

Rhetorical Move Analysis of Iraqi Advanced EFL Learners' Research Articles

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Abstract

This study undertakes a comprehensive move analysis of research articles written in English as a Foreign Language (EFL), using Yang and Allison's (2003) model as the analytical framework. The primary aim of the research is to explore and compare the rhetorical structures utilized by EFL students in their academic writing, with specific attention given to the "Conclusion" sections of twenty research articles within the field of Applied Linguistics. The corpus for this study was sourced from diverse scientific journals in Iraq. The research methodology employed in this study adopts a mixed-methods approach, effectively combining qualitative and quantitative techniques.

Keywords :. Move Analysis, Conclusion Section, Academic Writing, EFL Learners.

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التحليل البلاغي للبحوث الأكاديمية لتعلمي اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة

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المستخلص

تجري هذه الدراسة تحليلاً شاملاً بلاغياً لمقالات بحثية مكتوبة باللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية من قبل باحثون ذوي مستوى متقدم. تتبنى هذه الدراسة الاطار التحليلي و النظري ل Yang and Allison (2003) . ان الهدف الاساسي من البحث هو استكشاف و مقارنة التراكيب الخطابية التي يستخدمها متعلموا اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية في كتاباتهم الأكاديمية. تجدر الإشارة هنا الا ان هذه الدراسة قد ركزت على موضوعة كيفية كتابة خاتمة البحوث العلمية بطريقة ناجعة. شملت عينة هذه الدراسة عشرين مقالة بحثية من مجلات عراقية علمية رصينة. تتبنى هذه الدراسة منهجية بحث مزدوجة بين الكمي و النوعي. تبين نتائج هذه الدراسة استخدام قليل للانماط البلاغية و كذلك التنوع في استخدامها من قبل متعلمي اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية المستوالمقدم.

كلمات مفتاحية: التحليل البلاغي, الخاتمة, متعلمي اللغة الأنكليزية كلغة اجنبية, الكتابة الأكاديمية

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Introduction:-

Academic writing stands as a pivotal element within higher education, serving as a crucial avenue for scholars and students alike to communicate their research findings and knowledge to a broader audience. In this context, move analysis has emerged as a valuable instrument for comprehending the rhetorical arrangement of academic texts. Move analysis entails a methodical scrutiny of the organization and sequence of particular rhetorical maneuvers within a written piece, illuminating the tactics employed by authors to effectively present their arguments and discoveries. Furthermore, move analysis in academic writing has garnered substantial attention in recent years due to its potential to unveil underlying patterns and structures in diverse academic genres. By identifying distinct maneuvers present in academic texts, researchers can glean insights into how writers navigate intricate subjects, construct coherent arguments, and engage with existing scholarly literature. The concept of moves can be traced back to Swales (1990), who introduced the notion of "moves" as recurrent stages in the structure of research articles in the applied linguistics field. Since that time, scholars have elaborated on and refined the concept of move analysis, adapting it to various disciplines and genres. Yang and Allison (2003) introduced a widely recognized move model based on the IMRD structure (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) commonly found in scientific research articles. Their model furnishes a valuable framework for dissecting academic writing and has found use in numerous studies exploring the arrangement of moves in different domains. Nevertheless, move analysis has also found application in diverse academic writing contexts, including English as a Foreign Language (EFL) composition. For instance, Paltridge (2012) conducted move analysis on EFL student essays to fathom how these learners organized their arguments and engaged with source materials. Such research not only enhances our comprehension of EFL writing proficiency but also provides insights to language instructors and curriculum developers regarding potential avenues for enhancing language instruction. Furthermore, move analysis has been harnessed to inspect the progression of academic writing skills over time. By scrutinizing texts produced at varying educational levels, researchers glean insights into the evolution of students' academic writing proficiency and their grasp of rhetorical conventions (e.g., Thompson & Tribble, 2001). The application of move analysis goes beyond

English academic writing, with scholars exploring its utility in other languages and cross-cultural contexts (e.g., Li, 2016; Samraj, 2002). Such inquiries yield a broader understanding of how distinct cultures and linguistic backgrounds influence practices in academic writing.

2. Statement of the Problem

It is worth mentioning that rhetorical move analysis, initially proposed by Swales in 1990 and subsequently developed by various scholars, including Yang and Allison in their 2003 model, has found application in diverse types of academic writing. These applications encompass the writings of both postgraduate and undergraduate students. Undergraduate students often engage in essay writing, while postgraduate students typically produce theses, dissertations, and journal articles. In the context of Iraqi EFL (English as a Foreign Language), several studies have been conducted to investigate genre move analysis, particularly within the realm of M.A. theses. However, these studies have predominantly focused on the "Abstract" section of these theses. Notably, one of the Iraqi studies, as detailed in section 5 below, delved into genre move analysis within journal articles solely within the field of education. In this context, the current study serves to complement prior Iraqi research by expanding its scope to encompass journal articles from various disciplines. These disciplines include critical discourse analysis, English language teaching, phonology, and sociolinguistics. Furthermore, the present study uniquely explores the "conclusion" section of the journal articles in question, thereby addressing a gap in the existing academic writing literature.

3. Research Questions

The present study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the generic moves in the "Conclusion" sections of Iraqi research articles in the field of Applied Linguistics?

2. Is there variation between Iraqi EFL learners' research articles regarding move application in the "Conclusion" sections?

4. Theoretical Framework

The concept of "move analysis" has emerged as a noteworthy theoretical framework within the realm of applied linguistics, with the primary objective of comprehending the rhetorical arrangement and structure of academic texts. This segment delves into the historical progression of the term "move analysis" and examines its journey from its initial origins to its present standing as an invaluable instrument for investigating academic writing across various disciplines. The foundational underpinning of move analysis can be attributed to John Swales, whose influential book "Genre Analysis: English in Academic and Research Settings," published in 1990, laid the groundwork for comprehending academic genres. In this seminal work, Swales introduced the concept of "moves" as recurrent rhetorical stages within the structure of research articles. He emphasized that academic writers, particularly in the sciences, often adhere to a predictable sequence of moves (such as stating the purpose, reviewing literature, presenting methods, and offering results) to effectively convey their research. Swales' notion of moves offered a valuable framework for grasping how academic texts are organized to communicate research findings and arguments. Nevertheless, it wasn't until later that scholars expanded on this concept, leading to the formal establishment of "move analysis" as a distinct term. In 2003, Ruiying Yang and Dorothy Allison made significant contributions to the development of "move analysis" as a recognized term within applied linguistics. In their paper titled "Research Articles in Applied

Linguistics: Move Analysis as a Framework for the Study of the Discussion Sections," published in the Australian Review of Applied Linguistics, they introduced a model that systematized the analysis of discussion sections in research articles. Yang and Allison's model built upon Swales' moves concept but introduced a greater level of specificity and categorization. They identified four major rhetorical moves that constitute the discussion section of research articles: 1) Summarizing the study, 2) Evaluating the study, 3) Deduction from the research, and 4) Concluding remarks. These moves contributed to a more nuanced understanding of the diverse rhetorical functions and strategies employed by authors in academic writing. Furthermore, another notable contribution to the advancement of move analysis arose from the work of John Swales and Christine B. Feak. Their highly influential book "Academic Writing for Graduate Students," initially published in 1994, introduced the IMRD (Introduction, Methods, Results, and Discussion) structure commonly found in scientific research articles. This structural approach aligns with the concept of move analysis, as each section within the IMRD structure can be perceived as comprising specific moves that contribute to the overall argumentation and organization of the article. Subsequent to the initial formalization of move analysis by Yang and Allison, the term has gained momentum and evolved across diverse disciplines and academic contexts. Scholars have applied move analysis to various genres, including research articles, essays, abstracts, and theses, spanning different languages and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, move analysis has been adapted and extended to scrutinize moves in specific fields, such as engineering, medicine, and the social sciences. Researchers have also explored how move

analysis can enhance language teaching and academic writing instruction, furnishing insights into effective pedagogical strategies for nurturing students' writing proficiency (Hyland, 2000; Gosden, 1993; and Holmes, 1997). In conclusion, the term "move analysis" has transitioned from early influences by John Swales' work on academic genres to become a widely recognized and indispensable framework for comprehending the rhetorical organization of academic writing. The contributions of Yang and Allison, coupled with the IMRD structure, have molded the evolution and applicability of move analysis across varied disciplines and linguistic contexts. As the domain of applied linguistics continues its evolution, move analysis retains its status as a versatile and invaluable tool for probing the intricacies of academic writing and communication.

5. Review of Related Studies

Numerous related studies have delved into move analysis within diverse EFL and ESL contexts, yielding insightful perspectives that can enrich the ongoing research on academic writing among Iraqi EFL students. This review highlights pivotal studies germane to move analysis and EFL student writing. Abed's research (2015) contrasted move structures in research article abstracts authored in English and Arabic by EFL researchers. The study unveiled disparities in move patterns, underscoring the influence of linguistic and cultural factors on the arrangement of moves in academic writing. The findings underscore the significance of contextual understanding in Iraqi EFL students' thesis composition. Al-Mukhtar (2015) delved into the rhetorical framework of English research article abstracts composed by Iraqi postgraduate

students. The research emphasized the import of apprehending the rhetorical structure's

implications for academic writing. The findings indicated an inclination among Iraqi students to deviate from the conventional IMRD structure, suggesting potential distinctions in the application of rhetorical moves. For the same purpose, Hamid and Ibraheem (2016) delved into genre analysis regarding the rhetorical structure of English Master's theses within Mosul University's Department of Translation, Iraq. The investigation underscored the significance of discerning organizational patterns and rhetorical maneuvers employed by EFL students in their academic prose. While the focus was on the Translation department, findings might illuminate parallels or disparities in other disciplines.

Abdullah's study (2016) explored move analysis within EFL Master's theses from a Saudi university. Applying Yang and Allison's (2003) model, the research dissected moves within introduction and discussion sections. The outcomes unveiled distinctive move patterns among Saudi EFL students, underscoring the context and cultural backdrop's significance. However, there's a necessity to explore move analysis within a different EFL context, such as Iraq.

On the other hand, Al-Mahmood's investigation (2017) investigated the rhetorical moves within research articles penned by Iraqi scholars within the education domain. The study employed move analysis to ascertain how Iraqi scholars structure their research papers and interact with existing literature. The outcomes unveiled resemblances and disparities in move application compared to other contexts, albeit being anchored in published research articles.

Tawfiq (2017) executed move analysis on a collection of English Master's theses authored by Iraqi students. The research concentrated on identifying and categorizing rhetorical moves within theses. The findings indicated consistent usage of certain moves by Iraqi EFL students, while others were underrepresented, indicating possible areas for refining academic writing instruction. Du's study (2018) undertook move analysis on Master's theses authored by Chinese students within a specific discipline. The investigation spotlighted disciplinary divergences in move organization, accentuating the role of genre awareness in academic writing. This study's insights can contribute to grasping how academic writing conventions may diverge across cultures and disciplines within the Iraqi context.

Moreover, Saadi (2018) engaged in move analysis of abstracts within Iraqi EFL students' Master's theses. The study examined the rhetorical moves used in abstracts to synopsise research findings and underscore thesis significance. The findings indicated variability in move utilization across abstracts, with some adhering effectively to the IMRD structure while others diverged from this framework.

Al-Jaberi (2018) executed move analysis on a corpus of linguistics postgraduate theses from Iraqi universities. The study employed move analysis to identify the rhetorical moves within introduction, methods, results, and discussion sections. The findings disclosed specific move patterns shared by these theses, offering preliminary insights into academic writing practices among Iraqi EFL students. Salih's research (2019) concentrated on the moves apparent in English Master's theses composed by Iraqi EFL postgraduate students. The investigation

harnessed move analysis to probe thesis structure and organization. The findings disclosed that while Iraqi EFL students exhibited a general grasp of conventional move patterns, they grappled with effectively utilizing these moves to formulate cohesive academic arguments. Ali's study (2019) dissected the rhetorical moves adopted by Iraqi EFL students in their undergraduate research essays. Employing move analysis, the research classified the moves within essay introductions, bodies, and conclusions. The findings revealed a prevalent organizational pattern among Iraqi EFL students, with distinct moves employed to present research arguments. Mohammed (2020) scrutinized the discussion sections' structure within Linguistics Master's theses at the University of Anbar, Iraq. By concentrating on a specific academic domain, the research provided insights into the rhetorical moves employed by Iraqi EFL students to articulate research findings and engage with existing literature. Nonetheless, there exists a demand for a more comprehensive exploration spanning various disciplines and thesis segments. Finally, Al-Mahdawi's inquiry (2020) delved into the rhetorical moves embraced by Iraqi graduate students in their English Master's theses. The research employed move analysis to scrutinize moves in thesis introductions and discussions. The results indicated that while Iraqi EFL students adhered to some customary move patterns, variations emerged in their use of rhetorical maneuvers, illuminating the intricate nature of academic writing in this context. The current study, distinctively, incorporates various disciplines in the applied linguistic field, like critical discourse analysis studies, English language teaching studies, phonologic

studies, and sociolinguistic studies. Additionally, it employs Yang and Allison's (2003) model as an analytical framework, setting it apart from other Iraqi studies in this domain.

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Sample The sample of this study comprises a diverse selection of research articles written by L1 academic writers from various Iraqi scientific journals. Twenty research articles are selected for the EFL speakers of English language. The scientific discipline of the sample is applied linguistics. The research articles included in the sample were selected based on their availability and accessibility. Efforts were made to obtain a representative sample of academic texts from different journals. The study's sample timeframe includes no specified period of time. They are expected to have a substantial length, adhering to the typical academic requirements for research articles. They will be also anonymized, and any identifying information, such as authors' names and institutions, will be removed to maintain confidentiality and for ethical considerations. See the Appendix.

6.2 Procedures

The current study focuses on the analysis of "Conclusions" sections in twenty selected research articles from various Iraqi scientific journals. These articles, authored by advanced English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, are accessible online. The primary objective of this study is to conduct move analysis specifically on the concluding sections, using Yang and Allison's (2003) move-step model as a framework. The procedural steps for this research are outlined as follows:

Firstly, the collection and selection of samples are crucial. A comprehensive and diverse collection of research articles, authored by non-native English speakers, is to be gathered. This collection should encompass a range of topics within the field of applied linguistics to ensure a representative sample.

Secondly, a process of familiarization is undertaken. This involves reading the chosen research articles in detail to acquire a comprehensive grasp of their content and structural layout. During this stage, any recurring rhetorical moves and steps that are particularly notable are to be identified. Thirdly, the focus shifts to identifying distinct moves within the research articles. A move is essentially a functional unit that serves a specific rhetorical purpose within the text. This stage involves breaking down the articles into these discernible moves, highlighting the specific purposes they serve. Next, a coding phase is implemented. The research articles are annotated with move labels, indicating the specific locations where each move is employed. This annotation allows for a clear visual representation of the distribution of moves within the text. Subsequently, the analysis delves into recognizing patterns and their functions. A comparative assessment of move distributions is carried out across different topics within the realm of applied linguistics English research articles. By examining similarities and disparities in terms of the types and frequencies of moves used, valuable insights are gained.

6.3 Data Analysis

In order to answer the research questions of this study, the researcher presents the results of the move analysis on the research articles produced by Iraqi advanced English as Foreign

Language (EFL) learners. The analysis is organized according to the rhetorical moves identified in the “conclusion” section of these articles. Therefore, the present study follows Yang and Allison’s (2003) model of the categorization of the generic moves and it concentrates on the discussion of the ‘conclusion’ sections in academic writing. Table (1) below explains this model:

Moves and Steps	Definitions
Move 1	Summarizing the Study
Move 2	Evaluating the Study
Step 1	Indicating Significance/ Advantage
Step 2	Indicating Limitations
Step 3	Evaluating Methodology
Move 3	Deductions from the Research
Step 1	Recommending Further Research
Step 2	Drawing Pedagogical Implications

Table (1)

Yang and
Allison’s
(2003)

Model

Examining the data at hand, table (2) below shows the distribution of moves and steps in the research articles structures related to the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) , English Language Teaching (EFL),

Phonology, Pragmatics, and Sociolinguistics disciplines. In other words, the current study examines 20 research articles, four articles for each discipline. All in all, they are in the scope of Applied Linguistics.

Table (2)
The Distribution and Frequency of Moves and Steps in Research Articles

Move 1: Summarizing the Study:

It is obvious from the table above that Move 1 is commonly frequent in the structure of the applied linguistic research articles. It is used more in the sociolinguistics research articles (4 times). In the second place come the CDA and phonology research articles (3 times). This move is less common one in the ELT scientific papers (1 time). The frequency of this move is (13%) which is commonly used.

Move 2: Evaluating the Study:

Step 1: Indicating Significance/ Advantage

Moves and Steps	CDA	ELT	Phonology	Pragmatics	Sociolinguistics	Total
Move 1	3	1	3	2	4	13
Move 2						
Step 1	3	4	4	4	4	19
Step 2	0	0	0	0	0	0
Step 3	0	0	0	0	1	1
Move 3						
Step 1	0	2	0	0	1	3
Step 2	0	1	0	0	0	1
Total	6	8	7	6	10	37

that

Table (2)

above

indicates

this move

and especially this step is more frequent in the structure of the applied linguistics research articles. It seems that it is more familiar than other moves and steps for the EFL writers. It occurs four times in ELT, phonology, pragmatics, and sociolinguistics studies (4 times). In CDA studies, it is used less (3 times). The frequency of this step is (19%) which is more commonly used.

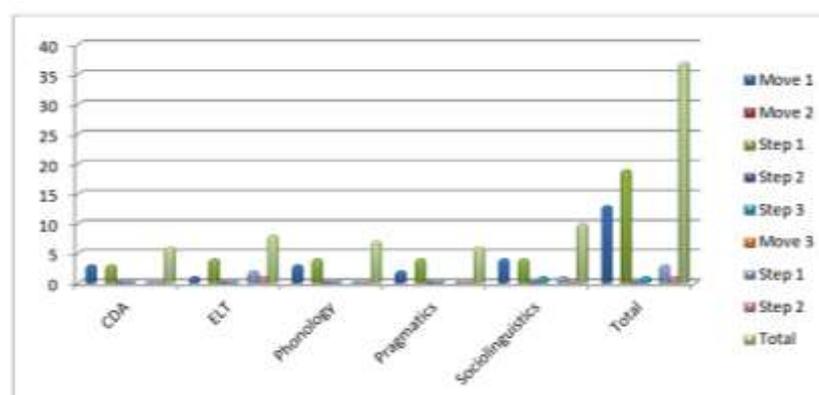
Step 2: Indicating Limitations

According to the available numbers in the table (2) above, no use is recorded for this step in the structure of the applied linguistic research articles. The main reason could be it is not the appropriate place to use this step in. As part of their conventional knowledge, EFL academic writers tend to use this step in the 'introduction' section. The frequency of this step is (0%) which indicates no use of it.

Step 3: Evaluating Methodology

This step is less common and frequent in the sample of this study. It is mentioned only one time (1 time) in the sociolinguistics studies while the other disciplines did not contain such step. The frequency of this step is (1%) which indicates underuse of such step.

Move 3: Deduction from the Research



Step 1:

Recommending Further Research

It is less common used in the applied linguistics studies represented in this study. It is used two times (2 times) in the structure of ELT studies. It is used one time (1time) in the structure of sociolinguistics studies. There is no mention for such step in other disciplines. It could be that EFL academic writers advocate separate section for this step in their articles apart of the 'conclusion' section. The frequency of this step is (3%) which indicates low extent of use for this step.

Step 2: Drawing Pedagogical Implications

Also this step is less common used in the sample of this study. It is possible the same reason which is mentioned for step 1 behind the low occurrence of such step. Sometimes, the conventions have power more than rules. It is only one time (1 time) used in ELT studies. No

record for it in other disciplines. EFL academic writers tend to make separate section for such step in the structure of their academic writing. The frequency of this step is (1%) which refers to very limited use of such step. The data analysis of the present study clearly stated in the following pie chart. The genre moves and steps are distributed in the structure of all twenty research articles related to applied linguistics.

Pi Chart (1): **The Distribution of Moves and Steps in Research Articles**

Consequently, the answer of research question No. (1) What are the generic moves in the "Conclusion" sections of Iraqi research articles in the field of Applied Linguistics? Is that Mov (summarizing the study) and Move 2/ Step 1 (identifying significance/advantage of the study) are the most frequent used in the 'Conclusion' sections of Iraqi research articles in the field of Applied Linguistics?. The answer of research question No. (2) Is there variation between Iraqi EFL learners' research articles regarding move application in the "Conclusion" sections? There are many variations between Iraqi EFL learners' research articles as shown in the above table and pie chart.

6.4 Discussion

The paramount objective of writing is clarity, as it epitomizes the formal avenue of language communication. Across diverse writing processes, achieving clarity is of utmost importance to realize effective and fitting verbal interaction. Writers strive diligently to resonate with readers, ensuring that their conveyed messages are lucid and devoid of ambiguity. Within the realm of Genre Analysis, scholars and their theories are fundamentally aimed at facilitating effective and comprehensible communication. Their focus lies in rendering the receiver's understanding

uncomplicated and logical, particularly when engaging with research articles (RAs). Notable scholars such as Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995), Brett (1994), Holmes (1997), Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988), Swales (1981, 1990, 1994, 2004) have concentrated their studies on the textual product and the delineation of organizational patterns within RAs. Correspondingly, EFL academic writers endeavor to elucidate their ideas for readers when composing scientific RAs. The data under scrutiny in this study originates from reputable scientific journals in Iraq, ensuring accessibility for specialists in the applied linguistics field. Regrettably, these data diverge from Yang and Allison's Model (2003) due to various factors. Conventional knowledge that EFL academic writers possess, coupled with cultural distinctions between native and non-native writers, contributes to this divergence. Crafting the 'conclusion' section of RAs presents a formidable challenge. This section encapsulates the entirety of the RA, encapsulating its key concepts and patterns. Hence, the application of a suitable model becomes indispensable for shaping the 'conclusion' section. Remarkably, the predominant move in the twenty RAs examined is Move 2/Step 1 (95%). Writers universally endeavor to underscore the significance and merits of their studies. Subsequently, Move 1 claims the second position (65%), signifying the writers' obligation to synopsise their ideas in the 'conclusion' section. Generic Moves and Steps exhibit lesser frequency in the RA structure, constituting a mere 5% and 15% respectively. This trend can be attributed to the aforementioned reasons. It is noteworthy that while the nature of the text does play a role in shaping writing styles and techniques, these styles predominantly remain aligned with communicative objectives.

6.5 Conclusion

This study is an attempt to examine the distribution and the frequency of the three main moves and steps proposes by Yang an Allisions' (2003) model. It is a step forward to generic move analysis especially in the field of text product and the organizational patterning of text structure. The study reveals that EFL adademic writers are not so much familiar with this model so that the frequency of using it is underuse. Moreover, the distribution of the moves and steps in the RAs is to some extent limited. This study focuses only on the 'conclusion' section of the structure of RAs to be under the discussion. Also, the study emphasizes only the applied linguistics RAs as a discipline under analysis. The present study follows a mixed approach of analysis. Thus, it is a qualitative and quantitative study. It recommends conducting further research to investigate the differences between native and non-native writers regarding the using of generic moves and steps. Also, it could be other studies examine other sections of the structure of RAs, for example discussion section. Finally, the pedagogical implications of this study would be applicable in the course of Research Teaching Methods for undergraduate EFL students and postgraduate EFL students. Besides, this study urges the language instructors and curriculum developers to draw attention on potential areas in language teaching context as how to construct logical arguments in well established structures.

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Appendix

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