Rhetorical Moves in the Introduction Section of Dissertations in International Relations: A Study From Turkey

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Abstract

The main purpose of this paper is to find out the rhetorical moves in the introduction section in dissertations (PhDTs) written in English in International Relations. To this end, the study uses a PhDT corpus which has been built with dissertations written by doctorate students between 2006 and 2015 at a state university in central Turkey. The communicative categories or "moves" (Swales 1981, 1990) that constitute the macrostructure of these texts have been analysed. The results revealed that the moves and steps revealed certain similarities and differences with the introduction sections in other disciplines, and provided evidence of disciplinary variation. Also, a few steps which are non-existent in the original CARS Model (Swales, 2004) and are specific to PhDTs analyzed in this study were found. Thus, a modified version of the CARS Model for PhDTs was suggested with excerpts from the corpus in detail. The rhetorical variables found in the genre may be mainly explained by the different expectations that the members of the discourse community has.

Keywords: Rhetorical moves, Introduction section, Dissertations

Introduction

The role of writing in the life of the academic community is powerful and pervasive. Writing for an academic discourse community is an important step particularly for novice researchers to enter the discourse community and share their research results. To obtain acceptance and thus to be published, novice researchers are required to follow some specific guidelines to shape their studies.

There are different genres (e.g. dissertations) in the academic discourse which the community members need to produce and /or comprehend and several genre studies have mainly focused on investigating the discourse structures of genres through genre analysis. The most prominent work in genre analysis that focused on schematic structure was carried out by Swales (1990).

Despite the fact that genre studies of PhD theses are available in the general literature, a specific study looking at genre-specific features of the introduction parts of the PhD theses written in the field of International Relations does not exist. Filling a gap in the literature, this study may shed light on the genre-specific features of the introduction parts of the PhD theses in the field of International Relations in general and the PhD theses written at METU at the Department of International Relations in particular.

The current study focuses on the introduction section of the dissertations written at a state university in central Turkey. The essential aim of this study is to explore the discoursal (move-step structure) features found in the introduction section of the PhD theses written in the field of International Relations. This current study can deepen our understanding of how introduction sections are constructed and can increase the awareness about the conventions of the introduction section in the field of International Relations. The study can demonstrate how accurately Swales' CARS Model (2004) accounts for the features of writing in PhD theses written at Middle East Technical University (METU) in International Relations.

The following research questions are the guiding frame of reference for the study.

1. What are the genre-specific features of the introduction parts of the PhD theses (PhDTs) written at METU in the field of International Relations (IR)?

1.1 What is the move structure of the introduction parts of the PhDTs written at METU in the field of IR?

1.1.1 To what extent is the move structure of the introduction parts of the PhDTs written at METU in the field of IR compatible with the CARS Model?

Body

In the study, the PhDT corpus was analyzed in order to specify the discoursal feature (move-step structure) of the genre. The 78360 word corpus of the PhDTs included the theses written between 2006 and 2015 by the PhD students enrolled in the PhD programs offered by METU in the Department of International Relations. METU, the context of the study, is a state university in Ankara, Turkey and the medium of instruction at METU is English. The Department of International Relations, founded in 1984, is one of the leading institutions in international relations in Turkey. Of all

the PhDTs written by the METU students between the specified years, 21 PhD theses were included in the study as they met the three main criteria: The theses should 1) be accessible during the data collection period, 2) not include sub-headings under the introduction chapter, and 3) be data-based, empirical studies.

Data analysis was carried out using qualitative and quantitative data analyses methods. Move (M) - Step (S) structure based on Swales' CARS Model (2004) in the corpus was analyzed qualitatively. Then, this analysis was further analyzed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) Program (22.00) to see the similarities and/or differences between CARS Model and PhD theses. The cut-off frequency of 50% of occurrence was chosen as a potential measure of move stability for any move posited in this study. If the frequency of a move falls below 50%, it is considered optional (Swales, 1990; Khani & Tazik, 2010). Based on these calculations, a rhetorical structure for the introduction parts of the PhD theses was proposed. The analyses of the two corpora were conducted by the researcher of this study. During the qualitative data analysis stage, in addition to the researcher (Rater 1), an independent rater (Rater 2) coded the 42% (9/21) of the corpora in order to obtain reliable results. Rater 3 was consulted when Rater 1 and Rater 2 differed in the move analysis.

The results of the study have revealed that the move structure of the PhDT introductions shows a significant deviation from the structure proposed by Swales" CARS Model (2004) in several ways.

To start with, none of the PhDT introductions followed M1-M2-M3 sequence that is proposed by Swales' CARS Model (2004). Only one of the PhDTs started with M1-M2-M3 pattern but then continued mostly with M1- M3 pattern. Second, two PhDT introductions do not contain a Move 2 at all (i.e., they do not establish a niche). In other words, 9,5% of the PhDT corpus lacked a Move 2. Due to the lack of this move, these two PhDTs were the most dissimilar ones from the model.

M1-M3 was the only observable pattern that was present in the corpus. Expressed in quantitative terms 9,5% (2 out of 21) of the PhDT introductions (PhDT19 and PhDT21), in the corpus contained M1-M3 pattern. In this type of structural organization, the authors establish a territory (M1) by making topic generalizations and giving background information and then present their current study (M3) by using steps such as announcing the present research study, summarizing methods, and indicating the structure of the article. In this organization, the authors do not use Move 2, and thus they do not establish a niche. In addition to these two PhDTs, there were 2 more PhDTs (PhDT7 and PhDT17) whose move structures were very close to the M1-M3 cycle. With the exception of one M2, where the author establishes a niche, the general pattern fitted M1-M3 pattern.

As for the moves, based on the cut-off of a 50%, Move 1, Move 2, and Move 3 in the introductions of International Relations PhDTs are obligatory, using Swales' term (Swales, 2004). While the percentage was the same for Move 1 (100%) and Move 3 (100%), the percentage for Move 2 was 90,48% in PhDTs.

According to the results of this study, M1 functions as an introduction to the topic and is realized by "Move 1: Establishing a Territory via topic generalizations of

increasing specificity" (Swales, 2004) and the two new steps that are not present in Swales' CARS Model (2004). One of the new steps is called M1 - S1: Presenting a Case with Factual Details to Give Background Information. It introduces the territory and provides detailed information about it. the new step can be recognized from factual details, such as dates, or places. Most of the time, this step takes place at the beginning of an introduction to set the background. The step is present in 13 PhDTs out of 21 PhDTs (61,90%), which makes it an obligatory one. The step, M1 - S2: Quotation to Support Ideas, is another new step under Move 1 that emerged in this study. The step presents quotations to emphasize the importance of the subject matter to be studied, and it is quite easy to recognize it as the authors directly quote the person. The step is present in 3 PhDTs out of 21 PhDTs (14,29%), which makes it an optional one.

Move 2 is present in most of the introductions (19/21, 90,48%) in the introductions of the PhDTs in IR, and it can be regarded as an obligatory move. In addition, because it is found more than once in all of the introductions, this move is cyclical, in agreement with Swales' Model (2004). This move aims to justify the research being reported (Kanoksilapatham, 2012) and functions as "establishing a niche for about-to-be-presented research" (Swales, 1990: 154). "M2- S1A: Indicating a gap" indicates a gap in earlier research in literature. Out of the four steps to create a niche, this is the most often used step in the PhDT introductions in IR. This move is present in 19 PhDT introductions out of 21 introductions (90,48%), and it can be considered as an obligatory move. "M2- S1B: Adding to what is known" is used to claim that the current study provides additional insights along the same line of previous research to justify the research study. The step is present in only 9 PhDT introductions out of 21 introductions (42,86%), and it can be considered as an optional move. The final step under M2 is M2- S2: Presenting positive justification. Different from M2S1A and M2S1B, this step evaluates previous research in literature by presenting positive justification and making a positive evaluation (Kanoksilapatham, 2012). M2S2 is found in 13 out of the 21 PhDT introductions in the corpus of this study (61,90%).

The role of Move 3 is to turn the niche established in Move 2 (Establishing the Niche) into the research space that justifies the present study (Swales, 1990). In Swales" Model, this move includes seven steps, some of which are obligatory, optional or probable in some fields. In the PhDT corpus in IR, this move is distinct from Swales" Model since it includes nine possible steps based on the results of this study. Similar to M1, M3 is found in every PhDT introduction in this corpus study (21/21, 100%). The first step, M3 - S1: Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposively is noted as an obligatory one. It is present in all of the PhDT introductions (100%), and it can be considered as an obligatory step for PhDT introductions in IR. The function of the second step under M3 is to display research questions or hypotheses of the present research study (M3-S2). While this step is regarded as an optional one by Swales (2004), it was found to be obligatory in the PhDT introductions in IR due to its high rate of Occurrence (95,24%). "M3-S3: Definitional clarifications" is one of the optional steps in the corpus. It is found in 7 out of the 21 PhDTs with 33,33%, which makes it an optional step as it is below the 50% cut off point. "M3-S4: Summarizing Methods" is an obligatory step in the PhDT corpus. It is found in 21 out of the 21 PhDTs (100%). In this step, the methods selected for the study are given. "M3 - S5: Announcing principal outcomes" is an optional step in the PhDT introductions in IR as it is found in 10 out of 21 PhDTs (47,62%) . In this step, the

authors briefly report the main arguments of their research study by directly making a reference to their theses. "M3 - S6: Stating the value of the present research" is an obligatory step in the PhDT introductions in IR as it is found in 13 out of the 21 PhDTs (61,90%). In this step, the authors informed the discourse community members about the value of the research study. "M3 - S7: Outlining the structure of the paper" is another obligatory step in the PhDT introductions in IR as it is found in 21 out of the 21 PhDTs (100%). With this step authors roadmap the structure of the research study so that readers can easily follow them. "M3 - S8: Limitations of research study" is a new step in the corpus and it is found in 4 out of 21 PhDTs (19,05%), which makes it an optional one. The step is quite easy to recognize as the authors list the limitations of research study. "M3 - S9: Evaluating the method selected" is the second new step under Move 3 in the corpus. It is found in 3 out of the 21 PhDTs (14,29%), which makes it an optional one. Although it can be categorized as Move 3- Step 4 Summarizing Methods, it is different from it in that it does not mention the method selected but evaluates the method selected for the study. That is, it includes such statements as "useful", "clarifies", which mentions the strengths of the method. Also, there are phrases (e.g., while, on the one hand, on the other hand, however, there is need for ...) that mention the weaknesses of the method selected. Thus, it might be useful to consider it as a different step.

Conclusion

This study investigated the discoursal features of the PhDT genre in a specific discipline (in International Relations) by a move and step analysis of the introduction sections of the 21 PhDTs based on the Swales' CARS Model (2004). Due to the differences in the use of steps, some modifications in the CARS Model (2004) were found to be necessary concerning the steps to make it more compatible with the PhDT introductions.

This study was conducted with the purpose of providing novice writers with the genre specific features of PhDTs in the field of IR. The findings of the study could be seen as the shared conventions of the members of a discourse community in which they convey their ideas and present their research findings. Being a part of a discourse community is particularly challenging for novice writers who are "unfamiliar with the rules of the game" (Gosden, 1995: 39). However, only in this way can academicians produce well- written PhDTs to publish their work. At this point, genre analysis plays an important role in investigating general and specific organizational patterns of RAs and PhDTs within specific disciplines (e.g. Bhatia, 2002; Dudley-Evans, 1995, 1997; Gosden, 1995; Flowerdew, 2000; Misak et al., 2005; Swales, 1990).

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