Organisation and Move Structure in the Results and Discussion Chapter in Malaysian Undergraduates' Final-Year Projects

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ABSTRACT

Genre analysis studies on academic writing are mostly limited to analysis of articles. There is need for studies on undergraduate students' Final-Year Projects in the context of Malaysia. This study presents an analysis of 10 Final-Year Projects of English Language by final-year undergraduate students in a public university in Malaysia. Drawing on Yang and Allison's Moves and Steps model in the Results and Discussion sections, this study investigates the move structures used by the final-year undergraduates in their Results and Discussion chapters. The qualitative method was followed to collect and analyse the data. The data were collected purposively from Bachelor of Arts (English Language) students. The samples were analysed thematically by the researchers. Conclusions were drawn based on the rhetorical moves presented by the undergraduates in their Results and Discussion chapters. It was found that the moves most used were 'Reporting results' and 'Commenting on results'. The frequencies of both moves were higher compared with the frequency of 'Preparatory/Background information' and 'Summarising results'. The findings are expected to guide lecturers in designing instructional materials for teaching academic writing that focus on rhetorical structures and to raise students' consciousness of the structure of a well-written Results and Discussion chapter.

Keywords: ESL learners, final-year projects, genre, move structure, organisation, results and discussion chapter

INTRODUCTION

Malaysian tertiary-level learners lack the necessary writing skills in the English language (Nambiar, 2007). This can place considerable stress on these learners, particularly when they are required to write a Final-Year Project (FYP) to fulfil their respective programme requirement.

Previous research shows that Malaysian undergraduate students find it difficult to report their results and interpret them (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). They often face difficulties in organising their results and discussion. The discussion section seems to be the most troublesome among the different sections of an article for students to write (Dudley-Evans, 1986, as cited in Amirian, Kassaian, & Tavakoli, 2008).

In recent years, the study of the academic genre has become the focus of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) researchers due to its pedagogical implications. The researchers have attempted, particularly, to investigate how texts can be distinguished by rhetorical structure according to the sequence of moves and steps. John Swales, the pioneer of move analysis, defines move as "a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (Swales, 2004, p. 228).

It is widely agreed that move "performs a coherent communicative function" in a text (Swales, 2004, p. 228). Each move carries its own communicative purpose and together with other moves, completes the communicative purpose of the whole text. Move structure of a text can be distinguished by referring to an analytical framework. In this study, an analytical model was used to help in analysing the communicative purposes of Results and Discussion chapter of Final-Year Projects.

The term 'obligatory' refers to the compulsory move employed by the undergraduates in reporting their results and presenting their discussion. In this study, it depended on the frequency of occurrence of the moves and steps. Moves with the highest frequency were regarded as obligatory moves.

Conceptually, organisation of discourse can be defined as "the appropriate ordering of proofs within a discourse" (Crowley, 1994). In this study, organisation involves the way the content in the Results and Discussion chapter is arranged in logical order, starting with the introduction, progressing on to the results, followed by the discussion together with interpretation, comparisons, reasons and assumptions of the findings and ending with the conclusion.

Objective

This study was primarily proposed to identify Malaysian ESL undergraduates' ability to organise their Results and Discussion with regard to the rhetorical structure of the Results and Discussion chapter in their Final-Year Projects, based on an adapted Yang and Allison (2003) Model of Moves and Steps in presenting the Results and Discussion chapter. This is the first study on the Results and Discussion chapter in Final-Year Projects of English language using this adapted Yang and Allison (2003) Model of Moves and Steps for the Results and Discussion sections. This study is novel in that it applies the Yang and Allison (2003) analytical framework to an unexplored genre, which is undergraduates' Final-Year Project, specifically the Results and Discussion chapter of their projects. The main objectives of this study were:

1. To explore the ways the undergraduates organised their Results and Discussion chapters, and

2. To determine the frequency of the move structures in the Results and Discussion chapters.

Research Questions

In order to achieve these objectives, the following research questions were posed:

1. How are the results and discussion organised in the Results and Discussion chapter of the selected Final-Year Projects?

2. What are the frequent move structures of the Results and Discussion chapter of the selected Final-Year Projects, based on an adapted Yang and Allison (2003) Model of Moves and Steps?

Model of Moves and Steps

Yang and Allison (2003) proposed representative templates of a two-level rhetorical structure (move and step) for different sections of a research article reporting on Applied Linguistics: Introduction, Methodology, Results, Discussion and Conclusion. The templates were derived from Swales' (1990) Create a Research Space (CARS) model in order to produce appropriate models for different sections of written discourse on applied linguistics. The templates for the Results and Discussion sections were adapted in this study. Both templates were combined together as the Results and Discussion sections in the undergraduate Final-Year Project had combined 'Results and Discussion' as one heading to be presented in one chapter. This was due to the frequent occurrence of combined Results and Discussion sections in Chapter 4, as confirmed by the second model provided by Murison and Webb (1991) (Figure 1).

The original models for the Results section comprised six moves and those for the Discussion section comprised seven moves. The moves in the Discussion section match the initial moves in the Results section except for 'Summarising results' and another new move, 'Summarising the study' (Figure 2).
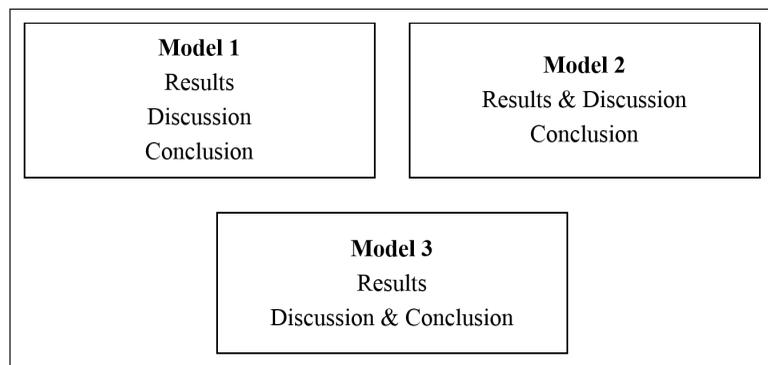

Figure 1. Organisation of results and discussion (Murison & Webb, 1991)

Results section	Discussion section
Move 1: Preparatory information	Move 1: Background information
Move 2: Reporting results	Move 2: Reporting results

Move 3: Commenting on results
    Step 1: Interpreting results
    Step 2: Comparing results with literature
    Step 3: Evaluating results
    Step 4: Accounting for results
	Move 3: Summarising results

	Move 4: Commenting on results
	    Step 1: Interpreting results
	    Step 2: Comparing results with literature
	    Step 3: Accounting for results
	    Step 4: Evaluating results

Move 4: Summarising results	

Move 5: Evaluating the study
    Step 1: Indicating limitations
    Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage
	Move 5: Summarising the study

	Move 6: Evaluating the study
	    Step 1: Indicating limitations
	    Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage
	    Step 3: Evaluating methodology

Move 6: Deductions from the research Step 1: Recommending further research	

	Move 7: Deductions from the research
	    Step 1: Making suggestions
	    Step 2: Recommending further research
	    Step 3: Drawing pedagogic implications

Figure 2. Original version of Yang and Allison's (2003) moves and steps in the results and discussion sections

Taking note of the similarity between the respective moves, the present study attempted to adapt these two frameworks for use in a combined Results and Discussion chapter. Our new adapted framework for analysing the combined sections is illustrated in Figure 3.

Move 1: Preparatory/Background information

Move 2: Reporting results

Move 3: Summarising results

Move 4: Commenting on results
    Step 1: Interpreting results
    Step 2: Comparing results with literature
    Step 3: Accounting for results
    Step 4: Evaluating results

Move 5: Summarising the study

Move 6: Evaluating the study
    Step 1: Indicating limitations
    Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage
    Step 3: Evaluating methodology

Move 7: Deduction from the research
    Step 1: Making suggestions
    Step 2: Recommending further research
    Step 3: Drawing pedagogic implications

Figure 3. Adapted Yang and Allison (2003) model for results and discussion chapter

The adapted model comprises seven moves with specific communicative purposes. Moves 4, 6 and 7 are broken down into several steps. These moves and steps are often signalled by linguistics cues. Table 1 shows some of the linguistics features signalling the moves and steps in the Results and Discussion chapter.

Table 1
Examples of linguistics features signalling 'Moves and Steps' in the results and discussion chapter

Moves/Steps	Example
Move 1: Preparatory/Background information	will be presented, our aim
Move 2: Reporting results	The results indicate/show
Move 3: Summarising results	To sum up, It can be concluded
Move 4: Commenting on results	
Step 1: Interpreting results	The results suggest
Step 2: Comparing results with literature	The findings are similar with those in Bhatia (1990)
Step 3: Accounting for results	This is caused by
Step 4: Evaluating results	The results are rather vague and not clear
Move 5: Summarising the study	In summary
Move 6: Evaluating the study	The study is . . .
Step 1: Indicating limitations	However, a larger sample is needed
Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage	The study provides benefits/new insight
Step 3: Evaluating methodology	It is questionable whether the experimental data
Move 7: Deduction from the research	
Step 1: Making suggestions	It may be better to use other methods
Step 2: Recommending further research	Further research could focus on
Step 3: Drawing pedagogic implications	The findings may have some implications on

Previous Studies

Many studies of move analysis of academic writing have been conducted mostly on research articles (RA) and a few on postgraduate theses. Studies on the structure of RAs in various disciplines have so far concentrated on RA as a whole (Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Nwogu, 1997) and different sections of an article such as the Abstract (Golebiowski, 2009; Lores, 2004; Martin, 2003; Samraj, 2005), Introduction (Ahamad & Yusof, 2012; Loi, 2010; Joseph, Lim, & Nor, 2014; Kanoksilapatham, 2007; Samraj, 2002, 2005; Swales, 1990), Results (Brett, 1994; Bruce, 2009; Lim, 2010; Yang & Allison, 2003), Discussion (Basturkmen, 2009, 2012; Fallahi & Erzi, 2003; Holmes, 1997; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Le & Harrington, 2015; Parkinson, 2011; Peacock, 2002; Yang & Allison, 2003) and Conclusion (Yang & Allison, 2003). Despite the remarkable number of studies on RAs, a few move-based studies have been conducted on postgraduate theses in different sections, such as the Introduction (Lim, 2014; Peters, 2011; Samraj, 2008; Soler-

Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares & Gil-Salom, 2011), Literature Review (Soler-Monreal, 2015) and Discussion (Basturkmen, 2009; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988).

Some studies have been conducted on rhetorical moves of the Results and Discussion sections using Yang and Allison's (2003) framework. To offer an example, Chen and Kuo (2012) developed new coding schemes of moves and steps for analysing the results and discussion based on Yang and Allison's (2003) study. They integrated and modified the moves and steps to make them consistent and appropriate for a number of theses. The coding scheme was then used to analyse a corpus of 20 Master's theses in Applied Linguistics. The findings showed that some moves/steps in the Results section can overlap others in the Discussion or Conclusion sections. The major rhetorical move for the Results section is reporting the major findings, while the most important moves/steps in the Discussion section are interpreting results, accounting for results and comparing the obtained results with those of related literature.

Le and Harrington (2015) analysed the word clusters used to comment on results in the Discussion section of Applied Linguistics quantitative research articles based on Yang and Allison's (2003) move of Commenting on results. The study provided a detailed list of clusters used in three steps of the move: Interpreting results, Comparing results and Accounting for results. The study report was in contrast to Basturkmen's (2009), who stated, "Interpreting results and Accounting for results were realised by different clusters and should not be conflated" (p. 54). The study also extended and refined the four-step model presented by Yang and Allison (2003).

Undergraduate Final-Year Projects have not gained much attention from previous researchers. There have been no investigation into the structure of undergraduates' Final-Year Project. Only Parkinson (2011) conducted a study on the Discussion section of ESL undergraduates' Physics laboratory reports. The scarcity of the genre in analysis studies on undergraduates' research Final-Year Projects in various ESL settings has led to a growing interest in analysing this genre. Therefore, there is a need for studies on undergraduate students' Final-Year Projects in the context of Malaysia.

METHOD

This study is an in-depth exploration of Malaysian ESL undergraduates' writing ability as seen in their Final-Year Projects. A qualitative approach with the purposeful sampling method was employed to extract thick and rich data. According to Creswell (2014), the central phenomenon can be defined by purposively selecting the samples or participants. Onwuegbuzie and Leech (2007) suggested that the samples size in a qualitative study should not be too large because it would be difficult to extract thick and rich data (as cited by Gray, 2009). For this reason, only 10 Results and Discussion chapters of Final-Year Projects written by Bachelor of Arts English Language final-

year students from a public university in Malaysia were selected with the writers' consent. The organisation of the 10 Results and Discussion chapters was analysed based on the adapted Yang and Allison (2003) model for the Results and Discussion chapter shown in Figure 2. The analysis was conducted thematically by the first author. The moves and steps were defined, coded and recorded. The average frequency for each move and step was calculated and tabulated (Table 2).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The data were analysed based on an adapted model of Yang and Allison's (2003) model for the Results and Discussion chapter for their organisation and move structure. The results are presented here in frequency.

Organisation

The analysis revealed that most of the samples reflected the influence of the three-part structure of an academic essay: Opening, Body and Closing. All the samples had a Chapter Introduction, the opening (also known as preambles) paragraphs that prepare the reader for the thesis before moving on to the results and discussion as seen in Example 1 below.

> This chapter will present the data gathered from this study. In addition, this chapter also discusses and compares the results of the current study with the previous literatures within this field. (Example 1, S7)

However, the Chapter Summary/ Conclusion section that ends the Results and Discussion chapter occurred in only five samples (Example 2). The results and discussion section in the other samples were ended rather abruptly without any closing. This shows that the writers had failed to provide their readers with overall remarks to summarise and close their report and presentation of the results and discussion (Example 3).

> This chapter discussed the findings from the analysis of the Vocabulary Knowledge Scale pre-test and post-test. The results showed that the Read Plus treatment has positive effect and it influence the vocabulary acquisition of the experimental group. Evidentials were the mean scores of the experimental group for the post-test is significantly higher than the pre-test. Meanwhile, there is no significant difference for the mean scores of the control group. The interview done also revealed that the students has positive perceptions on the Read Plus strategy. (Example 2)

> Based on the table shown above, it is clearly showed that the strategy of 'Proxy Questioning' is frequently used in the radio talk show. This shows the usage of proxy question which used by the host in the radio talk show in producing more auxiliary information from the expert. This helps the topic

discussed be clearer and understood able by the 'private' caller as well as the 'public' audiences. (Example 3, S8)

Based on the results, the Chapter Introduction can be considered as a part of Move 1 while the Chapter Summary/Conclusion could be a new move (Table 1). This presentation of the moves was similar with that of Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015) and Chen and Kuo (2012).

Moves Structure

The frequency of moves and steps occurring in the samples are shown in Table 2. The moves are indicated as M and the steps, as S. The samples are represented by S1-S10.

Based on Table 2, only M1, M2, M3 and M4 were identified in the samples, while M5, M6 and M7 were not present in the samples. These results revealed that the writers constructed their Results and Discussion chapter according to their perceived communicative purposes. The

Table 2
Frequency of move and steps in the results and discussion chapter

Moves and Steps	Sample										Mean	Total
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10		
New Move Chapter Introduction (Preamble)*					1						1	10
Move 1 Preparation/Background information	4	2	6	4	2	4	4	1	9	2	3.8	38
Move 2 Reporting results	20	24	21	36	34	19	22	28	17	12	23.3	233
Move 3 Summarising results	0	0	4	1	3	4	2	0	0	1	1.5	15
Move 4 Commenting on results												
Step 1 Interpreting results	6	2	8	10	15	13	8	11	6	6	8.5	85
Step 2 Comparing results with literature	16	0	5	13	2	1	5	6	2	2	5.2	52
Step 3 Accounting for results	2	0	0	2	2	4	3	0	1	10	2.4	24
Step 4 Evaluating results	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	0.2	2
Move 5 Summarising study					0						0	0
Move 6 Evaluating the study					0						0	0
Move 7 Deductions from the research					0						0	0
New Move Chapter Summary (Conclusion)*	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0.5	5

*newly identified moves

three final moves were not appropriate for the Results and Discussion chapter of Final-Year Projects as Yang and Allison (2003) mentioned in their study, "The appearance of the three final moves in Discussion is often influenced by whether there is a subsequent Conclusion or Pedagogic Implication section". The final three moves are more appropriate for the Conclusion chapter of the Final-Year Projects.

As can be seen in the results, M2 had the highest average frequency of 23.3, occurring in all samples, followed by M4 with 16.3. These results are consistent with the findings of previous studies (Chen & Kuo, 2012; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2015). These two moves are obligatory for a Results and Discussion chapter. Example 4 shows how the undergraduates employed M2 in presenting their results by providing statistics and examples:

> Table 4.1 shows the summary of the percentages of Moves in the abstracts of Linguistic and Literature. The results showed that the Linguistic students had the highest frequency of move for Move 2 (100%) followed by Move 4 (93.3%) and Move 3(80%) respectively. (Example 4, S4)

Step M4S1 of M4 had the highest frequency and was presented in all the samples. The second most frequent step was M4S2, which occurred in nine samples, followed by M4S3, with an average frequency of 2.4. The final step of M4, M4S4,

was missing in nine samples, indicating that almost all the undergraduates had failed to deduct the strengths and limitations of their studies. Based on Yang and Allison (2013), this step is where writers provide a claim about the generalisability of their results. However, this step never occurred in any of Chen and Kuo's (2012) samples, which may suggest that it may not really be required as part of the structure of the Results and Discussion chapter. Examples 5, 6, 7 and 8 show how the undergraduates make general claims from their results (Example 5), compare and support their results with those of previous studies (Example 6), suggest reasons (Example 7) and provide generalisation, strengths and limitations of the results (Example 8) in their Results and Discussion chapters, respectively:

> The examples that are found on the former Prime Minister, Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad serve one purpose which is to prove that the current Prime Minister is a failure as a Prime Minister or unfit to be one. (Example 5, S5)

> Previous research done by Al-Zubaidi indicated this move as 4.15% of the present corpus, causing this to be considered as optional move because of its low frequency detected in the texts analysed. This study also regarded this move as optional as the percentage of occurrence was 60%. (Example 6, S1)

This is probably due to the fact that the economics research paper mainly uses a more complex type of analytical tools, making it important for the discussion section to report the findings before commenting on the results. (Example 7, S10)

However, it should be noted that the linguistic field uses a more standard way of closing its discussion section i.e. by evaluating the study, compared to the economics field where mostly ended the discussion section while still commenting on results. (Example 8, S10)

The third most frequent move was M1, with average frequency of 3.8; this move was observed in all the samples. This illustrated that the undergraduates had attempted to provide background information, explain how their results and discussion were presented and recapitulate the research questions, aims, theory or method used in their Results and Discussion chapters. Example 9 shows an example of how the undergraduate applied this move in the Results and Discussion chapters:

> One sample t-test was done to prove that they have low proficiency level as compared to the standard. This is one of the objectives in this research which is to see whether they are proficient in English as a Second Language as compared to the standard level. (Example 9, S3)

Step M3 obtained the lowest frequency in the Results and Discussion chapters, occurring in only six samples. Example 10 gives an example of how the undergraduates concluded their results:

> It can be concluded that both newspaper are strongly disagree and are condemning the actions carried out by ISIS in every aspect and in all extent. (Example 10, S6)

Based on the results, M1 and M3 were optional moves. This is similar to the findings of Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015), which identified M1 as a conventional move for the combined Result-Discussion chapter of Vietnamese students' Master's theses. It can be concluded that the moves in the combined Results and Discussion chapter had four compulsory steps, M2 (Reporting results), M4S1 (Interpreting results), M4S2 (Comparing results with previous studies) and M4S3 (Accounting for results), and two optional steps, M1 (Chapter introduction/ Preparatory and Background information) and M3 (Summarising results).

CONCLUSION

This study presented the analysis of rhetorical moves of the combined Results and Discussion chapter of 10 Final-Year Projects written by BA English Language students. This is the first move structure analysis of the Results and Discussion chapter of undergraduates' Final-Year Projects based on Yang and Allison's (2003) analytical framework.

Based on an adapted framework by Yang and Allison (2003), the analysis revealed that the undergraduates lacked the essential knowledge of the structure of a good Results and Discussion chapter. The undergraduates failed to construct excellent organisation of the Results and Discussion chapter according to the three-part structure of an academic essay. Besides that, it was found that the framework needed to be refined and improved in order to be more appropriate and systemic to the genre. The moves/steps that incorporate the communicative functions of a combined Results and Discussion chapter should be added to the framework and those inappropriate moves/steps need to be removed.

The findings are expected to guide lecturers in designing instructional materials for teaching academic writing that focus on rhetorical structures and to raise students' consciousness of the structure of an excellent Results and Discussion chapter. Other researchers have also suggested that the model be improved according to the communicative purposes of the desired genre to be studied.

Further studies are required to confirm the present results. A comparison of lecturers' expectations and students' perceptions of a good Results and Discussion chapter would result in insightful findings. Comparing the samples with different frameworks would discover more accurate data. Comparing Results and Discussion chapters written by ESL and native undergraduates would produce interesting findings as well. These are some recommendations for further study that can contribute to better research reporting in Applied Linguistics. The findings from forthcoming studies will also improve on these findings as well as the framework.

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