Comparative Rhetorical Organization of ELT Thesis Introductions Composed by Thai and American Students

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Abstract

Genre analysis is today's dominant approach for textual analysis, especially in the ESP learning and teaching profession. Adopting this approach, the present study compares the Introduction chapters of MA theses in ELT (English Language Teaching) written by Thai students to those written by American university students based on the move-step analysis. Two sets of corpora comprise 30 TSI (Thai student Introduction) and 30 ASI (American student Introduction) Introduction chapters from the theses that followed the traditional five-chapter pattern or ILrMRD. All the TSI and ASI datasets were purposively collected from two electronic databases of graduate theses and dissertations, publicly known ThaiLis Digital Collection and ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. These were subsequently analyzed using genre analysis approach. The modified CARS model introduced by Bunton (2002) guides the move-step analysis. To ensure the coding reliability and consistency, the coding analysis of a subset of the entire datasets between the researcher and an expert coder was checked, and the coding agreement was at a highly satisfactory level. The findings demonstrated that both Thai and American MA students followed the moves and steps proposed in the framework to construct their Introduction chapters rhetorically. Both similarities and differences were discovered in the Introduction chapters investigated, in terms of the communicative purpose, the frequency of move-step occurrences, and the move-step classification. Pedagogical implications drawn from the present study are useful for EAP practitioners and research writing instructors, allowing ESL/EFL teachers to equip their graduate students with an appropriate rhetorical outline for thesis Introduction composition.

Keywords: genre analysis, MA thesis, Thai and American students, Introduction chapter, ELT

1. Introduction

Academic English writing, especially in the scenario of EFL/ESL, still has been receiving a great deal of attention from teachers and, specifically, learners of EFL/ESL. Particularly true in the real academic situations, the number of EFL/ESL students worldwide has been growing since English has obtained the status of a lingua franca or ELF, used as a medium of communication (Manuranen, 2011). Moreover, English is one of the influential languages, and it plays a pivotal role in academic community, e.g. English language teaching, research, and scholarship (Hyland, 2006b).

As a matter of fact, even though the increase in academic English use is currently prominent, EFL/ESL or so called NNS (non-native speaker) learners, especially graduate students, still have been confronting repeated and prolonged problems on how to successfully compose a good piece of academic English work in academic institutions (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). In academic institutions, all graduate students are assigned a lot of academic writing tasks required throughout the programs in which they are participating (Swales & Feak, 2012). Upon their academic writing tasks, they are required to produce their works in an adequate organization and style, together with appropriate complexity and academic writing skills to meet satisfactory standard expected by their institutions. With the aforementioned reasons, a number of applied linguistics researchers have recently turned their interest into rhetorical constructions and linguistics elements that catalyze academic writing success. Consequently, the pressing needs to find out effective solutions to tackle such problems require useful hands from ESP/EAP and genre analysis approaches.

The study of discourse and genre or textual study, equivalently used within the field (Wang, 2009), covers how a language is used in a particular group of language users (Jones, 2012). It concerns conventional patterns,

structures, content and style, and target audiences. Additionally, genre analysis is a main channel for EAP teachers, equipping them with an elaboration of communicative activities to explicitly understand genre-specific texts for language teaching (Hyland, 2006a). Equally important, the major focus on academic discourse study relates to preparing non-native speaking students to study in English or English for Academic Purposes (EAP). The reason is that English is being used as a medium of instruction in an increasing number of universities, attributed to the established status of English as a global language (Flowerdew, 2002). Outstandingly, research studies regarding written discourse and genre analysis have consistently gained interests from a large number of scholars.

Since the foregrounded notion of Swales' (1990, 2004) genre analysis or move analysis was introduced, a great deal of research studies in written academic discourse and genre analysis have been carried out. A large number of researchers have examined predictable presence of rhetorical moves and steps embedded in a wide variety of text types, e.g. research abstracts (Saeeaw & Tangkiengsirisin, 2014; Suntara & Usaha, 2013) and (sections of) research article (Kanoksilapatham, 2015; Hirano, 2009; Ozturk, 2007).

Apart from the academic written genres mentioned earlier, parts of theses/dissertations have gained continuous interest from researchers as well. These academic genres are considered one of the most problematic academic texts for graduate students, particularly L2/NNS students. A large number of graduate students are challenged not only to show their knowledge in their research but also present how their research contributes to their academic community in a logical and coherent way through their theses/dissertations (Council of Graduate Schools in the U.S., 1991). NNS graduate students request needs and helps in theses/dissertations writing components, for instance, paragraph organization, idea development, conclusion drawing, chapter online, etc (Dong, 1998).

There have been studies analyzing individual sections of theses/dissertations, e.g. Introduction (Bunton, 2002; Samraj, 2008; Cheung, 2012), Literature review (Kwan, 2006), and Discussion (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Rasmeenin, 2006; Salmani Nodoushan, 2012). However, a thesis Introduction chapter is still worth being further investigated. It is a crucial part of a thesis that requires master's students to logically present their general research perspectives to their readers (Weissberg & Buker, 1990). Additionally, the perspective of cultural differences of writing is still significant to be observed as it appearently exists (Gecikli, 2013; Choe & Hwang, 2014; Wuttisrisiriporn, 2015). Therefore, since there are very few comparative studies on this specific genre, it is interesting to comparatively analyze how Thai and American university students compose their MA thesis Introductions in English. A larger sample of theses (N = 60) of the present study, compared to some previous studies, e.g. 12 thesis Introductions in Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2014) study and 24 Introductions in the work by Samraj (2008), can promote more reliable generalizability of how the two groups of students write their thesis Introductions.

In this study, the researcher focused on the investigation of rhetorical move-step structure of master's thesis Introduction chapters in ELT (English Language Teaching), by proposing two research questions: (1) What are the rhetorical structures of master's thesis Introduction chapters in ELT written by Thai and American university students? and (2) What are differences and similarities identified in master's thesis Introduction chapters in ELT written by Thai and American university students? The answers to these two research questions portray the structure of the target chapter composed by Thai and American university students as well as the aspect of curtural variations between the two groups. It is hoped that the findings of the present study will have articulated productive contributions to the ELT graduate community and pedagogical implications to thesis Introduction chapter writing and teaching for both ELT professionals and master's graduate students.

2. Method

2.1 Compilation of the Corpora

There were two main corpora analyzed in this study: TSI corpus (Thai student Introduction) and ASI corpus (American student Introduction) belonging to the discipline of English Language Teaching (ELT). The dataset of TSI was comprised of 30 ELT master's thesis Introduction chapters authored by Thai master's degree students and submitted to Thai universities. The TSI corpus was collected from *ThaiLis Digital Collection* (http://thailis.or.th/tdc/), the online Thai university dissertation-thesis database. The ASI corpus consisted of 30 master's thesis Introduction chapters in the field of ELT written by master's students in American universities. These theses have been disseminated and can be retrieved online through *ProQuest Dissertations and Theses*, the online thesis-dissertation database of American and Canadian universities. The structure of the entire theses of the two datasets is the traditional five-chapter thesis structure. It is composed of five main chapters: (1) Introduction, (2) Literature review, (3) Methodology, (4) Results, and (5) Discussion (Conclusion/Implication) or ILrMLD. Thesis Introduction chapters written in any other patterns were excluded from this study. The headings

might be various and different, but their communicative focus needs to purposively devote to the five mentioned chapters. All the theses selected for the analysis were written in the English language and summited to universities during the years 2007−2016.

2.2 Analytical Framework for ELT MA Thesis Introductions

The present study concentrates upon analyzing rhetorical structure of master's thesis Introduction chapters in the field of ELT which requires an analytical framework for move−step identification. Various analytical frameworks are available for move analysis of Introduction (Dudley-Evans, 1986; Swales, 1990, 2004). The analytical framework proposed by Bunton (2002) is intentionally and preferably embraced into move analysis in the present study. There are two main reasons to support the application of the framework in the analysis. The first reason is that Bunton's (2002) framework was the finalized model from the genre-based analyses of 45 Ph.D. thesis Introductions across eight disciplines. Also, the model was successfully adopted for Introduction move analysis studies (e.g Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014; Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares & Gil−Salom, 2009). Therefore, this model is considered the working framework for move-step identifications in this study. Table 1 illustrates the selected framework for move-step analysis in this study. See Appendix A for some examples of moves and steps realized in Bunton's (2002) framework.

Table 1. Modified CARS model for thesis Introductions by Bunton (2002)

Often present	Occasionally present
Move 1: Establishing a Territory	
Steps	
1: Claiming centrality	
2: Making topic generalization and giving background information	
3: *Defining terms*	Research parameters
4: Reviewing previous research	
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	
Steps	
1A: Indicating a gap in research	
1B: *Indicating a problem or need*	
1C: Question-raising	Counter-claiming
1D: Continuing a tradition	
Move 3: Announcing the Present Research	
Steps	
1: Purposes, *aims, or objectives*	*Chapter structure*
2: Work carried out	*Research questions/ Hypotheses*
3: *Method*	*Theoretical position*
4: *Materials or Subjects*	*Defining terms*
5: Findings or Results	Parameters of research
6: *Product of research/ Model proposed*	
7: Significance/ Justification	*Application of product*
8: Thesis structure	*Evaluation of product*

2.3 Inter-Coder Reliability Analysis

The process of coding was conducted by applying a functional-semantic approach. The approach depends upon cognitive judgments, more preferably than linguistic criteria, to distinguish the purpose(s) of a text and contributions to the textual boundaries (Bhatia, 1993; Jian, 2010; Kwan, 2006). However, without the systematic

coding conventions, the convergent validity and reliability was questionable (Crookes, 1986). Coding reliability analysis, therefore, was carried out to prove that each unit of text constitutes the textual boundary of units at a highly satisfactory level of accordance (Kanoksilapatham, 2005), as drawn into a number of genre-analysis studies, for example, by Kanoksilapatham (2015), Ozturk (2007), Saeeaw and Tangkiengsirisin (2014).

To ensure coding reliability of the move analysis, an inter-coder analysis was performed. The three-hour training was conducted to promote mutual coding agreements between the researcher and an expert coder. The expert coder identifed moves and steps in a subset of the texts randomly selected for the inter-coder reliability analysis. The expert coder is a university lecturer and researcher with doctoral degree, specializing in rhetorical move analysis. The researcher and the expert coder individually completed coding in the coding sheet. Then the reliability analysis was processed to check the mutual agreement and correctness of the identified moves found by the two coders.

The present study adopted Cohen's k (kappa) to analyze the inter-coder reliability of the move analysis in the two datasets of TSI and ASI. Cohen's kappa coefficient statistically measures the qualitative agreement between two coders or raters (Cohen, as cited in Orwin, 1994). Cohen's k value has its range from 0.00 to 1.00, from total disagreement to total agreement. The k value can be interpreted according to the following interpretation descriptions: none to slight ($\leq$ 0.20); fair (0.21 - 0.40), moderate (0.41 - 0.60), substantial (0.61 - 0.80), and almost perfect agreement (0.81 - 1.00). The set ratio of the k value is at above 0.6 for satisfactory agreement level (Fleiss, as cited in Orwin, 1994).

Additionally, percentage is another calculating method used to measure the reliability, comparatively supporting the computed k value of the coding analysis of the two coders. The set ratio of percentage in this study is at least 80% for satisfactory measurement level.

The analysis of k value showed an agreement level of the inter-coding process. Despite some discrepancies, the average k value 0.87 indicated the very good validity and reliability of the overall coding analyses of individual moves between the two coders. In addition, the average percentage of the entire measurement of 89.82% supported the average k value that inter-coder reliability is valid.

2.4 Classification Criteria for the Status of Moves and Steps

The move-step classification was carried out to distinguish whether moves and steps employed in the ASI and TSI corpora were adequately qualified to be regarded as *obligatory*, *conventional*, or *optional*. Following the criteria proposed by Kanoksilapatham (2005), to be considered an obligatory move, an individual move or step must occur in every thesis Introduction chapter collected (N = 100%). A move or step is categorized as conventional if one fails to appear in all the theses but the frequency of occurrences must be at least 60% (N $\geq$ 60%). The last criterion is that, to be regarded as optional, the frequency of move-step occurrences drops below 60% of the entire individual corpus (N $\leq$ 60%). After the completion of move-step coding, the coding reliability assessment, and the move frequency classification, a comparative move-step analysis was performed to investigate similarities and differences between the two corpora.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1 Overall Occurrences of Moves and Steps

The move-step analysis revealed that the entire ASI and TSI corpora adopted all the moves shown in the analytical framework proposed by Bunton (2002). The results showed that 274 move occurrences were identified in the ASI corpus and 284 move occurrences were realized in the TSI corpus (see Table 2). Both Thai and American students employed all the moves to construct their thesis Introductions to introduce general perpectives of their studies to their readers, consistent with Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014). It is apparent that the complexity of the ASI Introductions, in terms of move occurrences, are equivalent to those in the TSI dataset.

This is, however, different from Gecikli's (2013) study in that Move 2 failed to be used in some of the ELT Turkish Ph.D. thesis Introductions she investigated. She mentioned that the structure of Turkish Ph.D. thesis Introductions contained less complexity than that of English Ph.D. theses. This might be attributed to some writers' possible need that wished to establish a setting of their research and then immediately present the position of their studies.

It seems that both group of writer preferred to use Move 1 in their thesis Introductions. As shown in Table 2, Move 1 *Establishing a Territory* was considered the most distinctive move in the two corpora. This move was found as the most frequent opening move of the thesis Introductions, as suggested in Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2014) study. The occurrence frequency of Move 1 was 40.88% in the ASI corpus and 42.25% in the TSI corpus. Also, the occurrence frequency of its steps was highest between the other moves, 47.71% in the ASI corpus and

43.08% in the TSI corpus, which are considered close in an account of occurrence density. This is similar to Gecikli's (2013) study that Move 1 played the most significant role in both English and Turkish Ph.D. theses analyzed.

Table 2. Overall move-step occurrences in ASI and TSI corpora

Moves/Steps	ASI Corpus (N = 30)		TSI Corpus (N = 30)	
	move/step occurrences	Percentage of occurrence	move/step occurrences	Percentage of occurrence
Move 1 Establishing a Territory	112	40.88	120	42.25
(Steps of Move 1)	(250)	(47.71)	(274)	(43.08)
Move 2 Establishing a Niche	102	37.23	108	38.03
(Steps of Move 2)	(116)	(20.28)	(122)	(19.18)
Move 3 Announcing the Present Research (Occupying the Niche)	60	21.90	56	19.72
(Steps of Move 3)	(206)	(36.01)	(240)	(37.74)
Total	274	100	284	100
	(572)		(636)	

As shown in Table 2, the occurrences of Move 2 *Establishing a Niche* tend to be more frequent than Move 3 *Announcing the Present Research*. Move 2 appeared 37.23% in the ASI corpus and 38.03% in the TSI corpus, while Move 3 occurred 21.90% and 19.72% in the ASI and TSI corpora, respectively. Compared in terms of step occurrence, the steps of Move 3 were more demanded than those of Move 2 in the thesis Introductions. The step occurrences of Move 3 in the ASI and TSI corpora were 36.01% and 37.74%, respectively. In contrast, the frequency of the steps of Move 2 occurring in the two datasets made up approximately 20%. To put it simply, Thai and American students used a wider variety of the steps of Move 3 to concentrate more on setting up and presenting their studies, while the students employed the steps of Move 2 to give reasons of conducting their research despite lower frequency of step appearance.

It can be concluded that every move found in the present study meaningfully declared how each move is prioritized in the thesis Introduction chapters. Even though there seems to be differences emerging in the two corpora, the directions of move preference and move proportion devoted in the thesis Introduction chapters are outlined.

3.2 Identification and Classification of Moves and Steps in ASI and TSI Corpora

The identification of moves and steps revealed the overall rhetorical structure of ELT MA thesis. Additionally, classification of moves and steps, as shown in Tables 3, 4 and 5, employed by both groups of writers was observed to see preferences and cultural differences between the two.

3.2.1 Move 1 *Establishing a Territory*

This move was found obligatory as it was used in all the thesis Introductions analyzed. The writers employed it to set the context of the study by providing background on the thesis topic. However, the move was constructed by one or more of four steps introduced in Bunton's (2002) model.

As detailed in Table 3 below, Step 1 *Claiming centrality* was classified as an optional step as it occurred in 33.33% in the ASI corpus and 20% in the TSI corpus. Ten ASI and six TSI students used this step to claim that their studies are useful or relevant to their field of research interest. In contrast, Step 2 *Making topic generalization and giving background information* was observed as an obligatory step. This step appeared in all the ELT thesis Introductions of the two datasets. Both Thai and American students generalized their topics and provided necessary background of their studies to their readers by using this step.

Table 3. Move-step identification and classification of Move 1 *Establishing a Terriroty*

Moves/Steps	ASI Corpus (N = 30)	TSI Corpus (N = 30)
Move 1 : Establishing a Territory	30 (100%)***	30 (100%)***
1 : Claiming centrality	10 (33.33%)*	6 (20%)*
2 : Making topic generalization and giving background information	30 (100%)***	30 (100%)***
3 : Defining terms	2 (6.67%)*	-
4 : Reviewing previous research	30 (100%)***	30 (100%)***

Remark : *** = obligatory, ** = conventional, * = optional.

The realizations of Step 1 and Step 2 in the present study correspond to the work by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014). All Vietnamese TESOL master's students used Step 2 (100%) to set the research context for their studies in, whereas none of the Vietnamese students employed Step 1 when composing their Introductions (0%). Also, Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, and Gil-Salom (2011) found out that Step 2 played a crutial role in Ph.D. thesis Introductions in the field of computing (90% in English theses and 100% in Spanish). On the contrary, Step1 was remarked optional as it was identified in 60% of the entire of Spanish and English Ph.D. theses.

Another distinctive step present in the two corpora was Step 4 *Reviewing previous research* since it appeared in every thesis as Step 2. This obligatory step was opted by the two groups of students to relate their points being discussed to supportive previous research studies. Referring to previous studies seems possible to be done wherever the writers found it necessary to support their ideas. This step appeared even with Move 2 or Move 3. Although it was realized as a conventional in the findings of Bunton's (2002) and Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2014) studies, Step 4 played an important role in that some of the writers in these two studies demanded to refer to previous studies to state the research gap(s) or to continue the study they were conducting. On the other hand, as elaborated in Cheung (2012), some writers were likely to review related literature in a separate chapter called *Literature Review*.

Apparently, it seems that Both Thai and American students neglected to employ Step 3 *Defining terms* in their thesis introductions. Compatible with several studies (e.g. Bunton, 2002; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014; Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, & Gil-Salom, 2011), this optional step was only present in two Introductions or 6.67% in the ASI corpus, whereas it failed to show up in the TSI corpus. The possible reason might be that the students of the two groups tend to define specific keyterms in Move 3 in a paragraph of text or as a separate part entitled *Definitions of Terms* or any other related heading. This is a common practice realized in Move 3, especially among Thai master's students.

The following are some instances of Steps realized in Move 1.

1) *Scholars have reiterated the fact that lexicon study is of great importance to and a central part of language learning*. (M1S1)(ASI#12)

2) *Collocations are the way in which particular combinations of two or more words are used frequently and naturally in spoken and written language such as make an appointment, rancid butter, and absolutely fascinated.* (M1S2)(TSI#7)

3) *A genre has been defined by Swales and Feak (2009) as "a type of text or discourse designed to achieve a set of communicative purposes"(p. 1)*. (M1S3)(ASI#1)

4). *Many researchers (Wongsuriya, 2003; Promshoit, 2010; Phuphanpet, 2004 & Kethongkum 2005), who have conducted research on vocational students' listening and speaking abilities, agree that vocational students have deficiencies in their speaking ability.* (M1S4)(TSI#11)

3.2.2 Move 2 *Establishing a Niche*

As shown in Table 4 below, it is noteworthy that Step 1B *Indicating a problem or need* was the most prominent step in this move as it appeared in 30 TSI corpus as an obligatory step (100%). Meanwhile, it was realized as a conventional step in the ASI corpus for the reason that it was found in 29 TSI theses (96.67%). The writers used this step more frequently, instead of the others, to raise problems or needs about the topic of study as a supportive reasoning element to their studies to be conducted (see Examples 5-6).

On the contrary, the writers of the two corpora adopted Step 1A *Indicating a gap in research* in their thesis Introductions as an optional step (see Example 7). Step 1A was identified in 10 ASI theses (33.33%) and 12 TSI theses (40%). This is in line with Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014) that only 16.67% of their research corpus contained Step 1A, but 66.67% of the Vietnamese students preferred Step 1B in their Introductions. As the communicative purpose of Step 1A is to illustrate a gap in previous studies reviewed, demonstrating a loophole in previous research (Step 1A) could be a very difficult task for the students. Also, since these graduate students were in the status of a novice researcher, they seemed to avoid employing this step but using the other steps, e.g. Step 1B, to establish a research niche instead (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014). In addition, it is possible, as Belcher (1995) described, that master's students seem not to be heavily trained on addressing any insufficient points of adequacy in earlier research studies. They, therefore, opted to choose one of the other steps to raise an argument in relation to their studies

Apart from the status of being a novice researcher mentioned above, cultural norms of different groups of language users could be a possible explanation for such occurrences. The similar incidents were also found in the Korean, Vietnamese, Spanish cultures (Choe & Hwang, 2014; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014; Soler-Monreal Carbonell-Olivares & Gil-Salom, 2011). As described in Jogthong's (2001) study, it seems to be a common norm that criticizing others' works is considered improper in the Thai culture, as well as in other cultures. However, as shown in the findings, not only did a small number of Thai students point out a research gap in previous studies, but also only did some of the American university students. One possible reason is that giving direct criticism of weaknesses in previous research might not be a common practice among master's students in novice researchers' culture. That is, writing habits are a result of culture influences, and writing itself is apparently a product of activities in each particular culture (Mauranen, 1993). Therefore, fewer uses of Step 1A may reflect writing hablits and thoughts of the writers.

Table 4. Move-step identification and classification of Move 2 *Establishing a Terriroty*

Moves/Steps	ASI Corpus (N = 30)	TSI Corpus (N = 30)
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	30 (100%)***	30 (100%)***
1A: Indicating a gap in research	12 (40%)*	10 (33.33%)*
1B: Indicating a problem or need	29 (96.67%)**	30 (100%)***
1C: Question-rasing	4 (13.33%)*	–
1D: Continue a tradition	–	–
Counter-claiming	–	–
+Giving solution	1 (3.33%)*	–

Remark: *** = obligatory, ** = conventional, * = optional, + = newly realized step.

5) *To be in a better position in the competitive world, English language teaching in Thailand has to be improved in order to prepare students to become good language learners with good communication skills.* (M2S1B)(TSI#2)

6) *However, there is an increasing number of applicants who have fulfilled the academic requirements for admission (i. e., they have high enough academic GPAs from their home country institutions) but have not scored high enough on a standardized English language test, such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), or International English Testing System (IELTS), in order to be admitted to a U.S. institution of higher education unconditionally.* (M2S1B)(ASI#10)

7) *In the Thai educational context, there is no study has been conducted on a reading instruction based on team-based learning approach.* (M2S1A)(TSI#1)

Step 1C *Question-rasing* is used to mention exising questions from the findings of previous studies. Based on the findings, it was identified as an optional step in the two datasets. This step rarely appeared in the ASI corpus, only found in 4 ASI Introductions (13.33%). It was, however, not present in the TSI corpus (0%). Similar to Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014), Step 1C was realized with very low frequency of occurrences (16.67%). Besides, a newly identified step found was *Giving Solution* (GS). Only one American student used this optional

step to propose a possible solution to the problem raised. It is apparent that although these two steps existed in the ASI and TSI datasets, the steps served relatively as minor elements of thesis Introdutctions. Examples 8 and 9 below refer to Step 1C *Question-rasing* and *Giving Solution*, respectively.

8) *However, it is not clear whether syntactic information is used in determining lexical identity, and if so, to what degree this is common.* (M2S1C)(ASI#15)

9) *Additionally, as a student learning…, I noticed that the best way to teach struggling readers was to be explicit in reading instruction, including comprehension skills, that engaged them in interactive and social ways, such as employing SDAIE (Specially Designed Academic Instruction in English) strategies.* (M2GS)(ASI#5)

3.2.3 Move 3 *Presenting Present Research (Occupying the Niche)*

To extend the niche presented in Move 2, the students of the two groups employed the obligatory Move 3 and its steps, as decribed in Table 5. Step 1 *Purposes, aims, or objectives* was shown as a conventional step in 27 ASI theses (86.67%), consistent with Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, and Gil-Salom (2011). However, it was used as an obligatory step in the TSI corpus (100%). This step was also coined obligatory in Nguyen and Pramoolsook's (2014) and Bunton's 2002 findings that the writers preferred to give specific purposes of doing such research after they presented the niche. This could be the final answers or solutions to a problem or need they raised to be filled.

Below are examples of Step 1 found in the two corpora.

10) *The primary purpose of this study is to identify the strategies used by the advanced and intermediate ESL learners at IEPS to enhance their listening comprehension in the academic context.* (M3S1)(ASI#11)

11) *To investigate language learning strategies used by secondary school students in an English program.* (M3S1)(TSI#2)

Equally important, Step *Research questions/Hypotheses* (RQ/H) played an important role in constructing thesis Introduction. This step was regularly written in a separate part. Both Thai and American students presented their research questions or hypotheses as one of the beginning steps of doing their research. This step was identified conventional in the ASI corpus (93.33%). Yet, like Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014), it functioned as an obligatory step in the TSI corpus (100%). In contrast, Step 4 was an optional selection in Spanish and English Ph.D. thesis Introductions in the field of computering (10% and 50%, respectively), as found in Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, and Gil-Salom's (2011) work. The existence of more or fewer occurrences of the step sheds light on a predictable writing pattern of a specific community. It is quite noticeable that one tends to follow a common writing pattern of completed theses submitted to universities. New thesis writers are likely to apply a repeated pattern of those theses submitted. A separate section of research questions and/or hypotheses (Step RQ/H) is one of those examples. An instance of this step is displayed in Example 12.

Another step analyzed to be an important step in the two corpora was *Defining terms* (DT) (see Example 13). The students provided their readers with adequate working definitions of terms coined in their studies. The readers can understand each term mentioned in a sense of a specific context. The occurrence frequency was 26.67% (conventional) in the ASI corpus and 100% (obligatory) in the TSI corpus. As mentioned in Section 3.2.1, specific terms mentioned in the theses collected were clarified their meanings in a separate section. It can be concluded that Thai students followed this tradition of defining terms in a separate part from those complete theses submitted to universities.

12) *1. There is a significant difference between translation method and pictorial method in recall and retention new vocabulary at the elementary level.*

2. There is no significant difference between translation method and pictorial method in recall and retention new vocabulary at the elementary level. (M3RQ/H)(ASI#15)

13) *1. Out-of-class English language learning activities mean any kind of learning activities that take place outside the formal classroom setting and involve self-instruction, naturalistic learning, or self-directed naturalistic learning (Benson, 2001)…….*

2. Secondary school students refer to students who are enrolled in the secondary education (Mattayomsuksa one to six) according to the Basic Education Curriculum B,E. 2544 (A.D. 2001) (Ministry of Education, 2001). (M3DT)(TSI#22)

Table 5. Move-step identification and classification of Move 3 *Presenting Present Research*

Moves/Steps	ASI Corpus (N = 30)	TSI Corpus (N = 30)
Move3: Announcing the Present Research (Occupying the Niche)	30 (100%)***	30 (100%)***
1: Purpose, aims, or objectives	27 (90%)**	30 (100%)***
2: Work carried out	-	–
3: Method	9 (30%)*	14 (46.67%)*
4: Materials or Subjects	6 (20%)*	28 (93.33%)**
5: Finding or Results	5 (16.67%)*	4 (6.67%)*
6. Product of research/Model proposed	–	–
7: Significance/Justification	22 (73.33%)**	20 (66.67%)**
8: Thesis structure	20 (66.67%)**	22 (73.33%)**
Chapter structure	2 (6.67%)*	5 (16.67%)*
Research questions/Hypotheses	28 (93.33%)**	30 (100%)***
Theoretical position	6 (20%)*	–
Defining terms	8 (26.67%)*	30 (100%)***
Parameters of research	4 (13.33%)*	4 (13.33%)*
Application of product	–	–
Evaluation of product	–	–
+Chapter summary	2 (6.67%)*	5 (16.67%)*
+Limitations	–	2 (6.67%)*

Remark: *** = obligatory, ** = conventional, * = optional, + = newly realized step.

The analysis further showed that American university students were less likely to use Step 4 Meterials or Subjects in their ELT thesis Introduction than those Thai students did. Only six American students (20%) elaborated their research materials or research subjects in their studies, while 28 Thai students (93.33%) employed this conventional step as their writing strategy to mention what or who involved in their studies. However, this step was rarely present in TESOL thesis Introductions (2 out of 12 or 16.67%) written by Vietnamese master's students (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014).

Step 7 *Significance/Justification* and Step 8 *Thesis structure* were often realized in the two corpora. Twenty Thai and twenty-two American students used Step 7 as a conventional step to demonstrate the importance of their research. This step frequently showed up after Move 3 Step 1 *Purposes, aims, or objectives*. Similarly, 20 thesis structures or 66.67% were identified in the ASI dataset as a conventional step, and it is also conventional in the TSI dataset, found in 22 TSI Introductions or 73.33%. The findings of these two steps agree with those investigated by Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014) and Soler-Monreal, Carbonell-Olivares, and Gil-Salom (2011).

Another similarity between the two datasets is that Step 3 *Method*, *Chapter Structure*, *Theoretical Position* and *Parameters of Reseaerch* appeared to play an insignificant role in thesis Introductions. These miscellaneous steps were labelled optional since they were used to provide minor information of thesis Introductions. This is correspondent with Cheung (2012) and Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014) in that this explains the viewpoint of the writing flexibility and appropriateness of a particular topic being presented. These steps might not be required to be stated in thesis Introductions; however, it is possible to add one (or more) of these steps to constitute or support the topic the writer is reporting.

Chapter summary, one of the two newly realized steps other than those specified in Bunton's (2002) model, served as one of the final sections of ELT thesis Introductions where some writers summarized their thesis Introduction chapters. This is in line with Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2014) in that this step was optional in both corpora, occurring in 2 ASI thesis Introductions (6.67%) and 5 TSI thesis Introductions (16.67%). Cheung (2012) also found in her study a few Singaporean graduate students, e.g. in the fields of applied linguistics and physical

education, employed this step in their Move 3 of their thesis Introductions.

The other new step realized was *Limitations*. Only two Thai students discussed some limitations of their studies. This is consistent with Cheung (2012) that it rarely appeared in thesis Introductions. One possible reason that could explain this little use of this step is that graduate students normally discuss the limitations of their studies in the last chapter of the thesis entitled *Discussion*. Thesis Introductions serve as a crucial part of a thesis proposal; in consequence, thesis writers have a high tendency to present positive claims regarding their studies.

4. Conclusion

This comparative study sought to investigate rhetorical structure of master's thesis Introduction chapters in ELT (English Language Teaching) composed by Thai and American university students. The analytical framework proposed by Bunton (2002) was found to be practical to underline significant homogeneity and variation in terms of move-step employment and culture of writing displayed in the two sets of data (the ASI and TSI corpora). In this regard, the analysis showed that both Thai and American university students preferred all the three moves suggested by Bunton's (2002). However, the analysis further declared the students' preferences of move-step selection when composing the Introduction of their theses.

The findings highlight a close relationship between the two distinctive moves, Move 1 *Establishing a Territory* and Move 2 *Establishing a Niche*. Both Thai and American university students demonstrated the principal communicative purpose of master's thesis Introduction chapter by employing these two moves. That is, these thesis writers elaborated background or current state of their research area and reviewed previous related research. Then they described their research boundary by introducing opposing viewpoints or showing a research gap in those previous studies. Move 3 *Announcing the Present Research*, in addition to the aforesaid two moves, pointed out a proposed solution to help bridge the gap(s) or solve the problem(s) previously stated in Move 2. Although this move positioned there with least frequency, the writers used it as a compulsory move to show the fulfillment of their research intention.

In spite of the similarity of the move employment used by the two groups of students, the findings portray aspects of cultural awareness of writing as indicated by the uses of steps identified. One significant point of this perspective is the way both Thai and American university students created their research niche or Move 2. As being novices in the research community, the two groups of students embraced fewer employments of Move 2 Step 1A *Indicating a gap in research*. Additionally, master's students might not be mostly trained to establish an argument towards loopholes in previous research studies (Belcher, 1995). Instead, they sought for one of the other elements, e.g. Move 2 Step 1B *Indicating a problem or need*, to show prioritized awareness of current situations in relation to their research areas (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014). Furthermore, cultural norms and practices in local communities of each particular language can be another possible attribution of this phenomenon. Explicit criticism of previous research works may not be typically applicable in those in collectivism communities, e.g. the Korean, Thai and Vietnames cultures (Choe & Hwang, 2014; Jogthong, 2001; Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014). This depicts the view of collectivism in that a particular cultural trait is seen as a general value of a whole of group, not of that individual. However, differences of language users might not be the only one factor of such fewer occurrences of Move 2 Step 1A. Mauranen (1993) highlighted that writing habits mirrors culture influences. Also, in each particular culture, products of activities in each culture can be seen through writing itself. To conclude, more uses of Move 2 Step 1B, instead of Move 2 Step 1A, is attributed to social practices among master's students in novice researchers' culture.

In this study, the findings also reflect a connection between diversity and continuity of cultural practices in a local community. Based on my observation, Thai students, in their local thesis community, are more likely to follow a similar organization of thesis Introduction. They tend to follow thesis instruction guidelines as well as thesis Introduction components constituted in theses submitted to Thai universities. Headings, subheadings, and even feedbacks from thesis supervisors have a great effect on an arrangement of thesis Introduction organization to which new comers to the community tend to conform. On the contrary, the analysis of move-step realization mirrors some variations on thesis Introduction organization in that American university students might not prefer a rigid structure of thesis in their local community. Different arrangements of (sub)headings, together with thesis supervisors' comments, influence a variety of move-step use. Therefore, these mentioned variables echo flexibility and varieties of possible layout of thesis Introductions accepted into a local thesis community.

In short, a possible organization of thesis Introductions exists as described in Bunton's (2002) framework. Even though variations of move-step employment or cultural norms possibly prevail in a thesis Introduction, this introductory chapter of a thesis still has the single aim at presenting an overview and significance of a study. This study has attempted to make a significant contribution to the community of novice researchers, especially

non-native speakers of English. It is truly hoped that this will be practically useful for both teachers and learners of academic writing.

4.1 Pedagogical Implications

The results of the study have drawn significant pedagogical implications for both EFL/ESL teachers and learners. EFL/ESL teachers should recommend their students a rhetotical arrangement of moves and steps in order to successfully compose their master's thesis Introduction chapter. It is due to the fact that most master's students have been facing difficulty writing their graduate research (Dong, 1998). Introduction chapter is a specific section that they need to show their writing ability, logical ideas and contributions to the field of study (Weissberg & Buker, 1990). Therefore, the findings of the present study are practically useful for thesis Introduction writing.

Also, there should be a new creative form of course materials, e.g. online training materials, providing students with guidelines on how to logically write a thesis Introduction chapter. Linguistic signals, keywords, and phrases of unique moves and steps should also be provided for quick and easy uses. This will be a significant advantage for those who are required to complete thesis writing, especially for non-native English speaking students (Flowerdew, 2002).

4.2 Recommendations for Further Research

Some perspectives for further studies are hereby portrayed in order. As genre analysis approach outlines predictable structure of texts, it is interesting enough to investigate rhetorical conventions of graduate theses/dissertations across disciplines as disciplinary variations exist in each specific genre. It is suggested that corpus analytical tools be brought into the analysis. A larger number of samples are worth to be remarked. In addition, aspects of cultural differences of texts are truly worth being observed. This can help gain insights into how language users convey their thoughts in a particular culture or cross-cultural context, which will contribute to the flexible phonomena of communication through academic texts. Also, research on complexity of academic language use is interesting to be conducted. This will layout an adequate level of complex academic language for those, especially non-native (novice) researchers, entering into scholarly communities.

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Appendix A

Examples of Distinctive Steps of Each Move in Bunton's (2002) Framework for Thesis Introductions

Moves/Steps	Sample Expressions
Move 1: Establishing a Territory	
Step 1: Claiming centrality	- The abstract,…, has gained significant attention in recent years. (TSI#4)
Step 2: Making topic generalization and giving background information	- As economies worldwide are recovering from the most recent financial crisis, Europe is fighting to uphold … (ASI#2)
Step3: Defining terms	- A genre has been defined by Swales and Freak (2009) as "a type of text or discourse…" (TSI#4)
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	
Step 1A: Indicating a gap in research	- While the reduction in minority referrals may include …, no study has documented the effectiveness of the IC Teams model with ELL students. (ASI#6)
Step 1B: Indicating a problem or need	- …poorly translated subtitles decrease the English language learning potential of movies seen by millions of Thai viewers. (TSI#7)
Move 3: Announcing the Present Research	
Step 1: Purposes, aims, or objectives	- The objectives of the present study were as follows：(TSI#7)
Step 3: Method	- The approach that is used to investigate this phenomenon is a cross sectional study ... (TSI#9)
Step 4: Materials of Subjects	- The population of this study was lower secondary level students in public schools in Bangkok… (TSI#9)
Step 7: Significance/ Justification	- …, the findings of this research on different types of errors found in movies will benefit language learners in several areas… (TSI#5)
Step 8: Thesis structure	- This thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 … (TSI#5)
Research questions/ Hypotheses	- Research Questions 1）What are the problems of Thai students …? 2)… (TSI#5)