TESOL Conference Abstracts: Discrepancies between Potential Writers' Knowledge and Actual Composition

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ABSTRACT

The ability to write a successful conference abstract seems to be one barrier preventing new researchers from disseminating their research work in their particular disciplinary community. However, very few studies on how conference abstracts are structured have been conducted in order to help such novice researchers. This study, thus, aims to examine the rhetorical structure of conference abstracts in two TESOL conferences in Asia with the purpose of informing a particular group of new researchers in Asian settings about the actual practice of writing this particular genre. The findings from the open-ended questions and the move analysis of 137 abstracts indicated that there was a mismatch between these potential conference abstract writers' knowledge and the actual composition of these conference abstracts. Besides the rhetorical structures of conference abstracts, this paper also provided some pedagogical suggestions on dealing with this mismatch.

Key words: abstracts; TESOL conferences; rhetorical structure; novice writers; genre analysis

INTRODUCTION

It is generally accepted that conferences have greatly contributed to the success of scientific communications between researchers not only in the same field but also internationally. It is in conferences that scholars communicate their research findings to relevant research communities. However, in order to be accepted for presentation at a conference, scholars need to submit an abstract that presents, in a condensed way, the overall structure and content of their upcoming presentation. In addition, an abstract submitted to a conference, if accepted,

aims to inform the readers or potential audience not only about the exact content of its accompanying presentation but also whether or not the talk deserves their further attention.

Despite its importance in academic settings, very few studies on rhetorical structures of this specific genre, conference abstracts, have been conducted although considerable attention from text analysts has been paid on rhetorical structures of a similar genre, research article (RA) abstracts. This body of work includes Nwogu (1990), Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Santos (1996), Hyland (2000), Martín (2003), Lorés (2004), Samraj (2002, 2005), Pho (2008), Zhang, Bui, and Pramoolsook (2012), Suntara and Usaha (2013). Although these studies focused on RA abstracts across disciplines and in different settings, almost all of them employed Swales' CARS model (Create a Research Space) (1990), which originally intended to describe RA introductions.

Bhatia (1993) identified a four move framework in constructing a typical abstract; namely, *Introducing purpose*, *Describing methodology*, *Summarizing results*, and *Presenting conclusions*. This structural pattern is also reported to be a common rhetorical structure in RA abstracts in Martín (2003) who named this pattern I (Introduction)- M (Methodology)- R (Results)- C (Conclusions), and in Samraj (2005). However, in the analysis of a corpus of 94 RA abstracts in three journals in applied linguistics, Santos (1996) proposed a slightly different generic move pattern for RA abstracts. Initially based on the IMRC structure, her proposed pattern for RA abstracts has five basic moves and a number of optional sub-moves. While the IMRC pattern identified by Bhatia (1993) is found in the last four moves in her newly proposed model for RA abstracts, the first move *(Situating the research)*, the newly added move, is similar to the first move in Swales' CARS model (1990). This slight difference on her five-move model for RA abstracts from the typical IMRC pattern may account for the disciplinary variations in academic writing which Samraj (2005) pointed out. Similarly, from his study of RA abstracts across eight disciplines, Hyland (2000) proposed a five-move component pattern, which is slightly different from the rhetorical macrostructure IMRC of abstracts. The newly added move is the Introduction move, which aims to establish the context of the paper and motivate the research or discussion. The explanation for this adjustment is that the move signaling the writer's purpose should be distinguished from the introduction move, where it is located, since it is the introduction move that provides a justification for the research.

In addition to the studies on the overall rhetorical structure of RA abstracts, Lorés (2004) summarised that there are three possible rhetorical organisations of RA abstracts. According to her, the majority of RA abstracts take the IMRD (*Introduction*, *Method*, *Results* and *Discussion)* structure that mirrors the global structure of the RA itself. A number of abstracts in her corpus display the Swales' CARS model of the RA introduction and a small number of RA abstracts begin with the CARS structure with the IMRD embedded in the last move. These three structures are Informative (informing about the structure of the whole paper –IMRD), Indicative (indicating the need for research e.g. gaps, research questions or problems –CARS) and Combinatory (combining the Informative and Indicative structure), respectively.

Although these investigations on the macrostructure of RA abstracts have undoubtedly enhanced our understanding of the genre, information on the rhetorical structure of conference abstracts is scanty. Indeed, the only study that investigated the overall structure of conference abstracts is Yakhontova (2002) who conducted a contrastive analysis of conference abstracts written by English native speakers, Russians and Ukrainians in the field of applied linguistics. Found in her analysis of the conference abstracts are the five rhetorical moves modified from Swales' CARS model (1990), which include *Outlining the research field*, *Justifying a particular research/study*, *Introducing the paper to be presented at the conference*, *Summarizing the paper* and *Highlighting its outcome/ results*. One of her findings

labelled "intergenres" shows "the changes in the ideology and conventionalised existence of the academic community that has found itself at the interface of two social systems" (Yakhontova 2002, p. 231).

With the aim of disseminating research findings within the target discourse community, conference abstracts are regarded as a kind of a "pass" (Yakhontova 2002, p. 217) to the research community that provides, if accepted, abstract writers with various opportunities for their professional development and communication. It is likely that most universities around the world encourage their graduate students to present their work at conferences. Graduate students at the School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) in Thailand are not an exception as they are encouraged to write conference abstracts for TESOL conferences besides getting their research work published internationally. As novice researchers in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), these students tend to submit their abstracts to the conferences that are close to them and less competitive in terms of being accepted for presentation.

However, in spite of the importance of conference abstract writing in general and for this group of non-native English students and academics in particular, very few investigations have been carried out on the discourse conventions of this important genre. What is more, there are no specific guidelines provided by the conference committee on how to structure the conference abstracts. One possible explanation for this might be the assumption that conference abstracts are supposed to be written in the same way as RA abstracts, which belong to the same academic genre.

Given the need and lack mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to examine the rhetorical structure of the conference abstracts in two TESOL conferences in South East Asia with the hope that our findings may, to a certain extent, inform the group of the novice researchers and especially those potential conference abstract writers at Suranaree University of Technology (SUT) and elsewhere about the expected overall organisation of the abstracts for these conferences. Also, this investigation aims to see whether or not the modified framework applied to the conference abstracts written by the discourse community in Europe by Yakhontova (2002) in the field of Applied Linguistics fits with the structure of conference abstracts accepted for the presentations at the TESOL conferences in the other part of the world. Our research questions are as follows:

1. What are the existing knowledge and opinions about conference abstracts of SUT potential writers?
2. What are the types and move structures of TESOL conference abstracts in the target corpus?
3. What are the discrepancies between the existing knowledge and opinions of SUT potential writers and actual practice of abstract writing?
4. What are the possible pedagogical implications for potential conference abstract writers?

METHODOLOGY

Two sets of data were employed in this project. First, eight open-ended questions were formulated to form a questionnaire (Appendix A) in order to learn about the existing knowledge and opinions of a group of thirty one potential conference abstract writers at the School of Foreign Languages, at SUT, Thailand about writing a conference abstract. Their knowledge and opinions (Questions 1, 4, 5, 6 and 7) about conference abstract writing aside, these questions also aimed to study these potential abstract writers' problems and their solutions to these problems (Questions 2 and 3) and their expectations (Question 8) with the

purpose of providing them appropriate pedagogical instruction in writing this specific genre. Second, the investigation of 137 abstracts of empirical studies from two TESOL Conference handbooks, ThaiTESOL and CamTESOL Conference, published in 2012 was conducted with the aim of comparing these potential conference abstract writers' existing knowledge with the actual composition of this genre. There are two reasons why we only chose the abstracts of empirical studies in the handbooks of these two conferences in South East Asia. Firstly, this Asian group of new researchers are encouraged to share the findings of their empirical research with their disciplinary community at conferences. Secondly, we would like to find the latest trends of TESOL conference abstracts in South East Asia, where these new researchers tend to choose to present their research.

After the responses from the informants were collected, open coding and axial coding were employed to categorise the data. After the agreement on the data categorisation was reached by four researchers, the frequency of each category was counted in order to learn about their existing knowledge, opinions, problems and expectations about the conference abstract writing.

All the 137 abstracts of empirical studies were first copied and randomly assigned to numbers from 1 to 137. Since there are three kinds of abstracts summarised by (Lorés 2004), these abstracts were then divided into appropriate types: *Indicative*, *Informative*, and *Combinatory*. Then three compatibly analytical frameworks for the analysis of the overall rhetorical structure of the conference abstracts were adopted.

As for the informative abstract which presents an overview of the whole article and displays the IMRD structure of the research article, Hyland's (2000) model was selected because it provides a clear description for the communicative purpose for each move (as compared with Bhatia (1993)) while it does not go down into smaller sub-categories of sub-moves which are not obviously present in such a short discourse as conference abstracts (as compared with Santos (1996)). Furthermore, Hyland's model (2000) is the direct result of an investigation of abstracts across eight disciplines, including applied linguistics. It may, therefore, describe all the moves found in the abstracts although some of abstracts did not have all the five moves.

Swales' CARS model (1990) was adopted as an analytical framework for the indicative abstracts in this target corpus as this kind of abstract provides a general indication of the context in which the research has been carried out, then perceived gaps or research questions or problems are indicated and the final section announces the principal findings or the ways in which the research is going to fill the gaps found or answer the questions raised. In other words, Swales' CARS model was used to analyse indicative abstracts since the function of indicative abstracts is to help readers understand the general nature and scope of the research, but "it does not go into a detailed step-by-step account of the process involved" (Lorés 2004, p. 282) like the CARS model does.

The analytical framework for analysing combinatory abstracts is Yakhontova's (2002) modified from Swales' CARS model (1990).This model was applied to analyse the same academic genre, conference abstracts, in the same discipline, applied linguistics. This framework consists of five moves, the first three of which display Swales' CARS structure while the last two moves summarise the paper and highlight its outcomes/results, respectively; to a certain extent, mirroring the components of the IMRD structure.

Move identification was based on the content or communicative function of the text segments or moves. Swales (1981) defines a rhetorical move as a text segment that not only performs a specific communicative function of its own but also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre. However, previous studies have used different criteria for move identification; namely, the function-based approach (Kwan 2006), the form-based approach (Anderson & Maclean 1997) and a combined approach of function and form

(Kanoksilapatham 2005, Swales 1990). While the function-based approach can be criticised for its subjectivity and the form-based approach is not in accordance with the concept of move, the combined approach has been found faulty with its logical fallacy of circular reasoning (Paltridge 1994). Paltridge (1994) suggests that an investigation for structural divisions in text should be carried out for the cognitive organisation of texts in terms of convention, appropriacy, and content rather than linguistic features and his suggestion was taken into account in the analysis of conference abstracts in this study.

The analyses were done by four analysts independently who then reached agreements to ensure the reliability of the analyses. The results from the move analysis of the current corpus (Tables 1, 2 & 3) were compared with those in the literature and with the results from the questionnaire to find out the similarities and differences between potential conference abstract writers' knowledge and actual composition before proposing the pedagogical implications.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were reported from two sets of data: open-ended questionnaire and text analysis of TESOL conference abstracts. Eight questions in the questionnaire are concerned with different perspectives ranging from the potential writers' experience of writing conference abstracts, their problems and solutions to these problems, their opinions and knowledge about the abstract, the sources of such knowledge, to their expectations of an abstract. This information can answer Research Question 1 about the existing knowledge and opinions about conference abstract of SUT potential writers.

According to the questionnaire data (Appendix B), 19 out of 31 informants reported that they had never written a conference abstract before, and only one of them had written abstracts five times (Question 1). This tends to suggest that the majority of them were inexperienced writers. Twelve informants reported that language constraints, such as limited size of vocabulary and poor grammar knowledge were their main problems when writing abstracts. However, nine said that the major problem they had was the limited knowledge about the structure of the abstract. Interestingly, five of them stated that they had no idea about the problems. Ten claimed that some writing skills such as organising ideas and writing several drafts were helpful to alleviate their problems. Seven said that they solved their problems by reading conference abstracts, and seven stated that they had no idea because they had never had the experience of writing abstracts for conferences. When asked for their opinion about the characteristics of a good abstract (Question 4), seven informants claimed that good structure indicated the good quality of an abstract.

As for the types of abstract (Question 5), seventy-one percent of the informants said they had no idea, and only 7 percent could provide the correct answer. The majority of them did not know the types of abstracts. *Purpose*, *Methods* and *Results* were regarded as compulsory and 45%, 71% and 65% of informants expressed such opinions, respectively (Question 6). When asked about the sources of the knowledge about the abstract (Question 7), 26% and 23% of them claimed that they obtained such knowledge mainly by reading published article abstracts and attending coursework, respectively. It is interesting to know that although these informants did not know the structure of conference abstracts, 39%, 65% and 68% of them respectively reported to expect to these three compulsory elements (Hyland, 2000) in the abstract.

TABLE 1. Three Types of Abstracts

Indicative (1)	Informative (110)	Combinatory (26)
0.7%	80%	19.3%

The results from texts analysis (Table 1) showed that there were three types of abstract present in this corpus. Among them, the Informative type represented 80% (110 abstracts) of the total number of abstracts. Combinatory type and Indicative type account for 19.3% (26 abstracts) and 0.7% (1 abstract) of the corpus, respectively. Our results of the abstract types correspond with a previous study by Lorés (2004), revealing that Informative type is the most popular one. The possible explanation for this consistency may be that the majority of RA abstracts take such structure of the Informative type to be the characteristic rhetorical organisation of abstracts in previous studies (Nwogu 1990, Swales 1990, Bhatia 1993). However, differences exist in the other two types. There was only 1 (0.7%) indicative abstract in the present corpus, but 11 out of 36 (30.5%) were found in Lorés' study. As for the combinatory type, the present corpus had a larger proportion of such type (19.3%) than that found in Lorés' (8.4%). One possible reason for these differences is due to different time points, where the recent academic competition between researchers to get their papers published or presented every year tends to be fiercer. Eight years after Lorés carried out her study, the abstract is likely to be extremely important in positioning the writer as having something to say that is worth publishing. In order to capture audience attention, writers should compose their abstracts to be more competitive and more attractive by not only indicating the research gaps but also the structure of the whole paper. In fact, compared with the Indicative type, the Combinatory type included more information about the study, which may capture audience's attention and interest them more. The one indicative abstract fitted the CARS model (1990). The organisational structure of this abstract was M1-M2-M3.

TABLE 2. Move Structure of Informative Type

1	P/I-M-Pr-C	50	I/M-M-Pr	95	P/M-M-Pr/C
3	I-P/M-M-C	51	I-P-M-P	96	P-M-Pr
4	I-P-M-Pr	52	P-M-Pr	97	I-M/P-M-Pr
5	P/M-M-Pr	53	I-P-M-Pr	98	I-P-M-Pr
6	P-M-Pr-C	54	I-M/P-M-Pr	99	P-M
7	I-M-Pr	55	I-P-M-C	100	I-P-M-Pr
8	P-M-Pr	56	I-P-M-Pr	101	P-M/Pr
9	I-M-Pr-M-Pr	59	I-P-Pr	102	P-M-Pr/M-C
10	P-M-Pr-C	60	I-P-M/Pr-C	103	P/M-M-Pr-C
11	I-P-M-Pr-C	62	I-P-M-Pr-C	105	P-M-Pr
12	I-P-M	64	P/M-M-Pr	107	I/P-M-Pr
13	I-P-M	65	I-P/M-M	108	I-P-M-Pr
14	P-M-Pr/M-C	66	M-P/M-Pr	109	P-M-Pr-C
15	I-P-M-Pr	67	I-P-M-Pr	110	I-P/M-Pr-C
17	P-M-Pr-C	68	I-M-Pr-C	112	P-M-Pr-M-C
19	I-P-Pr-C	69	I-P-M-Pr-C	113	I-Pr/M
20	I-P-M-Pr	70	I-P/M-Pr-M-C	114	P-M-Pr

(Continued)

23	I-P-M-Pr/C	71	I/P-M-Pr-Pr/C	116	P-M-C
24	I-P-M-C	72	I-P-M	117	I-M/P-M-C
25	P/M-M-Pr-C	73	I-P/M-M-M/P-P-Pr	118	P-M-Pr-C
26	P-M-Pr	74	I-M-P	119	I-M-Pr-C
27	I-P/M-P-C	75	P/M-M-Pr-C	122	I-P-M-Pr
28	I-P-M-Pr-C	77	P/M-M-Pr-C	123	P-Pr/M-C
29	I-P-M	80	P/M-M-Pr/M	124	P/M-M-P-Pr
30	I-P-M-Pr	81	P/M-I-M-Pr-C	125	P-I-Pr/M-C
31	I-P-M-Pr	82	P/M-M-Pr	126	I-P-M-Pr-C
32	I-P-M-Pr	83	P-M-Pr-C	127	I-P-M-Pr
33	P/M-Pr-C	84	I-Pr-C	128	I-P-M-M/Pr-C
34	P-M-Pr-C	85	P/M-M-Pr-C	129	P-M/Pr
35	I-P/M-Pr/M	86	I-P	130	I-P-M-Pr-C
37	P/M-M-Pr-C	87	P-M-Pr	131	P-M-Pr
40	I-P-M-Pr	88	P-M-Pr	132	P-M-Pr
41	M-P-M-Pr-C	89	P/M-M	133	P-M-Pr
43	P-M-Pr	90	I-M-Pr	135	P-M-I-Pr
44	I-P-M/P-M/P-M	91	P-M-Pr/M	136	I-P-M-Pr/M-C
46	I-P-C	93	P-M-Pr	137	I-P-M-Pr-C
47	I-M-P	94	P-M-Pr		
Total: * I=62 (56%) P=97 (88%) M=99 (90%) Pr=87 (79%) C=47 (43%)					

The most frequently employed moves in the Informative type (Table 2) were *Purpose (P), Method(M)* and *Product(Pr),* which account for 88%, 90% and 79% of the total number of this type of abstracts, respectively. A possible explanation for the high frequent occurrence is that these three elements are considered key components in an abstract. Some examples of these moves are:

> (1) *This is a large-scale test program which aims to assess and evaluate students' achievement* (13, P)
>
> (2) *The subject was one teacher teaching two English classes. The data came from document analysis, classroom observations, teacher's stimulated recalls, and students' written feedback.* (96, M)
>
> (3) *The results showed that the students in the treatment group significantly outperformed those in the control group in terms of motivation and vocabulary acquisition.* (85; Pr)

The most frequent move structures of Informative type were the sequences of Purpose-Method-Product (P-MPr), accounting for 20% of all cases, and of Purpose-Method-

Product-Conclusion (P-M-Pr-C), representing about 15% of this type of abstracts. These two patterns are illustrated below as (4) and (5), respectively.

> (4) *This paper reports on action research focused on training students to direct their own learning to meet their language goals regarding the skill of oral presentation. // It targeted a group of intermediate learners at a secondary school. The participants were trained to use the metacognitive model for strategic learning to develop an electronic speech portfolio. Students were assigned to do oral presentations which were recorded and transferred into audio files. After each presentation the teacher held a post-presentation conference, whereby each student was trained to use the metacognitive model for strategic learning. // The findings suggest that students only partially directed their speech portfolios because they lack the degree of self-regulation needed to embark on such a project.* (88)

> (5) *This study investigates the language choices in the writing of Assumption University Basic English II students in response to picture prompts. // Samples of 76 essays were collected from 12 students in order to compare the progress of their writing over a period of 14 weeks. // The resulting analysis showed that the students had a limited knowledge of the different text-types available and an equally limited range of lexico-grammatical available to them. No discernable improvement could be observed over the period of study. // Possible reasons for this were firstly the lack of awareness of the role and importance that genres play in their academic studies and an approach to teaching which did not include a grammar that was functionally based.* (10)

The most frequent pattern P-M-Pr in our corpus is similar to that in Hyland's (2000), who identified P-M-Pr as the dominant sequence. The similarity between these two corpora lies in the nature of the abstracts. As mentioned earlier, all abstracts in the present study were selected from empirical studies. Research purposes, methods used in the study, and results are very crucial for an empirical study. And these three elements are arranged in the sequence to present a logical order of research activities. In Hyland's (2000) corpus, 800 RA abstracts were selected from 10 journals each in eight disciplines (Philosophy, Sociology, Applied linguistics, Marketing, Electronic engineering, Mechanical engineering, Physics, Biology). Five of the Philosophy journals and two of the sociology journals that made up the corpus do not contain abstracts. Additional abstracts were therefore from the remaining journals. This is to say, the majority of abstracts were from hard disciplines which focus more on empirical research. This could explain why the most dominant pattern in these two corpora was P-M-Pr.

The move embedment was another finding of the Informative abstracts. The Method move embedded in the Purpose move (P/M) was found to be the preeminent move embedment, accounting for 21% of the total number of the Informative abstracts. This style of writing could be due to the limited numbers of words required in the abstracts or could reflect the skilled writers' style in writing. For example:

> (6)*The presentation discusses the investigation of 10 debate video clips from the world and regional debate tournaments, constituting linguistic transcripts of 65 speeches, interviews of expert adjudicators and a debate champion, as well as linguistic realisation of the speeches.*

Move cycle is very common, and was identified in previous studies (Bhatia 1993, Hyland 2000). The absence of move cycles in our corpus may be due to the limited text length required by the two conferences: an abstract of no more than 150 words for the conference program. It is very difficult for writers to present move cycles with limited words without missing necessary elements in abstracts.

It is worth noting that a new move which does not exist in Hyland's (2000) model was identified. We would like to call this new move 'Promising more information' because the function of this move was to promise the audience that the implications of classroom practices, results, recommendations for further studies, challenges or special considerations in conducting the research would be provided in the presentation. In our opinion, it is this new move that differentiates the conference abstract from the RA abstract, in which research results and pedagogical implications are presented clearly and explicitly, even though these two genres share the same functions. This difference could be explained by the conference abstract writers' strategy in attracting audiences to attend their oral presentation, a different accompanying genre from that of RA abstracts. However, due to its small number of occurrences (16 out of 110), this new move was considered as an optional move. Examples of the new move are illustrated below as (7) and (8).

(7) *Pedagogical and research implications will be discussed.* (13)

(8) *Implications of the results were also elucidated in this research.* (50)

TABLE 3. Move structure of combinatory type

2	O-J-I-H	48	O-J-I	92	J-I-H
16	O-J-I-H	49	O-J-I-H	105	J-O-I-S
18	O-J-I-S	57	O-J-I-H	106	O-J—I-H
21	O-J-I-H	58	J-I-H	111	O-J-I-H
22	O-J-I	61	O-J-I	115	O-J-I-H
36	O-J-I-H	63	O-J-I	120	O-J-I-H
38	O-J-I-H	76	O-J/O-I-H	121	O-J-I-H
39	O-J-H-I	78	O-J-I	134	O-J-I-H
42	J-I-H	79	O-I-J-H-I		

The most frequently found moves in the Combinatory type (Table 3) were *Outlining the research field* (O), *Justifying the research study* (J) and *Introducing the paper* (I) which represent 89%, 100% and 92% of the total number of this type of abstracts, respectively. Not surprisingly, the move *Justifying the research study* appeared in every Combinatory abstract because the main function of this move is to indicate a gap in previous studies and the presence of this move is an important criterion to categorise an abstract as Indicative or Combinatory. As for the move *Outlining the research field*, it aims to provide background knowledge and state the importance of the study. The possible reason for the high frequency of this move is that necessary information about the research background enables the audience to have a general idea of the study and to decide whether or not to attend the presentation session. Concerning the move *Introducing the paper*, the main rhetorical strategy for realising the move is to state the purpose or the focus of the paper. The research purpose could be a key element in an abstract. Also, audience expects to see this kind of information included in an abstract according to the questionnaire data. Some examples of these moves are given below.

(9) *Use of students' first language (L1) in an EFL classroom has been a debatable issue.* (18, O)

(10) *Despite widespread use of groups, there has been little research investigating the dynamics involved, and what actually happens when students work together.* (49, J)

(11) *The central aims of the research are to understand the use by humour of a teacher in the classroom and students' perception of its effectiveness and appropriateness.* (58, I)

The most frequent pattern of Combinatory abstracts was O-J-I-H, which accounted for 50% (13 out of 26) of the total number of this type. That is to say half of Combinatory abstracts followed this pattern.

Based on the results from the questionnaire data (Appendix B) and abstracts analysis (Tables 1, 2 & 3), there was a mismatch between the existing knowledge and opinions of SUT potential writers and actual practice of conference abstract writing. According to the questionnaire data, the majority of the informants showed that they had little knowledge about the rhetorical structures of conference abstract and its types (Questions 5 & 6). Language, general structures and the word limit were reported to be these novice conference abstract writers' problems (Question 2). These problems aside, writing style; namely, being concise, well-organised and clear, was believed to make a good conference abstract by these writers with the highest frequency (48%), accounting for twice more than that of the structure (23%) and exactly three times more than that of the content of a conference abstract (16%) (Question 4). To solve the problems, these novice abstract writers reported rewriting the abstract many times, including only essential ideas to shorten the abstract, and using field-specific terms to the minimum with the highest percentage (32%), compared with referring to RA abstracts and conference abstracts of previous years (23%) (Question 3). 23% reported having no ideas about how to overcome their difficulties in writing conference abstracts while a lower percentage (16%) mentioned carefully reading the requirements of the conference guidelines. Furthermore, only two out of 31 of these informants knew the types of abstract (Question 5). Their lack of knowledge about conference abstracts and their confusion in solving their problems of writing them indicate the need for explicit instructions on how to write this genre to this group of potential conference abstract writers.

As for the similarity between these two, the informants stated that the research purpose, methods and results/findings should be included in an abstract, and the information about these three was reported to be expected. In the Informative type, the real practice of abstract writing was that the moves of Purpose (accounting for 88% in the dataset of this type), Method (90%) and Product (79%) were key components in the corpus. The high frequency of these three moves matches the informants' expectation. Similarly, the statements about research purpose and findings embedded in the moves of *Introducing the paper to be presented* and *Highlighting outcomes* occurred frequently in the corpus for Combinatory abstracts, accounting for 92% and 93% respectively of the number of these two moves.

However, in the analysis of Combinatory abstracts, we had difficulties in finding a location for research activities. There were 16 Combinatory abstracts (about 67%) containing the statements which describe research methods used in the studies. It seems that Yakhontova's (2002) model does not provide a place for the research activity move. Therefore, a modified version of Yakhontova's (2002) model should be proposed in order to accommodate research activities for the TESOL conference abstracts in Asian context. Logically, the description of the research activities is supposed to be located between purpose statement and results report. However, in Yakhontova's (2002) model, between the two moves embedding the statement of purpose and methods is the move *Summarising the paper*,

which consists of two steps a. Giving the overview of the whole paper, and b. Giving an overview of its parts in sequence. It seems that the name of this move does not allow for the inclusion of the research activities. Therefore, a better solution is to place the research activities in Move 3 *Introducing the paper to be presented*. A modified model for Yakhontova's Combinatory type of conference abstracts

Move structure	**Rhetorical strategies for realizing the move**
Move 1: Outlining the research field	a. Referring to established knowledge b. Referring to previous research c. Asserting the importance of the area
Move 2: Justifying the research study	a. Indicating a gap in the previous research b. Making a counterclaim c. Raising a question about the previous research
Move 3: Introducing the paper to be presented	a. Stating the purpose of the paper (aims) b. Stating the focus of the paper (content) ***c. Stating the methods of the study***
Move 4: Summarizing the paper	a. Giving the overview of the whole paper b. Giving an overview of its parts in sequence
Move 5: Highlighting outcomes	a. Reviewing the most important results of the study b. Stating the implications or applications of the study

CONCLUSION

The present project sought to help a group of new researchers at SUT write a successful abstract for a presentation at TESOL conferences. Based on their responses to eight open-ended questionnaires and the textual analysis of 137 conference abstracts taken from two TESOL conference handbooks in Asia, the results of this study show that there were discrepancies between these potential abstract writers and the actual composition of this genre. Data from the questionnaires indicated these informants' lack of knowledge about conference abstracts and their confusion in composing this specific genre. The results of textual analysis support the previous findings about the types of abstracts, the most common abstract type, the most common move sequence and the move embedding. However, in Informative type the new optional move, which differentiates this genre from the research article abstract, was identified and named 'Promising more information'. In Combinatory type a new step 'Stating the methods of the study' was identified and added to Move 3 of Yakhontova's model. All these findings would benefit other new researchers who would like to present their work at TESOL conferences.

The results of data analysis in this study tend to suggest that this group of new researchers need to be formally instructed on how to compose their own theses. In fact, as also indicated in Min, San, Petras and Mohamad's (2013) study on Asian novice writers' writing issues, it is crucial to make novice researchers aware of the required knowledge of a particular genre through formal training in their postgraduate programs. Several pedagogical implications are, therefore, proposed. First of all, three types of conference abstracts: Indicative, Informative, and Combinatory should be introduced and explicitly taught to the potential conference abstract writers. Then, the structure of each type: Swales' CARS model (1990), our modified models of Hyland's (2000) and of Yakhontova's (2002) will be shown to them to let them know how each type of conference abstract is formulated, and with a special emphasis to the newly added move in Yakhontava's should be also given. After that, the analysis of the texts of the most common type of conference abstract (Informative type)

should be conducted with these novice writers with the purpose of familiarising them with this structure and the fixed language expressions employed to achieve the most common moves in this kind of conference abstracts. Examples of a list of fixed expressions that these potential writers can make use of in writing their conference abstract are as follows:

Fixed expressions employed in Findings/Results:
The results of this research show……
The findings revealed that…..
The results indicated that….

Fixed expressions employed in Methods
A questionnaire was utilized to….
A semi-structured interview on……. was also conducted
Moreover, classroom observation was also employed to….
These interviews were recorded and will be summarized…
Questionnaires will be used to collect …..

Fixed expressions aside, the use of tenses (past, present, or future) and voice (active or passive) found in the corpus should also be introduced to these writers. Teaching them linguistic features in conference abstracts may help these novice writers to solve their difficulties with language as mentioned in their answers to Question 2 (Appendix B).

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APPENDICES
APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRES FOR POTENTIAL ABSTRACT WRITERS

1. Have you ever written a conference abstract? If Yes, how many conference abstracts have you written?
2. What are problems you have when writing a conference abstract?
3. What do you do to solve such problems?
4. In your opinion, what makes a good conference abstract?
5. Do you know how many types of abstracts there are? If Yes, how many and what are they?
6. Do you know what kinds of information are typically included in an abstract? And how are they organized?
7. Where did you get the knowledge about the abstract from Question 4 and Question 5?
8. As a conference abstract reader, when you find the topic which you are interested in, what kinds of information do you expect to see from the abstract?

APPENDIX B
REPONSES TO QUESTIONNAIRES FROM POTENTIAL CONFERENCE ABSTRACT WRITERS

Themes	**Frequency**	**Percentage**
Question 1. Have you ever written a conference abstract? If Yes, how many conference abstracts have you written?		
Never	19	61
One	7	23
Two	2	6
Three	2	6
Five	1	3
Question 2. What are problems you have when writing a conference abstract?		
General structure	9	29
Language	12	39
Limited number of words	5	16
No idea	5	16
Question 3. What do you do to solve such problems?		
Read conference abstracts	7	23
Read requirements	5	16
Ask for help from teachers, friends, and experts	2	6
Others	10	32
No idea	7	23
Question 4. In your opinion, what makes a good conference abstract?		
Writing style	15	48
Content	5	16
Structure	7	23
Significance	2	6
Meet the requirements	3	10
Others	3	10
No idea	3	10
Question 5. Do you know how many types of abstracts there are? If Yes, how many and what are they?		
No idea	22	71

Correct answers	2	7
Incomplete answers	7	22
Question 6. Do you know what kinds of information are typically included in an abstract? And how are they organized?		
Methods/ Findings	22	71
Results	20	65
Purposes	14	45
Conclusion	13	42
Gap and Problem	3	10
Introduction	8	26
Previous studies	5	16
Others	3	10
Question 7. Where did you get the knowledge about the abstract from Question 4 and Question 5?		
Published article abstracts	8	26
Coursework	7	23
Workshop	3	10
Internet	3	10
Own experience	3	10
Book	3	10
Others (friends, experts)	5	16
No idea	7	23
Question 8. As a conference abstract reader, when you find the topic which you are interested in, what kinds of information do you expect to see from the abstract?		
Findings/ Results	21	68
Methods	20	65
Purposes	12	39
Conclusion	8	26
Gap/ Problem	3	10
Overview of the content	4	13
Significance of studies	4	13
Others (i.e. Introduction/ question)	2	6