
STATING AND DEFENDING NEW KNOWLEDGE CLAIM: A RHETORICAL ANALYSIS ON THE DISCUSSION SECTION OF ENGLISH MASTER THESIS BY INDONESIAN EFL LEARNERS

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ABSTRACT

The discussion section is considered the most important section of a thesis but also the most difficult to write especially by university students. This study investigated the move-step and rhetorical pattern of discussion section in 20 English Master Theses written by Indonesian EFL postgraduate students. Following the model suggested by Loan and Pramoosook (2015), this study found that students constructed the discussion section according to their perceived communicative purposes of discussion section. The most noticeable feature of the section is the occurrence of Move 2 (reporting results) and Move 4 (Commenting on results) occurring in all texts making them obligatory moves. In terms of step, interpreting results and referring to other studies in Move 4 are also considered as obligatory steps. The findings of this study are useful particularly for EFL students; that is to facilitate them to better understand the rhetorical structure of thesis discussion section when written in English.

Key Words: rhetorical analysis; move; step; rhetorical pattern; master thesis

ABSTRAK

Bagian pembahasan dianggap sebagai bagian yang paling penting dalam tesis tetapi juga yang paling sulit ditulis terutama oleh mahasiswa atau penulis baru. Penelitian ini penting untuk menyelidiki pola retorika bagian pembahasan tesis mahasiswa magister bahasa Inggris yang ditulis oleh mahasiswa Indonesia. Mengikuti model yang disarankan oleh Loan and Pramoosook (2015), penelitian ini menemukan bahwa mahasiswa mengorganisir bagian pembahasan sesuai dengan tujuan komunikatif yang mereka anggap penting. Tujuan komunikatif yang paling menonjol dari bagian ini adalah 'Move' 2 (tahapan melaporkan hasil penelitian) dan 'Move' 4 (tahapan mengomentari hasil penelitian) yang ditemukan di semua teks sehingga dianggap wajib. Dalam hal langkah (Steps), langkah menafsirkan hasil penelitian dan langkah mengacu pada penelitian terdahulu dalam 'Move' 4 dianggap sebagai langkah wajib. Temuan penelitian ini berguna terutama untuk mahasiswa magister bahasa Inggris, yaitu untuk memudahkan mereka memahami struktur retorika dari bagian pembahasan tesis yang ditulis dalam bahasa Inggris.

Kata Kunci: analisis retorik; pindah; langkah; pola retorik; master thesis

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INTRODUCTION

Writing the discussion section of a Master Thesis is expected to be structured in a manner defined by rhetorical moves to make it easy to read and interpret. Structuring this discussion around arguments can be meaningless and tends to fail in justifying the validity of the claims that can make readers difficult to understand the significance of the study. The majority of student writers find it very hard to write the discussion section because it involves complex causal, conditional and purposive argument (Arsyad, 2013); this argument guides the reader from acceptance of the relatively uncontroversial data to acceptance of the writer's knowledge claim (Parkinson, 2011). However, it is widely recognized that the discussion section is difficult to write and troublesome for both native and non-native speakers (Flowerdew, 1999, 2001; Jaroongkhongdach et al., 2012; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 2004). This may be because writers need to meet the cognitive demands of the discussions and have skills for writing in the persuasive and argumentative styles (Pojanapunya & Todd, 2011).

A number of studies related to discussion section of research articles (RA) have been conducted by several investigators such as Amirian et al,

(2008); Khani and Tazik (2010); Arsyad (2013); Amnuai and Wannaruk, 2013; Peacock, 2002; Holmes, 1997 and Loan and Pramoolsook, 2015). Amirian et al., (2008), for example, investigated the similarities and differences of discussion sections in applied linguistics research articles (RAs) from the perspective of the genre. The results of their study revealed that there are considerable differences across the three corpora (Persian, English, and English as L2). They found that although there was a kind of universality in moves across English and Persian texts, there were some discrepancies in the frequency and sequence of moves, such as the lack of a logical sequence of different moves in the English Discussions written by Persian writers. The marked difference, according to Amirian et al., was the pervasive use of citation to previously mentioned claims and suggestion for further studies in the Persian corpus that were not found in the English corpus. Results also showed that Persian writers tended to make stronger claims when explaining and justifying their findings and tried to validate their findings by repetitively referring to past literature.

Using Swales' (1990) CARS model for the description of the schematic structure of introduction and discussion sections of research articles (RAs),

Khani and Tazik (2010) compared the generic structure of English introduction and discussion sections written by international authors and Iranian in sub-disciplines of Applied Linguistics. The findings showed no significant differences regarding the obligatory moves in the introduction section across the two corpora; however, significant differences were found in the discussion section.

Arsyad (2013) also examined the genre structure of research article (RA) discussion section written in Indonesian by Indonesian writers aiming at exploring how Indonesian writers discuss their research findings in their RAs. The corpus for this study consisted of 47 selected RAs published mainly in university-based journals in Indonesia from social science and humanity disciplines. Swales' eight-move structure (EMS) model of the discussion section of RAs was employed for the data analysis. From the results, the most noticeable feature occurs in terms of the absence of Move 4 (*reference to previous research findings*) in the majority of the Indonesian RAs and the difference between the RAs in the same discipline in terms of the number of moves found. According to Arsyad, the difference in research practice and RA writing practice in Indonesia is the most possible cause of the differences in the move structure.

Annuai and Wannaruk (2013) investigated rhetorical move structure of Discussions in English applied linguistic research article published in Thai and English published in international journals. They revealed that there were both similarities and differences regarding the move occurrence, move-ordering patterns, and move cyclicity. According to Annuai and Wannaruk, the findings are useful particularly for novice non-native writers by facilitating them to better understand the rhetorical structure of research article discussions. Holmes (1999), from his study, also revealed that the rhetorical structure of social science discussion sections displayed some distinctive features, such as the result that there is no obligatory move. Similarly, in a study carried out by Peacock (2002), it was found that there was no obligatory move in 252 discussions from seven disciplines that he investigated.

The only study on the discussion section of master theses written by EFL students in the literature, as far as these authors are concerned, is the one conducted by Loan and Pramoolsook (2015). Using the framework by Chen and Kuo (2012), they investigated the move-step structures of two chapters in 24 master theses written by Vietnamese postgraduates and the discourse-based interviews with actual thesis writers

and supervisors. Loan and Pramoolsook found that the student writers constructed the genres according to their perceived communicative purposes of these chapters. Moreover, the presence of section/ chapter introduction-next section/ chapter introduction-section/ chapter summary cycles tends to reflect the distinctive composition of these texts at the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam.

As discussed above, studies on the rhetorical structures and styles on RA discussion sections have frequently been conducted by several discourse experts but similar studies on English master thesis written by EFL postgraduate students have been very rarely conducted. In Indonesian academic, studies on how Indonesian post-graduate students introduce and defend their new knowledge claim in their thesis discussion section has been neglected while these studies are very important; that is to know how Indonesian post-graduate students introduce a new knowledge claim and defend it in their English thesis. Therefore, this study was aimed at answering the following questions: 1) What moves are commonly found in the discussion section of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students?; 2) What steps are commonly found in the discussion section of

English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students?; 3) What rhetorical patterns are commonly found in the discussion section of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students?

METHODS

This study followed qualitative method for collecting and analyzing the Discussion section sections. It was assumed that the results of the current study can provide useful information for similar situations and cases. This research analyzed English Master Thesis written by Indonesian EFL students of Postgraduate Program of English Education, Bengkulu University. This study involved 20 Discussion Section of English Master Thesis in the field of Applied Linguistics. For the purpose of identification and easier access, Research Thesis Discussions were separately codified (D1-D20).

Data Analysis

Loan and Paramoolsook's (2015) framework was used for the move and step identification because it was developed and revised from the analysis of RAs in Applied Linguistics which was also the focus of the present study. The model consists of seven moves as shown in Figure 1.

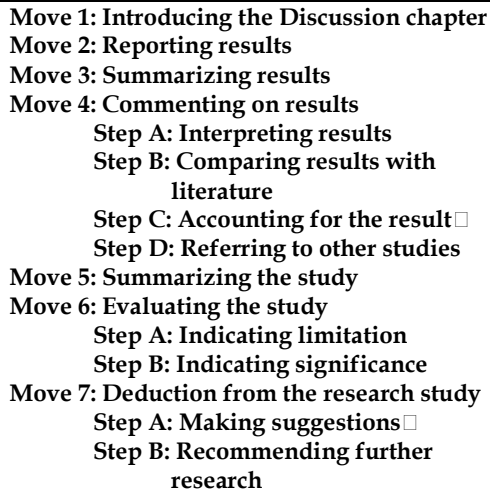


Figure 1. Framework for the discussion section of master thesis (adapted from Loan and Pramoolsook, 2015).

As seen in Figure 1, there are seven possible moves in the discussion section of a master thesis; some may be classified as obligatory moves, conventional and some are optional. Three of the seven moves (Moves 4, 6 and 7) may have smaller units of communicative purpose called Steps.

Data Analysis Procedures

In the processes of move identification, the following steps were followed. First, the titles, the abstracts, and the key terms were read to get a rough understanding of the research. Second, the discussion section was read to identify the linguistic and discourse clues, for instance, the linguistic clues such as ‘the findings revealed that...’, ‘the findings of this study showed

that...’, and ‘the analysis showed that...’ were an explicit indication of Stating Findings. Third, the communicative units of moves and steps in the discussion section were classified as compulsory, conventional or optional in relation to the overall communicative purpose. Fourth, the moves and steps were looked further at how they were ordered. Finally, the common discourse patterns of the discussion section were identified following Arsyad (2013) and Loan and Pramoolsook (2015).

After the moves and steps were identified, then, their frequency in the discussion section of English Master Thesis was calculated in order to verify the extent to which a particular move or step was used. Kanoksilapatham (2005) recommended the criteria; namely ‘obligatory, conventional and optional’ were employed for classifying the frequency of the moves and steps. If a particular move occurred in every discussion section (100%), it was categorized as ‘obligatory’. Whereas the occurrence of a move ranged from 60-99% was classified as ‘conventional’. Eventually, If the occurrence of a move was below 60 %, the move was considered as ‘optional’. Below are description and example of each move as in the above framework.

Move 1 (Introducing the Discussion Chapter) includes some main statements such as research questions, the aims and purposes of the study, theoretical background or established knowledge and the study's research methodology as in the following examples: 1) **The Research was conducted to reveal** the authentic assessment model applied by the teacher...**The first research question was** what authentic assessment model is applied... (M1-D17); 2) **The first question in this research is** how semantic mapping through collaborative..... (M1-D12).

Move 2 (Reporting Results) is used to present the results of the study as in the following examples: 1) **From the statistic analysis testing**, the result showed that 6.90 introverts students got very good score..... (M2-D15); 2) **Based on the cycle 1 and cycle 2**, the students' mean score improved from baseline data to cycle 2 (from 25.50 in baseline data to 52.50 in cycle 1. (M2-D6)

Move 3 (Summarizing results) is to sum up the results of the study. Linguistic clues like summarizing verbs/nouns/phrases such as to sum up, to summarize, in summary, and in brief are often used to identify this move as in the following examples: 1) **In short**, writing helps the students to refine the ideas when they receive

feedback, ... (M3-D11); 2) **To conclude**, from the data that was collected from the test produced a result that CORI strategy... (M3-D10).

Move 4 (Commenting on results) is to establish the meaning and significance of the research results in relation to the relevant field is the objective of this move. Move 4 is considered as a central move in which the results of the study are commented on through four different steps, including 'Interpreting results', 'Comparing results with literature', 'Accounting for results', and 'Referring to other studies'. The characteristics of each step and their realizations are presented below;

Move 4 Step A (Interpreting results) is used to address claims or generalizations based on the results of the study by the students is the function of this step. To interpret the results, the writers preferred using some words indicating either certainty or tentativeness such as *seem, suggest, indicate, appear* and modal verbs such as *may, might, would and could* as in the following examples: 1) **This problem could be solved** through the cooperation among students in a group... (M4SA-D14); 2)....language skills and knowledge **indicated** the language skills needed by students in

Accounting Department of UNIB....(M4SA-D7).

Move 4 Step B (Comparing results with literature) is used to allow authors to compare their study's findings with those of previous works is the function of this step. Some distinct linguistic features were used to realize this step, particularly in the forms of certain words or phrases such as *agree with, compare to, similar to or in line with* as in the following examples: 1) The researcher **agrees by** Frodosen (2001) that indirect feedback is very useful ... (M4SB-D11); 2) This result also **in line with** the studies from Lewis (1997), Mauana (2012) and Nurmasita (2013) that teacher still lecturing in the classroom... (M4SB-D9).

Move 4 Step C (Accounting for results) is to provide readers with further explanation or give the reasons for the observed differences in findings or unexpected outcomes. This result can be used to infer that writers tend to clarify or explain the marked similarly found in their findings. The rational explanations used to realize this particular communicative purpose were highlighted by the use of words or phrases such as *because, the possible explanation for, it is possible, may be caused from, can be explained by* as in the following examples: 1) **It probably means that** by using the zigzag pattern

the researchers acknowledged the function of this pattern... (M4SC-D16). 2) In supporting learning materials was contextual **because** almost category adjusted such as it was up to date materials... (M4SC-D5).

Move 4 Step D (Referring to other studies) is used to relate the findings of the study with those of previous works and the preferred options to comment on the results. This means that writers presented the findings which are followed by interpreting findings which are supported by referring to literature as in the following examples: 1) In exploring phase, Kartikawati (2015) **stated in his research** that the teacher only has lack of knowledge about... (M4SD-D8); 2)...Verdeber and Sellnow (2008) **which pointed out about** mastering good oral presentation skills will also help students... (M4SD-D1).

Move 5 (Summarizing the study) is aimed at providing readers with the main findings of the research study is the function of this move. The keywords used to signal this move were similar to those found in Move 3; however, some differences were observed. The major difference is that summary or conclusive words or phrases, such as *in sum, in conclusion*, were commonly followed by particular statements related to overall results, while those in Move 3 were followed by

specific results. This move is very often found at the end of discussions as in the following examples: 1) **From the research findings**, it can be implied that the use of peer feedback activities can help the students improve their speaking abilities...(M5-D6); 2) The researcher **concluded** that the teacher's indirect feedback strategy helped.... (M5-D11).

Move 6 (Evaluating the study) is often used by researchers to judge their studies in term of its significance, limitations, delimitations, generalizability, novelty, strengths, and weaknesses.

Move 6 Step A (Indicating limitations) is to describe the limitations of the research being conducted is the objective of this step. Present simple tense was the preferred tense used to present this communicative unit as in the following examples: 1) Furthermore, the small class taken as the sample used in this research **becomes the limitation** of this research.... (M6SA-D10); 2) On the contrary, **there are some limitations of this study**. First, to achieve the aim of this study the researcher has to.... (M6SA-D12).

Move 6 Step B (Indicating significance/ advantage) is to allow the researchers to point out the strengths of the study which may be significant for

applications or implications is the function of this step. Statements in present simple tense, relating to the significance of research conducted, such as *value, benefit, advantage, essential* were commonly used. The realizations of this step are shown in the following examples: 1) Comparing the result of this study with other previous researchers, **this study has strength**. This study has not only focused on investigating the students' speaking competence but also in each component.... (M6SB-D12); 2) This research **contributes theoretical and empirical finding**, as consideration to the teaching English as Foreign Language ... (M6SB-D15)

Move 7 (Deductions from the research) is to address suggestions concerning areas for further research or solutions to certain problems. They may as well provide implications for teaching. The move is quite often made in one or a combination of steps: (1) Step A: Making suggestions, (2) Step B: Recommending further research.

Move 7 Step A (Making suggestions) is to allow authors to highlight how the research contributes to the existing knowledge in the field. Also, the researchers provide some guidelines from the research findings for the readers in order to solve the problems identified by the research as

in the following examples: 1) **It is suggested that the teachers are able to use semantic mapping through collaborative learning** (M7SA-D12); 2) **In the teaching of writing for EFL, it is important for the teachers to give extra attention to the extroverts and ambiverts students in writing...** (M7SA-D15).

Move 7 Step B (Recommending further research) is to state some possible areas for future studies. This step can be signaled by words/phrases such as *'further studies/ research'*, *'future studies/ research'*, *'more studies are needed'* as in the following examples: 1) Therefore, **for further studies**, it should be used other kinds of genres such as descriptive, procedure, recount etc.... (M7SB-D2); 2) It is important **for the further studies** to analyze the coherence, thematic progression and the coherence quality in other aspects of English.... (M7SB-D16).

Triangulation Processes

This study used co-raters to check the reliability of data analysis results. The co-raters were a postgraduate student at the English education

department of education faculty of Bengkulu University. First, they were trained how to identify moves and steps in the discussion section of English Master Thesis using the checklist based on Loan and Prmoolsook's (2015) framework. Then, they were given five discussion sections of English Master Thesis randomly selected from 20 English Master Thesis in the corpus of the study and they were given enough time to classify moves and steps in those discussion sections independently. When training was completed, inter-rater reliability was calculated using Cohen's Kappa to ensure correspondence in the identification of moves and steps. From the Cohen kappa, inter-rater agreement of two raters showed a kappa value of 0.87 and 0.84 (the co-rater and the researcher respectively). It shows a strong agreement (above 81%).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

Moves and Step in the Discussion Section of English Master Thesis

The analysis results are presented in the table1. □

Table 1. Frequency of moves-steps in 20 Discussions section

Moves and Steps	F	%	Cate-
M-1 Introducing the Discussion chapter	8	40	Optional
M-2 Reporting results	20	100	Obligatory
M-3 Summarizing results	15	75	Conventional

Moves and Steps	F	%	Cate-
M-4 Commenting on results	20	100	Obligatory
Step A: Interpreting results	20	100	Obligatory
Step B: Comparing results with literature	18	90	Conventional
Step C: Accounting for results (giving reasons)	18	90	Conventional
Step D: Referring to other studies	20	100	Obligatory
M-5 Summarizing the study	12	60	Conventional
M-6 Evaluating the study	11	55	Optional
Step A: Indicating limitations	10	50	Optional
Step B: Indicating significance/advantage	8	40	Optional
M-7 Deductions from the (research) study	7	35	Optional
Step A: Making suggestions	4	20	Optional
Step B: Recommending further research	8	40	Optional

First, Table 1 shows that some important information can be highlighted from the analysis results. First, the most frequent moves are Move 2 (*Reporting Results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*). These moves were found in all 20 Discussion sections of English Master Thesis in the corpus of this study and therefore they are classified as obligatory moves. The frequent occurrence of Move 2 and Move 4 in the present study confirms Loan and Pramoolsook's findings that in the Discussion section, 'Reporting results' and 'Commenting on results' are the most substantial and frequent moves. In addition, this agrees with Yang and Allison's (2003) study, which also showed the highest of Move 4. Below are examples of a Move 2 and Move 4 taken from the corpus of this study.

1) From the statistical analysis testing, the result showed that 6,90

introverts students got very good score..... (M2-D15).

- 2) Based on the cycle 1 and cycle 2, the students' mean score improved from baseline data to cycle 2 (from 25.50 in baseline data to 52,50 in cycle 1... (M2-D6).
- 3) Most students seemed to find difficulty in understanding the contents of videos since they find difficulty in understanding (M4-D2).
- 4) As stated by Danan (2004), audio-visual materials enhanced with caption or subtitles.... (M4-D2).

As can be seen from the above examples, in most cases authors use specific lexicons such as 'the results', 'show', 'mean score' and so on to present their research results in the discussion section or Move 2. In addition, after presenting the results or Move 2, the authors refer to the findings of relevant studies to compare

or contrast them with their own findings or interpret what the research findings mean or imply and use citation to support their own interpretation.

Second, as seen in Table 1, Move 3 (*Summarizing the results*) and Move 5 (*Summarizing the study*) were the second most dominant moves found in the Discussion sections. These moves were categorized as conventional moves because they occurred inconsistently high in the study (75% and 60% respectively). To identify this move, Linguistic clues used were summarizing verbs/ nouns/ phrases such as to sum up, to summarize, in summary, and in brief. Below are examples of Move 3 and Move 5 taken from the corpus of the study.

- 5) In short, writing helps the students to refine the ideas when they receive feedback, ... (M3-D11).
- 6) To conclude, from the data that was collected from the test produced result that CORI strategy.... (M3-D10).
- 7) From this study, it can be concluded that the students with the ambivert got better achievement that closely similar with the extrovert achievement.... (M5-D15).
- 8) The researcher concluded that the teacher's indirect feedback strategy

helped the students at grade XIPA 1 of SMAN 1 Bengkulu Tengah in improving their ability in writing descriptive text.... (M5-D11).

As can be seen from the examples above, statement of summarizing results is shown by the presence of summarizing verbs 'in short or to conclude'. This linguistic clues originally comes from the researcher focusing on summing up the specific results of the data. In other words, summarizing results statement is as the bridge idea before organizing the information in the next move of the Discussions. Similarly, the authors summarized their study by presenting conclusive words 'concluded'. Then, it was followed by particular statements related to overall results. This move is very often found at the end of discussions. However, this move was categorized as conventional in the current study.

Third, Table 1 also indicates that Move 6 (*Evaluating the study*), Move 1 (*Introducing the discussion chapter*) and Move 7 (*Deduction from the study*) are optional moves occurring at a frequency of 55%, 40 and 35, respectively. Move 6 is used by the authors to judge their studies in term of its significance, limitations, delimitations, generalizability, novelty, strengths, and weaknesses. It was

realized by two steps of indicating limitation (Move 6 Step A) and indicating significance (Move 6 Step B). The results of the present analysis revealed that this move appeared in 11 or 55% of the discussions. Both present and past simple tenses were used to indicate this move. Below are examples of a Move 6 taken from the corpus of the study.

- 9) Comparing the result of this study with other previous researchers, this study has strength. This study has not only focused on investigating the students' speaking competence but also in each component ... (M6-D12).
- 10) On the contrary, there are some limitations of this study. First (M6-D12).

As shown in the above examples, the authors address the strength as well as significance related to study under-investigated. They used this move either to highlight the limitation of study or state the significances of the study in order to make one last effort to convince the reader about the study that has been presented.

As stated earlier, some main statements such as research questions, the aims and purposes of the study, theoretical background or established knowledge and the study's research

methodology are included in Move 1. Move 1 (*Introducing the discussion chapter*) was an optional move in this current study, occurring at a frequency of 40% in the discussion section of English Master Thesis. To realize this move, both present and past simple tenses in the form of active or passive voices were used. Below are examples of a Move 1 taken from the corpus of the study.

- 11) This research was conducted to describe the implementation of scientific Learning Approach at 10th grade English Classes by the teachers of ... (M1-D8).
- 12) The first question in this research is how effective is fishbowl strategy to improve students' speaking ability in general... (M1-D7).

As can be seen in the example above, Move 1 is shown by the presence of the sentence about the purpose and research question at the beginning of the paragraph related to study. In this example, a statement about the purpose and research question indicated as the opening sentence to arouse reader's interest and establish the focus and direction for the study.

- 13) It is suggested that the teachers are able to use semantic mapping through collaborative learning ... (M7-SA-D12).

14) It is important for the further studies to analyze the coherence, thematic progression and the coherent quality in other aspects of English.... (M7-SB-D16).

As shown in the above examples, the researcher address suggestions as well as some possible areas for future research related to study. The researcher recommends readers that they should meet the implication of the presented findings in order to make one last effort to convince the reader, to suggest larger studies about the evidence that has been presented, and absolutely to provide a satisfying sense of closure.

Moves patterns in the Discussion Section of English Master Thesis

The move patterns, as seen in figure 2 below are shown through the list of moves found in the discussion section in the English Master Thesis of this study. It is obvious that the number of moves in each Discussion section includes very various moves and steps such a peculiar ordering patterns. However, there was no straightforward linear pattern (M1-M2-M3-M4-M5-M6-M7) appearing in a set of data. All Discussions were constructed in various move patterns. The initial M2-M4 and M1-M2 were prominently used by the writers in organizing their

information in this current study, then followed by various moves and steps. M1-M2 indicated that discussion section started with *Introducing the discussion chapter*, then followed by *Reporting Result*. The prominent patterns M2-M4, it was started with *Reporting results*, then followed by *Interpreting results*. Thus, all of the discussion sections in this study used M2 and M4 in organizing the information. As stated earlier, Move 2 and Move 4 are considered as a central move in which the results of the study are presented and commented upon. The rhetorical patterns in the current study are shown in figure 2 below.

Pattern 1	Pattern 2	Pattern 3
M2	M1	M3
↓	↓	↓
M4	M2	M4
↓	↓	↓
M3	M4	M2
↓	↓	↓
M6	M6	M3

Figure 2. Common Move patterns in the discussion section

As seen in Figure 2, each pattern must have two obligatory moves (Move 2 and Move 4). Move 2 (Reporting results) was the beginning move of a cycle in most cases and was also the starting move of all 20 Discussions section. However, in some cases, Move 4 (Commenting on results) can be the beginning move of the cycles which was followed immediately by Move 3

(Summarizing results). Pattern 1 in the figure above was classified as obligatory move pattern which occurred in every text.

In some cycles, Move 1 (Introducing the discussion chapter) is followed by Move 2 (Reporting results). Whenever Move 2 (Reporting results) was the beginning of a cycle, it was immediately followed by Move 4 (Commenting on Results) which, in some cases, was followed by Move 6 (Evaluating the study). The pattern 2 above was classified as conventional move pattern in this study. Moreover, the analysis showed that when Move 3 (Summarizing the results) was part of a cycle, in some cases, it appeared before Move 4 (Commenting on results) and was the beginning move of the cycle. The pattern 3 showed above was classified as optional move pattern in the current study.

The moves are combined in various ways in a cycle; however, some orders of moves were more common than the others. In most of the cases when Move 2 was the beginning move of a cycle, it was followed by either Move 3 (Summarizing results) or Move 4 (Commenting on results). In a few cases, it was also followed by Move 6 (Evaluating the study). The most common combination of cycles

consisted of Reporting Results and Commenting on results.

Discussion

The first research question in this study is what moves are found in the discussion section of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students are. As indicated in the results section of this study, the most frequent moves found in the discussion section of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students of this study are Move 2 (*Reporting Results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*). These moves occurred in every text, making them the obligatory moves in these discussion sections. Move 2 (*Reporting results*) was a common move in Swales (1990) and Holmes (1997). Also, in a study conducted by Amirian et al. (2008), the move called 'Finding' was also categorized obligatory. With the highest frequency of Move 2 and Move 4, these two moves are substantial rhetorical moves for applied linguistics RA/thesis Discussions.

Move 4 (*Commenting on results*) stands out in the discussion section of EMT. This finding is consistent with some past research. For example, this move occurred at 100 % frequency in the biochemistry RAs analyzed by Kanoksilapatham (2005). Although she referred to this move as 'Consolidating results', its function resembled a Move

4. In line with this research, Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) also found the same frequency occurrence of Move 4 in their thesis discussion section data. In addition, the commenting on the results move was found obligatory in the study carried out by Basturkmen (2012) who found that the authors of dentistry preferred making comments on the results through two prominent steps (Explaining result and Comparing with results in literature). In addition, the finding conforms to Yang and Allison's (2003) study and Amnuai and Wannaruk (2013)'s study in which the occurrence of this move was obligatory, and it could occur repeatedly in the Discussion sections

Unlike obligatory Move 2-4, Move 3 (*Summarizing results*) and move 5 (*Summarizing the study*) are found in fifteen and twelve out of twenty discussion sections making them conventional moves. This current finding is different from Loan and Pramoolsook (2015)'s finding that Move 3 (*Summarizing results*) occurred in every text making it obligatory moves. Otherwise, Move 5 in Loan and Pramoolsook (2015) finding was fewer than Move 5 in this study that makes it optional in those discussion sections. On the contrary, Move 1 (*Introducing the Discussion chapter*), Move 6 (*Evaluating the study*) and Move 7 (*Deduction from the study*) are found with a low frequency of occurrence. Their

infrequent occurrence may indicate that few evaluations and claims were made in the discussion section by the EFL students. This finding is in line with Peacock's (2002) finding that non-native English writers made far fewer claims than their native counterparts.

The second research question in this study is what Steps are found in the discussion section of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistic by EFL Students are. As stated in the results section of this study, *Step A Interpreting results* and *Step D Referring to other studies* (Move 4) were obligatory in this study. The analysis of step sequences shows that *Interpreting results* is often followed by *Referring to other studies* in justifying the results in their discussion section, making the highest occurrence. It means that while interpreting the results is utilized to provide some explanations on why the findings were obtained in such a way, this step is used to provide a speculation about what the findings meant. The writers tend to use their own perspectives and understandings to make sense of the findings (Dobakhti, 2011). Meanwhile, *Referring to other studies* was also found in all 20 Discussions. This finding confirms Peacock (2002)'s finding which indicates that *Referring to previous research* seems to be important in Language and Linguistics. In another way, it provides support or justification in which the researchers tended to

simply report on the research results without interpretation □

Similar to Loan and Pramoolsook (2015)'s findings, *Interpreting results* was found in 20 discussions section of this study. This may indicate that the writers made claims or generalizations based on the results of the study. Moreover, they not only presented results but also expounded their idea on the results accordingly. Dobakhti (2011), revealed that interpreting results is used to provide a speculation about what the findings meant. The writers used their own perspectives and understandings to make sense of the findings.

Step B: Comparing results with literature and *Step C: Accounting for the result (giving reasons)* of Move 4 are classified as conventional steps in this study with the same occurrence. However, this is different from Pramoolsook and Loan's (2015) findings that Move 4-Step B and Move 4-Step C were classified as conventional and optional steps in their studies. The frequency of this step may indicate that Move 4-Step B is one of the preferred options to comment on the results. Also, Move 4-Step C occurred with notably the same frequency with Move 4 Step B. This result can be used to infer that the writers tend to clarify or explain the marked differences found in their finding. Similarly, *Step A: Indicating limitation* and *Step B:*

indicating significance/advantage) of Move 6 are less prominent making them optional steps. The writers seemed hesitant of talking about weaknesses in their studies. The cycle could reflect that the writers appeared to

avoid talking about limitations as far as possible and did not allow the writers to point out the strengths of the study which may be significant for applications or implications. As Amnuai and Wannaruk (2013) stated, the objective of these moves (Step A and Step B) is to evaluate the overall study by pointing out the limitations, indicating the contributions or evaluating the methodology.

The occurrence of Move 7-Step A (*Making suggestion*) in the current study is interesting. Compared to the other steps, Move 7-Step A is the least frequent step occurring only in 4 out of 20 of the Discussions. The employment of such a step in previous research studies varied in its frequency. However, it is of a higher frequency in the current study compared to Loan and Pramoolsook (2015)'s findings, (15% and 7%, respectively). This may reflect that the writers seemed hesitant to draw inference about the results by suggesting what could be done to solve the problems identified by the research, proposing areas for further study or drawing pedagogical implication because these claims were presented in

a separate section, namely Conclusion and Suggestion in Chapter 5 of the Thesis. This step allowed writers to highlight how the research contributes to the existing knowledge in the field. Also, the writers provided some guidelines from the research findings for the readers in order to solve the problems identified by the research (Amnuai and Wannaruk, 2013)

Regarding Move patterns, variations of move pattern are found in the data. This may be due to the fact that the Discussion section is where the writer presents his/her point based on the research findings. The writer had greater freedom in generating the ideas which were relevant to the research conducted. This may lead to the presence of the various deviations of move structures in the Discussion sections data. The rhetorical pattern is defined as ways or structure of organizing information in order to construct the relevant part with proper move structure for effective writing in the discussion of a research thesis. As Dudley (1986) suggested that discussion part has the cyclic structure of the rhetorical pattern, but he has not given moves under this cyclic structure.

The majority of discussion sections in a master thesis are written cyclically. Move 4 (Commenting on results) and Move 2 (Reporting results) were the most cyclical moves in the discussion section of EMT. Different from that of

Amirian et al. (2008) who state that not all moves are linearly sequenced; some of them are cyclical; each move may be repeated many times in a single text. This was in line with the concept of cyclicity of moves suggested by Dudley-Evans (1986) and Bria & Tahirian (1997). However, the obligatory move in each cycle was Move 2 (Reporting results) and Move 4 (Commenting on results). Five moves, including Move 1 (Introducing the discussion chapter), Move 3 (Summarizing results), Move 5 (Summarizing the study), and Move 6 (Evaluating the study) were non-cyclical moves in the data. Move 7 was also of a cyclical nature.

This finding supports those of Peacock (2002) who also found that move cycles were frequent in Language & Linguistics Discussions, particularly in the Discussions written by non-native writers. The moves involved in the cyclic structure in both corpora were Move 2 and Move 4. These two important moves were repeated in many move sequences, for example, M2-M4-M1-M2-M4; M1-M2-M4-M2-M4-M7. The use of these sequences implies a style of presenting results. However, different from that of Posteguillo (1999), the preferred cyclical pattern found in computer science was 'the structure of result' move alternated with 'deduction' or 'recommendation' moves. The cyclicity of Move 4

(Commenting on results) in the present study may be due to the fact that applied linguistics is an established field where much previous research has been carried out. The sequence of results and comments which was the most prevalent pattern in the data was in the form of either Reporting results - Interpreting the results (M2-M4SA) or Introducing the discussion chapter - Reporting results (M1-M2).

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

From the results and discussion of this study, several conclusions can be drawn: 1) it was found that the most frequent moves in the discussions section of English Master Thesis by EFL students are Move 2 (*Reporting results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*), making them obligatory. Move 3 (*Summarizing results*) and Move 5 (*Summarizing the study*) were conventional, then Move 1 (*Introducing the discussion chapter*), Move 6 (*Evaluating the study*) and Move 7 (*Deductions from the study*) were classified into optional. 2) In term of Steps, *Step A: Interpreting the results* and *Step D: Referring to other studies* (Move 4) were obligatory, followed by *Step B: Comparing results with literature* and *Step C: Accounting for results* (Move 4) were conventional. Then, *Step A: Indicating limitations* and *Step B: Indicating significance/advantage* (Move 6) and *Step*

A: Making suggestions and *Step B: Recommending further research* (Move 7) were classified as optional in this study. 3) There were obligatory, conventional and optional moves and steps found in the discussion section regarding rhetorical patterns of EMT. The most prominent pattern in beginning justified the results in the data are in the form of either Reporting results - Interpreting the results (M2-M4SA) or Introducing the discussion chapter - Reporting results (M1-M2). There was no linear ordering of the moves found in the Discussion. The most cyclical move in datasets was Move 2 and Move 4. In term of Steps patterns, interpreting results (M4SA) and Referring to other studies (M4SA) were the most frequents patterns in the Discussion.

Suggestion

There are some Suggestion for consideration: 1) with raised genre awareness, writers could become sensitive to the moves and steps and the rhetorical functions and would be able to effectively establish the significance of their reported studies in these discussion sections. Moreover, academic writing is not only on the content quality of the text but also the writing or rhetorical style; that is how it is appropriately and correctly written in English so that it is acceptable to read. 2) In the present study, only the rhetorical moves, steps and patterns of

Theses Discussions written by EFL students are analyzed. Therefore, further research should compare the rhetorical style of Theses Discussion sections written by the same non-native writers but published in both local and international contexts. It has found great similarities and interesting differences in these Discussion sections. Also, future research can investigate the other main sections of English Master Thesis in Applied Linguistics and even the whole English Master Thesis sections. In addition, further study can also be conducted in other disciplines which employ both qualitative and quantitative methodology to find out whether they use the same or different rhetorical style in various sections of their theses.

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