

A GENRE-BASED ANALYSIS OF METHODOLOGY SECTIONS IN LINGUISTICS RESEARCH ARTICLES PUBLISHED IN PAKISTAN

Asad Hussain

M. Phil Scholar, Dept of Applied Linguistics, GC University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: asadh0132@gmail.com

Inshrah Shahid

M. Phil Scholar, Dept of Applied Linguistics, GC University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: inshrahshahid2@gmail.com

Dr. Hafiz Muhammad Qasim (Corresponding author)

Assistant Professor, Dept of Applied Linguistics, GC University Faisalabad, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: muhammadqasim@gcuf.edu.pk

Abstract

The present study explores the rhetorical move-step structure of English Linguistics research articles published in Higher Education Commission (HEC) recognized Pakistani journals. It outlines macro-structural strategic moves and micro-strategic steps of methodology reporting practices in Pakistani journals, keeping in view the lack of empirical research focused on this important strand of academic writing. The corpus consisted of 30 research articles (from the period 2016–2026), purposively sampled across the three categories of Pakistani journals, namely W, X, and Y. The texts were coded manually following the genre-analytical framework of John Swales (1990, 2004) as modified by Lim (2006) and Peacock (2011) to find out the frequencies of moves, the patterns of moves, and the move thresholds. The results indicate that there was no uniform structure and a significant imbalance in the rhetoric between the publication levels. Pakistani researchers are able to use descriptive moves (Describing the Sample (Move 2), Describing Instrumentation (Move 3), and Describing Procedures (Move 4)), but usually do not include evaluative elements, making Justifying Methodological Choices (Move 5) an optional phenomenon. The findings emphasized the dire need for greater awareness and explicit teaching of rhetorical argumentation among the local research community, to make the research of the Pakistanis more visible and acceptable internationally.

Keywords: *Genre Analysis, A move-step structure, Method section, Research journals from Pakistan, Swalesian model.*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

In modern academic publishing, the Research Article is the highest echelon and most formidable type of paper, and is how academic knowledge is validated and shared. In *Research Genres* (Swales, 2004), these texts are not simply reporting results of empirical activities, but are very organized communicative events that are regulated by the conventions of the discourse community. The Methodology section is a rhetorical location in the complex structure of the Research Article that serves as the engine room, a place where validity is established. The Methodology section is a high-stakes area for scholars in the subject of Linguistics. In the hard sciences, procedures may be standardized and predictable, according to a laboratory protocol, while in Linguistics, there can be qualitative differences, an interpretative structure, and differing interactions with the participants. Thus, the writer needs to manipulate

language effectively in ways that will create a story that is not only accurate and scientific but is compelling and convincing. The study examines the generic expectations and how Pakistani linguists negotiate them to make their way into the international academic discourse.

The theoretical foundation of this study is taken from Genre Analysis, namely the Move-Step model developed by Swales (1990, 2004). This is a functional approach in which a text is broken down into a sequence of functional stages and moves with a communicative function. Bruce (2008) states that the Methodology section is a cognitive genre in which writers must articulate a variety of descriptions of the things done and evaluations of the reasons for doing the things. Once the Moves and Steps are identified by the macro-structure and micro-strategies, respectively, we can decipher the underlying logic of Pakistani research articles. The structure of the Methodology section is not unique, as Lim (2006) and Peacock (2011) point out; it is very dependent upon the disciplinary conventions and cultural contexts. Thus, an analysis of the genre gives the tools to uncover the ways in which the Pakistani authors have structured their empirical world in order to satisfy the requirements of local and international academic gatekeepers.

In the past twenty years, the field of Applied Linguistics in Pakistan has experienced a paradigm shift. The Higher Education Commission (HEC) has been pushing the publication in high-category journals (W, X, and Y) to a greater extent than ever before. This culture of “publish or perish” has forced Pakistani linguists to conform to global standards in their writing. But as Mahmood (2011) noted, such local research articles may have their specific rhetorical features due to the socio-cultural and educational context within Pakistan. In a Non-Inner Circle English context, the Pakistani scholars have to deal with two problems of language proficiency and Genre Knowledge. Research also indicates that local authors can be quite successful in explaining the tools and procedures they use, but not as successful in the more persuasive aspects of genre, like why they chose to use a particular method (Move 5). Moreover, the cultural significance of authority and tradition in Pakistan may have a bearing on the Step level of the text, which may result in a descriptive rather than analytical narration. This study aims to investigate these shades in the light of Pakistan's linguistic journals.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Methodology section, although there are some linguistics journals in Pakistan, like Pakistan Journal of Linguistics and Kashmir Journal of Language Research, is an under-researched area. However, most studies in the local studies conducted so far have either been focused on Introductions or Abstracts (Mahmood, 2011), with little emphasis on how empirical procedures are rhetorically staged. At most institutions, novices are given templates to write a methodology for, for example, the sample, instrumentation, analysis, etc., but are not taught the rhetorical functions of these sections of the methodology. This results in international reviewers viewing methodology sections as mechanical and/or under-reasoned. A descriptive empirical study of the specific Move-Step structure of the Pakistani linguistics research articles is of critical need to offer a better pedagogical guide for the MPhil and PhD students.

1.3 Research Questions

This study revolves around the following research questions:

1. What is the typical rhetorical structure of the Methodology sections in Pakistani linguistics research articles?
2. Which moves are considered obligatory and which are optional in Methodology sections published in Pakistani linguistics journals?

3. What move-sequencing patterns are commonly employed by Pakistani linguistics researchers in Methodology sections?
4. How do these rhetorical strategies reflect the socio-academic context, constraints, and research culture of Pakistan?

1.4 Research Objectives

The main aims of this study are:

1. To investigate the rhetorical move structure of the Methodology sections in linguistics research articles published in HEC-recognized Pakistani journals.
2. To identify the moves employed in these Methodology sections as obligatory, optional, and quasi-obligatory within the Pakistani linguistics discourse community.
3. To examine the patterns, frequency, and sequencing of rhetorical moves to understand how Pakistani authors organize and construct methodological discourse.
4. To explore the extent to which Pakistani authors employ justification and evaluation steps to support and rationalize their methodological choices.

1.5 Significance of the Study

Theoretically, this study is beneficial for the academic community in Pakistan and practically for the teachers. It adds to the corpus of English for specific purposes (ESP) literature as it provides empirical data from a South Asian context and thus puts the Swales model to the test from a different point of view. There is pedagogically, the findings will be a Rhetorical Toolkit for researchers. Scholars can learn to structure and persuade their writing more effectively by comprehending the Moves in successful articles. There is also an institutional impact as it helps HEC-recognized journals to set new guidelines for authors, which can increase the international visibility and impact of Pakistan's linguistics research. This study is limited to thirty Methodology sections of the journals that are recognized by HEC from 2016 to 2026. It is restricted to the field of Applied Linguistics and its subfields to maintain disciplinary uniformity. Only the Genre-Based Move-Step structure is analyzed in this study.

2.0 Literature Review

The concept of Moves and Steps was introduced by Swales (1990) and it revolutionized the study of academic discourse in a systematic way. According to the classic genre analysis work of Swales, a move is a unit of text that performs a particular communicative function. Although his initial Create a Research Space (CARS) model was used for the Introduction, it laid the foundations for all academic writing, which is a social and goal-oriented process. Swales (2004) revised his model in *Research Genres: Explorations and Applications*, recognizing that the Methodology section is an "enclosed" area where researchers must first secure the audience's acceptance of their research without being attacked by them for their skepticism. He claimed that it's not just a list of procedures, but a genre of cognition, and that the author has to position himself as a professional in a discourse community. The historical period marked a fundamental change in the conception of methodology sections, in which they were no longer seen as purely descriptive and were made rhetorically active.

As genre theory developed, researchers started to look into how genres differ across disciplines in their application of the methodology section. Lim (2006) performed a groundbreaking study of Management research papers to discover five different moves. His research was important in that it pointed out the Justification move in social sciences and showed that not only is it important to say what one has done, but also to explain why one has done it in one way instead of another. This disciplinary emphasis was continued by Bruce (2008), who investigated the cognitive

structures in methods sections. Bruce pointed out that the methodology writing in Applied Linguistics sometimes oscillates between two types of writing: Procedural Recounts (chronological actions) and Analytical Descriptions (defining the framework of the research). Soon, Peacock (2011) did a large-scale interdisciplinary research on eight fields. His research showed that Linguistics methodologies emphasized description of human subjects and tools for data collection more than hard sciences, which tend to emphasize materials and lab environments. In the context of Pakistani linguistics research, qualitative data collection often relies on semi-structured smartphone-recorded interviews, which are subsequently transcribed, translated, and analyzed using thematic analysis techniques (Muneeb et al., 2024).

While the use of genre analysis started in the Pakistani academic context with the work of Mahmood (2011), it was not until the publication of Sadiq et al. (2014) that it was applied to the field. While conducting his research in the study of Pakistani Linguistics research articles, Mahmood noted that local researchers mostly follow the macro-structural moves prescribed by Swales, while there are variations in the step level. He added that Pakistani writers are the ones who prefer a descriptive or traditional style, which he said was due to the educational tradition in Pakistan and the norms of the British scholars in the subcontinent. In this period, Zubair (2015) emphasized the socio-cultural problem of writing methodologies in Pakistan. Although it doesn't fall into the category of move analysis per se, her work was essential to illuminate why some moves were lacking or underutilized in the local linguistics journals. She claimed that cultural sensitivities and institutional limitations often result in a sanitized version of research methodology in which the messiness of field research is avoided.

In the mid-2010s, there was a shift towards incorporating genre analysis with other linguistic elements to give a more comprehensive picture of the text. Pramoolsook, Li and Wang (2015) examined methodology sections in Applied Linguistics and concluded that the success of the Move was closely related to the skill with which the author was able to direct the reader through the move by utilizing Metadiscourse. They noted that in the field of Linguistics, the Data Analysis move is often the most complicated one, and involves several steps to describe the interpretive procedures. In the local context, Nasir and Rashid (2021) studied the evaluative aspect of Pakistani academic writing. They concluded that Pakistani authors may be strong in Descriptive Moves and do not demonstrate the Evaluative Voice in the Justification move. They discovered that local writers are generally cautious and impersonal; that their writing style does not employ assertive rhetorical techniques found in international high-impact journals. The findings of this research highlighted the pedagogical gap in the genre pedagogy used in Pakistani universities.

Researchers have targeted only the Methods section of articles in HEC-approved journals during the last few years. Aslam and Mehmood (2022) gave a detailed move analysis of methodology sections in Pakistani journals. They found their results, that the local norm is a four-move structure, but they also maintained that move 4, Justifying Methodological Choices, is also rare or optional in the Pakistani context. The methodology is presented not as a defense of argument, but as a report of action, which implies that the local discourse community sees this methodology as a report of action, not an argumentative defense. Khalid et al. (2025) analyzed the schematic structure of Introduction and Methodology chapters in MPhil Linguistics theses at Government College University Faisalabad, using the SFL genre-based approach and Generic Structure Potential (GSP). The study identified obligatory stages in both chapters and highlighted “Establishing Local Context” as a culturally significant feature of Pakistani academic writing.

However, the study was limited to a small corpus from one institution. Aashiq et al. (2025) explored the narrative structure and communicative functions of Goodbye, Mr. Chips using the SFL narrative genre framework. The findings showed a chronological narrative pattern similar to recount and narrative genres, with attitudinal evaluations reflecting nostalgia, grief, and pride. The study's strength lies in its pedagogical implications, though it was limited to a single novella and one analytical perspective.

Lastly, Shabbir and Ahmed (2023) conducted a corpus-based study on academic discourse in Pakistan. Their observations focused on different parts of the RA, but they found a Fossilized Genre pattern when analyzing the methodology part; local writers are very much dependent on the use of the standardized templates. As we venture into 2026, their study indicates that the rhetorical strategies are becoming more fluid and dynamic, and that Pakistani researchers need to adopt more such strategies and break out of these rigid rhetorical frameworks to gain an understanding of this concept, which they have named 'Genre-Awareness. As seen in the evolution of genre studies from Swales' (1990) models to Aslam and Mehmood's (2022) local findings, our understanding of the methodology section has progressed over a period of time. There is, however, a gap in recent, large-scale corpus studies that focus specifically on the Applied Linguistics subfields in the existing (2024–2026) HEC journal landscape. The majority of the studies that are currently available are either cross-disciplinary or are on the research articles as a whole. This research article fills this gap by conducting a targeted move-step analysis of 30 recent methodology sections that will give a contemporary view of the linguistic discourse community of Pakistan.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the theoretical framework of the Socio-Rhetorical view of Genre, which was mainly developed in the English for Specific Purposes (ESP) field. Contrary to the common view of genre as a formalistic template or a set of rules, this theory is based on an understanding of text as a social construct. Genre, on the contrary, is treated as a communicative event that is staged and ends with the achievement of a goal, as Swales (1990) did and later developed in his 2004 book. The Methodology section is no longer a simple listing of procedures: it is a rhetorical act in which the author must meet the expectations of the gatekeepers, like peer reviewers and editors. The theory is based on the premise that members of a discourse community, as in this case, Pakistani linguists, have some set of communicative purposes, and the communicative purposes determine the structure of the Moves in the text. The main analytical instrument applied in this study is the Move-Step Model. Such a model enables the researcher to break a text down into its functional units:

Move: A set of texts that has a communicative function at a high level.

Step: Second Level Text: a specific strategy for implementing a Move.

There are two types of moves to classify as a result of Swales' (2004) corpus analysis:

- i. Obligatory Moves: Occur in 100% of the articles.
- ii. Quasi-Obligatory Moves: Includes 60%–99% of the articles.
- iii. Optional Moves: Less than 60% of the articles include optional moves.

This classification is particularly important because it will show you how important and how optional the points are in the methodology part of the study, as decided by the Pakistani linguistics community. The taxonomy used for the Methodology section is the taxonomy developed by Lim (2006) and Peacock (2011) that refined Swales' original taxonomy

on the CARS model for introductions. Five basic moves were clearly identified as being particularly relevant to social science and linguistic research.

Move 1: Describing the Research Design. This move sets the theoretical or philosophical paradigm of the study, for example, Qualitative, Quantitative, or Mixed Methods. It lays the conceptual groundwork for the empirical study.

Move 2: Describing the Sample of participants and data. This move is to establish the who or what of the study.

Phase 1: Demographic and context description of participants.

Step 2: Describing the sampling criteria for how they were selected.

Step 3: Describing the data means what a corpus of text is.

Move 3: The description of the Instrumentation. This is when data are manually coded and software such as NVivo is used.

Move 4: Describing procedures of data collection & analysis. Generally, the most Material-heavy move. It describes sequentially the research steps the researcher took.

Step 1: Description of the steps in the data collection processes.

Step 2: Describing data analysis steps that show how the raw data were transformed into findings.

Move 5: Justifying methodological decisions. This is the best argument. In this, the author argues for the appropriateness of a certain method or tool. These are key steps to the development of Epistemic Authority as discussed by Bruce (2008).

One of the important theoretical contributions that can be added to this research is the theory of Cognitive Genres proposed by Bruce (2008). Bruce believes that there are different cognitive patterns used by authors in the macro-structure of a Move. These patterns typically are procedural, recounting the chronological sequence of events for a story, or technical, describing some non-chronological sequence of events for how things are.

This framework is utilized in this study to find out whether the authors of the Pakistani papers on linguistics prefer to tell the readers about what they did rather than about their technical frameworks, as this information helps provide a better understanding of the rhetorical colour of the Pakistani papers in linguistics. Finally, the theoretical approach is based on the conceptualization of genres as culturally situated. Like Mahmood (2011), this study draws attention to the fact that a research article's global move may be English-dominant, but the detail, i.e., the Steps themselves and how they are realized, will have an impact from the Pakistani Academic Context. This involves the heritage of British academic English affecting the formalization of the genre, and the HEC's regulatory influence in establishing a template-driven method of writing and potentially social hierarchies that shape how the author justifies his/her work in front of the authority figures in the field.

3.0 Research Methodology

The study was conducted using a mixed-methods genre analytical approach. The research type used in this study is a mixed-methods genre analytical approach, with the main method used being a Genre Analysis method. Also, A quantitative component was also included through purposive corpus sampling, so that fine-grained analysis of the Steps in the Moves of methodology sections could be conducted, as the objective was to detect the complex Steps. This is similar to the Swales tradition (1990, 2004) in which it is not only the statistical frequency of utterances that is discussed, but also the rhetorical structure and communicative function of the

linguistic choices in the utterances. A hand-coded sample provides the researcher a chance to capture all of the nuances of the text that may not be captured in a larger automatic study.

3.1 The selection and stratification of the corpus. This study's corpus consists of thirty methodology sections that are taken from the linguistics research papers published in journals that are recognized by HEC. A Stratified Purposive Sampling technique was used to ensure a variety of texts and to allow for possible differences in the editorial standards. Based on the HEC journal ranking, the corpus has been divided into three classes, W, X, and Y, which represent the pyramid of academic publications in Pakistan.

Table 3.1: The Stratified Corpus Profile

Corpus ID	HEC Category	Journal Name	Subfield of linguistics
W 1-5	W	<i>Pakistan Journal of Linguistics</i>	Corpus Linguistics
W 6-10	W	<i>Journal of Social Sciences</i>	CDA
X 11-15	X	<i>International Journal of Linguistics</i>	Sociolinguistics
X 16-20	X	<i>International Journal of Linguistics</i>	ELT
Y 21-25	Y	<i>JALT</i>	Pragmatics
Y 26-30	Y	<i>Pakistan Social Sciences</i>	Forensic Linguistics

3.2 Criteria for Selection:

1. Nationality: All authors need to have an affiliation with a Pakistani university.
2. Discipline: Applied Linguistics and its subfields would be the only ones accepted for articles.
3. Publication year: Articles published in the last decade, 2016-2026.
4. Article length criteria: Only methodological sections are extracted from articles.

The relationship between the words of the instrument is shown in the following table:

The analytical tool employed in this study is an integrated taxonomy based on Swales (2004), Lim (2006), and Peacock (2011). This taxonomy was selected because it is particularly relevant to the Methods section of the social sciences.

3.3 The Coding Framework:

Move 1: Describing the Research Design (Steps: Philosophical stance, approach type).

Move 2: Describing the Sample/Participants (Steps: Demographics, sampling technique, context).

Move 3: Describing Instrumentation (Steps: Tool description, tool validation/piloting)

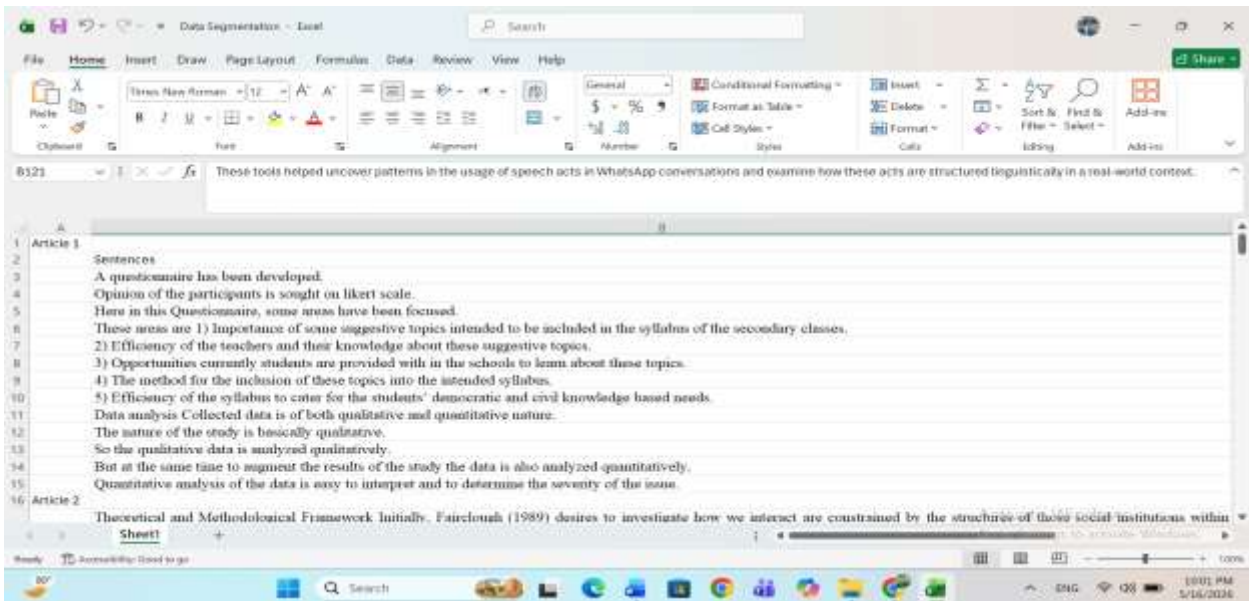
Move 4: Describing Procedures of Data Collection & Data Analysis (Steps: Chronological steps, software used).

Move 5: Justifying Methodological Choices (Steps: Defending choices, acknowledging limitations).

4.0 Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis was carried out in a recursive four-stage process to achieve maximum qualitative and quantitative depth:

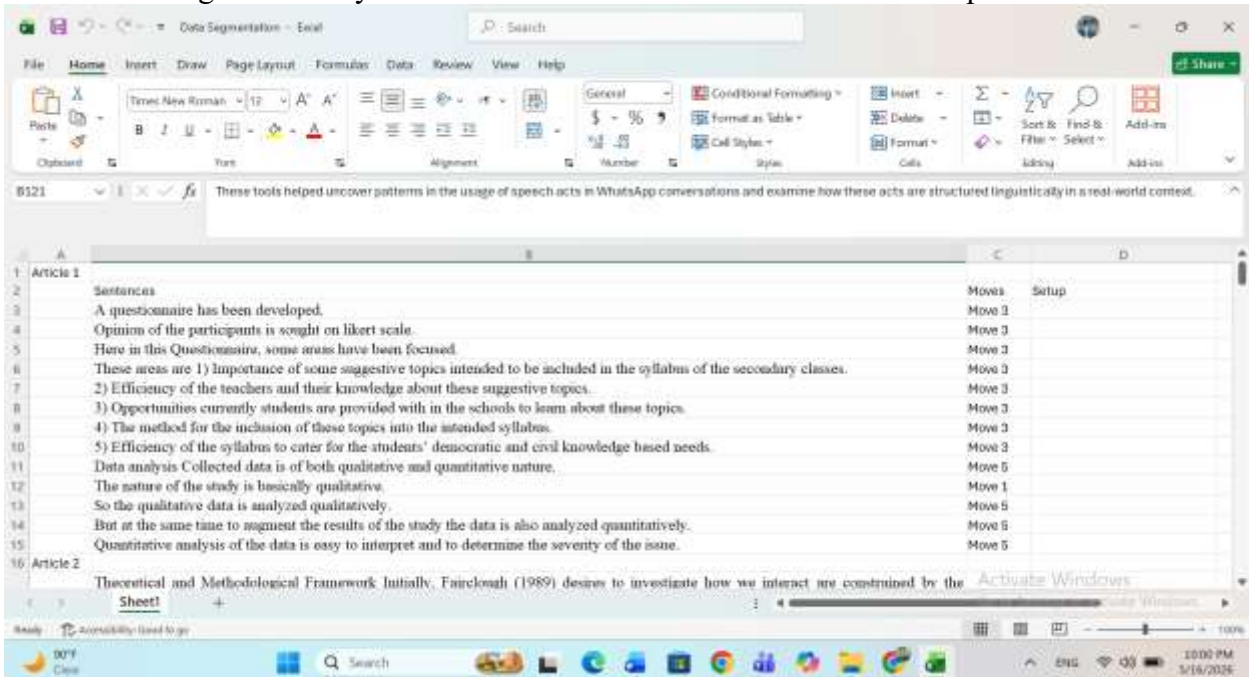
Stage 1: Digitization and Segmentation: Methodology sections of the research articles were extracted and transferred to plain text format. Each section was then broken down into sentences, the fundamental section to be analyzed for Move identification.



Stage 2: Manual Coding: Using the taxonomy given above, each sentence was manually assigned a Move and a Step. This step was done by close reading to identify the communicative intention of each segment.

Inter-Rater Reliability Statement

To ensure coding reliability and eliminate subjective bias during the manual move-step identification, an inter-rater reliability procedure was executed. A second evaluator from the Department of Applied Linguistics at GCUF independently coded a stratified sample representing 10% of the entire corpus. The statistical agreement between the two coders was calculated using Cohen's Kappa, yielding a high-reliability coefficient of 0.84, which confirmed excellent coding consistency before the final distribution metrics were compiled.



Stage 3: Categorization of Moves: After conducting the frequency analysis in the 30 articles, the moves were classified as:

Obligatory: Occurred in all 30 articles (100%).

Quasi-Obligatory: Occurred in 18 to 29 articles (60%-99%).

An optional move: occurred in 17 or fewer articles ($\leq 60\%$).

Table 4.1: Distribution of Moves across HEC Categories

Move	Functional Description	W	X	Y	Frequency	Status
Move 1	Describing Research Design	5	5	5	100 %	Obligatory
Move 2	Describing Sample and Participants	3	5	5	83 %	Quasi-Obligatory
Move 3	Describing Instrumentation	5	5	3	83 %	Quasi-Obligatory
Move 4	Describing Procedures	5	5	5	100 %	Obligatory
Move 5	Justifying Methodological Choices	5	5	0	50 %	Optional

Stage 4: Qualitative Synthesis: The researcher looked for Move cycles in the order in which moves appear and step variation that how W-category articles might differ in detail compared to Y-category articles. For example, one article contains the following move order: M3 → M5 → M1 → M5

5.0 Results and Discussion

5.1 Macro-Structural Move Distribution

Based on the analysis of the thirty methodology sections, there is an interesting variation in terms of rhetorical style within the different tiers of the HEC journal. All articles take a general trajectory, but the length and elaboration of the rhetorical moves are determined largely by the tier in which they are published.

Table 5.1: Normalized Move Distribution Profiles Across the Thirty Articles

Corpus Stratum	M1: Design (%)	M2: Sample (%)	M3: Tools (%)	M4: Procedure (%)	M5: Justification (%)	Total Sentences (N)
W-Category (A1-A10)	24.5%	5.5%	31.0%	18.0%	21.0%	420
X-Category (A11-A20)	18.5%	18.5%	29.0%	22.5%	11.5%	380
Y-Category (A21-A30)	18.0%	24.5%	13.5%	33.0%	1.0%	310

5.2 Rhetorical Moves: Critical Evaluation

5.2.1 Move 1: Describing the Research Design

The realization of Move 1 shows distinct differences in the publications. In the W-category sub-corpus, Move 1 is deliberately worked out and is often expressed in the form of explicit statements of a philosophical or epistemological paradigm. The authors in this level do not just

describe their methodology, but develop an academic argument, stating the position they take with regard to a particular constructivist, interpretivist, or positivist perspective.

On the other hand, when the journal category gets to the Y, Move 1 is either completely missing or is just loosely included at the end of the Introduction. This structural truncation seems to reflect a generic preference among lower-tier authors to quickly dive into the physical components of data management. This structural tendency is well in line with the cross-disciplinary claims made already by Mahmood (2011), who noted that in Pakistan, the more competitive the venue, the more likely it is to approach the text theoretically, while the less competitive venues appear to avoid such theoretical approaches and focus on the unmediated procedural chronicles.

5.2.2 Move 2 & Move 3: The Empirical Core

The functional nucleus of the analyzed Pakistani methodology sections is Move 2 (Describing Sample and Participants) and Move 3 (Describing Instrumentation). The moves were successful, with almost all levels represented with dense demographic documentation and complete lists of tools. The profile of the human participants (Move 2, Step 1) was generally strong across the board, but a strong qualitative split emerged at the sampling criteria stage (Move 2, Step 2).

Only X-category articles and texts categorised as W and Y routinely defend their sampling methods, the latter treating it as an unargued event. The use of extremely large amounts of structural space for Move 2 and Move 3 in the corpus shows that the Pakistani linguistics discourse community values framing of the participants greatly. The result builds upon Peacock's (2011) basic research, which showed that Applied Linguistics is a very participative discipline, and that the empirical validity of studies is clearly related to demographic transparency.

5.2.3 Move 4: Procedural Recounting

Move 4 (Describing Procedures) had the highest number of sentences and word density in the entire thirty articles. Pakistani authors are very competent in describing the physical operations in detail, step by step. The real difference, though, is when Step 2 (Data Analysis Procedures) is actually performed. W category methodologies make explicit the processes of coding, theme generation, and interpretive mechanics iteratively.

Y-category articles, by contrast, often lack an outline of the actual data processing stage altogether, and often data collection is the final step – the processing is not explained sufficiently. The analytical process is constructed as a given aspect of the collection and is not characterized as a strict and explicit interpretive phase.

5.2.4 Move 5: The Justification Deficit

The distribution of Move 5 (Justifying Methodological Choices) shows the most extreme rhetorical split in the study. Move 5 occurred, less frequently in the X category and absent in the Y category, although it has been justified by the W tier authors and is acceptable for their limitations.

This is a total lack, which is indicative of the fact that lower-level domestic journals see the methodology as a set of proven facts that don't need to be rhetorically defended. This confirms the results of Aslam and Mehmood (2022), where they found that active methodological defense is still a rare phenomenon in the mainstream Pakistani academic writings, and is optional.

5.3 Discussion: Theorizing the Local Rhetorical Logic

It is observed from Table 5.1 that statistical frequencies of the methodologies in linguistics do not reflect the rhetorical practices of Pakistani linguistics research; rather, there are significant socio-academic and cultural tendencies. The overuse of descriptive moves (Moves 2, 3, and 4) in

comparison to evaluative moves (Moves 1 and 5) is deeply rooted in a positivist perspective. The Pakistani researchers are writing as an "objective reporter of events," not as an active rhetorician who claims their research design is valid. This can be understood with the help of the Context of Culture, which Swales (2004) and Halliday (1993) define. Traditionally, in the Pakistani Higher Education system, academic writing pedagogy has focused on the scientific stance of detachment and followed a template. The learners are carefully taught what they should report, but are not taught how to defend their strategic decisions very well. This institutionalization establishes a different rhetorical sophistication ordering. Authors who publish in W-category journals demonstrate an awareness of the genre expectations of the global discourse community and intentionally use Move 1 and Move 5 to "dialogue" with the rest of the global discourse community. Y-category texts, on the other hand, are fully template-driven and are more of a formulaic list of actions than an academic argument. This structural gap shows the important pedagogical gap in local university training. Novice scholars are regularly assigned rigid models for the construction of a thesis, but they are rarely trained in the critical rhetorical abilities they need to perform Moves 1 and 5 successfully.

In addition, the lack of rhetorical cycling in the texts (0-0-0-0) in all thirty articles shows a very conservative approach to the genre, in which the texts are structurally linear. A linear fossilization suggests that local writers treat the methodology part of their texts as not negotiable and as a template. The findings of Shabbir and Ahmed (2023) that academic prose in Pakistan is formulaic and structurally uniform align well with this structural pattern. Last but not least, the general absence of Move 5 can be explained by the perspective of Zubair (2015), which is a sociolinguistic approach. In an educational society that has a strong tradition and a high status in the academic hierarchy, offering a defense of a method is sometimes considered redundant if the method is a copy of an established method. What can be called Authority-Based Validity is a common method used by Pakistani linguists. When an important Western scholar applies a particular analytical framework or tool, then local writers will take the position that using it in the local text is "pre-validated" and particular justifications will not be required for any given instance. In conclusion, it is found that although Pakistani linguists are good at reporting data at the macro level, they are not strong in the evaluative steps of the genre. The academic ecosystem in Pakistan needs to move from procedural reporting to rhetorical argumentation to enhance the impact of local research on the international arena.

6.0 Conclusion

This study analyzed the Methodology sections of thirty articles from the English Linguistics field published in HEC-recognized journals of Pakistan during 2016-2026 from a genre analysis perspective. The study examined the structural move-step patterns, the frequency of rhetorical choices, and the sequencing of moves in local academic writing using a stratified sampling method across W, X, and Y category journals. This investigation of the structure was directed by the classic Swales (1990, 2004) Move Step Model, with the support of the more specific taxonomies of Lim (2006) and Peacock (2011). The empirical results show that the rhetorical structure of methodology writing in the Pakistani linguistics journals is mainly descriptive compliance without any analytical or persuasive justification. Pakistani researchers have been able to describe Move 2 (Describing the Sample/Participants), Move 3 (Describing Instrumentation), and Move 4 (Describing Procedures) in a successful and systematic way, but they have failed to describe various evaluative parameters of the genre. Move 5 (Justifying

Methodological Choices) is still exclusively a rhetorical move, with 50% of the selected corpus containing the move and none of the Y-category texts containing it. In addition, there is a widespread structural linearity found throughout the texts, which reflects the rigid approach to academic writing in the local research community by creating a template-like framework.

The absence of evaluation moves and justification steps in a systematic manner has serious consequences for the representation of linguistic scholarship from Pakistan in the international academic world. Local writers do not defend their methods as research facts (Move 5), thereby setting up a "rhetorical gap" that is often read by the international peer reviewers as a lack of methodological depth or conceptual argument. This description can be traced back to the "Context of Culture" in the university environment in Pakistan. Often, a cultural belief in traditional academic norms and respect for a Western authority results in the researcher assuming that their procedures are justified and that it is unnecessary or superfluous to justify them. The quantitative production of research is thus successfully achieved with the help of the publication law; however, the domestic higher education system has unwittingly contributed to the emergence of a formulaic and conservative linguistic style that hinders the dynamism of rhetoric and impacts on the international dissemination of research.

Although this investigation provides important fine-grained analyses of macro and micro rhetorical structures within local methodology sections, certain limitations must be recognized to inform future research. First, this study did not focus on other linguistic systems like interpersonal metadiscourse markers or systemic functional linguistics (SFL) meta-functions, which might have been complementary to the move-step approach taken. Secondly, the current corpus was restricted to the discipline of Applied Linguistics and its subfields, so the results obtained do not represent the hard sciences or other soft sciences published in Pakistan.

Future research would benefit from a large-scale, diachronic corpus study that spans a time period of several decades in order to gather enough data to assess whether rhetorical strategies are becoming more fluid over time. More besides, the combination of multi-metafunctional SFL analyses (which would include not only transitivity but also mood and thematic progression) would offer a very full, multi-dimensional picture of how the grammar of the text is used explicitly to convey these rhetorical moves. Finally, a comparative study of the linguistic features of Pakistani English academic writing with those of other South Asian and inner circle international academic papers would shed light on the distinctive sociolinguistic features of Pakistani English academic prose.

References

- Aashiq, M., Sarwar, M., & Qasim, H. M. (2025). Structural Patterns and Communicative Functions in Goodbye Mr. Chips: A Genre-Based Analysis. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 9(3), 10-24.
- Alamri, B. M. (2017). *Connecting genre-based and corpus-driven approaches in research articles: A comparative study of moves and lexical bundles in Saudi and international journals* (Doctoral dissertation, The University of New Mexico).
- Annuai, W., & Wannaruk, A. (2013). A move-based analysis of the conclusion sections of research articles published in international and Thai journals. *3L; Language, Linguistics and Literature, The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, 19(2), 53–63.
- Aslam, I., & Mehmood, A. (2014). Genre analysis of the conclusion sections of Pakistani research articles in natural and social sciences. *Journal of Natural Sciences Research*, 4(22), 106-113.

- Biber et al. (2007). *Discourse on the Move: Using Corpus Analysis to Describe Discourse Structure*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing, 290 ISBN 978-90272-2302-9.
- Brett, P. (1994). A genre analysis of the results section of sociology articles, *English for Specific Purposes*, 13(1), 47–59.
- Bruce, I. (2008). Cognitive genre structures in Methods sections of research articles: A corpus study. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 7(1), 38-53.
- Cotos, E. et al. (2015). Furthering and applying move/step constructs: Technology-driven marshalling of Swales' genre theory for EAP pedagogy. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 19, 52-72.
- Halliday, M. A. K., & Matthiessen, C. M. (2014). *An introduction to functional grammar* (4th ed.). Routledge.
- Khalid, M., Khalid, A., & Qasim, H. M. (2025). ANALYZING SCHEMATIC STRUCTURE IN MPhil LINGUISTICS THESES AT GCUF: AN SFL GENRE-BASED APPROACH. *Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT)*, 8(2), 1498-1511.
- Lim, J. M. H. (2006). Method sections of management research articles: A genre-analytical study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 25(3), 282-315.
- Mahmood, M. A. (2011). A genre analysis of the introductions of Pakistani research articles in the field of linguistics. *Language in India*, 11(5), 112-128.
- Martin, J. R., & Rose, D. (2008). *Genre relations: Mapping culture*. Equinox.
- Muneeb, M., Fatima, A., Shoaib, M., & Amin, T. (2024). Exploring code-switching in EFL classes at ULM: A comparative study of teachers' and learners' motivations. *Journal of Asian Development Studies*, 13(2), 1678–1690.
- Nodoushan, M., & Khakbaz, N. (2011). Theses 'Discussion' sections: A structural move analysis. *International Journal of Language Studies*, 5(3), 111-132.
- Paltridge, B. (1994). Genre analysis and the identification of textual boundaries. *Applied Linguistics*, 15 (3), 288–299.
- Peacock, M. (2011). The Structure of the Method Section in Research Articles Across Eight Disciplines. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 7(2), 99-124.
- Pramoolsook, I., Li, Q., & Wang, S. (2015). Genre analysis of the method sections in applied linguistics research articles. *The Asian ESP Journal*, 11(2), 6-28.
- Rasmeenin, C. (2006). A structural move analysis of MA thesis discussion sections in applied linguistics. Unpublished MA thesis, Mahidol University.
- Shehzad, W. & Abbas, A. (2016). Genre Analysis of Generic Section Headings of MPhil Theses' Introduction Section of Linguistics and Literature. *NUML Journal of Critical Inquiry*. 14(1), 67-86.
- Sinclair, J. (2005). Corpus and Text -Basic Principles. In M. Wynne (Ed.), *Developing Linguistic Corpora: A Guide to Good Practice*. (pp. 1-16.) Oxford: Oxbow Books.
- Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Swales, J. M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University Press.