides evidence for the non-synonymity of active-passive pairs.

7.   Conclusion and implications

In this paper we have analyzed two sets of PhD dissertation abstracts in linguistics selected from two different languages, English and Arabic, which represent two different cultural proclivities. We have explored English and Arab writers' available generic resources through which writers textualize their discourse in order to achieve the communicative purpose of this genre. The study has also identified generic and linguistic similarities and variation across the same written discourse genre. At the microlevel of analysis, we have identified the linguistic features used to express the genre components and attempted to justify why writers from different cultures employ different linguistic recourses. On the macro-structure level, this small scale study has shown that the generic structure of abstracts written in Arabic and English reflect rhetorical patterns showing similarity with the four basic move-model (Bhatia 1993) and the CARS structure (Swales 1990), as well as the third alternative pattern drawing mainly on both, the CARS and IMRD structures.

However, the macro (i.e. generic structure) and micro levels (i.e. linguistic representation of genre components) have revealed some of the

ways dissertation abstracts vary across different languages and cultures. The comparison shows differences in the type and frequency of the component moves employed. For example, in the Arabic texts we identified unsupported promotional claims that are not based on factual evidence indicated by *Promoting theses* move. This strategic component was not found in English. However, the English PhD candidates in linguistics make use of objective promotion claims, especially in the conclusions and recommendations move. They find it necessary to foreground the value of the results obtained and exhibit the benefits and applications of their research in order to promote their abstracts to the wider international academic community. Another significant difference is that English PhD candidates in linguistics tend to utilize *Referring to previous research*, a component that is not utilized in the Arabic abstracts, to show that their research derives from a lively tradition of established related works of the target academic community. In contrast, Arab PhD candidates do not justify their research by the naming of specific researchers in the selected area. Instead, they tend to utilize other alternative strategies to justify their research, such as making topic generalizations about current knowledge in the area by using (component move 2) and/or addressing the centrality of the general topic by means of (component move 1); such tendencies are more frequent in Arabic texts than in the English. A further possible explanation is that the writers of Arabic texts tend to focus on providing information more than on justifying their research. This was evident in the high percentage of *Indicating thesis structure* (46%), which was evident in Arabic texts in comparison to (4%) in English.

A further difference between the two sets of data is the strong tendency to include the methods move in the English texts to indicate *how* the study was conducted. Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to place more emphasis on *what*. This tendency is reflected in the high frequency of *Indicating thesis structure* move, in which Arab candidates present a summary of the chapters constituting a thesis. This difference in rhetorical structure leads to the argument that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics tend to place more emphasis on *telling* readers *what* content each chapter includes rather than on *selling* their research to their peer academics in the field. Consequently, it appears that Arab PhD candidates in linguistics have developed a practice of abstract writing different from the well-established

practice developed by English native speakers in order to articulate the communicative purpose of the discourse genre. At the same time, Arab PhD candidates also need to learn how to foreground objectively the value of their research to the wider international academic community by learning the generic options that are used to articulate this promotion purpose. There is a need for guides which show PhD candidates the kind of generic options that occur in authentic texts and provide a rationale for the various choices writers might make (Swales & Feak 2000). Students also need to be instructed on the particular values of the abstracting services and the importance of including abstracts in Arabic dissertations.

The analysis at the micro-level carried out in this study indicates that the abstracts written in both languages share some linguistic features as regards the use of simple present tense in *Making topic generalization*, *Indicating a gap* moves, and the use of simple past in *Describing methods* moves. The use of present tense is acceptable in both languages to generalize about the state of knowledge; likewise, the past tense is used in the methods moves to report the research methodology that has already been employed. However, there are variations in tense use in the other moves that can be attributed to socio-cultural expectations, as indicated in the Discussion Section. The greater use of passive in English in contrast to its scarce use in Arabic texts might be attributed to differences in the linguistic resources and stylistic conventions. In contrast to English passive, which allows the writers not only to mention the agent but also to highlight it, the inherent linguistic nature of passive in Arabic does not always allow the agent to appear.

It is hoped that the findings of the current study can be used to familiarize both native speakers and non-native speakers of English and Arabic with the generic options, as non-native speakers may lack not only the necessary level of language proficiency, but also the necessary genre knowledge (see Bhatia 1999 and Paltridge 2002) required of PhD candidates to succeed in writing abstracts. Furthermore, it is not enough to teach all students from different fields the rhetorical structures suggested by the general abstracting guidelines; instead, students should be taught according to the conventions of abstract writing in their own fields (Stotesbury 2003: 340). It would also be interesting to carry out cross linguistic studies to compare the use of verb tenses and passive constructions in other languages with their use in English.

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