

the importance. kindergarten schooling as preparation for the elementary stage.

This study attempts, therefore, to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any difference in intelligence and in self-concept between first year elementary school girls who have been to kindergartens and those who have not?
2. Is there any effect of kindergarten schooling on the intelligence and on the self-concept of first year elementary school girls who have been to kindergarten and those who have not?
3. What are the factorial components of kindergarten and of self-concept for first year elementary school girls who have been to kindergartens and those who have not?

Abstract 8:

Title : التنبؤ بالتفوق الدراسي في ضوء متغيرات مفهوم الذات لدى طلاب الصف الأول الثانوي بالدمام

Author :
Advisor(s) :
Date : 1997

Self-concept represents the corner stone of personality study. It regulates the human behavior and plays a significant role in various psychological functions. Self-concept thus determines targets, achievements and social relationship combining the positive self-concept with a high level of school achievement.

Abstract 9:

Title : The Differences in Specialization, Educational Class and Residence in Realizing Some Guidance Needs of a Sample of Female Secondary Students in AI-Hassa

Author :
Advisor(s) :
Date : 1421

The study aims at identifying the differences in the realization of female secondary student their academic, physical, psychological, social and health needs according to specialty, educational class and residence. The study tries to answer the following questions:

- 1) Are there statistical differences among female students' means in realizing some of their guidance needs due to different specialty (Science -Arts)?
- 2) Are there statistical differences among female students' means in realizing some of their guidance needs due to different educational class (2nd- 3rd)?
- 3) Are there statistical differences among female students' means in realizing some of their guidance needs due to different residence (village -city)?

The researcher developed a list of guidance needs consisted of (72) items distributed on four dimensions. Stability and reliability of the list was calculated and then applied to a sample of (800) female secondary students. Suitable statistical methods such as T -Test, have been utilized and the study results showed:

First and third assumptions have been partially achieved while the second one hasn't where some statistical differences have been detected at the level of (0. 01) in some academic needs, at the level of (0.001) in some health needs, and at the level of (0.05) in the total of needs among female students of the 2nd and 3rd classes.

In addition, some statistical differences have been experienced at the level of 0.05 in some social needs. Results have been discussed in the light of theoretical framework, previous studies and presenting suggested researches.

and scholastic. achievement variables in self-assertiveness. Furthermore, it found several factors to self-assertiveness scale items according to scholastic stage and scholastic achievement. fore recommodations and studies research are required.

Abstract 4:

Title : متغيرات بيئة الفصل

الدراسي السعودي في التعليم الثانوية العام والمهني

“الصناعي” (دراسة عملية فارقة)

Author :

Advisor(s) :

Date : 1418

There is a kind of climate or environment which distinguishes the relationship between teachers and students and among students themselves. Stolurow & Pahel (1963) indicated that education is a social process containing an interaction between at least two persons a teacher and a student. So the recognition of classroom environment is an essential factor in finding out of teacher effectiveness. Therefore, classroom environment plays intermediat role between teacher actions and student achievement. Moos & Moos (1978) believe that the educational environment practises an important effect upon members who are in it and it has characteristics that influence student development .

Abstract 5:

Title : نمو القدرات الابتكارية في المراحل

التعليمية

Author :

Advisor(s) :

Date : 1997

The progress of nation depends greatly on its people, especially the youth, and the development of their personalities and mental abilities. The main problem in third world counties lies in its under-developed human power resources.

To develop these countries, their human resources must be developed, and that is what Guilford (1965) and Torrance (1977) emphasized when they testified that nothing can promote the standard of luxury and civilization of nations better than developing creative performance.

Abstract 6:

Title : المناخ الدراسي في ضوء

المستوى الأكاديمي لدى طلاب كلية التربية –

Author :

Advisor(s) :

Date : 1419

Individuals and the environment have received a great deal of attention from psychologists. Therefore, three main streams concerned with the nature of the relationship between the individual and his environment have emerged. One stream, disregarding other variables, focuses on the role that the environment plays in shaping the individuals' behavior. Another stream maintains that there are abilities in the brain that are responsible for the behavior of the individual. The other one takes a midway stand in that it studies the interaction between the individual and the environment and calls for studying the individual and the environment together because it is difficult to understand behavior independent of the social environment, and the individual and his characteristics (A1-Agha, 1989:2). The climate prevailing in the educational institutions differs from one institution to another. The open climate which gives a chance to every member to grow psychologically and spiritually and to develop close social relations is characterized by dwlopnis a true behavior and having high morals which in turn help achieve the desired objective. On the other hand, in a closed climate, the relationships between individuals are impersonal and the morals are low (Al- Thabit, 1992:3).

Abstract 7:

Title : أثر الالتحاق برياض

الأطفال على الذكاء ومفهوم الذات لدى تلميذات

الصف الأول بالمرحلة الابتدائية

Author :

Advisor(s) :

Date : 1998

In many developed countries, education begins with kindergarten. which constitute the basic foundation for building up an integrate personality, and enhancing children's mental abilities and individual characteristics. However, opinions differ as regards

APPENDIX ONE**Abstract 1:**

Title : قلق الامتحانات في علاقته
بالإنجاز العقلي والأكاديمي لدى طالبات كلية التربية

Author :
Advisor(s) :
Date : 1995

The current study seeks to answer the following question:

1. Are there any significant effectiveness of test anxiety on mental achievement and academic achievement for girls?
2. Is there any relationship between test anxiety and mental achievement for girls?
3. Is there any relationship between test anxiety and academic achievement for girls?
4. Is it possible to recognize the factorial components of test anxiety, mental achievement and scholastic achievement?
5. Is it possible to predict the academic achievement in the light of mental achievement and test anxiety?

The current study involves the following variables:

1. Test Anxiety .
2. Mental Achievement.
3. Academic Achievement.

The current study is also determined by the sample used which consist of 30 girl students for the pilot study, and 237 girl student for the main study. The main sample is divided into 4 groups, the first consist of 57 over mental and academic achievement girl, the second girls 24 over mental achievement but under academic achievement, the third girls 63 over academic achievement but under mental achievement and the fourth 93 under academic and mental achievement girls.

The study is also determined by the following tools:

1. Test Anxiety Scale
Prepared by "Spielberger"
Experimented by: Abdelrahem Bakhet
2. D. 48 Intelligence Test
Prepared by " J. Blook "

Experimented by: Abdelrahem Bakhet

The study is determined by the geographical location (Al-Hassa Zone), and by the statistical style: GLM general linear multivariate, Factorial Analysis, and Step Wise regressions. Previous studies, both in Arabic and English, have been presented by the researcher.

Abstract 2:

Title : الرضا الوظيفي لمعلمي
المرحلة الابتدائية وعلاقته ببعض المتغيرات النفسية

Author :
Advisor(s) :
Date : 1997

Job satisfaction of elementary school teachers and its relationship with some psychological variables.

Subjects :

200 elementary school teachers in Alhasa, Sudia Arabia.

Tolls :

- 1 – Job satisfaction questionnaire.
- 2 – Achievement motivation questionnaire.
- 3 – Aspiration level questionnaire.

Results :

1 – There is positive relationship between job satisfaction and achievement motivation of elementary school teachers.

2 – There is positive relationship between job satisfaction and aspiration level of elementary school teachers.

3 – There are four factors : persistence, responsibility, social interaction and struggle in the three variables.

Abstract 3:

Title : السلوك التوكيدي وعلاقته
بالتحصيل الدراسي لدى طلاب المرحلتين المتوسطة

والثانوية بالمنطقة الشرقية – المملكة العربية السعودية

Author :
Advisor(s) :
Date : 1996

Self -Assertiveness and It's Relationship with Academic Achievement for Intermediate and Secondary School Student in Eastern Region Saudi Arabian Kingdom. The Aim of this study was to find out the effect of scholastic level (Intermediate/Secondary) and scholastic achievement (Low/High) on self assertiveness.

It administered self- assertiveness scale after modifying it to suite study environment and find out its psychometric characteristic on 484 students in Intermediate and Secondary stages. Results indicated that there is not statistical effect for scholastic level

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of abstracts as just to introduce their research topic without further obligation” (Alhuqbani, forthcoming). The current study takes the component as the basic textual unit of analysis, and it agrees with Alutaibi’s results (2011) and Alhuqbani’s findings (Alhuqbani, 2013 and forthcoming) concerning the low correlation among the structural functions and the negative influence of local research community and culture on producing and evaluating abstracts and research in general (Al-Shabab, 2008). The pedagogical and linguistic conventions in departments using Arabic as a medium of education has been referred to above as responsible for an attitude towards the practice of teaching English, a fact which reflects an academic culture which deserves further study.

The third dimension of the present results addresses the fourth question of the current research, namely the relation between language and content in the abstract. It was seen that IS professionals have a different approach to abstracting from ESP practitioners, and to the linguistic approach to the study of the abstract. The abstracts produced by researchers from outside language specializations are primarily informative texts, and this inherent priority should be honoured in a way that maintains the *raison d’être* of writing the abstract, i.e. the abstract, in the first place. Thus, the IS emphasis on readability and informativity needs to be taken into account by linguistic theorists and practitioners in language studies. The implication of this will be manifested in supporting the content which M.A. students know well and to coach them in the basics of language and methods which enable them to put their specialized knowledge in correct language and informative content.

If the language/content balance is achieved, then the methodologist needs to put a simple model which caters for the local situation and takes into consideration the teaching environment and culture that need to be incorporated in the production of the abstract, while balancing language and content, i.e. informativity, readability and lucidity. This cultural localism together with meeting the requirements of correctness, informativity, readability and lucidity, will help suggest three basic units or components taken to be descriptively present in an abstract by most researchers: the purpose (topic), the method (techniques and data), and the results (evidence or final judgment). This, however, remains a practical compromise which needs to be applied in the

classroom. One needs to remember that writing is the most complex skill of language competencies and that research students need English not only for writing abstracts but more importantly for reading about their specialization in order to stay updated.

9. Suggestions for Further Research

On the basis of the above discussion, the following three areas of research can be suggested:

1. To investigate abstracts based on a large scale corpus from research works produced by native speakers and non-native speakers from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds, to study the structural units and organization of the abstract.
2. To carry out research that focuses on the implication of information technology on producing and storing abstracts.
3. To study the influence of translation on published abstracts translated from Arabic into English.

prescriptive instructions have not succeeded as the data show. Research students do undoubtedly have a fairly good amount of content about their work; still putting that content in good language is a different matter. The discrepancy between language proficiency and abstracting information from the content they know is clear. Language instructors and IS professionals disagree about various aspects of abstract writing because, according to Chan and Foo (2004) the first group believes that “if novice-writers are explicitly taught the rules and conventions of a specific genre, they will internalize the rules and produce acceptable work”, while IS experts see that the abstract “functions as the screening device for making decisions to read the source article and as an expedient means of information transfer” (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 108). But a careful study of the underlying purpose and the methods adopted by the two groups, show that they subscribe to a level of prescriptivism in the form of rules and/or guidelines. Naturally, each set of rules are different and are offered in the spirit of task-fulfilment blended with a sense of authority. The simple fact is that while abstract writers themselves may be as eager to have the task done, these practical considerations have not succeeded in the Arab university at large to produce better abstract writers. Nor would the prescriptive pedagogical or IS ingredient inform us much about the nature of text making, text identity or text integrity. Descriptive instruments are needed and a balance of language and content is also needed in a simple formula that enables learners to compose correct informative abstracts.

8. Discussion and Conclusion

The results obtained from the current study can be summarized as follows: first, there is a clear weakness in the basic language skills, and second, there is no agreement on a set of components used in the abstracts, which reflects the lack of systematic schemata of content and structure in the abstract as a text, or member of a genre to use Swales’ term. The results have three main implications in relation to: 1) English language programs, 2) the abstract as a text-type, and 3) the abstract as an information dissemination tool.

The first dimension relates to the first question of the present study, the language and function of the abstract within English intensive programs. The data are not far from those obtained from error and contrastive analysis of Arab learners’ level and

problems (Al-Dossary, 20014 & AL-Khalaf, 2015). The present study shows that the abstracts in the sample suffer from ill-formed sentences, misprinted and misspelled words, and vague grammatical structures. Moreover, the components expected in an abstract are not observed and they are not used consistently among themselves. Whether the abstracts are produced by the researcher himself/herself or produced with the assistance of an editor, translator, or teacher, they reflect the student’s formulation of the component, i.e. the content of the original Arabic abstract. Even where a second person such as an editor, translator or teacher is involved, the abstracts in the sample reflect the low English proficiency level that is tolerated. The wider implication reflects an environment in which English programs suffer from basic problems, especially in terms of length, instructors who are content professor rather than English language professionals, and emphasis on terminology rather than basic competency in reading and writing.

The second dimension relates to the second question of the study, which attempts to explore the functional or rhetorical units of the abstract and the function of each. The low correlations among the components of the abstracts in the current sample are in line with the results obtained from abstracts written by Asian researchers where the basic functional moves of the abstracts are not regularly reported (Pho, 2008 and Chan and Foo, 2004). Alutaibi’s results also point to discrepancies in the moves found in English and Arabic research abstracts in humanities journals (Alutaibi, 2011). In this respect, Alhuqbani’s two recent studies of article abstracts by Arab researchers taken from police and security journals (Alhuqbani, forthcoming) and across five disciplines (Alhuqbani, 2013) are highly relevant firstly because he is primarily looking for “obligatory” units in a representative sample, and secondly because of the methodological and theoretical implications of his results. In terms of method, his search for regularity is conducted at the level of the “step” which is a component of the move, and that this unit has higher level of representation in the functional structure of the abstract (Alhuqbani, forthcoming). In terms of theory, he incorporates the writing culture to allow for the possibility that abstract structure and function need not be approached from the vintage point of universal rules applicable to all languages and environments in the same way. Thus, some Arab researchers, Alhuqbani observes, “view the function

Table (2): Pearson correlations of components used in the Sample

Component		Topic	Lit	Task	Sit/Meth	Data	Hypo	Result	Recom
Topic	Pearson correlation	1	-.112	.175	.289	.336	.83	.175	.074
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.	.528	.323	.098	.052	.641	.323	.678
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Lit	Pearson correlation	-.112	1	-.103	-.134	-.107	.043	-.232	-.043
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.528	.	.563	.449	.547	.807	.187	.807
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Task	Pearson correlation	.175	-.103	1	.357*	.104	.571**	.328	.195
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.323	.563	.	.038	.559	.000	.058	.268
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Sit/Meth	Pearson correlation	.289	-.134	.357*	1	.588**	.240	.802**	.464*
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.098	.449	.038	.	.000	.171	.000	.006
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Data	Pearson correlation	.336	-.107	.104	.588**	1	.049	.356	.190
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.052	.547	.559	.000	.	.782	.039	.281
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Hypo	Pearson correlation	.083	.043	.571**	.240	.049	1	.188	.336
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.641	.807	.000	.171	.782	.	.287	.052
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Results	Pearson correlation	.175	-.232	.328	.802**	.356*	.188	1	.579*
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.323	.187	.058	.000	.039	.287	.	.000
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34
Recom	Pearson correlation	.074	-.043	.195	.464**	.190	.336	.579**	1
	Sing. (2-tailed)	.678	.807	.268	.006	.281	.052	.000	.
	N	34	34	34	34	34	34	34	34

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The highest correlation obtained is between Situation/Method and Result (Columns 4 Table 2, .802). The next highest is between Situation/Method and Data (Column 4, Table 2 .588). The third highest correlation is between Result and Recommendation (Columns 7, Table 2 .579). Hence, except for the relationship between Situation/Method and Result, the components do not show regularity of occurrence in relation to one another. The correlation, in fact, can be quite low; Literature shows very low correlation with all other components (Column 2, Table 2). Thus, one finds Literature in an abstract, but not any other component regularly co-occurring with it. One can also find any combination of components when Literature is not used. The randomness of the occurrence is quite evident from the low correlations obtained. Still, a sense of framing and sequencing, as a level distinctive from mere “cohesive devices” (Hinkel 2001) can be observed. The overwhelming majority of the abstracts in the sample open with the Topic. Where there are recommendations, they

always come at the very end. Meanwhile, if the “recommendations” are preceded by results, then the results occur immediately before the recommendations. The sequence “Topic-Methodology-Results-Recommendations” seems to emerge as the outline framing strategy in organizing most of the abstracts in the sample. The linguistic realization -grammatical and textual- of these components and the structural details are outside the scope of the present work. The results show that the components are not presented (Table 1) well, and do not represent a fairly coherent set (Table 2). At the same time, they are not related in the sense of consistency of occurrence of any two components in an abstract.

7.3 M.A. Abstracts: Language, Content, Descriptivism and Prescriptivism

The writers in the sample received instruction, much of it prescriptive, as to how to improve their writing skills and how to write an abstract; but the

conclusions deduced from logical argumentation.

8. Recommendations: These are specific suggestions derived from the conclusions of the work. They may suggest that more research should be undertaken, or they may adopt solutions or a particular technique to obtain a specific result.

What is explored in this work is the presence or absence of the components, and not the sequencing of these units of information. After specifying the

components as they are used in the sample, it is time to turn to quantitative description of these components in the sample.

The first statistical indicator is the mean (Table 1) which shows that most of the components are not consistently used. In fact, the highest mean is .82 topic, and the lowest is .38, reviewing previous literature (column 5 Table 1).

Table (1): The mean and Standard Deviation of components the sample

Component	N	minimum	maximum	mean	Std. Deviation
Topic	34	.00	1.00	.8235	.38695
Literature	34	.00	1.00	.3824	.49327
Task	34	.00	1.00	.6765	.47486
Situation/Method	34	.00	1.00	.7647	.43056
Data	34	.00	1.00	.5294	.50664
Hypothesis	34	.00	1.00	.5882	.49955
Results	34	.00	1.00	.6465	.47486
Recommendation	34	.00	1.00	.4118	.49955
Valid N (listwise)	34				

The graphic representation below makes the quantity of using each of the eight components under investigation clear.

Histograms representing the components used in M.A. abstracts

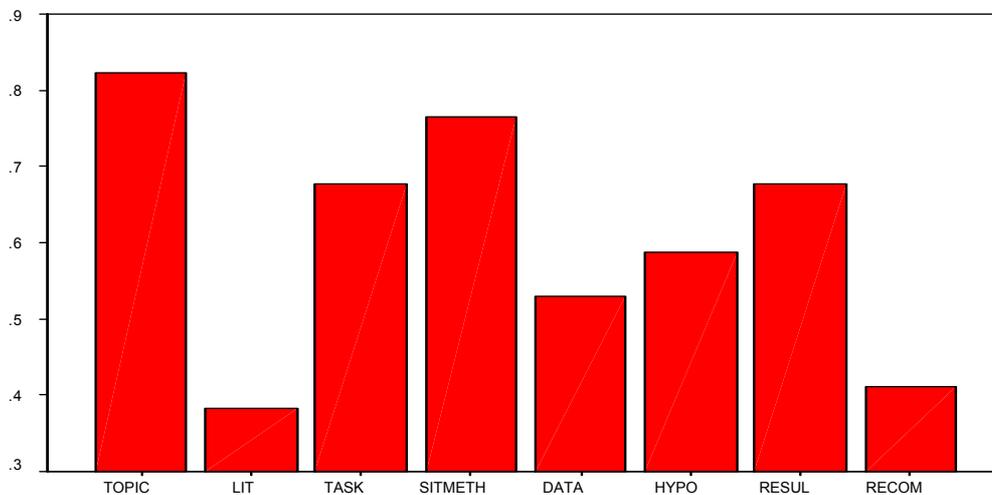


Fig.1

In order to gain some insight into the relationship which holds the components together, the researcher has used Pearson Correlation obtained from SPSS. The results show low correlation among the eight components (Table 2).

first paragraph is followed by an introduction to the three questions which follow.

- 8) This Abstract is very short (only 41 words). It has a short sentence introducing the topic, followed by an assertion about the role of *Self-concept* in regulating behavior. The second sentence contains a full-stop which seems to be a misprint. The meaning of the third sentence is not clear since it suddenly shifts to add *high level of school achievement* to other factors which appear to be self sufficient. The meaning would be clarified in two sentences instead of the one which is used here.

The abstract is very short and it makes no reference to the work it is supposed to be summarizing. Thus, it is not an abstract of any specific work.

- 9) Abstract nine specifies its aim from the beginning and clearly refers to the "study" being summarized. It asks specific questions which could have been better formulated as hypotheses. In the fourth paragraph the questions are referred to as *assumptions*. Two examples of language can be reported here: one in the paragraph before last stating: *In addition, some statistical differences have been experienced at the level of 0.05 in some social needs*. The use of the word *experienced* seems inappropriate. The second example is seen in the opaque reference to the results without reporting them accurately, as it is clear in this last sentence of a separate paragraph: *Results have been discussed in the light of theoretical framework, previous studies and presenting suggested researches*.

This abstract contains some essential components, but it suffers from wrong terminology and awkward phraseology. It also mentions what is done but does not say what exactly it is in terms of specific information.

To sum up, the language of the nine abstracts reviewed above shows that they are produced with no reference to a model or any set of criteria. 1) They contain language errors; 2) they show poor rhetorical organization; 3) In some cases informativity and relevance are not observed since the abstract is not related to the work which is being summarized.

7.2 M.A. Abstracts: Components

It is clear that in addition to the erroneous language, the abstracts under study suffer from the absence of one or more of the components expected in an

abstract, such as the research problem, sample and data, the method(s), instruments used in the research, or the results.

Some abstracts lack the basic information expected in a summary of an academic work. In line with the "moves" suggested by Swales (1990) in studying the introduction to scientific articles, and building on Al-Shabab (1986) and Alutaibi (2011), the researcher will use the term "component" in reference to the utterance which is expected to be one of "the relevant aspects of the source text" (Swales & Feak 2004). The component can be defined for the present purpose as a kind of "textual function" which contributes to the meaning of the abstract and which informatively presents and represents the counterpart of the thesis or dissertation being summarized.

The following components in an abstract of an M.A. dissertation can be suggested as the basic parts of an abstract. The components used here are based on the sample under analysis and from research works on abstracts. Eight components are suggested here to be necessary components in an abstract of an academic thesis or dissertation. They cater for content and language.

1. Topic: it is a general notion of what the text is about (Brown and Yule, 1983). It has to do with the notions of texture, cohesion and coherence (Halliday and Hassan, 1997).
2. Literature: this is a part of the abstract which discusses, or refers to, previous work relevant to the topic being discussed in the thesis.
3. Task: this is the information about the specific aspect of the topic to be researched in the thesis. It is similar to what is referred to as the "research problem" (for a discussion of the "research problem" see Glatthorn (1998).
4. Situation/Method: this is the part of the abstract which refers to the exact environmental context in which the problem or topic is found. The method is the specific technique(s) used in the study of the topic.
5. Data: Refer to the raw information in terms of numbers or features, collected from a sample or from a situation, in order to study the topic as realized in this raw information.
6. Hypothesis: it is a statement to be investigated by testing the relationship between the variable of assumptions and reality with reference to statistical techniques.
7. Results: The statistical values of the operation applied to the data in the study; they can be

7. Analysis and Results

7.1 M.A. Abstracts: Language

Nine out of thirty-four abstracts were selected for comment due to their special characteristics. No special significance is attached here to the ordering of the articles or the problems they demonstrate. All nine abstracts are included in Appendix One. The parts of the abstract discussed here are underlined by the researcher in the Appendix for ease of reference, and in the following paragraphs the nine abstracts are described in terms of language proficiency.

- 1) The title is in Arabic. It can be translated as "Examination Anxiety and its relation to Mental and Academic achievement in Female students at the College of Education, King Faisal University". The abstract opens with five questions which are followed by stating three variables. Then the current sample and tools are specified and the limitation of data to one location is mentioned. The word *anxiety* is misprinted or misspelled (see Appendix one Abstract 1). In describing the sample, one reads the following sentence *the current study is also determined by the sample used which consist of 30 girl students for the point study*. There is no need for *also*, and how could the sample determine the study, if the sample itself is selected by the researcher? Hence, the idea is vague. In introducing the *tools*, the researcher meant the "instruments". In the last paragraph, one reads *The study is detennelled by the geographical location (Al-Hassa Zone),....* What is needed is the word *limited* and not *detennelled* which is used when the writer meant "determined", which is a wrong choice of word, and is misspelled.

It is clear that the writer has not paid much attention to the language or the ordering of the textual functions in the abstract.

- 2) The second Abstract is entitled in English. However, in terms of components, it is sketchy, and in terms of coherence, it reveals a random ordering of the following three components: 1- subjects, 2- tools, and 3- results.
- 3) In Abstract three, one finds the translation of the title incorporated in the first paragraph. In the title, one finds the wrong use of capital letters and the use of *it's* where "its" is required. The word 'intermediate' is spelled as "Intermeprer". The "Kingdom of Saudi Arabia" becomes the *Saudi Arabian Kingdom*, and "school achievement"

becomes *scholastic achievement*. The last sentence says *fore recommodations and studies research are required*, which is hardly comprehensible.

One can note the misprints, the grammatical errors, the weak English which does not report the name of Saudi Arabia correctly, in addition to the vague sentence which ends the abstract. All these features point to a weak language level.

- 4) The fourth Abstract is short (103 words). It is made up of a brief review of two published papers and an indirect mention of the topic. The language of the review is sound. But it is not an abstract of any specific work.
- 5) Abstract number five is supervised by the same teacher who supervised Abstract four. It has the same orientation, a general introductory statement starting with *The progress of nation depends greatly on its people*, and in a short second paragraph, the writer mentions two publications reporting that they *emphasized when they testified that nothing can promote the standard of luxury ... better than developing creative performance*. The mentioning of the previous work has not clarified the meaning, and the statement seems to be general and vague. The abstract is hardly related to the work being summarized.
- 6) The sixth Abstract is yet another example of a literature review. It is longer than the previous two, but it follows the same pattern: a general comment about the topic as dealt with in the literature *Individuals and the environment have received a great deal of attention from ...*, followed by a classification of trends using two published works as references.

The abstract does not report any specific information from the works which are supposedly being summarized. As such this abstract can appear anywhere as a comment on the relationship between the individual and the environment.

- 7) Abstract seven starts with a general statement which introduces the topic and mentions the difference of opinions about kindergarten education. The first paragraph suffers from language problems. The first sentence is interrupted by a full-stop which is not needed and the verb *constitute* does not agree with the third person subject. The second sentence is also interrupted, *However, opinion differ as regards the importance. Kindergarten schooling as....* The

voice”, which is realized in the “epistemic stance”, in words like “possible” and “likely”, and in attitudinal stance words, like “successful” and “useful” (Pho, 2008, p. 243). But his most interesting finding is seen in reporting a 100% occurrence of two moves—presenting the research and summarizing the results—while describing the methodology comes to 90%, enabling Pho to claim three obligatory moves in the sample investigated (Pho, 2008, p. 237).

Alhuqbani’s study of research abstracts (Alhuqbani, forthcoming) is localized in the sense that it deals with English and Arabic abstracts written by Saudi researchers in Saudi journals, in addition to including the culture as a possible factor (Alhuqbani, 2013, pp. 371-372). Quantifying Swales (1990), Alhuqbani describes three moves and every step in each move in the sixty abstracts, half English and half Arabic, and he concludes that each move shows obligatory step(s) in addition to comparing the occurrence of the steps in Arabic and English abstracts in the sample. Thus, what is referred to as “obligatory” or “missing” is a particular step in a given move and not the move as a whole. For instance, Step One “claiming centrality” of Move One “establishing a territory” is used 53.33% in one police journal (JASR) and 6.66% in another journal (JPCP), making this step the highest in frequency. The second move (establishing a niche) is frequent, while the first and second steps (outlining purposes, announcing present research) are used more frequently (78.33% and 66.66% respectively). Alhuqbani states his position after comparing abstracts from a number of academic disciplines including law, linguistics, medicine, and police sciences, published in Arabic academic journals. He believes that “variation in the use of moves across disciplines could be attributed to the Arabic journal publication policy which leaves the writing of abstracts at the researchers’ disposal” (Alhuqbani, 2013, p. 379), a position which leans in favour of establishing prescriptive guidelines.

Alutaibi (2011) observed discrepancies in the occurrence of various components in the Moves in a sample of sixty abstracts from Saudi and British academic journals in humanities. Her results remain descriptive, while she identifies assertiveness in the evaluation move, which allows the writer’s judgement to be “assertive” or “non-assertive” (Alutaibi, 2011, pp. 75-77).

Descriptive results of almost all studies of abstract functions and organization remain a matter of percentage, but the employment of the figures ranges

from the purely statistical and computational to pedagogical prescriptive guidelines and recommendations. From the perspective of publishers, information technology experts such as information retrieval and storage management, the main emphasis is on brevity, readability and retrievability through technical descriptors. In other words, these technical concerns come heavily in favour of prescriptive dictates. The present investigation sets out to identify the need for English for M.A. students, and to establish the functions and components of the abstracts in the sample, and hence find any difference between the epistemological and the language competency of the writers of the sample abstracts.

6. Sample and Methodology

Thirty-four abstracts of completed M.A. theses were obtained from the Deanship of Academic Research at KFU. They were produced, in English, as part of theses written in Arabic. The field is education, though various areas of education are covered: curriculum, methodology, educational administration and educational guidance. The inclusion of a particular thesis depended on availability in the Deanship.

The abstracts appear as such, but they may have been edited by supervisors (see Al-Shabab, 2015), and accordingly may not faithfully represent the students’ level. Still, they represent students’ content, since the students must have produced the Arabic version that may have been given to the translator. The analysis of the abstracts is carried out at two levels. First, an ad hoc description of the erroneous aspects of the language of these abstracts is given, and then the components used in the abstract and the correlations among them are investigated. The description of “errors” is limited to a number of typical cases. The second level is more significant, since recent works in discourse and genre analysis have focused on the components of a variety or a part of text that belongs to a given variety as in the case of the introduction of scientific articles (Alutaibi, 2011 & Alhuqbani, 2013). The present concern focuses mainly on the components included in the abstract, while only scanty attention is given to the ordering of the components. Still, it would be interesting for future research to investigate whether the organization of the components reflects Arabic patterns or more “universal” patterns.

However, studies which focus on Arab graduate writing are scarce and models which suggest a working method for “the composition and informative abstracts” are prescriptive in nature (Smith and Liedich, 1980) and offer general advice and little insight into the informative and organizational choices involved in the actual making of an abstract by a human agent.

Shifting emphasis away from recurrent discussions of moves and sequencing in abstracts, Loan et al. (2014) brought the emphasis to the relationship between the background knowledge of the abstract writer and the ability to put what they know in an acceptable abstract. Inability to communicate in English those ideas they know very well means failure to participate in conferences and not being able to publish through that venue. To them, the main cause is the “discrepancies between the existing knowledge of SUT potential writers and actual practice of abstract writing” (Loan et al., 20014, p. 163). This mismatch between language and content can be remedied by instruction, a solution which is simple but by no means new. To them “it is crucial to make novice researchers aware of the required knowledge of a particular genre through formal training in their postgraduate programs” (Loan et al., 2014, p. 171). But simple observation and practical experience show that research students in Saudi Arabia and Arab countries are not short of instruction or English courses, and the solution should be found somewhere else.

Chan and Foo (2004) have studied three aspects of interest in research abstracts as reflected in the works of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) practitioners and Information Systems (IS) experts. They characterize the gap created by difference of focus by each group, identify an overlap in the working on language, and demonstrate the potential benefits of ESP pedagogy from the emphasis on clients abstract qualities highlighted by IS professionals. The emphasis is on the interdisciplinary nature of research abstracts. They maintain that “... the gap between what information experts expect of abstracts and what ESP teachers practise in abstract pedagogy remains” (Chan and Foo, 2004, pp. 102-103), indicating the need for “a better understanding about information systems, or to identify the qualities of abstracts...” (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 103). For IS professionals, successful abstracts are “characterized by qualities of brevity, accuracy, and clarity, exhaustivity, and on whether they serve the information needs of users”

(ibid., p.106), which places the abstract user’s concerns including readability and exhaustivity at the heart of studying abstracts. But satisfying the needs of the client includes meeting the requirements of conference organizers and standardizing agencies such as the ANSI, and the International Standards (ISO 214:1976)” (ibid. p. 106). This development has led to the emergence of a prescriptivism which according to Chan and Foo “believe the great concern of information professional for regulating abstracts qualities and abstracting skills” (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 106). They see that ESP teachers remain limited by “linguistic issues of rhetorical structures, and language conventions of abstracts in various disciplines” (ibid, p.107).

The common ground where both groups meet is language, since brevity, accuracy, clarity and exhaustivity are features of language (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 109). They use feedback from a Focus Group (FG) of seven IS professionals to seek their informed opinion about the relationship between ESP concerns and IS perspective vis-à-vis abstract writing and abstract IS qualities. The FG agrees that abstracts “have to be modified for the environment” suggesting that abstracts could have “hyperlinks” and that they could be written to “enhance information retrieval” (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 113). Significantly, the FG ranked content presentation above linguistic competency, and this in turn above exhaustivity, a ranking which reflects IS experts’ bias in favour of content, i.e. in favour of informativity.

What is in favour of Chan & Foo’s work is that it has brought informativity and user’s benefits, including readability, into prominence. But their main weakness lies in the fact that they do not include advances in text linguistics, corpus linguistics or computational linguistics in their discussion, because these branches of linguistics would be natural allies to IS professionals. Yet, unlike IS and ESP, these branches would not be prescriptive. On the contrary, in a fundamental sense both ESP researchers and IS professionals end up “recommending” guidelines and restrictions on the language and content of the abstract.

Pho (2008) sets out to search for the recurrent, obligatory moves in the abstract, in addition to identifying the salient grammatical features in each move in a sample of thirty abstracts from English language studies journal. Hence, his main concern is limited to language, but interestingly, he includes a unique aspect of the abstract, namely “authorial

regularly contain the “required” functional units, i.e. basic components?

3. Is there a discrepancy between language and knowledge of the domain in the sample of abstracts in the present corpus?
4. Do the prescriptive/pedagogical instructions make graduate learners of English better abstract writers?

The first and second questions look into the relationship between language and content, while the third and fourth focus on teaching about, as opposed to practicing how, to accomplish an acceptable abstract. Hence, the main pivot of the investigation has to do with the relationship between language and content, and whether pedagogical instructions affectively assist the novice abstract writer.

5. Literature Review: Local Need for English Abstract Writing: Balancing Language and Content, and the Shadow of the Descriptive/prescriptive dichotomy

The spread of English in the last fifty years has coincided with a unique surge in information technology and considerable advances in different academic disciplines. The flux of information presents a challenge to scholarship which has to communicate the new findings, albeit in the form of abstracts and summaries. Computer-based and computer-assisted processing of natural language has used “repeated phrases” (Peled, 2005), “names” (Jacso, 1998), and “concept-based” techniques (Li, 2005), to automatically abstract and extract texts from different disciplines and from media.¹ Research in information technology and communication has vehemently been engaged in designing search engines for internet access to abstract and/or information retrieval from different types of corpora. Jizba studied traditional applications of abstracts to access and develop Internet databases (Jizba, 1997). Nicholson (1997) studied Internet applications of natural language processing and suggested an “ideal database for the Web”. Craven (1996) used computer technology in the form of keyboard and key terms to assist ordinary users to produce an abstract, and reported a 37% success (Craven, 1996). Rothkegel (1995) used writing strategies to support humans in producing abstracts (Rothkegel, 1995). Earlier in the sixties of last century, abstracting and extracting

systems used linguistic features such as the “sentence dictionary” and the “word governed dictionary” (Earl, 1968). This prescriptive stance may be necessary but not informative when it comes to teaching or producing actual abstracts by humans not machines.

Graduate students in Saudi and Arab universities cannot afford to imprison themselves within the learning resources available in Arabic. They need to read and assimilate the summaries of works in English and be able to produce a summary of their own work in “good” English. Earlier it was mentioned that computer-assisted abstracts can be produced by humans as in the case of “keyboard and key terms” Craven (1996). But text production is widely acknowledged to be more complex than that and the rate of 37% success reported by Craven is not enough for producing a viable abstract. Hence, language specialists would be necessarily called upon to study this phenomenon and carry out research in linguistics and education.

Linguistic interest in text making has a long standing tradition (Schiffrin, 1988, & Swales & Feak, 2004). When it comes to making an abstract, the linguistic level is always there, though in certain approaches, the emphasis is on “content” in the sense of content analysis (Tibbo, 1992), lexical items (Craven, 1996) or grammatical structure (Earl, 1968). Content categories were used by Tibbo (1992) to compare the requirements of the American National Standard Institute (ANSI Z39.141979) with the “actual content” of 120 abstracts from different academic disciplines. Text understanding and making is at the heart of the functional approach to genre and discourse analysis, as an approach which has examined text structure and textual functions of language varieties, e.g. the biology lecture (Baka, 1996), radio news broadcasts (Al-Shabab & Bloor, 1996), introduction to scientific articles (Swales, 1990), and legal and newspaper articles (Bhatia, 1993). The study of academic abstracts pertains to a number of theoretical issues, including the relationship between performance in English and Arabic (Khuwaileh, 2000), research and teaching ESP (Doushaq, 1986), and theories of writing and abstracts writing (Bacha, 2003). Li rightly suggests that understanding a text requires from us to “extend the generation probabilities model to address a significant application that are related to concept-based understanding and meaning – semantic integration between text and database, based on entity identification and tracking” (Li, 2005).

1. See Liu et al. (1999) for abstracting Chinese newspaper articles, and Craven (2001) for automatic abstracting.

1. Introduction

Linguistic aspects and informative content play a range of roles in writing an acceptable academic abstract. Much of the discussion of abstract writing whether theoretical or practical, focuses on three main factors: language, which includes lucidity, content, which includes exhaustiveness, and length which includes brevity. The abstract is a specific text-type. Following Swales (1990), many researchers prefer the term genre, for being focused and relatable to rhetorical structuring. Above all, however, its formal language covers a wide range of knowledge domains, terminology and structural components. Although language holds together the content, the terminology, the structural components and length, still descriptive/prescriptive perspectives and practical considerations, including pedagogy and publishing guidelines, have overshadowed the basic relationship between language and content. This is mainly due to the overemphasis on the question of how an abstract *should* look like and what it *should* contain. Practical, rather than descriptive or academic, considerations have given rise to a prescriptivist stance, presented in expedient guidelines by publishers and rigid dogma by pedagogists, who justify their dictates by reference to the specific purpose of teaching, not learning, and limitations of space and the need for being economical.

2. Background of the Study Problem

Saudi M.A students majoring in Education, who are required to write an abstract may seek assistance from internet shadow writers, or produce ill-formed abstracts, a situation which reflects lack of language competence and a sense of helplessness. From the research community point of view, although research investigating the abstract as a genre has received considerable attention in the last two decades, the need for a localized and simplified approach to abstract writing remains valid (Alhuqbani, 2013 and forthcoming). This may have partly resulted from the negative effects generated by the descriptivist/prescriptivist dichotomy, which leaves English language learners who need to write an abstract torn between official requirements of graduate boards and gatekeepers to conference and journal publishing on the one hand, and descriptivist results obtained from research works on genre and discourse analysis on the other (Bhatia, 1993). The current work studies a selection of abstracts by Saudi

research students in education, attempting to identify the main components they utilize in their abstracts and to suggest simple solutions, rather than descriptive results or obligatory constraints on the production of a thesis/dissertation abstract. The use of descriptive results may overwhelm students with details and exception, leaving most of them wondering what option to follow, while strict obligatory rules limit their knowledge and give false impression that there is only one way of writing an abstract.

Using English as a medium of instruction, and hence teaching English for specific purposes, is not met with resistance in most Arab universities. But, departments of social sciences and humanities, led by Arabic departments, were first to call for using Arabic within the call for Arabization which has succeeded in these departments and which has extended this call to cover science and technology departments. Using Arabic to teach science subjects has always been accompanied by emphasis on the need to teach ESP, an emphasis which is often not attested in the case of social sciences and humanities. When it comes to higher studies programs, the missing component of not being able to consult or write abstracts creates a gap between research and studies carried out in Arabic and English/or French. The widening of the gap would ultimately lead to complete isolation of Arab research students in certain disciplines, which is almost defeating the very purpose of offering higher studies programs and engaging in research.

3. Statement of the Problem

The main aim of the current study is to investigate the competency of Saudi M.A. students majoring in Education to write an abstract, taking into account their rich background knowledge in their specializations. Secondly, the English components of the abstracts are examined to determine what they know and what they need to know to express the specialized knowledge they want to include in their abstracts.

4. Questions of the Study

The following questions will clarify the main concerns of the current investigation:

1. Does the language of the abstracts in the sample illustrate the required level of language proficiency?
2. Does the language of the abstracts in the sample

MA Abstract Writing: Balancing Language and Content Beyond Descriptive/Prescriptive Dictates

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Abstract: The main purpose of abstract writing has been overshadowed by descriptivists who hypothesize linguistic frames about how and why certain elements and functions should be used and sequenced in the abstract (Swales & Feak, 2004), and by prescriptivists who argue that the abstract should be brief, adequate and readable (Chan and Foo, 2004, p. 103). The present study assumes that for pedagogical purposes, one should benefit from descriptive predictions and utilize instructional rules for writing abstracts properly.

To study the textual structure in abstract writing, this paper examines the language of 34 English MA abstracts written by students in the Department of Education at King Faisal University. The results reveal that there are no statistical correlations among the textual components in the sample such as topic, literature and data. This is in addition to the erroneous language and the discrepancy between the language level and the academic content manifested in the sample abstracts. The paper recommends adopting a genre-based approach which focuses on specific information blocks – components— in teaching abstract writing to equip learners with a simple, effective use of the rich information available to them in their subject-domain .

Key Words: Abstract writing, abstract content, descriptivism/prescriptivism, localization.

كتابة خلاصات رسائل الماجستير: الموازنة بين اللغة والمضمون وتجاوز الإملاءات الوصفية والمعيارية

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(قدم للنشر في ١٢/٠٦/١٤٣٦ هـ؛ وقبل للنشر في ٢٨/٧/١٤٣٦ هـ)

ملخص البحث : ثمة عدم وضوح في فهم الهدف الأساس من كتابة خلاصات مناسبة ووافية لرسائل الماجستير. ويعزى عدم الوضوح هذا إلى تأثير المنظرين الوصفيين (descriptivists) الذين يضعون فرضيات معينة حول كيفية وأسباب استعمال عناصر بذاتها وترتيبها في تسلسل معين في الخلاصة (سويلز وفيك، ٢٠٠٤)، وإلى المعياريين (prescriptivists) الذين يرفعون أصواتهم مطالبين بوجوب أن تكون الخلاصة موجزة ووافية، وقابلة للقراءة (تشان وفو، ٢٠٠٤، ص ١٠٣). أما الموقف القائم حالياً من الموضوع فيرى أن بلوغ الأهداف التعليمية يقتضي أن نستعين في عملية كتابة الخلاصة بما تأتي به التنبؤات الوصفية، وأن نستخدم في الوقت ذاته القواعد البيداغوجية (التعليمية) لتكون الوسائل التي تساعدنا في تحقيق الغاية التي نسعى إلى تحقيقها والتي تتمثل في صياغة الخلاصة على الوجه الأمثل. يتناول البحث دراسة ٣٤ خلاصة لرسائل ماجستير أنجزها قسم التربية بجامعة الملك فيصل. وتبين من النتائج أنه ليس ثمة علاقات ترابطية بين المكونات النصية للخلاصات التي تتضمنها العينة مثل الموضوع والأدبيات والبيانات. هذا فضلاً عن الأخطاء اللغوية وحالات التباين والتناقض بين المستوى اللغوي والمحتوى الأكاديمي في الخلاصات المعتمدة في الدراسة. ويوصي الباحث بضرورة تبني منهج يعتمد "جنس النص" ويركز على كتل معلوماتية - مكونات - معينة في تدريس كيفية كتابة الخلاصات لتمكين الدارسين من استخدام ما يتوفر لديهم من معلومات في ميدان دراستهم بصورة سهلة، غير معقدة، ولكنها في الوقت ذاته فاعلة وتؤدي الغرض المنشود.

الكلمات المفتاحية: كتابة الخلاصات، محتوى الخلاصة، الوصف والتقنين، المحلية.

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