

Significance of Non-Narrative Features in Online University Prospectus of Pakistan: A Corpus-Based Investigation

Naveed Nawaz

Department of Applied Linguistics, Govt. College University, Faisalabad.

Naveednawaz744@ymail.com

Dr. Aleem Shakir

Assistant Professor, Department of Applied Linguistics, Govt. College University, Faisalabad.

Abstract

The study focuses on the language of online university prospectus of Pakistan to show the significance of non-narrative features in relation to Dimension 2 “Narrative versus Non-narrative Concerns”, of multidimensional analysis postulated by Douglas Biber (1988). The study incorporated a corpus-based investigation. Based on a representative corpus of five sections (about, facilities, department, library and Vice Chancellor message) of online university prospectus of Pakistan, multidimensional analysis was performed with the focus on Dimension 2. Multidimensional Analysis Tagger v 1.0 was used to tag and analyze the data. Dimension scores and the co-occurrences of the linguistic features were studied through Dimension 2 of multidimensional approach. The results indicate that language of Pakistan university prospectus shows greater concern for non-narrative and it was concluded that language of online university prospectus of Pakistan is argumentative, informational and non-narrative due to the presence of attributive adjective and present tense (non-narrative features) in high proportion. The study has educational as well as marketing implications in educational marketing.

Keywords: Multidimensional analysis, Corpus, Prospectus, Non-narrative features

1. INTRODUCTION

Online university prospectus has significance as a marketing tool as well as linguistics manifestation in educational circumstances. The language of prospectus has been studied from CDA (Critical Discourse Analysis) perspective using genre analysis and the focus of these studies was to establish the identity of prospectus language among other registers. It was seen that online university prospectus is a marketing tool in higher educational context and it also fulfills the purpose of advertising. In this era of globalization and internationalisation, marketing have become decisive point for higher educational institutions to catch attention of potential students. The researches (Askehave, 2007; Connell & Galasinski, 1998; Hui, 2009; and Osman, 2008) on the language of online university prospectus and brochures establish these as promotional genre on the basis of these communicative purposes that prospectus persuades, welcomes and informs. Prospectus relates the consumer’s needs with the institution and presents ways for the accomplishment of the needs of students in the best way. The relation between consumers (students) and educational institution is best viewed through the language of online prospectus that the language of prospectus fulfills the purpose of persuasion along with promotion.

The study of register variation involves quantitative and comparative approach. The current research is based on multidimensional model of analysis presented by Biber in 1988. Using this approach, language of Pakistan universities prospectus is investigated to check non-narrative characteristics of language of prospectus under Dimension 2 “Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns” that where does it lie among other registers of English. The research is corpus-based investigation of the prospectuses of five countries (USA, UK, Australia, India and Pakistan) to study the language of online university prospectus of these countries that how does it vary on Dimension 2.

The Oxford English Dictionary defines prospectus as “a brochure detailing the facilities or activities of a school, university, or other educational institution”. Fairclough (1993) noted that prospectus has the promotional function as primary function, because prospectus is designed for students to win their attention for university and its courses in the educational market as a marker of the success of the institution (p. 156). Brent and Ellison (1997) noted that school prospectus is used as a means for marketing and promotion of school’s image and activities and it can avoid school to closure. Prospectus is said to be a goods and education is product. So, as marketing choices are different then strategies are built on different structures of narratives. Prospectus is at the same time an advertising tool and persuasive material for the customers (students). Goddard (2002) said university prospectuses can be classified as advertisements as they are not only information texts but always has a “corporate perspective” and a “conscious intention” behind them (p. 101).

1.1 Aims and Objectives of the Research

The current study aims at corpus-based investigation of online university prospectus of Pakistan through multidimensional analysis to establish it as a promotional register. This research also focuses to describe how

language of prospectus differs cross culturally and how it is different from other registers. The study specifically focuses on Dimension 2 “Narrative vs. Non-narrative Concerns” of MD analysis in terms of co-occurrence linguistic features to inquire the variations in the language of prospectus.

The major objectives of this research are to:

- Establish prospectus language as a promotional register.
- Investigate the variation of prospectus text in different cultures.
- Highlight the differences in educational marketing through prospectus.
- Establish how ‘narrative’ and ‘non-narrative’ features bring the persuasion and promotion capacity in the language of prospectus.

2. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Online university prospectus is viewed as linguistic tool for educational marketing in a way that it is used for information and advertising. Prospectuses provide multi-faceted function in educational marketing. The few studies were attempted to deal with the language of prospectus that it varies to other educational registers has some questions of validity of those researches as different perspectives were involved under genre analysis and there also appeared a major change in register analysis after Biber’s 1988 work in which he introduces multidimensional approach for register analysis. In the present study, language of prospectus is studied from multidimensional approach under Dimension 2 “Narrative versus Non-narrative Concerns” to investigate the significance of non-narrative features in Pakistan university prospectuses and register variations are studied with reference to verbal elements as data was refined by keeping only text and all visual aspects were excluded.

Previously, Prospectuses were investigated in different fields of study like Marketing, Educational Management, Business Administration, and Communication Studies from the perspectives of genre analysis and critical discourse analysis. In Linguistics, the representative studies for language of prospectus were included (Askehave, 2007; Bhatia, 1993; Connell & Galasinski, 1998; Fairclough, 1993; Hui, 2009; Osman, 2008; and McDonald, Mayes & Pini, 2009). All these researches were organized subjectively on a small data set of few categories (e.g. Introductory pages and Mission statements) of online prospectus.

O’Connell (2012) worked in the field of marketing to determine new strategies in educational institutions to catch students. Peppiatt (2007) in the field of management determined that school prospectuses are necessary for marketing. Roggendorf (2008), focused on university prospectus to provide evidence for commodification of education, marketization and corporatisation of the universities. Bagheri and Beheshti (2010) worked on university prospectus in the field of business administration to investigate international marketing efforts of Swedish universities to capture the international students and to develop some strategies for students’ enrollment. McDonald, Mayes and Pini, (2009), focused on school prospectuses of Australia using critical discourse analysis approach to establish different strategies in educational institution for the marketing. Hui (2009), worked on university prospectus focusing genre analysis in the field of critical discourse analysis to explore the discourse patterns of globalization of marketing in higher education institutions. Introductory pages of the prospectuses of 14 universities were focused to carry out the research in the field of linguistic analysis.

These researches were carried out through genre analysis in case of linguistic analysis and in other cases Halliday’s approach and critical discourse analyses were practiced. Prospectus has the features of promotion and advertising so the current research being a study of register variation involves quantitative analysis using multidimensional approach. Previously there is hardly any work on language of prospectus was conducted on these principles to establish prospectus a promotional register. Biber(1988 and 1995), etc. used multidimensional analysis on 23 registers of English and Connor’s 2004 study of grant proposal was conducted on the same parameters of register variations.

These researches were not conducted under multidimensional approach for register variation of prospectus language. Though some studies used somewhat same framework to calculate frequency counts of past tense verbs (Narrative concerns) in register comparisons include Blankenship (1962), Marckworth and Baker (1974), and Biber (1986a & 1988). Quirk (1985) said perfect aspect forms mark actions in past time with ‘current relevance’, (p. 189). Biber (1986a) and Marckworth and Baker (1974) found that perfect aspect forms co-occur frequently with past tense forms as markers of narrative. Douglas Biber in 1988 first time practiced multidimensional model in his study of 23 registers and classified linguistic features in five textual dimensions. Present study focused on Dimension 2 “Narrative versus Non-narrative Concerns” in register analysis of language of online university prospectus.

Biber (1988) reported that Dimension 2 has two types of discourse (descriptive and procedural) that are similar in use and differ in past tense forms (narrative features) and non-past verbal forms (non-narrative features). Biber’s (1988) study of narrative and non-narrative features of genres include prepared and spontaneous speeches, biographies, personal letters, humor, face to face conversation and press reportage. Narratives are typically framed within some larger interactive discourse and thus the narrative is in some sense subordinate to a large purpose, although the text can be described as having both narrative and non-narrative

emphases. Biber (1988) also mentioned that several written registers engage both extremes along Dimension 2, with the fiction registers being extremely narrative, while registers such as academic prose, official documents, and skills and hobbies prose are extremely non-narrative. Previous researches do not contribute in maintaining the persuasive and promotional nature of the language of prospectus by discussing narrative, non-narrative features as the data collected was not large, and researches were organized on a narrow scale in different perspectives.

Fairclough's (1993) study of British university prospectus under CDA (critical discourse analysis) verifies that purpose of prospectus with the changes in texts is to sell and promote. Teo (2007) conducted a research in the same stream under CDA on Singaporean university prospectus for the comparison of interpersonal meanings by means of visual and verbal. He was of the view that public university upholds a self-centric commanding voice through distant and impersonal tone in discursive practices. On the contrary, private universities are on the verge to break those boundaries to hold varied relations with potential clients by espousing the ideologies of students centered. For this purpose, the pronoun we is used in prospectus.

Teo (2007) also expresses about the elite universities that they will advocate a democratic way for gaining attention of students in the globalised higher education market. However, it is now often said that in this era of globalization Asian universities will respond in this way because of their national histories, cultures and economies (Mok, 2003). Particularly, many universities of Asian context take funds from government. Due to this, these universities are adopting globalization with slow pace. The messages for English recruitment appear with authoritative tone and less promotional (Osman, 2006; and Teo, 2007).

Hui (2009) commented three stages of critical discourse analysis in his research, these include: description of text, interpretation of the relationship of text and social context and an explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context. Hui (2009) Analysis was done using Bhatia's approach of genre analysis. He applied Bhatia's (1993) model of genre analysis, in identification of five-move generic structure in 14 selected introductory pages to show confirmation of interdiscursivity "with elements of advertising and other promotional genres".

Askehave (2007) notes that the university extends its traditional ambit as an education provider to offer "an interesting and challenging university 'experience' to meet the needs of the picky student who is spoiled for choice" (p. 639). The "experience" was as much a selling point as the programmes offered. Swales (1990) elaborated that the texts share the same "identifiable communicative purposes" (i.e., persuading, welcoming and informing), use the same two media in written discourse (i.e., printed texts and web pages) and have similar groups of audiences (e.g. prospective students from all over the world) as well as groups of readers (e.g. parents and teachers) (p. 49). Fairclough (1995) explored speech functions – informing, regulating and persuading -in which university prospectuses attempt a "balancing act" between a discursive practice of providing information about courses and a discursive practice of 'selling' courses (p. 107).

Previously, the studies on the language of prospectus were carried out through genre analysis and those studies do not meet the required results in the co-occurrence of linguistic features and the comparison of two varieties. So a new approach was developed to study register analysis and to compare two varieties with each other. The approach was named as Multidimensional approach and it was first developed and exercised by Douglas Biber (1984c, 1985, 1986 and 1988) in register analysis. The present research focuses on non-narrative features (Dimension 2) in the language of Pakistan university prospectuses using the corpus in a way to investigate the significance of non-narrative features in prospectus language Pakistan universities.

3. METHODS AND MATERIALS

This section gives details about data collection, corpus building and data analysis. Data was collected from the corpus of 81 online university prospectuses from Pakistan. The present research offers a model to build a representative corpus of Prospectus. The proposed model for the representative corpus is sketched in the Figure 3.1 below.

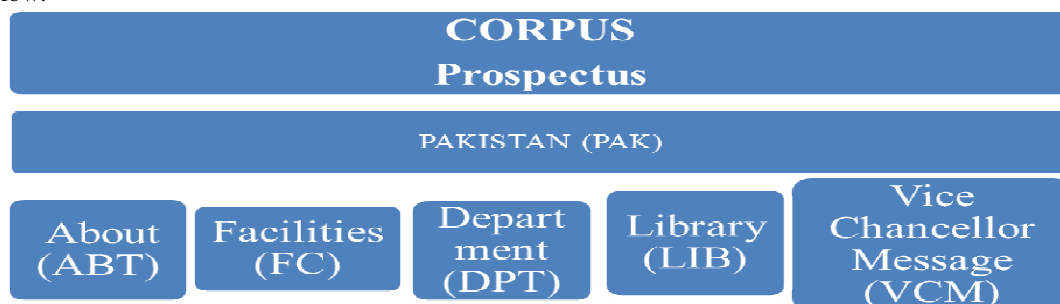


Figure 3.1: Proposed Model for Corpus

3.1 Corpus Building

Hundred universities were selected to collect data but at the end corpus was not comprised of 100 universities rather it was in less number. Different problems were faced in the process as some universities did not have the desired data regarding the selected categories of prospectus. So the proposed model was not fulfilled and the corpus built was comprised of 81 online university prospectuses from Pakistan.

The corpus was organized by the acquisition of the pages of online university prospectus comprising of five categories (About, Facilities, Department introduction, Library and Vice Chancellor message). Data was collected in word document files and it was saved according to respective folder. The data was purely in soft form.

3.2 Computation of Data

The data collected in word files was comprised of text only and all other features like pictures and tables were deleted. The data was in harmony in all files. Naming of files was also in a systematic way that all folders had same categories and codes for those categories. Data was then transferred to text files using converter for this purpose. Word files were converted to text files because it was mandatory for tagging the data as the software used for the purpose only tag files in text format.

The computation of data was done by Multidimensional Analysis Tagger v1.0 as the tagger is used as alternative to Biber's tagger. All the operations are according to the parameters of Biber's tagging. Files are normalized as per requirement of the tagging in Biber's tagger so that the difference in results can be minimized.

3.3 Data Analysis

The present research was based on Biber's 1988 model of multidimensional analysis through Multidimensional Analysis Tagger v1.0 (Nini, 2013) with the very focus on Dimension 2 "Narrative versus Non-narrative Concerns". The research offers the study of the language of online university prospectuses in five countries with the focus of Dimension 2 among six proposed dimensions of Biber.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter is dedicated to present the results of multidimensional analysis along Dimension 2 for non-narrative features. The results were drawn from five categories (About, Department Introduction, Facilities, Library and Vice Chancellor Message) of Pakistan university prospectuses. Dimension scores for dimension two were calculated along categories of prospectus.

Table 4.1: Mean scores for Sections of Online University Prospectus

Categories	About	Department	Facilities	Library	VC Message
Mean Score	-3.78	-4.44	-4.63	-4.78	-3.82

The results appeared on Dimension 2 for the language of Pakistan university prospectus suggested that language of online Pakistan university prospectus was non-narrative because the scores were in negative. Negative scores are due to the presence of attributive adjectives (JJ) and present tense (VPRT) in high number.

Table 4.2: Mean Scores of Linguistic Features on Dimension 2 along Prospectus sections of Pakistan University Prospectus

Linguistic Features	Abou t	Departme nt	Facilitie s	Librar y	VC Message
Word Length (AWL)	5.42	5.64	5.50	5.50	5.30
Attributive Adjective (JJ)	75.56	87.52	77.80	86.82	89.50
Present Tense (VPRT)	40.97	41.82	56.04	48.27	53.85
Past Participial Clauses[PASTP]	1.30	0.45	0.48	0.20	0.79
Past Participial WHIZ Deletion Reletives[WZPAST]	1.71	2.01	2.32	3.04	2.03
Past Tense (VBD)	17.03	7.99	4.90	5.61	5.20
Perfect Aspect[PEAS]	6.79	5.29	5.58	5.24	7.37
Third Person Pronoun (TPP3)	5.62	8.64	7.58	5.24	9.33
Public Verbs[PUBV]	2.28	1.82	2.32	2.22	1.97
Synthetic Negation (SYNE)	0.10	0.45	0.15	0.15	0.26
Present Participial Clauses[PRESP]	1.70	1.12	1.10	1.14	1.76

Graphical representation of these features is given below in figure.

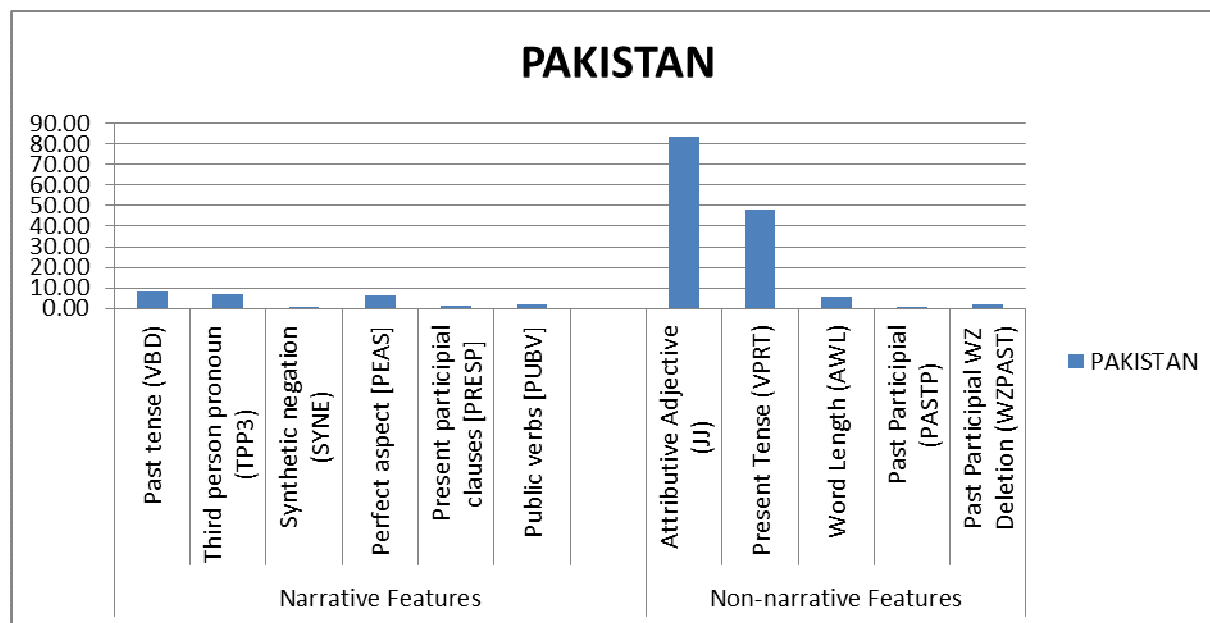


Figure 4.1: Distribution of Narrative and Non-narrative features in Pakistan

The graphs above show that attributive adjectives and present tense are in large quantity. Both these features are significant informational features on dimension 1 and these appeared as non-narrative on Dimension 2 so it suggests that the language is more argumentative rather verbal or narrative. These two linguistic features present in high weight prove the language of online university prospectus of Pakistan as non-narrative. The narrative features appear in very low ratio in comparison to non-narrative features. So the language of online university prospectus of Pakistan is nominal and argumentative rather than verbal or narrative.

As narrative features were in very low quantity and the non-narrative features were prominent it was appeared that language of online university prospectus is highly non-narrative. The presence of such linguistic features and the absence of narrative features present the text as more informational and descriptive or expository in nature, which shows non-narrative emphases in the language of online university prospectus of Pakistan. The data was now subjected to interpret on the basis of different categories that how did the language of online university prospectus appear in single domain by describing the comparison of five categories of prospectus.

4.1 Comparisons of Prospectus Sections

The graph plotted in comparison of prospectus categories (sections) among Pakistan universities suggested that language of prospectus is non-narrative in nature as dimension scores along prospectus sections appeared with high negative numbers. Among all sections of prospectus library is more non-narrative and about is less among five sections of prospectus. The results of dimension scores for prospectus sections in this graph supported the arguments that language of university prospectus is argumentative and expository rather than narrative and established the argument that language of prospectus is promotional and non-narrative along Dimension 2 “Narrative versus Non-narrative Concerns”. Therefore, this suggested that non-narrative features in university prospectus are more significant rather than narrative features.

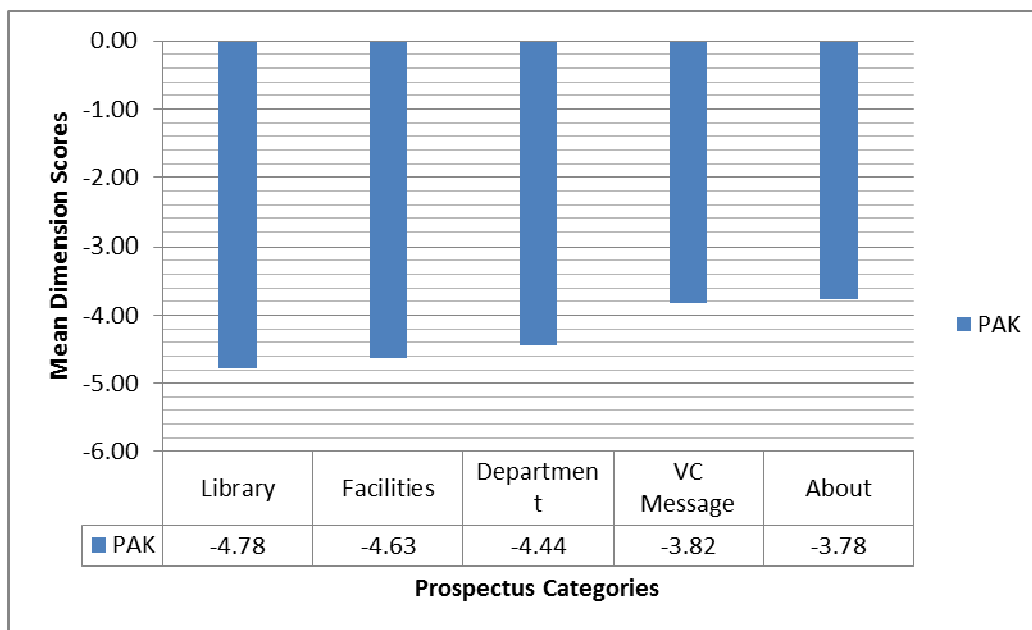


Figure 4.1: Mean Scores of Prospectus Sections in Pakistan Universities Prospectus

Graph shows the results of dimension scores for Pakistan University prospectus that in this graph of PAK universities prospectus Library section appeared with higher negative score and About section with lower score. Here are projected two examples from the text to ensure that non-narrative features are significant. Texts are given for both extremes according to higher and lower scores among sections of prospectus so that the variations among language of prospectus in the same country can be shown.

Text 1: Library section of PAK

Fatima Jinnah Women University is committed to provide students with the resources *they* need and to make those resources readily available for student's use. Fatima Jinnah Women University Library, which houses a **wealth of knowledge** and information, *came* into existence in 1998 with the founding of the university. The library *was* initially located in the **old Presidency**, a building rich in heritage and **architectural beauty**. It *remained* in the **old building** up to 2006, after which it *was* shifted to its **present** location to accommodate **the library's growing** collection. The library has **a rich collection** of materials, including books, journals, videos, CD-ROMs, DVDs, etc... The collection is ideally suited to encourage and support both **academic** and **research** activities of the university. The library *has* established its **repute** by providing **excellent services** and facilities to fulfill needs of its clients. The library is manned by qualified and experienced professionals, all dedicated to provide **high** quality **innovative services**. Our mission is to provide support to academic and scholarly endeavor of our users, in *their* **core instructional** and research requirements through utilizing the **best possible** resources, systems and services.

Narrative features (Bold and Italic)

Non-narrative features (Bold and Underline)

The text clearly shows that non-narrative features are more in quantity than narrative features that suggests the text is non-narrative in nature.

Dimension scores for individual linguistic features (narrative and non-narrative) on dimension 2 are given in the below plotted graph to give an idea about the distribution of these features in library section of prospectus.

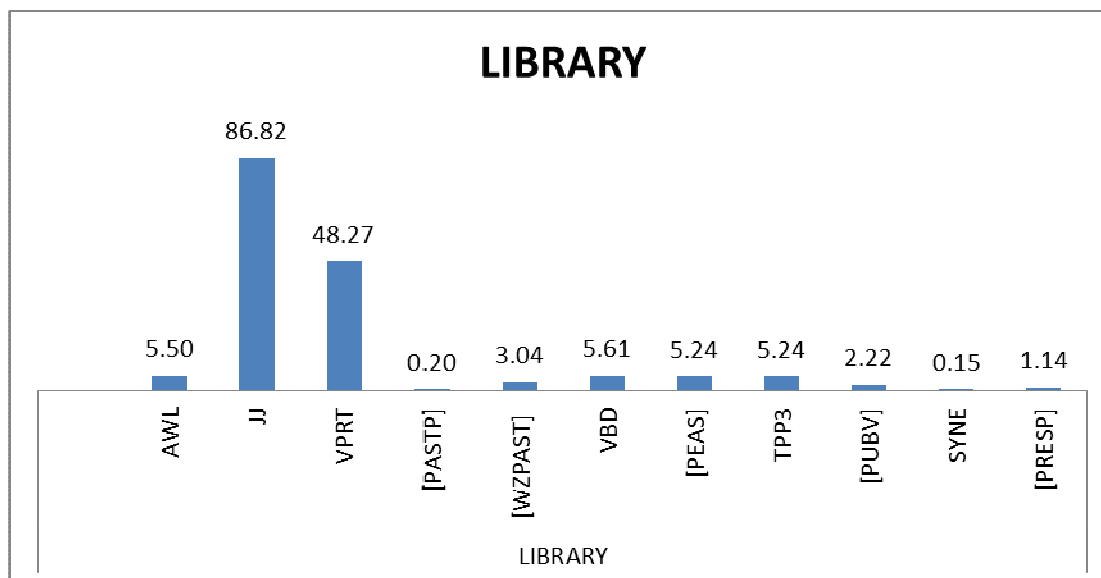


Figure 4.2: Distribution of Linguistic Features in Library Section of Prospectus

Text 2: About section of PAK

The existing premises of University of Haripur spread over an area of 236 Kanals *were* once a Rosin and Turpentine factory established by the Forest Development Corporation (FDC) which on Wednesday, September 9, 1953, that the then Governor General of Pakistan *laid* its foundation stone. The **basic objective** of the factory *was* to produce rosin and turpentine from **forest resources** and use part of the revenue *generated* on forest conservation. The factory *remained* functional till 1980 and *was* completely shut down in 1985 due to non-availability of **raw material**. It *remained* idle for more than two decades that *resulted* in its resemblance to a **real jungle** because of **discontinued operations** and **maintenance work** in the factory premises. Hazara University, being the only **public sector** university in this region, *was* not **sufficient** enough to cater for the **educational needs** and requirements of the entire Hazara Division. Though it *played* **pivotal role** in equipping people with **necessary knowledge** and skills, however being at approximately 100 km from Haripur, the people of District Haripur, Hassan Abdal, Chaj, Wah, Taxila, Mardan and Swabi *had* **low access** to University particularly the female students. The idea *was* picked by the then Vice Chancellor, Hazara University, to open a **satellite campus** of Hazara University in Haripur to provide **higher educational** access to the people of Haripur and its **adjoining areas** at **their door step**. The idea *was* supported by the then Governor and Environment Minister of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.

Narrative features (Bold and Italic)

Non-narrative features (Bold and Underline)

Again, the text shows that non-narrative features are in high proportion so the language is non-narrative in nature as well as argumentative and informational rather than verbal or narrative.

Below figure gives the representation of linguistic features on dimension 2 for about section of Pakistan universities prospectus. Dimension scores for individual linguistic features (narrative and non-narrative features) are plotted in graph.

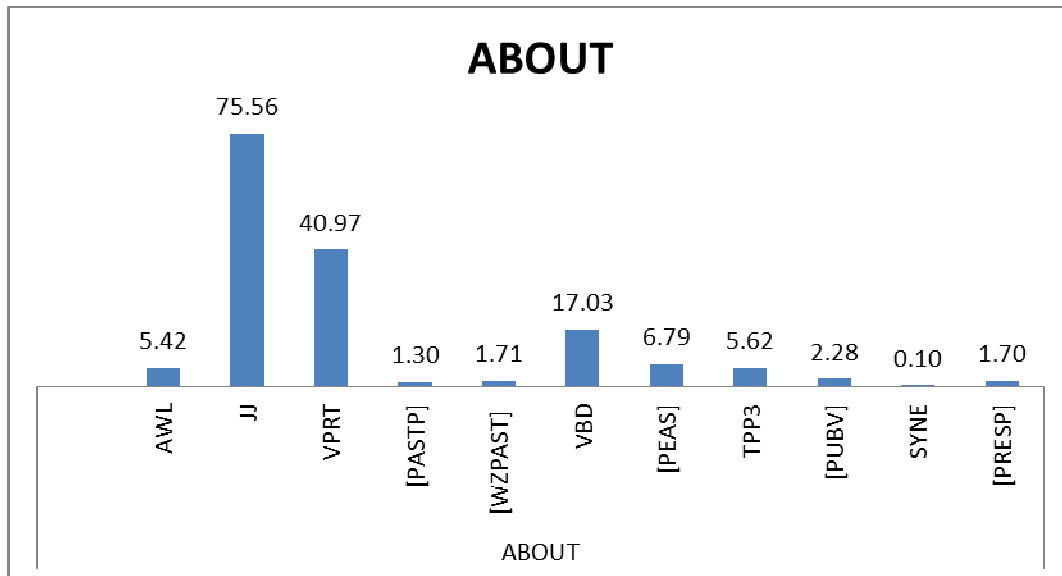


Figure 4.3: Distribution of Linguistic Features in About Section of Prospectus

Non-narrative features appeared in large quantity in both sections and narrative features appeared in relatively more number in the section with low dimension scores than the section with higher score. About section with low negative score was more near to positive end so it showed more narrative features than Library section as it was at more distance from the positive end. Overall, both sections appeared with large quantity of non-narrative features (attributive adjective and present tense). In case of library section, the scores for these features are 86.81 and 48.27 respectively and about section appeared with the scores 75.56 for attributive adjective and 40.97 for present tense. The high scores for these features clearly suggested that language of prospectus of Pakistan universities is highly non-narrative.

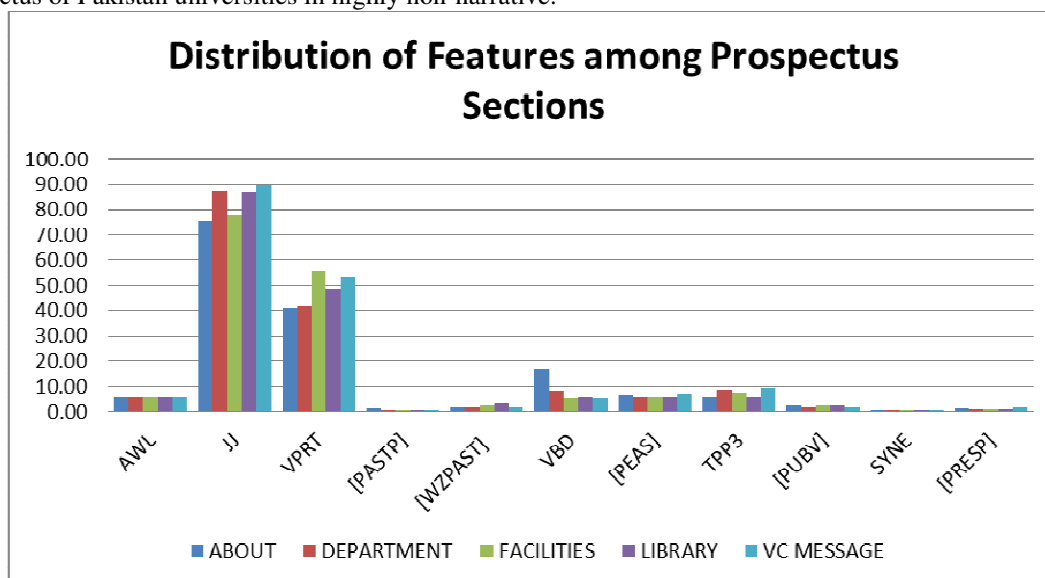


Figure 4.4: Distribution of Features among Prospectus Sections

Figure shows that attributive adjective and present tense are in high proportion in all the sections of Pakistan university prospectus. It suggests that language of prospectus is highly informational and so it is non-narrative in nature. To sum up language used in online university prospectuses of Pakistan was nominal, argumentative and non-narrative.

5. CONCLUSION

The research was aimed to investigate the significance of non-narrative features in Pakistan university prospectus and it was also studied that where does lie the language of Pakistan university prospectus on Dimension 2 “Narrative versus Non-narrative concerns”.

In relationship along Dimension 2 prospectus language of Pakistan universities have been found to reflect Non-narrative Concerns, which exhibit exposition, description and procedural information. The

prospectus language appeared straight as non-narrative, because the representative texts of the prospectus have high Non-narrative Concerns and such linguistic features on Dimension 2 were in high proportion that showed expository and non-narrative structures. Prospectus language on Dimension 2 showed Non-narrative Concerns as it does not have narrative concern because of the frequent use of attributive adjectives and present tense.

These features are believed as unmarked value of Dimension 2 and are linked with any of the numerous communicative purposes. These purposes were illustrated by the texts presented in chapter 4(Results and Discussion) in the current research on prospectus language. The linguistic features which identified the text as non-narrative were attributive adjectives and present tense. Attributive adjectives were used in the texts for identification and descriptive purposes and present tense showed description and procedural information. Overall discourse of these arrangements is nominal and argumentative rather than verbal and narrative.

5.1 Future Directions

The focus of current research was to study the language of prospectus in relation to Dimension 2 in multidimensional analysis. In this respect, this research can be improved and used to study all six dimensions of multidimensional analysis as a whole. It can be used to compare with further multidimensional studies in different perspectives.

The corpus model used in this research can be further extended by using more prospectus sections and more cultures to investigate certain other factors of prospectus language. The study can be explored to find the distinctions between native language users and non-native users and it provides grounds for studying language of prospectus in broad spectrum of world Englishes. Results of this study can be used for comparison in future researches of native and non-native contexts.

In Pakistan context the corpus of the research can be used to compare with other general corpora of Pakistani English. The study is also valuable to conduct comparative research in the same context at different time span to highlight the changes in language of prospectus.

5.2 Pedagogical Implications

The current research has significant implications for existing trend in structuring the language of prospectus for marketing of the institute.

This research has also implication in copywriting. Copywriting imparts some communicative purpose and the results of this research indicate some communicative purpose as Non-narrative Concerns are shown in that purpose whether to impart information or description about something. Copywriting books use linguistic features like present tense mostly but in contrast this study imparts that frequency of present tense vary across sections of prospectus and in the same section in different culture and the communicative purpose also changes with the effect. The corpus of this research can be used to identify lexical chain of different categories of grammar.

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