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## SUB-DISCIPLINARY VARIATION IN THE MOVE STRUCTURE OF ENGLISH-MEDIUM RESEARCH ARTICLE INTRODUCTIONS IN APPLIED LINGUISTICS

Do Xuan Hai

*School of Foreign Languages, Can Tho University, Vietnam*


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### ABSTRACT

*This article reports on a recent corpus and genre-based investigation of the move structure in research article introductions (RAIs) in two constituent areas of inquiry in applied linguistics, namely language learning & teaching and pragmatics & discourse analysis. The corpus consists of 30 RAIs extracted from 30 parent empirical research articles written by English native speakers and published in high impact factor English-medium applied linguistics journals between 2011 and 2013. The analytical tool was developed both with reference to Swales' (1990, 2004) CARS models and a preliminary examination of the corpus built for this particular study. Findings revealed sub-disciplinary corpus-based variations of this schematic structure, at both the move and step tiers.*

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### 1 INTRODUCTION

In the field of *English for Specific Purposes* (henceforth ESP), a large number of studies have been carried out to identify the move structure in empirical research article introductions written in English (e.g. Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Ozturk, 2007; Pho, 2013), making use of such influential analytical frameworks as Swales' CARS (1990, 2004) models. Not only was this organizational structure in English-medium RAIs in one discipline examined (e.g. Anthony, 1999; Kanoksilapatham, 2005), some authors (e.g. Samraj, 2002; Suntara, 2013) made similar corpus-based but cross-disciplinary comparisons of this structure, while some others went further by investigating sub-disciplinary variations in the use of this structure in RAIs written in English in certain disciplines (e.g. Ozturk, 2007; Atai and Habibi, 2012; Kanoksilapatham, 2015).

The research reported in this article is a continuation of the research line within ESP seeking to reveal subfield variations in the move structure of RAIs written in English in applied linguistics (e.g. Ozturk, 2007; Jalilifar, 2010; Khany and Tazik, 2010; Atai and Habibi, 2012). However, unlike previous studies, the current research aims to compare and contrast the schematic structure of RAIs in *Language Learning & Teaching* (hereafter LLT) and *Pragmatics & Discourse Analysis* (henceforward PDA), two sub-disciplines within the umbrella field of applied linguistics. While pragmatics and discourse analysis may be treated as separate sub-disciplines of applied linguistics in their own rights, in this paper it is maintained that these two areas of inquiry can also be conceptualized as belonging to one single umbrella field due to the many common grounds and a closely-interconnected, overlapping relationship they share and the apparent lack of a definite categorical distinction between them (see Mullany and Stockwell, 2010; Barron and Schneider, 2013). Arguably, a

similar argument applies equally well to the areas of *language learning* and *teaching*. In addition, while many of previous research were primarily interested in comparing/contrasting the use of individual moves and steps in the corpora under examination (e.g. Jalilifar, 2010; Khany and Tazik, 2010; Atai and Habibi, 2012), my study broadens this research scope to include a comparison of the move structure patterns found in the corpus besides the commonly conducted investigation into individual move and step variations per se.

In this paper, I report the results of a contrastive genre-based analysis of the move structure in a corpus of 30 English-medium RAIs in the two afore-mentioned subfields of applied linguistics. All of the research articles from which the RAIs were extracted for the construction of the corpus were published in journals considered to be highly reputable in the discipline of applied linguistics. Additionally, these research papers were written by English native speakers understood in this study as Anglophone educated mature citizens of Inner Circle countries (i.e. in such countries as the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) (henceforth English native speakers), following Kachru's (1985) well-known taxonomy. The analytical tool was developed both with reference to Swales' famous CARS (1990, 2004) frameworks and from a preliminary examination of the corpus particularly built for this study.

## 2 METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 Analytical framework

In this study, the development of an analytical tool was guided by descriptions of Swales' CARS (1990, 2004) models, which were believed to capture the move structure of empirical RAIs written in English. According to Swales (1990, 2004), a very well-known scholar in the field of ESP, basically, the discursive structure of this type of RAIs can be conceptualized as being composed of a series of moves (i.e. context-specific textual segments embodying communicative purposes) arranged in a certain order. Indeed, Swales (2004, p. 228) offered the following definition of a move: "a discursive or rhetorical unit that performs a coher-

ent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse".

As regards the move structure of RAIs written in English, Swales (1990, 2004) proposes that this organizational pattern can be thought of as a particular sequence of three distinct moves, namely *Establishing a territory*, *Establishing a niche*, and *Occupying the niche* in the CARS 1990 model and *Establishing a territory*, *Establishing a niche*, and *Presenting the current work* in the CARS 2004 framework. In their turns, these moves are realized by a number of lower-level, more specific communicative acts which Swales (1990, 2004) termed *steps*. Together, these moves and steps constitute a coherent, hierarchical structure manifesting the overall communicative purpose of an English-medium RAIs, viz., *Creating A Research Space* (hence the acronym CARS). These three-move models of Swales (1990, 2004) have been widely adopted as analytical tools in many genre-based investigations of RAIs in the field of ESP and their validity in capturing the move structure of this particular section of the research article has generally been confirmed, especially at the move tier (see Ozturk, 2007; Pho, 2013; Kanoksilapatham, 2005, 2015). Readers interested in a more detailed description of these theoretical models can refer to Swales (1990, 2004).

In this study, I did not use either of the two CARS (1990, 2004) models verbatim as the theoretical framework for data analysis. There has been corpus-based research evidence (e.g. Anthony, 1999; Samraj, 2002) that the move structure of RAIs written in English showed disciplinary and even sub-disciplinary variations (e.g. Ozturk, 2007; Kanoksilapatham, 2015), especially at the step tier. Teaming with the group of ESP genre-based researchers in favour of developing an analytical tool for his/her corpus-based study based on both a reference to the CARS (1990, 2004) and an examination of the actual corpus built for that particular research (e.g. Gao, 2014; Kanoksilapatham, 2015), in the current work, I followed this orientation and practice in the development of a coding scheme for data analysis. Table 1 below gives information on this coding framework.

**Table 1: Analytical framework**

<p><b>Move 1 – Establishing a territory</b>  Step 1 – <i>Claiming centrality</i>  Step 2 – <i>Providing background information</i>  Step 3 – <i>Reviewing previous studies</i></p> <p><b>Move 2 – Establishing a niche</b>  Step 1 - <i>Indicating a gap</i>  Step 2 - <i>Extending previous knowledge</i>  Step 3 – <i>Giving positive justifications</i>  Step 4 – <i>Highlighting a problem or a mismatch</i></p> <p><b>Move 3 – Presenting the current work</b>  Step 1 – <i>Presenting the study purposively or descriptively</i>  Step 2 – <i>Presenting a hypothesis or a research question</i>  Step 3 – <i>Announcing important findings</i>  Step 4 - <i>Stating theoretical or practical values of the study</i>  Step 5 – <i>Outlining the article’s structure/ Previewing the next section</i>  Step 6 – <i>Defining terms</i>  Step 7 – <i>Making an argument</i>  Step 8 – <i>Defending an aspect of the methodology</i>  Step 9 – <i>Giving implications for further research or for pedagogical applications</i></p>
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Compared to descriptions of the CARS (1990, 2004) models, my coding scheme retains the influential, research-supported insight that the move structure of English-medium RAIs consists of three moves at a higher level and a larger number of steps realizing these moves at a lower level. I favoured the labels that Swales (2004) used to call the moves because of my belief that, with new additional steps being discovered, reported, and incorporated into the CARS 2004 description in several other coding schemes (e.g. Samraj, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2015), these labels give a fuller, yet more concise descriptive picture of the organizational pattern prototypically employed in RAIs written in English. However, at the step level, I made a couple of small changes in the wording of some steps compared to the labels used by Swales (1990, 2004). In particular, I maintain that M1S1 should be termed *Providing background information* instead of the label *Making topical generalizations* that Swales (1990) used because it has been demonstrated by research evidence (e.g. Samraj, 2002) that a number of English-medium research article authors chose to situate their study in the real world apart from the research world.

In addition, for the step M3S4 in my coding scheme, I added the pre-modifiers *theoretical* and *practical* to the noun *values* (cf. the label for step M3S6 in Swales’ CARS 2004 description) not only as an attempt to provide a more specific description of the communicative function of this step, but also as a recognition of the possibility of research world

and real world orientations in the situatedness of the research being reported in an empirical research article written in English. Besides, for the M3S5 step - *Outlining the article’s structure*, I added a possible variation of this sub-move found in the corpus, namely *Previewing the next section*. As the label suggests, in this variation, instead of previewing the contents of all the important sections following the introduction, the author just gives an overview idea of the information that will be presented in the section which subsequently follows the introductory part of the article.

The three steps M3S7 – *Making an argument*, M3S8 – *Defending an aspect of the methodology*, and M3S9 – *Making further research implications* in my coding scheme can be considered new steps in that they were found in the corpus built for this study but are not included in both the CARS 1990 and the CARS 2004 models. While the labels for the steps M3S7 and M3S9 are straightforward enough to the readers, the label for step M3S8 - *Defending an aspect of the methodology* might need a little stint of elaboration. Basically, in this sub-move, the author initially admits that one aspect of his/her methodology suffers from certain limitations, yet he/she goes on to point out that there is a practical reason for that particular methodological choice and/or these limitations do not prevent the obtained results from being valid, as can be seen in the following extract from the corpus (the [R] symbol represents a reference which has been omitted from the extracted text):

*At the outset, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of this small-scale study: the investigation is narrowly circumscribed to a specific age group in a particular geographical location, and draw on a restricted number of tokens (N = 148), so the interpretation of the data must be necessarily cautious. Nevertheless, these limitations are offset by the dearth of research addressing the evolution of socially motivated patterns of variation in preadolescent speech [R]. While large data are clearly desirable to do full justice to this area of research, judicious exploitation of a restricted number of tokens can still be illuminating. Britain's [R] review of a number of sociolinguistic studies based on small datasets (often amounting to fewer than 200 tokens) confirms that limited data can often reveal systematic and insightful patterns of variation.*

## 2.2 Corpus compilation

The corpus was compiled out of the introductions extracted from a pool of 30 empirical research articles published in prestigious Applied Linguistics journals during 2011-2013. The selected journals were *Applied Linguistics*, *Language Learning*, *The Modern Language Journal*, *English for Specific Purposes*, and *Journal of Second Language Writing*. On the basis of their impact factors, these journals were ranked in the first quarter of the Thomson Reuters' Journal Citation Report for the year 2012 (the latest one available at the onset of this study) in the category of linguistics journals. The choice of these journals appears to have met the three requirements suggested by Nwogu (1997) concerning journal selection for the compilation of an ESP genre-based corpus: representativeness, academic reputation and ready access. Besides, by limiting the publication period to a span of three years, from 2011 to 2013, the potential of genre change over time in English-medium RAIs was reduced remarkably, and the resultant corpus for this study could also be argued to be one of the most recent. For the construction of the corpus, two empirical research articles in regular issues of each of the afore-mentioned journals per year were selected. The number of authors in each research article was not controlled, yet the focus was on English native speakers who were the only author or the first in a group of authors of the research article.

Unlike some previous researchers (e.g. Duszak, 1994; Lee, 2001), I did not have any difficulty delimiting the boundaries of the introduction section in the research articles selected for the construction of the corpus. For the majority of the RAIs in the corpus, this section was the part of the research

article under headings labeled either *Introduction* or *Introduction and Preliminaries*. The remaining RAIs, though having no such labeled headings, possessed distinguishable sectional, typographic and layout formats, which facilitates the identification of this major part in the chosen research articles.

## 2.3 Analytical procedure

All of the RAIs in the corpus were analyzed according to the following analytical procedure, which was developed based on Bhatia's (1993) guidelines and the procedural accounts reported in Safnil's (2013a, 2013b) genre-based studies: (i) the coder first reads the title and the abstract of the RAI under investigation to get a general idea of the reported study, (ii) the coder then skims the whole article and locate the introduction section based on such distinguishing features such as section headings and format and layout features, (iii) against the analytical tool developed for this study, the coder reads carefully and in many cases, repeatedly, each introduction section to identify the moves and steps embodied in this section based on both their textual semantic contents and any readily recognizable accompanying lexico-grammatical mechanisms. It can be seen that my approach to the identification of the moves and steps was heavily influenced by the point of view put forward by Swales (1990) and adopted by a number of other scholars (e.g. Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Safnil, 2013a, 2013b), which is in favour of both a top-down (semantically driven) and bottom up (lexico-grammatically based) orientation in this decoding process. It appears that this reading comprehension strategy is gaining collective consensus and popularity among applied linguists (see Fox and Alexander, 2009; Bax, 2011). In addition, to enhance the reliability of the research results, I undertook the intra-rater reliability technique, which involved my analyses of the corpus two times, with an interval of five weeks between the analyses. The analytical tool and the analytical procedure were kept constant in the two coding processes. A comparison of the obtained results from the two analyses showed agreement rates at 94% for the move tier analysis and 92% for the step tier analysis.

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1 Move structure patterns

Tables 2 and 3 below present data about the move structure patterns found in the two sets of LLT and PDA RAIs in the corpus. Due to space constraints, only the move patterns identified at the move tier are presented.

**Table 2: Move structure patterns in the LLT corpus**

Move structure patterns	Frequency of occurrence	Number of observations
1. 1-2-3	33%	5
2. 1-3	6,6%	1
3. 1-2-1-3	20%	3
4. 1-2-1-2-3	13%	2
5. 3-1-2-1-2-3	6,6%	1
6. 2-1-2-1-2-3	6,6%	1
7. 1-3-1-2-1-2-3	6,6%	1
8. 1-2-1-2-1-3-1-2-3	6,6%	1

As can be seen from Tables 2 and 3, the most striking similarity in the move structure patterns of the RAIs in the LLT and PDA sets is that the majority of these RAIs contain organizational patterns composed of at least three dissimilar moves (i.e. sequences made up of M1, M2, and M3 and the possible recursive use of one or all of these moves). In general, this finding is congruent with those reported in Ozturk’s (2007) study though it should be noted that this researcher built his corpus with RAIs in *Second Language Acquisition* and *Second Language Writing*. As a matter of fact, my study’s corpus analysis showed that 14 out of the 15 LLT RAIs and 13 out of the 15 PDA RAIs embodied these multi-move informational arrangements. Rhetorical structures composed of fewer than three moves are few and far between, with only one two-move instance recorded in the LLT corpus and two other two-move observations made in the PDA corpus. Another similarity is that most of the RAIs, irrespective of their sub-disciplinary nature, start with M1 and end with M3. Again, a similar observation was made by Ozturk (2007) as well. Furthermore, any of the three moves M1, M2, and M3 can be used cyclically, as can be observed in the move structure of a number of LLT or PDA RAIs in the corpus. In the corpus, the M1-M2-M3 generic structure did not reach the necessary percentage of 60% (Swales, 1990; Kanoksilapatham, 2005) to be considered prototypical. This finding is in line with Ozturk’s (2007) result regarding the employment of this particular move structure in the *Second Language Writing* corpus but diverges from his result of the *Second Language Acquisition* corpus.

The employment of elaborate multi-move and move-cyclical rhetorical structures in the corpus can be accounted for from the perspective of the ‘received culture’ (Atkinson, 2004). In this view, culture is often associated with a static, homogeneous, national, regional or ethnic entity. Within this camp, one can appeal to Hall’s (1976) dichotomy of high-context versus low-context cultures or

Hinds (1983) binary conceptualization of reader-responsible and writer-responsible cultures. Equipped with these theoretical foundations, it can be argued that the recursive and multi-move move structures discovered in the corpus were due to the fact that English native speakers feel the culture-specific (low-context or reader-responsible) discursive needs to provide elaborate information in verbal written interactions, English-medium RAIs in applied linguistics included.

**Table 3: Move structure patterns in the PDA corpus**

Move structure patterns	Frequency of occurrence	Number of observations
1. 1-2-3	53%	8
2. 1-3	13%	2
3. 1-2-3-2	6,6%	1
4. 2-1-2-3	6,6%	1
5. 1-2-1-2-3	13%	2
6. 1-2-3-1-2-3	6,6%	1

However, another plausible explanation comes from Swales’ (1990) influential notion of discourse community. According to this author, discourse communities are closely related sociocultural networks having common public communicative goals to achieve through the genres used in these communities. Swales (1990) goes on to propose the following identifying characteristics of a discourse community: (i) having a set of common public goals, (ii) having mechanisms of intercommunications among its members, (iii) using these intercommunication mechanisms mainly to provide information and feedback, (iv) using and possessing a number of genres to achieve and further the community’s public communicative aims, (v) having acquired some community-specific vocabulary and (vi) having a reasonable ratio between novices and experts. Adopting this profitable notion of Swales (1990), it can be maintained that applied linguistics in English is a sizeable community not only because of the international academic status of the English language but also because this community is composed of both English native speakers and English non-native speakers who write their research articles in English, their L2 or additional language. Since competition for publication in this discourse community is harsh, research article writers strategically employ an elaborate and recursive move structure in their RAIs to capture the attention of the readers and to persuade the latter of the academic and/or practical value of the research reported in the articles.

**3.2 Individual moves and steps**

Table 4 gives information on the frequencies of occurrence and numbers of observations of the

moves and steps which were identified in the LLT corpus.

Adopting the taxonomic scale categorizing moves and steps in terms of frequency of occurrence re-

ported in recent studies (e.g. Pho, 2013; Hai, 2015; Kanoksilapatham, 2015), it can be seen that M1 and M3 in the LLT corpus are obligatory, while M2, M1S2, M1S3, M3S1 occupy the prototypical status and the remaining steps are optional.

**Table 4: Moves and steps in the LLT corpus**

<b>MOVES and STEPS</b>	<b>Frequency of occurrence</b>	<b>Number of observations</b>
<b>M1 - Establishing a territory</b>	100%	27
M1S1 - <i>Claiming centrality</i>	53%	9
M1S2 - <i>Providing background information</i>	87%	13
M1S3 - <i>Reviewing previous studies</i>	73%	18
<b>M2 - Establishing a niche</b>	93%	22
M2S1 - <i>Indicating a gap</i>	33%	6
M2S2 - <i>Extending previous knowledge</i>	40%	7
M2S3 - <i>Giving positive justifications</i>	40%	7
M2S4 - <i>Highlighting a problem or a mismatch</i>	27%	6
<b>M3 - Presenting the current work</b>	100%	18
M3S1 - <i>Presenting the study purposively or descriptively</i>	87%	15
M3S2 - <i>Presenting a hypothesis or a research question</i>	6,6%	1
M3S3 - <i>Announcing important findings</i>	20%	4
M3S4 - <i>Stating theoretical or practical values of the study</i>	6,6%	1
M3S5 - <i>Outlining the article's structure/ Previewing the next section</i>	33%	5
M3S6 - <i>Defining terms</i>	0	0
M3S7 - <i>Making an argument</i>	20%	3
M3S8 - <i>Defending an aspect of the methodology</i>	0	0
M3S9 - <i>Giving implications for further research or for pedagogical applications</i>	6,6%	1

Table 5 presents data on the frequencies of occurrence and numbers of observations of the moves and steps which were identified in the PDA corpus. With reference to the taxonomic scale used in this study, M1 and M3 can be categorized as obligatory, M2, M1S1, M1S2, M2S1, M3S1 as prototypical and the steps which remain occupy the optional status. As I have mentioned earlier, in the Introduction of this paper, the present study is perhaps the first attempt to compare/contrast the move structure of RAIs written in English by native speakers in the two fields, LLT and PDA, the obtained results concerning the occurrence of the moves and steps in the corpus should be compared only within this present work. No attempt will be made to make comparisons/contrast of the results of this study with the findings of previous research seeking sub-disciplinary variations in the move structure of RAIs in applied linguistics (e.g. Ozturk, 2007; Atai and Habibi, 2012) because the nature of the corpora in these studies is dissimilar.

Compared to the results obtained from the LLT corpus, the PDA results share the obligatory moves (M1 and M3) and some of the prototypical moves and steps (M2, M1S2, M3S1). However, the PDA

corpus reveals more prototypical step variation than the LLT corpus. In my opinion, the finding that M1 and M3 are obligatory in the corpus is interesting. These moves, when combined, conform to a general-specific pattern, which may mean that applied linguistics English native speakers have a strong and natural tendency to think and organize the information in their generic written discourse in this particular way. However, given the limited scope of the current study, it must be pointed out that this suggestion is merely speculative and further empirical data must be sought to support or reject it. Besides, the prototypical existence of M2, M1S2 and M3S1 in the corpus could be seen as evidence that LLT and PDA research article writers pay remarkable attention to giving a rationale for the research carried out (M2), providing background information about the research topic to facilitate readers' comprehension (M1S2) and presenting the current work descriptively or purposively (M3S1). To novice writers, these findings may prove to be valuable because these moves and steps appear to be core components of English-medium LLT and PDA RAIs that many or all applied linguists in these two areas use, as demonstrated by the above results.

**Table 5: Moves and steps in the PDA corpus**

<b>MOVES and STEPS</b>	<b>Frequency of occurrence</b>	<b>Number of observations</b>
<b>M1 - Establishing a territory</b>	100%	18
M1S1 - <i>Claiming centrality</i>	93%	15
M1S2 - <i>Providing background information</i>	87%	20
M1S3 - <i>Reviewing previous studies</i>	47%	11
<b>M2 - Establishing a niche</b>	87%	18
M2S1 - <i>Indicating a gap</i>	67%	11
M2S2 - <i>Extending previous knowledge</i>	40%	6
M2S3 - <i>Giving positive justifications</i>	27%	4
M2S4 - <i>Highlighting a problem or a mismatch</i>	20%	3
<b>M3 - Presenting the current work</b>	100%	16
M3S1 - <i>Presenting the study purposively or descriptively</i>	93%	19
M3S2 - <i>Presenting a hypothesis or a research question</i>	13%	3
M3S3 - <i>Announcing important findings</i>	0	0
M3S4 - <i>Stating theoretical or practical values of the study</i>	47%	9
M3S5 - <i>Outlining the article's structure/ Previewing the next section</i>	53%	8
M3S6 - <i>Defining terms</i>	13%	2
M3S7 - <i>Making an argument</i>	0	0
M3S8 - <i>Defending an aspect of the methodology</i>	20%	3
M3S9 - <i>Giving implications for further research or for pedagogical applications</i>	0	0

To test whether the use of moves and steps in the corpus are statistically significant, the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was employed because the obtained data did not meet the demand of normal distribution as revealed by means of the Shapiro-Wilk test of normality performed by version 11.5 of the SPSS software. In cases where statistically significant differences were found, the entailed effect sizes (r) were calculated to demonstrate how large or small the differences were. Results showed that M1 – *Establishing a territory*, M1S1 – *Claiming centrality* and M3S4 - *Stating theoretical or practical values of the study* revealed statistical differences and these differences were between the medium and large extents (M1:  $z = -2,30, p < 0.05, r = 0.4$ ; M1S2:  $z = -2,11, p < 0.05, r = 0.4$ ; M3S4:  $z = -2,45, p < 0.01, r = 0.4$ ).

The statistical differences in the use of M1 – *Establishing a territory* and M1S1 – *Claiming centrality* in the corpus may be attributed to the *established* or *emerging* status (Samraj, 2002, 2005) of the two fields, LLT and PDA, in applied linguistics. Historically, LLT has an older record compared to PDA, so it may well be put into the established end of the continuum. In contrast, PDA belongs to the emerging end. Because of its long research tradition, a research carried out in LLT may not promise any strikingly novel issue to the field since it may well be a continuation of an established research tradition. In contrast, PDA researchers, given the emerging nature of this sub-discipline, may ap-

proach the research topic from various theoretical angles, thus the need to both giving background information on the research topic as well as making the claim that the research reported in the research article is important to the field.

On the other hand, the differences in the use of M1 - *Establishing a territory*, M1S1 - *Claiming centrality*, and M3S4 - *Stating theoretical or practical values of the study* in the RAIs in the corpus may also be interpreted as being shaped by the level of competition for publication in prestigious journals in the two fields. It is very likely that publishing a research article in PDA is more highly competitive than in LLT, so research article writers in PDA opt for more steps in M1, emphasize the importance of their research, and include statements about the theoretical or practical values of their research in their RAIs as persuasive strategies to get the submitted manuscripts past the journal gatekeepers (e.g. editors and peer reviewers) toward publication. On the contrary, researchers in the field of LLT may experience a lower level of competition for paper publication in their target journals, which logically leads to the less frequent use of these move and steps in the introductions of their research papers.

Although all of the above interpretations of the research results are reasonable, they should be treated with caution since they are based on a text analysis of the RAIs in the corpus, proposed views in the literature, and, at best, speculations. This is

one limitation of the present study. Ideally, a complementary qualitative research (e.g. ethnographic study, discourse-based study, in-depth interview-based study) ought to be conducted to verify the extent to which the interpretations are correct. The current study also suffers from another limitation: it examines a somewhat small sample data (30RAIs) so the generalizability power of the research results is limited. Furthermore, to ensure the reliability of the analytical results, the researcher only applied the technique of maintaining high intra-rater reliability. To enhance the level of reliability, therefore, a more rigorous design should consider taking a complementary inter-rater analysis measure into consideration. In light of the drawbacks of the present research, subsequent studies are encouraged to overcome these (minimally) three limitations so that their results will achieve higher validity and reliability.

Overall, the findings of this corpus-based and genre-based study provide supportive evidence for the insight that there are sub-disciplinary variations in the use of the move structure in English-medium RAIs in applied linguistics (e.g. Ozturk, 2007; Atai and Habibi, 2012). On a particular note, novice writers in the two areas of LLT and PDA, L2 non-native English speakers included, are likely to find the reported research results insightful and practically valuable since the results make clear to them the prevalent move structure in a recent corpus of RAIs in the two fields and the sub-disciplinary variations of these schematic patterns in terms of moves and steps. On the basis of these findings, these novice writers can make informed choices on the move structure they wish to employ in the English-medium research article introductions they write so that the generic public communicative goals of their RAIs can be achieved. This, if done well, is a good start for the acceptance of the manuscripts, of course along with the additional condition that the research topic is original, the study has been conducted in a systematic and principled manner, and the other major parts of the research papers are written up to the expectations of the gatekeepers. Pedagogically, the findings of this study could be incorporated into the teaching materials of higher education Advanced Academic Writing modules in Vietnam having a section on teaching novice writers how to write a good research paper in LLT or PDA in English. Alternatively, the results of the current study may be used for discussion and awareness-raising activities in these modules. It is my strong belief that these pedagogical applications will result in positive gains in the RAIs generic competence of the learners in these modules.

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