A Comparative Analysis of the Generic Structure of RA English Abstracts in Chinese-Medium and English-Medium Linguistics Journals

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Abstract

This paper aims to analyze the generic structure of English abstracts in both Chinese-medium and English-medium linguistics journals. A total of 40 abstracts published in the year of 2011-2013 are collected randomly, with 20 written by native English speakers from *Applied Linguistics* and *Language* and the other 20 by Chinese scholars from *Journal of Foreign Languages* and *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. The BIMRD/C model is adopted in this study as distinct differences can be found in the two corpora in terms of the Background move. Three major differences are revealed. Firstly, the abstracts written by native English speakers are more complete in structure than those by Chinese writers as they tend to omit the Background move and the Discussion/Conclusion move. Secondly, most Chinese writers prefer to combine the Method move with the Introduction move and put it at the very beginning of the abstract, while native writers tend to use the independent and the integrated Method nearly equally. Thirdly, in the Results move, Chinese scholars tend to objectively report their study results in detail by *"Results indicate that…"*, sometimes listing them, while native English writers sometimes choose to highlight their research results by patterns of *"we find (show, propose) that"* and *"I propose"* although most of them also use such objective patterns to present their research results. This study is especially helpful for those Chinese writers who hope to publish their paper in international journals.

Keywords: RA English abstracts, comparative analysis, generic structure, linguistics journals

1. Introduction

In 1979, American National Standards Institute (ANSI) defines abstract as ''an abbreviated, accurate representation of the contents of a document, preferably prepared by its author(s) for publication with it'' (as cited in Bhatia, 1993, p. 78). As a time-saving device, abstract provides an easy access to the exact contents of the article by foregrounding the main points of the research article (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995). Ever since then, RA abstracts have been explored by researchers all over the world from different perspectives. Some researchers focus on the generic structure of RA abstracts in a single discipline or a certain journal (Miller, 1984; Bhatia, 1993; Lorés, 2004; Ayers, 2008; Che, 2009), some concentrate on the contrastive studies of the generic structure of RA abstracts in different disciplines (Hyland, 2000; Huckin, 2001; Samraj, 2002; Stotesbury, 2003; Ge & Yang, 2005; Samraj, 2005; Kang & Sun, 2012), while others pay attention to the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural differences (Martín, 2003; Ju, 2004; Bonn & Swales, 2007). Besides, the linguistic features and linguistic realizations of RA abstracts have also been studied, such as the study of the thematic structure by Lorés (2004) and the analysis of linguistic features of abstracts (tenses, voices, modal verbs, etc.) by Salager-Meyer (1992). Some even devote to the study of metadiscourse features in RA abstracts (Hyland, 1998; Gillaerts & Velde, 2010; Mur- Dueñas, 2011).

In terms of the generic structure of RA abstracts, previous researchers generally hold three somewhat different viewpoints. The first is a four-move structure (IMRD/C) which briefly summarizes each of the main sections of the paper: Introduction, (Materials and) Method, Results, and Discussion/Conclusions (Graetz, 1985; Day, 1988; Swales, 1990; Bhatia, 1993; Hyland, 2000; Cargill & O'Connor, 2013). The second is a five-move structure

(BPMRD/C) in which an additional move Background is added (Santos, 1996; Ge & Yang, 2005; Swales & Feak, 2009; Kang & Sun, 2012). The third is a "result-driven" abstract which focuses primarily on one or two aspects of the study, usually—but not always—the Method and the Results (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Swales, 2001; Ayers, 2008; Glasman-Deal, 2010).

Yet, agreement hasn't been reached in terms of the generic structure of English RA linguistics abstracts. For example, Lores (2004), in her study of 36 RA abstracts from 3 linguistics journals, reports that 2/3 of the RA research articles follow the IMRD model, while 1/3 of them follow the CARS model. Ju (2004) finds that the abstracts written by English speakers are rather complicated than the abstracts written by Chinese writers, and Chinese writers mostly adopt the IR model. Liu and Wei (2009) report that the generic structure of abstracts of international journals is more complex and complete, which usually include four moves: Introduction—Method—Results—Discussion; abstracts of domestic journals usually have three moves: Introduction—Results—Discussion. Kang and Sun (2011) point out that among the five moves, Method, Results and Discussion are the most important three moves in linguistics abstracts. He (2013) selects 40 abstracts from *System* and *English for Specific Purposes*. The results show that the Background move is optional in *System*, and is often omitted. All abstracts from *English for Specific Purposes* have a Purpose move, while 15 abstracts in *System* have such a move. The frequency of the Method move, Results move and Discussion move doesn't show any difference.

The previous review shows that researchers home and abroad haven't reached agreement on the generic structure of English abstracts of English-medium and Chinese-medium linguistics journals. Therefore, this study aims to investigate RA English abstracts written by Chinese Learners of English (CLEs) and Native Speakers of English (NSEs) in leading Chinese and English linguistics journals. Specifically, this paper seeks to illustrate the following two research questions:

1) What are the generic structures of RA abstracts written by NSEs and CLEs in linguistics journals?

2) To what extent are these two corpora similar or different in terms of the Background move, the Introduction move, the Method move, the Results move and the Discussion/Conclusion move?

2. Method

2.1 The Selection of the Corpus

Since disciplinary variations have discernible influences on the generic structure of RA abstracts (Swales, 1990; Nwogu, 1997; Samraj, 2005), it is necessary to focus on a single discipline to avoid disciplinary influence on the study results. This study focuses on a single discipline—linguistics, because the study contents are relatively easy for the authors to manage. Based on the three criteria proposed by Nwogu (1997)—reputation, representativity and accessibility, the present study has selected 40 English abstracts as its corpora, with 20 written by native speakers from *Applied Linguistics* and *Language* and 20 written by Chinese scholars from *Journal of Foreign Languages* and *Foreign Language Teaching and Research*. The selected journals are all scholarly leading academic journals in linguistics. *Language* is a popular journal indexed in the SSCI with a high impact factor (1.974 for 2013). *Applied Linguistics* is also considered well-known by specialists in this area with a high impact factor (1.833 for 2013). *Foreign Language Teaching and Research* and *Journal of Foreign Languages* are two Chinese top journals covering key aspects of the foreign language disciplines.

On the other hand, all the RA abstracts are selected randomly from the period of 2011 to 2013. In the selection of English articles, special emphasis is put on the authors of the articles. They should be native English speakers. Another important criterion is the title of the RAs in both corpora, from which we could infer the study fields, covering language, genre analysis, and academic study with the discourse communities belonging to the same type. Conversely, the review articles and short articles in each issue are not considered to provide a representative sample and are thus excluded from the study for comparability. For convenience, the two corpora are respectively termed as Native Speakers of English Corpora (NSEC) and Chinese Learners of English Corpora (CLEC).

2.2 The Procedure

Following the procedure originally suggested by Nwogu (1997) in identifying the generic structure, we did a preliminary analysis to make sure which model (IMRD/C or BIMRD/C) was reliable. The procedure of the preliminary analysis was as follows: (1) Collect 5 abstracts randomly from each linguistics journal in the two corpora; (2) Identify important information such as the research background, the research purpose, the research methodology, the research results and the research discussion; (3) Classify and divide the context of discourse into a number of segments based on the linguistic clues; (4) Assign discourse functions to the overall information;

(5) Decide whether or not the function identified is a general one by reference to other texts in the corpora. After identifying the important messages in the abstracts selected, the authors found that besides the traditional four moves, there existed another move—providing background information (B). Therefore, this BIMRD/C model was employed in our analysis as the basic framework to facilitate the data coding process.

To minimize the author's subjectivity and to validate the findings, we did the analysis as follows. First, each abstract in the two corpora was analyzed twice by all the authors independently. The first two authors are graduate students majoring in English for Specific Purposes, while the third author is their supervisor. Second, the first author compared the results and then discussed with the third author to resolve any discrepancies between their analysis and coding.

When examining different moves in the abstracts of the two corpora, we mainly resorted to the conventional lexical signals which indicate different moves. For example, **the Background move** is usually separated from **the Introduction move** by words or phrases like *"this paper presents…", "in this paper/study, we propose…", "…is presented/proposed in this paper"* and so on. **The Method move** is usually signaled by *"The method used …", "By adopting …", "Five corpus-based case studies are presented…"* and so on. **The Results move** is distinguished by *"The experimental results show/find/reveal/indicate/demonstrate…", "Results have indicated/demonstrated that…", "The results/findings…"* and so on. T**he Discussions/Conclusions move** is recognized by *"The contribution of the paper…", "The potential merits /advantages of …", "…discuss/imply", "This study concludes that…"* and so on.

In addition, we identified the boundaries of moves with a special emphasis on the semantic interpretation when no lexical signals were found or lexical signals didn't have the conventional implication. Gross (1985) stated that the IMRD/C model, as a logic structure for persuasion, is "a rhetorical device that helps to justify the enterprise of experimental science" (as cited in Livnat, 2012, p. 26). As Hunston (1994) suggested, the Introduction move persuades the reader that "the research undertaken is necessary and worthwhile on the grounds that there exist some gaps in knowledge on a topic which is important"; the Method move persuades the reader that "the research was well done, specifically that the subjects represented the groups they were intended to represent and the experimental method avoided distortion"; the Results move persuades the reader that "the statistical packages used were useful and informative"; and the Discussion move persuades the reader that "the results make sense and fit with other examples of research, leading to a consistent body of knowledge" (as cited in Livnat, 2012, p. 27).

The coding was done as follows: if one move was described by a complete sentence or more than one complete sentence, the initial letter for the corresponding move was used only as B, I, M, R, or D. However, if more than one move was described in one sentence, it was coded as B+I, I+M, M+I, or M+R, respectively depending on the order of the presented information. The analysis is mainly designed to check whether the five moves are obligatory or optional in the abstracts, therefore, it is move-based rather than sentence-based.

3. Results and Discussion

Following the methodological framework in the previous section, we examined the generic structure of the abstracts in the two corpora. Table 1 and Table 2 present the descriptive statistics for the generic structure of the 40 abstracts aiming to discover the move differences between abstracts of Chinese writers and that of English-native writers.

Table 1. The generic structure of abstracts in NSEC

Text No.	Structure	Text No.	Structure
T 1	BIMRD	T 11	BMIRD
T 2	IBMRD	T 12	BI
T 3	BIMRD	T 13	B I M+R D
T 4	B+I MRD	T 14	BI+M
T 5	M+RD	T 15	M+IRD
T 6	BR	T 16	IM+RD
T 7	B M+I RD	T 17	IM+R D
T 8	IBMRD	T 18	BIMRD
T 9	IBMRD	T 19	BIRD
T 10	I+M RD	T 20	BIM+RD

Table 2. The generic structure of abstracts in CLEC

Text No.	Structure	Text No.	Structure
T 21	BIRD	T 31	M+IRD
T 22	IR	T 32	M+IRD
T 23	BIR	T 33	I R+M
T 24	IR	T 34	B I+M R
T 25	BID	T 35	M+I R
T 26	BI+M	T 36	BIRD
T 27	I+MRD	T 37	IMRD
T 28	M+I R	T 38	M+I R
T 29	M+IRD	T 39	I+M R
T 30	BI+R	T 40	M+IRD

Comparing the two tables, we can draw four noticeable conclusions. First, the Introduction move and the Results move in the two corpora occur nearly in all the abstracts. Second, the total number of moves in abstracts written by native English speakers is higher than that written by non-native English speakers, representing that abstracts of NSEC have a comparatively more complete generic structure. The two tables reveal that 11 abstracts of NSEC have the complete pattern of BIMRD, while only one abstract in CLEC contains all these five moves. Third, non-native English writers show a tendency to omit the Background and the Discussion move. Frequency of the Background move and the Discussion move in NSEC is markedly higher than that in CLEC. These two moves are present in CLEC with only 35% and 45%, but 75% and 85% in NSEC. Finally, the Method move in abstracts of NSEC occurs at a higher frequency than that of CLEC with a percentage of 85% and 65% respectively. Compared with native English speakers, Chinese writers tend to adopt the M+I rhetorical strategy. In the following section, a detailed analysis of the five moves will be conducted.

3.1 Description of the Background Move

The Background move plays a crucial role in providing the reader basic knowledge of a specific study field. Table 3 reveals that the Background move of NSEC has an appreciably higher frequency than that of CLEC, with 75% and 35% respectively. A detailed analysis of the sampled abstracts indicates that the Background move generally consists of two fairly predictable steps: reviewing the previous study (Step 1) and presenting the gap (Step 2). It should be noted that the first step appears in all the Background move, indicating that reviewing the previous study is of great necessity in the Background move. In this step, authors tend to review the established knowledge in this field. It is characterized by two strategies: one is "general references" which means the name of the author cited will not appear; the other is "specific references" in which the specific theory and the related contents will be mentioned.

Table 3. Frequency of the background move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC	Percent (%)	CLEC	Percent (%)
Move 1 (M1)	15	75	7	35
Step 1 (S1)	15	75	7	35
Step 2 (S2)	6	30	2	10

Despite these similarities, differences also exist in this step. Chinese scholars tend to adopt the "describing knowledge" step which simply summarizes previous knowledge without any critical comments. By contrast, native English speakers courageously criticize previous research rather than simply put them into the background information. In Ex.1, no critical remarks are presented. The author uses hedges such as *"can"* and *"may"* to convey a tone of uncertainty and cautiousness. As a politeness strategy, the author thus mitigates the illocutionary force of a criticism, a face threatening claim to the previous researchers (Myers, 1989). In Ex. 2, the author uses *"However, there are a number of methodological research questions that jeopardize any verifiable conclusions"* to assume a voice of confidence with a firm conclusion and closes off other possible alternative views.

Ex.1: It is pointed out in Hu (2007) that a distinction **can be** drawn between Case marking and non-Case-marking languages. Whether an NP is Case-marked or not in a language produces impact on thematic reading and syntactic positioning. Based on the notion that Chinese is a non-Case-marking language, Hu (2010) provides an account on how the characteristic unselectiveness manifested in argument

distribution in many types of Chinese sentences **may be** a result of the interaction between prominence and locality. [M1-S1] (CLEC T21)

Ex.2: Lorenzo et al. (2010) attribute some quite astounding average FL language score differences between Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) and non-CLIL groups in Andalusia, Spain, precisely favoring the CLIL initiative. **However**, **there are a number of methodological research questions that jeopardize any verifiable conclusions** that can be drawn from the study as described by the authors, beginning with the interpretation of the scores. Three other significant factors are considered, before a plea is made for more disinterested research, which does not ignore the less privileged. [M1-S1] (NSEC T14)

The second step indicating a gap is to present contrastive statements with conjunctions (*however, yet, but* or *while*) or adverbial clauses of concession to illustrate the points neglected by previous research so that the value of the present research is precisely highlighted. Writers find a "niche" by showing that previous research is not complete or there is still a research space requiring further examination. The two strategies help the writer to highlight the current research. As a result, readers are more likely to accept the value of the current research. In Ex. 3, the author uses the sentence *"What transpires in these conferences, however, is 'hidden from view' (Heritage and Sefi 1992: 362) and the norms of interaction are largely unexamined in the literature"* to illustrate that the current research on legitimate talk in feedback conferences fulfills the blank of this field.

Ex.3: Feedback on performance is a feature of professional training. Much feedback is delivered in post-observation conferences where a "trainer" will discuss the "trainee's" performance with him/her. [M1-S1] **What transpires in these conferences, however, is "hidden from view" (Heritage and Sefi 1992: 362) and the norms of interaction are largely unexamined in the literature**. **Even less is known about feedback conducted in groups, yet** many teachers training to teach English experience feedback in this way. [M1-S2] (NSEC T13)

3.2 Description of the Introduction Move

The present empirical analysis of the abstracts from the two corpora shows that the Introduction move is significantly indispensable and obligatory because of its high occurrence of more than 90% in both corpora. In the Introduction move, the author tends to announce the relevant information purposively to occupy the niche and present the research question or hypotheses. Two strategies are used frequently. One is to state the purpose (Strategy 1) and the other is to present the research question (Strategy 2). The purpose of the research article is generally signaled by the pattern of *"This paper (study) aims to"* or *"The aim of this article is"* (as illustrated by Ex.4 and Ex.5), while the subject such as *"the (this) present (current) study/ paper/ article"* adding the verb such as *"addresses", "argues", "examines", "investigates", "explores", "discusses" and "focuses on"* is frequently adopted to present the problem (as illustrated by Ex.6 and Ex.7).

Ex. 4: Adopting a sociocultural approach, **the paper aims to** explore the role of teacher scaffolding through micro genetic analysis of teacher and student discourse in an ESL classroom at a university in Hong Kong, in which Chinese undergraduate students were give a rewriting task in teacher-student interaction. [M2-S1] (CLEC T31)

Ex. 5: **The aim of this article is to** discuss and illustrate to what extent the contrastive discourse analysis of adaptations of the same basic story available in the target and source cultures/languages may help translators (training or practising) gain an insight into…. [M2-S1] (NSEC T12)

Ex. 6: **It investigates** how the existential meaning is expressed and distributed in the three functional elements of the clause, i.e. the Existent, the Locative Element, and the Process. [M2-S2] (CLEC T24)

Ex.7: **The study not only involves** quantitative and qualitative analysis of "on" and "nous" usage, the variants typically considered in the literature, **but also focuses on** the use of je in combination with the first-person plural ending ones, a lower-class variant not sufficiently taken into account in earlier studies. [M2-S2] (NSEC T3)

Table 4. Frequency of the introduction move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC	Percent (%)	CLEC	Percent (%)
Move 2 (M2)	18	90	20	100
Strategy 1	1	5	6	30
Strategy 2	17	85	14	70

Table 4 indicates that the purpose statement occurs with an extremely low frequency, particularly in abstracts of NSEC. In NSEC, the purpose statement accounts for only 5% in the Introduction move, while 30% in CLEC. More interesting than the frequency comparison, however, are the approaches used by the two different groups of writers to signal their purposes and judgments. A notably higher degree of difference between the NSEC and CLEC corpora is that native English scholars tend to adopt a more descriptive approach to problems. However, the Chinese scholars prefer a purposive writing style. In Ex. 4, by using the verb pattern *"this paper aims to…"*, the writer emphasizes the aim of his study and thus conveys a sense of determination. Yet, in Ex.5, the native English writer uses the pattern *"the aim of this article is to…"* to describe the study purpose without any personal attitude.

3.3 Description of the Method Move

With a frequency of 85% in NSEC and 65% in CLEC, it suffices to say that the Method move is also of great importance for both the reader and the writer to create and comprehend an abstract (Table 5). Devlin (2003) claims that the Method move contains the detailed information about how a particular research is done systematically and provides the reader with sufficient information about materials, subjects, data sources, procedures or methodology.

Table 5. Frequency of the method move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC	Percent (%)	CLEC	Percent (%)
Move 3 (M3)	17	85	13	65
Independent	8	40	1	5
Integrated	9	45	12	60

Table 6. Frequency of M+I/I+M move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC	Percent (%)	CLEC	Percent (%)
M+I/I+M	4	20	11	55
Outlining the purpose	0	0	4	20
Announcing the present research	4	20	7	35

The two corpora differ significantly in the frequency of the Method move. Table 5 shows that the Method move in NSEC accounts for 85%, among which 40% turns to be independent, followed up by 45% embedded with the Introduction move or the Results move. By contrast, the Method move in CLEC accounts for 65%, among which the independent one is only 5% and 60% are compressed with other moves (11Method moves are combined with Introduction and only 1 with the Results move). What's more, the position of the Method move differs in the two corpora. In CLEC, 55% is embedded in the Introduction move, among which 20% is compressed with "outlining the purposes" and 35% with "announcing the present research" (Table 6). By contrast, none of the Method move in NSEC is compressed with "outlining the purpose", and all of the 20% M+I/I+M move is embedded in "announcing the present research" (Table 6). This may be caused by the fact that "outlining the purpose" occurs with a very low frequency in NSEC corpora. Below are the typical examples which are labeled accordingly.

Ex.8: This study, **by conducting a psychological experiment**, aims to explore the nature of scalar implicatures through testing the processing time of the Chinese scalar item "yixie" in utterance interpretation…(Outlining the purpose) [M3] (CLEC T27)

Ex.9: **In a series of three experiments,** we **compare** verbs that have no agreement marker with ones that have a single marker, and we **compare** verbs with one agreement marker with ones that have two… (Announcing the present research) [M3] (NSEC T4)

It should be noted that 35% abstracts of Chinese writers completely remove the Method move, while 15% abstracts of native writers omit the Method move, though the methods can occur in both the Introduction and the Results move (5 integrated with the Results move in NSEC, 1 in CLEC). This can be attributed to the fact that in some discipline, the Method move constitutes little promotional value. As Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) found that the Method move was being relegated to a secondary position in the full articles.

3.4 Description of the Results Move

The frequency count indicates that the Results move is of the highest significance in abstract writing, with 36 cases overall, 18 in each of the two corpora (Table 7). It means that the Results move is equally important in the

abstracts of NSEC and CLEC, supporting previous observations by Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), who claim that the Results move is gaining importance in the full article. Since the Results move is supposed to highlight the significance of the research, 13 Results moves in NSEC and 16 in CLEC are independently realized respectively.

Table 7. Frequency of the results move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC	Percent (%)	CLEC	Percent (%)
Move 4 (M4)	18	90	18	90
Independent	13	65	16	80
Integrated	5	25	2	10

The study also reveals that both the writers of NSEC and the writers of CLEC present their results primarily through a step "reporting the result". However, writers of the two groups adopt different positions when presenting their research results. Chinese scholars tend to objectively report their study results in detail, sometimes listing them. The most commonly used patterns are *"The results (findings, etc.) show (demonstrate, find, reveal, etc) that…"* or *"The main finding is that…"*, as illustrated in Ex. 10. By using *"Results…indicate that…"*, the writer objectively listed three major findings with 87 words and clearly informed the reader of his study results. This feature might be due to the journal-specific requirement as four abstracts from *Foreign Language Teaching and Research* are constructed in this way.

> Ex.10 **Results** based on a corpus of 240 writing samples by English majors **indicate** that 1) radio measures are more effective indicators of writing fluency than frequency ones, yet lexical fluency measures of frequency are equally effective when such extraneous factors are controlled as number of writing tasks, time limit and participants' attitude; 2) composition length, words in error-free clauses and clause length have predictive power to writing quality; and 3) all fluency indicators, except composition length and writing speed, are discriminating factors for language proficiency levels. [M4] (CLEC. T33)

Although most native English writers also use such objective patterns to present their research results, some of them choose to highlight their research results by patterns of *"we find (show, propose) that"* and *"I propose"*, as illustrated in Ex.11. This may also be attributed to the journal-specific requirement as this pattern appears in five of the ten abstracts selected from *Language*. This is in line with Harwood's research results. Harwood (2005) stated that "First person pronouns help writers create a sense of newsworthiness and novelty about their work, showing how they are plugging disciplinary knowledge gaps." (as cited in Livnat, p. 93-94)

> Ex.11 **We find that** word recognition is slower with agreement than without it; and words with two agreement markers are recognized more slowly and with more errors relative to verbs with a single marker. For grammaticality judgments, subjects were generally slower to respond when the verb carried more markers. For verbs with no marker versus verbs with one marker, this extra cognitive effort yielded improved accuracy; however, this advantage did not extend to multiple exponence, as the extra processing time did not produce much improvement in accuracy. In cued recall, the presence of one marker conferred a clear advantage in accuracy, but the presence of two agreement markers actually resulted in decreased accuracy. [M4] (NSEC. T4)

3.5 Description of the Discussion Move

The Discussion move mainly presents how writers argue for their claims. It is observed that this move is usually realized by two steps, commenting on the results and highlighting the significance. The first step, commenting on the results, is the key one and functions as recapitulations of the research. The possible methods that writers adopt in this step are explaining the results, comparing the current results with that of previous studies or elaborating the validity of the results. This study shows that in this step, writers show a tendency of using noun phrases (*the finding, the results, the investigation etc.*) or verbs (*indicate, argue, suggest, interpret etc.*) to explain the results. Structures such as "*It is concluded that…*" or "*It is argued that…*" are frequently used to conclude the results. In step 2, writers tend to highlight the significance of the results. In Ex. 12, by using the word *"helpful"*, the writer states the value of this research with an aim to persuade readers to approve of his contribution.

> Ex.12 We believe that this kind of research **is helpful to** define clearly between the illocutionary force and modality, and to be clear about the different objects of study. [M5-S2] (CLEC.T25)

It should also be noted that the frequency of the Discussion move presents distinguishing differences in the two

groups of abstracts, with 85% in NSEC and 45% in CLEC, indicating that Chinese writers lack the awareness of the function of discussion or conclusion (Table 8). The frequency of the two steps in NSEC is also significantly higher than that in CLEC, representing that Chinese writers try to simplify the Discussion move. They just present the research findings instead of persuading readers to accept their new assertions. However, native English writers prefer to stress the research significance to promote their new findings.

Table 8. Frequency of the Discussion Move in NSEC and CLEC

	NSEC N=20	Percent	CLEC N=20	Percent
Move 5 (M5)	17	85 %	9	45%
Step 1 (S1)	15	75 %	5	25%
Step 2 (S2)	12	60%	5	25%

> Ex.13 Because actualization is guided by local and global analogies to existing uses, one determinant of the course of actualization is the locus of reanalysis, as it defines the first uses of an item under change, on which subsequent uses can be modeled. [M5-S1] Further, it is argued that the findings fit best with usage-based models of language, which attribute a prominent role to similarity-based organization in grammar, and in which an item's use can be subject to multiple, potentially conflicting generalizations. [M5-S2] (NSEC. T1)

In Ex.13, the writer attempts to explain why the result is as obtained. The writer's own knowledge (*Because actualization is guided by local and global analogies to existing uses… as it defines the first uses of an item under change, on which subsequent uses can be modeled)* is used to give an account to the results. This step serves one main function: supporting the results offered by the writer. If a result can be explained, it is credible. Also, the writer provides an additional explanation (*the findings fit best with usage-based models of language…and in which an item's use can be subject to multiple, potentially conflicting generalizations)* to cover all bases and preempt potential suggestions by reviewers and readers. In the last sentence, the writer successfully extends the topic from the narrower focus of the current research to the wider focus of general explanation and theory, thus adding news value to his research and seems appealing to a wider audience.

Obviously, the Discussion move in NSEC is more complex with frequent explanatory and commenting information as well as detailed statement about the significance of the study, while Chinese writers lacks awareness of the functions of the comments on the results. In other words, it seems that they put little emphasis on the papers' main contribution. Yet, native English writers appear to be cognizant of the functions of this move. This emphasis on results can be seen as part of the advertising of a paper.

4. Conclusions

The generic structure of abstracts in the two corpora is analyzed with an aim to find out the answers to the question raised at the very beginning of the Introduction section. Data analysis reveals the following conclusions.

Generally speaking, no matter whether the abstracts are complete or not in structure, they usually appear with a similar linear sequence, representing the logical order of summarizing a research. This is in line with Martín's study on Spanish and English research paper abstracts (2003). Obviously, both native English writers and Chinese writers give particular importance to the Introduction move and the Results move, since the Introduction move serves to inform the readers of the exact content of the research and the Results move, as the main contribution of the research, has great promotional value.

Despite the similarities in the two groups of abstracts, an overview of the generic structure of abstracts in the two corpora also presents some interesting differences. Firstly, in terms of the Background move, in contrast to Chinese scholars' generalization and avoiding criticizing the previous researchers, native speakers usually provide the specific reference and courageously criticize the previous researchers. In the Introduction move, compared to the Chinese writers' purposive writing style, native speakers tend to adopt a more descriptive approach to focus on the main aim of the research. In the Method move, native speakers use both independent move and integrated move while Chinese writers especially like to combine the Method move with the Introduction move. In the Results move, Chinese scholars tend to objectively report their study results in detail by *"Results indicate that…"*, sometimes listing them, while native English writers sometimes choose to highlight their research results by patterns of *"we find (show, propose) that"* and *"I propose"* although most native English writers also use such objective patterns to present their research results. In the Discussion move, the writers of NSEC show a tendency of providing some explanations for their findings or giving some

alternative explanations. Meanwhile, they also provide the evaluation of results in the Discussion move, which is always omitted by Chinese writers. Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) argue that it is necessary for writers to highlight the news value of their research so that it can appeal to a wider readership. By providing explanations for a phenomenon or making fresh connections between the phenomenon under study and a general theory, the writers of articles in the present study are able to extend the topic from the narrower focus of the actual research to the wider focus of general explanation and theory, thus adding news value to their research and appealing to a wider audience. Also, by making a number of explanations, the writers may have been claiming additional territory, offering explanations and connections that future scholars might otherwise make.

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