A Comparative Study of IELTS Argumentative Essay and Other Subgenres of Learner Academic Writing in Pakistani Context

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Abstract

This research is an attempt to study if IELTS writing is different from students' university writing in Pakistani context. It has already been theorized that IELTS writing is different from university writing by Moore and Morton (2005). They collected the students' university assignments and evaluated them according to IELTS rubric for Task 2. However, in the present study a corpus of argumentative essays has been collected from IELTS test takers in Pakistan (IAEC) and Biber's multidimensional analysis (1988) has been used as the framework for the analysis of data. The dimensions have been extracted according to Biber's framework for old MD (1988) and further it has been compared to previous MD studies conducted on learner academic writing in the university. For this purpose three studies have been used for making comparisons: Abdulaziz (2017), Hussain (2016) and Abbas (2020). The results confirmed that the IELTS writing is different from university writing. Significant difference has been observed on dimension 1, 3 and 4. This study can be helpful for the instructors in IELTS preparatory centers in Pakistan as well as for the material developers to design more localized materials according to the requirements of Pakistani learners. Overall, this comparative analysis aims to provide insights into how language use has evolved or remained consistent across different studies and timeframes, contributing to a deeper understanding of language variation and development in academic writing contexts.

Keywords: IELTS tests, argumentative essays, university writing

Introduction

Genre and the genre approach in writing appears to be relatively recent developments in English language teaching. Genre in writing is a component of genre in language usage. Thoreau (2006) defines genre in writing as a specialized sort of writing characterized by a distinctive style, intended audience, and particular purpose. According to Thoreau, genre encompasses three primary elements: writing style, audience, and aim orientation. Thoreau asserts that writing style refers to the specific words employed and the organization of information in a piece of writing.

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Scott and Avery (2011) endorse Thoreau's concept (2006) that writing style refers to the words and expressions employed in writing and how language patterns are conveyed. Genre writing aims to view work from several perspectives. The perception, execution, and examination of writing vary from diverse perspectives. It significantly deviates from the traditional viewpoint on writing as discussed by Dirgeyasa (2015). Genre writing offers a fresh approach to teaching writing by providing many viewpoints. One key aspect of genre analysis is the understanding that writing is influenced by social contexts, with each piece of writing aiming to fulfil a specific goal derived from a particular scenario. Hyland (2003; as mentioned in Dirgeyasa, 2015) states that genre involves prompting students to write with specific intentions, such as achieving goals, conveying stories, requesting information, describing processes, or reporting events. By adhering to social conventions in message organization, we aim for readers to understand our objectives. Hyland suggests that genre writing serves the dual purpose of facilitating the act of writing and allowing the writer to achieve specific objectives. For instance, explaining how to summarize, how to narrate, how to depict, how a task is completed, or how a process is executed. The writers must utilize specific social conventions, language traits, and rhetorical structures in the text. The genre approach to writing encompasses two separate dimensions in teaching and learning writing. Genre is a specific category of text or literary composition. The language (writing form) should be connected to the social function of the text. The social function of a text refers to the specific social context in which the text is utilized. This will change depending on the context and situation. Genre as a process refers to the way in which a piece of writing is created, instructed, and acquired. In this instance, there is a specific technique of creating and duplicating the written work. Genre, as a methodology, outlines specific stages or actions to be followed. These will systematically lead the writer to produce the written work. Genre might be likened to a coin with two distinct faces, each with unique traits and functions. Ann (2003) asserts that genre is perceived as a specific sort of textual composition. It is a standard model for describing a product with various features and attributes. On the contrary, it is considered as a single paradigm, approach, or strategy for teaching and learning writing. This demonstrates that the genre-based approach to teaching and learning writing is markedly unique compared to other techniques.

Background

Douglas Biber's multidimensional analysis is a study approach that entails analyzing several aspects of language use in a collection of texts, such as linguistic characteristics, communicative purposes, and social settings (Biber, 1988). The method entails recognizing patterns of linguistic features, including grammatical structures, lexicon, and discourse markers, across various text kinds and genres. Biber contends that these patterns can unveil the inherent communication functions and social contexts of language use, offering insights into how various groups of speakers and authors utilize language to accomplish their communicative objectives.

Biber's multidimensional analysis has been utilized in several contexts such as academic writing, discourse analysis, and corpus linguistics. Biber utilized multidimensional analysis to investigate the variations in language usage across various academic disciplines and genres in his research on academic writing (Biber, 2006). He recognized distinctive linguistic elements in various disciplinary and generic contexts, asserting that these features were indicative of the diverse communicative roles and social settings in which language was utilized.

Other academics have utilized Biber's multidimensional analysis in research on discourse genres, including spoken interaction in hospital contexts (Candlin & Candlin, 2005) and legal discourse (Kjeldsen, 2013). These (among others) research studies utilized multidimensional analysis to pinpoint distinctive patterns of language traits associated with various communicative functions and social situations in these genres.

Biber presented the framework for the categorization of linguistic features. He proposed that in any register or genre there are certain linguistic features which occur more or less frequently. Furthermore certain features get them categorized with other features to develop a distinctive text in each genre. This frequent categorization of linguistic features is also responsible for the differences between different registers. Biber, in his 1988 study, figured out five dimensions to study textual characteristics of different genres. Through this model he also proposed some guidelines for formal versus informal discourse and on the medium of communication between spoken and written discourse. He presented a list of features which were determining features for either spoken and/or written discourses or registers. In the following table, the dimensions proposed by Biber have been given.

Table 1: Dimensions proposed by Biber (1988)

Dimension No.	Label for each dimension (Biber, 1988)
Dimension 1	Involved versus Informational Production
Dimension 2	Narrative versus Non-Narrative Concerns
Dimension 3	Explicit versus Situation-Dependent Reference
Dimension 4	Overt Expression of Persuasion
Dimension 5	Abstract versus Non-abstract Information

Biber's multidimensional analysis is a strong tool for evaluating the intricate relationship between language usage, communicative purposes, and social circumstances in various genres and language use scenarios.

In this paper following question has been tried to be answered:
How far IELTS writing is different from university writing?

Review of Literature

Learner academic writing is not a homogenous whole. It has many sub-genres to be explored and studied through research. These sub-genres are the research articles, text books, class assignments, short stories and narrative and argumentative essays. Egbert (2014) conducted a corpus-based comparative analysis analyzing university textbooks, journal papers, and popular academic books. The research is based on 150 samples. This study utilized Biber's (1988) multidimensional analysis as its approach. The regression analysis indicates that reader perceptions can be examined by analyzing the linguistic choices made by the writers in the sample. This study provides an in-depth analysis of academic writing using the paradigm developed by Biber.

Grey (2011) studied the linguistic features of register found in academic publications, considering the different ways research articles are presented in various disciplines. This dissertation's research is grounded in a corpus of 270 research articles spanning six disciplines: philosophy, history, political science, applied linguistics, biology, and physics.

Research articles in these fields are classified based on the publication they are published in: theoretical, qualitative, and quantitative research articles. Grey (2013) uses a broad definition of research articles (RAs) as any text published in an academic journal that reports on primary research when studying linguistic diversity across academic disciplines. It is assumed in this definition that papers in the same field, even if they discuss different research methods, share language similarities. However, there is limited empirical research that has explored this notion. He has extensively researched research articles from several disciplines and correctly identified syntactic complexity as a multidimensional concept. Hutter (2015) has also studied research articles using corpus as a methodology and through concordance lines and frequencies, noun modification has been studied in the empirical research articles. Karakaya (2017) is a corpus-based and systemic functional analysis of syntactic complexity and nominal modification in academic writing. The genre of Journal article and masters' theses across three disciplines have been included in the analysis of learner writing. Extensive study has been conducted on research articles written by learners (Kanoksilapatham, 2003), Patterns of linguistic variation in research articles (Kim, 2021), textual elements and their pragmatic implications (Kim, 2011), a corpus driven study of class assignments written by Chinese EFL learners (Leedham, 2011), class assignments (Moran, 2013; Taasker, 2019), syntactic complexity in class projects (Gustin, 2019). The effect of feedback on learner essay writing has been studied (Mazgutova, 2015; Nguyen, 2016; Nguyen, 2013), the difference between argumentative and narrative essays (Pan, 2018), syntactic complexity in argumentative essays (Park, 2017; Russell, 2014), expression of stance in argumentative essays (Faulkner, 2014), in Turkish context (Sogut, 2014) in Vietnamese learners (Ho, 2011), and study of stance markers in summary versus argumentative essays genre (Danis, 2019). Study of coherence in argumentative essays (Gao, 2012), the effects of time constraints and proficiency on L2 learners' narrative versus argumentative essays (Lee, 2019). Whereas, composition, summary and essays have also been studied comparatively with the theoretical framework of textual cohesion (Abeywickrama, 2007), learners' sensitivity towards spoken and written English (Chui, 2010). These and other influential studies in the field have been discussed in the upcoming section.

IELTS Writing is Different from University Writing by ESL Learners
Moore and Morton (2005) analyzed the IELTS Task 2 rubric alongside 155 assignment tasks from two Australian universities. They discovered similarities between IELTS writing and university essays, but also noted significant differences. Their research indicates that the writing style required by the examination is more similar to specific nonacademic public genres, and should not be considered a suitable example for university-level writing. They determined that it is most likely optimal to address exam preparation and the larger EAP writing curriculum through distinct programs.

Two overarching conclusions can be derived from the results they have presented. There seemed to be a wide variety of writing activities that students were expected to complete in university curriculum. The variability posed a problem for both students and EAP instructors and curriculum developers who must prepare students for the requirements of professional EAP programs. An EAP instructor could consider focusing on the common university essay as the major written form for their program. This type of essay is typically based on a variety of readings and may explore abstract or meta-phenomenal topics. The essay's continued prevalence as the primary genre in academia has also been observed in research outside of Australia (Dudley-Evans, 2002).

Therefore, significant distinctions appeared to exist between the writing skills needed for university assignments and those needed to succeed in the IELTS test. The IELTS analysis suggests that academic literacy in this format involves writing in different forms such as spontaneous writing, expressing opinions, using anecdotal evidence and personal experiences, and prompting action through questions. It often explores and analyzes real-world phenomena to understand the complexities of our environment. Writing is separate from reading, functioning as a unique activity with its own specific goals and methods. The characteristics of first-year university assessment tasks differ from spontaneous writing. Opinions are allowed in certain fields but must be backed by research or scholarly sources. Writing is typically analytical rather than practical, focusing on abstract concepts and theories. Writing is closely connected to reading processes. Upon analysis, the writing style required by the IELTS exam may share more similarities with public written discourse than with academic writing. The focus on expressing opinions spontaneously indicates categories like letters to the editor or newspaper editorials. Practicing this writing style can help students develop their literacy skills, such as coherence and grammar. However, it should not be considered a suitable model for university-level writing. Morton and Moore (2005) further endorse the 'separated' model proposed by Deakin (1997). EAP and IELTS must be addressed in distinct modules. Although integrating the two curricula may appear efficient, without addressing the differences mentioned, such programs may confuse students about university writing. It would be incorrect to consider exam preparation as a sufficient kind of EAP writing education. One important point to ponder is whether the IELTS Task 2 could be modified to align better with the writing expectations in academic settings. This addresses the overarching concerns regarding the validity and authenticity of tests. Bachman and Palmer (1996) emphasized the need of ensuring that test tasks in large-scale public examinations, such as IELTS, have a major impact on teaching programs by being as authentic as possible. Wigglesworth and Elder (1996) point out that in test development, there is frequently a compromise between validity and reliability. The latest changes to the IELTS test indicate that the test designers have given more importance to dependability factors. In a previous iteration of the test, tasks were designed with a thematic connection between reading passages in the reading test and Task 2 items. Examinees had the choice to use reading material to back up their writing. However, this component, which included teaching citation skills in preparatory courses, was discontinued due to concerns about the challenge of detecting plagiarism in examinees' responses and its impact on test reliability. Given the high stakes of the IELTS exam and its expected increase in popularity among institutions, the test is likely to face more accountability demands. Therefore, it is probable that there will be a sustained focus on enhancing the reliability of the test (UCLES, 2002a). Unfortunately, focusing too much on this aspect may hinder potential enhancements to the test's validity in the future. Cooper (2013) examined it within the South African setting. Cooper (2013) observed that the content taught in language schools should directly impact students' success on the IELTS test, which is crucial for university admission. Cooper aligned the language education in the classroom with the test performance and the bands in IELTS that learners achieve. High-achieving learners are likely to excel in IELTS examinations or other placement, proficiency, or diagnostic tests if they perform well academically. Lexical bundles are word groups that commonly appear together, creating identifiable patterns linked to specific writing styles. Due to variations in bundle usage across genres and academic fields, students must learn and use the appropriate lexical bundles for their subjects to demonstrate proficiency in their writing.

This study is conducted using a collection of IELTS Task 2 writing tests and essays, all authored by first-year psychology students. The corpora were created to study the common lexical bundles found in two academic genres in order to evaluate the extent of similarity and validate Task 2 of the IELTS test as a gauge of the writing style anticipated from undergraduate students. Analyzed the most common 4-word lexical bundles in each corpus using WordSmith Tools, a computer program specialized in examining vocabulary in extensive text collections. The results indicate significant variations in the lexical bundles utilized due to distinct fundamental criteria in each style of essay. Task 2 of the IELTS test involves presenting an opinion-based argument, whereas academic essays rely on several references from relevant literature. Based on previous research, lexical bundles in TOEFL iBT tests and IELTS tests are similar to spoken discourse, while those in academic essays are more characteristic of written discourse.

Cooper (2013) determined that the current format of the IELTS Task 2 writing test is not an effective indicator of university success. Hashimoto (2020) attempted to examine this argument by employing Biber's multidimensional analysis approach. The participants' written language was transformed into the Proportional American University Student Experience (PAUSE) Corpus, comprising 580 texts with a total of 405,954 word tokens over 21 registers. The corpus data was marked with linguistic features using the Biber Tagger. The data was analyzed using Biber's (1988) multidimensional analysis to calculate the mean dimension scores for each register. Registers were then mapped onto the first five dimensions from the analysis. The corpus analysis revealed that university student written language was marked by high usage of features for conveying information densely and for non-narrative purposes, while features used for persuasion were less common. Zhao (2016) examined how voice salience, assessed by an analytic rubric, correlates with official TOEFL iBT argumentative essay scores in 200 timed L2 essays. The study found that voice significantly predicted TOEFL essay results, accounting for around 25% of the score variations. Furthermore, each specific voice dimension showed a significant or moderate correlation with essay results when analyzed independently. It also emerged as a key indicator of writing quality.

Methodology
Step 1 involved gathering a corpus of 500 argumentative essays written by IELTS test takers in Pakistan. Each essay was approximately 200 words long and was written under controlled conditions, including standardized prompts and duration.

In Step 2, these essays were analyzed using Biber's tool for multidimensional analysis, which involved tagging the essays according to established dimensions outlined by Biber (1988). Specifically, five key dimensions from Biber's framework were extracted due to their significant loading and relevance to the analysis.

Step 3 involved calculating dimension scores for each essay based on the tagged data. These dimension scores provide quantitative insights into how the essays performed across different linguistic dimensions as defined by Biber's framework. This step allows for a detailed examination of language use patterns and characteristics within the corpus of IELTS argumentative essays from Pakistani test takers.

In Step 4, the data obtained from the corpus of argumentative essays collected from IELTS test takers in Pakistan undergoes comparison with three previous studies and with Biber's (1988) study. The three previous studies referenced for comparison are Abdulaziz (2017),

Hussain (2016), and Abbas (2020). These studies likely involve similar analyses of language use in written texts, potentially focusing on dimensions similar to those established by Biber (1988). By comparing the dimension scores obtained from the current corpus with those from these previous studies, researchers can identify similarities, differences, and trends in language usage among IELTS test takers in Pakistan over time.

Results and Discussion

In this section, present study has been compared to the previous studies on genre of academic language in Pakistani context. The objective of this section is to explore if argumentative essays written by Pakistani IELTS test takers have same linguistic features as the learner writing produced in college or university. Moore and Morton (2005) have theorized that the university writing might be different from the IELTS writing. Through this section we want to explore if this trend is followed or not and how far IELTS writing is different from university writing. The mean dimension scores of the present study and other previous studies on learner academic writing have been presented in the table below.

Table 2: Comparison of the present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on learner writing (MD88)

| Study	Corpus	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5
Present study, 2024	IAEC	0.81	-3.46	8.96	0.26	0.02
Abdulaziz, 2017	PLC	-1.7	-2.5	2.68	2.08	1.27
Hussain, 2016	WAL	-20.95	-4.21	10.02	-3.63	3.08
Abbas, 2018	PWE-Thesis	-14.5	-1.29	6.26	-2.86	3.73

The above table offers a comparative analysis of various studies or sources across different dimensions labeled as DM1 to DM5. Each row corresponds to a distinct study or source, while each column denotes a specific dimension or metric under consideration. The table includes details such as the name of the study or source, the corpus or dataset utilized in the research, and the respective values corresponding to each dimension. This information outlines the results of several studies across different dimensions, denoted as DM1 to DM5 (Biber, 1988). In the Present study (2024), the values across these metrics are 0.81, -3.46, 8.96, 0.26, and 0.02 respectively. Similarly, in Abdulaziz (2017), the corresponding values for DM1 to DM5 are -1.7, -2.5, 2.68, 2.08, and 1.27 respectively. In contrast, Hussain (2016) yields values of -20.95, -4.21, 10.02, -3.63, and 3.08 across the same dimensions. Finally, in Abbas (2018), the values for DM1 to DM5 are -14.5, -1.29, 6.26, -2.86, and 3.73 respectively. These values provide insights into the performance or outcomes of each study across the specified dimensions. These values are the values in each study according to Biber's Old MD (MD88) framework. Hence in the discussion on each dimension Biber's values from DM1 to DM5 have been given and compared as well. The detailed discussion on each dimension has

been given separately in the sections below.

Comparison of Scores on Dimension 1

Dimension 1 makes a difference between the production of informational discourse on the negative pole and of involved discourse on positive pole. The graphical comparison shows that according to Biber (1988), the academic prose genre is supposed to follow the trend on informational discourse. The comparison highlights that these are high mean values for the informational discourse in Biber (-14.9), Thesis genre in PWE (-14.5), Written Academic (-20.95). Whereas, slightly negative value in PLC (-1.7) and altogether different trend in IELTS argumentative essay genre (0.81). It means that the present study highlights different use of linguistic features while writing for IELTS. This huge difference is also backed by ANOVA on DM1 (0.000). The results show that this dimension is statistically significant. The value on IAEC and statistical values confirm that IELTS writing is different from university writing.

**Figure 1: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Dimension 1**
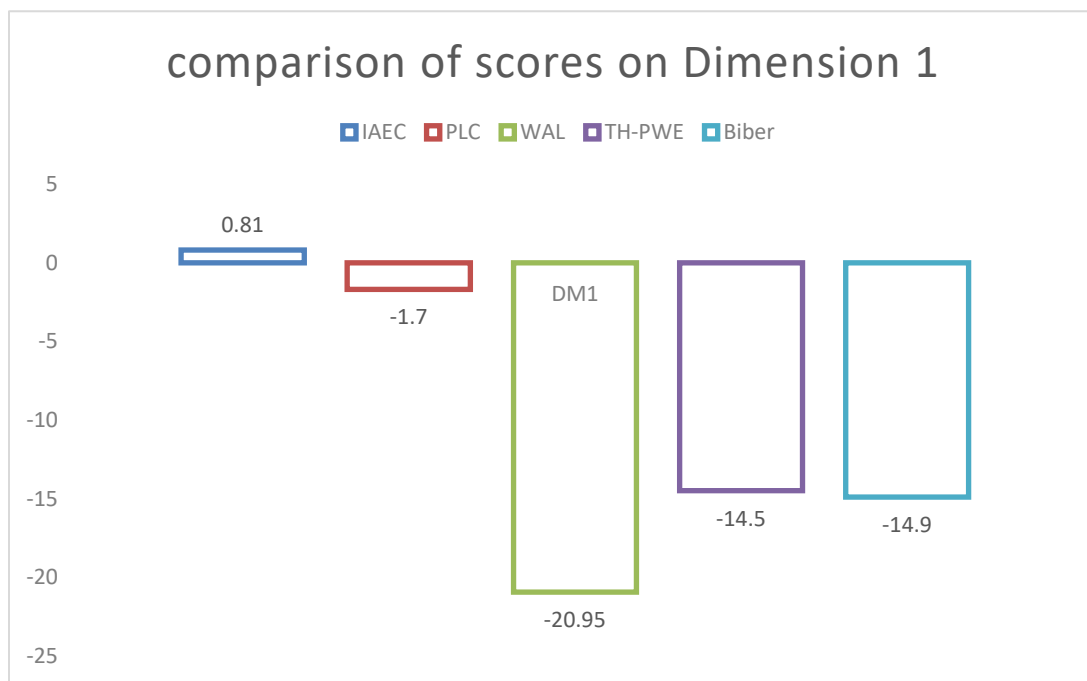
Furthermore, this finding is significant on the basis of the comparison of past MD studies on learner essays (Abdulaziz et al, 2016; Tabassum et al, 2019). According to Abdulaziz et al. (2016) more packets of information are placed in learner essays through prepositional phrases, word length, and lexical density. Furthermore, these and other linguistic structures make the discourse of learner essays highly informational and nearer to the genre of academic prose in Biber (1988). This research, on the one hand, confirms the results on dimension 1 (Tabassum et al. 2019) as having involved focus rather than informational production, while, on the other hand, the present data is nearer to prepared speeches on the whole. Prepared speeches have characteristic features of elaborated grammatical structure, noun phrases and prepositional phrases. They are produced for an expected audience. The highly informational discourse is expected to have markedly low scores on this dimension.

Comparison of Scores on Dimension 2

Dimension 2 distinguishes between narrative and non-narrative concerns. The figure below shows that all the corpora follow the similar trend of the production of non-narrative discourse. This is due to the amount of information packed in the lexical choices, bundles and the highly technical use of language. The figure shows that present study not only follows the same trend as has been proposed by Biber but also aligns with previous MD studies on learner language in Pakistani context. Similar to DM1, on this dimension too, highest score is on WAL study (Hussain, 2016). Another similarity between the mean scores on DM1 and DM2 is here again nearest to PLC (Abdulaziz, 2017). In fact if we put these values on the scales established by Biber then IAEC would be placed in between WAL (2016) and PLC (2017) with mean values of -3.46 (IAEC), -4.21 (WAL) and -2.5 (PLC) respectively.

Figure 2: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Dimension 2
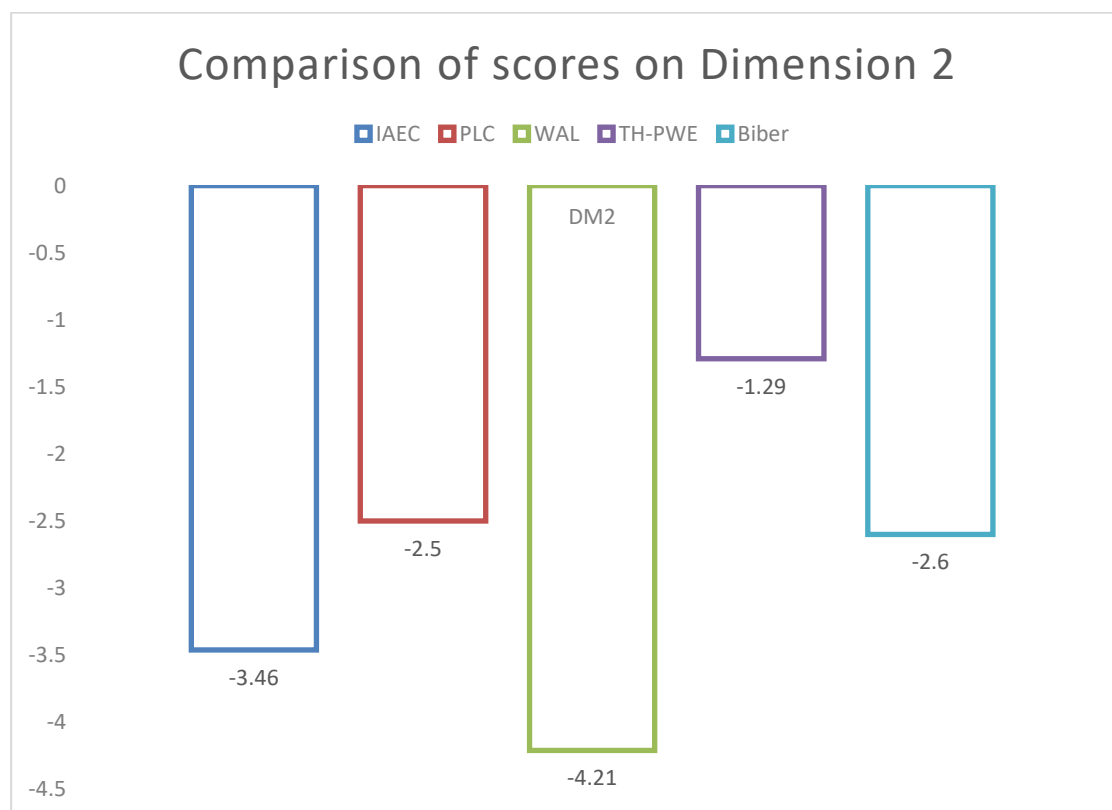

To conclude, on dimension 2, IAEC follows the similar trend as the previous studies on Pakistani learners' corpora follow. This is due to the nature of response and language required for the genre of academic writing. IELTS writing task is also performed by producing language which is non-narrative in nature. According to Abdulaziz (2017), the nature of topic or prompt is also an important reason for the type of language used for the response. Hence, this non-narrative production of information might be due to the choice of topic for the task in the present study.

Comparison of Scores on Dimension 3

According to Biber (1988), third dimension on which written and spoken genres can be studied is elaborated versus situation dependent. In the figure below the graphical representation of the comparison between the present study and previous MD based Pakistani studies have been given.

Figure 3: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Dimension 3
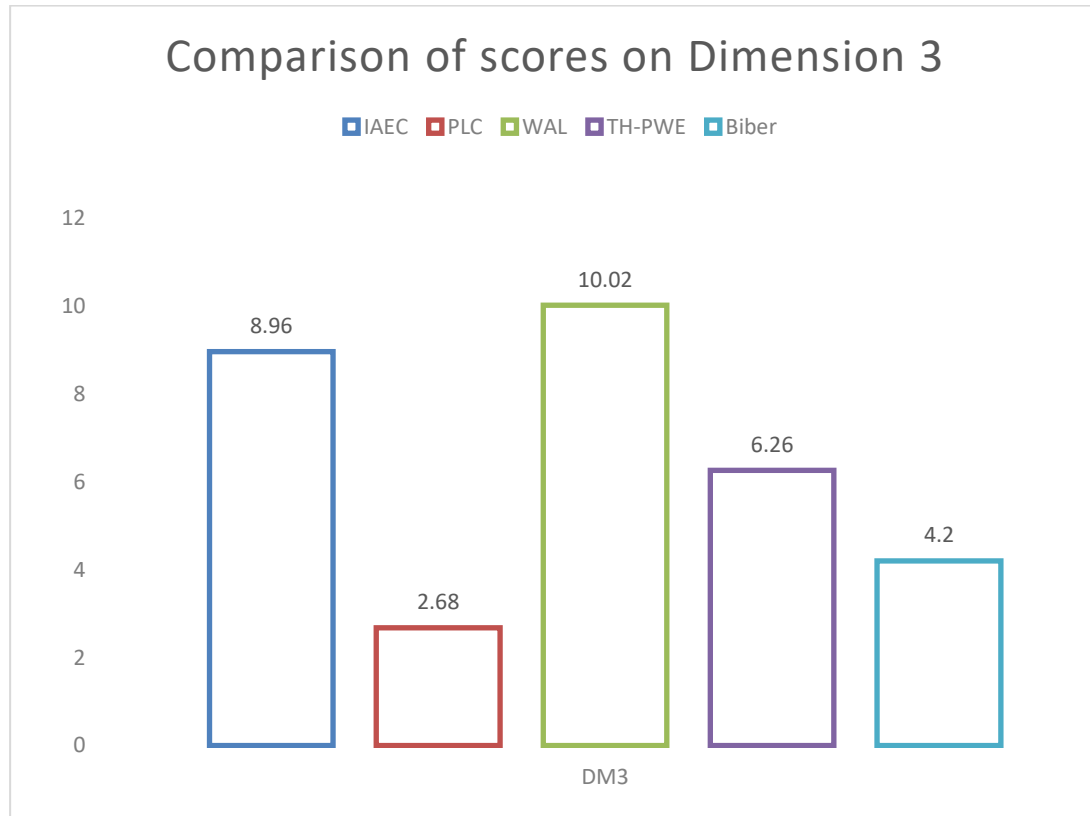

This graphical representation shows that IAEC is largely elaborated discourse. According to the graph, IAEC (mean score: 8.96) can be placed directly in between PWE-TH study (Abbas, 2020) with the mean score of 6.26 and WAL (Hussain, 2016) which has mean score of 10.02. Whereas, PLC has difference of trend with mean score of 2.68. All the studies, including Biber (1988), confirm that learner academic writing is supposed to be elaborated discourse. Similar trend has been observed for all the studies while carrying out the comparison. This study also confirms that IELTS writing has somewhat different trend from university writing.

Comparison of Scores on Dimension 4

The fourth dimension proposed by Biber (1988) is discourse of argumentation in academic writing. in the figure below, the comparison of present study to the MD based Pakistani studies on learner academic writing has been presented through their mean scores on dimension 4.

Figure 4: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Dimension 4
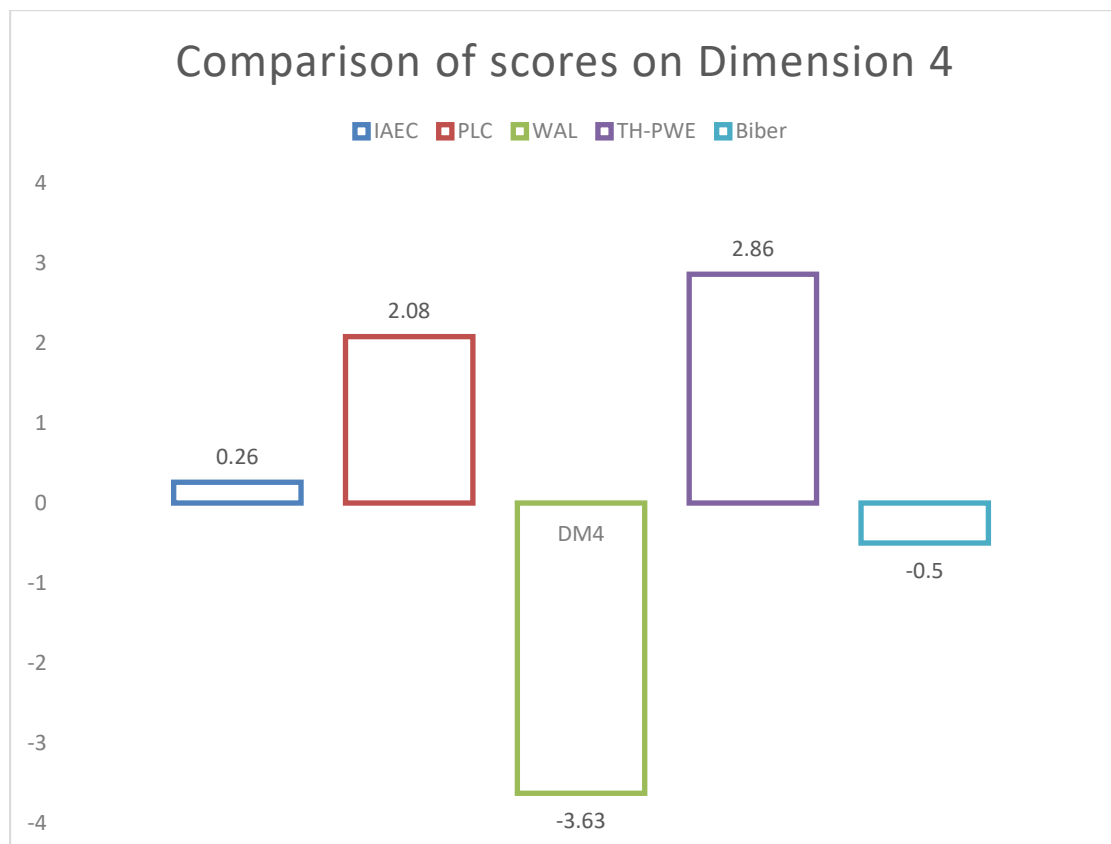

The graph shows that IAEC follows different pattern of usage of linguistic features than the previous Pakistani studies on learner writing with multidimensional framework as background. The mean dimension scores for the present study (IELTS writing task) are quite low (0.26) as compared to previous Pakistani studies which have comparatively higher values of 2.86 and 2.08 mean scores in PLC and PWE-TH corpora. These scores also affirm that IELTS writing is different from university writing. however, there is a need to make efforts in teaching learners how to establish the discourse of argumentation. This aspect has been discussed in the next chapter.
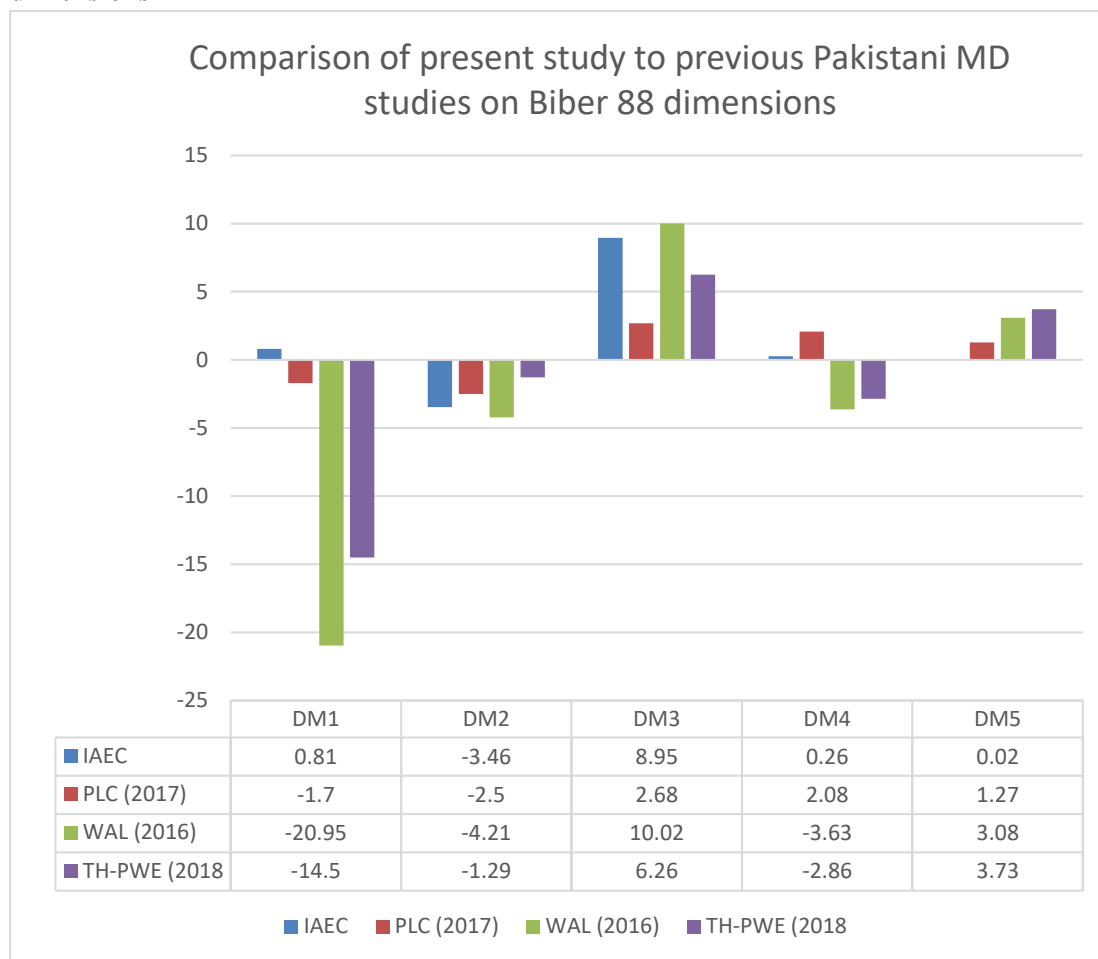
Comparison of Scores on Dimension 5

According to Biber (1988), on dimension 5 we study abstract versus non-abstract production of discourse. Academic genre is supposed to use abstract discourse rather than non-abstract / concrete discourse. In the figure below the dimension score for present study have been represented to be compared to PLC, PWE-TH, WAL and Biber on dimension 5.

Figure 5: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Dimension 5
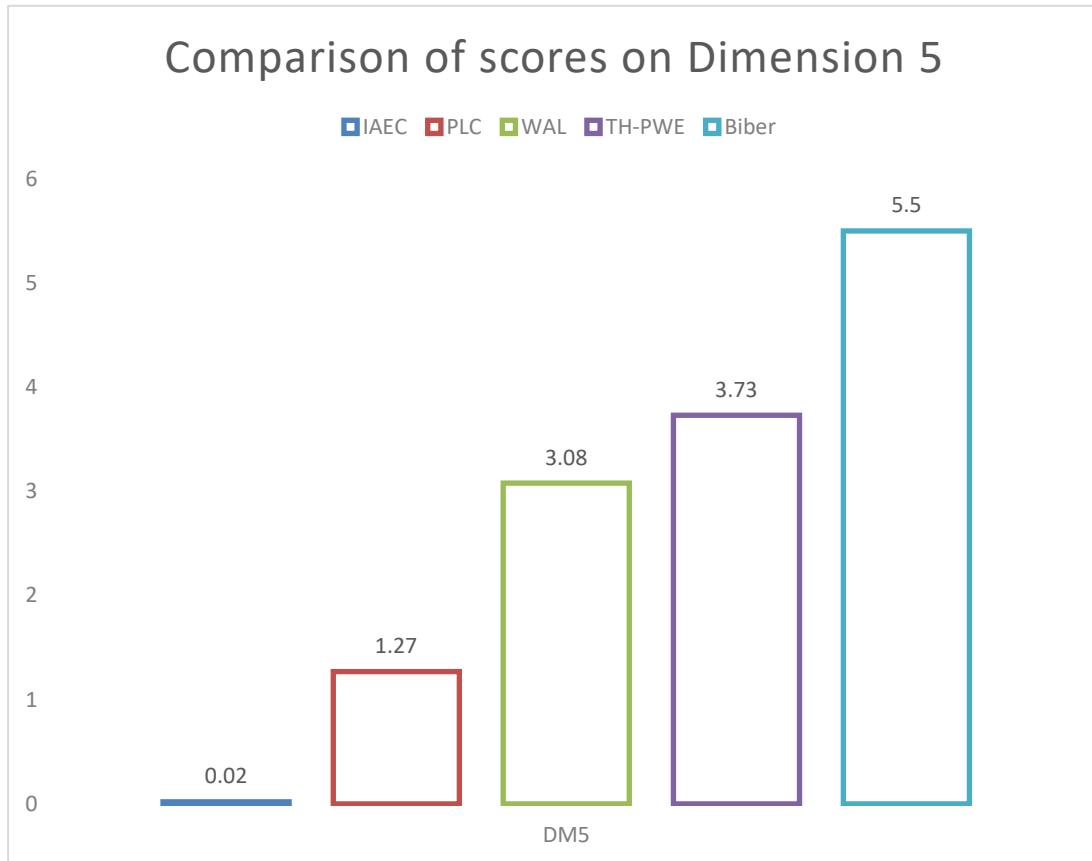
The graph shows that IAEC has the lowest mean scores on dimension 5. The mean scores for IAEC is just 0.02 in comparison to PLC: 1.27, WAL: 3.08 and PWE-TH: 3.73. Biber's mean scores are 5.5 on dimension 5. This graph leads us to two results. First, Pakistani writers, generally use less abstraction in the discourse of learner academic writing in comparison to the genre requirements established by Biber. Biber established that academic prose has highest scores on the scale of abstract information. Second, IELTS writers represent the least characteristics of abstraction in the argumentative essays written by them. Here again, the results confirm that learners do not use the linguistic features associated to abstraction like, conjuncts, passives, WHIZ deletions, adverbial co-ordination and past participial clauses. Official documents are the closest to academic genre. Contrastively, fiction and conversation genre comes on the negative pole with the lowest values on abstract information. However, there are some other genres which show intermediate mean scores on dimension 5. These genres are press editorials, press reportage and press reviews. Our IELTS writers are nearer to these intermediate genres rather than following the linguistic features of academic prose.

Figure 6: Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Biber 88 dimensions

Comparison of present study to previous Pakistani MD studies on Biber 88 dimensions

	DM1	DM2	DM3	DM4	DM5
IAEC	0.81	-3.46	8.95	0.26	0.02
PLC (2017)	-1.7	-2.5	2.68	2.08	1.27
WAL (2016)	-20.95	-4.21	10.02	-3.63	3.08
TH-PWE (2018	-14.5	-1.29	6.26	-2.86	3.73

This graph represents how IELTS writing seems to be different as compared to previous MD studies in Pakistani context. On DM1, DM3, DM4 and DM 5 present study confirms to follow different use of language. On DM2 all the studies follow same trend. On DM1, we have most significant results. IELTS writers tend to produce slightly involved discourse on DM1, on the other hand PLC is slightly informational in comparison to WAL and PWE-TH where very high values occur on the negative pole of involved versus informational production. On DM3, the trend is otherwise. Present study has higher dimension scores on DM3, which leads to the highly elaborated discourse. It can also be concluded that the high elaboration on D3 indirectly affects the low scores on D4 and D5. Low dimension scores for abstract production of information and on persuasion may be complementarily related to high scores on D3. Interestingly, IELTS writing is similar to university writing only on D2 i.e. non-narrative production of information.

This was the discussion on IAEC on the basis of Biber's (old MD) framework presented in his seminal work on genre writing (1988). In this section, the most frequent linguistic features

and their functional interpretations on five dimensions have been discussed. The results of IAEC have been compared to Biber's dimension scores of the genre of academic prose. The difference between IELTS writing and university writing has also been compared and confirmed through carrying out comparisons to previous Pakistani MD studies. In the next section, factors according to New MD have been discussed in detail.

Conclusion

In the context of the Pakistani setting, previous studies have sought to determine the linguistic features which recur significantly in the writing of university learners whether it is the sub-genre of essays, theses, research papers and others. Here, aim of this study is to study whether IELTS writing differs from university-level writing. Three distinct corpora were utilized across these studies: PLC, WAL, and PWE-TH, as employed in the studies conducted by Abdulaziz (2017), Hussain (2016), and Abbas (2020), respectively. The present study reveals divergent language usage across different dimensions. Notably, significant differences are observed on DM1, with IELTS writers demonstrating a slightly involved discourse compared to PLC, which leans slightly towards informational content. Conversely, WAL and PWE-TH exhibit notably high values for informational production. However, on DM2, all studies align, showing a consistent trend in non-narrative information production.

On DM3, the present study stands out with higher dimension scores, indicating a highly elaborated discourse. This high elaboration indirectly correlates with lower scores on DM4 and DM5. It suggests that the emphasis on elaboration may influence the decreased focus on abstract information production and persuasion. Interestingly, IELTS writing resembles university writing solely in non-narrative information production (DM2). Additionally, comparing the current data with Biber's (1988) study allows for a broader contextualization within the framework originally proposed by Biber. This comparison helps in understanding any shifts or consistencies in language patterns observed in argumentative essays, particularly within the specific context of IELTS writing in Pakistan. The collective results of these investigations affirmed that indeed, IELTS writing exhibits disparities when compared to writing produced at the university level. This underscores the distinct nature of writing demanded by the IELTS assessment in contrast to academic writing within university contexts.

Note: This paper is part of researcher's Ph. D dissertation.

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