THE ENGLISH ABSTRACT IN JOURNAL ARTICLES ON APPLIED LINGUISTICS: LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES

Ton Nu My Nhat[*1], Phan Thi My Hao[2]

1. Institute of Linguistics, Duy Tan University, Da Nang, Vietnam
2. HUTECH University, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam

Abstract: This study explores the lexico-grammatical features of the abstracts of research articles (RAAs) in the field of applied linguistics. The data for this study is 30 RAAs from the two journals - *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (ESPJ) and *TESOL Quarterly Journal* (TSQJ). The analysis was based on Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG) as an analytical tool and confined to three systems of transitivity, modality and thematisation. The results reveal that regarding transitivity, an overwhelming majority lies with material and relational processes although all types of processes are present. As for modality, most of the clauses are non-modalised. As far as thematic structure is concerned, this genre contains mainly single unmarked topical themes; the use of multiple, interpersonal and textual themes is infrequent. The results of this study hold practical implications for teaching English for Academic Purposes.

Keywords: research article abstract, systemic functional grammar, transitivity, modality, thematisation

1. Introduction

Research articles (RAs) are aimed to communicate new knowledge to members of the academic community and thus persuading them to accept the claims (Hyland, 2000). One of the key parts of a RA is the abstract, which is considered as the point of departure. Hartley (2003) maintains that the abstract tends to be the first part of a journal article to be read because it captures the essence of the whole article. Due to the importance of the communicative appeal of an abstract and given the status of English as a lingua franca, many journals that are published in languages other than English also need the submission of an English version of the abstract (Lorés, 2004). The abstracts written in English, therefore, have been well researched, for both writing and reading purposes. Journal comprehension would be greatly improved if readers could recognize the linguistic signals of the different functions of the abstracts. On the other hand, thanks to the signals which provide a clear guidance to readers, writers can communicate their ideas more effectively.

There has been a growing body of literature that describes the RAA. Researchers have explored the abstracts either in English written by native speakers or from a cross-linguistic perspective. These

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* Corresponding author.
 Email address: tonnmynhat@dtu.edu.vn

studies investigated the abstracts in different disciplines, such as engineering, finance and surgery (Ge & Yang, 2005), experimental social science (Martín, 2003), protozoology (Cross & Oppenhein, 2006), conservation biology and wildlife behavior (Samraj, 2005), linguistics (Lorés, 2004), linguistics and chemistry (Li, 2011), applied linguistics (Santos, 1996; Pho, 2008), and so on. These researches explored either the macro-structure (rhetorical structure, move-structure, generic structure) and/or micro linguistic features. Several studies have documented the linguistic features such as tense (Chalak & Norouzi, 2013; Cross & Oppenhein, 2006; Li, 2011; Salager-Meyer, 1992; Tseng, 2011), voice (Cross & Oppenhein, 2006; Li, 2011), modality (Salager-Meyer, 1992), or subject and voice (Pho, 2008). These studies, however, have explored the linguistic features in terms of traditional concepts. Such descriptions are unsatisfactory because on the one hand they have been descriptive in nature, failing to take account of the social-cultural features, and on the other hand research on the article abstract has been mostly restricted to one single feature or two. This indicates a need to understand the causal factors underlying these features.

In this paper, we attempt to extend these previous studies by manipulating SFG as an analytical tool. SFG is an internationally influential model of language associated with the English-born linguist Michael Halliday. It enables an in-depth description of lexico-grammatical features interpreted in terms of discourse-semantic features. Because it is unable to encompass the multiple lexico-grammatical dimensions representing the three lines of meaning in SFG in one paper, this investigation focuses on only one dimension in each meaning. This study sought to answer the following specific research questions: (1) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *transitivity* and how do they represent the *experiential* meaning? (2) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *modality* and how do they represent the *interpersonal* meaning? and (3) What are the typical lexical-grammatical features regarding *thematic structure* and how do they represent the *textual* meaning?

2. Literature Review

SFG is a social, descriptive theory of language. Rather than a set of rules for specifying grammatical structures, SFG presents language as a resource for creating meanings – the three simultaneously performed meta-functions (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). The *ideational function* serves for the expression of content. It refers to human experience of the world, including the worlds in minds, to describe events and states, and the entities that are involved in them. The *interpersonal function* refers to the communication roles created and maintained by using language. The *textual meaning* refers to the use of language to organize human's experiential, logical and interpersonal meaning into a coherent whole. In SFG, each metafunction is realized through choices from various systems in the lexico-grammar of a language. The ideational metafunction is realized through transitivity system and logico-semantic types; the interpersonal through mood and modality, and the textual through thematic structure, information structure and cohesion.
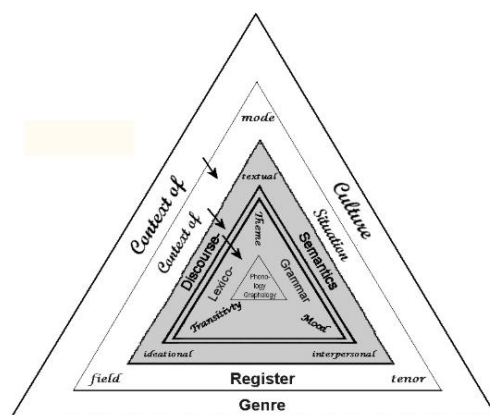
According to Halliday, each of the three metafunctions also tends to serve to project one of the three different aspects of context; he sets the following correspondences as a working hypothesis:

Field _____ ideational

Tenor _____ interpersonal

Mode _____ textual

The correlation between context, functions and wordings can be seen in Figure 1.

Figure 1

Context, Semantics and Lexico-Grammar (Eggins, 2004, p. 112)

A full account can be contemplated in some widely circulated works on SFG, the most accessible being Downing and Locke (1995), Eggins (2004), and Halliday and Matthiessen (2004).

This study is confined to only three linguistic resources of each line of meaning: we chose to analyze transitivity system for ideational meaning, modality for interpersonal meaning and thematic structure for textual meaning, each of which is briefly presented below.

2.1. Transitivity

The system of transitivity is concerned with different process types and their participants and circumstances (Eggins, 2004; Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Material process is the process of doing and happening. It might be action or event such as kicking, beating, running, walking, etc. (e.g. *We are all eating now; The lion caught the tourist*). *Behavioural process* is the process of physiological and psychological behaviour such as breathing, crying, drinking, etc. (e.g. *She's laughing; Don't breathe!*). *Mental process* is the process of sensing such as thinking, loving, wanting, hoping, etc. It is concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness (e.g. *He saw the car; Mary liked the gift.*). *Verbal process* is the process of saying such as saying, telling, speaking, talking, etc. (*John said 'I'm hungry'; They praised her to her parents*). *Relational process* is the process of being, having, becoming, in which a participant is characterized, identified, or situated circumstantially. There are three main types of relation: *intensive*, *possessive* and *circumstantial* (e.g. *Pat is the richest; Peter has a piano.*). *Existential process* is the process of existing, indicating that something or some natural force exists (e.g. *There was a storm; On the wall there hangs a picture.*).

Circumstances are almost always optional augmentations of the clause rather than obligatory components and typically occur freely in all types of process. They are realized by adverbial groups or prepositional phrases. Circumstantial element serves as an expansion of the experiential content of the text instead of standing on its own. The circumstantials consist of nine types including *Extent, Location, Manner, Cause, Contingency,* Ac*companiment*, *Role*, *Matter* and *Angle*.

2.2. Modality

Modality is a complicated area of the different ways with which a language user can intrude on their messages to convey

attitudes and judgment. There are four main kinds of modality: probability, usuality, obligation and readiness. This strand of meaning can be expressed in various ways (summarized in Table 2). There is a difference in the degree to which the speaker seems to be taking responsibility for the assessment or the pressure on the other person. S/he may express his/her subjective view point clearly, or do it in an objective way by making it appear to be a quality of the event itself.

Table 1

Realizations of Modality in English (Martin et al., 1997, p. 70)

Kinds of modality	Congruent realizations			Metaphorical realizations	
	Finite **Implicitly subjective**	Adjunct (mood) **Implicitly objective**	Predicator **Implicitly objective**	Mental clause **Explicitly subjective**	Attributive clause **Explicitly objective**
Probability	can/could may/might will/would should	possibly probably certainly ...		[cognitive:] I guess, I think, I know	it is possible it is probable it is certain
Usuality	ought to, must	sometimes, usually, always...			it is unusual (for him to leave)
Obligation		necessarily ...	be allowed to be supposed to be obliged to	[affective:] I'm willing for... I expect... I want...	it is permitted it is expected it's necessary (for him to leave)
Readiness: inclination		willingly, eagerly	be willing to be keen to be determined to	[verbal group complex] I'd like to leave I want to leave	it'd be lovely to leave
Readiness: ability	can/could		be able to		it is possible for him to leave

2.3. Thematisation

Thematisation is concerned with the organization of information within individual clauses, and through this, with the organization of the larger text, given its purpose and context. The system of Theme is realized via a structure in which the clause falls into two main constituents – a THEME and a RHEME. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004) define the point of departure of the message as THEME, and the remainder of the message as RHEME. THEME is the element coming first in the clause, while RHEME is the one providing additional information to the starting point. Theme may be single or multiple, marked or unmarked. A single Theme is one that contains only an

experiential element (topical Theme). Topical Themes are divided into unmarked topical Theme and marked topical Theme. If the first topical element of a declarative clause is the Subject, it is called unmarked theme; non-subject themes are marked. There are also other elements preceding the topical theme which are either textual or interpersonal in function, playing no part in the experiential meaning in the clause. When there is a *topical Theme* plus *textual Theme* and/or *interpersonal Themes* in a clause, the clause has *multiple Theme*. The *textual Theme* almost always constitutes the first part of the Theme. It gives thematic prominence to textual elements with a linking function. It can be realized by conjunctions, relative pronouns, conjunctives and continuatives. The *interpersonal Theme* represents the interpersonal element with which the speaker or writer acts on the listener or reader. It can be a *vocative*, a *modal* or a *comment adjunct*, a *finite verbal operator*, *Wh-element* or *interpersonal metaphors of modality*. Besides, when the speakers/writers wish to give emphasis to a constituent, they can make use of *predicated Theme*. The typical structure of this theme begins with "It is/was...".

3. Research Methods

3.1. Data Collection

Data for this study consist of 30 RAAs collected from two journals in the discipline of applied linguistics - 15 RAAs from *English for Specific Purposes Journal* (ESPJ) and 15 RAAs from *TESOL Quarterly Journal* (TSQJ). These two journals were chosen as they are prestigious and widely circulated. The RAAs chosen as data for this study were confined to the latest issues up to the time when this study began. Another criterion of selection was whether the article is a review of literature or an empirical study; only the abstracts of the papers which report empirical studies were chosen. The fifteen abstracts from each journal were coded from 1 to 15 (see Appendix); these codes are referred to in parentheses at the end of the examples in Section 4 as the sources from which the illustrations are extracted.
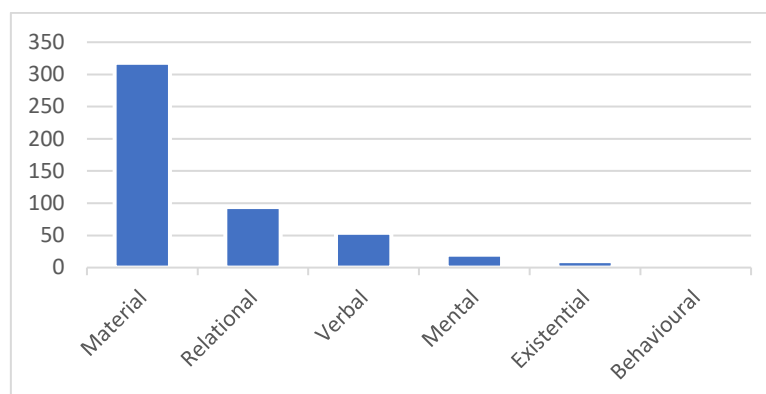
3.2. Data Analysis

The analytical unit was the clause. The initial step involved the division of each abstract into clause complexes (traditionally the sentence), then into clauses. To establish the linguistic features in each meaning, we analyzed the data in terms of transitivity (processes and circumstances), modality, and thematic structure. To determine the prominent characteristic features, we based on the statistical figure of occurrence of each sub-type. Finally, the whole linguistic picture was interpreted in terms of the three corresponding situational variables of field, tenor and mode.

4. Findings

In 30 RAAs, there are a total of 192 clause complexes. Of these, 39 sentences consist of a single clause ('clause simplex'); the remainders are clause complexes, 56 with two, 55 with three, 21 with four, 10 with five, 3 with six, 2 with seven, and 2 with eight clauses, giving a total of 498 clauses in all. No minor clause is found.

4.1. Transitivity

Figure 1 summarizes the analysis of transitivity of 30 RAAs, showing the distribution of the process types. These are shown for all clauses (498 clauses), including those that are embedded, since clauses select freely in the transitivity systems.

Figure 2

Distribution of Processes

As can be seen from Figure 2, all the six types are found. Among them, Material process is the most predominant (63.86%), accounting for more than three-fifths of the clauses, leaving each of all the other five types a very low proportion. Relational process ranks second (18.88%). Meanwhile, Verbal, Mental, Existential and Behavioural processes are less common, with 10.84%, 4.02%, 2.01% and 0.40% respectively.

As for Material process, those in the abstracts mainly focus on actions. The variety of verbs used in the abstracts such as *examine, investigate, draw, identify, show, describe, develop...* shows that writers perform many different activities, and the writers have a strong tendency toward providing what they did in their studies. Some other verbs are found as signals of this process in these such as *analyze, investigate,* etc. For example,

(1) It <u>investigates</u>, first, how each student <u>participated</u>, and <u>was positioned</u>, in the classroom network of practice, and, second, what kinds of English growth each student <u>experienced</u> between the fall and spring. (TSQJ-9)

Regarding Relational Process, all the three subtypes are found, with the number of intensive relational process being far higher than the others. Although 'be' is the most common intensive verb used, other synonyms exist in the abstracts like *mean*, for example:

(2) Findings indicate, however, that while centrality and increasingly full participation in the classroom network of practice did <u>mean</u> different ways of interacting, a more central place did not afford greater language growth in measures of vocabulary and syntactic complexity. (TSQJ-9)

The verbs *consist, include, have, involve,* etc... are used as signals of possessive relational processes, whereas circumstantial relational processes are presented by verbs *present, associate, relate*.

(3) These findings illuminate contingencies of an EMI policy bound by a local context which <u>include</u> a shared understanding of the influences of an instructional language on teaching HSS subjects. (ESPJ-12)

Verbal process is just over 10%, *suggest, report, say, conclude, discuss, recommend* being the common verbs. For example,

(4) Post-analytically, the author <u>suggests</u> pedagogical implications of

what the participants' categories <u>say</u> about issues related to the ER teaching principles in an English for academic purposes context. (TSQJ-2)

The proportions of Mental, Existential and Behavioural processes are low. Mental process exists in RAAs with low frequency (4.02 %). *Perceive*, *view*, *want*, *feel*, *expect,* etc. are the verbs commonly employed. Existential and Behavioural processes occupy the lowest rank with only 2.01% and 0.40% respectively. The existential process can be present in the abstracts by verbs such as *persist*, *be*, *emerge* and *appear*; whereas, *observe* describes the behavioural process.

(5) Interestingly, the local language <u>was perceived</u> as crucial to practicing the HSS disciplines and to conducting their professional roles. (ESPJ-12)

(6) Although the federal government has documented that schools are instituting policies of providing only one set of services, such as special education or EL supports, there <u>is</u> little understanding as to why this practice <u>persists</u> in spite of educational laws and policies. (TSQJ-11)

(7) This research adopts a qualitative approach, using data from two groups of participants: a group of nine nurses who participated in interviews and a group of 10 nurses who <u>were observed</u> in the workplace. (TSQJ-4)

Table 2 presents the most common verbs realizing each process in the RAAs analyzed.

Table 2

Typical Verbs Realizing Processes

Process	Verbs
Material	examine, identify, conduct, show, use, analyse, investigate, participate, experience, take, note
Relational	Intensive: be, mean
	Possessive: consist, include, have, involve, obtain, contain
	Circumstantial: present, need, associate, support, relate, bound
Mental	perceive, want, feel, expect, consider
Existential	exist, persist, emerge, appear, be, exhibit
Verbal	suggest, report, say, conclude, discuss, recommend
Behavioural	observe

Closely related to the processes are the attendant circumstances, functioning to increase the experiential content by adding specificity to the experiential meanings in these abstracts. They give more details about the descriptions by telling where, when, why, how, or with whom. Overall, circumstances do not frequently appear in every clause, approximately one circumstance per two clauses; nearly all kinds of circumstances appear in RAAs. Among those, the dominant circumstance is that of Location (35.10%). Manner comes second (17.96%), followed by Accompaniment (12.65%). This number signifies that the writers tend to clarify their studies by noting where and how the studies have been implemented. One special thing is

that none of temporal location occurs at all in the abstracts. The proportions of *Role* and *Cause* are nearly equal - 8.57% and 8.16%, respectively. The frequencies of *Angle* and *Contingency* are rare - 0.82% and 0.41%).

The following abstract illustrates how circumstances are used. The circumstances are underlined, followed by the type specified in parentheses.

(8) Technical words are words whose meanings are related to one specific and specialized subject area, such as Business English (BE). Knowledge of the semantic nuances and pragmatic uses of these technical words is crucial to developing one's competence in a particular field [Location]. Thus, developing a list of frequent technical words in a given area is a necessary resource for those who are teaching and learning English for Specific Purposes (ESP). The present study develops such a list of frequently used technical words in the field of finance by adopting a combined method [Manner] (Keyword Analysis and a modified rating scale). The resulting list contains 979 words crucial to finance, which are categorized into 569 word families [Extent]. These 979 words are listed in both the General Service List (GSL) and the Academic Word List (AWL) (413 and 291 words, respectively) [Location]. This study demonstrates that a combined Keyword Analysis-rating scale method can more effectively [Manner] identify high frequency technical words than can either of these methods used alone. Hybrid methods are recommended for creating future BE vocabulary lists to overcome the inherent flaws
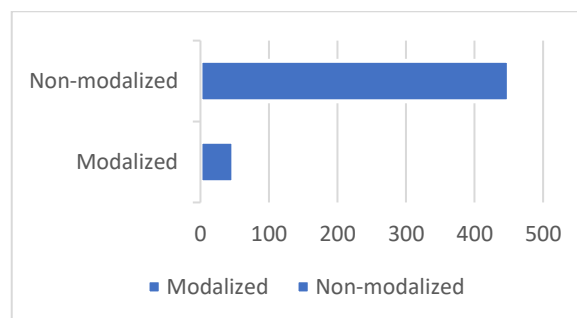
of individual analytic methods. (ESPJ-11)

4.2. Modality

The number of modalised clauses is not very high (less than 10%), most of which express probability, and less frequently obligation. The ratio between the modalised clauses to the non-modalised is about one to ten (Figure 3). Because the number of modalised clauses is not very high (less than 10%), we chose not to make further analysis into the various sub-systems of modality.

Figure 3

Distribution of Modalised/Non Modalised Clauses

Modality is realized by modal operators such as *can*, *may, could, will, might*. Among them, *can* is used frequently and is often employed in the passive voice, as can be seen in the following examples.

(9) The approach to curriculum development illustrated in this paper can be applied to other ESP topics. (ESPJ-14)

Others such as *may*, *should*, *might*, and the lexical verb *suggest* are employed to convey obligation, or inclination. In these abstracts, inclination is tied to giving suggestions drawn from results of the studies. For example,

(10) Pre-service teacher education courses on subjects such as Biology, Geography or Spanish may include ESP in their curricula. ESP can be taught with a view to reinforcing

content and language integrated learning (CLIL). The purpose of this study is to understand how CLIL and ESP can complement each other. (ESPJ-3)

(11) It <u>should</u> be noted that the EMI experience also interacts with both students' and teachers' L2 motivation. (TSQJ-5)

(12) The study <u>suggests</u> that paraphrasing by these advanced graduate students is a process of smoothly integrating the source information into the new text by syntactically restructuring, interpreting and recounting only the source text with relevance to the new text. (ESPJ-10)

Besides, adjective *likely* are also used to express ability and probability.

(13) This description of how experienced tutors support their trainees' vocabulary acquisition is <u>likely</u> to be of value to new and experienced tutors in trades teaching and beyond. (ESPJ-4)

There is only one Comment adjunct out of 498 clauses, as can be seen in (14).

(14) <u>Surprisingly,</u> interactional metadiscourse shows a marked decline in the discursive soft knowledge fields and a substantial increase in the science subjects. (ESPJ-9)

4.3. Thematisation

In the analysis of thematisation, the embedded clauses are ignored. It is because 'their thematic contribution to the discourse is minimal' (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 100). The result of analysis is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Frequency of Theme Types

Types of theme	Textual Theme	Interpersonal Theme	Topical Theme		Total
			Marked	Unmarked	
No. of instances	108	5	49	231	280
Percentage (%)	38.57	1.79	17.50	82.50	100

As can be seen from Table 2, two things stand out: (1) Interpersonal Themes are rarely used in RAAs, and (2) a predominant proportion of Topical Themes are unmarked.

Firstly, there are only five cases of Interpersonal Themes. This shows that it is not common for RAAs writers to convey their attitudes. For example,

(15) <u>Surprisingly,</u> interactional metadiscourse shows a marked decline in the discursive soft knowledge fields and a substantial increase in the science subjects. (ESPJ-9)

(16) <u>Interestingly,</u> the local language was perceived as crucial to practicing the HSS disciplines and to conducting their professional roles. (ESPJ-12)

Most of Topical Themes unmarked, with over one-fifth (82.50%). This indispensably makes the abstracts become clear and concise.

(17) <u>Results</u> show that <u>the use of authentic materials, a focus on subject matter knowledge and language awareness-based activities</u> had a positive impact on student-

teachers' trajectories as future teachers and foreign language learners. (ESPJ-3)

(18) This study provides insights into language development in a trades training context in New Zealand. (ESPJ-4)

Thematised –ing, or –en clauses are often used as signals of marked topical themes. According to Downing and Locke (1995, p. 234), they are rather formal and are characteristic of written rather than spoken language.

(19) Extending our diachronic work analysing a corpus of 2.2 million words from articles in the top journals in four disciplines, we show there has been a significant increase in interactive features and a significant decrease in interactional types. (ESPJ-9)

(20) Given that the enactment of EMI varies according to the underlying language ideologies of the educators who implement it, the authors argue for […]. (TSQJ-1)

More commonly used are the circumstances of spatial location.

(21) In this research setting, English language-learning motivation, authenticity and identity played a crucial role. (ESPJ-3)

(22) In this paper we explore whether, and to what extent, metadiscourse has changed in professional writing in different disciplines over the past 50 years. (ESPJ-9)

Textual themes are signaled by conjunctions such as *although*, *and*, *on the one hand*, *on the other hand*, *instead*, *because*, *firstly*, *secondly*, *furthermore*, serving to make RAAs logically expressed.

(23) Furthermore, it examines how these resources shape and were shaped by the classroom community of practice. (TSQJ-14)

5. Discussion

These results are in agreement with those obtained by Gosden (1993), Lorés (2004), Pho (2008) and Salager-Meyer (1992). As for thematic realization, this study produced results which corroborate the features found by Gosden (1993) and Lorés (2004). That a predominant proportion of themes are unmarked topical Themes is similar to the result in Gosden (1993)'s study which reveals that the most common topical Themes in scientific and academic discourse in English tend to be realized in the grammatical category of Subject. In Lorés (2004)' study, thematic analysis was carried out not in isolated sentences but in terms of thematic progression and method of thematic development, that is, how thematic material is linked to the material which comes next in the text and which material is typically used in thematic position. Although analyzed from a slightly different perspective, the finding accords with that of our present study. Lorés (2004) found that Theme was generally realised as the unmarked Theme; the other realisations were 'empty it' and subordinate clauses, textual themes (*however*), which were particularly infrequent. Lores (2004)'s findings were also similar to ours in terms of the circumstantial element as marked Theme. Pho (2008)'s findings concerning the grammatical subjects reveal semantic features of this category, which are, though incomparable to ours, do agree with our major finding that the unmarked topical Themes, traditionally the grammatical Subject, are typical of the English abstracts in applied linguistics. Moreover, comparison of our finding in terms of modality with Salager-Meyer (1992)'s study of modality

usage in medical English abstracts reveals similarity, too. In both studies, modals make up less than 10% of all the verb forms in the abstracts, with 'may' being of the highest frequency, followed by 'can'.

All these previous studies were concerned with the correlations between these linguistic features and the rhetorical moves. Evidence from these studies suggest how the meaning conveyed by these features is related to the communicative function of the different rhetorical stages (moves) of the abstracts. Our present study adopts the SFL approach to genre analysis. This approach perceives genres as goal-oriented social activities that people engage in as members of their culture (Martin, 1984; Eggins, 2004). SFL considers '*realization*' as a key notion which helps to describe the dynamic relationship between language features and contextual variables, including *Field*, *Mode* and *Tenor*. Each of these situational variables has a systemic and predictable relation with lexico-grammatical patterns.

This article is narrowed to just three systems - transitivity, modality and thematic structure. The relationship between form, function and context is summarized in Table 3.

As for Field, findings regarding transitivity show that Material process takes the lead, followed by Relational, Verbal process ranking the third; Mental, Behavioural and Existential processes being very infrequent. These findings show that RAAs must describe activities concerning what the researchers have done in order to carry out their studies. The authors' feelings are not expressed in the RAAs. Besides, in order to increase the experiential content of the actions, specificity is added to the information given through a number of Circumstances. Among the nine types of circumstances, Location is the most frequent; Manner ranks for the second. These numbers signify that the writers tend to clarify their studies by noting where and how the studies have been implemented.

Table 3

Relationships Between Situational Context and Lexico-Grammatical Features of RAAs

	Situational context	Lexico-grammatical features	
FIELD	+ Function: to summarize a study; + Subject matters: introducing the study, indicating the method; highlighting the main findings; suggesting some implications.	+ Predominant with Material processes to describe what has been done; + Slightly common with Relational processes to feature findings; + A small proportion of Verbal processes to convey implications; + Rare occurrence of Mental processes due to absence of expression of feelings; + Common use of circumstances of Location and Manner to note the context of a study and how it has been implemented.	TRANSITIVITY
MODE	+ Power relation: unequal, formal Writer: giving information Reader: receiving information + Scientific information is presented without subjective feelings and judgments.	+ Statements only; no minor clauses, questions, exclamations; + Overwhelming majority of non-modalized clauses.	MODALITY

TENOR	+ Medium: written + Code: English + Discourse community: academic	+ Range of structures; + Few Interpersonal themes; + Large number of unmarked Topical themes; + Common use of Textual themes.	THEMES

Tenor - the social relations between the participants - is realized through the grammatical use of the mood system and modality. This study did not analyze mood system as it stands out clear: all the sentences are statements to provide information, namely summarizing the accompanying full-text. Not a single minor clause was found, due to the formal nature of academic context; neither were there questions and exclamations. Regarding Modality, the number of modalised clauses is not very high, just less than 10%. Modality belongs to probability and obligation. A possible explanation for this characteristic might be that the authors tend not to express their attitudes and judgments in this section.

Finally, Mode, which represents the role of language in an interaction, is manifested through the degree of grammatical complexity and thematic structures. The very first stage of the analysis indicated that the most common patterns lie with sentences of two, three clauses (29.1% and 28.6%, respectively) and one single clause (20.3%). Sentences with six, seven or eight clauses are minimal (1.56%, 1.04% and 1.04 %, respectively). This suggests a link with the written medium, where a range of structures are highly appreciated. This situational factor also triggers the typical features of Themes. That there are only few Interpersonal Themes and a large number of unmarked Topical themes can be attributed to the written mode and academic style. This also explains the moderate proportion of textual Themes, which helps to create clarity and logicality between ideas in this concise section of an article.

6. Conclusion

The goal of the current study was to determine the lexico-grammatical features of the English RAAs in applied linguistics. Manipulating SFG as an analytical framework, we analyzed transitivity, modality, and thematic structure of RAAs written in English. This study has identified the typical characteristics, which generally agree with the salient features found in the previous studies. What makes this study significantly contribute to the ongoing research of RAAs in general and RAAs in applied linguistics in particular is the methodological stance, which is firmly based on SFG. Whereas mostly all of the linguistic patterns focused on in the previous studies are the traditional grammatical areas, this study makes use of the SFG terminology. This methodological strength lends the convincing interpretation of the results in close association with the social context in which the genre unfolds.

The results of the study hold some pedagogical implications for under-graduates and post-graduates in the discipline of applied linguistics, especially those from the non-English backgrounds who are learning to write for publication in English. Gee (2008, p. 140) argues that it is through natural exposure to elements of the Discourse and interactions with discourse communities can a Discourse be fully mastered. Gee (2008) also positions that explicit instruction of the genre-specific features of a new Discourse help acquire meta-knowledge and understanding. The theoretical underpinning of this approach is provided by Hyland (2003)'s genre

pedagogy, which is a socially informed theory of language, grounded in research on texts and contexts. The theory is strongly committed to empowering learners to attend to the subtle language to participate effectively in target situations. A heightened awareness of the linguistic features which are characterized by the purposeful social activity of a discourse community, as evidenced from the findings of this current study and the previous studies in the same line, can prepare novice writers for participation in the world of publication. To create well-formed and effective RAAs in English, the non-native English writers need improvement in formal knowledge and understanding of why they are written the way they are. The ESP teacher's role is to assist learners toward a command of this meta-knowledge through systematic and explicit instruction. In addition, repeated decoding of RAAs help learners establish a repertoire of appropriate language for them to be able to exploit to meet their needs. Beside the important practical implication, evidence from the analysis and interpretation serves as methodological reasons to explain why linguistic features should be investigated in sufficient detail if ESP teachers are to provide a pedagogically meaningful meta-knowledge for novice researchers in a particular discipline.

A clear limitation of this study is that the present study focuses on only 30 abstracts of ESPJ and TSQJ. This leads to only tentative conclusions instead of applicable generalizations. The analysis is also confined to only transitivity, modality, and thematic structure. Thus, this study has thrown up many questions in need of further investigation. Further work needs to be done on this genre as follows: an investigation into correlations between Logico-semantic and Move structure of RAAs, and/or an investigation into the same features focused on this study, but with larger data, and/or data written by Viet Nam researchers.

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Appendix: Data sources

(ESP stands for English for Specific Purposes; TSQ for TESOL Quarterly)

Code	Research article (Names of authors have been removed and titles partially omitted for concise presentation)
ESPJ 1	Identity constructions of ESP teachers in a Chinese university. *ESP*, *49*, 1-13.
ESPJ 2	Is ability grouping […] language proficiency development? *ESP*, *49*, 39-48.
ESPJ 3	Learning subject-specific content […] story in Argentina. *ESP*, *50*, 1-13.
ESPJ 4	"We learn as we go": How […] during vocational training. *ESP*, *50*, 14-27.
ESPJ 5	Words for what? Contrasting […] academic vocabulary needs. *ESP*, *50*, 28-39.
ESPJ 6	Strengthening move analysis […] the function-form gap. *ESP*, *50*, 40-63.
ESPJ 7	"As we all know": Examining […] in academic writing. *ESP*, *50*, 64-80.
ESPJ 8	What do nurses say […]: The case of Taiwanese nurses. *ESP*, *50*, 116-129.
ESPJ 9	"In this paper we suggest": Changing […] metadiscourse. *ESP*, *51*, 18-30.
ESPJ 10	Paraphrasing to transform […] graduate student writing. *ESP*, *51*, 31-44.
ESPJ 11	Developing a frequent technical […]: A hybrid approach. *ESP*, *51*, 45-54.
ESPJ 12	Challenges in implementing […] engineering students. *ESP*, *51*, 111-123.
ESPJ 13	Bringing reality to the classroom: Exercises in intertextuality. *ESP*, *52*, 1-12.
ESPJ 14	Proposing and illustrating a […] topics in business English. *ESP*, *52*, 27-46.
ESPJ 15	Modeling Taiwanese adolescent […] word list. *ESP*, *52*, 47-59.
TSQJ 1	Reimagining English-medium instructional […]. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 516-539.
TSQJ 2	New contexts, new challenges for […] instruction. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 540-563.
TSQJ 3	Roles of vocabulary knowledge […] undergraduates. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 564-587.
TSQJ 4	Longitudinal vocabulary […] maths, and science. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 588-610.
TSQJ 5	Speaking anxiety and strategy […] contexts. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 611-633.
TSQJ 6	Assessing English-medium […] disciplines. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 634-656.
TSQJ 7	Teachers' and students' second […] approach. *TSQ*, *52*(3), 657-679.
TSQJ 8	Understanding reading motivation […] focus group. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 772-797.
TSQJ 9	The perks of being peripheral […] of practice. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 798-844.
TSQJ 10	"Because we are peers, […] classroom interactions. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 845-876.
TSQJ 11	Breaking one law to uphold […] with disabilities. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 877-910.
TSQJ 12	Teaching English as […] public school in Spain. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 943-970.
TSQJ 13	Learning vocabulary through […] of the same text? *TSQ*, *52*(4), 971-994.
TSQJ 14	Spanish, Arabic, and […] classroom communities. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 995-1021.
TSQJ 15	Discovering […] design-based research. *TSQ*, *52*(4), 1022-1049.

TÓM TẮT TIẾNG ANH TRONG BÀI BÁO TẠP CHÍ CHUYÊN NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ HỌC ỨNG DỤNG: NHỮNG ĐẶC TRƯNG TỪ VỰNG-NGỮ PHÁP

Tôn Nữ Mỹ Nhật[1], Phan Thị Mỹ Hảo[2]

1. Viện Ngôn ngữ, Đại học Duy Tân, Đà Nẵng, Việt Nam
2. Trường Đại học HUTECH, Thành phố Hồ Chí Minh, Việt Nam

Tóm tắt: Công trình này nghiên cứu những đặc trưng từ vựng-ngữ pháp của phần tóm tắt tiếng Anh trong bài báo khoa học, chuyên ngành ngôn ngữ học ứng dụng. Dữ liệu khảo sát là 30 bài tóm tắt trong 2 tạp chí chuyên ngành quốc tế là *English for Specific Purposes Journal* và *TESOL Quarterly Journal*. Lấy cơ sở lý thuyết Ngữ pháp chức năng hệ thống làm công cụ phân tích, những đặc trưng ngữ pháp-từ vựng được giới hạn ở 3 khía cạnh – hệ thống chuyển tác để tìm hiểu nghĩa kinh nghiệm, hệ thống tình thái để tìm hiểu nghĩa liên nhân, và cấu trúc đề thuyết để tìm hiểu nghĩa văn bản. Kết quả phân tích cho thấy những đặc trưng nổi bật của thể loại tóm tắt trong tiếng Anh. Để diễn đạt nghĩa kinh nghiệm, thể loại này sử dụng đại đa số là quá trình vật chất và quá trình quan hệ; chu cảnh về không gian và thể cách cũng được sử dụng thường xuyên. Thực hiện nghĩa liên nhân, thể loại này không sử dụng nhiều yếu tố tình thái. Để đạt hiệu quả giao tiếp, các tác giả sử dụng thường xuyên đề đơn, không đánh dấu; các loại đề liên nhân và đề văn bản ít được sử dụng thường xuyên. Những kết quả về khía cạnh từ vựng-ngữ pháp được chúng tôi lý giải từ 3 khía cạnh tương ứng của ngữ cảnh. Những kết quả nghiên cứu có những đóng góp đối với thực tiễn dạy tiếng Anh cho các mục đích học thuật.

Từ khóa: tóm tắt bài báo, ngữ pháp chức năng, chuyển tác, tình thái, cấu trúc đề ngữ