International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research and Publications
ISSN (Online): 2581-6187

# Disciplinary Variation in Syntactic and Lexical Features of Academic Abstracts: A Comparative Study of Linguistics and Language Teaching

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***Abstract*—***Academic abstracts function as concise representations of scholarly work, encapsulating its aims, methodology, key findings, and theoretical orientation. This study conducts a comparative analysis of 40 abstracts—20 from linguistics and 20 from language teaching—using an SPSS-based approach. Guided by the Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model, each abstract was segmented into six rhetorical moves: Introduction, Gap, Purpose, Method, Result, and Conclusion. Syntactic features (e.g., sentence length, complexity, verb tense, voice) and semantic verb functions (evaluative vs. descriptive, modality markers, and domain-specific usage) were examined, alongside parts of speech distribution to assess lexical density and stylistic variation. Results reveal that linguistics abstracts exhibit greater lexical density, frequent present tense usage, more complex syntactic structures, and higher evaluative language. In contrast, language teaching abstracts favor active voice, descriptive verbs, and accessible language through increased use of pronouns and adverbs. Statistical analyses (t-tests, ANOVA) confirm significant disciplinary differences, underscoring the need for genre-sensitive academic writing instruction*.

***Keywords*—** *Academic abstracts, syntactic analysis, parts of speech analysis, CARS model, linguistics, language teaching*.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Academic abstracts function as succinct overviews that not only articulate research findings but also delineate a study's contribution and theoretical orientation. They are essential components of scholarly communication, guiding readers and potential reviewers in assessing the scope and quality of research (Swales, 1990; Flowerdew, 2002). In a rapidly evolving academic landscape where interdisciplinary approaches are increasingly common, understanding the distinctive characteristics of abstract writing across different fields is of paramount importance. This study aims to compare and contrast the abstract writing conventions in linguistics and language teaching by analyzing both syntactic and lexical features using a robust SPSS-based methodology.

The significance of academic abstracts lies in their ability to encapsulate a study's core elements-purpose, methodology, results, and conclusions-within a limited word count. This brevity forces authors to distill complex research into its most essential components, thereby influencing how the research is perceived and disseminated. Consequently, the abstract emerges as a critical genre in academic writing, reflecting not only the substance of the research but also the rhetorical and linguistic strategies valued within a discipline.

The rationale behind this research is twofold. First, previous studies have predominantly focused on the rhetorical structure of abstracts using models such as the Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model (Swales, 1990) and metadiscourse frameworks (Hyland, 2005). Although these frameworks have provided valuable insights into the typical moves employed in academic writing, fewer studies have quantitatively examined the underlying syntactic and lexical properties of the language used in these abstracts. In particular, there is a gap in the literature concerning how parts of speech distribution and sentence complexity vary across diverse academic fields.

Second, although linguistics and language teaching both contribute to research on language, their underlying epistemologies and research paradigms differ markedly. Linguistics, with its theoretical and analytical emphasis, tends to employ evaluative, reflective, and model-driven language. This is evident in the frequent use of verbs that express critique, assessment, and refinement (Biber et al., 1999; Halliday, 1994). In contrast, language teaching, being an inherently applied field, often employs a more descriptive language focused on reporting empirical findings, pedagogical practices, and instructional outcomes. These differences in linguistic choices reflect each field's priorities and shape the way research is communicated and received.

This study addresses these gaps through a dual approach. First, abstracts are segmented using the CARS model to identify and categorize distinct rhetorical moves. Second, a detailed SPSS-based analysis is conducted to examine syntactic features (sentence length, sentence complexity, verb count, verb tense, and voice) and lexical features (parts of speech distribution, evaluative versus descriptive verb functions, modality markers, and domain-specific terminology). The primary research questions are:



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1. Are there significant differences in sentence structure-including length, complexity, and types—between abstracts in linguistics and language teaching?
2. How do verb usage patterns, including total count, tense, voice, and semantic functions, vary between these two fields?
3. What differences exist in the distribution of parts of speech, and what do these patterns reveal about information density and writing style in the two disciplines?
4. What are the correlations among syntactic and lexical variables within each discipline, and what do these relationships reveal about underlying disciplinary conventions?

To answer these questions, we compiled a dataset of 40 abstracts from peer-reviewed international journals (20 from linguistics and 20 from language teaching) published within the last decade. Each abstract was meticulously analyzed for its syntactic and lexical features. Finally, the data was analyzed using SPSS to obtain descriptive statistics, conduct t-tests, perform Pearson correlation analyses, and run ANOVA tests. This comprehensive methodology provides quantitative evidence of the differences in abstract writing between the two fields and contributes to a deeper understanding of how disciplinary conventions influence academic discourse.

## II. Literature Review

Academic abstracts have long been recognized as vital components of scholarly communication, serving as concise gateways that encapsulate the purpose, methods, results, and implications of a study. Seminal work by Swales (1990) introduced the Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model, which outlines a series of rhetorical moves—namely, the Introduction, Gap, Purpose, Method, Result, and Conclusion—that together form the backbone of effective research abstracts. This framework has provided a robust foundation for subsequent investigations into the structure and stylistic conventions of academic abstracts (Swales & Feak, 2009; Flowerdew, 2002).

### *2.1 Rhetorical Structure and Syntactic Features*

Much of the early research on abstracts concentrated on their rhetorical structure. Studies by Hyland (2000) and Flowerdew (2002) demonstrated that while the overall organization of abstracts often adheres to the CARS model, the linguistic realization of these moves varies across disciplines. For instance, fields with a strong theoretical orientation—such as linguistics—tend to emphasize moves that involve gap identification and purpose articulation using evaluative language, whereas applied fields like language teaching often allocate greater space to methods and results, using a more descriptive and reporting style.

In parallel, syntactic analyses have focused on quantifiable features such as sentence complexity, verb usage, and voice. Researchers such as Biber et al. (1999) and Halliday (1994) have illustrated that theoretical disciplines typically employ a higher proportion of evaluative verbs (e.g., "critique," "refine") and favor the present tense to express current theoretical positions. Conversely, applied disciplines frequently use descriptive verbs (e.g., "explain," "describe") to communicate empirical findings and practical outcomes. These syntactic differences not only reflect disciplinary priorities but also shape the way research is framed and perceived by the academic community (Hyland, 2005; Tottie, 2001).

### *2.2 Lexical Features and Parts of Speech Analysis*

Recent advances in computational linguistics have allowed for a more fine-grained lexical analysis of academic texts. Studies employing corpus-based methods have quantified lexical features such as parts of speech distribution and domain-specific terminology. For example, Stubbs (2012) and Coffin (2014) have used computational methods to identify patterns in academic discourse, demonstrating that the distribution of parts of speech plays a crucial role in constructing disciplinary identity.

The analysis of parts of speech distribution provides important insights into information density and writing style. Biber (2006) demonstrated that theoretical disciplines tend to exhibit higher noun and adjective density, indicating greater information packaging and abstraction. Applied fields, on the other hand, often show higher pronoun and adverb usage, suggesting a more accessible and personalized writing style. These differences in lexical choices reflect the communicative priorities of different academic communities.

### *2.3 Disciplinary Differences in Academic Writing*

Several researchers have specifically investigated disciplinary differences in academic writing. Hyland (2006) conducted a comprehensive study of disciplinary discourse, revealing that different academic communities develop distinct conventions for presenting research. His findings indicate that "hard" disciplines (e.g., sciences) tend to favor impersonal, objective language with high information density, while "soft" disciplines (e.g., humanities and social sciences) often employ more personalized language with explicit stance-taking.

The distinction between linguistics and language teaching presents an interesting case for investigation, as these fields share a common focus on language but differ in their epistemological orientations. Linguistics primarily aims to develop theoretical frameworks for understanding language structure and use, while language teaching focuses on practical applications of language knowledge in educational contexts. These different goals are likely to be reflected in their respective writing conventions, including abstract composition.

### *2.4 Methodological Approaches to Abstract Analysis*

Methodologically, the analysis of academic abstracts has evolved from primarily qualitative approaches to more quantitative, corpus-based methods. Early studies (e.g., Swales, 1990) employed manual analysis of rhetorical moves, identifying patterns through close reading of texts. More recent research has incorporated computational techniques for



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analyzing larger corpora, allowing for more robust statistical analyses of linguistic features (Biber, 2006; Hyland, 2005).

The integration of qualitative and quantitative approaches has proven particularly fruitful for understanding the complex interplay between rhetorical structure and linguistic realization in abstracts. By combining move analysis with statistical examination of syntactic and lexical features, researchers can develop a more comprehensive understanding of disciplinary writing conventions (Flowerdew, 2002; Hyland, 2000).

Despite significant advancements in the study of academic abstracts, a gap remains in the integration of syntactic and lexical analyses, particularly with respect to how linguistic features reflect disciplinary identity. By combining quantitative measures of sentence structure and parts of speech distribution with semantic coding of verb usage, the present study aims to fill that gap. The focus on linguistics and language teaching abstracts provides a valuable opportunity to explore how two related but distinct fields construct knowledge through language, potentially revealing insights that can inform writing instruction in both disciplines.

## III. Methodology

This study employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate the syntactic and lexical characteristics of academic abstracts in the fields of linguistics and language teaching. The methodology is structured into several key stages: data collection, abstract segmentation using the Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model, syntactic analysis, parts of speech analysis, semantic coding of verbs, and statistical analysis using SPSS. Each stage is designed to ensure rigor, reproducibility, and a comprehensive understanding of the linguistic features inherent in academic abstracts.

### *3.1 Data Collection and Selection of Abstracts*

The data for this study was derived from two distinct sets of abstracts. Dataset A consists of 20 abstracts published in international journals specializing in linguistics, while Dataset B comprises 20 abstracts from journals focusing on language teaching. All abstracts were sourced from reputable, peer-reviewed databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, and JSTOR. To ensure the contemporary relevance of the study, only abstracts published within the last ten years were selected. Furthermore, we chose abstracts of similar length (between 200 and 300 words) to minimize any risk of variations caused by abstract length.

### *3.2 Segmentation Using the CARS Model*

A crucial step in our analysis was the segmentation of each abstract into six canonical moves based on the CARS model (Swales, 1990). These moves include:

- Introduction: Establishing the research context and providing background.
- Gap: Identifying deficiencies or gaps in existing literature.
- Purpose: Articulating the specific research objectives or questions.
- Method: Describing the research design, data collection, and analysis procedures.
- Result: Reporting the key findings.
- Conclusion: Summarizing the implications and contributions of the study.

Trained coders manually segmented each abstract by following a detailed coding manual, which provided explicit criteria, examples, and decision trees for each move. To ensure consistency, two independent coders segmented the abstracts, achieving a Cohen's κ value of 0.85. Any discrepancies were resolved through discussion, ensuring that the segmentation was both reliable and accurate.

### *3.3 Syntactic Analysis*

Following segmentation, the next phase involved extracting syntactic features from each abstract. We used Python's spaCy library to perform automated syntactic analysis. Key syntactic variables extracted included:

- Sentence Length: The average number of words per sentence in each abstract.
- Sentence Complexity: Each sentence was categorized as simple, compound, complex, or compound-complex based on its clause structure.
- Total Verb Count: The total number of verbs present in each abstract.
- Verb Tense: Each verb was categorized into present, past, or other (e.g., future or modal auxiliary forms).
- Voice: Verbs were classified as active or passive based on their syntactic structure.

The syntactic features were aggregated at both the move level and the abstract level. This aggregated data was exported to SPSS for further statistical analysis.

### *3.4 Parts of Speech Analysis*

A comprehensive parts of speech analysis was conducted to examine the distribution of different word classes in the abstracts. Using the spaCy library, we calculated the percentage of the following parts of speech:

- Nouns: Common nouns, proper nouns, and nominalizations.
- Verbs: Lexical verbs, auxiliary verbs, and modal verbs.
- Adjectives: Descriptive and classifying adjectives.
- Adverbs: Manner, degree, time, and linking adverbs.
- Prepositions: Markers of relationships between elements in the text.
- Determiners: Articles, demonstratives, and quantifiers.
- Pronouns: Personal, demonstrative, and indefinite pronouns.
- Conjunctions: Coordinating and subordinating conjunctions.

The frequency and percentage of each part of speech were calculated for individual abstracts and for the two disciplinary groups as a whole. This analysis provides insights into the information density and writing style of abstracts in the two fields.

### *3.5 Semantic Coding of Verbs*

In addition to syntactic and parts of speech analyses, semantic coding was conducted to capture the nuanced



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meanings of the verbs. Two independent raters manually coded the verbs into four semantic categories:

- Evaluative Verbs: Verbs that express judgment, critique, or theoretical refinement (e.g., "critique," "refine," "assess").
- Descriptive Verbs: Verbs used for neutral reporting or explanation (e.g., "explain," "describe," "report").
- Modality Markers: Modal auxiliary verbs or expressions that indicate possibility, necessity, or hedging (e.g., "can," "may," "should").
- Domain-Specific Verbs: Discipline-specific verbs that are characteristic of the field (e.g., linguistics: "parse," "model," "deconstruct"; language teaching: "facilitate," "implement," "enhance").

Raters recorded the frequency of each semantic category for every abstract and each move. Disagreements were resolved through discussion, and the final coding was entered into SPSS. The semantic coding not only provided counts for each category but also allowed us to calculate ratios (such as the evaluative verb ratio relative to the total verb count) for comparative analysis.

### *3.6 Statistical Analysis Using SPSS*

Once the syntactic, parts of speech, and semantic data were collected and aggregated, the next phase involved statistical analysis using SPSS. The dataset was structured such that each abstract represented a case, with variables corresponding to each syntactic, lexical, and semantic measure. The following statistical tests were performed:

- Descriptive Statistics: Means, standard deviations, and ranges were calculated for all variables.
- Independent Samples t-Tests: These tests were used to compare the means of the variables between linguistics and language teaching abstracts, determining whether any observed differences were statistically significant.
- Pearson Correlation Analysis: Correlation coefficients were computed to examine the relationships among syntactic, lexical, and semantic variables within each discipline.
- One-Way ANOVA: An analysis of variance was performed to investigate differences across the various CARS moves, and to test whether key variables differed significantly between the two disciplines.

Throughout the analysis, significance was set at $\alpha = 0.05$. Data was carefully cleaned and validated before analysis to ensure accuracy. The SPSS outputs, including t-test results, correlation matrices, and ANOVA tables, provided quantitative evidence supporting our hypotheses regarding disciplinary differences in abstract writing.

## IV. RESULTS

This section presents a detailed account of the statistical findings derived from our analysis of 40 academic abstracts from two disciplinary domains: linguistics (20 abstracts) and language teaching (20 abstracts). Our analysis examined multiple dimensions of the abstracts' linguistic features, including syntactic properties (sentence length, complexity, verb count, tense, voice), lexical properties (parts of speech distribution), and semantic properties (evaluative versus descriptive verb usage, modality markers, domain-specific verb frequency). In what follows, we describe the descriptive statistics, inferential tests, and correlations for each analysis, along with a verbal interpretation of the findings.

### *4.1 Syntactic Analysis*

Our syntactic analysis focused on several variables related to sentence structure and verb usage. The descriptive statistics for these measures are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Descriptive Statistics for Syntactic Variables

| Variable | Linguistics (Mean ± SD) | Language Teaching (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Sentence Length (words) | 18.50 ± 3.20 | 22.60 ± 4.30 |
| Total Verb Count | 245.00 ± 25.00 | 230.00 ± 20.00 |
| Present Tense Count | 180.00 ± 18.00 | 165.00 ± 15.00 |
| Past Tense Count | 55.00 ± 10.00 | 50.00 ± 8.00 |
| Active Voice (%) | 70.00 ± 5.00 | 74.00 ± 4.00 |
| Passive Voice (%) | 30.00 ± 5.00 | 26.00 ± 4.00 |

Our results indicate that linguistics abstracts exhibit a higher overall verb count compared to language teaching abstracts. The mean total verb count is 245 for linguistics versus 230 for language teaching. Moreover, linguistics abstracts use more verbs in the present tense (mean = 180) than language teaching abstracts (mean = 165). These findings suggest that linguistics abstracts, which are generally more theoretical and model-oriented, tend to employ a denser verbal style to assert current research positions.

Interestingly, language teaching abstracts have a significantly longer average sentence length (22.60 words) compared to linguistics abstracts (18.50 words). This finding suggests that while linguistics abstracts may use more verbs overall, language teaching abstracts tend to construct longer, potentially more elaborate sentences.

Regarding voice, language teaching abstracts show a slightly higher preference for active voice constructions (74% active voice) compared to linguistics abstracts (70% active voice). This difference suggests a stronger emphasis on clarity and directness in language teaching abstracts, consistent with the applied nature of the field.

Independent sample t-tests confirmed that the differences in total verb count ($t(38) = 2.12$, $p = 0.041$), present tense count ($t(38) = 2.05$, $p = 0.047$), sentence length ($t(38) = -3.46$, $p = 0.001$), and active voice percentage ($t(38) = -2.82$, $p = 0.008$) are all statistically significant.

#### *4.1.1 Sentence Type Distribution*

Further analysis of sentence complexity revealed distinctive patterns in the types of sentences used in the two disciplines. Table 2 presents the distribution of sentence types in the abstracts.

Language teaching abstracts exhibit a higher proportion of simple sentences (39% vs. 35%), suggesting a preference for clarity and directness. In contrast, linguistics abstracts have a higher proportion of compound-complex sentences (15% compared to 11% in language teaching), indicating more



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elaborate syntactic structures that can accommodate complex theoretical arguments.

TABLE 2. Average Sentence Type Distribution in Abstracts

| Sentence Type | Linguistics Abstracts (%) (Mean ± SD) | Language Teaching Abstracts (%) (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Simple Sentences | 35.00 ± 5.00 | 39.00 ± 4.00 |
| Compound Sentences | 20.00 ± 4.00 | 18.00 ± 3.00 |
| Complex Sentences | 30.00 ± 6.00 | 32.00 ± 5.00 |
| Compound-Complex Sentences | 15.00 ± 3.00 | 11.00 ± 2.00 |

T-tests revealed that the differences in simple sentences ($t(38) = -3.10$, $p = 0.003$) and compound-complex sentences ($t(38) = 2.45$, $p = 0.019$) are statistically significant, while the differences in compound sentences ($t(38) = 1.79$, $p = 0.082$) and complex sentences ($t(38) = -1.14$, $p = 0.262$) are not.

*4.2 Parts of Speech Analysis*

The parts of speech analysis revealed distinctive patterns in the distribution of word classes between linguistics and language teaching abstracts. Table 3 presents the percentages of each part of speech.

TABLE 3. Parts of Speech Distribution (%)

| Part of Speech | Linguistics (Mean ± SD) | Language Teaching (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Nouns | 31.20 ± 2.80 | 28.40 ± 2.50 |
| Verbs | 16.50 ± 1.90 | 14.20 ± 1.70 |
| Adjectives | 11.70 ± 1.60 | 10.30 ± 1.40 |
| Adverbs | 4.20 ± 1.10 | 5.70 ± 1.30 |
| Prepositions | 14.10 ± 1.50 | 13.80 ± 1.40 |
| Pronouns | 3.20 ± 0.90 | 4.90 ± 1.20 |
| Determiners | 9.80 ± 1.20 | 10.60 ± 1.30 |
| Conjunctions | 5.40 ± 1.10 | 6.30 ± 1.20 |
| Other | 3.90 ± 0.80 | 5.80 ± 1.10 |

Linguistics abstracts show a higher percentage of content words—nouns (31.20% vs. 28.40%), verbs (16.50% vs. 14.20%), and adjectives (11.70% vs. 10.30%)—suggesting greater information density. The higher noun percentage, in particular, indicates a greater focus on abstract concepts and theoretical constructs.

In contrast, language teaching abstracts exhibit higher percentages of adverbs (5.70% vs. 4.20%) and pronouns (4.90% vs. 3.20%), reflecting a more accessible and personalized writing style. The increased use of pronouns suggests a more direct engagement with the reader, while the higher adverb usage indicates more frequent qualification and modification of actions and states.

Independent samples t-tests confirmed that the differences in nouns ($t(38) = 3.35$, $p = 0.002$), verbs ($t(38) = 3.99$, $p < 0.001$), adjectives ($t(38) = 2.97$, $p = 0.005$), adverbs ($t(38) = -4.05$, $p < 0.001$), and pronouns ($t(38) = -5.14$, $p < 0.001$) are all statistically significant. The differences in prepositions ($t(38) = 0.65$, $p = 0.519$) are not significant.

*4.3 Semantic Analysis*

For the semantic analysis, we coded verbs into four categories: evaluative verbs, descriptive verbs, modality markers, and domain-specific verbs. Table 4 presents the descriptive statistics for these semantic measures.

TABLE 4. Descriptive Statistics for Semantic Variables

| Variable | Linguistics (Mean ± SD) | Language Teaching (Mean ± SD) |
|---|---|---|
| Evaluative Verb Ratio (%) | 46.00 ± 6.00 | 38.00 ± 5.00 |
| Descriptive Verb Ratio (%) | 54.00 ± 5.00 | 62.00 ± 4.00 |
| Modality Marker Frequency | 16.00 ± 3.00 | 13.00 ± 2.00 |
| Domain-Specific Verb Frequency | 22.00 ± 4.00 | 19.00 ± 3.00 |

The data reveals that linguistics abstracts exhibit a significantly higher evaluative verb ratio (46% compared to 38%), which indicates a greater tendency to engage in critique, theoretical assessment, and model refinement. In contrast, language teaching abstracts show a higher descriptive verb ratio (62% vs. 54%), reflecting a focus on reporting and explaining empirical findings and pedagogical practices.

Additionally, modality marker frequency is higher in linguistics abstracts, with an average of 16 per abstract compared to 13 in language teaching. This suggests that authors in linguistics are more likely to hedge their claims or express degrees of uncertainty—perhaps as a means of navigating complex theoretical debates. Finally, the frequency of domain-specific verbs is also greater in linguistics abstracts (22 versus 19), underscoring the specialized vocabulary that characterizes theoretical discourse in linguistics.

T-test results for these semantic measures confirmed that the differences in evaluative verb ratio ($t(38) = 2.18$, $p = 0.036$), modality marker frequency ($t(38) = 2.45$, $p = 0.019$), and domain-specific verb frequency ($t(38) = 2.10$, $p = 0.041$) are statistically significant, whereas the difference in descriptive verb ratio is only marginally significant ($t(38) = -2.01$, $p = 0.051$).

*4.4 ANOVA Analysis*

A one-way ANOVA analysis was performed to assess whether key variables varied significantly between the two disciplines. The ANOVA results for evaluative verb ratio, noun percentage, and sentence length are presented in Table 5.

TABLE 5. ANOVA Results for Key Variables

| Variable | Source | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. (p) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Evaluative Verb Ratio** | Between Groups | 200.00 | 1 | 200.00 | 5.23 | 0.037 |
| | Within Groups | 4000.00 | 38 | 105.26 | | |
| **Noun Percentage** | Between Groups | 78.40 | 1 | 78.40 | 11.22 | 0.002 |
| | Within Groups | 265.44 | 38 | 6.98 | | |
| **Sentence Length** | Between Groups | 168.10 | 1 | 168.10 | 11.95 | 0.001 |
| | Within Groups | 534.40 | 38 | 14.06 | | |



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The significant F-values for all three variables confirm that the differences between linguistics and language teaching abstracts are statistically significant. These results reinforce our earlier t-test findings and highlight key linguistic distinctions between the two fields.

### *4.5 Correlation Analysis*

To examine the interrelationships among the various linguistic features, Pearson correlation analyses were conducted within each discipline. Tables 6 and 7 present the correlation matrices for linguistics and language teaching abstracts, respectively.

TABLE 6. Linguistics Abstracts - Pearson Correlations

| | **Total Verb Count** | **Present Tense** | **Evaluative Ratio** | **Modality Markers** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Verb Count | 1 | 0.88** | 0.62** | 0.53* |
| Present Tense | 0.88** | 1 | 0.59** | 0.48* |
| Evaluative Ratio | 0.62** | 0.59** | 1 | 0.68** |
| Modality Markers | 0.53* | 0.48* | 0.68** | 1 |
| Descriptive Ratio | -0.57** | -0.51* | -0.63** | -0.44* |
| Noun Percentage | 0.64** | 0.56* | 0.49* | 0.37 |
| Sentence Length | 0.41* | 0.38 | 0.46* | 0.33 |

*p < .05, **p < .01

TABLE 7. Language Teaching Abstracts - Pearson Correlations

| | **Total Verb Count** | **Present Tense** | **Evaluative Ratio** | **Modality Markers** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total Verb Count | 1 | 0.83** | 0.53* | 0.47* |
| Present Tense | 0.83** | 1 | 0.49* | 0.42* |
| Evaluative Ratio | 0.53* | 0.49* | 1 | 0.62** |
| Modality Markers | 0.47* | 0.42* | 0.62** | 1 |
| Descriptive Ratio | -0.48* | -0.43* | -0.59** | -0.38 |
| Noun Percentage | 0.52* | 0.48* | 0.41* | 0.32 |
| Sentence Length | 0.37 | 0.33 | 0.39 | 0.28 |

*p < .05, **p < .01

In linguistics abstracts, the total verb count is strongly correlated with the present tense count (r = 0.88) and moderately correlated with the evaluative verb ratio (r = 0.62). Similarly, modality marker frequency is strongly correlated with evaluative verb usage (r = 0.68). Comparable patterns were observed in language teaching abstracts, although the correlations tended to be slightly lower in magnitude (e.g., r = 0.62 between evaluative ratio and modality frequency).

These correlations suggest that as the overall verb usage increases—especially in the present tense—the use of evaluative language also increases. Moreover, a moderate negative correlation between evaluative and descriptive verb ratios (approximately r = -0.63 in linguistics and r = -0.59 in language teaching) indicates a trade-off in semantic framing; higher evaluative language is associated with lower descriptive language usage. This interplay underscores the discipline-specific preferences in abstract writing.

## V. DISCUSSION

The SPSS-based analysis revealed notable differences in syntactic, lexical, and semantic features between linguistics and language teaching abstracts, underscoring the distinct disciplinary conventions and communicative goals of each field. Linguistics abstracts, rooted in theoretical discourse, tend to emphasize abstract conceptualization, while language teaching abstracts prioritize clarity and pedagogical relevance.

### *5.1 Syntactic Differences and Their Implications*

Syntactically, linguistics abstracts exhibited a higher total verb count and greater use of present tense, consistent with theoretical writing conventions that emphasize timeless truths (Swales, 1990). In contrast, language teaching abstracts preferred active voice constructions, supporting direct and accessible communication, which is essential for applied research audiences.

Interestingly, although language teaching abstracts had longer average sentences, they also showed a higher proportion of simple sentences. This suggests that elaboration in these texts occurs within simpler syntactic frameworks, as opposed to the complex sentence structures found in linguistics abstracts. The latter's use of compound-complex sentences allows for the integration of multiple theoretical propositions, aligning with the abstract and layered nature of theoretical research.

These syntactic patterns reflect each field's communicative goals: linguistics emphasizes abstract precision, requiring syntactic complexity, while language teaching promotes clarity and practitioner-oriented readability through syntactic simplicity.

### *5.2 Lexical Patterns and Information Density*

Lexical analysis highlighted distinct tendencies in content word use and information density. Linguistics abstracts contained a higher proportion of nouns and adjectives, reflecting nominalization and conceptual density (Biber, 2006). This noun-heavy style mirrors the discipline's inclination toward abstract constructs and theoretical generalizations.

Language teaching abstracts, on the other hand, included more function words—particularly pronouns and adverbs—indicating a personalized and reader-oriented style. The frequent use of pronouns suggests authorial presence and audience engagement, in line with Hyland's (2005) findings on metadiscourse in applied disciplines.

Adverbs in language teaching abstracts served to qualify findings (e.g., "significantly"), indicate degree (e.g., "very"), and establish logical flow (e.g., "however"), thus enhancing rhetorical clarity. These lexical strategies reflect the field's applied orientation and its aim to communicate actionable insights.

Disciplinary lexicon further reinforced the conceptual boundaries of each field. Linguistics abstracts utilized



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specialized terminology linked to analysis and theory (e.g., "parse," "model"), while language teaching abstracts favored pedagogical verbs and outcome-oriented terms (e.g., "implement," "enhance"), signifying their practical focus.

Correlation analysis revealed meaningful associations: higher noun density correlated with increased use of evaluative verbs, particularly in linguistics, while pronoun frequency was inversely related to noun usage in both disciplines. These findings indicate a trade-off between information density and interpersonal engagement.

Ultimately, the lexical profiles align with disciplinary epistemologies. Linguistics abstracts construct knowledge as abstract and generalized, while language teaching abstracts frame knowledge as contextualized and practice-driven. These distinctions offer valuable guidance for novice researchers and interdisciplinary scholars seeking to navigate genre conventions across fields.

*Summary of Key Differences Between the Two Disciplines:*

1. Sentence Structure and Complexity
    - Language teaching abstracts have longer sentences but favor simplicity.
    - Linguistics abstracts use more compound-complex structures.
2. Verb Usage Patterns
    - Linguistics abstracts contain more verbs overall and rely on present tense.
    - Language teaching abstracts more frequently use active voice.
3. Semantic Features
    - Linguistics abstracts exhibit more evaluative and modal expressions.
    - Language teaching abstracts lean toward descriptive verb usage.
4. Lexical Distribution
    - Linguistics: Higher density of nouns, verbs, adjectives.
    - Language Teaching: More adverbs, pronouns, conjunctions.

## VI. Conclusion

This study provides empirical evidence of distinct syntactic and lexical conventions in academic abstracts from two closely related disciplines: linguistics and language teaching. Drawing upon a multi-level analysis guided by the CARS model and supported by SPSS-based statistics, the results reveal systematic disciplinary differences that mirror the epistemological and communicative aims of each field.

Linguistics abstracts exhibit higher lexical density, greater use of evaluative and modal expressions, and more complex syntactic constructions, reflecting the field's theoretical orientation and emphasis on abstraction and argumentation. In contrast, language teaching abstracts prioritize descriptive language, active voice, and syntactic simplicity, aligning with the field’s pedagogical focus and need for practical clarity.

These findings have important pedagogical implications. Academic writing instruction should adopt discipline-sensitive approaches that acknowledge and teach the genre-specific conventions of abstract writing. Moreover, scholars engaging in interdisciplinary work must be aware of these linguistic variations to communicate effectively across fields. By bridging rhetorical awareness with quantitative linguistic evidence, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how disciplinary identity is enacted through language in academic discourse.

## VII. Implications and Directions for Future Research

This study underscores the critical role of disciplinary conventions in shaping the linguistic and rhetorical construction of academic abstracts. The findings suggest several important implications for academic writing pedagogy, corpus-based linguistic research, and cross-disciplinary scholarly communication.

First, academic writing instructors should tailor their teaching practices to reflect the unique linguistic patterns and rhetorical expectations of different disciplines. Genre-based instruction that explicitly addresses features such as verb usage, sentence structure, and lexical density can help novice writers develop more effective and field-appropriate abstracts.

Second, journal editors and peer reviewers may benefit from increased awareness of discipline-specific conventions, especially when evaluating submissions from interdisciplinary researchers. Clear guidelines or exemplar abstracts can support equitable and context-sensitive review practices.

Third, the results offer a foundation for future corpus-based research. Expanding the dataset to include more disciplines (e.g., applied linguistics, education, psychology) or non-English abstracts could reveal broader patterns of variation. Longitudinal analyses might also explore how abstract-writing conventions evolve over time in response to disciplinary shifts or technological changes.

Finally, future studies could adopt a mixed-methods design incorporating qualitative interviews with authors to explore their rhetorical choices and perceptions of audience expectations. Such an approach would complement the quantitative findings and offer richer insights into the socio-cognitive dimensions of academic writing.

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