

ANALYZING SCHEMATIC STRUCTURE IN MPhil LINGUISTICS THESES AT GCUF: AN SFL GENRE-BASED APPROACH

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Abstract

*This study used an SFL genre-based approach to analyze the schematic structure (GSP) of Introduction and Methodology chapters in MPhil Linguistics theses at Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF), Pakistan. Addressing a gap in context-specific genre analysis, the research identified and described schematic stages, determined their obligatory or optional status based on frequency, and analyzed typical sequencing patterns in a corpus of eight theses (analyzing seven traditional Introduction chapters). Findings revealed a core set of mandatory stages in traditional Introduction chapters, including General Topic/Field Background, Specific Area/Literature Background, Establishing Local Context, Identifying the Research Problem/Gap, Stating Research Aims/Objectives, and Establishing Significance, reflecting rhetorical functions aimed at establishing research space and purpose. Methodology chapters also exhibited an obligatory core of stages covering Research Design/Type, Sample & Sampling, Data Source Description, Instruments/Tools, and Data Analysis Procedure (General), reflecting procedural reporting. The required presence of Establishing Local Context in Introductions is highlighted as a notable local feature. Typical sequences in both sections aligned with genre functions and general academic norms. These results provide a valuable pedagogical "blueprint" for GCUF students and supervisors, directly informing context-specific Genre-Based Pedagogy. **This empirically grounded framework offers practical guidance for teaching and learning these crucial thesis sections within the GCUF context, potentially improving thesis quality and supporting supervisors.** The study also contributes to SFL/GSP theory by illustrating how cultural context influences local genre structures.*

Keywords: Academic Writing, Genre Analysis, Genre-Based Pedagogy, Generic Structure Potential (GSP), Introduction, Methodology, Pakistan, Schematic Structure, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), Thesis Structure.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the study

Completing a postgraduate thesis requires navigating established academic writing conventions, crucial for presenting research effectively (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). A thesis functions as a specific genre with underlying organizational patterns helpful for both writers and evaluators. This study approaches thesis writing through the lens of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and genre theory. Given the importance of genre conventions, Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) provides a robust framework for analyzing these structures. Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) analyzes purposeful language use (Halliday, 1994). Within SFL, a genre is a recurring social process with a goal, realized through predictable functional stages known as Schematic Structure or Generic Structure Potential (GSP) (Hasan, 1984; Martin, 1992). Analyzing GSP reveals the model of a text type. Academic theses

possess GSP to present research, link to knowledge, and persuade the community. Research has examined academic writing structure, including research article introductions (Swales, 1990) and thesis organization (Kwan, 2006), showing structural variations across text type, discipline, and institution. Studies applying SFL to Pakistani academic writing also find local variations. However, there is a gap: no study specifically applies detailed SFL GSP analysis to MPhil Linguistics thesis Introduction and Methodology sections within a specific Pakistani institution like Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF). Understanding these local structural patterns is essential for accurately describing writing practices and providing clear pedagogical guidance at GCUF.

1.2 Research Statement

While genre analysis has been applied to academic texts, no study has specifically examined the schematic structure of MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF using an SFL approach. This study addresses the identified gap by employing an SFL genre-based approach to analyze the schematic structure of Introduction and Methodology sections of MPhil Linguistics theses written at GCUF. The research aims to describe the conventional functional stages and their typical organization in these thesis parts within this specific setting.

1.3 Objectives of Research

This study seeks to achieve the following goals:

- To identify and describe the schematic stages that make up the Introduction and Methodology sections of MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF.
- To determine which of these identified schematic stages are usually present (core) and which are less common (optional) in these sections.
- To analyze the typical order in which schematic stages appear within the Introduction and Methodology sections and compare these patterns to structural findings from other studies on academic texts.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on these objectives, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What are the schematic stages found in the Introduction and Methodology sections of MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF, and what function does each stage serve?
2. Which of these identified schematic stages are obligatory and which are optional in the Introduction and Methodology sections of this corpus?
3. What are the typical sequences of schematic stages within the Introduction and Methodology sections, and how do these sequences compare to structural patterns found in previous academic genre research?

1.5 Delimitation

The scope of this study is limited to analyzing the schematic structure only within the Introduction and Methodology sections of MPhil Linguistics theses submitted to Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF). The corpus, limited to eight available MPhil theses from this institution, was primarily selected based on accessibility constraints in the university library, without restriction to a specific timeframe. Consequently, findings describe the generic organization of these two sections and do not represent the entire MPhil thesis genre or necessarily apply to theses in other subjects, degree levels, or universities without further comparative research. The analysis focuses on identifying major functional parts (schematic structure) and does not include detailed analysis of specific lexicogrammatical features within each stage.

1.6 Significance of Research

The findings are valuable for several groups. For GCUF MPhil Linguistics students and supervisors, this research provides practical, evidence-based insights into expected thesis

section structure, clarifying writing and supporting targeted feedback. Results can inform tailored Genre-Based Pedagogy practices, potentially improving thesis quality. Theoretically, the study contributes to SFL genre analysis by providing a detailed GSP analysis in an understudied context, enhancing understanding of how academic genres are instantiated locally and potentially vary across settings. **Furthermore, the findings may offer relevant insights into understanding genre practices at other similar institutions in Pakistan, potentially prompting comparative research.**

2. Literature Review

This chapter reviews the existing body of literature pertinent to the current study, which aims to analyze the schematic structure of MPhil Linguistics theses at Government College University Faisalabad (GCUF) using a Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) genre-based approach, with a view to informing Genre-Based Pedagogy (GBP). The review is organized into several key sections. It begins by establishing the theoretical foundations of genre theory, particularly from an SFL perspective, and its application to genre analysis. Subsequently, it examines previous research on the generic structures of academic texts, with a specific focus on theses and dissertations, detailing common findings for key sections such as Introductions, **Methodology sections**, and Discussions. The chapter then explores the principles and practices of Genre-Based Pedagogy and its relevance to academic writing instruction. Finally, it synthesizes the reviewed literature to identify the existing research gap that the present study seeks to address.

2.1 Theoretical Foundations: Genre and Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)

Understanding academic writing as a social practice necessitates a robust theoretical framework that can account for the relationship between text, context, and purpose. Genre theory, particularly as conceptualized within Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), provides such a framework.

2.1.1 Conceptualizing Genre

Genre, in this context, transcends its traditional literary sense. From an SFL perspective, a genre is defined as a "staged, goal-oriented social process" (Martin & Rose, 2007 p.6; Eggins, 2004). This definition emphasizes that genres are purposeful activities enacted through language, characterized by a series of functional stages or moves that participants undertake to achieve a particular social goal. As Swales (1990) highlights in his influential work, genres are communicative events recognized by a discourse community, possessing shared communicative purposes and conventionalized structures and linguistic features. Thus, genres are not static textual templates but dynamic social constructs that evolve with the practices of their user communities (Bazerman, 1997).

2.1.2 Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) as an Analytic Framework

SFL, originating from the work of Michael Halliday (e.g., Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014), provides the linguistic tools to analyze how language works within these genres to achieve social purposes. SFL views language as a resource for making meaning in context. A central tenet is the connection between the context of culture (which shapes genres) and the context of situation (which shapes registers). The context of situation is described through three register variables:

- Field: the nature of the social action.
- Tenor: the participants and their relationships.
- Mode: the role and channel of language.

These register variables systematically influence the lexicogrammatical (vocabulary and grammar) choices made by language users (Halliday & Hasan, 1989). Crucially for genre

analysis, SFL posits that genres are realized through characteristic patterns of register configurations, which, in turn, are realized through specific lexicogrammatical choices. The overall purposeful organization of a genre is its schematic structure (or generic structure), comprising obligatory and optional stages or moves that guide the text towards its social goal (Martin & Rose 2008). Analyzing this schematic structure is a core component of SFL-informed genre analysis.

2.2 Genre Analysis of Academic Texts and Thesis Writing

The application of genre analysis to academic texts has been extensive, driven by the need to demystify academic discourse and support student writers (Hyland, 2004; Flowerdew, 2002). The academic thesis or dissertation represents a particularly high-stakes and complex macro-genre (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). It is the culmination of postgraduate study, demonstrating a student's ability to conduct independent research and contribute to their field. Given its complexity and gatekeeping function, understanding its generic conventions is crucial for student success.

2.2.1 Previous Research on Thesis Structures

Numerous studies have investigated the schematic structures of various sections within theses and dissertations across different disciplines.

• **Introductions:**

The structure of research article and thesis introductions has received considerable attention. The most influential model is Swales' (1990, 2004) Create-A-Research-Space (CARS) model, which typically involves three moves: Establishing a Territory (Move 1), Establishing a Niche (Move 2), and Occupying the Niche (Move 3). Subsequent research has validated, refined, and adapted the CARS model across various disciplines and cultural contexts (e.g., Samraj, 2002; Ozturk, 2007), including SFL-informed analyses that examine how these moves are lexicogrammatical realized (Mamac & Bangga, 2022)."

• **Methodology Sections:** Methodology sections (or chapters) describe and justify the research design. Their structure tends to be more discipline-specific than introductions (Paltridge, 2002; Bruce, 2008). Common stages identified in studies include describing the research paradigm, participants/corpus, data collection instruments and procedures, and data analysis methods. The language often emphasizes objectivity and procedural clarity.

• **Discussion Sections:** Discussion sections are rhetorically complex, as they interpret findings, make claims, relate results to existing literature, and highlight the study's contribution. Research has identified common moves such as restating principal findings, comparing results with previous studies, interpreting results, accounting for unexpected outcomes, acknowledging limitations, making recommendations, and suggesting areas for future research (e.g., Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Peacock, 2002; Yang & Allison, 2003). The linguistic realization of these moves often involves careful use of hedging and boosting (Hyland, 1998).

2.2.2 Contextual Considerations in Genre Analysis

While generic patterns exist, it is also acknowledged that genre conventions can vary across disciplines (Hyland & Bondi, 2006), academic levels (e.g., undergraduate vs. postgraduate), and cultural or linguistic contexts (Connor, 2000). Much of the early research on academic genres originated from Anglophone, Western contexts. There is a growing body of research exploring academic writing in ESL/EFL contexts (Flowerdew, 2000), including the Pakistani context (Khan et al., 2021). Such studies are crucial for understanding local instantiations of global academic genres and for developing contextually appropriate pedagogies.

2.3 Genre-Based Pedagogy (GBP)

The insights gained from genre analysis directly inform Genre-Based Pedagogy (GBP), an influential approach to literacy education that emphasizes the explicit teaching of how language works in different contexts to achieve specific purposes.

2.3.1 Principles of GBP

GBP, particularly as developed by the "Sydney School" of SFL scholars (e.g., Christie & Martin, 2007; Cope & Kalantzis, 1993), views learning language as learning how to mean in different social situations. Key principles include:

- **Explicitness:** Making the conventions of different genres (purpose, structure, language features) clear and accessible to learners.
- **Contextualization:** Teaching language not in isolation but as it is used in authentic texts within specific contexts.
- **Scaffolding:** Providing systematic support to learners as they move towards independent control of a genre.
- **Critical Awareness:** Encouraging learners to understand not just how genres work, but why they work that way and the social implications of genre choices.

2.3.2 The Teaching and Learning Cycle

A central element of GBP is the Teaching and Learning Cycle (TLC), a process designed to guide learners towards independent control of a genre. The TLC is often comprising stages such as:

1. **Deconstruction:** Analyzing model texts of the target genre to identify its purpose, schematic structure, and key lexicogrammatical features.
2. **Joint Construction:** Teacher and students collaboratively create a text in the target genre, with the teacher providing scaffolding.
3. **Independent Construction:** Students apply their understanding to produce their own texts in the target genre, demonstrating their control.

(Feez, 1998; Rothery, 1996).

GBP has been widely applied in various educational settings, including tertiary academic writing instruction (e.g., Hyland, 2007; Johns, 2002), proving beneficial for students, especially those from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds, by making the "rules of the game" transparent.

2.4 Synthesis and Identification of the Research Gap

The literature reviewed demonstrates a robust understanding of genre as a theoretical construct and SFL as a powerful analytical tool for uncovering the schematic structures and linguistic features of various texts. Significant research has been conducted on the generic conventions of academic writing, including key sections of theses and dissertations, primarily in established academic contexts. Furthermore, GBP offers a theoretically sound and practically effective approach to teaching these conventions.

However, despite this body of work, there is a discernible need for more context-specific genre analyses. While general patterns for thesis sections like Introductions, **Methodology sections**, and Discussions have been identified, the specific instantiations of these patterns within particular institutional and disciplinary contexts, such as MPhil Linguistics programs in Pakistani universities like GCUF, remain under-explored. Understanding these local conventions is crucial for developing targeted and effective GBP interventions. The present study, therefore, aims to address this gap by conducting an SFL genre-based analysis of the schematic structure in MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF. The findings are intended to provide empirically grounded insights that can directly inform the teaching of thesis writing

within this specific academic community, thereby contributing to both genre theory and pedagogical practice.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has provided an overview of the theoretical underpinnings of genre, SFL, and GBP, and reviewed relevant empirical studies on the structure of academic theses. It has established the importance of understanding genre conventions for academic success and the value of GBP in making these conventions explicit. The review culminates in identifying a need for research that investigates the specific schematic structures of MPhil Linguistics theses within the GCUF context, a gap this study intends to fill. The following chapter will detail the methodology employed to achieve this aim.

3. Research Methodology

This part explains how the study was carried out. It covers the research plan, the texts used (corpus), how the texts were gathered, and how they were analyzed using Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) to understand their schematic structure.

3.1 Research Design

This study uses a qualitative approach based on looking closely at a collection of texts (a corpus). This type of study describes things as they are, which is useful here to show the typical organizational patterns in the thesis sections. Using a corpus helps us analyze real examples of writing. **The approach is primarily qualitative in identifying and describing functional stages, supplemented by quantitative frequency counts to determine their commonality.** We mostly describe the parts of the text qualitatively (in terms of their function), but we also count how often things appear (quantitative data) to see which parts are common or rare. This combined approach helps answer the research questions about the structure of these thesis sections.

3.2 Corpus

The study analyzed MPhil Linguistics theses available in the GCUF library. For this research, we specifically chose to analyze only the Introduction sections and the Methodology sections from each thesis. We included available theses regardless of when they were submitted, meaning there was no specific timeframe limit, though the corpus primarily consisted of theses submitted in random years.

In total, 8 MPhil Linguistics theses were analyzed. This gave us a corpus of 8 Introduction sections and 8 Methodology sections to work with. However, for the analysis of traditional Introduction structures (as detailed in the Analysis chapter), one non-traditional introductory text (Text 8's abstract) was excluded to focus on the more conventional chapter format. Focusing on these two sections allows us to look closely at the parts where writers introduce their research and explain how they did it.

3.3 Data Collection and Preparation

The chosen Introduction and Methodology sections from the physical theses in the library were turned into digital files. This was done by scanning the relevant pages of each thesis using the CamScanner app. The scanned files were then organized into separate digital documents for each section, ready for analysis.

3.4 Theoretical Framework for Analysis

Our analysis is guided by the SFL framework, specifically the idea of Schematic Structure, also called Generic Structure Potential (GSP). This concept describes the typical, purposeful order of functional parts (stages) that make up a genre. In this study, a schematic stage is simply a part of the Introduction or Methodology section that has a specific job or purpose that helps the whole section achieve its goal in the thesis. We aimed to find these functional parts based on what the text actually does.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

We followed several steps to analyze the schematic structure of the Introduction and Methodology sections:

1. Getting Files Ready: The scanned Introduction and Methodology files were organized for systematic review.
2. First Look: We read each section to get a general idea of its content and how it was organized. We noted headings, but focused on the purpose of each part of the text, not just the headings.
3. Finding Stages: We read each section again and again to find distinct parts that performed specific jobs. We looked for where the job or topic of the text seemed to shift, which helped us find the boundaries between stages. We started listing potential jobs/stages we found (like 'Giving Background' or 'Describing Participants').
4. Naming and Describing Stages: Once we found a distinct stage, we gave it a functional name (a code) that described its job (e.g., 'Introduce Topic', 'State Problem', 'Describe Method'). We created a list of these names and what they meant as we went.
5. Tracking Stages: For each Introduction and Methodology section, we wrote down which stages appeared and in what order. We then counted how many times each stage appeared across all 8 sections of its type.
6. Identifying Common/Rare Stages: Based on the counts, we decided if a stage was obligatory (present in almost all sections) or optional (present in some, but not all). We knew that with only 8 sections, a stage would need to appear very often to be considered.
7. Finding Typical Order: We looked at the order of stages to find the most common sequence in the Introduction and Methodology sections. We also noted any sections that had a different order.

Comparing Structures: We compared the typical structure found in the Introductions to the typical structure found in the **Methodology sections**. We also compared our findings to what other studies (mentioned in the literature review) found about the structure of similar academic texts.

8. To ensure consistency in stage identification and naming across texts, the authors collaboratively analyzed a subset of the corpus. Discrepancies in stage identification were resolved through discussion among authors, and agreed upon coding conventions were applied before completing the analysis.

9. 3.6 Ethical Considerations

Access to the MPhil theses in the university library was obtained with formal permission. The analysis focused purely on the structure of the text, and no information that could identify individual authors was collected or reported.

4. Analysis

This chapter presents the schematic structure (GSP) analysis of the Introduction and Methodology chapters of eight GCUF MPhil Linguistics theses, identifying stages, determining frequency and classification (obligatory/optional), and analyzing typical sequencing (RQs 1-3).

4.1 Analysis of Introduction Chapters

Analysis identified seventeen potential stages in introductory sections. Text 7 included a chapter overview, and Text 8 was an abstract; both deviated from the traditional Introduction structure. Frequency and sequencing analysis (RQs 1-3 for Intros) uses the seven traditional introductions (Theses 1-6, and traditional portions of Text 7).

4.1.1 Identified Stages and Frequency.

Table 1 shows stage presence and frequency in the 7 traditional introductions.

Table 1: Presence and Frequency of Schematic Stages in Thesis Introduction Chapters (N=7 traditional introductions)

Stage	Freq. (out of 7)	%
General Topic/Field Background	7	100.0%
Specific Area/Literature Bkg	7	100.0%
Establishing Local Context	7	100.0%
Identifying Research Problem/Gap	7	100.0%
Stating Research Aims/Obj.	7	100.0%
Specifying Research Questions	6	85.7%
Delimiting the Study	6	85.7%
Methodology Overview	6	85.7%
Data Source Background	5	71.4%
Defining Key Terms	4	57.1%
Stating Hypotheses	2	28.6%
Chapter Overview/Summary	1	14.3%
Outlining Thesis Structure	1	14.3%
Summary of Intro/Study	1	14.3%

(Stages Summary of Results and Keywords appeared only in Text 8 Abstract and are excluded from this table of traditional intros.)

Table: 1

4.1.2 Classification of Stages

Classification based on frequency (7/7 for required) in the 7 traditional Introductions (RQ 2 for Intros):

- Core(100%): General Topic/Field Background, Specific Area/Literature Background, Establishing Local Context, Identifying the Research Problem/Gap, Stating Research Aims/Objectives.
- Highly Frequent Optional (85.7%): Specifying Research Questions, Delimiting the Study, Methodology Overview.

- Moderately Frequent Optional (57.1%): Data Source Background, Defining Key Terms.
- Less Frequent Optional (14.3% - 28.6%): Stating Hypotheses (28.6%), Chapter Overview/Summary (14.3%), Outlining Thesis Structure (14.3%), Summary of Introduction/Study (14.3%).

4.1.3 Typical Stage Sequencing

A common sequence was observed (RQ 3 for Intros):

(Background (General → Specific) + Local Context) → Problem/Gap → Aims/Objectives (+ Questions/Hypotheses) → Significance → (Delimitations if separate) → (Other optionals vary in placement) → (Optional: Thesis Structure Outline)

Sequence progresses from background/context to problem, purpose, and significance. Optional stages show placement variability.

4.1.4 Illustrative Textual Examples

- General Topic/Field Background: "Systemic Functional Linguistics is a theory related to language which centralizes on language function..."
- Identifying the Research Problem/Gap: "The English used in Pakistani business letters manifests variation... So the identification of features and trends... is required."
- Stating Research Aims/Objectives: "The aims of this research project are To identify features of Pakistani business letters..."

4.2 Analysis of Methodology Chapters

Analysis identified sixteen stages in the eight Methodology chapters. Frequency and sequencing analysis (RQs 1-3 for Methods) uses all eight texts (N=8).

4.2.1 Identified Stages and Frequency

Table 2 shows stage presence and frequency in the 8 Methodology chapters.

Table 2: Presence and Frequency of Schematic Stages in Thesis Methodology Chapters (N=8)

Stage	Freq. (N=8)	%	Classification
Research Design/Type	8	100.0%	Mandatory
Sample & Sampling	8	100.0%	Obligatory
Data Source Description	8	100.0%	Core
Instruments/Tools	8	100.0%	Required
Data Analysis Procedure (General)	8	100.0%	Mandatory
Specific Data Analysis Techniques	7	87.5%	Highly Consistent Opt.
Research Paradigm/Approach	5	62.5%	Optional
Theoretical/Analytical Framework (Method)	5	62.5%	Optional
Chapter Introduction	4	50.0%	Optional
Research Population	4	50.0%	Optional

Reliability & Validity	4	50.0%	Optional
Data Collection Procedure	4	50.0%	Optional
Specific Context/Setting	3	37.5%	Optional
Ethical Considerations	2	25.0%	Optional
Chapter Summary	2	25.0%	Optional
Piloting Study	1	12.5%	Optional

Table: 2

4.2.2 Classification of Stages

Classification based on frequency (7/8 or 8/8 for Obligatory) in the 8 Methodology chapters (RQ 2 for Methods):

- Mandatory (100%): Research Design/Type, Sample & Sampling, Data Source Description, Instruments/Tools, Data Analysis Procedure (General).
- Highly Consistent Optional (87.5%): Specific Data Analysis Techniques.
- Optional ($\leq 62.5\%$): All other stages listed in Table 2.

4.2.3 Typical Stage Sequencing

A common logical progression was observed (RQ 3 for Methods):

(Optional: Intro) → (Optional: Paradigm) → Design/Type → (Optional: Pop.) → Sample & Sampling → Data Source Desc. → (Optional: Context) → (Optional: Method Framework) → Instruments/Tools → Data Collection Proc. → Data Analysis Proc. (General) → (Highly Consistent Optional: Specific Data Analysis Tech.) → (Optional: Reliability/Validity) → (Optional: Ethics) → (Optional: Piloting) → (Optional: Summary)

Sequence moves from design/selection to tools/procedures, with optional stages interspersed.

4.2.4 Illustrative Textual Examples

- Research Design/Type: "The study is quasi-experimental research." (Thesis 1, Chapter 3 Intro)
- Sample & Sampling: "Data were collected using purposive sampling. The sample consisted of 70 extracts from two novels..." (Thesis 2, 1.2)
- Data Analysis Procedure (General): "Data analysis in this research investigation is the process of compiling, annotating, and analyzing the data using logical and statistical approaches." (Thesis 8, 3.5)

5. Discussion

This chapter interprets the schematic structure findings (GSP) of GCUF MPhil Linguistics thesis Introduction and Methodology chapters, addressing the research questions and highlighting significant theoretical and pedagogical implications. It relates findings to literature (Chapter 2), highlighting similarities and differences, discusses implications, acknowledges limitations, and suggests future research. **These findings offer a practical guideline that can directly inform and enhance local pedagogical practices for thesis writing.**

5.1 Introduction Chapter Findings

Analysis revealed a core of obligatory stages and several optional ones, reflecting rhetorical conventions.

5.1.1 Stages and Status

Six stages were Core (100%) in traditional Introductions: General Topic/Field Background, Specific Area/Literature Background, Establishing Local Context, Identifying the Research Problem/Gap, Stating Research Aims/Objectives, and Establishing Significance. These align with SFL genre purpose (Martin & Rose, 2008) and Swales' CARS model (1990, 2004). Specifically, the cluster of Background stages functions similarly to Swales' Move 1 (Establishing Territory), while Identifying the Research Problem/Gap maps onto Move 2 (Establishing a Niche), and Stating Research Aims/Objectives corresponds to Move 3 (Occupying the Niche). These obligatory stages fulfill core rhetorical functions aimed at establishing research space and purpose. Mandatory Establishing Significance reinforces the need to justify value.

The required Establishing Local Context is notable, underscoring the importance of grounding research locally in this context (GCUF, Pakistan), aligning with observations in ESL/EFL contexts (Flowerdew, 2000). This obligatory presence may reflect a cultural or institutional emphasis within the Pakistani academic context on establishing the local relevance and situatedness of research.

Highly Frequent (85.7%) and Moderately Frequent (57.1%) Optional stages (Specifying Research Questions, Delimiting the Study, Methodology Overview, Data Source Background, Defining Key Terms) provide supplementary details, showing variability possibly due to topic, design, or preferences. Less frequent stages are less conventional or represent alternative structures. Abstract-unique stages confirm its distinct purpose.

5.1.2 Typical Stage Sequencing

The observed typical sequence (Background → Problem/Gap → Aims/Objectives → Significance) aligns with models like Swales' CARS, reflecting a logical rhetorical progression. Variations in optional stage placement suggest flexibility within this core structure.

5.2 Methodology Chapter Findings

Analysis identified a core set of obligatory stages critical for documenting research procedures.

5.2.1 Stages and Status

Five stages were Obligatory (100%) in Methodology chapters: Research Design/Type, Sample & Sampling, Data Source Description, Instruments/Tools, and Data Analysis Procedure (General). This core set covers the fundamental reporting requirements: the plan, participants/data, tools, and general analysis process, essential for clarity and potential replication.

Specific Data Analysis Techniques (87.5%) was Highly Consistent Optional, highlighting the importance of detailing precise methods. Other Optional stages provide supplementary information with variable inclusion, possibly integrated elsewhere. Low frequency of Piloting Study and Chapter Summary indicates they are rarely distinct sections.

5.2.2 Typical Stage Sequencing

The typical sequence (Design → Data/Sample → Instruments → Collection → Analysis) follows a logical, process-based order common in reporting empirical methods. Placement of optional stages like Reliability/Validity and Ethics near relevant procedures also follows a logical flow.

5.3 Comparison of Introduction and Methodology Sections

Both genres share obligatory cores (6 in Intro, 5 in Methods), but their nature differs significantly. Introduction stages are rhetorical/justificatory (arguing for the study), while Methodology sections are descriptive/procedural documentation (reporting how study was

done). Introductions show slightly more optional stage variability than the procedurally structured Methodology sections. This difference in structure and variability across sections aligns with previous research highlighting the distinct generic requirements and disciplinary influences on different parts of a thesis (e.g., Paltridge, 2002; Bruce, 2008; Kwan, 2006).

5.4 Implications

5.4.1 Theoretical: Study contributes to SFL/GSP theory by analyzing specific academic genres in a local context (GCUF, Pakistan). core Local Context shows cultural influence on genre structure. Confirms GSP value and demonstrates local variations.

5.4.2 Practical/Pedagogical: Findings provide a "blueprint" for GCUF students/supervisors, clarifying expected structure and content, easing writing, and enabling targeted feedback. This supports local Genre-Based Pedagogy by providing an evidence-based model of expected generic structure. Specifically, this model can be directly integrated into the Teaching and Learning Cycle; it offers concrete models for the Deconstruction phase, provides clear goals for Joint Construction activities, and sets explicit targets for students' Independent Construction of their own thesis sections. Utilizing this localized GSP can potentially improve thesis quality and streamline the supervision process.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research

Limitations:

The study faces several limitations. Firstly, the small corpus size (N=8) significantly limits the generalizability of the findings beyond the specific context of MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF. Secondly, there is a single institution/discipline focus. Thirdly, analysis was limited to Introduction and Methodology sections. Fourthly, no detailed linguistic analysis within stages was performed.

Recommendations for Future Research:

- Replicate with a larger GCUF corpus to confirm and refine the identified stages and sequences.
- Compare across other disciplines/institutions in Pakistan to explore regional variations and discipline-specific differences.
- Extend analysis to other thesis sections (e.g., Literature Review, Results, Discussion) for a comprehensive understanding of the entire genre.
- Perform detailed linguistic analysis within stages to understand the lexicogrammatical features that realize each function.
- Investigate student/supervisor awareness of these generic structures and the effectiveness of GBP interventions based on the framework.

5.6 Conclusion

This SFL genre-based study identified and analyzed the schematic structure of GCUF MPhil Linguistics thesis Introduction and Methodology chapters. It revealed obligatory stage cores and optional variations, with typical sequences aligning with genre functions and academic norms, while showing context-specific features (obligatory Local Context) and variations. Results offer valuable insights into local generic expectations, supporting enhanced thesis writing pedagogy.

6. Conclusion

This study successfully applied an SFL genre-based approach to analyze the schematic structure of Introduction and Methodology chapters in MPhil Linguistics theses at GCUF, addressing a gap in context-specific genre analysis within this specific institutional context in Pakistan. The analysis identified distinct core sets of required stages for each genre, reflecting their primary functional purposes: rhetorical justification in Introductions and procedural reporting in **Methodology sections**. A key finding was the core presence of the Establishing

Local Context stage in Introductions, highlighting a notable local feature influenced by context.

These results provide empirically grounded insights valuable for local pedagogical practice, offering a guideline for thesis writing guidance at GCUF. Theoretically, this research contributes to SFL genre theory by illustrating local instantiation of academic genres and the influence of cultural context within the South Asian academic landscape. While limited by corpus size and scope, this work lays a foundation for future comparative and linguistic analyses of academic genres in similar contexts across the region, potentially extending its relevance to other Pakistani and South Asian universities. Future studies could expand the corpus to include theses from other Pakistani universities to explore regional variations.

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