# Evaluating Abstracts of MA Theses and PhD Dissertations in Applied Linguistics in Kurdistan Region Universities

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*Abstract*— **This paper evaluates the quality of abstracts in MA theses and PhD dissertations in Applied Linguistics from universities in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI) between 2007 and 2021. The research employs a rubric or criteria-based evaluation approach, informed by Hyland's (2000) five-move model, adapted to include criteria for 'irrelevant information' and 'word count'. A comprehensive sample of all the abstracts from the collected data was analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods.**

**The findings indicate that while most abstracts effectively introduce the research topic and state objectives, they often struggle with the clear presentation of results and maintaining overall coherence. Besides, significant relationships were found between various components of abstract quality, suggesting that improvements in one area (e.g., clarity in 'introduction') could positively impact others (e.g., presenting 'results').**

**Moreover, this study highlights the need for enhanced training and guidelines in abstract writing, particularly for Applied Linguistics research, to improve clarity, coherence, and academic rigor of future theses and dissertations. The findings have important implications for improving the quality and accessibility of academic research in the KRI region and its universities.**

***Index Terms*— *Abstract writing, academic writing, applied linguistics, Hyland's model.***

## I. INTRODUCTION

To begin with, the word "abstract" is originated from the word "abstractum" which is Latin and refers to the summary of a long-written piece of writing (Collins Dictionary, 2023). It is the source of the first impression one will have on a whole paper since it represents it in brief.

Therefore, writing an abstract has often been regarded as the task of summarizing the whole paper in a way the researcher desires. This has created a sort of confusion among researchers because they often seem to be unaware of different types of abstracts and what sort of abstract is required according to their field, Applied Linguistics (hereinafter, AL), as an example. According to Hyland's (2000) five-move model, an abstract should account for five moves; introduction (M1), purpose (M2), method (M3), product (M4), and conclusion (M5).

Furthermore, the quality of abstracts in academic writing is crucial as it serves as the first impression of the entire research work, providing a concise summary of the study's objectives, methodology, findings, and implications. In the context of AL, particularly in Kurdistan Region of Iraq (hereinafter, KRI), there is a growing need to evaluate the effectiveness of these abstracts to ensure they meet the academic standards and effectively communicate the essence of the research.

This study aims to evaluate the quality and structure of abstracts in MA theses and PhD dissertations within this region, with focus on identifying potential issues that may hinder the accessibility and dissemination of research findings, in general. By conducting this evaluation, the study seeks to determine whether inadequacies or structural weaknesses exist and how they might impact the clarity and effectiveness of the abstracts.

### *A. Problem statement*

Despite the fact that an abstract is a crucial part of any research work that summarizes and presents the overall content, many MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL from KRI universities appear to struggle with clarity, coherence, and completeness. This issue is particularly prevalent in presenting the results and maintaining a logical flow throughout the abstract. This paper seeks to evaluate the quality of these abstracts, identifying common deficiencies, and suggest areas for improvement.

### *B. Aims*

The primary aim of this research is to evaluate the quality of abstracts in those theses and dissertations, using a criteria-based approach informed by Hyland's (2000) five-move model. Specifically, they study aims at:

a. assessing how well these abstracts introduce the research topic, state the objectives, describe the

Journal of University of Human Development
Volume 11 No. 1(2025); DOI: 10.21928/juhd.v11n1y2025.pp19-27
Regular research paper: Received 4 September 2024; Accepted 2 October 2024; Published 15 January 2025
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methodology, present the findings, and conclude the study,
b. identifying the prevalence of irrelevant information and the adherence to word count limits within the abstracts,
c. analyzing the relationships between different components of abstract quality to understand how improvements in one area may influence others,
d. providing recommendations for improving abstract writing in AL, particularly in the context of higher education in KRI.

By achieving these aims, the study intends to enhance the academic rigor of future theses and dissertations in the region and contribute to the overall improvement of academic writing practices in AL.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Definitions of abstract

The abstract part of any academic writing plays an essential role in summarizing the research findings presented throughout the writing (Carraway, 2007). According to the Writing Center, the University of North Carolina (2011), "an abstract is a short summary of your completed research. It is intended to describe your work without going into great detail. Abstracts should be self-contained and concise, explaining your work as briefly and clearly as possible." Hence, abstracts almost always are written when the research endeavor is concluded.

Furthermore, Ridley (2012) states that "abstracts of journal articles, dissertations and theses are global summaries which are created to introduce a reader to the content of the text which follows."

### B. Elements of abstract

An abstract promotes the whole work, influencing editors and readers alike. It also provides a concise overview of the writing, highlighting the major elements, including the study purpose, methods, key findings, and the importance of the results. Besides, the abstract should explain briefly the implications of the findings without evaluating the conclusions. Overall, writing the abstract section requires careful considerations and attention to details (Hesselbach et al., 2012).

Additionally, Riazi (2016) points out that the word count of a thesis abstract should be around 300 words since details would be provided in later sections or chapters.

### C. Purpose of abstract

To understand the need for having an abstract in research papers, one should figure out the purpose(s) of writing the abstract, the reason(s) behind writing it often after writing the full research paper, and the support the abstract provides to both researchers and readers.

An abstract can broadly be described as a brief, coherent, and independent summary of a certain research presented in the body. The primary purpose of such an abstract is to give readers a concise understanding of the research's key points, findings, and significance. Furthermore, it highlights the role of the abstract in making the research more accessible and discoverable to a wider audience which is crucial in the context of academic publishing and dissemination of scientific knowledge. According to Kate et al (2017), "an abstract of a scientific article is a precise, clear, and stand-alone statement that provides an overview of the work to the reader and plays an important role in increasing the visibility."

### D. Types of abstract

Abstracts can basically and more broadly thought to be categorized into two types: descriptive abstract and informative abstract. It is important to decide which one is required in the field of AL. According to the literature, descriptive abstract is argued to be suitable for humanities and social sciences academic writings while informative abstract leans towards science-related ones. Hence, it is expected that MA theses and doctoral dissertations in AL would provide a descriptive abstract ("The University of Adelaide", 2014).

In addition, it is not only the type of abstract that is key but also how effective the abstract is written and presented. In the academic realm, it is also crucial to give thorough attention to the factor of making research papers distinct and noteworthy by making it stand out and truly catch the readers' attention.

#### 1) Descriptive abstract

In general, this type of abstract is used in writing papers of the study areas of humanities and social sciences. The word range differs from one source to another. Some scholars believe that it should be between 200 – 300 words while the majority argue that it is often between 50 to 100 words, and they share a set of writing sequence and/or criteria as:

- background,
- purpose,
- focus or interest,
- and sometimes overview of contents ("The University of Adelaide", 2014).

However, the word count is different and is expected to double or triple the word count when it comes to MA theses and PhD dissertations. Additionally, this research type lacks a detailed presentation of the results, often summarizing findings in a brief statement without providing statistical or numerical data. Such abstracts offer readers an overview of the nature and scope of the article's content, helping them understand what to expect without delving into specific data points (Sirisilla, 2023).

In addition, this type of abstract is sometimes called 'humanities abstract' due to the fact that it briefly provides an overview of the content of the study or paper in which its parts are organized according to four primary components of paper topic, thesis, main point(s), and keywords. ("Germanna Academic Center for Excellence", 2020).

Therefore, it could be summarized that a descriptive or humanities abstract requires including the following elements/components in the abstract that:

a. starts with a background, aim(s), or a topic sentence,
b. followed by a purpose, method, or thesis,
c. what is coming after is focus, interest, results, main point(s),
d. concluded by an overview of contents or conclusion ensuring that key words are mentioned afterwards.

#### 2) Informative abstract

This type of abstract captures the essence of the report, typically in about 200 words. Besides, it accurately reflects the contents of the work, particularly emphasizing the results section. It generally includes common criteria, such as:

- background,
- aim or purpose,
- methodology,
- results,
- and conclusion.

On one hand, it is evident that research in AL can be effectively represented by both descriptive and informative abstracts. Either type is suitable for research writing in this field, as long as they adhere to the specific criteria outlined for each type of abstract—descriptive and informative. On the other hand, having differences in disciplinary conventions and expectations can lead to poorly written abstracts. For instance, while abstracts in the sciences might emphasize methodology and results, those in the humanities may focus more on the theoretical framework and interpretation of findings (Bhatia, 2013).

A consensus seems to exist among numerous scholarly sources that Hyland's (2000) five-move model or framework represents the most appropriate schema for assessing the abstracts of scholarly works, including articles, books, theses, and dissertations (Huang and Lv, 2022, Tavakoli, 2012, and Bitchener, 2010).

**Table 1.**
Linear order of Hyland's five-move model

| Moves | Function |
|---|---|
| **Introduction (M1)** | Establishes context of the paper and motivates the research or discussion. |
| **Purpose (M2)** | Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper. |
| **Method (M3)** | Provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc. |
| **Product (M4)** | States main findings or results, the argument, or what was accomplished. |
| **Conclusion (M5)** | Interprets or extends results beyond scope or paper, draws inferences, points to applications or wider implications. |

Primarily, according to Perry et al (2003), it is recommended that an abstract should include the following seven elements:

1. The abstract has to start with a brief theme sentence to orientate the reader about the overall issue addressed in the thesis. The sentence should grab the reader's attention,
2. It should then indicate the main aim or purpose of the study,
3. Next, the academic and/or practical importance of the study should be explained,
4. The methodology used in the study should also be described,
5. The main findings of the study should be summarized,
6. Statements of conclusions should indicate the contribution made by the study in filling gaps in the literature,
7. Finally, the practical or managerial implications of the study's findings should be highlighted where appropriate.

Despite the fact that Bitchener (2010) agrees on Hyland's five-move model, he points out that any thesis abstract should function as providers of the following elements. (See table 2).

**Table 2.**
Functions of abstracts by Bitchener (2010)

| | Functions |
|---|---|
| **A** | The aim of the study |
| **B** | The background of the study |
| **C** | The methodology and methods used in the study |
| **D** | The key findings of the study |
| **E** | The contribution of the study to the field of knowledge |

The Writing Center, the University of North Carolina (2011) points out that a proficient abstract will encompass a number of key characteristics:

1. Motivation/ Problem statement: Why is your research/argument important? What practical, scientific, theoretical or artistic gap is your project filling?
2. Methods/ Procedures/ Approach: What did you actually do to get your results?
3. Results/ Findings/ Product: As a result of completing the above procedure, what did you learn/invent/create?
4. Conclusion/ Implications: What are larger implications of your findings, especially for the problem/gap identified previously? Why is this research valuable?

Tavakoli (2012) summarizes five essentials to writing any research abstract which include "purpose of the study, source(s) from where the data are drawn (usually referred to as participants), the method(s) used for collecting data, the general results, and general interpretation of the results." In addition, he adds that for an abstract to be good, it should be:

a. accurate, reflecting precisely the overall meaning of the research paper,
b. nonevaluative, reporting instead of evaluating,
c. coherent and readable, having clarity in the written language and using required grammar tense(s),
d. concise, briefly demonstrating the overall idea and avoid using unnecessary words.

According to Kate et al (2017), there are a number of elements to include or a number of broad headings that an abstract can address which are:

- Background/ introduction/ aims and objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion

Furthermore, Huang and Lv (2022) advocate for the implementation of the five strategic moves, as delineated in the subsequent table, to enhance the effectiveness of the process. (See table 3)

**Table 3.**
Five strategic moves to write abstract by Huang and Lv (2022)

| No. | Moves |
|---|---|
| **1** | Situating the research |
| **2** | Presenting the research |
| **3** | Describing the methodology |
| **4** | Summarizing the results |
| **5** | Discussing the research |

Therefore, the five-moves model is adopted since two other criteria are added to it, which are 'irrelevant information' (i.e. M6) apart from the five moves, as well as, the required 'word count' (i.e. M7) for MA theses and PhD dissertations. According to Swales and Feak (2009), the abstracts corresponding to theses and dissertations at the postgraduate level are expected to be inclusive with a word count not exceeding 350 words. And, since the word count is clearly specified, and theses and dissertations are referenced, this paper ensures compliance with the word count range recommended by Swales and Feak (2009).

To sum up, Hyland's original model of the moves provides solid and sufficient roadmap for any research to analyze and evaluate abstracts of any MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL as previously shown in Table 1. However, as already mentioned, two valuable, practical criteria would need to be added, which are either the abstract includes any irrelevant information outside the five moves and whether the word count stays in the 350-words range limit, i.e. 300 to 400 words. The following table includes a set of criteria for this purpose.

**Table 4.**
Inclusive table for the final criteria for this study

| Criteria | Function (definition) |
|---|---|
| **Introduction (M1)** | Establishes context of the paper and motivates the research or discussion. |
| **Purpose (M2)** | Indicates purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper. |
| **Method (M3)** | Provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc. |
| **Product (M4)** | States main findings or results, the argument, or what was accomplished. |
| **Conclusion (M5)** | Interprets or extends results beyond scope or paper, draws inferences, points to applications or wider implications. |
| **Irrelevant information (M6)** | Any unnecessary information or addition provided in the abstract. |
| **Word count (M7)** | The ideal word count is 350. |

## III. METHODOLOGY

### *A. Research design*

This research employs both descriptive and inferential statistical analysis design. On one hand, descriptive statistics is followed which is a fundamental branch of statistics that involves summarizing and organizing data to provide an informative overview of the sample(s) under study. According to Gravetter and Wallnau (2017), descriptive statistics focuses on presenting the characteristics of a dataset in a clear and understandable manner.

On the other hand, inferential analysis is deployed which is known to be a branch of statistics that enables researchers to make inferences or generalizations about a population based on data sampled from that population. Unlike descriptive statistics, which merely summarize data, inferential statistics goes further by using the data to test hypotheses, make predictions, and determine relationships among variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). Its primary aim is to draw conclusions that extend beyond the immediate data at hand, making it a crucial tool in many fields, including AL.

This mixed statistical analysis allows for identification of strengths and weaknesses in the abstracts and provides a foundation for making recommendations for further solid academic writing practices.

### *B. Sampling*

This paper takes the whole population into consideration which is 91 MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL across multiple universities in KRI. Among those, it examines a comprehensive number of 46 samples, which is over 50% of the total population. The samples selected had to meet certain criteria, such as:

- written in English,
- completed between 2007 and 2021,
- focused on topics within the field of AL (i.e. different subfields of AL),
- conducted in different years,
- difference in supervisor specialty.

The selection process is guided by the purpose of ensuring that the sample is representative of diverse characteristics within the field of AL, rather than randomly selecting from the population, which is called 'purposive sampling'.

This type of sampling is particularly useful in studies where specific information or insights are sought, and it allows the researcher to focus on cases that will effectively contribute to answering the research questions (Etikan et. al., 2016). It can be inferred that this approach is advantageous to gain in-depth understanding from selecting samples based on related purpose(s) strategically. Besides, this sample size ensures that the findings are representative of the population and provides sufficient data for robust statistical analysis.

### *C. Data collection*

The process of data collection involved obtaining the abstracts of relevant MA theses and PhD dissertations from university libraries and online database. These abstracts were then compiled into a database for evaluation. The data collection process was carefully managed to ensure the integrity and completeness of the sample.

### *D. Development of evaluation criteria*

To evaluate the abstracts, a set of criteria was developed based on established criteria for academic abstract writing. These criteria were informed by existing literature on abstract writing in AL and included key elements, including the moves offered by applied linguist Hyland's five-moves model or framework in 2000, i.e. introduction (M1), purpose (M2), method (M3), product (M4), conclusion (M5). These five moves are supported by two more moves which are whether irrelevant, unnecessary information is given in the abstract or not, named 'irrelevant information (M6)'. In addition, one final move of 'word count' is added as (M7) to examine whether the abstract word count is within the 350-word-count limit.

Each criteria item was designed to be binary (Yes/No), reflecting whether the abstract met the specific criterion. This binary scoring system simplifies the evaluation process and allows for clear distinctions between abstracts that meet the criteria and those that do not.

### *E. Validity and reliability of the criteria*

To ensure the validity and reliability of the evaluation criteria, they were subjected to a validation process involving a panel of a number of expert jury members (*see acknowledgements*). These experts were selected based on their extensive experience in AL. The panel of jury members reviewed the criteria and provided feedback to refine the set, ensuring that they accurately reflect the essential components of high-quality academic abstracts. Therefore, it can be stated that face validity is achieved. According to Bhandari (2023), face validity is used to identify whether a set of criteria, rubric or standards can adequately measure what it should measure. The feedback from the jury members shows a perfect rate of 100%, thereby confirming the validity of the set to be used in this research.

Inter-rater reliability was tested by having both researchers analyse the samples independently and together in order to finalize the evaluation in a fair, practical manner. According to Wang (2009, p. 72), this type of reliability refers to "the use of different assessors to confirm the fairness of the scores. Two or more assessors who are not linked to one another score the same written work" (Cited in Albakkosh, 2024).

Following that, both researchers analysed and evaluated the abstracts separately. The results were then compared to assess consistency among raters.

### *F. Data analysis Method*

The data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, using SPSS software. The analysis was conducted on two levels:

a. descriptive statistics: the mean, standard deviation, variance, and frequency distributions for each criteria item (M1 to M6) were calculated to provide an overview of the performance of the abstracts.
b. Cross-tabulation analysis: cross-tabulation were used to explore and examine the relationships between different items in the criteria (e.g., M1 and M2, M1 and M4). Chi-square tests were applied to assess the statistical significance of these relationships.

The findings from these analyses provided insights into the overall quality of the abstracts and identified areas where improvements are needed.

### *G. Ethical considerations*

The research adhered to ethical standards throughout the data collection and analysis processes. Since the study involved the evaluation of publicly available academic work, no personal or sensitive information was accessed. The identities of the authors of the theses and dissertations were anonymized to protect their privacy. Additionally, the findings were reported in aggregate form, ensuring that no individual abstract or university was singled out in the analysis.

## IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the findings of the data collected from abstracts regarding their seven moves collected from MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL at universities in KRI between 2007 and 2021. The rubrics used for the evaluation were validated by a panel of experts, and the resulting data were analyzed to identify both strengths and weaknesses in the abstracts.

### *A. Descriptive Statistics*

The descriptive statistics of the data provides an overview of the abstracts' characteristics. Key measures include the mean scores, standard deviations, and variances of various metrics, which are denoted as M1, M2, M3, M4, M5, M6 and M7. (See tables 5 and 6)

**Table 5.**
Descriptive statistics for key variables

| | N | Range | Minimum | Maximum | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| R | 1996 | 88 | 2 | 90 | 58.14 | 21.934 |
| M1 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .89 | .314 |
| M2 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .97 | .167 |
| M3 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .89 | .314 |
| M4 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .67 | .470 |
| M5 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .59 | .493 |
| M6 | 1996 | 1 | 0 | 1 | .66 | .475 |
| M7 | 1996 | 815 | 180 | 995 | 436.24 | 165.719 |
| Year | 1996 | 13 | 2008 | 2021 | 2016.08 | 3.366 |
| Valid N (listwise) | 1996 | | | | | |

**Table 6.**
Descriptive Statistics of variance across different criteria (variables)

| | Variance |
|---|---|
| R | 481.097 |
| M1 | .099 |
| M2 | .028 |
| M3 | .099 |
| M4 | .221 |
| M5 | .243 |
| M6 | .225 |
| M7 | 27462.918 |
| Year | 11.328 |
| Valid N (listwise) | |

### *B. Frequencies and distribution*

For each variable, ranging from M1 to M6, a corresponding frequency table is provided, which comprehensively and clearly illustrates the distribution and frequency rate of occurrences for each variable within the analyzed abstracts. These smaller tables serve in highlighting the prevalence and significance of each variable in the context of this research study.

The frequency tables reveal the proportion of abstracts that meet each criterion of 'Yes/No' responses:

- M1 (introduction): The mean score for M1 is 0.89 (89%), which indicates that most abstracts clearly introduce the research topic. The variance is low at 0.099, suggesting consistency across samples.
- M2 (purpose): This one has a mean of 0.97 (97%) with a very low variance of 0.028, which indicates that almost all of the abstracts clearly state the research objective(s).

- M3 (method): Interestingly, M3 mirrors M1 in having a mean of 0.89 (89%) and a variance of 0.099, highlighting consistent descriptions of methodologies across the selected samples.
- M4 (product): Here, the mean score drops to 0.67 (67%) with a higher variance of 0.221. This means only 67% of the abstracts clearly present the product, findings, or results of their entire theses or dissertations.
- M5 (conclusion): With a mean of 0.59 (59%) and a variance of 0.243, it can be stated that just below half of the abstracts have accounted for clear conclusion(s). Thus, this metric indicates that conclusions are less frequent and less consistently addressed in MA these and PhD dissertation abstracts.
- M6 (irrelevant information): The mean score for this move is 0.66 (66%) with a variance of 0.225, which shows that almost 35% have included information that are irrelevant which indicates these abstracts have struggles to maintain a coherent structure.
-

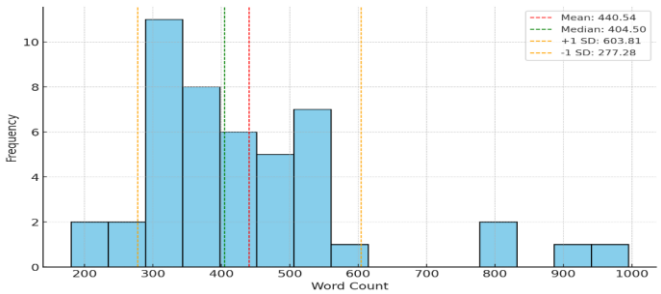
**Table 7.**
Frequency and descriptive statistics for variables M1 to M6

| | | M1 | M2 | M3 | M4 | M5 | M6 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| N | Valid | 1996 | 1996 | 1996 | 1996 | 1996 | 1996 |
| | Missing | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Mean | | .89 | .97 | .89 | .67 | .59 | .66 |
| Median | | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 |
| Mode | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Std. Deviation | | .314 | .167 | .314 | .470 | .493 | .475 |
| Variance | | .099 | .028 | .099 | .221 | .243 | .225 |
| Range | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

These frequencies can reinforce the earlier observation that while most abstracts perform well in introducing the topic and stating purpose, fewer abstracts are effective when it comes to conclusions and being to-the-point.

Moreover, the descriptive statistics suggest that while the abstracts generally perform well in introducing the topic and stating objectives, they are less consistent in presenting products, conclusions, and maintaining overall coherence with providing irrelevant, unnecessary information.

- Regarding M7 (word count), since it has a much higher variance, it is analyzed in a different manner. The histogram below illustrates the distribution of word counts for the 46 abstract samples. (See Bar Chart 1)
-




**Bar Char 1.** Histogram of distribution of word counts in the 46 samples

The mean word count is 440, while the median is 404. This indicates that, on average, the word counts are slightly above the ideal target of 350 words, with a central tendency around 404 words.

Concerning standard deviation, it is approximately 163, with the ±1 standard deviation range (277.28 to 603.81) covering a broad spectrum of the data points. This suggests that there is considerable variability in the word counts.

When it comes to the distribution shape, the histogram depicts that most word counts are clustered around 300 to 500 words, aligning fairly well with the ideal range of 300 to 400 words. However, there are several abstracts with word counts exceeding 500, with a few extreme outliners reaching up to almost 1000 words.

Overall, while many of the abstracts are near the target word count range, the high variability and presence of substantial outliners suggest that not all abstracts consistently adhere to the ideal length suggested in the literature.

### *C. Cross-tabulations and Chi-Square tests*

Cross-tabulation analysis was performed to investigate the relationships between different criteria items (M1 to M6). There are a number of significant relationships identified between the items, as indicated by the Chi-Square tests:

a. M1 and M2 (introduction and purpose): There is a significant relationship ($p < 0.001$), suggesting that abstracts with clear introductions are likely to have clearly stated the purpose. (See table 8)

**Table 8.**
Chi-Square tests for M1 and M2

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 34.370[a] | 1 | .000 | | |
| Continuity Correction[b] | 31.905 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 23.843 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .000 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 34.352 | 1 | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 1996 | | | | |

b. M1 and M4 (introduction and product): According to the following table, it can be noted that the analysis shows a strong relationship ($p < 0.001$), which indicates that a well-introduced abstract is highly likely to present effective results (i.e. product).

**Table 9.**
Chi-Square Tests for M1 and M4

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 148.948[a] | 1 | .000 | | |
| Continuity Correction[b] | 147.101 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 138.791 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .000 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 148.873 | 1 | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 1996 | | | | |

c. M1 and M6 (product and irrelevant information): Again, the relationship is significant with $p < 0.001$, suggesting that abstracts with well-presented introductions are more likely to maintain overall coherence. (See table 10)

d.

**Table 10.**
Chi-Square tests for M1 and M6

| | Value | df | Asymptotic Significance (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (2-sided) | Exact Sig. (1-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 22.748[a] | 1 | .000 | | |
| Continuity Correction[b] | 22.036 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Likelihood Ratio | 24.655 | 1 | .000 | | |
| Fisher's Exact Test | | | | .000 | .000 |
| Linear-by-Linear Association | 22.736 | 1 | .000 | | |
| N of Valid Cases | 1996 | | | | |

All in all, it can be stated these findings imply certain aspects of abstract writing which are interconnected, and improving one element (e.g., clear introduction 'M1') could positively impact other areas, such as the results or purpose 'M4'.

*D. Discussion*

The analysis shows that while the majority of abstracts in AL theses and dissertations at KRI universities meet basic criteria, there are notable areas for improvement. These weaknesses in presenting the product or results and providing irrelevant, unnecessary information are particularly concerning, since these elements are crucial for conveying the theses' and dissertations' significance and outcomes (Kate et al., 2017, and Hyland, 2000).

Certainly, writing an effective abstract that aligns with the expectations and conventions of a specific discourse community can present many challenges and difficulties. According to Ren and Li (2011), novice or inexperienced writers often struggle when English is their second language (L2) because they would need to understand the specific ways of communicating within their field while also adapting to rhetorical styles that can be quite different from those in their native language (L1). This was one of the major points noted by Hyland (2000) that such writers may struggle in organizing their abstracts appropriately, leading to incomplete or confusing abstracts that do not meet academic standards, or the moves he suggested.

Additionally, examining the five-moves model reveals that the first aspect that covers formal elements, including the structure required for writing an abstract and adhering to a specific word count—both of which are crucial for completing a well-crafted academic abstract. Kilmova (2013) argues that many people who speak English as an L2 often struggle with this style of writing because their learning experiences may not have emphasized such formal writing, writing an abstract, as an example.

Further, such disciplinary expectations can result in writing poor abstracts. Bhatia (2013) points out that failure to recognize and adapt to these disciplinary differences can result in abstracts that are not aligned with the norms of their field.

Another reason for ineffective abstracts might be the failure to adequately summarize the key findings and their significance. A well-structured and high-quality abstract is expected to clearly highlight the most important results of the research and explain their implications (Hartley, 2008). However, some authors may either omit these crucial elements or provide too much detail, overwhelming the reader with unnecessary information. This issue is totally apparent when it comes to providing much more words required to write MA theses' and PhD dissertations' abstracts at KRI universities. This issue often arises from a lack of clarity about what the abstract should achieve—serving a concise representation of the entire research work. As Creswell and Creswell (2018) point out, abstracts that lack focus on the key findings and their contributions to the field may fail to engage readers effectively.

Finally, inadequate training in abstract writing seems to be a fundamental issue. Obviously, many graduate and postgraduate programs do not provide sufficient guidance, handbook or practice in writing abstracts, which can leave students ill-prepared to write concise, clear, and impactful summaries of their research. Swales and Feak (2009) argue that without proper, practical training and feedback, all types of students, including postgraduate ones, may struggle to distil their complex research into a succinct abstract that captures the essence of their work.

In summary, the failure to write a good abstract in MA theses and PhD dissertations can be attributed to issues related to structure, language use, content summarization, disciplinary conventions, and inadequate training. Addressing these challenges requires both better understanding of the conventions of academic writing and targeted instruction in abstract writing skills.

Additionally, this paper provides an intensive and comprehensive evaluation of abstracts of MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL at KRI universities. Utilizing a set of validated rubrics, it identifies strengths in how abstracts introduce their titles and state research objective(s) and/or

purpose(s). However, weaknesses were found in the areas of presenting results (products, i.e. M4) and overall coherence with giving unnecessary, irrelevant information.

Providing these findings, future AL researchers should focus on enhancing the clarity and detail in the presentation of their results and ensuring that their abstracts maintain a logical flow throughout. This could involve providing more training in abstract writing or developing more detailed guidelines for students at the postgraduate studies, particularly in the field of AL.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has evaluated the quality of abstracts in MA theses and PhD dissertations in AL from universities in KRI between 2007 and 2021, using a criteria-based approach informed by Hyland's (2000) five-move model. The findings reveal that while many abstracts successfully introduce the research topic and state the objectives, there is a significant need for improvement in areas such as the presentation of the results and the maintenance of coherence throughout the abstract.

A notable proportion of the abstracts were found to include irrelevant information and did not adhere to the recommended word count, which detracts from their overall effectiveness. The descriptive and inferential statistical analyses conducted suggest a strong relationship between different elements of abstract quality, indicating that enhancing one area (e.g., clear introduction 'M1') may positively influence others (e.g., presenting the results 'M4').

The research highlights several key challenges that contribute to the shortcomings observed in the quality of these abstracts. These include; a lack of adherence to the formal elements of academic abstract writing, insufficient clarity in summarizing key findings and their significance, and inadequate training in abstract writing skills. It is also discussed that postgraduate students in AL may struggle with effectively communicating their research due to a lack of guidance on disciplinary conventions and rhetorical styles specific to their research field.

In response to those identified challenges, it is evident that more comprehensive programs and guidelines on abstract writing are essential for graduate and postgraduate students in AL within KRI universities. Besides, these programs should not only focus on the structural components of effective abstract writing but also emphasize key qualities such as conciseness, clarity, and coherence. This recommendation aligns with the study's findings, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to address the current and existing gaps in academic writing instruction.

Additionally, incorporating practical exercises and feedback mechanisms into academic programs can help students better understand and apply the conventions of academic writing.

The implications of this research paper could extend beyond the realm of abstract writing to the broader context of academic research quality in the KRI region. By improving the standards of abstract writing, universities can enhance the accessibility and impact of their academic research. Future research could explore the effectiveness of different training interventions in abstract writing and examine their impact on the overall quality of academic output in the region, through targeted efforts to improve abstract writing skills, it is possible to foster a more rigorous and accessible academic environment that supports the dissemination of high-quality research.

### *A. Recommendations*

The findings from this paper have significant implications for future research in AL within KRI universities. By addressing the weaknesses identified, future AL researchers can improve the quality and impact of their work. Clear and coherent abstracts are essential for ensuring that any research is accessible and its significance is understood and generalized by concerned the academic community/communities.

Secondly, universities, academic departments, and other higher education institutions should offer more training programs, workshops, and seminars, particularly targeting postgraduate students. As the largest group of academic researchers responsible for writing and publishing scholarly work, such as MA these and PhD dissertations, postgraduate students would greatly benefit from enhanced support in developing their research and writing skills in general, and abstract writing, in particular.

In brief, the following two recommendations are highly likely to provide solid, practical resolutions:

a. giving training programs, in which the focus is on abstract writing, emphasizing the importance of clear results presentation and maintaining coherence,
b. developing MA these and PhD dissertation writing guidelines, in which the key elements evaluated in this study are highlighted.

### *B. Suggestions for further research*

The findings of this research paper suggest several avenues for further research. Given the identified deficiencies in the presentation of results, coherence, and adherence to word count standards, future research could focus on the following areas to provide a more comprehensive understanding of abstract writing in academic contexts:

a. Comparative analysis across other disciplines, in which this issue is researched in other disciplines or research areas.
b. Impact of training interventions, in which the impact and significance of training programs are explored to comprehend to what extend researchers across various disciplines would require more training when it comes to abstract writing.
c. Next, longitudinal studies on abstract writing quality could provide insights into how changes in academic training and institutional guidelines influence the quality of abstracts.

By exploring these suggestions, further studies can build on the findings of the current research to enhance understanding of the factors that contribute to effective abstract writing and the development of more targeted strategies to improve academic writing quality in the KRI context and beyond.

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