

## **Rhetorical Analysis of Introduction Sections from Humanities and Sciences Research Theses Authored by Pakistani Scholars**

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### **Abstract**

This research aims to investigate the rhetorical structures of the introduction sections of Pakistani research theses at postgraduate level. The corpus of study contains 32 “Introduction” sections of Pakistani research theses from two faculties: Humanities and Sciences. The faculty of Sciences include theses from disciplines of Zoology, Chemistry, Botany and Biochemistry, whereas the faculty of Humanities include theses of Mass Communication, English, Gender Studies and Computer Studies. Both qualitative and quantitative methods including textual analysis and frequency percentages have been used for data analysis. The online software Compleat Lexical Tutor (Cobb, 2015) was employed to extract the sentence units of the data. A hand tagged move analysis was conducted by following Swales’ Model (2004) as a reference framework. All the instances of moves and steps were calculated to explore the rhetorical variation across two faculties. Findings of the study disclosed that Pakistani authors follow their own pattern of Move 1 (Establishing the research territory) along with the variation in frequency of its constituent steps across two faculties. The demarcation between two faculties has revealed that, in the field of sciences, there is a stronger use of topic generalization than in humanities. Moreover, the inter-textual links to prior research in the field of sciences are provided more frequently than in the field of humanities. However, scholars from the faculty of Humanities represent their stance by claiming relevance of the field.

**Keywords:** *Genre analysis, Introductions, Pakistani research theses, Move analysis*

## Introduction

Writing a research thesis has become an arduous task for non-native learners of English (Paltridge, 2002; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014). According to Kaur and Sidhu (2009), a rapidly increasing population of the learners registered in postgraduate programs has been observed during the past two decades. Although writing skill is mandatory during the whole process of education, students and research scholars still experience rhetorical difficulties while writing research dissertations.

Keeping in view the current scenario, various educational institutions are organizing workshops on dissertation writing skills and offering instructional material to the scholars for their prolific grooming and enabling them to face the challenges of composing longer manuscripts. However, guidelines and instructional material provided by educational institutions are insufficient to cater the requirements of novice researchers. This trend has galvanized the interest of genre analysts and various communities to investigate the discursive practices of academic genres. Therefore, genre analysis has attracted enormous attention these days. Academic genres like research articles, text books, and research theses have been analyzed in this respect. Generic features of different sections like acknowledgement, introductory chapters, literature reviews, methodology, discussion, and conclusion have also been examined (Bunton, 1998; Samraj, 2008; Rofess & Mahmood, 2015).

The “Introduction” section of a research thesis plays a crucial role in presenting the importance and relevance of the study being carried out. Shaw (1991) indicates that, among all sections in a thesis, “Introduction” is one of the most difficult chapters to write. Moreover, the first chapter of the research dissertation to be appraised by the readers is also the introduction section. Shehzad (2006) asserts that the introduction section sets an appropriate contextual background for the study undertaken and serves as a platform to capture the attention of the audience. Shehzad and Abbas (2015) propose that a careful use of linguistic and rhetorical features is required to structurally organize the introductory section of research thesis.

Writing a research thesis is mandatory requirement at M Phil and PhD level in Pakistani universities. Pakistani students learn two languages, their mother tongue and their national language before learning English, and this phenomenon makes thesis writing more difficult for research scholars (Shehzad & Abbas, 2015). Most of the universities have not provided published guidelines regarding the writing of dissertations. Consequently, the rhetorical structures within introduction sections of research theses at M Phil and PhD level in the fields of humanities and sciences are still relatively unexplored in the Pakistani context. The present situation necessitates exploration of rhetorical structures of the Introductory chapters of research theses of sciences and humanities. The objectives of this research study are as follow:

- To find out the steps of the move 1 “Establishing the research territory” in the introduction sections of Pakistani research theses of Humanities and Sciences.
- To explore the rhetorical variation in the steps of the move 1 employed in the introduction sections of Pakistani research theses of Humanities and Sciences.
- To highlight the advantage of teaching rhetorical structures of academic writing to novice learners.

## Literature Review

Genre based approaches have been employed to investigate the rhetorical structures of various academic genres. The term genre has been widely employed in the domains of media, rhetoric and applied linguistics to represent a specific type of text (Ketabi & Rahavard, 2013). Dudley-Evans (1989, p. 72) defines genre as a “system of analysis” to accomplish various goals. He further elaborates that it helps categorize certain commonalities of text regarding form, functions, the audience of the text. Moreover, it distinguishes a specific type of text from other texts.

According to Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988, p. 115), genre analysis refers to the “structured and standardized” positioning of text. Swales (1990) defines genre as a set of communicative events along with a communicative purpose shared by all the members of its discourse community. The members of the discourse community provide a justification and rationale of genre due to their specialized knowledge of norms of that particular genre. This rationale helps shape the organizational schema, style, and content of the discourse.

The focus of Swales’ definition revolves around major constructs like “communicative event”, “communicative purpose” (1990, p. 58), the role of schema, and discourse communities. The communicative event is a complicated notion that not only entails the spoken or written discourse, but also the contextual background and culture (Swales, 1990). Swales postulates that a class of communicative events can be turned into a genre by a “shared set of communicative purpose” (1990, p. 46). Language plays a significant role in communicative event. However, it also includes discourse, participants, culture, and context of discourse. Swales further posits that genres are possessions of “discourse communities” (1990, p. 54) and not of individuals. Discourse communities perceive genres according to their set of norms and conventions. These members of discourse communities can assign appropriate names to the communicative events occurring in their communities (Rofess, 2013). Names cannot be assigned to the genres until they are accepted by the members of their discourse communities.

Analysts and theorists have defined genre approaches from different perspectives. Hyon (1996) has classified three major approaches of genre analysis: Sydney School (SFL), New Rhetoric, and English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The Sydney School grounded in the theory of systemic functional linguistics (SFL) developed by Halliday (1994). In New Rhetoric, genre is defined through its social functions and context (Bazerman, 1988; Miller,

1984). Miller describes genre as a “social action” (1984, p. 156) that functions as a mediator between society and individuals. The exponents of this approach are less concerned with the form of texts and more with their social actions and situations (Hyland, 2002). ESP approach considers genre as a vehicle to analyze the structural patterns of texts for pedagogical implications (Suntara & Usaha, 2013). This approach is based on theories and frameworks developed by Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993) and Dudley-Evans (1994). Hyon also accentuates the role of genre analysis to explore linguistic forms of “spoken and written” (1996, p. 695) discourse of non-native speakers. Researchers exploring scientific genre have established that genre analysis provides useful information to the learners regarding the stylistic and rhetorical organization of the texts (Suntra, 2013). These three approaches have been examined. However, ESP tradition is extensively acknowledged for its advantages through several theoretical research studies (Haq, 2006). This approach supports the learners to comprehend the textual patterns of academic genres through move analysis.

Move Analysis is considered a useful method for exploring the internal organizational structure of discourse. Writers employ genre moves to realize the communicative purpose of genre (Swales, 1990). According to Swales (1990), the device employed to reveal the structural organization of genre with the purpose of accomplishing its communicative function is termed as Move Analysis. The length of moves may vary from one proposition to a number of paragraphs. He further explains that a move may be divided into different steps and sub-steps. These steps have organizational patterns which facilitate the carrying out of the global purpose of the moves (Swales, 1990). Bhatia has employed the term “cognitive structures” (1993, p. 75) for moves. He asserts that the concept of move analysis facilitates in interpreting the structural uniformity to realize the rationale of the genre.

“CARS” model (Create a Research Space) by Swales (1981) has a tremendous impact for analyzing the moves of academic genres. He investigated the moves of 48 introductions of research articles from a variety of disciplines. He developed a framework of move analysis comprising four moves along with various steps: establishing the territory, review of past researches, preparing for the current research, and introducing the current research.

Several explorations have been influenced by the seminal work of Swales (1981). This effort of Swales directed multiple studies in which his framework of move analysis was exploited in various genres and sub-genres for validation purposes. The intricacies were found by the researchers in differentiating move 1 and 2 of his model (Crook, 1986). He revisited and modified his framework in 1990.

In the modified version of the CARS model (1990), Move 1 is called “establishing the research territory.” This move contains three steps: claims of centrality, generalization of topic, and reviewing the previous studies. The first step makes an appeal to the members of discourse community to acknowledge

the research as a significant and dynamic piece of work (Swales, 1990). IşıkTaş (2008) is of the view that these claims can be made by employing various lexical expressions. The second step refers to statements regarding knowledge or phenomena (Swales, 1990). The third step is review of prior research (citations) that is considered relevant by the authors to establish their research field. Swale (1990, p. 184) also suggests a categorization of “integral” and “non-integral citations” in this respect. Move 2 (establishing the research gap) consists of four steps, i.e. counter claiming, indication of gaps, raising questions, and continuing the tradition. The research gap can be presented by employing “negative and quasi negative quantifiers” (Swales, 1990, p. 155). Move 3 (occupying the niche) is further divided into three steps: stating the purpose, revealing the main findings, and indicating the structure of research article. According to IşıkTaş (2008), the purpose of research can be described in Move 3. In 2004, Swales again modified a few aspects of his CARS model (1990). He accepted that two steps of Move 2, counter claiming and question raising, are not different from the indication of gap. In his revised model, four steps of Move 2 have been reduced to two realizations. He also included more options in the move 3 like research questions/hypothesis, summarizing the methods, defining key terms, and presenting the outcomes of the study.

CARS model (1990) of move analysis was followed and adapted for analysis of various genres across different disciplines. According to Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), there lies a connection between the genres and practices of different disciplines. The recent studies have documented the predominance of Swales’ CARS model for investigating the rhetorical features of various genres of different disciplines. The researches of Bunton (1998) and Samraj (2002), mentioned in this study, are renowned adaptations of CARS model (1990).

In the field of genre, a very useful research was conducted by Bunton (1998). He adapted this model to analyze the moves of introduction and conclusion sections of 13 Ph.D dissertations of Social Sciences, Sciences and Technology. The findings of Bunton’s (1998) study identified problems in rhetorical structures of theses and revealed that “establishing the niche” (Move 2) in the previous literature was not identified in two introductions. In addition to this, in two more introductions no indication of move 3 (occupying the niche) was found. Consequently, he proposed a “three stream model”.

Samraj (2002) also adapted “CARS” model for the analysis of rhetorical moves of the introductory sections of research articles on Wildlife Behavior and Conservation Biology. The findings of research exposed rhetorical differences, particularly the promotional use of centrality claims in the area of Conservation Biology. This research also proposed revisions in Swales’ framework (1990).

A few researchers have followed “CARS” model (1990) to explore the disciplinary variation of research these. In this regard, an exploratory study was carried out by Cheung (2012) to analyze the application of “CARS” model (1990) in 43 theses of Soft Sciences. The results of his study showed a higher frequency of non-integral citations in the fields of Linguistics and Education

Management in comparison with Instructional Design and Technology. Geckili (2013) analyzed a corpus of 20 introductory sections of Ph.D theses of English written by English and Turkish researchers. The findings of the study exposed variation in rhetorical structures of theses of Turkish and English scholars. Ferandez (2016) examined the use of rhetorical features of 79 introductory sections of research theses of English, Biology, and Statistics by utilizing “CARS” model. The results of the study exhibited that the moves of CARS model (1990) had been followed in the discipline of English.

A lot of research has been conducted in the field of genre to analyze the schematic structures of introductions of theses at international level. However, only a few studies have been done in Pakistan to investigate the generic structures of academic writing. Shehzad (2006) explored the approach of computer scientists for establishing the research field in the introductions of articles. The findings uncovered a variety of methods used in the discipline of Computer Science like claims of timelessness, being problematic or being part of a cult.

Another study has been undertaken by Khan and Mehmood (2014) to investigate the disciplinary variation in generic structure of introductions of Pakistani M.Phil theses of Social Sciences and Natural Sciences. The results revealed that both the faculties share the same rhetoric with an exception of Move 2. Shehzad and Abbas (2015) investigated rhetorical structures of M.Phil theses written in Pakistani context. The corpus of study was taken from the fields of Linguistics and Literature. “CARS” model (Swales, 2004) was used for analyzing the data. The results revealed differences in the rhetorical organization of moves across two disciplines.

The theses of Natural Sciences and Social Sciences have been explored in Khan and Mehmood’s (2014) study but the comparative analysis of Humanities and Sciences is still an unexplored area. The present study aims to explore rhetorical differences of the research genres of these two faculties.

## **Method**

This section delineates the details of corpus and methods adopted for current investigation. Corpus of the study was borrowed from Begum (2015). Permission to use the corpus was taken from Begum (2015) to fulfill the ethical considerations. The said corpus contains 160 research theses from two major faculties of Humanities and Sciences which present a broad range of subjects. A total number of 32 introduction chapters of Pakistani research theses from the faculties of Humanities and Sciences have been selected using stratified random sampling technique as recommended by Biber (1993). The reason behind this selection is that the background, objectives and justification of the study are presented in the introduction sections of research theses.

**Table 1**

***Details of the Corpus***

Faculties	Subjects	No of Introductions
Sciences	Zoology	4
	Chemistry	4
	Botany	4
	Biochemistry	4
Humanities	Mass Com	4
	Gender Studies	4
	English	4
	Computer Studies	4

“CARS” model proposed by Swales (2004) has been employed as a reference framework for the analysis of corpus. It is pertinent to note here that the application of “CARS” model is frequently acknowledged for macro analysis of the introductions of research articles and dissertations across various fields and this framework has also been developed further considering the findings of those studies.

**Table 2**

**“CARS” Model (2004)**

Move	Steps of Moves
Move 1: Establishing the research territory (citations required)	ViaTopic generalizations of increasing specificity
Move 2: Establishing a niche	Step 1A Indicating a gap Or Step 1B Adding to what is known Step 2 (optional) Presenting positive justification
Move 3: Presenting the present work	Step 1 (obligatory) Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively Step 2* (optional) Presenting RQs or hypotheses Step 3 (optional) Definitional clarifications Step 4 (optional) Summarizing methods Step 5 (PISF**) Announcing principle outcomes Step 6 (PISF) Stating the value of the present research Step 7 (PISF) Outlining the structure of the paper

Note: \*Steps 2-4 are optional and less fixed in order.

\*\* PISF means probable in some fields.

Three moves are outlined in the “CARS” model. Every move adds to the global communicative purpose. In the current study, move 1 “Establishing the territory” of “CARS” model (Swales, 2004) has been considered for the structural analysis of corpus. The texts were organized and converted into notepad files to extract the sentence units through online software of Compleat Lexical Tutor (Cobb, 2015). This extracted data has been transmuted into Microsoft Word files. Subsequently, an exhaustive hand tagged analysis of Move 1 (establishing the research territory) has been conducted. Many strategies have been adopted by the Pakistani authors with an intention of uplifting their study and persuading the readers for the acceptance of their work. A few commonly employed strategies by the Pakistani authors did not resemble with steps elaborated by Swales (2004) in Move 1. Therefore, strategies regarding centrality claims of the authors and relevance of time frame have been taken from Lewin et al. (2001, p. 42) for the comprehensive analysis of Move 1. Researchers employ a plethora of lexical signals such as ‘useful’, ‘significant/important’, and ‘interesting’ to justify the distinctiveness of their work (Lewin et al., 2001). Lewin et al. elaborated some lexical expressions which facilitate the writers to disclose the “time frame of relevance” (2001, p. 43) to the reader. A few problems have been encountered by the researchers regarding identification and demarcation in the boundaries of moves. Procedures of Inter-coder reliability have been executed. After tagging all the steps of Move 1, an independent coder in the field of genre also examined all the instances and had agreement of almost 89 % with the researcher. Disagreements regarding the tagging have been resolved. Finally, the frequencies of manually tagged steps of Move 1 were analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively in this study. In order to ensure the validity of data analysis, four experts (university teachers) in the same field were interviewed, specifically regarding the implications of “CARS” model for pedagogical purposes.

## **Results and Discussion**

The move analysis of 32 introduction sections is presented here with a focus on observing how the introductory sections from two faculties of Humanities and Sciences are structured. Move 1 with its constituent steps have been found in all 32 introductions of two faculties. The findings in table 3 elaborate the details of percentages of steps of Move 1 employed in the corpus of Humanities. The authors started their introductions by making claims which show the relevance of their research.

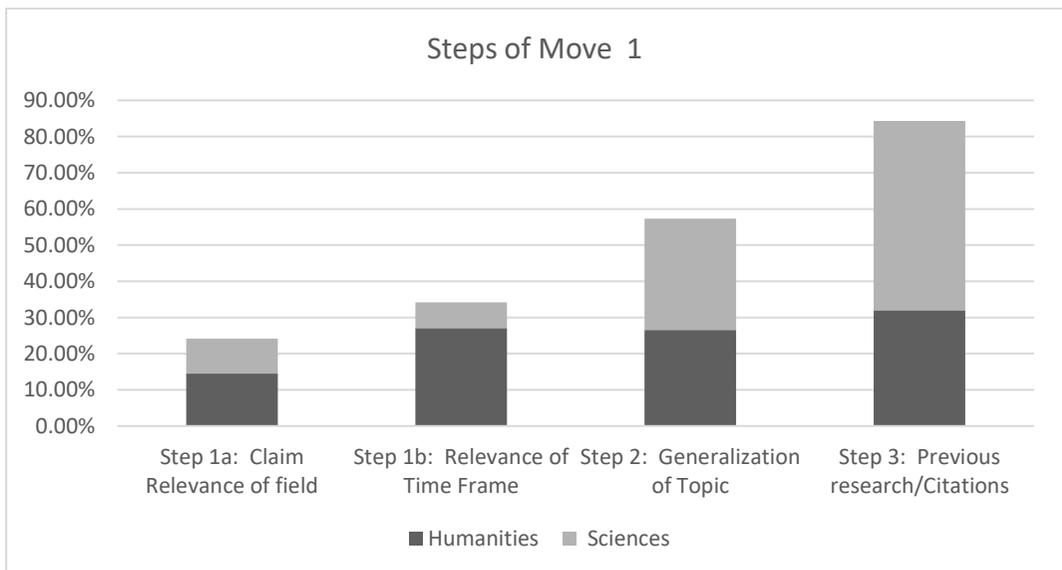
### **Table 3**

#### **A Comparison of the Percentage of Steps of Move 1 in Humanities and Sciences**

Steps of Move 1	Percentage in Faculty of Humanities	Percentage in Faculty of Sciences
Step 1a: Claim Relevance of field	14.48%	9.65%
Step 1b: Relevance of Time Frame	27.04%	7.18%
Step 2: Generalization of Topic	26.50%	30.80%
Step 3: Previous research/Citations	31.96%	52.36%

Table 3 shows that the most frequently occurring step of Move 1 is “review of previous research/Citations” with 52.36% in the introductions of Sciences. The authors, in the field of Sciences, offered thorough details of the previous researches as compared to the Humanities.

Figure 1. Comparison of Steps of Move 1 in the Corpus of Faculty of Humanities and Faculty of Sciences



The comparative analysis of frequency differences is shown in figure 1. The bars of the chart divulge substantial variation in the frequencies of steps of Move 1 exploited in the fields of Humanities and Sciences. The detailed description and lexical signals of each step have been discussed below to distinguish the similarities and difference of both faculties.

## **Detailed Description of Move 1**

### **Claim relevance of the field**

In the first step (1a) of Move 1, the significance of the field of research has been established by the authors through several lexical keys. The occurrence of step (1a) of Move 1 in the corpus of Humanities and Sciences is shown in figure.1, which indicates that the authors from the field of Humanities employ more instances of claim relevance (14.48%) than the writer of Sciences (9.65%). These authorial choices demonstrate disciplinary differences. The Step 1(a) of Move 1 claiming relevance is utilized as an opening device in the introduction sections of Pakistani research dissertations. Lewin et al. (2001) suggested that writers may select a wide variety of positive traits to offer a justification for their research. A few illustrations along with the most frequent lexical keys from the corpus are discussed below. Instances from the corpus include:

- It is also considered that the print media is more credible than electronic media and plays an important role regarding the national and international issues. (Mass Communication)
- Media is supposed to be the fundamental constituent in a society as it bestows a platform for discussion of national, international, political and social concerns. (Mass Communication)
- Face book played a central part in this revolution. (Mass Communication)

The most common lexical signals employed in the corpus of humanities are “important”, “significant” and “fundamental”, whereas the frequency of expression including “major”, “useful”, “common” and “important” is high in the corpus of sciences.

### **Relevance of time frame**

The findings depict that the frequency of Step 1(b) of Move 1, ‘time frame relevance’, is high in the introductions of Humanities dissertations than in those of Sciences. Researchers from the faculty of Humanities appraised the history of their area by representing the complete sketch of theories and approaches with reference to their frame of time. By providing supporting signals of time reference, they placed their work in the wider spectrum of historical research arena. In most of the instances, present perfect tense has been selected to delineate or specify the time period. According to Hyland (2002), citations help writers create factual stability and “a credible writer ethos” (p. 3).

A number of lexical choices seem to be prioritized by Pakistani researchers in this regard, such as “last three decades”, “in the past”, “during”, and “presently” etc.

### **Topic generalization**

The next step used by the Pakistani writers is to make statements regarding knowledge and practices of their respective fields. This step facilitates to contextualize the research study by presenting background regarding current research. The use of step 2, ‘topic generalization’, is high in the corpus of Sciences than Humanities. Most of these statements are already known about the topics.

Instances from the corpus include:

- Mosquitoes are tiny insects that belong to phylum Arthropoda.... (Biology)
- Dengue is transmitted as four serotypes. (Zoology)
- Brahvi (spoken in central Balochistan province) is a Dravidian language. (English)

### **Review of Previous Research**

The percentage of this step is predominantly high in the introductions of Sciences. In 6 out of 16 introductions of Humanities, the step “Review of Previous Research/Citations” was almost non-existent. In the field of Sciences, knowledge is approved with evidences and confirmations. Authors present the review of prior research by citing the work particularly valuable findings of scholars in their respective field. This strategy highlights how the existing efforts of scholars are embedded in the past studies. Both integral and non-integral citations have been employed in the corpora. Pakistani authors also employ a variety of verbs to report or accredit the work of previous authors. In the field of Sciences, the most commonly employed verbs are “found”, “examined”, and “estimated”, whereas, in the faculty of the Humanities, these are “believed”, “argued” and “claimed.” These examples indicate what has already been investigated and by whom.

Instances from the corpus include:

- Carlson (2010) found that Mark Zuckerberg has originated Facebook....(Communication Studies).
- Five possible ways were suggested by Flowers and Yeo (1995) in order.... (Botany Intro)
- The a-amylase is the biggest family of glycoside hydrolyzes .... (Biochemistry)

In a nutshell, Move 1 is present in all introductions of both the faculties because it raises a platform of knowledge with the supporting claims of saliency along with time relevance and evidences from prior researches. The findings of this study portray the prevalent use of strategies such as “topic generalization” and “reviewing prior researches” in the field of sciences. The importance of citations in Move 1 was also highlighted by Swales (2004). In the

faculty of Sciences, the high occurrence of citations reveals that authors frame their work in a way to indicate the norm of presenting their arguments and claims with supporting evidence from the past literature and not from their own interpretations. Hyland (2011) considers that integration of citations is a key factor for persuasion in academic discourse. In Samaraj's (2008) study, reviewing the previous research/citations was also a step preferred more in the faculty of Sciences than in Humanities. This view is also supported by Thomson's (2001) study that revealed greater frequency of citations in hard disciplines as compared to soft disciplines. However, the results of this study conflict with the claims made in Hyland's (2002) study regarding the dominant practice of accrediting previous research in Soft fields. In the field of Humanities, theses analyzed in the current study employed an extensive use of claims of relevance accompanied by lexical indicators related to time. In the faculty of Humanities, claims are acknowledged by showing their strength through salience, centrality and relevancy of arguments.

## Conclusion

The purpose of the present study was to explore the rhetorical structures of the "Introductions" of Pakistani research theses across two faculties. It has been demonstrated that Move 1 occurred in the beginning of introductions portraying an extensive range of choices to establish the research field of dissertations. In this move, authors attempt to signify where the theme of thesis makes its place. The introductions of Pakistani research have their own rhetorical pattern of Move 1, "Establishing the research territory", by claiming the relevance of the field, generalizing the topic, and reviewing the previous research/citations. The analysis reveals that authors from both the faculties followed similar steps but with a variation of frequency. This diversity within the move exhibits how the authors from two different faculties prefer to organize their introductions to persuade their audience. This study opens a window for the future researchers in the field of rhetorical analysis. However, the number of introductions analyzed from dissertations in both the faculties is not adequate. The future researchers can explore rhetorical variation with a more representative sample. As the study was also limited to the analysis of only Move 1, the prospective researchers can employ the rest of the moves from the Swales' framework. This study has pedagogical implications for novice learners and EAP teachers. The results of study may serve as guidelines while teaching academic writing. It may prove helpful for the novice authors in organizing the generic structures of their research theses. In line with Shehzad and Abbas (2016), the findings of our study propose, that genre based pedagogies may be exploited to teach academic writing in educational institution of Pakistan.

**Note:** This paper has been extracted from Tayyabba Yasmin's PhD thesis entitled "Generic and Metadiscourse Analysis of Pakistani Academic Writing."

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