

**CORPUS-BASED RESEARCH ON STYLISTIC FEATURES OF ENGLISH
ABSTRACT IN POSTGRADUATES' THESIS OF FASHION MAJORS**

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ABSTRACT: *English abstract is a highly condensed article with the accurate summarization. English Abstract writing ability of theses is a must for postgraduates of fashion majors. This paper analyzes the stylistic features of English abstract in postgraduates' thesis of fashion majors in terms of stylistic move structure with the English abstract corpus of English-speaking scholars in fashion fields as the reference corpus. The research result indicates that move structure in English abstract for Chinese postgraduates of fashion majors is less complete than that of English-speaking researchers. Compared to the frequency of each move in the abstract from the English-speaking scholars, the frequency of background move in abstract is higher while the methodology move is lower, couple with the serious absence or omission of some moves. This research would be of great implication to improving the academic writing ability of the postgraduates of fashion majors by providing postgraduate teaching reform with the necessary data evidence.*

KEYWORDS: Postgraduates' Thesis for Fashion-Major, English Abstract, Move Structure, Stylistic Features

INTRODUCTION

Abstract writing is the important measurement of academic English writing ability. Academic English writing has been the weaknesses of English teaching of fashion majors, so the important task for postgraduates' English teaching is to improve the academic English writing of fashion majors. Considering the characteristics of postgraduates' thesis for fashion majors, a small-scale corpus is built with the name English Abstract of Postgraduates' Thesis for Fashion Majors (EAPFM), which is composed of 126 English abstracts of postgraduates' thesis, collected randomly from database of postgraduates' thesis between 2013 and 2015 in BIFT library. This paper is an analysis of stylistic features of English abstract in postgraduates' thesis of fashion majors in terms of stylistic move structure with the English abstract corpus of English-speaking scholars in fashion fields as the reference corpus, to find out the current situation and the stylistic characteristics of English abstract writing of this group, and thus provide the data support for the postgraduate English teaching of fashion majors.

Research Background

Since 2011, Chinese experts in this field work on the academic abstracts from diverse perspectives. The research can be boiled down to the following four aspects: the macro and micro stylistic analysis of English and Chinese abstracts from multiple disciplines (Niu Guiling, 2013, p.11-14; 2013, pp.150-156; Wang Li, 2014, pp.111-113; Liu Haiping Xu Yuchen, 2015, pp.46-50; Li Guojing Cao Yan, 2015, pp.80-85; Zhou Zhongliang, 2015, pp.45-51; Liu Qin Wang Xinyi, 2016, pp.52-60;), the comparative study of Chinese and foreign academic papers (Li Ping, Josta van Rij-Heyligers, 2011, pp.39-44;

Xiao Zhonghua Caoyan, 2014, pp.260-272; Hu Xin, 2015, pp.813-822; Cao Yan Xiao Zhonghua, 2015, pp.5-9; Guo Hua Ma Lei, 2016, pp.39-43; Liu Yonghou Zhang Ying, 2016, pp.20-26; Lv Ying, 2017, pp.78-82), and the comparative analysis of Chinese and foreign academic abstracts. (Liu Shufen, 2011, pp.85-88; Mu Congjun, 2016, pp.97-107; Chen Xiaowei Wang Lingling, 2017, pp.32-35). Besides, some experts focus the research on the pragmatic identity construction of master's thesis abstracts from the perspective of pragmatics. (Sun Li, 2015, pp.15-21)

Throughout the previous related researches, it is found that studies over academic abstract writings are involved in various disciplines, and therefore, there are more corresponding research results and findings. What is most important is the number of comparative analysis of cross-discipline theses' abstract have increased from 2011 up to now. However, it is also obvious that less attention has been paid to the studies of academic abstract writing from postgraduates of fashion majors. In this paper, the reason for choosing English abstracts of thesis from Chinese master students of fashion majors as the research data is that research data for most researchers in abstract studies are collected from the international or national prestigious academic journals, and there is relatively less number of thesis abstract studies, which is less taken as the research data. Therefore, studies over English abstracts in Chinese postgraduate's thesis of fashion majors still remain unexplored. Therefore, completing the academic writing task for this special group--postgraduates of fashion majors, could accurately reflect their actual learning situation while they accomplish professional learning tasks. In this paper, 126 English abstracts of postgraduates' thesis of fashion major during 2013 and 2015 are analyzed in terms of stylistic feature, aiming at the distinctive stylistic features of the abstract writing from those of fashion majors, and establishing the corresponding English abstract writing model to provide postgraduate English teaching with the effective reference.

English Abstract

According to national standard GB7713-87(the format of scientific technique reports, dissertations and academic papers), Master's and doctoral dissertation are required to provide English and Chinese abstract. Obviously, abstract of thesis is necessary and important part in academic writings, which is also an independent discourse summarizing the whole writing. It is written before the main body of the academic writing, serving as the indicative role to the whole text in terms of content and structure. (Swales, 1990, pp.179-181) Academic abstract writing has a direct impact on international recognition of the paper and effective academic attention of that in the same area. Of course, English abstract, as an independent style, plays an important role in worldwide transmission and communication of Chinese academic papers, most importantly, it could effectively promote the academic internationalization.

Abstracts are first written in front of the body text in medical papers in 1960s, and popularized gradually in other fields. Generally speaking, an abstract falls into three main categories, which are an indicative abstract, an evaluative abstract and informative abstract. (Niu Guiling, 2013) The indicative abstract shows information and data from research. The aim of an evaluative abstract is to analyze and evaluate the correctness, completeness and purpose in the academic paper, highlighting evaluation. An informative abstract summarizes the whole content of the academic paper, which is characterized by summarizing the aim, methodology, findings and conclusion, etc., emphasizing condensation of the whole writing. Elements or components in an abstract is the measure of high-quality or low-quality papers.(Niu Guiling, 2013, p.22) In this paper, the informative English abstracts are mainly

studied, where the background, aim, methodology, result and conclusion should be arranged clearly to sum up the whole content of the paper, playing the role of concentration.

Structure of Move

“Move” is a rhetorical concept instead of grammar concept. (Swales, 2004, p.28) it refers to “language segment which is composed of a set of language characteristics demonstrating the same purport orientation, displaying a certain communicative function”. (Niu Guiling, 2013, p.99) One sentence or a group of sentences conveying the same type of communicative information would be affirmed as the same move. What is shown in the move is the macrostructure of the stylistics, and what is shown in the structural difference is the difference of the stylistics, which forms the diversity in the stylistic features of the text.

The common four-step structures (IMRC) are summed up by Graetz (1985), including introduction—method—result—conclusion. Among the researches related to academic writings, the Swalesian School represented by Swales et al. take the moves and the steps with different communicative aims as a springboard for analyzing the global structure of the discourse, maintaining that the academic abstract and the academic paper share the same outline as the four-step move including introduction-methodology-result-discussion. According to Bhatia’s (1993, pp. 76-79) view, the moves for each element are defined as follows: The introduction move includes intentions of the author, the hypothesis, the aim, the question to be addressed and the like. The method move covers experiment design, data collection, research process, methodology, research scope and others. The result move involves the observation of the author, the findings, the way to address the question, and the conclusion move includes the explanation of the result, the inference, the implication and the application.

Baker (Swales & Feak 1994, pp.210-211; Hilary 2010, p.199) established the five-move model, including research background, aim, methodology, result and conclusion. The structure of the abstract can be boiled down to two types: result-driven abstract and research paper summary. The former abstract emphasizes the research methodology and result which mainly include methodology, result and conclusion. Research paper summary is mainly to summarize the main content in body, involving research background, research methodology, result and discussion. Research in this paper is mainly conducted by reference to Swales (2010, pp.167-172). The moves are listed in detail as follows: (1) Research background (M1) : research background, the inadequacies of the previous studies and the significance of the research. (2) Research introduction (M2) : research content and research aim. (3) Methodology (M3) : the method adopted in the paper. (4) Research result (M4) : research result and findings. (5) Conclusion or discussion (M5) : the evaluation or extension of the result.

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research Question

This paper attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) With the English abstract of English-speaking researchers as the reference corpus, what are the stylistic features of the English abstracts in Chinese postgraduates' theses of fashion majors with different specialties and those of Chinese postgraduates of fashion majors as the whole in terms of the completeness of move structure?
- (2) With the English abstract of English-speaking researchers as the reference corpus, Are there any differences of each move frequency in the English abstract from Chinese postgraduates of fashion majors with different specialties and those of Chinese postgraduates of fashion majors as the whole in terms of the macro-move structure of the discourse ?

Research Object and Data Collection

One hundred and twenty six abstracts from postgraduates of fashion majors are selected randomly as the research samples, including samples from three different specialties --- thirty nine samples from those of costume engineer, twenty eight samples from those of artistic designing, and fifty nine from design art. All samples are collected from Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology (BIFT). All abstracts are collected from postgraduates' theses of 2013, 2014 and 2015. Reference abstracts of English-speaking researchers are all randomly selected from the section of Clothing and Fashion, art and photography, Design and Graphic Design, Communication and Media Study in Wiley Online Library and those of EBSCOhost, there are all together fifty samples related to the research field of costume and artistic design.

Analytical Method

Table 1 Five - move English Abstract

Move	Content	Function	Question Addressed
Move1	Background	research background, deficiencies and limitations of the research, research significance	What is known in this field? What is the research?
Move2	Introduction (aim and content)	research aim(purpose) and research topic (content)	Statement of aim and content
Move3	Methodology	research subject and research process (procedure)	How is the research carried out? (Or conducted?)
Move4	Result	research result	What are the findings?
Move5	Conclusion or Discussion	Interpret result, draw conclusion, put forward suggestion and give implication	What does the result mean?

Abstracts in this paper are divided into different moves according to macro-move structure. English abstract corpus from both postgraduates of fashion majors and English-speaking researchers are carefully analyzed by move and manually annotated according to five-move model (as is shown in table 1) due to the absence of automatic dividing function for the time being. However, there exist such sentences as one sentence with two types of moves

combined because abstracts are commonly characterized by their high generalization and economy, therefore, the move in this case is annotated according to the move function of the main clause in the whole sentence. While annotating the English abstracts of postgraduates of fashion majors, we found the fact that combination of background move with aim move were more adopted in these abstracts, and also the fact that the absence or omission of methodology move, result and conclusion move were found to be quite common in this corpus.

RESEARCH RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Research Result

Generally speaking, in background move, these are often stated, such as introduction of research field, research question involved, explanation of technical terms or specialized jargons, indication of research significance, review of related research, indication of research gap, and the like. In aim move, the research aim and research content are mainly stated while research method, research procedure and research materials are included in methodology move. Research result move serves for summary of research result. While the purpose in conclusion move tends to interpret the research result, sum up the conclusion, put forward suggestions, give implications, and so on. The completeness of move structure in an academic abstract is helpful for readers to immediately understand the outline of the article. In this paper, the completeness and incompleteness of move structure are defined as the follows: Move structure of the English abstract, where three main moves are all covered, including research background or content and aim, research method or procedure and research result or conclusion, is considered as complete. And instead, it would be considered as incomplete when at least one of three parts is absent or omitted in the English abstract.

Table 2: Move Structure and Its Frequencies in English Abstracts from Postgraduates of Fashion Majors with Different Specialties, Those of Fashion Majors as a Whole and English-speaking Researchers

Move Number & Abstract Frequency corpus	Complete Move Structure BIMRC/ BIMR/ BIMC /BMC/BMRC/BMR/IM RC/IMR/IMC		Incomplete Move Structure BIR/BIRC/BIM/IM/IC/B M/BR BI/BIC/BC/I/B/MR	
	Number	Freq.%	Number	Freq.%
	Costume Engineer	20	51.3	19
Design Art	11	18.6	48	81.4
Artistic Designing	7	25	21	75
All of Fashion Majors	38	30.2	88	69.8
English-speaking researchers	25	50	25	50

It is found by observing table 2 that the number of complete move structure from costume engineer is approximately the same with that of incomplete move structure and even the

former is slightly more than the latter. The main reason could be that this major inclines to engineering, their theses are characterized by more experimental and practical research topics, attaching more importance to the research methodology. However, move structure from those students as a whole is less than satisfactory, almost the half English abstracts are incomplete in move structure---Many of the abstracts are lack of concise introduction of methodology or summary of research procedure and research conclusion in abstracts. Some only describe the research method and procedure in the English abstract, while forgetting research conclusion or research-based discussion, suggestion or recommendation. As is shown in table 2, the number of incomplete move structure from design art and artistic designing are far more than that of the complete one. Most English abstract from the two majors only spend more efforts on writing the background introduction or giving a description of content without any summarized and generalized introduction of research procedure or method, research conclusion or discussion, which suggests the great improvement is earnestly needed for those students in summarizing and generalizing ability. The number of complete move structure from postgraduates of fashion majors as whole are 38, which occupies 30.2%, while the number of incomplete move structure are up to 88, accounting for 69.8%. Compared with that of English-speaking researchers, the percentage of the complete move structure is 30.2%, much lower than that of the latter (50%), whereas the percentage of the incomplete move structure is 69.8%, which is much higher than the latter. So, the result indicates that postgraduates of fashion majors as a whole need to pay more attention to academic English study, further strengthening the standardization of English abstract writing. At the same time, the summarizing ability and generalizing ability are supposed to be taken into great consideration during English study so as to construct a more logical and standardized abstract writing ability.

Table 3: The Number of Each Move and Its Frequencies in English Abstracts from both Postgraduates of Fashion Majors with Different Specialties and English-speaking Researchers

Frequency Type	M1		M2		M3		M4		M5	
	number	Freq. %	number	Freq. %	number	Freq. %	number	Freq. %	number	Freq. %
Costume Engineering	27	69.2	34	87.2	22	56.4	19	48.7	13	33.3
Design Art	49	83.1	53	89.8	25	42.4	10	16.9	18	30.5
Artistic Designing	24	85.7	24	85.7	14	50	3	10.7	7	25
Fashion Major (as a whole)	100	79.4	111	88.1	61	48.4	32	25.4	38	30.2
English-speaking Researcher	25	50	50	100	31	62	23	46	15	30

As is shown in table 3, Postgraduates of fashion major from costume engineering attach great importance to research methodology, research findings and the research-oriented discussion and suggestions, Therefore, There is a slightly higher proportion for costume engineering than that for other specialties in adopting methodology move, findings move and conclusion move in English abstract writing. As to the English abstract from artistic designing and

design art, it is found that students of the two majors pay more attention to research status, aiming at enabling readers to acknowledge the necessity of the research or the great value in conducting the research. As the result, they attach more importance to background information and research content, and in their English abstracts, background move, content and aim move are more frequently appeared, taking a large amount of space, while method move, result and conclusion move are less frequently adopted. In table 3, we find there is high-frequency adoption (100%, 62%, 46%) of content and aim move, method move and result or findings move in English-speaking researcher's abstracts. It is also observed that English-speaking researchers attach great importance to normalization of abstract writing, following the normality and logicalness of abstract organization---from research aim or content, research method to research result or findings. In this paper, the result shows that postgraduates of fashion majors pay much more attention to background move (79.4%) in abstract writing, which is extremely in consistent with what Yu Bifang, a researcher in this field, has found in her research: There is a significant difference of move frequency in abstracts between the specialties of linguistics, computer science, economics and that of medical science, while the former value more on research status, highlighting research necessity and value, and for the latter, research aim is more important than research background. (Yu Bifang, 2016, p.36) Above all, abstracts of fashion majors as a whole are characterized by incompleteness of move structure, which goes against the highly-condensed requirement and complete information required in academic abstract writing, this might result in the consequence---readers would fail to catch the important information effectively and immediately so as to achieve the intention of abstract itself.

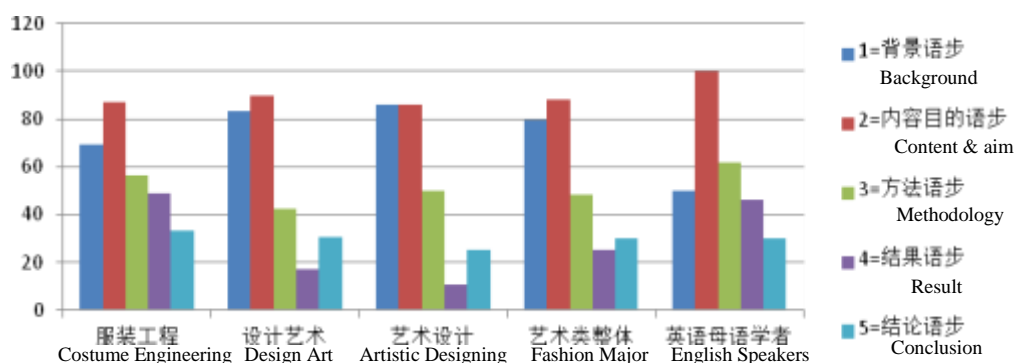


Figure1. Macro-structured English Abstract of Five Groups

As is shown in Fig. 1, from the general overview of macrostructure, five group share the similarity in the adoption of move structure in English abstract---aim move is the most highly frequently used one in the English abstract, which is closely related to the characteristics of the artistic discipline, indicating great attention is paid to research content and aim by artistic discipline. While the difference among them lies in that the English speaking researchers are observed to describe methodology move more frequently, showing the fact they attach great importance to research methodology, research procedure and steps. In the meanwhile, according to observation from the abstract corpus of English speaking researchers, they would rather highlight research aim than take more space for introduction of background information. As we all know, the purpose for writing English abstract is to enable readers to have a complete yet exact knowledge of the whole paper, and its function is to present the

important content for the quick knowledge of the paper from a macroscopic perspective. It is well known that combination of background, content and aim, methodology, result and conclusion move could provide enough information, by which readers would get across the important content of the paper instantly. However, background information is highly valued in the English abstract of master students' theses of fashion majors as a whole. As is observed from the corpus of fashion majors, a great deal of time is devoted to detailed background description in the English abstract, which, as a result, results in less adoption or omission of other moves and even lack of information, making it impossible to achieve the ultimate goal of the English academic abstract, which presents the overall characteristics of the English academic abstracts of fashion major as a whole.

DISCUSSION

Based on what we have found in the research above, compared to the English abstract of English-speaking researchers, great improvement in English abstract writing is earnestly needed for either postgraduates majoring in different fashion specialties or those of fashion majors as a whole. The completeness of move structure in English abstract is obviously lower than that of English-speaking researchers, while the incompleteness of the former is far higher than that of the latter, which shows great improvement and enhancement is earnestly required in logic mode of thought, capacity of generalization, inductive ability and academic writing normality when writing the English abstract.

As to macrostructure of moves, except costume engineering, the frequency of adopting result or findings move in the abstracts of design art, artistic designing and those of fashion majors as a whole is lower with reference to the English-speaking researchers' abstract, even displaying absence or omission of result move, which, from another point of view, shows native researchers devote much attention to the generalization and induction of research question-driven methodology, result or findings. The frequency of using content-aim move, methodology move and result move in English-speaking researchers' abstracts is apparently higher than those majoring different fashion specialties and those of fashion majors as a whole, which shows their great attention attached to the completeness of the structure of writing an academic paper. Adoption of conclusion move in English abstracts of design art is quite similar with that of English speaking researchers, for this discipline is more inclined towards the aspect of theories, usually emphasizing research conclusion or the theoretical function, implication or significance of the research. The frequency of adopting methodology move in English abstract of artistic design is 50%, for this discipline is more inclined towards the designing, which highlights the significance of research method, procedure and process.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, based on the corpus-based quantitative analysis method, the stylistic macro features of English abstracts of those of fashion majors are statistically analyzed with the English abstracts of English-speaking researchers as the reference corpus in terms of English abstract move and the frequency of each move. The research result shows that logic of writing, generalization of article and normalization of abstract writing need to be further strengthened for postgraduates majoring in fashion. It is teachers' responsibility to increase their awareness of the significance of normalized academic writing, and assist them to have a

good knowledge of academic writing method. more trainings in academic writing are supposed to be integrated into English teaching, having an insightful understanding of stylistic features in English abstract writing so as to construct a strong writing ability, promoting the efficiency in international academic exchanges.

Corpus-based academic textual researches enriches the empirical studies of English abstracts of postgraduates majoring in fashion, the research result of which provides the helpful reference for postgraduate English teaching, especially the English abstract writing. It also provides an important evidence of basic model in writing the English abstract for postgraduates of fashion majors or researchers of fashion- related field, helping them to be aware of the generic structure of abstracts. Of course, some questions still remain unaddressed as follows: whether the artistic background or mother language transfer of the author would make a difference of discourse patterns and linguistic features when writing English abstract will be discussed further in another paper. Above all, what has been enlightened in this paper is to enhance the academic writing awareness for postgraduates and cultivate the academic writing thinking. Great attention should be given to the important teaching activities such as transformation of thinking in both academic writing and other writing (Wang Yu Chen Hongjun, 2015, p. 67)

Acknowledgements

The author owes a great deal of gratitude to the sponsors. This research is sponsored by the project of Construction of English Abstract Writing Ability of Thesis for Postgraduates of Art (J2017-13) and the project of Micro-course Construction of English for Specific Academic Purpose (JGZD-1710) in BIFT.

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