

**RESEARCH PAPER****Informal Language in Academic Writing: Analysis of Social Sciences
PhD Dissertations in Pakistan**

¹Shahida Parveen, ² Dr. Muhammad Rashid Hafeez

1. PhD Scholar, Department of English, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Associate Professor, Department of English, Government College Women University, Sialkot, Punjab, Pakistan

***Corresponding Author**

shahida.parveen@gcwus.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken with a view to examine the patterns and prevalence of informal language in social sciences PhD dissertations in Pakistan. Formality in academic writing is essential for intelligibility. It eliminates any room for the author's personal idiosyncrasies. Due to their systematic and formal structure, PhD dissertations are expected to adhere to the scholarly conventions and stylistic norms of the academic community. It explored a corpus of 15 most recent PhD dissertations from three social sciences disciplines. The dataset was taken from the disciplines that produced the highest number of PhD degrees in the past five years. The study employed the classification of informality proposed by Chang and Swales (1999), further modified by Hyland and Jiang (2017). The aim of the study was to identify deviations from these conventional norms and to explore various features of informality within the selected sample. Qualitative content analysis method was used for an in-depth analysis of the phenomenon. Markin Software 4 utilized for annotating the identified features of informality. The findings revealed that unattended anaphoric references were the most recurrent informal feature. These were followed by listing expressions and conjunctive adverbs/sentence-initial conjunctions. These findings show that actual linguistic practices contrast with conventional academic expectations.

KEYWORDS

Academic Writing, Features of Informality, PhD Dissertations, Social Sciences

Introduction

A doctorate distinguishes an individual due to its elite status in academia. A dissertation produced as a result is notable for its innovation and consistent adherence to conventional norms of academic writing. Academic writing is traditionally characterized by rigorous, formal, objective, and accurate structures (Chang & Swales 1999; Hyland 2017; Gilquin & Paquot, 2008). Despite these established stylistic norms, there has been a surge in the use of informal and colloquial expressions within scholarly documents. These documents include research articles, reports, and dissertations. Informality in academic writing refers to incomplete grammatical structures, omitted or overused punctuation rules, relaxed spelling, or typographical errors. This not only deviates from traditional writing standards but also creates a personal and friendly environment. It offers an escape from the constraints of conventional academic writing norms. Academic genres, nevertheless, appear to be resistant to the infiltration of colloquial expressions (Seone & Loureiro-Porto, 2005). In academic writing, certain linguistic expressions are proscribed for being too informal and colloquial. The presence of these proscribed features deviates from academic standards. Such a practice undermines the prestige of a PhD degree.

English, as a lingua franca, is used internationally for communication. In academia, in particular, it plays a crucial role in transmitting information (Flowerdew & Dudley-Evans, 2002). English also significantly impacts the research domain. It influences both the academic subjects and research publications (Crystal, 2003).

English serves as the medium of instruction at the tertiary level in Pakistan and is taught as a compulsory subject in schools, colleges, and universities. Consequently, doctoral scholars are expected to produce a well-written and structured PhD thesis in English that incorporates fundamental elements of academic writing. However, English being a non-native or foreign language, presents significant challenges for learners. The tendency to use informal features is notably high in the academic texts of ESL or EFL learners as observed by Harris and Dilts (2015).

Hyland and Jiang (2017) argue that informality has invaded several domains of written and spoken discourse, traditionally characterized by formality, such as journalism, business communication, and official documents (p.47). However, conventional norms typically require formality in academic writing (Chang & Swales, 2014). At the tertiary level, it is a prerequisite for students to write critically. PhD Scholars are to engage in analyses and evaluation, rather than merely providing simple descriptions (Woodward-Kron, 2002).

A PhD thesis addresses a broader subject matter over a longer timeframe and thus requires more meticulous care compared to any previously written dissertations or research articles (Firth et al., 2020). The consistent use of informal expression in doctoral dissertations raises questions on pedagogical practices as informal writing is often characterized by subjective, unstructured, and personal styles. However, academic writing is expected to be formal in nature (Chang & Swales, 2017; Swales & Feak, 2012). There is a widespread notion that academic writing is losing its sanctity due to the informal use of language (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Many research studies have been conducted to investigate the use of informal language in learners' compositions, research articles, and abstracts of research proposals.

There is growing interest among researchers in applied linguistics to investigate the extent to which academic writing exhibits impressions of informality. The impetus of the present study, therefore, is to investigate this widespread notion, namely informality, within social sciences PhD dissertations in the Pakistani context. The study aims to unravel which features of informality are prevalent in PhD dissertations, why they are used, and how they affect the overall perceived quality and academic rigor of these dissertations.

Literature Review

Informality is described by Hyland and Jiang (2017) as a 'slippery concept'. They also elucidate that formality is a chief characteristic of academic writing because it protects the written content from personal bias, misunderstanding, and ambiguity, which can otherwise render writing less transparent and objective (Hyland & Jiang, 2017). Swan (2016) in 'Practical English Usage', a resource book for ESL/EFL learners, explains that informal language is suitable for casual settings that involve personal conversations with family and friends. It includes informal features such as slang, contractions, abbreviations, taboo words, imperatives, and sentence fragments (Swan, 2016). 'The Little, Brown Handbook Global Edition' (Fowler & Aaron, 2016), designed for EFL/ESL learners, describes informal writing as depicting colloquial expressions, short-simple sentences, and contractions. It enlists certain informal features such as sentence fragments, abbreviations, improper capitalization, slang, and lowercase usage. The handbook recommends avoiding

informality in academic writing and emphasizes maintaining formality in scholarly discourse (Fowler & Aaron, 2015). Consequently, the lack of formality in academic writing can be disadvantageous to both the author and the content itself. The question of how formality is achieved in both written and spoken form has been the subject of debate among researchers for over a decade. There appears to be a consensus among them that formality of language is determined by the variations found between different styles, registers, and genres. Precision and clarity are required when writing for an educated audience, and for this reason, academic writing manuals and style guides proscribe certain features in academic writing (Heylighen & Dewaele, 2002). Chang and Swales (1999) analyzed 40 style manuals, identifying the ten most commonly mentioned informal features. Among these features, the demonstrative pronoun 'this' and sentence-initial conjunctions were strikingly prevalent, while contractions were the least frequent. Continuing this research, Hyland and Jiang (2017) explored the presence of these ten features of informality in a corpus of 360 research articles spanning from 1965 to 2015. Their findings revealed a greater tendency towards informality in the hard sciences compared to social sciences.

Numerous studies have been conducted to indicate that academic writing has a tinge of informality. Biber and Finegan (1989) reported that academic writing manifested elements of spoken language, similar findings echoed by Seoane and Loureiro-Porto (2005), who noted in British and American scientific English corpora that academic writing reflects colloquialism. McCrostie (2008) examined the writing of Japanese students majoring in English. The finding revealed that the first-year students frequently used informal expressions typically found in spoken language, first-person pronouns, and vague words in their academic essays. Praminatih et al. (2018) conducted a study on the thesis abstracts of undergraduate EFL students in an Indonesian context to identify features of informality in academic writing. They indicated the presence of eight informal features, as suggested by Chang and Swales (1999). The four features that were consistent over time in their occurrences included sentence-initial conjunctions, first-person pronouns, run-on sentences, and sentence fragments. Xia (2020) conducted a corpus-based study on research articles by Chinese and English scholars to determine the prevalence of informality in their academic writing. He identified four significant informal features: imperatives, unattended anaphoric references, first-person pronouns, and sentence-initial conjunctions; however, variations in their frequencies could be observed across different disciplines. These findings underscore the need for additional guidelines on stylistic choices to help scholars reduce informality in their academic writing.

Hyland and Anan (2006) explored perceptions of native and non-native English language teachers toward formality in academic writing. The comparative study indicated that Japanese English teachers viewed informal features as errors, whereas native English instructors considered informality altogether inappropriate. Their emphasis was on achieving formality, as informality according to them makes texts personal and accessible. Ebrahimi and Fakheri (2019) researched to observe the use of informal features in Applied Linguistic research papers published in two Iranian journals in 2014 and 2015. They studied the framework of informality developed by Hyland and Jiang (2017) to study 50 research articles. The results indicated that sentence-initial conjunctions and unattended anaphoric references were extensively used. However, exclamations and contractions were completely avoided. Their findings highlight the significance of raising awareness among scholars (Ebrahimi & Fakheri, 2019).

Bennett (2009) conducted survey research on English academic style manuals. He analyzed various recommended writing styles in academic writing. His findings revealed differences in recommendations: some style manuals advocated for a formal style with

objective structures and Latinate vocabulary. There were others that recommended simple, short, and direct sentences. Regardless of these differences, there was a mutual agreement on the necessity for precision and clarity in academic writing. This consensus aims to prevent young writers from losing coherence and formality in writing (Bennett, 2009).

Lee et al. (2019) conducted a corpus-based comparative study. They analyzed the use of informal language features in argumentative essays by native (L1) and non-native (ESL, L2) US students. They employed a taxonomy of ten informal features derived primarily from style manuals. The analysis revealed that the tendency to use informal features was common in the writings of both L1 and L2 students. However, these features were more prevalent among ESL students. The study suggests revising pedagogical practices to enhance students' awareness of formal academic writing (Lee et al., 2019).

Hasund (2019) conducted a study to investigate inclusion of guidelines on use of formal language in English textbooks at schools in Norway. The study found that eight out of nine textbooks included such guidelines. These guidelines clearly stated when to avoid using informal language. Moreover, the distinction between formality and informality is a key concept in the Norwegian curriculum (Hasund, 2019). Biber (1995) suggests that the inclusion of informal features in an academic context indicates personalization, direct interactions, and subjectivity. These features contribute to a reduction of formality.

Jiang and Wang (2018) conducted a study to examine the use of unattended anaphoric pronouns in academic writing. They analyzed a corpus of 160 research publications across eight disciplines. The study found that researchers often used unattended anaphoric pronouns. Style guides advising against this informal feature. These findings confirm the general belief about academic writing losing its formality (Jiang & Wang, 2018).

Several studies have been conducted throughout the world to investigate informality in academic writing. Research has been conducted in Pakistani EFL/ESL context as well. Akhtar and Riaz's (2019) investigated informality in writing of 30 undergraduate students at a postgraduate college of Faisalabad. They used the frameworks of formality and informality by Heylighen and Dewaele (1999) and Chang and Swales (1999). Their findings showed that there were issues of linguistic competence. They also underscored the prevalence of informality in their academic writing. The researchers recommended implementing task-based teaching to motivate students to produce original content and avoid rote learning (Akhtar & Riaz, 2019).

Sikandar and Riaz (2022) investigated the impact of slang on academic writing in Pakistani universities. Their study used a sample of 70 English major undergraduates from public universities. The findings revealed that informal language influenced the students' writing. It deviated from standard academic writing norms (Sikandar & Riaz, 2022). Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2022) studied students' perceptions of informal features in their academic writing. They conducted a cross-sectional survey in ten universities in Gujranwala. They got data from 250 graduate-level students. The findings revealed that students used informal language due to habitual use. The main factor was reported to be the text messages (Ahmad et al., 2022).

This review highlights existence of informality in academic writing in various contexts. However, there is a significant gap, particularly in the Pakistani context. Studies in Pakistan have mostly focused on undergraduate levels. No study has been conducted on PhD dissertations in social sciences disciplines in the Pakistani context. This gap highlights the need for further exploration and investigation into the phenomenon at PhD

level dissertations. The current study aims to fill the same gap by examining PhD dissertations in social sciences disciplines.

Material and Methods

Research design aims to address the research gaps identified in the literature. This study sought to find the existence of informality, and its patterns, in PhD dissertations of social sciences disciplines in Pakistan. It employed a qualitative descriptive design. This approach facilitates a deep understanding and provides insights into areas that are not well-researched. It offers a comprehensive description of the 'what', 'where', 'who', and 'how' of unexplored phenomena (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The primary method for data analysis for this study is qualitative content analysis. It is commonly used in qualitative descriptive studies to describe phenomena within specific contexts (Svensson et al., 2021). Compared to other methods, Qualitative content analysis provides a more categorical and less conceptual foundation for the study. It focuses on describing the phenomenon of informality in academic writing (Sandelowski, 2000).

The primary data sources for this study are PhD dissertations in social sciences. The corpus for this study consisted of 15 PhD dissertations from Education, Political Science, and Sociology. These disciplines were selected for their interdisciplinary nature and the relevance of the applied linguistics research to them. The most recent dissertations from the past five years were assessed from the HEC repository, a public data source. To adhere to the ethical standards, the names and titles of the selected dissertations were anonymized. The analysis focused on the methodology chapters and 'rationale onward parts' from the introductory chapters of each thesis, where, the author's reflection on their writing style and their competence in academic writing are most apparent. The selected samples included dissertations employing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method approaches to ensure a comprehensive analysis and facilitate a comparative study of the findings. Three separate Word files, corresponding to the three methodological approaches, were compiled.

Results and Discussion

This study employed the qualitative content analysis method to explore the features of informality in social sciences PhD dissertations. The framework of features of informality suggested by Chang and Swales (1999) and modified by Hyland and Jiang (2017) was utilized to identify features of informality, as illustrated in Figure 1.

Table 1
List of proscribed informality features (adopted from Hyland & Jiang, 2017).

- | |
|---|
| 1. first-person pronouns to refer to the author(s) (<i>I</i> and <i>we</i>)
e.g., "I will approach this issue in a roundabout way." |
| 2. unattended anaphoric pronouns (<i>this</i> , <i>these</i> , <i>that</i> , <i>those</i> , <i>it</i>) that can refer to antecedents of varying length
e.g., "This is his raw material." |
| 3. sentence initial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs
e.g., "And I will blame her if she fails in these ways." |
| 4. sentence final preposition
e.g., "A student should not be taught more than he can think <i>about</i> ." |
| 5. listing expressions ('and so on', 'etc', 'and so forth' used when ending a list)
e.g., "These semiconductors can be used in robots, CD players, etc." |
| 6. second person pronouns/determiners to refer to the reader (<i>you</i> and <i>your</i>)
e.g., "Suppose you are sitting at a computer terminal which assigns <i>you</i> role R" |
| 7. contractions
e.g., "Export figures <i>won't</i> improve until the economy is stronger." |
| 8. direct questions
e.g., "What can be done to lower costs?" |
| 9. exclamations
e.g., "This is <i>not</i> the case!" |
| 10. split infinitives – an infinitive that has an adverb between <i>to</i> and the verb stem
e.g., "The president proceeded to sharply <i>admonish</i> the reporters." |

Figure 1: Framework of Features of Informality (Hyland & Jang, 2017)

This framework ensures that the identified features are rigorously coded and categorized and that the analysis is reflective of the diverse academic disciplines represented. It assists in further exploration of informality in academic writing. Qualitative content analyses primarily focused on four features. These included sentence-initial conjunctions/conjunctive adverbs, unattended anaphoric pronouns, and listing expressions. These features were identified as main contributors to informality in PhD dissertations. This study excluded first-person pronoun, second-person pronoun, direct questions, split infinitives sentence-final preposition, and exclamation. It was done because of their low frequency. Markin 4 software was used to label the identified features of informality in each file separately. This software ensures systematic analysis and sets the key buttons according to the requirements or selected taxonomies.

Findings on the types of informal features employed by doctoral students are produced. The section provides instances of these features from the data. The features were identified through close reading. After that, these were systematically tagged using Markin 4 software within each dataset. The qualitative, quantitative, and mixed-method datasets have been analyzed.

Figure 2 shows the prevalence of features of informality across three datasets. Comparative analysis revealed that four features prominently appeared. These included unattended anaphoric pronouns, conjunctive adverbs/sentence-initial conjunctions, and listing expressions consistently appeared across the three datasets. These features, along with split infinitives, sentence-final prepositions, contractions, and direct questions constitute the core informality features examined. Notably, the first-person pronoun was excluded from the identification process due to its accepted flexibility in most of the style manuals. The analysis particularly focused on the three most pervasive informal features – unattended anaphoric pronouns, conjunctive adverbs/sentence-initial conjunctions, and listing expressions due to their notable presence across all datasets. This focus underlines the significant role these features play in defining informality within academic writing in the Pakistani context.

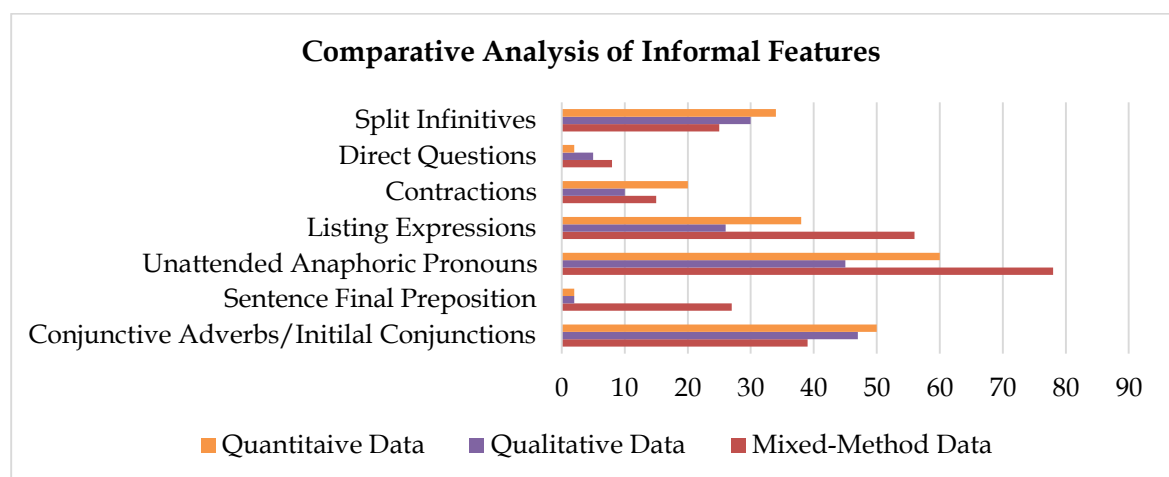


Figure 1: Distribution of Features of Informality across Datasets

Unattended Anaphoric References

As depicted in Figure 2, unattended anaphoric references were most frequently employed across datasets. These pronouns are commonly found in spoken academic genres where context and setting may more readily provide clarity which is often lacking in written texts (Swales, 2005). Academic Journals, style manuals, and EAP textbooks

caution against the use of unattended anaphoric references; and recommend using a determiner (demonstrative + noun phrase) to reduce ambiguity. The highest occurrence of this informal feature was noted in the mixed-method data, followed by quantitative and qualitative data, as depicted in Figure 3.

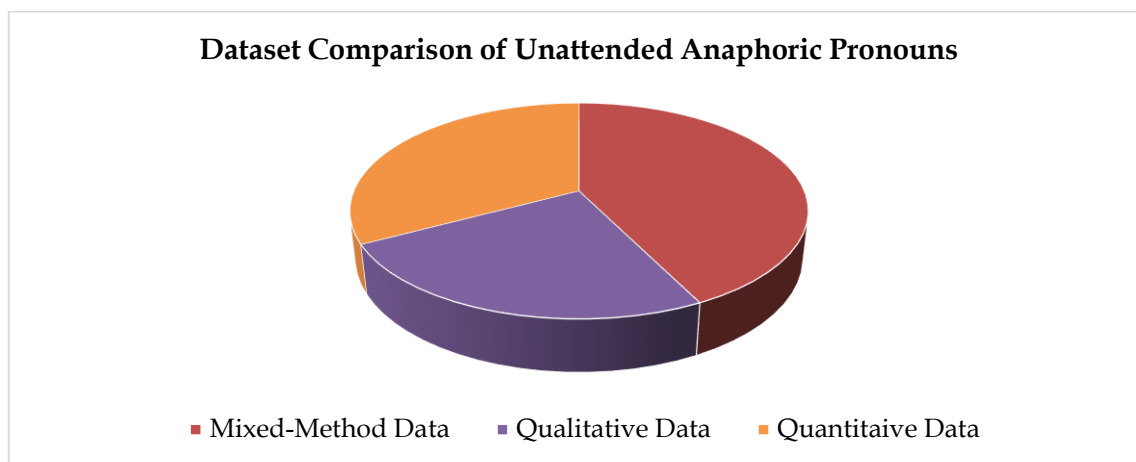


Figure 2: Distribution of Unattended Anaphoric References across Datasets

Although the disparity between qualitative and quantitative was small, it was more notable when compared to mixed-method data. However, the prevalence of this informal feature across datasets raises concern, as unattended anaphoric references such as pronouns like 'this' or 'it' which lack clear and explicit antecedents lead to ambiguity (Dixon, 2022). Table 1 presents examples of unattended anaphoric references retrieved from the data, revealing that 'this' and 'it' are the most frequently used pronouns across the datasets.

Table 1
Examples of Unattended Anaphoric References

Sr. No.	Example
1	This leads to a collection of information and feedback from individuals.
2	This is especially important when it comes to a large and comprehensive study.
3	It reveals how the present research has been done.
4	These involved lectures through task-based activities.
5	Those assisted in making the study more comprehensive.

These examples in Table 1 illustrate how unattended anaphoric references are used without specifying their reference in specific contexts, potentially leading to confusion and increased ambiguity. Academic writing, being a formal mode of expression, requires precise language to avoid subjective interpretation and assumptions that could deemphasize the seriousness of the phenomenon under study.

Listing Expressions

The second feature of informality analyzed within three datasets is listing expressions. Figure 4 depicts the prevalence of listing expressions across the mixed-method, qualitative, and quantitative datasets.

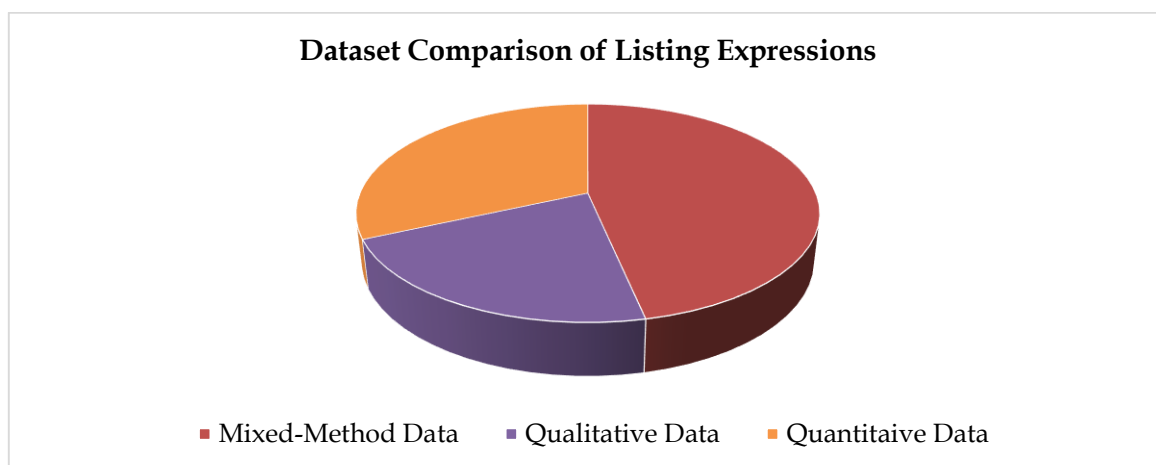


Figure 3: Distribution of Listing Expressions across Datasets

Listing expressions occurred most frequently in the mixed-method dataset, followed by the qualitative and quantitative datasets, respectively. The discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative datasets was moderate when compared to the mixed-method datasets. Listing expressions often entail incomplete information and invite readers to make assumptions about what is unsaid. This practice violates the standard norms of precision and completeness expected in academic writing (Bailey, 2014). The most commonly used listing expressions across datasets included 'so on', 'etc.', and 'other'. Despite being one of the least occurred features in notable previous studies e.g., (Chang & Swales, 2014; Hyland & Jiang, 2017; Xia, 2020), these expressions appeared prominently in our data, particularly in mixed-method dataset, indicating the casual approach by doctoral candidates towards handling referential content. Table 2 presents selected examples from the data, illustrating the potential lack of clarity and disruption to thematic flow caused by the use of these vague expressions.

Table 2
Examples of Listing Expressions

Sr. No.	Example
1.	The modes of blended learning approach i.e., online, offline, face to face and <i>so on</i> were added.
2.	There are many concepts given about philosophies like objectivism, subjectivism, positivism, interpretivism, <i>etc.</i>
3.	Interviews were taken from politicians, academicians, political activists, journalists, and <i>other people</i> .

Example 4 in Table 2 illustrates how the phrase 'so on' is used to replace additional specific modes of blended learning, leaving them unspecified and creating an impression of incompleteness. In academic writing, detailing all critical elements is crucial to ensure thoroughness and clarity. Similarly the use of 'etc' in Example 5 suggests the existence of additional philosophies beyond those mentioned, potentially leading readers to speculate about other philosophies. This can undermine the completeness of the referential content. Example 6 employs the term 'other people' which broadens the scope of interviewees beyond the listed categories, potentially raising concerns about the reliability and representativeness of the interview sample. The pervasiveness of such features in academic writing can obscure important information and adversely affect the overall validity and reliability of the studied phenomena.

Sentence Initial Conjunctions or Conjunctive Adverbs

The third and final feature of informality, analyzed was the use of sentence-initial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs. As depicted in Figure 4, the quantitative dataset exhibits the highest occurrences of this feature, showing a more pronounced use compared to qualitative and mixed-method datasets. The disparity between quantitative and qualitative datasets is relatively small, whereas the difference between quantitative and mixed-method datasets is more significant. Hasan (2000) reported a substantial increase in the use of initial conjunctions has substantially increased in the social sciences from 1965 to 2005. The most commonly used initial conjunctions or conjunctive adverbs across datasets were 'and', 'but', and 'however'. Another notable observation from the data was the incorrect usage of initial conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs. Improper usage of initial conjunctions and conjunctive adverbs led to sentence fragments and comma splice errors, thus increasing the risks of ambiguity and informality in academic writing. Conjunctive adverbs work as logical connectors, and their appropriate use gives the impression that text makes sense over large stretches of language. Garton (1996) observed that second language learners often over-generalize and inappropriately use conjunctive adverbs to imply cause-effect relationships, particularly in contexts where no logical conclusions should be drawn. Some representative examples of improper usage of conjunctive adverbs are presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Examples of Conjunctive Adverbs

Sr. No.	Example
1	<i>However</i> , purposive sampling was employed.
2	<i>Moreover</i> , Permission was obtained from the Prison Department.
3	<i>Besides</i> content validity of EFL students was also ensured.
4	<i>Therefore</i> the questions were translated into Urdu.

The placement of 'however' in Example 9 could be questioned, as it leads with a transition rather than a substantive statement, potentially weakening the argument's impact. In Example 10, 'moreover', an additive conjunctive adverb meant to enhance preceding information, is used improperly to introduce a fundamental procedural fact, rather than adding additional information. Similarly, the use of 'besides' in Example 11 appears informal and lacks clarity; a more precise alternative such as 'additionally' could enhance the expression. In Example 12, 'therefore' is used to suggest that the translation of questions was a direct result of previously stated conditions. If such conditions are not explicitly mentioned, its use is incorrect.

Sentence-initial conjunctions are generally proscribed by grammarians and style guides because they can impart a colloquial tone to formal writing. To illustrate this issue, different examples from datasets are presented in Table 4 that demonstrate the usage of sentence-initial conjunctions in the study sample.

Table 4
Examples of Sentence-Initial Conjunctions

Sr. No.	Example
1	<i>As</i> questionnaire was distributed among 10th-class students.
2	<i>But</i> , the present study involved the positivist approach.
3	<i>And</i> there are primary and secondary sources of data.
4	<i>Because</i> data was collected by interviewees.
5	<i>While</i> purposive sampling is suitable.

Examples 13 and 14 from Table 4 showcase the use of 'but' and 'and' at the beginning of sentences, which violates the standard norms of academic discourse. Examples 15, 16, and 17 illustrate the use of subordinate conjunctions 'as', 'because', and 'while' at sentence start, leading to sentence fragments that compromise clarity, precision, and correctness--essential elements of formal writing.

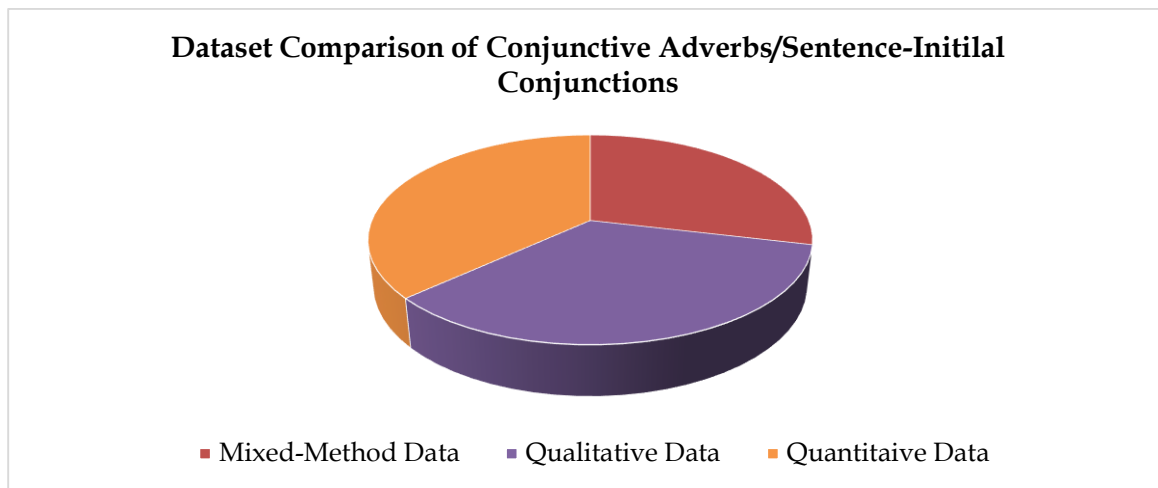


Figure 4: Distribution of Conjunctive Adverbs/Initial Conjunctions across Datasets

Conclusions

PhD social sciences dissertations were examined in this study to explore patterns and pervasiveness of features of informality. The findings of this study remain consistent with previous studies that academic writing is becoming informal. The overall findings of this study align with earlier studies, including works by Chang and Swales (1999), Heylighen and Jiang (2017), Biber and Gray (2016), and Ebrahimi and Fakhri (2019) which indicate the use of informal elements in academic writing. These studies indicate that there are inconsistencies between prescriptive stylistic norms and actual expressive practices in academic writing (Lee et al., 2019).

The most frequent features were unattended anaphoric references, listing expressions, and sentence-initial conjunctions/conjunctive adverbs. This study contributes to existing research by demonstrating that although three informality features occurred more frequently, their use was not consistent across the broader range of earlier academic corpus examined. An example in this regard are the listing expressions. These were the second most used informal feature in this study. However, in the previous studies, they have been the least used feature. This underscores the importance of an in-depth text analysis to discern such patterns. The comparative analysis of mixed-method, quantitative, and qualitative datasets further indicated that features of informality were present in all datasets. However, there was variation in frequency. This highlights the existing gaps in academic writing courses and resources. Before this, no study had specifically focused on identifying features of informality in PhD dissertations within the social sciences in the Pakistani context. This research not only fills this gap but also emphasizes the importance of mastering formal linguistic expressions, which are often overlooked due to a primary focus on error-free writing.

The comprehensive analysis of informal features in PhD dissertations provides valuable insights into current and future teaching practices. It influences pedagogical strategies and encourages the development of such approaches that enhance learners' and writers' understanding of both formal and informal registers as integral elements of

academic writing. This is expected to improve writing standards across social sciences disciplines and enhance the overall quality of academic writing (Negretti & McGrath, 2020). The present study has confined its analysis to three social sciences disciplines (Education, Political Science, and Sociology) to represent the broader field.

Recommendations

Future studies could expand this focus to include remaining disciplines within the social sciences, as well as fields in natural sciences and humanities, to gain a deeper understanding of this phenomenon in the Pakistani context. Additionally, this study has focused on ten specific features of informality. Future research could benefit from employing triangulation of data, incorporating multiple analytical taxonomies, and examining both writers' and readers' perceptions of these features to offer a more comprehensive insight as there is much more to the notion of informality.

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