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# A Comparison of Rhetorical Move Structure of Research Article Abstracts of Thai Scopus Journals and Top- Ranked Scopus Journals in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching

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## Abstract

*The purpose of this current study is to explore the move structure presented in abstracts of the research articles from Thai Scopus Journals (TSJ) and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals (TRSJ) in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching. Ninety abstracts were analyzed and separated equally between those two journals. The five-move framework established by Hyland (2000) was used to analyze the move pattern, showing different dominant patterns: I-P-M-Pr-C in Thai Scopus Journals and P-M-Pr-C in Top-Ranked Scopus Journals respectively. In Thai Scopus Journal, the results indicated that the introduction is optional, the conclusion, purpose, and method are considered conventional, and the product is obligatory. Similarly, in Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, the product is obligatory, while the purpose, method, and conclusion are conventional. These findings could offer practical insights into abstract structures and hold importance for educational purposes, offering guidance for the effective writing of abstracts in research articles.*

**Keywords:** Move Analysis, Research Article Abstracts, Thai Scopus Journal (TSJ), Top-Ranked Scopus Journal (TRSJ)

## Introduction

Research articles (RAs) and their abstracts (RAAs) play a vital role in global academic communication. Abstracts act as the first point of contact for readers, summarizing the entire article and aiding in its categorization, arrangement, and engagement (Alspach, 2017; Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2004; Kanoksilapatham, 2005). They are crucial in determining the relevance of a publication for further exploration (Cross & Oppenheim, 2006; Salager-Meyer, 1992). However, writing effective RAAs is challenging due to the diverse guidelines and styles across journals, which can be challenging for researchers. Given the need to meet both reader expectations and author objectives, there is a clear necessity for a thorough examination of the rhetorical structure of RAAs to ensure they are well-written and impactful.

Despite some research on abstract structures in various fields, few studies compare RAAs between Thai Scopus Journals (TSJ) and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals (TRSJ) in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT). In order to bridge this gap, the present study intend to examine differences in rhetorical structures between RAAs in these journals. Understanding these

differences can provide valuable insights for academic writers, language learners, and instructors, facilitating improved abstract writing and enhanced writing skills. Additionally, exploring variations in RAAs between these two contexts in these two fields can offer significant guidance for enhancing academic writing skills and supporting language learners. The findings of this study have the potential to increase instructors' awareness and provide authentic examples for learners, ultimately enhancing their writing proficiency. Therefore, this study intends to analyze the structures of moves, compare similarities and differences in these moves, and explore the classification of rhetorical moves presented within abstracts in research articles in Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching.

## Literature Review

### Functions of Abstracts

Abstracts play crucial roles in academic writing, providing readers with a preview of an article's content and helping them assess its relevance (Hyland, 2000). Despite their brevity, the Capella University Writing Center emphasizes the importance of abstracts in summarizing key points concisely, aiding readers who have limited time to grasp the article's essence. Moreover, abstracts are vital for article indexing and retrieval, as they use specific keywords and topics to help readers determine their relevance to their research.

### Move Analysis

#### The Five-Move Model

Hyland (2000) suggests that there is a growing trend in scholarly articles to include an introductory move in abstracts. In contrast to Bhatia's (1993) model, Hyland (2000) proposes a model that includes an additional move - the introduction move. His model emphasizes key components of abstracts in research articles: introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion. According to his framework, the initial move involves providing contextual background and explaining the motivation behind the study. The second move is focused on elucidating the rationale behind the paper. The third move details the study's methods and data processing. The fourth move

presents the key findings. Lastly, the fifth move aims to highlight the potential applications or broader implications of the article and its interpretive scope.

### Previous Studies Employing Hyland's (2000) Five-Move Model

Researchers from various fields have frequently used Hyland's model to examine the structure of abstracts. For example, Amnuai (2019) applied this model to analyze 30 abstracts in the accounting field, finding that most abstracts followed Hyland's sequence. In an international context, moves such as introduction (60%), purpose (90%), method (80%), and product (90%) were common, while Conclusion was less dominant and seen as optional. However, in the Thai journal, the product move was considered crucial, with purpose and method being more commonly used. The introduction and conclusion moves were not obligatory but were still considered optional elements. The researcher also suggested that educators could use this framework to help students structure their abstracts effectively.

Can et al. (2016) analyzed the move structure using a five-move framework. Their study stated that most of abstracts focused on purpose, methodology, and product. Interestingly, about half of the articles were different from standard patterns by omitting both the introduction and the discussion moves.

Kurniawan and Sabila (2018) studied the moves within abstracts in applied linguistics research using Hyland's framework. They found that the most prevalent moves were purpose, method, and product. However, among the 29 abstracts examined, only three followed Hyland's sequence exactly, indicating that while Hyland's move structure was evident, it was not consistently followed in the exact order.

Karmila and Laila (2020) investigated the rhetorical move patterns of abstracts in English education department theses using the five-move model. They found that most abstracts followed a sequence of purpose, method, result, product, and conclusion moves, with the Introduction move being infrequent.

Phonhan (2021) conducted a study on the typical abstract patterns found in Technical Education. The research aimed to examine how abstracts in this field are structured and the linguistic aspects they contain.

The findings indicated that abstracts in Technical Education often center around the purpose, method, and product of the research, which differs from the conventional five-move pattern proposed by Hyland.

In another study, [Maporn et al. \(2023\)](#) explored the rhetorical elements present in abstracts in applied linguistics published in Scopus journals. Those key findings highlighted the significant presence of the purpose (P) and product (Pr) concepts in these abstracts. Additionally, the data suggested that researchers in linguistics adhere to [Hyland's \(2000\)](#) model while also incorporating various move structures in their abstracts.

## Methodology

### Corpus Construction

In this study, two corpora were utilized for corpus analysis, comprising a total of 90 research article abstracts. These abstracts were separated into two main groups: 45 from reputable Thai Scopus Journals within the Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching fields, and another 45 from Top-Ranked Scopus Journals in the same field. They were randomly selected from six targets consisting of PASAA, LEARN, and REFLECTIONS, all of which are ranked in Quartile 2, along with top-ranked Scopus Journals in SCImago, specifically Modern Language Journal, Language Learning, and TESOL Quarterly, all ranked in Quartile 1. The studies were published between 2019 and 2022, aiming to capture the current trends in the fields.

### Research Design

The use of a mixed-method approach was utilized as a research design of this current study. This approach integrated both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. In the quantitative approach, the researcher tallied the moves' frequency presented in the chosen RAAs and converted those gathered data into percentages. Likewise, the qualitative method was employed to depict the patterns observed in the moves.

### Instruments

The focus in this study was using the five-move model proposed by [Hyland \(2000\)](#) to explore the RAAs. In addition, this certain model was

employed in the study as it was based on its precise outlines of five distinct moves, providing an accurate identification of each move. The study employed [Kanoksilapatham's \(2005\)](#) framework to classify the moves. Additionally, Microsoft Excel was utilized to compute the frequencies of these moves as percentages.

### Data Analysis

Ninety abstracts of RAs were analyzed and categorized using [Hyland's \(2000\)](#) five-move framework. The moves were manually identified in selected abstracts using coding as a method. Although integrated moves were noted, they were not further analyzed in this study. Move frequencies were calculated and converted into percentages using Microsoft Excel to ensure accuracy. In line with the criteria set by [Kanoksilapatham \(2005\)](#), moves were classified into obligatory, conventional, and optional categories.

## Results and Discussions

### The Frequency of Rhetorical Move Patterns of Research Article Abstracts (RAAs) Published in Thai Scopus Journals (TSJ)

**Table 1 The Frequency of Rhetorical Move Patterns in the RAAs (n=45) Published in Thai Scopus Journals**

Rhetorical Moves Patterns	Percentage (%)
I-P-M-Pr-C	40.00
P-M-Pr	20.00
P-M-Pr-C	20.00
I-P-M-Pr	13.33
I-M-Pr-C	4.44
P-Pr-C	2.22

As shown in Table 1, the I-P-M-Pr-C pattern was the predominant move structure identified in selected abstracts in the research articles from Thai Scopus Journals, constituting 40.00% of the abstracts. This sequence begins with the introduction move, followed by purpose, methodology, results, and conclusion moves, signifying a comprehensive structure commonly adopted in these abstracts. Additionally, the next most outstanding patterns, namely P-M-Pr and P-M-Pr-C, each accounting for 20.00% of the abstracts, reflect variations in the

omission or inclusion of introduction and conclusion moves while focusing on purpose, methodology, and results presentation. Similarly, the I-P-M-Pr and I-M-Pr-C patterns, found in 13.33% and 4.44% of the abstract order, demonstrate specific variations in the inclusion or exclusion of particular moves, indicating diverse structural approaches.

Conversely, less common patterns like the I-M-Pr-C and P-Pr-C, observed in 4.44% and 2.22% of the abstracts, respectively, illustrate different arrangements of moves, emphasizing specific aspects of the research content while omitting or including certain sections. In summary, the analysis of research article abstracts from Thai Scopus Journals revealed several distinctive movement patterns, providing insights into prevalent conventions and the moving pattern within the context of these two fields.

### The Frequency of Rhetorical Move Patterns of Research Article Abstracts (RAAs) Published in the Top-Ranked Scopus Journals (TRSJ)

**Table 2 The Frequency of Rhetorical Move Patterns in the RAAs (n=45) Published in Top-Ranked Scopus Journals**

Rhetorical Moves Patterns	Percentage (%)
P-M-Pr-C	33.00
I-P-Pr-C	17.80
I-P-M-Pr-C	11.11
I-P-M-Pr	11.11
P-M-Pr	9.00
P-Pr-C	6.70
I-M-Pr	4.44
I-P-Pr	2.22
I-M-P-Pr	2.22
I-Pr-C	2.22

As illustrated in Table 2, the primarily observed move pattern of RAAs from Top-Ranked Scopus Journals was the P-M-Pr-C, constituting 33.00% of the abstracts. This structure typically commenced with the purpose move, followed by methodology, results, and conclusion moves, signifying a prevalent comprehensive pattern in these abstracts, covering the research purpose, methodology, findings, and conclusion. Following closely was the I-P-Pr-C pattern, accounting for 17.80% of the abstracts,

which comprised introduction, purpose, results, and conclusion moves, excluding the method move. This pattern focused on introducing the study, stating its purpose, and presenting results without explicitly discussing the conclusion. I-P-M-Pr-C and I-P-M-Pr patterns were equally present in 11.11% of abstracts, incorporating variations in including or excluding the conclusion move while emphasizing aspects like introduction, purpose, methodology, results, and implications in differing ways. Moreover, the P-M-Pr pattern, observed in 9.00% of abstracts, highlighted a pattern concentrating on purpose, methodology, and results, excluding the introduction and conclusion moves indicating a clear presentation of the research's purpose, methodology, and findings. Less common patterns such as P-Pr-C, I-M-Pr, I-P-Pr, I-M-P-Pr, and I-Pr-C, each found in smaller proportions (ranging from 6.67% to 2.22%), demonstrated diverse structural arrangements, emphasizing specific components while excluding others.

In summary, the analysis of abstracts from Top-Ranked Scopus Journals identified various prevalent move patterns. The most widespread was P-M-Pr-C, followed by I-P-Pr-C, I-P-M-Pr-C, I-P-M-Pr, P-M-Pr, P-Pr-C, I-M-Pr, I-P-Pr, I-M-P-Pr, and I-Pr-C respectively. These findings shed light on the dominant conventions and move structures within abstracts in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching within top-ranked Scopus journals.

### Comparison of Rhetorical Moves in the Research Article Abstracts

When comparing move structures between Thai Scopus journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, similarities included the frequent use of purpose and product moves, emphasizing research objectives and findings presentation. However, both contexts exhibited less emphasis on the introduction move, implying a preference for stating the study's purpose, methodology, findings, and implications rather than providing a comprehensive introduction.

On the other hand, the differences were observed in the move structures within research abstracts between Thai Scopus Journals and those from Top-Ranked Scopus Journals. In Thai Scopus Journals,

the frequent use of the I-P-M-Pr-C pattern which underlined a comprehensive approach, containing all of five moves. Conversely, Top-Ranked Scopus Journals indicated a distinct trend preferring the P-M-Pr-C pattern. These RAAs excluded the introduction while emphasizing the purpose, methodology, product, and conclusion moves.

As for the individual move frequencies, both Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals commonly stated the purpose and presented findings. Yet, variations in move frequencies between these contexts were found. Particularly, the method move was more prevalent in Thai Scopus Journals compared to its frequency in Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, indicating a significant difference in its usage and inclusion based on the publication context.

In summary, the examination of move structures in research article abstracts from Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals within Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching revealed differences in the use, frequency, and sequence of rhetorical moves. These findings might lead to a better pattern comprehension in abstracts in research articles within distinct publication contexts, highlighting conventions and systematic arrangement in these two fields.

### Individual Rhetorical Move Classification in Research Article Abstracts (RAAs)

**Table 3 The Frequency of the Individual Rhetorical Moves in the RAAs (n=45) Published in Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals**

Rhetorical Moves	Percentage (%)	
	TSJ	TRSJ
Introduction (I)	57.78	51.11
Purpose (P)	95.56	93.33
Method (M)	97.78	73.33
Product (Pr)	100.00	100.00
Conclusion (C)	66.67	66.67

As shown in Table 3, after analyzing the frequency of individual moves in abstracts listed in Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, it is evident that each move, when evaluated separately, falls into the recognized categories of obligatory move (occurring 100%), conventional

move (occurring between 60.00% and 99.99%), and optional move (occurring between 0.01% and 59.99%).

In examining research article abstracts in Thai Scopus Journals, the occurrence percentages in individual rhetorical moves are introduction (I) at 57.78%, purpose (P) at 95.56%, method (M) at 97.78%, product (Pr) at 100%, and conclusion (C) at 66.67%. The introduction, falling within the range of 0.01–59.99% occurrence, is classified as an optional move, while purpose, method, and conclusion fall into the conventional move category. The product move is firmly categorized as an obligatory move, aligning with [Amnuai's \(2019\)](#) study emphasizing its significance in the Thai context.

In research article abstracts from Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, occurrence percentages for individual moves are introduction (I) at 51.11%, purpose (P) at 93.33%, method (M) at 73.33%, product (Pr) at 100%, and conclusion (C) at 66.67%. The product move stands as an obligatory move, appearing in 100% of abstracts, while purpose, method, and conclusion moves are classified as conventional moves.

### Discussion

The study's analysis of rhetorical move structures in abstracts from both Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals reveals the difference from established criteria by [Kanoksilapatham \(2005\)](#). None of the identified move patterns in the RAAs from both Thai Scopus Journals or Top-Ranked Scopus Journals meet the obligatory or conventional move criteria. In Thai Scopus Journals, the most frequent pattern, I-P-M-Pr-C (40.00%), along with others, such as P-M-Pr and P-M-Pr-C (each at 20.00%), fall within the optional move range (0.01–59.99%). This signifies a flexibility and variability in abstract writing within this context ([Kanoksilapatham, 2005](#)). Similarly, in Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, the prevalent pattern, P-M-Pr-C (33.00%), also falls within the optional move range, lacking obligatory or conventional categorization. This observation aligns with [Can et al.'s \(2016\)](#) findings, indicating a frequent exclusion of the introduction move in abstracts. Generally, these results suggest that abstracts in both contexts demonstrate flexibility

in their move patterns, not following strictly to the proposed obligatory or conventional classification (Can et al., 2016; Kanoksilapatham, 2005).

The analysis of individual moves in abstracts from both journals reveals interesting patterns. In Thai Scopus Journals, the introduction move is considered optional, the purpose and method moves are seen as conventional, the product move is deemed obligatory, and the conclusion move falls into the optional category. These results align with Amnuai's (2019) findings, emphasizing the importance of the product move and the flexible nature of the introduction move in this context.

For Top-Ranked Scopus Journals, the product move remains obligatory, yet the purpose, method, and conclusion moves fall into conventional move. However, the introduction move does not clearly fit into either the obligatory or conventional categories, indicating flexibility in abstract writing in this discipline. While the overall trends in rhetorical moves may not strictly follow the standard categories, it is important to note that Kanoksilapatham's (2005) move classification framework may be considered too broad, potentially limiting its ability to provide a comprehensive and detailed categorization of moves specifically within research article abstracts in these fields.

## Conclusion

In summary, the analysis of move patterns and individual moves in RAAs from Thai Scopus Journals and Top-Ranked Scopus Journals in the selected fields reveals distinct differences. Thai Scopus Journals typically follow the I-P-M-Pr-C pattern, emphasizing a detailed structure, while Top-Ranked Scopus Journals prefer the P-M-Pr-C pattern, employing a more straightforward approach without a formal introduction. The varying frequencies of individual moves, especially the higher occurrence of the methodology move in Thai Scopus Journals, highlight the influence of contextual factors such as publication guidelines and author preferences on abstract construction. While the overall trends in research article abstracts may not strictly align with obligatory and conventional move categories, individual moves consistently reflect expected patterns, ensuring essential components are included.

Understanding both move patterns and individual moves is crucial for a thorough investigation of abstract structures, offering detailed significance across different contexts. This emphasizes the importance of examining not just move patterns but also individual moves, contributing to a nuanced understanding of abstract composition.

This study holds significant implications for language learners, educators, and researchers interested in studying rhetorical move structures in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching research article abstracts. It serves as a comprehensive resource, offering detailed insights into move analysis within abstracts and providing valuable reference material for researchers investigating similar abstract sources. Additionally, it assists researchers in crafting effective abstracts by providing clear insights and illustrative examples, ultimately enhancing research writing skills in these fields.

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