

論文

A Study on Abstracts in the Arts and Humanities: The Abstracts of the 2015 and 2017 International Pragmatics Conference

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—国際語用論学会に提出された抄録に焦点を当てて—

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Abstract

Contrary to its importance, studies on abstracts and abstract writing in the fields of the arts and humanities, including sociology, are not plentiful. In this respect, this study tries to reveal some traits of abstracts submitted to the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA) conferences by analysing them as a corpus and to show some implications to English for Academic Purposes (EAP) through the entire analysis of the corpus and a comparison between abstracts written by native and non-native speakers of English. To analyse the corpus, this paper adopts the five-move analysis, which scrutinises the components (moves) and the structure of abstracts. Though the results did not show any noticeable differences between native and non-native speakers of English, the corpus had a prototypical move structure, in which the abstracts tended to start with the components of *Background* or *Aim* and to be endowed with *Method*, ending with a *Conclusion*. This prototypical structure can be a model of abstract writing in the specific academic field, encouraging novice writers to improve their abstracts.

Keywords

abstract, genre analysis, move analysis, English for Academic Purposes

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I. Introduction

Abstracts are important parts of academic texts (Hartley & Benjamin, 1998¹; Santos, 1996²; Shahla, 2015³; Swales & Feak, 2009⁴; Talebzadeh, Samar, Kiany, & Akbari, 2013⁵; Tseng, 2011⁶), and they have received considerable attention from academic writers (Shahla, 2015). Additionally, abstracts form the threshold for judging the quality of articles (Hartley & Benjamin, 1998; Swales, 1990⁷; Swales & Feak, 2009), and readers can evaluate them for relevance and content (Cross & Oppenheim, 2006⁸). However, in his first research on writing abstracts, Swales (1990) points out that such activity is "a neglected field" (p. 181); furthermore, Santos (1996) asserts that research on abstracts is scarce. Relatively recent researchers of genre analysis claim that analyses of abstracts, especially those written by non-native speakers of English (NNSs), are not plentiful (Shahla, 2015; Talebzadeh et al., 2013). Accordingly, research on abstracts of NNSs may interest researchers whose first language is not English. This paper is aimed at providing an overall analysis and a comparison of abstracts written by Japanese and English-speaking researchers, who are in the field of arts, humanities and sociology.

In the next section, this paper describes previous studies on genres, with a specific focus on abstracts. It is said that there are three main streams in genre analysis (Hyland, 2004⁹; Hyon, 1996¹⁰), and abstract analysis is located in one of the streams—English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The section three describes the corpus of data analysed in this study. The corpus is taken from "ABSTRACTS of IPrA" issued by

the International Pragmatics Association (IPrA), which were specific data distributed to the participants at two IPrA conferences (2015 and 2017^{11,12}). Following this, the method of analysis is presented. Though genre analysis has been a research theme in applied linguistics, it is difficult to say that analyses on abstracts are plentiful. Further, research methods are not likely to be ample. However, some methods for abstract analysis have been considered (Santos, 1996; Swales & Feak, 2012¹³), so this paper will adopt the method used by Santos (1996), in combination with the methodology of Swales and Feak (2012). Results and a discussion follow the section on methodology. This paper refers to 60 abstracts written by 30 Japanese researchers and 30 native speakers of English (NSs). Through the comparison of these two groups, some characteristics of both groups will also be identifiable. This paper concludes with a summary of the analysis and some implications for English for Academic Purposes (EAP).

II. Literature review

Hyon (1996) cited three different scholarly streams in genre analysis: ESP, North American New Rhetoric Studies, and Australian systemic functional linguistics (p. 693). In this paper, analyses on abstracts are mentioned in terms of ESP. Additionally, this paper refers to some recent salient cases of abstract analysis, which could have considerable impact on academic research and society, and some studies on abstracts in Japan are also mentioned.

1. Historical background of abstract analysis

As Hyon (1996) has described, genre analysis has proceeded on three different courses. Hyon explains that in the field of ESP, researchers utilise genre to analyse academic and professional languages so as to enhance non-native language users' proficiency levels. Swales (1990), in a seminal research study of genre analysis, describes genre as follows:

A genre comprises a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes. These purposes are recognized by the expert members of the parent discourse community and thereby constitute the rationale for the genre. This rationale shapes the schematic structure of the discourse and influences and constrains choices of content and style. (p. 58)

Bhatia (1993)¹⁴⁾ defines a genre as "a recognizable communicative event characterised by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs" (p. 13). Thus, people who share a certain genre are likely to use a specific set of language to achieve communicative purposes. In this respect, abstract analysis could be regarded as one of the genres in EAP. In addition, Tajino and Suiko (2005)¹⁵⁾ and Tajino, Terauchi, Kanamaru, Maswana and Yamada (2008)¹⁶⁾ clarify that EAP is subsumed under ESP. Therefore, abstract analysis is one of the research fields within ESP.

2. Abstract analysis in genre analysis

As mentioned previously, abstract analysis is classified as one of the research realms in EAP. Swales and Feak (2009) maintain that abstract writing is one of the central concerns of academic writers, including graduate students and junior researchers; even experienced writers sometimes have to write more than one version of an abstract to summarise their work satisfactorily (i.e. with efficiency and clarity). Furthermore, even researchers or graduate students whose first language is not English must write abstracts in English (Swales, 1990). For example, Bloor (1984, as cited in Swales, 1990¹⁷⁾) has pointed out that in a university in Spain, though scholars write their research articles in Spanish, they must write abstracts in English. In my experience in Japan, it is common that researchers or graduate students are often required to write abstracts in English, even when they write their research articles or dissertations in Japanese. Therefore, it is almost certain that instruction in writing well-organised abstracts is very important in EAP.

This need is supported by the importance of abstract writing in academic papers and articles. Hartley and Benjamin (1998) claim that today's researchers have to judge the quality of an abstract at a glance because of the dramatic increase in the number of academic papers and articles (Cross & Oppenheim, 2006). Moreover, abstracts can serve as a threshold of a specific research field (Hartley & Benjamin, 1998). In this respect, well-organised abstracts may be easy to read, facilitating the search for suitable articles by readers (Hartley, Sydes, & Blurton, 1996¹⁸⁾ ;

Hartley & Benjamin, 1998); for writers, abstracts would be a selling point for journal editors or conference organisers (Letchford, Preis, & Moat, 2016¹⁹); Swales & Feak, 2009).

Swales and Feak (2009) have divided abstract writing into three categories: research article abstracts (RAs), conference abstracts (CAs), and PhD dissertation abstracts (DAs). Further, CAs are classified in one genre because their contexts and purposes differ from those of RAs. A CA is considered a freestanding text with an original title, whereas an abstract in a journal may be called simply "Abstract" or nothing at all. This paper contains an analysis of the second type of abstract, i.e., CAs. Moreover, abstracts are classified as indicative abstracts and informative abstracts (Nakamura, 1989; Tanaka, 2000). The former type of abstract contains only metadata of the article which give some information about the contents and the structure of the article. On the other hand, the latter includes an outline or a summary of the article which contains conclusions, implications, and suggestions. This type of abstract can be called as "a miniature version of the paper" (Day & Gastel, 2012, p. 53). In this study, all the abstracts in the corpus are the latter type.

3. Salient cases of abstract analysis

In the previous section, it was mentioned that the abstract is an important element in an article. In this section, two salient cases concerned with abstract writing are mentioned. Altwaigi, Booth, Hopman, and Baetz (2012)²³ investigated 114 articles of published, randomised controlled trials (RCTs)^{a)} associated with publications concerning with lung cancer (published between

2004 and 2009); findings indicated that 11 articles out of 114 (10%) contained discrepancies between conclusions in the abstracts and those in the bodies of the texts. Altwaigi et al. (2012) warned that "clinicians should exercise caution when reading only the abstract of an RCT" (p. 3556). A mistake in the writing of abstracts could lead to a fatal incident.

In another research study by Letchford et al. (2016), the authors reported that the simpler an abstract is, the more attention it will attract. They examined 216,280 papers published between 1999 and 2008 for abstract length and word frequency and concluded that articles with shorter abstracts containing words that are used frequently tend to receive more citations.

These two cases show that abstract writing plays an important role in academic writing, and research on abstracts could have a profound impact on EAP pedagogy. In other words, the acquisition of a certain kind of writing skill could lead to written texts that are more acceptable to readers within the same disciplinary communities (Swales & Feak, 2009).

4. Studies on abstracts in Japan

Nakamura (1989) shows some useful points in writing abstracts by looking closely at what kind of styles and expressions should be used in abstract writing. His study can be regarded as an instruction of abstract writing. Narita's (1999)²⁴ study on abstracts can also be an instruction of abstract writing, which focuses on the differences of thinking patterns between Japanese and English. Narita (1999) tries to illustrate how to write a good abstract by observing the language traits of Japanese and

English. Iida and Tabayashi (2009)²⁵⁾ present an instruction programme in a university in Japan, where the importance of educating abstract writing in university is stressed and a practical training of abstract writing is exercised by the tutors in the university. This can be classified in a case study of abstract writing as an EAP programme. Hagiwara, Fukuike, and Kobayashi (2018)²⁶⁾ analysed abstracts in terms of interactional metadiscourse by using a technique of corpus linguistics. They compared the discourse markers used in the abstracts written by Japanese- and English-speaking writers.

It is true that these studies mentioned above are very interesting research on abstracts and abstract writing. However, there is no academic analysis on abstracts utilising the move analysis (to be explained) which this current study is trying to adopt as the main methodology. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the previous studies are precious and bring numerous implications in the research on abstracts and abstract writing.

III. The corpus

In this study, the abstracts were taken from "ABSTRACTS of IPrA," issued by the International Pragmatics Association (2015 and 2017). These collective handbooks of abstracts were distributed to the presenters and participants of the 14th and 15th International Pragmatics Conferences held in Antwerp in 2015 and in Belfast in 2017. I chose these data for the corpus because a number of Japanese researchers participated in the conferences, for which I was a presenter as well; thus,

the information was easy to access. Each handbook contains more than a thousand pages, and the content in each year is divided into four parts: PLENARY LECTURES, PANELS, PANEL CONTRIBUTIONS, and LECTURES & POSTERS. Each part contains a certain number of abstracts. I chose PANEL CONTRIBUTIONS—a collection of abstracts written by panel presenters—as the corpus for analysis because it contains the most abstracts. I randomly selected 30 abstracts written by Japanese authors (JPs) and 30 abstracts written by NSs. I did not choose abstracts written by more than one author because it was difficult to guarantee coherence of its structure.

IV. Method

In the analysis of abstracts, researchers have adopted the move analysis (Santos, 1996; Swales & Feak, 2009; Swales & Feak, 2012; Tseng, 2011). According to Swales and Feak (2009), "a move is a stretch of text that does a particular job" and "can vary in length from a phrase to a paragraph" (p. 5). In other words, by looking at a move, the role of a phrase or a paragraph such as presenting the background of the research field, explaining the method of the analysis, and showing the results of the investigation, can be identified. Swales and Feak (2009) also point out that the move analysis can analyse texts by dividing them into some components (moves) according to the roles of them and enable researchers to grasp the structure of a text. Accordingly, this paper adopted the five move patterns of Santos^{b)} (1996) to analyse the data, as the patterns were likely to be constructed with sufficient details and were suitable for

the classification of sentences, phrases, and paragraphs. The five moves are as follows:

- Move 1: Situating the research
 - Submove 1A: Stating current knowledge
and/or
 - Submove 1B: Citing previous research
and/or
 - Submove 1C: Extended previous research
and/or
 - Submove 2: Stating a problem
 - Move 2: Presenting the research
 - Submove 1A : Indicating main features
and/or
 - Submove 1B: Indicating main purpose
and/or
 - Submove 2: Hypothesis raising
 - Move 3: Describing the methodology
 - Move 4: Summarizing the results
 - Move 5: Discussing the research
 - Submove: Drawing conclusions
and/or
 - Submove: Giving recommendations
- (Santos, 1996, p. 487)

This five-move pattern seems to be very well-organised, though Tseng (2011) felt that the name of each move was not simple and clear. Therefore, in this paper, the names presented by Swales and Feak (2012) are used; Tseng (2011) also adopted them. The names of moves by Swales and Feak (2012) correspond to those of Santos (1996) as follows: Move 1: Situating the research—Background (B), Move 2: Presenting the research—Aim (A), Move 3: Describing the methodology—Method (M), Move 4: Summarising the results—Results (R), and Move 5: Discussing the research—Conclusions (C).

In addition, Swales and Feak (2009) have offered the following six-part organisation of abstracts:

- Move 1: Outlining/promoting/problematising the research field or topic
- Move 2: Justifying this particular piece of research/study
- Move 3: Methodological, demographic, or procedural comments
- Move 4: Summarizing the main findings
- Move 5: Highlighting its outcome/results
- Move 6: Further observations (implications, limitations, future developments) (p. 45)

Some of the features of the organisation outlined above could be incorporated into the move definition of Santos (1996). That is, "justifying the study/research" would be incorporated in Move 1 (Background) and "highlighting the outcome/results" would be incorporated in Move 4 (Results). In this paper, the combination of the five-move pattern espoused by Santos (1996) and the six-part organisation described by Swales and Feak (2009) will be utilised to analyse the move structures of abstracts.

Following Santos (1996) and Tseng (2011), the *sentence* was examined as the analytical unit in this study, with occasional references to the *clause* or *phrase* because more than one move could be embedded in a sentence, as shown in the following example:

This paper exemplifies Professor Fillmore's approach to the rhetorical differences between the two languages (Aim) by

querying whether or not the concept of *frame* (a schematic understanding of types of events, situations, individuals, and things) as developed for English in the FrameNet project can also function as a common platform of comparison in English-to-Japanese translations (Method). (A JP abstract extracted from the IPrA handbook 2015)

Using the five-move pattern, the corpus for this study was examined in terms of (1) the distribution of moves, (2) the sequence of moves, and (3) the distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections. The sequence of moves stands for the structure of abstracts—that is, the order of moves writers adopted to construct the abstract such as B-A-M-R-C, B-A-M-C, A-M-R, and so on. It should be noted that, as Pho (2008)²⁷⁾ and Santos (1996) point out, an abstract does not necessarily have all five moves in it. The present study also found some samples which omit some moves from the abstracts. The distribution of moves can be used to measure the percentages for the occurrences of each one. The distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections provides information regarding the tendency of initiating and closing the abstracts. These three points are important for the analysis presented in this paper concerning the tendencies of the move structure of JPs and NSs.

Moreover, this paper includes an analysis of two verb tenses for each move—the *present tense* and *past tense*. The present tense includes *present perfect* and *modal verbs*, and the past tense includes modal verbs. In this analysis, tenses are examined to clarify which tense

is preferred for each move. There are three patterns to judge the verb tense in a move. First, if a move contains only one sentence, the tense of the main verb in the sentence is the verb in the sentence (example 1 below). Second, if a move contains more than one sentence, percentages measuring the use of each tense are calculated (example 2). Third, if a move is expressed in a phrase or clause, the verb tense is not considered (example 3). Examples follow:

1. **I will argue** in this presentation for a broader integration of "micro" and "macro" levels of social interaction by incorporating the Japanese notion of *kata*, or "form/style/model". (*present tense* [JP])

2. The main findings **show** that Fanagalo is indeed maintained within a selected context—and potentially in broader contexts—in South Africa today as a sub-cultural language. Interestingly, some migrant workers **acquired** Fanagalo before they **acquired** other South African languages despite its unofficial status in South Africa. The implications of the findings for language policy and planning of sub-cultural languages is highlighted in the conclusion. (*present tense* [66%], *past tense* [33%] [NS])

3. **Taking a metacommunicative approach**, I will illuminate the influence of genre and language differences on the relationship between overlaps and collaboration through quantitative and qualitative analyses. (*no tense definition* [JP]) (Three examples extracted from the IPrA handbook 2015)

V. Results and discussion

As mentioned earlier, the results will be addressed in terms of (1) the distribution of moves, (2) the sequence of moves, (3) the distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections, and (4) the tense of each move. One thing that should be noted here is that the basis for this analysis is a limited number of corpus data. Therefore, the results cannot be interpreted as completely representing the features of the entire corpus. Nevertheless, there are some implications to bear in mind as an abstract writer and EAP instructor.

1. Distribution of moves

Table 1 shows the distribution of the five moves in the corpus; it indicates that four moves are likely to occur as compulsory elements of the abstracts—*Background*, *Aim*, *Method*, and *Conclusion*. If it is looked at closely, some noticeable points can be found.

First, the results show that there is no big difference between JP abstracts and NS abstracts in terms of distribution of each move. As an overall tendency, both groups tend to omit *Results* part from abstracts. In total, only 28.3 % of all the abstracts contributed to the IPrA handbook contain *Results* part. It can be said that *Results* part tend to contain very specific figures, examples, and/or diagrams. These kinds of data may be difficult to be included in abstract, which should be very short and simple. This is why more than 70% of the authors omitted *Results* part from their abstracts. Furthermore, in some cases, authors did not conduct any experiment-based

research in their study. In other words, some fields of sociological studies may not adopt an experiment-based way of analysing. One reason could be that IPrA studies tend to contain theoretical studies. Swales and Feak (2012) referred to two types of abstracts. The main purpose of the *result-driven* abstract is to present research findings, and it seems natural that this type of abstract inevitably contains a description of the experiment and the results. In other words, the research associated with this type of abstract should be empirical. For example, Tseng's (2011) research on abstracts, which included the move structures of three journals on second language acquisition (SLA), shows that the third move is compulsory because the corpus data include only empirical studies in the area of SLA. In this case, it is natural that the *Method* section would be incorporated into the abstracts. The other type of abstract is the *summary* abstract in which a few synopses of each section are summarised as an abstract. Swales and Feak (2012) claim that in some very complex theoretical arguments, it is almost impossible to express research findings in an abstract. Therefore, the absence of the *Method* move could be attributed to the nature of the research area (pragmatics and its related areas in this case). However, research on the quality of the contents of the corpus is beyond the scope of this paper.

Second, abstracts of JPs occasionally omit the *Conclusion* move, whereas 80% of the NSs' abstracts contain the fifth move. Though Swales and Feak (2009) have pointed out that some conference abstracts do not contain all of the moves, the difference is suggestive. That is, at least for most of the NSs, it could be important

to refer to the conclusion—hence, the presence of *Conclusion* in abstracts. As Swales and Feak (2009) suggest, abstract writers need to attract conference organisers or reviewers. Therefore, some of the abstracts written by the Japanese could be improved by adding the *Conclusion* move to clarify the crucial point of their study.

As mentioned earlier, Table 1 shows that, though *Background*, *Aim*, *Method*, and *Conclusion* are compulsory in the corpus, the first move (*Background*) is optional in one's research (Tseng, 2011), possibly because in empirical research, it is important to emphasise not the background of the research but the procedure followed in conducting the study or observing the data. Readers of a paper would be researchers who know the area very well, and the writers do not have to establish a niche[○]. On the other hand, in theoretical research, it could be vital to build logic to convince the readers.

2. The sequence of moves

A revelation presented in this paper is that there were various kinds of abstract structures in the corpus. The average number of moves in JP abstracts was 4.13; in NS abstracts, it was 4.03—resulting in an overall average of 4.08 moves. Thus, it can be said that abstracts in the corpus tend to have the four-move structure,

which Tseng (2011) regards as the preferred model in previous studies. Table 2 also shows the kinds of moves in the corpus and the numbers for each move structure. There are 20 types of move structures in JP abstracts, while abstracts of NSs consist of 16 patterns of move structures. The both groups of JPs and NSs have some structures in common and more than one author share some structures as a whole, namely B-A-M-C (n=16), B-A-C (n=5), B-A-M (n=4), B-A-M-R-C (n=4), A-B-M-C (n=3), and B-A-M-A (n=2).

Among these structures, the most popular one is B-A-M-C and this structure can be regarded as the most prototypical structure in the corpus. Additionally, the structure of B-A-M-R-C seems to be a variation of B-A-M-C because B-A-M-C may be a simplified version of B-A-M-R-C. That is, if authors think the *Results* move is redundant, they can omit it from their abstracts. In other words, B-A-M-R-C is a subspecies of B-A-M-C. Furthermore, B-A-C and A-B-M-C appear to be variations of B-A-M-C because B-A-C can be a variation of B-A-M-C without a *Method* section, and the constituent moves of A-B-M-C are the same as those of B-A-M-C, meaning A-B-M-C is a rearranged version of B-A-M-C. These four types start with either *Background* or *Aim* and end with *Conclusion*. On the other hand, though the structures of

Table 1. Frequencies of the five moves (%)

	Background	Aim	Method	Results	Conclusion
JP*	96.7	96.7	80.0	30.0	63.3
NS**	93.3	93.3	83.3	26.7	80.0
Total	95.0	95.0	81.7	28.3	71.7

* Abstracts written by Japanese (N = 30).

** Abstracts written by native speakers of English (N = 30).

B-A-M and B-A-M-A start with *Background*, they do not end with *Conclusion*. In this regard, these two structures can be different things from the four types.

From the observation above, it can be said

Table 2. Patterns of the move structure

Move patterns	JP	NS	Total
B-A-M-C	9	7	16
B-A-C	1	4	5
B-A-M	2	2	4
B-A-M-R-C		4	4
A-B-M-C	1	2	3
B-A-M-A	2		2
A-B-A-C	1		1
A-B-A-R-C		1	1
A-B-C	1		1
A-B-M		1	1
A-B-M-C-A		1	1
A-B-M-R	1		1
A-B-M-R-A	1		1
A-M		1	1
A-M-A-B-M-R-C	1		1
A-M-B-R-C	1		1
A-M-R	1		1
A-R-M-C		1	1
B-A	1		1
B-A-B	1		1
B-A-B-A-C	1		1
B-A-B-M	1		1
B-A-B-M-R-C	1		1
B-A-M-A-M-A-B-M-R		1	1
B-A-M-R	1		1
B-A-M-R-M	1		1
B-A-R-M-C		1	1
B-M		1	1
B-M-A-B-C		1	1
B-M-A-C		1	1
B-M-C		1	1
B-M-R-C	1		1

* Abstracts written by Japanese (N = 30).

** Abstracts written by native speakers of English (N = 30).

that the prototypical structure in the corpus is the B-A-M-C type (including some subtypes). Thus, it can be mentioned that this schema can be used as a model move structure in abstract writing for this academic field. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to bear in mind the size of the corpus, which is not plentiful from a statistical point of view.

3. Distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections

Table 3 shows the distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections; notably, 75% of all abstracts start with *Background* and 25% with *Aim*. None of the abstracts open with *Method*, *Results*, or *Conclusion*. This tendency is acceptable because, as mentioned earlier, it is necessary to establish the position (Swales & Feak, 2012). Thus, writers are likely to refer to the background of the study. Some of the abstracts starting with *Aim* were taken from PANEL CONTRIBUTIONS, suggesting that participants of each panel should know the purpose of the panel and background of the field. In such a scenario, a *Background* section may not always be needed to convey the key points of the study.

The fact that 68.3% of the abstracts close with the *Conclusion* move seems to agree with Tseng's (2011) research in which it was reported that 74% of the abstracts examined adopted *Conclusion* as the last move. In the study, Tseng also claims that, while 22% closed with *Results*, abstracts closing with *Aim* and *Method* were very few, and *Background* was not adopted as the closing by any of the authors. On the other hand, findings of the present study showed that

15% closed with *Method*, 6.7% closed with *Aim* and 3.3% with *Background*. The figures of 15% with *Method* and 6.7% with *Aim* in the present study are higher than those of Tseng's study and, contrary to the figure of 22% with *Results* in Tseng's study, that of the current study is much smaller than Tseng's. These differences could derive from the difference between two academic fields of applied linguistics, which tends to contain empirical research with specific results, and the arts and humanities, which may adopt theoretical-based approaches. In addition, in terms of the comparison between JP and NS, there is no significant difference between the figures.

4. Verb tense

The percentages of verb tenses in each move are shown in Table 4. In this study, all the sentences in the corpus were scrutinised and the sentences containing the present tense and the past tense were counted one by one. Overall, the present tense is preferred in the corpus. Especially, in *Aim*, most of the abstracts adopted the present tense. In the *Method* and

Results moves, the percentages of abstracts which adopted the past tense are slightly higher than the other moves. These data fall in line with Tseng's (2011) study in which the past tense is preferred in *Method* and *Results*. This could be explained by the fact that some authors described the actual way/procedure of analyses which they used in the experiments or investigations conducted in the past. As a consequence of this, some authors might have adopted the past tense in the current study. Swales and Feak (2012) also have pointed out that writers often select the past tense for *Method* and *Results* in abstracts, and the tense used in *Results* may depend on disciplinary and individual preferences, possibly explaining the difference between the percentages of the past tense use in the two moves of *Method* and *Results* and in other parts.

In a comparison between JP abstracts and NS abstracts, Japanese writers tend to use the past tense in *Background*, whereas NSs are less likely to use the past tense in the *Background* move. Day et al. (2012) point out that in the introduction (meaning *Background*) part, the present tense is preferred by writers because

Table 3. Distribution of moves in the opening and closing sections (%)

JP*	Opening		NS**	Opening		Total	Opening	
	Background	73.3		Background	76.7		Background	75.0
	Aim	26.7		Aim	23.3		Aim	25.0
	Closing			Closing			Closing	
	Background	3.3		Background	3.3		Background	3.3
	Aim	10.0		Aim	3.3		Aim	6.7
	Method	13.3		Method	16.7		Method	15.0
	Results	10.0		Results	3.3		Results	6.7
	Conclusion	63.3		Conclusion	73.3		Conclusion	68.3

* Abstracts written by Japanese (N = 30).

** Abstracts written by native speakers of English (N = 30).

previously published findings are established knowledge. Swales and Feak (2012) also observe that the present tense is often used to open statements, which may account for the tendency of NSs' abstracts in the present corpus. Another observation regarding the corpus for this study is that use of the past tense by JPs was 4.5 percent in the *Aim* section, whereas most of the NSs used the present tense for *Aim*. In this respect, some of the abstracts written by JP can be revised by using the present tense in *Aim* section. Contrary to the observation above, 14.3% of NSs used the past tense in *Conclusion* move and this figure is double the percentage of JPs. However, the finding does not imply that NSs have a strong tendency of using the past tense in *Conclusion* part. It is obvious from the result that most of the sentences were written in the present tense in the *Conclusion*. In general, there are no significant differences between JPs and NSs in terms of the use of verb tense, implying most of the authors in this academic field prefer the present tense. Therefore, by revising the abstracts to adopt the present tense in the appropriate moves, abstracts (written by beginners) could be improved.

VI. Conclusions and implications for EAP

This paper provides an analysis of abstract writing, which is regarded as one of the genres in EAP. Abstract writing is an important part of academic writing because abstracts seem to serve as barometers for judging the quality of articles and conference presentations, as they may contain highly condensed information about content. In this respect, abstract writing should have a crucial impact on EAP research and its instruction.

The corpus analysed for this paper contains abstracts from the 2015 and 2017 IPrA conferences. As Hartley (2008)²⁸⁾ points out, the results of the analysis show that the type of academic field appears to affect the move structure. Abstracts of research in pragmatics may contain fewer references to *Method* and *Results* compared to empirical research, though *Background* and *Aim* seem to be compulsory in the field. Further, though the difference is not so big, JP abstracts tend to contain fewer *Conclusion* sections than NS abstracts. Therefore, in EAP instruction, tutors should keep this tendency of Japanese-speaking writers in mind for better instruction in abstract writing. The corpus for this study appeared to have a four-move structure, which

Table 4. Percentages of verb tenses used in each move (%)

	Background		Aim		Method		Results		Conclusion	
	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past
JP*	82.3	17.7	95.5	4.5	83.6	16.4	83.9	16.1	93.0	7.0
NS**	92.8	7.2	98.6	1.4	80.0	20.0	84.0	16.0	85.7	14.3
Total	87.4	12.6	97.3	2.7	82.3	17.7	84.0	16.0	89.6	10.4

* Abstracts written by Japanese (N = 30).

** Abstracts written by native speakers of English (N = 30).

may be preferred by the writers; further, the schematic structure of B-A-M-C was adopted predominantly in the corpus. In addition, the results of this study indicate that writers are likely to start abstracts with *Background* or *Aim* and close with *Conclusion*; thus, if abstracts written by Japanese-speaking authors (or other non-native speakers of English) do not have a conclusion part, abstracts of JPs can be improved in terms of clarity by closing abstracts with the *Conclusion* move. However, EAP instructors should bear in mind the influence of the background knowledge of the writers. Regarding verb tense, the present tense seems to be preferred by the authors in this field. This finding suggests to teachers that excessive use of the past tense may disrupt the balance of abstracts.

The present study argues that writing a good abstract will have benefits for writers in academic fields and instructors of EAP. Also, abstracts written by beginners would be improved by paying attention to some points, which were found in the total scrutiny of the corpus. On the other hand, one thing which should be mentioned here is that abstract writing in a specific academic field can be accepted in the very specific field and should be altered by the needs of the participants of the community. In other words, there is no denying that a specific dominant structure or style of writing could be replaced by another structure in the future. As Tardy (2004)²⁹⁾ points out, the dominance of English could have bad influence on other languages. If this is the case, writers and instructors of abstracts should keep an eye on the situation surrounding abstract writing and EAP.

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Notes

- a) A sort of scientific experiment which intends to reduce bias in the testing of a new medical treatment.
- b) Santos (1996) adopted the five-move analysis because the samples he analysed were extracted from three journals of applied linguistics, in which the five-move pattern was regarded as the prototypical structure.
- c) A context in which a specific piece of research makes particularly good sense (Swales & Feak, 2012, p. 331).

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