

**FUNCTIONAL INDEXES OF SUCCESS
IN CSS/PMS ARGUMENTATIVE
ESSAY WRITING**

pISSN: 2957-9015

eISSN: 2957-9007



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Abstract

This study aims to explore different linguistics patterns of Argumentative essays written for Central Superior Services/ Provincial Management Service (CSS/PMS) in Pakistan by using Biber's Multidimensional approach (MDA). This is a corpus based study which is experimental in nature. The function of this approach is to explain the functional association of linguistic patterns systematically. This study has been performed by using second level of MD (New MD). The researchers have collected the corpus of 30 essays which are argumentative in nature. These essays are downloaded from the popular online forums which are used for the preparation of competitive exams/ current affairs issues in Pakistan. The researchers claim that Pakistan CSS/PMS aspirants focus more on sharing information rather than building arguments in their essay writing papers at CSS/PMS level. Doing so, they do not fulfill the linguistic requirement of the said papers. The ideas presented by them are without logical reasoning or research based facts. The results of these essays show that these aspirants share information in these essays rather than building arguments through cohesion and coherence. Most of the Pakistani learners of English Language do not have the basic knowledge of grammar. So, they don't know how to develop personal

viewpoints while attempting essay paper. The researchers have analyzed these linguistic gaps through multidimensional analysis of selected essays that may help the CSS/PMS aspirants to fix these linguistic gaps.

Keywords: *Argumentative essays, multidimensional analysis, aspirants, CSS/PMS, Information, Dimensions, Weights*

1. INTRODUCTION

Essays have significant place in English academic writing. The aspirants of Central Superior Services/Provincial Management Service in Pakistan are demanded to write argumentative essays in their essay writing paper. They are required to build arguments using all the cohesive devices to get success in these papers. The argumentative essay is a genre of writing that requires the student to investigate a topic; collect, generate, and evaluate evidence; and establish a position on the topic in a concise manner. According to Thomson (2000), argument is the manifestation of results which are assisted by information and causes. The perspective of argument highlights rhetorical theories which insert forward the features of persuasion (Gilbert, 2005). According to Crowhurst (1990), argumentative essay is “the form of writing that the writers take a notion and support it with either emotional stances or logical patterns” (349).

After independence from the British Empire, Pakistan maintained English as an official language and since has continued to play a key role in the economic, educational, social and political life of the people of the country (Mahboob). After independence, with the withdrawal of the British, local varieties of English became an even more dominant model for language. As a result of these processes, English in South Asia became ‘nativized’ and ‘vernacularized’ (Kachru 1992; Mahboob and Ahmar 2004; Rahman 2011). This article is genuinely for the aspirants who are willing to appear in CSS/PMS exams. The article focuses on the basic linguistic features that determine the argumentative stance of the aspirants. Most of the candidates score less in this paper because they convey more information than the developing an argument. This paper may help in analyzing the essays attempted by the CSS/PMS candidates and their argumentative approach towards the topics asked in the paper by using MAT Multidimensional Analysis. The linguistic features particularly using multi-dimensional analysis have been studied by many language researchers in the recent past. Williams (2012) analyzed the first-person reference in elaborations of biochemical RAs in a bilingual English-Spanish corpus. Quantitative research explained that Spanish

writers select both exclusive and mixed inclusive-exclusive approaches, whereas the exclusive concept is widely used in the English-language articles. Major linguistic discrepancies between the languages were demonstrated for overall use and for captions of results, comparison of results with initial research results as well as meta text.

Statement of the Problem

Argumentation has prominent role in writing persuasive essays. The study of building arguments via use of different linguistic features is considered substantial. The aforesaid studies are valuable in disclosing the distinct linguistic components of English language. However, certain gaps can be found in this area of research. According to the Observation of examiners on performance of candidates in CE- 2016, 2017 & 2018, a significant majority of candidates fail in essay writing paper of CSS in Pakistan due to building arguments without logical reasoning or research based facts. The quality and level of critical argumentation on the whole was very poor (CE-2017). Most of the studies have been conducted to analyze the linguistic features of essay writing. Unfortunately, none of them focus on the linguistic components which become cause of building potent arguments in the essay writing paper at CSS/PMS examination in Pakistan. It is therefore necessary to conduct a comprehensive study to analyse the argumentative essay to know the linguistic causes of failure of candidates at such high level.

Purpose of the Research

This study may cater what linguistic deficiencies the aspirants have which become cause of failure in the Essay writing paper at CSS/PMS level. This focuses on the linguistic features found in the essays of CSS/PMS aspirants. It may directly address the level of argumentation of the aspirants of competitive exam. The existing study focuses to what extent these essays are informational by using different dimensions of MAT. Through this study, the researches may analyse the linguistic elements that are important in constructing or building argument or persuasion. This article helps in breaking the conventional ways of attempting essay paper in competitive exam as it the aspirants by identifying the areas where more persuasion is needed.

Objectives of the Research

The main objectives of this research are:

- To compile a corpus of argumentative essays written for CSS/PMS level in Pakistan
- To highlight distinctive functional traits of CSS/PMS argumentative essays
- To explore functional variation within CSS/PMS argumentative essays

Research Questions

In response to the issues labeled above, the present study may investigate the following questions:

- RQ 1: What are the frequently co-occurring linguistic features in corpus of argumentative essay writing at CSS/PMS level according to new MDA??
- RQ 2: How far do the argumentative essays written by CSS/PMS aspirants vary in terms of linguistic functionality?

Significance of the Study

Through this study, the researchers may analyze the linguistic reasons of failure at large level in the paper of Essay writing in CSS/PMS competitive exam. The findings of this study may help future aspirants of CSS/PMS to overcome their linguistic problems. This research may also help the teachers who train the aspirants in the paper of essay writing. Moreover, the paper checkers of essays writing may be able to find help from this study. A large number of CSS/PMS aspirants prepare themselves using books/websites available in the market/online sources. Above all, the writers of essay writing books can formulate an approach how to write the argumentative essays to maximize the success of aspirants in this papers. Federal and provincial commissions may provide this article on their websites for facilitating aspirants in essay writing preparation.

Delimitations

This research work delimits to this study five dimensions of Essays of Pakistani Aspirants at CSS/PMS level. It also delimited to 30 Argumentative essays on different topics.

2. METHODOLOGY

Argumentative essays is a unique and popular genre in Pakistan especially for the aspirants of CSS/PMS. The research may analyze the functional and linguistics variations of argumentative essays written by CSS/PMS aspirants. In this study, the researchers have decided to make a corpus comprising of 30 essays about different topics related to issues in Pakistan. The sample is small but carefully

selected to represent the important issues of Pakistan.

Corpus Compilation

Compilation is a very crucial aspect of any corpus based research. In this light, the choice of corpus scheme and the corpus size should substantiate strongly. According to many researchers, a minimum of 30 observations is sufficient to conduct significant statistics.

This study has utilized the corpus of 30 argumentative essays of CSS/PMS level written by Pakistani aspirants. To conduct the detailed corpus analysis, the researchers have compiled purposeful random sampling of selected essays. The essays were selected from different online forums used for preparation of Competitive exams. The representative sample of total 30 essays were selected.

Sample Size

Sample of the research is 30 essays written by aspirants of CSS/PMS. Total tokens of all 30 selected essays are 101091 whereas average tokens are 3369.7.

Criteria of Essays Selection

The argumentative essays have been selected by those aspirants who appeared in CSS/PMS examination. The essays have been compiled via online websites e.g. CSS forums etc. All the essays are argumentative in nature. There is a lot of variation in the number of tokens of the selected 30 essays.

Data Collection

The Data used in this research is based on text files of argumentative essays on different topics regarding social, domestic and global issues of Pakistan. The data was not available in text form so it was downloaded from online sources e.g. CSS Times, Daily Times, CSS Essays, The financial Daily International and CSS Forum. The data was downloaded in Word format and converted in text format. Data is composed of 30 essays written by CSS/PMS aspirants of Pakistan on different topics representing current issues. Each essay is selected carefully which fulfills the requirement of the topic. Each essay starts with outline and written according to the order of the outline in shape of paragraphs.

Tool for Data Analysis

The data collected for this study has been analyzed and interpreted by MAT. The Multidimensional Analysis Tagger (MAT) is a program that replicates Biber's(1988) Variation across Speech and Writing tagger for the multidimensional functional analysis of English texts, generally applied for studies on text type of genre variation. The program can generate a grammatically annotated version of the corpus selected as well as the statistics needed to perform a text-type or genre analysis. The program plots the input text or corpus on Biber's (1988) dimensions and it determines its closest text type, as proposed by Biber (1989).

MAT uses the Stanford Tagger for an initial segmentation in parts of speech and then finds the patterns. Multidimensional analysis (MDA) forms central component of the paper. MDA uses computers to count the frequencies of linguistic features in tagged corpora, and then to carry out a factor analysis on these feature counts in order to identify 'dimensions', that is, sets of meaningful associations among individual variables.

3. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The main concern of this research is to analyze the different linguistics features in the argumentative essays of Pakistani CSS/PMS aspirants by using a software MAT. For this purpose text of essays on different topics about the issues related to Pakistan is compiled to analyse it by MAT and after analyzing the data the following results are obtained: An overall result of all Five dimensions of the selected argumentative essays may be seen in the following figure 1.

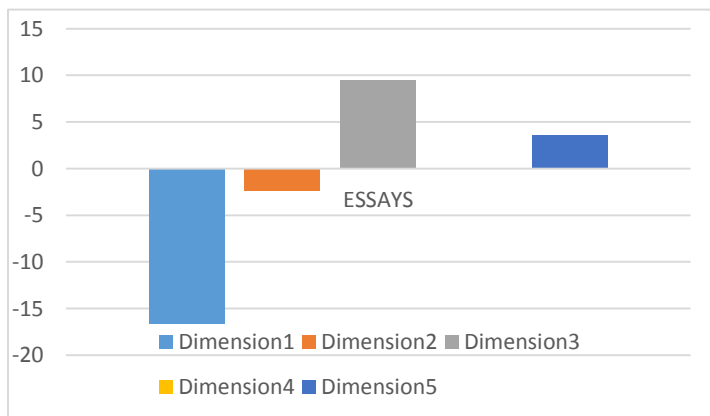


Figure 1: Overall result of first five dimensions of Essays

The above figure clearly shows the Negative and positive weights of all the five dimensions of the corpora of selected essays. Dimensions 1 highlights that the text

is highly informational with low score 21.43 and no involvement is found in the

selected text. Dimension 2 with low score of -4.89 indicates that the text is non-narrative and there are some part which is narrative. The text is presented explicitly in the dimension 3 with high weight of 14.46. Dimension 4 is clearly exhibits that the corpus has positive feature. Dimension 5 with high score of 10.39 shows that the text is highly non-abstract.

Involved vs. Informational

Essays written by aspirants of CSS/PMS in Pakistani context are supposed to be argumentative. So, these essays are usually highly involved as there are elements of subjectivity and personal thoughts.

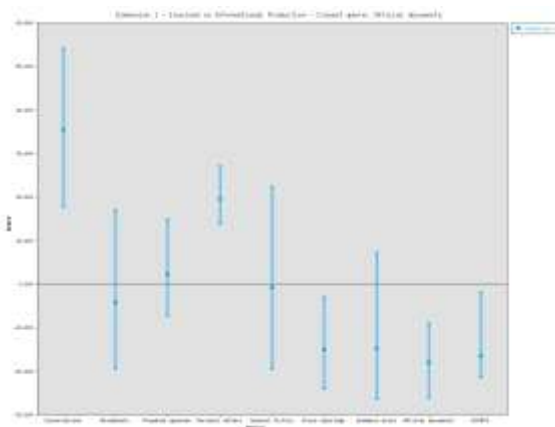


Figure 2: *Dimension 01, Involved vs. Informational*

As the concerned data is analyzed corpistically, the results show that the data is highly informational rather than involved. The claim of the researcher is correct that the writers of the essays at CSS/PMS level focus more on portraying information. The closest genre to the analyzed data is Press

reportage which are meant to be informational instead of involved. e.g. The significance of education cannot be neglected. Education make the ways for advancement. According to Biber, Nouns, Prepositional Phrases, Agentless passive, Attributive adjectives are some major linguistics features found in informational text. From the above example, it may be said that Nouns and agentless passive are used to prove the said Biber's description.

Narrative vs. Non- Narrative

The second dimension given by the software used (MAT) is about narration and as for narration, it is always narrated in past tense. Most of the argumentative essays are written in present tense so most of this data is non narrative.

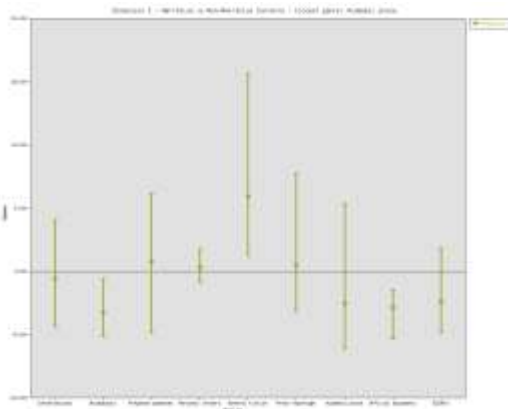


Figure 3: *Dimension 02, Narrative vs. Non-narrative*

Looking at the dimension, it is seen that the tagged data is more non-narrative and there are some chunks are narrative as well. The closest genre is with the tagged data is academic prose which is also more non narrative. Biber has stated that Narrative text is full of Past tense verbs, Third person personal pronouns, Perfect aspect verbs, Public

verbs etc whereas only two linguistic features have large negative weight: present tense and attributive adjectives. e.g. Its geo-political significance creates a remarkable prestige in the region.

Explicit vs. Situation Dependent

The other dimension here is about whether the data is explicit or situation dependent. Explicit data is kind of data that has been thoroughly elaborated and expressed without leaving anything untouched. On the other hand, situation dependent or implicit writing communicates the secondary meaning or idea of writing. Any kind of academic writing e.g. Argumentative essays does not adopt implicit writing because it has significant levels of ambiguity, which are not necessary when somebody is explaining or arguing some idea.

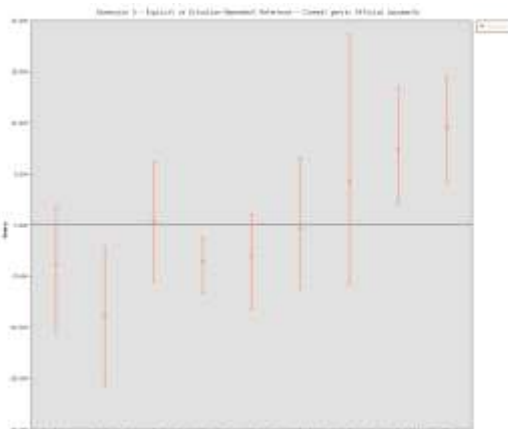


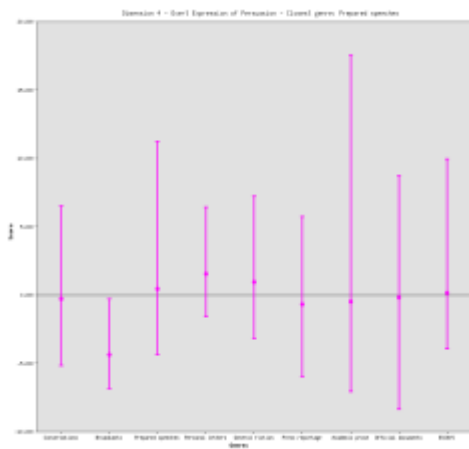
Figure 4: *Dimension 03, Explicit vs. Situation Dependent*

From the conducted analysis, it is observed that most of the data is explicit and before it was seen that the data is highly informational so it is concluded here that the information given is explicit and there is no ambiguity as the text gives the clear meaning so the readers don't have to struggle to understand what is being informed. The closest genre in this

regard is Official documents and it is indicated that argumentative essays are

written in fully prepared mind and these give clarity of thought and do not have any kind of ambiguity in it. Any text is explicit when it has positive features of WH relative clauses, pied pipping construction, phrasal coordination and nominalization. The text is implicit or situation dependent which has linguistic weightage of Time adverbs, place adverbs and other adverbs. e.g. centralization was accompanied by non-participatory governance and political management.

Overt Expression of Persuasion



On this dimension, something significant has been observed while analysing the concerned data which can be seen in this dimension and it is the dimension where our text stands neutral. Only positive features are found in this dimension. All the linguistic features function together to mark persuasion. According to Biber's point of view, positive weights of infinitives, prediction, necessity and possibility modals, split auxiliaries, conditional subordination and suasive

verbs are needed to make text persuasive.

Figure 5: Dimension04, Overt Expression of Persuasion

Although the given closest genre is Official Documents but there is the slightest difference between analysed data and other genres of dimension as it shows that there are elements of conversation, prepared speeches, general fiction etc. There is nothing to argue as the dimension itself suggests the neutral stance of the data. E.g. It may also be ensured that in old as well as in new prisons, clean hygienic conditions are provided including a flush system in toilets with proper sewerage facilities.

Abstract vs. Non-Abstract Information

As it is already seen that the data is highly informational and there is less subjectivity involved and from this dimension it can be seen what sort of information is given and it weighs towards the non-abstract information which means that there is information about current affairs, political affairs and social issues.

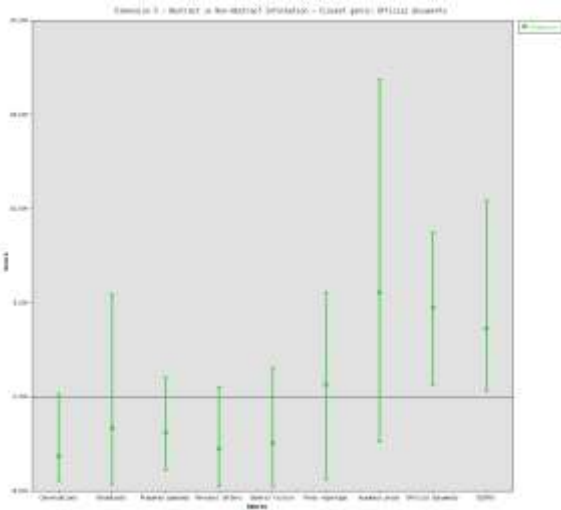


Figure 6: *Dimension 05, Abstract vs. Non-Abstract information*

These type of topics require the writer to have the knowledge on current affairs and facts and figures pertaining to recent incidents happening in the world. This gives vent to the notion that the writers of these essays give information of the situations and issues they are well aware of. The closest genre in this regard is official documents which also refer to the idea of portraying

information. Biber states that the features with positive scores are conjuncts, agentless passive, adverbial past participle clauses, by- passives, past participle WHIZ deletion and predicative adjectives. e.g. If the hostilities will be ratcheted up in future, India can disrupt the route which is vulnerable to Indian attacks as it lies hardly 18 kilometres from Ladakh region.

Example Extracts from Essays on Different Dimensions

Dim 1 -21.43 (What has gone wrong with the system of education in Pakistan?)
 Score &
 File
 Name

- Example Text
1. Illiteracy will be removed and secondary education will be made free and compulsory within minimum possible period.
 2. Participation of women in all spheres of life will be encouraged.
 3. It is assumed that a misplaced use of energy is rampant in industries which need to be curtailed.
 4. Wind can be utilized to produce electricity at the coastal areas.
-

Dim 4 Score 9.93 & File Name	(Prison Reforms)
Example Text	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. It is therefore recommended that such permission may be given by the Director Reclamation and Probation after due process and the procedure for the purpose should be simplified.2. It is also recommended that prisoners may be allowed to keep a radio (with headphones), wristwatch, books, paper, and pen/pencil with them, without having to obtain permission.3. This will enable the Government to earn some revenue and the parolees to provide subsistence to his/their family members. This will make the prisoner, a productive member of society and facilitate him/her in rehabilitation.4. Prison should be reserved for those whose offending is so serious that they cannot serve their sentence in the community.

It is important to note that the argumentative essays written by CSS/PMS aspirants are informative in nature. The involvement is very low in the dimension 1. In the second dimension, the genre is non- narrative. It means there is more usage of present tense and 2nd person pronoun which have been highlighted in example given above. Some part of data us narrative which means the writers have used the past tense as well. The data is explicitly described by the writer in the third dimension which shows the writers of these have written with clarity in minds about the topics.

4. CONCLUSION

This article has tested that the aspirants are more concerned to give information instead of developing arguments. Even the successful candidates more rely to convey information than argumentation. The results revealed the basic causes why most of the candidates are unable to pass essay writing in the competitive exams of CSS/PMS there is a plethora of information that is already known to the examiners. The aspirants do not bother to give their personal perspective regarding to the issues asked by the examiners. In this way the candidates are unable to convince the examiners because the lack of their personal viewpoints.

Pedagogical Implications

Some pedagogical implications for essay writing instruction can be drawn from the results of MD .The MD analysis findings suggest that the writers of the argumentative essays may not be fully aware of the linguistics features which can

build the arguments in these essays to fulfill the linguistic requirements of writing these essays. The finding of this study may help the future students of essay writing to avoid the linguistic errors committed by aspirants of CSS/PMS. The teachers of CSS/PMS English essays can use this article to teach their students about the common causes of failure in essays writing papers. This will help students in the development of a proactive approach for essay preparation. The students of essay writing learn a lot on their own about the possible causes of failure by reading this study.

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