

A Genre Analysis of Abstracts in Islamic Journals

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Abstract: The main purpose of this paper is to investigate the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of the Islamic research articles. It therefore analyzes the rhetorical structure of the abstracts of the Islamic research articles written for research papers in journals and devoted to various topics in Islam. For this purpose 100 abstracts were chosen from five Islamic journals. Specifically, the paper sought to find out if these abstracts followed or deviated from Swales' IMRD (Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion) model. The results show that only very small percentage of the abstracts follow this model. The paper also analyzed the abstracts from a micro-structure level using the CARS (Create a Research Space) model. The results show that most of the Introduction sections of the abstracts themselves have all the moves prescribed by the CARS model. However, the number of abstracts that follow the linear order 1-2-3, was relatively small. Though most of the authors followed the rhetorical moves, they deviated in terms of its organization. Some pedagogical implications are drawn from the study.

Key words: Islamic Academic Research Article • Moves • CARS model • Genre Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Research article (RA) is the most important genre in the academic community and it has gained significant attention in genre analysis. This is because it has become an important channel in presenting new knowledge in academic settings, as according to [1], the research article is produced to communicate new knowledge other members of the academic community and persuade them to accept certain ideas. It serves as a means of communication for the discourse communities and contributes to the academic success of the writer. In writing a good research article, learners need to know and be aware of the norms and conventions used by professionals in that particular field in order to communicate effectively through writing and to find a place in the international academic community by having certain forms of writing skills and fulfilling a specific communicative purpose. They need to have appropriate writing skills and knowledge on the rhetorical organization of the academic article. Thus, in order to produce an effective research article, the writer must adhere to the generic rules and conventions. It is particularly important for learners to have this knowledge, as unlike other types of writing, RA is a specific genre that has a certain

structure in terms of how the content is presented and rhetorically used to achieve its communicative goal. In the teaching of academic writing, genre-based approach is seen as a good way to provide students with useful writing instructions. Through genre analysis, the students learn how the texts work in particular contexts and the rationale for using rhetorical structure in genre. It helps them to produce texts or written discourse according to the conventions in the discourse community and achieve the communication purpose of the discourse.

Influenced by the pioneering work by Swales on the introduction to an academic article [2, 3], many studies have been conducted to analyze the structural organization of the academic research article. [4, 5] and [3, 6] have investigated the introduction sections of the RA while other studies have investigated other sections of RAs such as the methods section, results section and the discussion section [7-9]. Sometimes, the studies are accompanied by examining other features such as the grammatical and stylistic features by looking at the sentence level of the abstracts [3, 10-12].

The abstracts section, being part of the RA, has gained attention in recent years as studies have been conducted to investigate the RA abstracts [1, 3, 5, 11, 13, 14]. In one important cross disciplinary study, [5] found

that the majority of the abstracts had the same arrangement, Purpose-Method-Results Conclusion. A small scale study on abstracts by [14] revealed that the two major types of rhetorical organization are IMRD type and the CARS type. Based on their studies, [3] and [13] agree that a well-structured abstract should have the four basic moves of an abstract, which are Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion (IMRD). These four moves constitute the rhetorical structure of a research article. [10] Study on abstract proposed a structure comprising Introduction-Problem-Method-Results Conclusions.

These studies focused on the structure of RA abstracts in various fields. However, no study seems to have been conducted to investigate the abstracts of articles in Islamic journals. As Islamic article differ from other fields, especially the hard sciences. This may pose problems for readers to understand the organizational structures of abstracts in Islamic RAs. Using [3] Introduction-Methods-Results and Discussion (IMRD) model in analyzing abstracts and the CARS model that accounts for the rhetorical structure of the Introduction section of the RA, the present study will explore the structures and moves of the abstracts in Islamic RAs.

According to the IMRD model, an abstract of a research article typically comprises 4 moves. Swales named these moves based on the micro-structure of a research article. The first move (Move 1) is meant for Introduction. The elements that can be put in the introduction are the background, situation of prior studies, introduction of current research and description of main features of the research. In Methodology (Move 2), the researcher gives a brief information on the materials, data and procedure used in the study. Then, in the third move (Move 3), the researcher states the result or findings of the study and makes claim of a new knowledge by reporting the major results obtained in the research. The last move (Move 4) is the discussion and conclusion part in which the researcher makes his final claims, proposes further study in the area and summarizes the main suggestions drawn from the results. The CARS model reflects a preferred order for the moves that fully captures the rhetorical movement in research article introductions written in English. The model consists of three basic move structures and each move serves the communicative function of the introduction section. For instance, Move 1 (Establishing a Territory) serves the function of establishing the significance of the research topic to the discourse community. This goal can be achieved by employing various strategies or steps like claiming centrality (Step 1), making a general statement

about knowledge (Step 2) or reviewing items of previous research (Step 3).

A move in genre analysis is defined as a “discourse or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse” (Swales, 4, p 228-9). It is hoped that this study can fill in the gap of knowledge on the rhetorical organization of Islamic academic RA abstracts.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Selection of the Corpus: In order to study and describe the abstracts section of the RA, a total of 100 abstracts were collected from five journals, namely, Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, Islam and Science, Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, Journals of Islamic Studies and *the American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*. These journals were chosen because they are well established in the academic community and are dedicated to the scholarly study of all aspects of Islam and the Islamic world. Twenty (20) abstracts from each journal were chosen making a total of 100 abstracts altogether. They were selected randomly, written in English and published between year 2000 and 2011. They were produced in various topics. The data in this study was analyzed using Swales’ IMRD and CARS models. The procedures for data analysis are described in the following section.

Procedures: In the first stage, the macro-structure of all the abstracts were analyzed based on Swales’ IMRD model to determine whether they followed the organization structure proposed by Swale. This was done in order to identify the pattern of the Introduction units in the abstracts. All the units involved were counted and tabulated using Microsoft Excel. At the micro-level, the analysis was based on Swale’s CARS model. Each of the articles was analyzed in terms of the Move-Step sequences and linguistic features that signal the use of the Move-Step. Each sentence was examined and classified into an appropriate category. After this step, the patterns of the Move-Step were identified based on the CARS model. Finally, the frequency of the moves was counted and tabulated to determine the frequency of Moves and Steps in the abstracts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the Structure of the Abstracts Based on Swales’ (1990) IMRD: The analysis of the 100 abstracts selected from the five journals revealed interesting results.

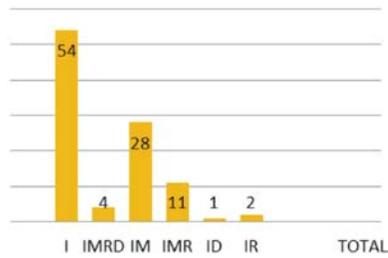


Fig. 1: Structure of Abstract

(IMRD: Introduction-Methodology-Results-Discussion, IM:IntroductionMethodology, IMR: Introduction-Methodology, ID: Introduction-Discussion, IR: Introduction-Results, I: Introduction)

It was found that the IMRD structure was seldom used as only 4 (4%) of the 100 articles contain this structure. The results are presented in Figure 1 below.

In Figure 1, the most frequent structure of the abstracts is a one-unit structure consisting of the Introduction move. A total of 54 articles out of 100 employed this structure. From the analysis, it is found that the Introduction unit is obligatory as all the abstracts contain this unit. In the Islamic RA abstracts, the methodology unit is quite uncommon and this could be due to the nature of the field which differs greatly from the hard sciences. Hard sciences deal with tangible matters and the nature of research also differs as it involves experimental-based research. In experimental-based study, methodology is the most important element. On the other hand, the present type of study falls under ‘soft’ sciences and often involves discussion of analysis on issues, concepts and theories. In the study, the majority of the abstracts discussed a certain issue of interest, conducted a comparative analysis between two views or models, among others. Another possible reason is that the authors of the Islamic research articles are mostly non-native English speakers from Turkish, Malaysian, Indonesian and Arab origins. The [15] showed that structures written by native and non-native English speakers can differ. However, this cannot be generalized as the [15] research dealt with a sample of abstracts in linguistics. From the findings, it can be said that the Introduction move is the most important unit of the structure. The second most important move may be the Methodology move where the methodology of research is described. This can be supported by the fact that nearly half of the 100 abstracts or to be exact, 38% of the abstracts, contain this move. Sometimes the methodology stated is quite difficult to identify as some authors describe how they discuss a particular topic and this can

actually be considered as methodology. Some abstracts from the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* have clearer and straightforward methodology statements. For example:

“A questionnaire survey and informal interviews were used to collect data”. (Abstract no.12, American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences)

One interesting finding in this study is that sometimes, in the Introduction unit, the authors include the methodology for the study. The methodology of the study is explained when the author announces the present research and its aim:

“The paper identifies and examines major problems confronting the legal institutions of the Muslim community of Singapore by utilizing examples from recent Singaporean Muslim’s discourse and the administration of the Muslim law by relevant state agencies”. (*Journal of Muslim Minority*, Abstract no. 4)

The analysis reveals that the least frequent moves are the Results and Discussion moves, with a total of 18 and 6 respectively. An example that illustrates the results section is:

“The results indicate that these mosques have a strong internal control system vis-à-vis these two activities. This study also reveals that their practice of several basic control activities (e.g. segregating duties, recording financial transactions and authorizing particular activities) is satisfactory” (Abstract no. 12, *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*)

The fewer occurrences of these two sections may be due to the nature of the field which is more towards discussion rather than presenting results. To conclude, the journals selected for this study do not follow Swales’ structure and according to [13], well-structured abstracts should state all the four components, that is, the linear sequence I-M-R-D.

Rhetorical Structure of Introduction Unit of Islamic Research Article Abstracts: In this section, the rhetorical structure of the Introduction unit of Islamic academic research article abstracts is identified through a movement analysis using [3] CARS model. A macro-structure analysis of the abstracts shows that all the analyzed

Table 1: Frequencies of Moves in Introduction sections of Islamic RA abstracts

No.	Move	Frequency
1.	1	15
2.	1-2	2
3.	1-2-3	3
4.	1-3	21
5.	1-3-1	4
6.	1-3-1-3	4
7.	1-3-2	2
8.	1-3-2-1	1
9.	1-3-2-3-1-3	2
10.	1-3-1-2	1
11.	2-1	3
12.	2-3	1
13.	3	23
14.	3-1	9
15.	3-2	3
16.	3-1-2	3
17.	3-1-3	2
18.	3-1-3-2-3	1
19.	3-2-3-1	1
	Total	100

abstracts have an Introduction unit. Thus, 100 Introduction units of the Islamic academic research abstracts were analyzed for move-structure as well as step structure. From the analysis, only 16 abstracts out of 100 abstracts contain three moves. Only 3% out of the 100 abstracts have the linear move pattern (1-2-3) as prescribed in the CARS model. Fifteen percent (15%) of the abstracts have cyclical moves where moves are repeated, 42 of the abstracts contain only Move 1 and Move 3 with Move 2 missing and only 15 articles contain Move 1. It can be concluded that most of the Moves appeared in all the abstracts although there are only 2 abstracts that follow the CARS model.

Move Structure of Islamic Research Article Abstracts: The results from the analysis show that only 16 out of 100 abstracts have all three moves. It can be said that the analyzed abstracts do not resemble the CARS model as there are only 3 abstracts that follow the standard pattern which is M1-M2-M3. It can be suggested that the writers of the Islamic articles tend to include all the moves in their abstracts but have different ways of organizing them. The following table shows the overall move structures of the Islamic RA abstracts:

Swales once stated that, in RA introductions, the three moves usually occur in a linear order. However, from the table, it can be seen that some of the Introduction sections of the abstracts do not occur in a linear order. For example, abstract 55 has M3-M1 move pattern.

Move-Step:

- 3 1B (S1) This article investigates the empowerment strategies of *Fatayat* NU, the young women's branch of the Indonesian Muslim mass organization Nahdlatul Ulama (NU).
- 3 1B (S2) It raises the following questions: what instruments the women have used to realize their visions of empowerment and gender equality since the foundation of *Fatayat* NU, what programmes they have recently set up to advance the position of women in Indonesian society and how they have addressed controversial topics such as female leadership, polygyny and abortion.
- 1 2 (S3) In *Fatayat* NU's early history male dominance confined its room for action.
- 1 2 (S4) The young women have increased their influence step by step, although they still have to negotiate their status vis-à-vis male authorities.
- 1 2 (S5) It was not until the 1980s that important changes occurred in the organization.
- 1 2 (S6) Women's empowerment based on Islamic values has been a declared goal of *Fatayat* NU.

In the example above, the author directly informs the readers about the research activities and findings. In the second sentence, the author still describes what the paper is all about which falls under Move 3, though the author usually discusses the questions raised in the paper. In the rest of the sentences in the abstract, the author provides the readers with a general knowledge of the topic.

The analysis shows that, besides Move 1, Move 3 is favoured by the majority of the writers of the abstracts as a prelude to their abstracts. Almost half of the analyzed abstracts, which is 42 abstracts in total, have Move 3 at the beginning of the abstracts. Furthermore, the majority of the abstracts, from the American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, have this Move at the beginning of the abstracts compared to the other four journals. Usually, the abstracts that begin with Move 3 are shorter than abstracts that contain Move 1. This is because, the authors make straightforward statements about their studies and this is actually one of their strategies to attract readers' attention.

The least frequent move in the Introduction section of the abstracts is Move 2. Only 20 abstracts contain Move 3 which is consistent with the findings of [16]. This could be due to the nature of the field. Papers written in this field are theoretical in nature where authors focus on discussion of topics rather than limitations of previous studies and make counter claims to establish a niche.

The study revealed that 21 of the abstracts do not have Move 2. This could be attributed to the field of research that only requires the writers to elaborate and discuss the topic. The studies mainly provide a critical analysis and constructive discussion on the research topic rather than indicating a gap and evaluating the work of others.

An analysis of the abstracts show that the second most used Move after Move 3 was Move 1 (86%). Only 27 out of the total abstracts do not contain Move 1. More than half of the abstracts (60%) begin with this move. Another 13% of Move 1 occur in the middle or at the end of the abstracts and that makes the total of this move 73%. The high percentage indicates the importance of this move to draw reader's attention towards the topic and highlight its significance.

The study also found that 24 of the Introduction sections of the abstracts do not contain Move 1. In contrast to the CARS Introduction model which proposes that an article Introduction should begin with Move 1, the following example starts with Move 3. As stated earlier, the majority of the abstracts from the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* begin with this move. For example:

Move-Step:

- 3 1A (S1) The paper focuses on the need to harmonize the practice of zakat on companies throughout Malaysia by implementing a zakat accounting standard (ZAS)
- 3 1A (S2) The objectives of the paper are fourfold: (1) to highlight the current practice of zakat on companies in Malaysia; (2) discuss the usefulness of AAOIFI FAS 9, MASB FRS *i-1* and MASB TR *i-1* as guidelines for developing a ZAS; (3) suggest a collaboration by various parties designed to pool initiatives, knowledge and skills to develop a useful and favorable ZAS; and (4) to demonstrate that without proper education and a strong political will, there is a little hope of making any ZAS a reality.

In this excerpt, the author begins the Introduction of the abstracts by informing readers of the purpose of the paper. The sentence that follows also discusses the objectives of the paper that are written in one long sentence, with the objectives numbered.

From the analysis, it is found that 21 of the analyzed abstracts only contain Move 1. The authors who choose to write in such a way tend to omit the next two moves in

their abstracts. This could be because of the different priority and aim that they have.

In this kind of abstracts, the authors generally talk about the current research topic, review previous studies or items relevant to the topic, or claim interest/importance of the research topic. Abstract 8 from *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations* journal is one of the examples of abstracts that contain only Move 1. This abstract contains only Move 1: Step 2. This is illustrated below:

- (S1) Muslim perception of Christianity has been characterized by references to Jesus and Christianity in the Quran and by the great range of historical encounters between members of the two traditions over fourteen centuries.
- (S2) In response to colonialism and Christian missionary activity in Muslim countries, Muslim modernist depicted Christianity as a religion of the sword and cast Islam as a superior system noted for its moderate and pluralistic vision
- (S3) By the second half of the twentieth century, the challenge of Marxism and Zionism gave credence to the Islamist ideology of the Islamic imperative to eliminate all other systems.
- (S4) Muslim society was depicted as the victim of the secular, Christian and Jewish fanaticism that sought to eradicate Islam.
- (S5) During the eighties, a new discourse on the role of religious minorities developed which saw pluralism as a foundational principle of Islamic society sanctioned by God since it was his will to create difference.
- (S6) The purpose is to promote not discord, but the perception of a sign of God's mercy.

The above example shows that the author offers the readers an insight into the topic in the entire abstract. According to [17], although this demonstrate the researcher's comprehensive knowledge of the research topic, readers may not see the connection between the broad context of the topic and the present research.

With regard to Move 3, the analysis shows that 76 of the abstracts contain this move. Move 3 is the most frequently used move in the majority of the abstracts followed by Move 1 with 73%. The high occurrence of this move in the corpus shows that most of the Islamic article writers introduce their present research, state its purpose or offer specific information regarding the study to the readers. The [3] claims that whenever Move 2 occurs, it should be followed by Move 3.

Fig. 4: Overall Steps structure within the moves

Move	Step	Frequency
1	1	15
	2	88
	3	5
2	1A	15
	1B	4
	1C	2
	1D	-
3	1A	4
	1B	97
	2	-
	3	3

The following section reports the findings on step structure of introduction sections of Islamic research article abstracts.

Move 1: Establishing a Territory: In this move, there are three steps, namely, claiming centrality (Step 1), providing general statements about the topic (Step 2) and reviewing items/previous studies on the subject (Step 3). In the introduction sections of Islamic RA abstracts, the most used step is Move 1: Step 2. Out of the one hundred abstracts, 88 of them have this Step. This suggests that the authors of Islamic RAs prefer to use this step to give a general knowledge of the discussed topic to the readers. They may believe that by doing so, the readers would get a clearer idea and enough information on the topic. It helps the readers to follow the discussion later. An analysis of the abstracts shows that this step does not necessarily occur at the beginning of the abstracts. It can recur after Move 2 and Move 3. The following examples illustrate this point:

- (S1) In the changing economy of Sri Lanka and in its environment of political conflict, the situation of Muslims in the country, who are not a party to the ethno-nationalistic war, is worsening by the day.
- (S2) The politics of Muslims in the eastern province is a story of conflict within a conflict.
- (S3) In this province, Kattakundy which has the largest Muslim settlement in the region, is one hundred percent Muslims and religiously conservative.
- (S4) The Muslims are also economically enterprising.
- (S5) The government appears to have become a dishonest broker in the middle, playing a double game to marginalize the Muslim community in order to appease a splinter Tamil group.

Pertaining to Step 1, there are 15 abstracts that contain this Step in Move 1. In this step, the authors claim

centrality of the topics. For this step the authors use linguistic expressions such as ‘a topic that has been the subject of debate’, ‘have generated great interest’, ‘emerged as the most predominant’.

Move 2: Establishing a Niche: In move 2, the author works to establish a niche. There are four steps in this move. They are, claiming that past research is misguided or incorrect (Step 1A: Counter claiming), indicating a gap (step 1B), posing questions (Step 1C) and the last step which is Step 1D, extending the previous research.

The most used step in this move is Step 1A where the author made a counter claim. The following are examples of sentences that show Step 1A in the abstracts:

- (30:3) Given the brevity of my remarks and the limited space allocated to comments, it is not possible to expound on the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the arguments.
- (36:3) However, we argue that rationality is involved in all elements of the Islamic concept of education.
- (90:4) We argue that it is the autonomy based toleration that is dominant in contemporary Germany.

Another step that is used in this move is Step 1B where the author indicates a gap, limitation or problem regarding the topic or issue. This approach is seen as an effective way to grab reader’s attention to read the study as it provides something that is lacking in previous studies. Two of the excerpts are given below:

- (86) However, the majority of the published work focuses on western cultures.
- (20) Although there have been several works that examine the issue of Sharia, such studies have not examined the subject taking public opinion data into account.

The examples above show that the authors inform the readers of the lack of previous studies and what they can offer in their studies. This can help to catch readers’ attention as they know what is new about the studies compared to other research that has been done in the related area.

Regarding Move 2: Step 1C, only two of the analyzed abstracts contain this step. In this step, the author raises questions. The following example shows the abstract that employs this step:

- (14) What distinguishes its approach from that of the classical commentators? Does the Quran contain mythical or legendary accounts and if so, what purpose do they serve?

To sum up, the most used Step in this move is Step 1A where the authors do counter claiming, followed by Step 1B which indicates a gap.

Move 3: Occupying a Niche: In Move 3, the author offers information about his present research. The move can be realized through the obligatory Step 1 that contains two steps which are Steps 1A and Step 1B. In Step 1A, the author outlines the purpose whereas in Step 1B, the author outlines the present research. Two other optional steps are Step 2 (Announcing principal findings) and Step 3 (indicating research article structure).

In Islamic RA abstracts, the most used step in Move 3 is Step 1B that occurs in 97 of the abstracts while only 4 abstracts contain Step 1A. The result shows that the authors took the opportunity to announce their present research. Usually, this is done by telling the readers what the study is about, explaining what they will be doing or describing the main features of the study.

The announcement of the present research is normally indicated by deictic references such as *this article, this study, the present study, this essay, in this paper, I* and *here*.

The following exemplify the straightforward and clear announcement of the present research by authors in the abstracts:

- (61:4) This article presents the methods together with an English translation of the related text from *al-Iqtisad fil-I'tiqad*.
- (62:4) This paper briefly examines al-Ghazzali's *Iljam*, its key theological constructs, its relative importance within the Sunni corpus on *Kalam* and the scholarly debate over the meaning of the 'Way of the *Salaf*'.
- (65:2) This paper presents and analyses the case for and the case against *tafsir 'ilmi*.
- (40:4) The present study reviews the manuscript corpus and redactions of the *Maslak* and examines the way in which each redaction treats the central issue of succession to the leadership of the Khwajagani community after Ghijduvânî's death; it argues that the later redaction of the *Maslak* was embraced by (and may have been produced within) the nascent Naqshbandi community of the fifteenth century,

revealing a series of changes in the central religious stances and concerns among Khwajagani circles from the thirteenth to fifteenth centuries.

CONCLUSION

With reference to the first research question as to whether the abstracts of the Islamic RA follow or deviate from Swales' IMRD, the result shows that the majority of the abstracts, contain the Introduction sections. Only 4 abstracts out of one hundred have the IMRD structure.

At the micro-structure level, based on the CARS model, the results show that most of the Introduction Section of the abstracts have all the moves prescribed by the CARS model. However, the number of abstracts that follow the linear order 1-2-3 is relatively small as only 2 abstracts have this movement.

Though most of the authors follow the rhetorical move, they deviate in terms of its organization. Move 3 (Occupying a niche) is highly used as it is found that 73% of the abstracts contain the move followed by Move 1 (Establishing a territory) with 71%.

In Move 1, Step 2 is more often used to provide a general knowledge about the current study to the readers. The high occurrence of this step can be explained by the nature of the field that is more theoretical. The step that occurred the most for Move 2 (Establishing a niche) in the abstracts is Step 1A where authors make counter-claim. In this step, authors show their disagreement with the topic or findings from previous studies.

Within Move 3, the most used step in this move is Step 1B (Announcing present research). Of the selected abstracts, 97% contain this move. In this move and step the authors choose to elaborate and give information to the readers which might help them in understanding the topic.

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