

## **Investigating Rhetorical Moves in Conference Abstracts from Different L2 Contexts**

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### **Abstract**

Abstracts are always required to be submitted in response to the ‘Calls for Abstracts’ for conferences in the academy. The rhetorical structure, content, and lexico-grammatical resources employed in such abstracts influence the selection of researchers for international and local conferences. Hence, this paper investigates the rhetorical move structures of conference abstracts (CAs) by Ghanaian and Nigerian academics. Swales (1990) and Bhatia’s (1993) move/step analysis was adopted as the theoretical framework for the study. Because of the highly descriptive nature of this study, it uses the qualitative research approach as its design. Forty abstracts submitted to the 2017 joint West African Languages Congress and the Linguistics Association of Ghana Conference constituted the dataset for the study. The findings revealed differences in the frequencies and the sequence of the rhetorical moves in the abstracts from the Ghanaian and Nigerian authors. Again, it was realized that moves that were obligatory in the abstracts by the Ghanaian authors appeared optional in those written by their Nigerian counterparts. Ghanaians preferred the passive voice while Nigerian academics favored the active voice. We argue that these differences are better seen as stylistic meaning-making variations within the same discourse community.

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### **Keywords**

Genre; rhetorical moves; abstracts; conference proceedings; obligatory moves

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## 1. Introduction

Academic conferences (ACs) are platforms for academic socialization and avenues for knowledge sharing. Thus, ACs serve as important avenues for scholars to share their research achievements and research methods in an academic discourse community (Wang et al., 2023). Of late, the significance of conference participation has been heightened as it is considered part of the promotion requirements in some universities across the globe. The number and kinds of conferences one has attended significantly add to one's ethos or persona as a member of the academic discourse community, or a Special Interest Group (SIG) (Beller et al., 2013; Halleck & Connor, 2006). The established practice in organizing academic conferences is that the organizers send a Call for Abstracts (CfAs) to interested researchers to submit abstracts for consideration. Potential participants, therefore, respond to such calls by submitting abstracts to designated emails or online submission systems. Conference abstracts (CAs) are designed to disseminate new knowledge and to simultaneously persuade the conference organizers and participants to respectively accept them and desire to listen to the researchers when the conference is in session (Halleck & Connor, 2006; Macdonald & Shaban, 2007).

CAs have distinct communicative functions, lexico-grammatical resources, and move structures from abstracts of RAs, conference proceedings, public lectures, inaugural lectures, theses, and research proposals. One is thus required to have the craft of writing CAs that meet the generic requirements sanctioned in a particular discipline. In most cases, not all abstracts are considered for selection for a conference, as the gatekeepers or reviewers, who are mostly the conference organizers make sure that only interesting and well-written abstracts are selected for "a presentation at a conference and subsequent publication of these findings in conference proceedings, journals or thematic volumes" (Povolna, 2016:30).

It can, therefore, be established that the art of writing CAs is seen as a unique skill that people require to be members of the academic discourse community to participate in highly respected ACs (Friesen, Phuah & Comino, 2014; Halleck & Connor, 2006; Macdonald & Shaban, 2007). In other words, good conference abstract writing skills will increase researchers' acceptance rate "even for data of moderate importance, or seemingly complicated research idea" (Jacinto, et al., 2014:265). The conference abstract, a key part-genre of the conference paper, provides a window to the rhetorical sections and the essential information of the paper. It is therefore not surprising that this unique genre has attracted the attention of most applied linguists within the past decade as far as its schematic structure is concerned.

For example, Obeng et al. (2023) investigated variation in academic conference abstracts of hard and soft sciences in terms of their schematic structure and metadiscourse elements. Thirty abstracts each from the hard sciences and the soft sciences made up the dataset for the study. The outcome of the study revealed that 43.3% of conference abstracts from the hard sciences and 33.3% of that of the soft sciences favored the *Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion* move structure. The *purpose*, *method*, *product*, and *conclusion* moves were noted to be obligatory whilst the *Introduction* move appeared optional in the soft science conference abstracts. However, only the *Method* and *Product* moves were obligatory in

the hard sciences conference abstracts as the *Introduction* and *Conclusion* moves appeared optional in that same corpus. It was further confirmed that the conference abstracts from the two disciplines did not find any marked differences in the authors’ use of boosters and hedges.

Similar to the research focus of Obeng et al. (2023), Cao (2018) did a move analysis of conference abstracts from the British Association for Applied Linguistics. Biber et al. (2007) and Santos’s (1996) genre analysis frameworks were adopted to explore the schematic structure of the abstracts that were analyzed. The findings confirmed that three moves – *situating the research*, *presenting the research*, and *describing the methodology* – were considered to be obligatory whilst *summarising the results* and *discussing the research* came out as optional moves.

To add to the above studies, Povolna (2016) made use of Swales’s (1990) move/step analysis to analyze 80 conference abstracts to ascertain whether there might be a variation in the way native speakers (Anglophone writers) and non-native speakers (writers from Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, and Ukraine) compose their conference abstracts. The research came out with a finding that confirmed a cross-cultural difference in the way native speakers and non-native speakers drafted conference abstracts. Thus, whilst the native speakers’ corpus favored a three-move structure, that of the non-native speakers predominantly stuck to a two-move schematic structure. Moreover, the findings established that conference abstracts differ from the research article abstracts concerning the number and types of moves.

Sidek et al.’s (2016) study also explored the rhetorical moves in conference abstracts to find out whether these conference abstracts have the essential rhetorical moves and a consistent move sequencing. Hyland’s (2000) five-move classification was adopted as the analytical framework for Sidek et al.’s (2016) study. After analyzing 23 conference abstracts, the researchers observed that most of the abstracts partially contain the rhetorical moves projected by Hyland (2000) as prototypical of well-written abstracts. Also, the move sequences did not follow a regular pattern. The researchers further projected that apart from the five-move structure of abstracts proposed by Hyland (2000), one new move that seeks to introduce the theoretical aspect of their study was also identified in the corpus they explored.

To contribute to the debate on the schematic structure of conference abstracts, Martin and Burgess (2023) did a move/step analysis of 80 conference papers written in English and Spanish in the field of applied linguistics. The results confirmed that conference abstracts written in both languages have similarities in terms of the frequency and distribution of moves/steps. Thus, the *Introduction Move* and the *Method Move* appeared as obligatory moves whilst the *Results Move* and *Discussion Move* were optional moves. However, there was a significant variation in the frequency of occurrence of the step that projects the implications of research findings, as this step appeared more frequently in the abstracts written in English than those written in Spanish.

From a different focus, Egbert and Plonsky (2015), examined the relationship between features of conference abstracts and reviewer scores. The study made use of 287 abstracts

which were submitted to the 2009 Second Language Forum. Plonsky and Egbert (2015) further annotated the grammatical and lexico-grammatical features in the data. The results of a stepwise multiple regression revealed that more words, citations, a results section, more nouns, no errors, and few personal pronouns could predict 31 % of the variants in the conference abstract scores.

Despite the array of studies on the schematic structure of conference abstracts, there is still a dearth of research on the variations in the move structure of conference abstracts written by non-native speakers of English from two different L2 contexts such as Ghana and Nigeria. In filling this gap, this article investigates the linguistic and generic variation in the abstracts submitted by Ghanaian and Nigerian researchers to the 2017 WALC and LAG Conference organized at the University of Education, Winneba. To be more specific, this current investigation aims to do a comparative study of the rhetorical moves and moves sequence in the CAs authored by Ghanaian and Nigerian writers. The study further explores unique lexico-grammatical resources in the moves found in the Ghanaian and Nigerian-authored CAs.

We used the Ghanaian and Nigerian-authored CAs because they dominated the book of abstracts for the 2017 WALC and LAG Conference. Also, studies on variation in the rhetorical structure of conference abstracts, specifically the ones written by Ghanaian and Nigerian scholars, remain scarce in the applied linguistics literature. To a large extent, this gap in the literature also influenced the selection of abstracts authored by Ghanaian and Nigerian writers as the dataset for this current investigation.

## **2. Methodology**

The study makes use of the qualitative research design which has proven to be suitable for studies whose mode of data collection and analytical procedures are purely descriptive (Amoakohene and Afful, 2021; Amoakohene and Amoakohene, 2021; Priest 1996). Since the analytical procedures of this study are strictly descriptive, selecting the qualitative research approach as the research design is deemed appropriate. It must be stressed that we deployed qualitative content analysis as the main method of analysis for the study. This research approach is noted as a method of analyzing written, verbal, or visual communication (Cole, 1988). It “aids subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systemic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hsei and Shannon, 2005:128). Thus, qualitative content analysis allows researchers to have the flexibility to break words into fewer content-related categories (Cavanagah, 1997) for detailed analysis. As far as this current investigation is concerned, the qualitative content analysis made it possible for the researchers to group words and sentences in the CAs into common moves, account for the moves sequence, and further explore distinct lexico-grammatical resources within the moves that were found in the CAs.

## 2.1. The Corpus

The corpus for the study comprised 40 abstracts authored by Ghanaian and Nigerian researchers in linguistics and/or applied linguistics. The abstracts were gathered from the book of abstracts of the 2017 WALC and LAG Conference organized in Ghana at the University of Education, Winneba. In selecting these abstracts to build the corpus, we used the first 20 abstracts of both Nigerian and Ghanaian writers as they appeared in the book of abstracts. To make the analysis of the work easy in terms of building the corpus, we used the soft copy of the book of abstracts.

## 2.2. Procedure of Analysis

The analysis of the study was done in two main stages. In the first phase, we analyzed the macrostructure (rhetorical moves) in the abstracts written by Nigerians and Ghanaians. The description of the macrostructure of these conference abstracts (CAs) was based on the genre-based theories from Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993). Specifically, the study employed Hyland's (2000) five-move model (Introduction, Purpose, Methods, Products, and Conclusion) that projects the conventionalized way of writing a standardized abstract as a framework to analyze the data. A move is conceptualized as a functional part of texts performing a distinct communicative purpose (Swales, 1990). A move therefore describes patterns of organizational content that perform a unique role in relation to the general communicative purpose of a text and a move boundary is noticeable when there is a change in the purpose of the propositional whole (Elena, 2013).

We are mindful that in the linguistics/applied linguistics literature, the criteria used for defining the status of moves as obligatory or optional moves in a text are not consistent. This stems from the fact that in some studies, an obligatory move or step is equated with a move that occurs in over 50% of a set of text, over 60% of a set of text, or even above 80% of a set of text (Li, 2011). However, in this study, all moves that had a frequency of 50% and above were considered obligatory whilst those with less than 50% occurrences were considered optional moves. Further, we examined the lexico-grammatical features predominant in actualizing the specific moves.

## 2.3. Coding of Data

The data were coded by using GCA for Ghana Conference Abstracts and NCA for Nigeria Conference Abstracts. Hence, the abstracts were labelled GCA0001 up to GCA0020, and NCA0001 up to NCA0020. To highlight certain moves for emphasis, italics, bold, underlines, and uppercase were adopted. In a situation (as in extracts 1 and 2) where a structure is required for more than one emphasis, two of the markers are used. Thus, we observe in extracts 1 and 2 that some structures are concurrently bolded and uppercased. We need to confirm that the data for this study was not cleaned; as such, all errors made by the writers in their abstract composition were not changed.



### 3. Results and Discussion

This section discusses the results concerning the moves and the lexico-grammatical resources in the CAs. It specifically examines the differences and similarities in the way the writers from the two cultural backgrounds compose their conference abstracts.

#### 3.1. Results on the contrastive analysis of the structural units of the abstracts

**Table 1. Frequency of Occurrence and Distribution of the Rhetorical Moves in the Abstracts**

Rhetorical Moves	Ghana	Nigeria
Introduction	16(80%)	17(85%)
Purpose	19(95%)	19(95%)
Method	14(70%)	14(70%)
Product	15(75%)	14(70%)
Conclusion	8(40%)	10(50%)
Organization	1(5%)	1(5%)

The CAs authored by Ghanaian and Nigerian writers conform largely to Hyland's (2000) five-move model. This finding contradicts that of Sidek et al. (2016) whose study on the schematic structure of conference abstracts revealed a partial confirmation of the five-move structure proposed by Hyland (2000). The *Purpose Move* occurred as the most frequent move across the two datasets. It recorded the same frequency of occurrence of 19 (95%) in the two sets of CAs. This finding is similar to that of Li and Pramoolsook (2015) whose study confirms the *Purpose Move* as the dominant move in the abstracts that they analyzed. Table 1 further reveals that besides the *Purpose Move*, the next move with the highest frequency of occurrence is the *Introduction Move*.

The *Product Move* is the third-ranked move and this is followed by the *Method Move*, the *Conclusion Move*, and the *Organization Move*. Apart from the five-move model projected by Hyland (2000), the study found one new move dubbed *Organization Move*. This new move is optional since it occurred just twice in the forty abstracts written by both Ghanaian and Nigerian writers. It is obvious from Table 1 that the *Introduction Move*, *Purpose Move*, *Method Move*, *Product Move*, and *Conclusion Move* are obligatory moves in the Nigerian-authored CAs whilst the *Organization Move* is optional. However, from the Ghanaian corpus, the *Organization Move* and the *Conclusion Move* appear to be optional moves while the other four moves (*Purpose*, *Product*, *Methods*, *Introduction*) are obligatory. This situation indicates that the Nigerian writers adopt Hyland's (2000) five-move model while their Ghanaian counterparts mostly make use of the four rhetorical moves (Introduction, Purpose, Product, Method) and in a few instances the *Conclusion Move*.

It was observed that the move patterns of the two datasets were irregular. To a large extent, each of the moves in the abstracts of the two sets of CAs exhibited different patterns. It is evident in the Ghanaian CAs that there is only one instance that a move pattern in the form

of *Introduction*, *Purpose*, and *Product* (I-P-Pr) has a frequency of 2 (10%). All the other 18 abstracts exhibited different unique movement patterns.

Concerning the Nigerian CAs, the *Introduction-Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion* (I-P-M-Pr-C) move pattern recorded a frequency of 4 (20%) whilst the *Purpose-Method-Product* (P-M-Pr) move pattern had a frequency of 2 (10%). The remaining 14 CAs displayed different unique move sequences. These findings contradict that of Hyland (2000) who confirmed the *Introduction-Purpose-Product* (I-P-Pr) move pattern as the most dominant move sequence in his study. Across the two data sets of this current study, we found many instances where the move sequence of the two sets of writers followed no linear pattern. There were some instances of repetition of moves as shown in extracts NCA0001 and GCA0015.

1. *Language is a potent weapon of societal integration and development no doubt. This is evidently true of proverbs from one generation to another. Proverb is one of the avenues through which the social and cultural background of the people could be known and understood. To this end, this paper examines only flora and fauna in Bassa Nge proverbs. Since proverbs are context dependent, culture specific and exclusive to certain environment, to understand the prevailing context of proverbs, the linguistic, sociocultural and physical contexts must be accounted for. Hence, the main thrust of this paper is to adapt aspects of Austin (1962) theory of pragmatics for the analysis with a view to identifying societal integration and development in aspects of flora and fauna in Bassa Nge proverbs. The methodology involves proverbs obtained from audio recording of some elders of Bassa Nge through social gatherings. Besides, the writer's observation, introspection and intuitive knowledge are deployed. THE PAPER REVEALS HOW ASPECTS OF PROVERBS THAT REFLECT FLORA AND FAUNA FOSTER SOCIETAL INTEGRATION AND DEVELOPMENT. (NCA0001).*
2. The significance of language in quality healthcare delivery cannot be overemphasised. Since the 1980s, healthcare and communication researchers have highlighted the primacy of communication in healthcare within multilingual settings. yet, what seems so pertinent in quality healthcare discussions has taken much time to receive scholarly attention in Ghana. Ghana is a multilingual country with about 79 languages. This language multiplicity poses communication challenges in healthcare as suggested in the works of Anane (2015), and Antwi, Kyei and Quarcoopome (2014). **This research concentrates on communication challenges between expatriate medical officers and indigenous Ghanaian patients.** The health sector has relied on the support of Cuban doctors in healthcare delivery for over twenty years (Saleh, 2013). Considering that the language background of these Cuban doctors is Spanish, and they do not have any knowledge of the indigenous Ghanaian languages and cultures, yet, they are posted to rural areas where literacy is low, one wonders how they communicate effectively with their patients to make accurate diagnoses. **USING INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONNAIRES, THIS RESEARCH INVESTIGATES THE COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES CUBAN DOCTORS USE TO OVERCOME LANGUAGE BARRIERS THAT OCCUR IN THEIR INTERACTION WITH GHANAIA PATIENTS. (GCA0015)**

Extracts NCA0001 and GCA0015 clearly illustrate the repetition of the *Introduction Move* and the *Purpose Move*. For example, in NCA0001, the writer began with the *Introduction Move* (in italics) which highlights the importance of language as a weapon for societal integration. The writer further reintroduces the *Introduction Move* just after the *Purpose Move* (in bold) to project proverbs as context-dependent, culture-specific, and exclusive to certain environments. This is followed again by the *Purpose Move* (in bold). The next, rhetorical move is the *Method Move* (in underlined) which is followed by the *Product Move* (in bold and upper case). The move structure of NCA0001 does not follow a linear configuration as seen from the I-P-I-P-M-Pr pattern. It thus shows the repetition of a move.

Concerning GCA0015, the writer starts the paper with an *Introduction Move* (in italics) and this is followed by a *Purpose Move* (in bold). Another *Introduction Move* is introduced just after the *Purpose Move* which is again followed by another *Purpose Move* and this gives GCA0015 *Introduction-Purpose-Introduction-Purpose* (I-P-I-P) pattern.

One feature that revealed the variation in the move structure of CAs from Ghanaians and Nigerians was move embedment. All the occurrences of this were found in the Ghanaian CAs. Similar to Li and Pramoolsook (2015), move embedment is mostly concerned with the *Purpose Move* and the *Method Move*. An instance of move embedment is shown in the last move of GCA0015:

3. “**Using interviews and questionnaires**, this research investigates the communication strategies Cuban doctors use to overcome language barriers that occur in their interaction with Ghanaian patients.” (GCA0015)

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It is evident from the above extract that there is an embedment of two moves in the form of the *Method Move* captured in the grammatical structure *Using interviews and questionnaires* and the *Purpose Move* in the expression *this research investigates the communication strategies Cuban doctors use to overcome language barriers that occur in their interaction with Ghanaian patients*. However, the whole structure was taken as *Purpose Move* because the *Purpose Move* is noted to be the move with the dominant communicative purpose. Another instance of move embedment can be identified in GCA0013.

4. This paper examines action nominalization, in Ewe, according to Comrie and Thompson’s (2007) framework, namely: action/state nominalization, agentive nominalization, instrumental nominalization, manner nominalization, locative nominalization, and objective nominalization. (GCA0013)

The *Purpose Move* in the form of “*this paper examines action nominalization, in Ewe*” is embedded with the *Method Move* which is captured as “*according to Comrie and Thompson’s (2007) framework, namely: action/state nominalization, agentive nominalization, instrumental nominalization, manner nominalization, locative nominalization, and objective nominalization*”. In this situation, because the *Method Move* has the dominant communicative purpose, the entire proposition is captured as a *Method Move*.



## 3.2. Lexico-Grammatical Features in the Rhetorical Moves within the Abstracts

This sub-section discusses the lexico-grammatical features that characterize the moves that were identified in the CAs.

### 3.2.1. Purpose Move

The *Purpose Move* communicates the objectives and aims of the study. It also states the focus of the study by indicating its scope. Thus, the *Purpose Move* defines the territory of a study to highlight its limitations. Extracts 5 and 6 from NCA0002 and GCA0013 respectively, exemplify the *Purpose Move*.

5. Therefore, the main objective was to investigate the role of language, particularly English in the acquisition of political power in Nigeria. (NCA0002)
6. The paper investigates how this nominalization types manifest in Ewe language. (GCA0013).

Extracts 5 and 6 give clear instances of the *Purpose Move* as they highlight the main focus of their respective studies. This confirms the view that the *Purpose Move* communicates objectives and outlines the focus of the paper. This move is characterized by endophoric markers, which are generally text-oriented and make reference to other parts of the text (Akoto, 2020; Akoto & Afful, 2020). The endophoric markers found in the datasets include *This Paper ...* (NCA0004), *The study ...* (NCA0015), *The paper ...* (GCA0004), *The study ...* (GCA0014). These endophoric markers serve as prototypical lexico-grammatical choices that characterize the *Purpose Move*. Writers from both cultural backgrounds used the endophoric markers *study*, *paper*, *research*, and *work* in the *Purpose Move*. The Ghanaian authors, however, frequently employed *paper*, and occasionally *research* and *study*. The Nigerian authors, on the other hand, mostly preferred *paper* and *study*. There was only one instance in the NCAs that the word *article* was used. None of the Ghanaian authors used *articles* and *work* to refer to the text in the *Purpose Move*.

In most of the cases, the endophoric markers were preceded by either the demonstrative pronoun *this* or the definite article *the* as in *the study*, *the research*, *the paper*, and *this paper*. Aside from the endophoric markers, the *Purpose Move* was characterized by verbs like *study*, *focus on*, *examine*, *investigate*, *discuss*, *analyze*, and *explore*. Though all these verbs dominate the *Purpose Move* in the abstract of the authors from the two different cultural backgrounds, the Nigerian writers predominantly used *examine* while their Ghanaian counterparts preferred *investigate*.

### 3.2.2. Introduction Move

The introduction move is the second dominant move in the CAs. This move serves as an opening to the CA in particular, and the paper in general. Hyland (2000) asserts that the *Introduction Move* sets a scene for the reader to contextualize the paper. The findings of this study showed that this move has two sub-moves/steps (i.e. *Establishing a Background to the Study* and *Establishing a Niche*).

### 3.2.2.1. Step 1. Establishing a Background to the Study

This sub-move is noted to be obligatory in the CAs that were analyzed. In all instances that the introduction move occurred in the CAs, the sub-move *Establishing a Background to the Study* was prevalent across the two corpora. This sub-move offers readers some background information to help them understand the topic to be explored. Instances of this sub-move are provided below.

7. Language is a potent weapon of societal integration and development no doubt. This is evidently true of proverbs from one generation to another. Proverb is one of the avenues through which the social and cultural background of the people could be known and understood. (NCA0001)
8. Linguistics rights have become prominent in the discourse of linguists and educationists globally in the last two decades or so. This is so because of the increase rates at which nations, and particularly developing ones have continued to perpetually make use of colonial languages at to the detriments of the ones indigenous to them. Apart from this, bodies like UNESCO and UN have also embarked on series of advocacies to enlighten nations how important their local languages are germane to their self-esteem, identity and development. Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights says “all individuals are entitled to the rights declared without discrimination based on language”, while Article 19 also says that: “Individuals have the rights to freedom of expression, including the rights to choose any language as the medium of expression”. Other sections of the Declaration also discuss the freedom fair trial and to be able to have an interpreter in the language one understands. (NCA0004).
9. Societies are quite unique and for that matter have their own cultural norms and values which are strictly adhered to in order to guarantee the sanctity of the society. In the Farefari community there are certain objects or things that are not supposed to be mentioned or spoken about in public. In communication therefore, when these unmentionables which are referred to as “taboos” are mentioned, people tend to describe the use of the language in various respects as obscene, dirty, vulgar and uncouth. (GCA0001)
10. The basic syllable types in most Mabilia languages are CV and CVC. In the CVC form, the realization of the coda is constrained, showing mainly the following: the nasals, /m, n, ŋ/; the obstruents, /b, k/ or /b, g/ and for others like Dàgàrà, the liquids /l, r/. In loanwords with coda, such coda is re-syllabified into onset through epenthesis. A rare V and VC syllable types are attested with a more highly restricted coda in the VC-syllable. Heavy syllables are realized either as CV:, CV:C or CVN. With regard to tone, majority of Mabilia languages are reported to have level tones, with a few isolated ones reported to have contour tones. Majority of these languages have two lexical tones: Low and High; some manifest a Downstepped High tone in addition to the Low and High; a few others, for example, Bùlì, Bìrìfòr and Dàgàrà, have three lexical tones: High, Mid and Low. In their underlying forms, a combination of these level tones is permissible either in disyllabic or polysyllabic words which are mono or poly-morphemic in nature. In such combinations in phonological words and phrases, tone processes are triggered resulting in among other outputs, rising and falling contour tones. (GCA0012).

In NCA0004, the writer tries to justify the reason for the popularity of linguistic rights among nations. This sub-move helps readers to appreciate the concept of *linguistic rights*. It thus sets the tone for readers to desire to know more about the concept. In GCA0001, the writer emphasizes the uniqueness of societies. The writer extends this uniqueness of societies to a community in Ghana, Farefari community, which has rules and regulations governing the linguistic choices of members of that community. This background is meant to attract readers to read further to uncover all the ideas they might wish to know about the Farefari community. Concerning the linguistic features in this sub-move, we found that the present perfect tense was dominant across the two sets of CAs. However, there were few instances when the writers from the two cultural backgrounds used the simple present tense, and in one instance, the simple past tense (*had proved*) featured in the Nigerian corpus.

Writers from both the Ghanaian and Nigerian contexts strategically employed the present perfect tense forms to relate the background information, irrespective of the time that it occurred, to the present time to make the background information more significant and current to the issue(s) under exploration in the papers. In other words, these present perfect tenses project accomplishment that has relevance to the present time (Chareonkul and Wijitsopon, 2020). Therefore, expressions like *has begun*, *has proved*, *has been discussed*, *are adhered*, *are supposed*, *are referred*, *is adopted*, *have proved*, and *is conditioned* are very dominant in this sub-move. It was also noted that the background information that contextualizes the studies was reported using verbs in the simple present form. Expressions like *societies are quite unique and for that matter have their own cultural norms* (GCA0001), *the basic syllable types in most Mabia languages are CV and CVC* (GCA0012), *the sentence is the largest grammatical unit of a language, and operates at either the formal or functional level* (NCA0006), *Language is a potent weapon of societal integration and development no doubt* (NCA0001) are all instances of assertions that connote acceptable facts, hence, their verb forms in the simple present tense.

### **3.2.2.2. Step 2 (Establishing a Niche)**

The second step/sub-move under the introduction move is *Establishing a niche*. It highlights the gap that exists in the literature and also offers justification for filling the gap. It also foregrounds the significance of the entire research work. This step was, however, found to be optional across the 40 CAs from the two sets of authors. The findings show that Ghanaian writers make use of this sub-move more than their Nigerian counterparts. *Step 2 (Establishing a Niche)* has a frequency of 7(43.75%) in the CAs written by Ghanaian authors but 5 (29.411%) times in the CAs written by Nigerian writers. Instances of this sub-move are shown in extracts 11 – 15.

11. However, the literature proves that one domain of discourse that has not been given much attention by Genre Analysts is sports news presentation programs (SNPP), a unique genre in sports discourse. (GCA0008)
12. Yet, what seems so pertinent in quality healthcare discussions has taken much time to receive scholarly attention in Ghana. (GCA0015)
13. The question then is why are they being embraced now? (GCA0008)

14. However, if linguistic rights is the ability to freely make use of one's speech form without any political, social, religious, or economic inhibition or hindrances, to what extent then have all nations in West African sub-region been faithful to these declarations? (NCA0008)
15. ...but it remains doubtful whether the degree of readership is able to sustain these traditions on the long run. (NCA0018)

One unique linguistic strategy that writers from the two cultural backgrounds used to realize this sub-move is contrastive connectors such as *but*, *however*, *yet*, *on the contrary*, *surprisingly*, *nevertheless*, *conversely*, *in spite of*, and *on the other hand*. These were used to signal a shift in focus from *Step 1 (Establishing a background to the study)* to *Step 2 (Establishing a Niche)*. There is no marked difference in the use of these contrastive connectors in *Step 2 (Establishing a Niche)* across the two sets of CAs. The findings further reveal that the contrastive connector *however* is more prevalent in *Step 2 (Establishing a Niche)* by both Ghanaian and Nigerian writers. There were few instances that the writers made use of questions to capture this rhetorical move as evident in extracts 13 and 14.

### 3.2.3. Product Move

This move presents the main findings of the study. Li and Pramoolsook (2015) noted that the *Product Move* states the main results, findings, or arguments. In other words, the *Product Move* communicates the answers to the research questions or the hypotheses that necessitated the study. It was evident from the datasets that this move has no sub-move and it is an obligatory move in the abstracts of both Ghanaian and Nigerian CA writers. Contrary to Hyland (2000) and Li and Pramoolsook (2014) who found the product move as the most dominant move, it rather occurred as the third most frequent move across the two sets of CAs. It recorded frequencies of 15 (75%) and 14 (70%) in the Ghanaian and Nigerian-authored CAs respectively. Instances of the *Product Move* in the data are provided below:

16. It was found that the Igbo language is going into extinction as the Igbos now prefer to interact in English language even among themselves. (NCA0020)
17. The study discovered that bilingual instruction affects students' performance compared to those using a monolingual system of learning. (NCA0015)
18. The paper discovers that the above-mentioned nominals derive, mainly, through the process of permutation and suffixation. Again, a single word-form can qualify for more than one category of nominal, for example, with the suffix *-fe* for deriving process and locative nouns. One category of nominal can be derived by two different suffixes, *-tɔ'* and *-la'*, for agentive nouns. (GCA0013)
19. The analysis showed that most writers deployed a seven-move pattern, with some variability in the textual space and sequence of moves. The next key finding concerned the use of evaluative lexis, personal pronouns, and disciplinary lexis as distinctive persuasive/linguistic features. (GCA0009).

The findings reveal similar strategies that the Nigerian and Ghanaian authors used to capture this move in their CAs. This move is marked by endophoric markers with their collocates like *the results showed...*, *the analysis showed...*, *the findings revealed...*, *the*

*study discovered..., it was found..., the analysis proved..., the findings establish... the paper reveals... and the study finds out.* Reporting verbs like *showed, revealed, establish, confirm, prove, project, discover, and found,* are highly employed in the realization of this move across the two sets of CAs. These reporting verbs are either in the past or present. However, the analysis revealed that the most dominant state of the reporting verbs by the Nigerian writers is the past tense. There were 9 (64.3%) instances of the past and 5 (35.7%) of the present tenses in the NCAs. However, the Ghanaian authors mainly used the present tense which occurs 8 (53.3%) times while the past tense has a frequency of 5 (33.3%). The findings further show two instances where the Ghanaian writers avoided reporting verbs in stating their findings but rather resorted to other grammatical structures as *some significant findings of the study include...* (GCA0018) and *three levels of adaptations been identified* (GCA0011) in the *Product Move*.

### 3.2.4. Method Move

The *Method Move* is the fourth most frequent obligatory move in the two sets of CAs. This move has the same frequency of occurrence across the two datasets. Contrary to the findings of Martin (2003), Li and Pramoolsook (2014), and Samraj (2005) that relate the *Method Move* with a frequency below 50%, this current study shows that the *Method Move* has a frequency of 14 (70%) in both sets of CAs. This shows that these non-native speakers of English writers from the West African sub-region, though with different cultural backgrounds, give much space to the *Method Move* in their CAs. The *Method Move* thus occurred as an obligatory move thereby making it a genre exemplar. Similar to the view of Hyland (2000), this study shows that the main communicative purpose of the *Method Move* is to describe the research design, procedures, data, and approaches adopted in the study. There were instances where the *Method Move* was embedded with the *Purpose Move* (see examples 3 and 4) similar to Martin (2003). Instances of the realization of this move are illustrated below;

20. The survey research method was utilized for the study while questionnaire was employed as data collection instrument. (NCA0020)
21. The methods of data collection were by both primary and secondary means. For the primary method, questionnaires were distributed to different individuals. (NCA0017)
22. The research used 50 transcribed versions of SNPP from three Ghanaian television stations (GTV, Metro TV & TV3). (GCA0008)
23. Data were collected via questionnaire method. In order to ensure efficiency of the data collected for the study, the contrastive analysis theory developed by Lado (1957) was used in analysing the data. (GCA0015)

Extracts 20-23 indicate that the *Method Move* comparatively has a limited textual space to summarize the methodological choices made in the study. This move is typified by the past and present tense forms and the active and passive voices. The differences in the use of linguistic resources in the Nigerian and Ghanaian-authored CAs concern their (linguistic resources) distributions. For example, within the 14 instances that the *Method Move* is realized in the Nigerian corpus, the active and passive voices occurred 8(57.14%) and 6(42.85%) times respectively. Also, the past tense is employed 11 (78.57%) times as



against the present tense which occurred 3 (21.42%) times. As the Nigerian writers highly employed the active voice, the Ghanaian authors, on the contrary, preferred the passive voice. There were 9(64.28%) instances of the passive voice and 5 (35.71%) of the active voice in capturing the *Method Move* in the Ghanaian CAs. Voice and tense in this move are exemplified in extracts 24-29.

24. The survey research method was utilized for the study. (NCA0020)
25. A simple comparative approach is adopted for our discussion. (NCA0019)
26. Data were collected via questionnaire method. (GCA0015)
27. To achieve this, a questionnaire was administered to 100 teachers from senior high schools in Ghana (GCA0017).
28. The methodology involves proverbs obtained from audio recording of some elders of Bassa Nge through social gatherings. (NCA0001)
29. Departing from an earlier description that distinguishes the classes based on a single-set notion of noun classes; **I adopt the paired singular-plural set notion.** (GCA0004)

Similar to the Nigerian writers, the Ghanaian writers predominantly used the past tense in the *Method Move*. There were 12 (85.71%) instances of the past tense and 2(14.28%) of the present tense.

### 3.2.5. Conclusion Move

The *Conclusion Move* is the fifth move in the 40 CAs that were analyzed. This move appeared in the abstracts written by both Ghanaians and Nigerians. There is a relative difference in terms of the frequencies of the *Conclusion Move* across the two datasets as it recorded 10 (50%) and 8 (40%) in the NCAs and GCAs respectively. This means that the *Conclusion Move* appears as an obligatory move in the NCAs but as an optional move in the GCAs. This move mainly projects the importance of the conference paper by summarizing the implications of the findings of the study. Typical instances of this move are shown as follows:

30. *This research has pedagogical relevance for training media practitioners. It also has implication for the genre theory by foregrounding the potential of the genre theory to explore situated language use from different domains of discourse* (GCA0008).
31. *This, no doubt have [sic] great implications for effective communication for speakers of English* (NCA0014).

The analysis further revealed that authors from the two cultural backgrounds used endophoric markers with their collocates in the form of verbs to signal the *Conclusion Move*. Examples of these resources are *the study has implication for...*; *the study concludes that...*; *the paper draws the conclusion that...*; *the study therefore concluded that...* and *the study contributes to...* Other linguistic strategies include *it was consequently recommended that...* and *this, no doubt have great implications for....* The tense in this move from both the GCAs and NCAs is noted to be in the present form (e.g. *has, concludes, have,*

*contributes, draws, and recommends*). However, there were few instances (e.g. *concluded* and *had*) that the past forms of the verb were used.

### **3.2.6. Organization Move**

The last rhetorical move identified in the 40 CAs is the *Organization Move*. It informs readers about the way the entire paper is structured, as evident in extracts 32 and 33. This move is not found in Hyland’s (2000) five-move model of abstracts. Thus, it is a new finding that has been uncovered in this current study. However, unlike the other five moves discussed above, the *Organization Move* has the lowest frequency of occurrence across the two sets of CAs. The findings show that the *Organization Move* occurs in two abstracts only: one each from NCAs and GCAs.

32. The paper is divided into three main sections. Section 1 is an introduction to loanwords and some phonological properties of Gurene. Section 2 discusses the data in relation to some phonological processes such as vowel harmony, vowel epenthesis, vowel lengthening, segment deletion, and segment alterations. The last section of the paper constitutes summary of findings and conclusions. (GCA0007).
33. The paper starts by highlighting the general importance of using mother tongue as a medium of instruction at the lower primary level. (NCA0003).

The extracts present the ‘architecture’ of their respective papers. This confirms the view that the abstract is a miniature paper since through the *Organization Move*, readers are offered an outline of the key rhetorical sections in the paper to be presented at a conference. In extract 32 for instance, the writer informs readers about the various sections that will make up the entire paper as well as the respective tasks to be accomplished in the sections and sub-sections. Linguistic signals that prompt readers about this rhetorical move are endophoric markers (e.g. *the paper is divided into...*, *the paper starts by highlighting...*) and present tense (e.g. *is* and *starts*) as shown in the extracts.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the study largely suggest that both Nigerian and Ghanaian linguists/applied linguists show a high degree of homogeneity in the way they compose their conference abstracts. The study shows that it is not just that Ghanaian and Nigerian academics belong to the same discourse community; the community is shared by the English (international) one described by Hyland (2000). In other words, all the five rhetorical stages proposed by Hyland (2000) as prototypical standardized RAs abstracts are found in the CAs written by writers from the two cultural backgrounds.

The *Introduction Move*, *Purpose Move*, *Product Move*, *Method Move* and *Conclusion Move* are all evident in the abstracts that were analyzed. There is a high degree of similarity between the ways these moves are frequently used in the two sub-corpora. One notable difference is that the *Conclusion Move* is identified as an optional move in the

Ghanaian abstracts whilst it appears as an obligatory move in the Nigerian abstracts. The other difference is the predominant use of the passive voice in the *Methods Move* by the Ghanaian writers as against their Nigerian counterparts who opted for the active voice.

Aside from the five-move structure proposed by Hyland (2000), the study confirms a new move tagged *Organization Move* and it has the communicative purpose of informing readers about the way the paper is organized. However, this new move is optional as it records a frequency of 5% in the Ghanaian corpus and a frequency of 5% in that of the Nigerian. We argue that the *Organization Move* is not considered a typical feature of CA and as such, it can be considered in some situations as an acceptable addition.

The reason for the presence of the five rhetorical moves proposed by Hyland (2000) in the two corpora stems from the fact that the writers of these abstracts are linguists and applied linguists who teach at the various universities in their respective countries and as such are aware of the established norms on composing a rhetorically effective CA. The awareness of these scholars of the conventionalized ways of writing an abstract might have resulted in the homogeneity that exists in their conference abstract composition. The study has, therefore, shown that it is not all instances that sociocultural factors cause marked variation in the writing styles of writers. It thus suggests that the rules of writing that bind a specific discourse community of writers supersede these writers' different cultural backgrounds.

It is recommended that further studies should be conducted to explore the rhetorical moves in abstracts from authors in L2 (English as a Second Language-ESL) and EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts. This will help reveal the effect of the different contexts on the move structure in CAs. The findings of this study are limited in terms of its scope and sample size. Thus, the scope of the study is limited to only Nigerian and Ghanaian writers and the sample size used is forty conference proceedings abstracts: twenty CAs from the Nigerian writers and twenty from the Ghanaian writers. There is a possibility that increasing the sample size as well as the scope of this study might affect its findings. This limitation of the study creates an avenue for further studies to be conducted on the same theme by using a wider scope, large sample size, and different focus within the same ESL context.

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