The Role of EAP Genre-Focused Instruction in Preparing Novice Research Students for Thesis Writing: A Case Study

Wei Wang[1]

[1] College of Foreign Languages and Literature, Fudan University, China

Correspondence: Wei Wang, College of Foreign Languages and Literature, Fudan University, 220 Handan Road, Shanghai, 200433, China.

Abstract

Although writing master's theses are believed to be a major challenge for many L2 research students, there has been no extensive discussion about to what extent students are prepared for such advanced academic writing through learning in English for academic purposes (EAP) classes. This study investigated a group of novice research students learning to write master's theses in an EAP course at a Chinese university and explored their progress in developing genre knowledge. Data were drawn from interviews, participants' learning diaries, and their written texts. It was found that most learners had developed the macro-level formal genre knowledge, including the overall structure and content of thesis writing, and raised the declarative meta-cognitive genre awareness, but they had not yet grasped the tacit aspects of rhetorical knowledge, the micro-level formal knowledge, and the complicacy of process knowledge, including the abstract thinking processes, intertextuality, and the interpersonal meaning of academic texts, as well as the correspondent lexicogrammatical features. The nascent status of the students' genre knowledge developed in the EAP class, and the role of EAP genre-focused instruction in preparing novice research students for their future thesis writing, are further discussed. It is suggested that thesis-focused EAP writing courses take advantage of explicit instruction to inform students about the meta-generic specifications of thesis writing and emphasize the multiple dimensions of genre knowledge development.

1. Introduction

Theses, as the formal written work produced by master's students for the assessment of their study in degree programmes, could be the "longest and most challenging piece of assessed writing" for many L2 novice research students (Thompson, 2013, p. 284). In the thesis writing journey L2 students can encounter linguistic, rhetorical, and procedural difficulties, which, nevertheless, may not always be explicitly addressed by their disciplinary supervisors (Swales, 2004; Thompson, 2013). To support such advanced academic writing practice, EAP thesis writing classes and workshops are often offered to familiarize L2 students with thesis writing conventions and academic writing style. EAP genre-focused writing instruction, as the short-term scaffolding by non-disciplinary specialists, could be different from supervisors' guidance on thesis writing. It gives rise to a question as to the specific role of formal EAP instruction in preparing students for the assessed academic writing of theses, in particular, to develop students' genre knowledge about thesis writing. However, it seems an under-focused area of instruction-based genre learning research.

2. Learners' Genre Knowledge Development Through Learning in EAP Class

Learners' genre knowledge refers to their awareness and understanding of the discourse conventions and communication processes embedded in a target genre that is shaped and shared in particular discourse community (Johns, 2008). Tardy (2009) categorizes four domains of genre knowledge concerning the learning of disciplinary genres – formal, rhetorical, process, and subject-matter knowledge. Formal knowledge involves the "textual instantiation of [a] genre" (p. 21), including the typical form, content, and use of language. Process knowledge refers to the knowledge of all the relevant processes that carry out a genre, such as abstract thinking, text composing, and interaction with audiences and genre networks. Rhetorical knowledge, which overlaps with formal and process knowledge, concerns an understanding of socio-rhetorical dimensions inherent in a genre, such as the intended communicative purpose, the dynamics of persuasion, and social interaction with members in

a local community. Subject-matter knowledge is about writers' discipline-specific knowledge for meaning construction when writing in academic genres. During the genre learning trajectories, those four domains of knowledge increasingly integrate with each other and students move from nascent knowledge towards expertise.

Meanwhile, the availability of metacognition in developing genre knowledge has drawn increasing attention, as highlighted by the theoretical framework for genre knowledge, metacognition, and recontextualization (Tardy et al., 2020). Negretti and Kuteeva (2011) point out that learners' genre knowledge develops at different meta-cognitive levels, termed "metacognitive genre awareness" (p. 98). This refers to students' ability to reflect upon the knowledge about a target genre in the learning process. This concept designates three levels of meta-cognition for genre learning, namely: declarative awareness – learners' knowledge of *what* concepts and features are typical of a genre; procedural awareness – the knowledge of *how* they can apply genre knowledge in specific writing tasks; and conditional awareness – learners' knowledge of *when* and *why* they need to apply genre knowledge (Negretti & Kuteeva, 2011; Negretti & McGrath, 2018). Tardy *et al.* (2020) further explains that conditional knowledge links genre knowledge and metacognition, enabling writers to apply genre knowledge cross contexts for specific communicative purposes.

Previous studies of instruction-based genre learning show that learners can largely develop formal knowledge at the declarative level (Cheng, 2006; Starfield, 2003; Tardy, 2006), while the development of rhetorical and process knowledge depends on their learning aims regarding the status of academic study, and on their experiences in disciplinary practice (Cheng, 2008, 2011; Kuteeva, 2013; Paltridge, 2012; Thompson, 2013). Students who are fully engaged in disciplinary practice with prior or ongoing experiences of academic writing tend to build up not only the formal but also the rhetorical and procedural knowledge of a target genre, though to different meta-cognitive degrees (Cheng, 2008, 2011; Huang, 2014). Whether to develop more than formal genre knowledge is also affected by students' metacognition of genre learning (Wang, 2019) and their capacity to connect genre learning to their perceived disciplinary practice (e.g., disciplinary ways of knowledge construction, the communication processes in academic community) (Kuteeva, 2013; Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016; Tardy, 2009). In this light, to understand what and how much genre knowledge about thesis writing students develop in EAP classes in order to prepare them for future thesis writing, it seems necessary to consider the stage of students' study in degree programmes and the point of their thesis writing journeys. However, not much attention has been paid to the learning of the thesis genre in EAP instructional context, as compared to that of research articles.

To fill the gap, the study conducts a case study of a group of master's students who learned in an EAP thesis preparatory course as they newly started the study in degree programmes at a Chinese university, aiming to explore the following two research questions:

• What genre knowledge do novice research students develop through learning in the thesis writing course?

• To what extent are novice research students prepared for thesis writing through learning in the thesis writing course?

3. The Current Study

3.1 Context and Participants

The EAP thesis preparatory course under investigation, offered by the Department of English at a university in Mainland P. R. China, aims to prepare new master's students in the faculty for writing theses (15,000 words in English) as partial requirement of their degree programs. Students attending the course were from the disciplines of English literature and English linguistics; they were instructed in the generalized conventions of thesis writing for an English-speaking target audience and formal academic writing style. They were expected to adapt these to their future disciplinary writing of theses. The instruction included the following parts: the structure and content of master's theses in English literature and linguistics (e.g., reviewing literature, introduction writing, good titles and abstracts), writing skills for each part of a thesis (e.g. how to write a summary/ a critique, referring to source materials, stating facts, making claims), and use of language (e.g., skeletal examples of strong opening statement, vocabulary of signalling a research gap, verbs for citations); texts of sample theses in disciplines were used for genre analysis and discussion. The main writing tasks in the course were two drafts of an Introduction chapter, designed as pilot thesis writing. As the students had not yet started their disciplinary thesis work, the tasks were simulations of thesis chapter writing for pedagogical purposes.

Eight students (Ling, Fei, Mei, Fan, Yao, Ping, Ming, and Shu; pseudonyms) from the writing course formally consented to participating in the study on a voluntary basis. They had newly started their study in the master's degree programmes, and were currently doing coursework required by the programmes; they had no learning experiences of writing master's theses in English before attending the EAP class (Note 1).

3.2 Data Sources and Analysis

Data were drawn from interviews with the participants, the participants' learning diaries, and their written texts in the EAP course. Two-rounds of semi-structured interviews were conducted, one in the middle of semester when the students had received teacher feedback on their first drafts of thesis introduction writing and one at the end of the semester when they had submitted the final texts. The participants were asked to keep learning diaries until they finished study in the course. Their written texts in the class were collected as evidence for their genre knowledge to complement their self-reported retrospection of learning experiences.

Interview transcripts and learning diaries were analysed using the constant-comparative method. Through the cyclic procedures of open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Neuman, 2011), major themes concerning the research question were generated. Participants' written texts (two drafts of a thesis introduction chapter) were analysed both on the macro-level and the micro-level. The macro-level analysis concerned the move-step structure of a thesis Introduction. This consists of Move 1 – Establishing a research territory (creating a research space where a thesis writer's study is contextualized), Move 2 – Establishing a niche (identifying a specific area in the research space for the writer's own study), and Move 3 – Occupying the niche (presenting the writer's own study in the research area), with several steps within each move (Swales, 1990; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007). The move-step structure of a thesis Introduction has been developed from Swales' (1990) Create-a-Research-Space (CaRS) model of the Introduction of research articles, and is oriented towards the characteristics of thesis writing (Bunton, 2002; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, Note 2). The micro-level textual analysis focused on intertextuality and authorial stance, which are highlighted in the discourse studies of theses (Hyland, 2000; Samraj 2013; Swales, 1990). To establish the trustworthiness of the study, in the data analysis, the methods of peer debriefing (Note 3) and data triangulation were used.

4. Findings

4.1 Formal Knowledge Development

It was found that the students had grasped the macro-level formal knowledge of thesis writing. They reported in interviews an informed understanding of the form and content of master's theses, such as in Ping's remark that she came to understand the structure of different chapters of a thesis by following the instructor's lectures, and in Fan's words that "From Ms. Yang's instruction, I understood what a thesis is like, how to write a thesis." The students also commented that doing the EAP writing tasks enabled them to have a concrete sense of formal academic writing. For example, Yao said, "After writing the two drafts, I finally understood what the proper structure of an Introduction chapter is," and Ming recalled, "When I finished writing Draft 2, I felt much clearer about the academic writing format, the procedure of thesis writing." The analysis of their written texts showed that most of their revised drafts (except for Shu's) had the move-step structure that basically achieved the communicative purpose of a thesis introduction (see an example of Table 1 and more data in Appendix A).

Table 1. Move-step structure of Ping's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 4; Para. 8, S. 3-7	Recent studies have focused on the media portrayal of major diseases and its influence on public awareness.
M2-a	Para. 8, S. 2; Para. 9, S. 1-2	The influence of news media on public awareness of Alzheimer's disease has been less researched.
M3-a	Para. 10, S. 1, S. 5	This study is to explore the news coverage of Alzheimer's disease in two different countries and its influence on public awareness.

Note. Move1—Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2—Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3—Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research.

The students' texts also revealed problems of such details as evaluating the prior literature and referring to cited works. It showed that they had not fully grasped the formal features of intertextuality and authorial stance of thesis writing. These problems were found to relate to the students' level of rhetorical and process knowledge.

4.2 Rhetorical Knowledge

Regarding rhetorical knowledge, on the one hand, the students' learning reflections revealed that they were aware of major rhetorical functions embodied in thesis writing. They mentioned important meta-generic terms in interviews, such as "[to] present the general research field, then to identify a gap" (Ping) and "[presenting] the

general research background and then move to the research focus of the present study" (Ming). On the other hand, the students indicated having problems with the more subtle rhetorical parameters, particularly the intertextuality (the relationship between the prior literature and their own texts) and the interpersonal meaning of academic texts (the use of reporting verbs and conveying authorial stance). Their texts showed a lack of writers' own comment or evaluation concerning the prior literature and accordingly the lack of their own voice or argument, a finding also observed in previous studies of students' citation practice (Kamler & Thomson, 2008; Ridley, 2004). Most of the students' literature reviews read like just a list of summarized studies. Further, the students seemed unaware of the interpersonal meaning embedded in the nuanced use of reporting verbs in order to convey a varying degree of commitment to the cited works. For example, Mei and Ming's reason for using reporting verbs was simply "to avoid repetition," and Ling's choice of reporting verbs was for "the variety of expression"; they had no particular consideration of conveying the authorial stance. The students' texts displayed a confused use of reporting verbs – the arbitrary use of both the assertive (e.g., assert, believe, uphold) and the non-assertive (e.g., say, claim, propose, argue). The following is an example from Mei's text:

> Schnyder *claims* [emphasis added] the author of SGGK [*Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*] "was thoroughly familiar … (Schnyder, 17), and Savage even *believed* [emphasis added] the author had read … (Savage, 13) (Mei, written text, Draft 1, p. 3, Paragraph 3, Sentence 12).

In this sentence, Mei cited two scholars, Schnyder and Savage. However, she used the verb "claim" in the simple present tense when citing Schnyder, and the verb "believe" in the past tense when citing Savage. Usually, "claim" indicates a writer's distance from the cited view, and "believe" infers more commitment. But the use of the present tense usually implicates closeness to the writer's own view or research, while the past tense implies a certain distance (Swales & Feak, 2004).

4.3 Process Knowledge

The learners' disadvantage in understanding the more subtle rhetorical functions was found to bear a relationship to their under-developed process knowledge. Most of the learners had not engaged in the high-order abstract thinking processes entailed by thesis writing. They had no consideration of creating a research space for writing the draft introduction, their attention largely paid to the formal features. For instance, Shu said that the purpose of an Introduction was merely "to provide a summary of one's research project," Fan spoke of the purpose as "to provide readers a general impression of one's research topic," and Yao admitted, "I just wrote [Draft 2] following Ms Yang's feedback. I didn't think of any particular reason for writing this way." Regarding the practice of intertextuality, most learners reported their difficulty with this writing aspect. It showed that they had not sharpened the ability of critical thinking for shaping their own evaluation of the prior literature (cf., Pecorari, 2006; Ridley, 2004). For example, Fei remarked that she "found it difficult" to connect the prior literature to her own argument, and Yao recalled, "Ms. Yang said my citations lacked evaluation. It's a problem in my writing. But I'm still confused about the purpose of making citations."

5. Discussion and Pedagogical Implications

This study investigated to what extent the novice research students were prepared for their future thesis writing through learning in an EAP class. The findings of the students' formal, rhetorical, and process knowledge suggest that their genre knowledge had begun to take shape, but remained nascent, in terms of their genre knowledge development trajectory (Tardy, 2009). What the students absorbed was largely the concepts and strategies of thesis writing (such as the move-step structure and the major rhetorical functions), and their meta-cognitive genre awareness in the learning process was mostly on the declarative level. This indicates that initiating novice research students into the meta-generic specifications of thesis writing could be an important role for EAP instruction to undertake as it currently does not seem to be explicitly addressed in their study programmes or by their supervisors in disciplines (Peters, 2011; Swales, 2004; Thompson, 2013).

What most learners had not yet grasped (such as the abstract thinking processes, the intertextuality, and the interpersonal meaning of academic texts, as well as the correspondent lexicogrammatical features) also demonstrates that their genre knowledge remained nascent (Tardy, 2009) and their procedural and conditional meta-cognitive genre awareness had not been raised by attending the EAP class. Admittedly, those are the more expert skills of thesis writing so require accumulative experiences of disciplinary practice and academic research writing rather than simply acquiring them in formal EAP instruction (Mansourizadeh & Ahmad, 2011; Tardy, 2009). Further, as the students had not engaged in their actual thesis work, they were more concerned with *what* the thesis writing convention was in order to fulfil the course requirements, than to further reflect on *how* the writing convention could be appropriately substantiated and *why* a thesis should be written in such a conventional way. Nonetheless, the students' declarative knowledge of thesis writing that they had developed in

the EAP class can still serve as preparedness for the more advanced procedural and conditional knowledge they will obtain through engagement in their future disciplinary writing of theses (Wang, 2018).

Thesis-focused EAP writing classes provide a scaffolding role different from supervisors', so should take advantage of explicit instruction to inform students about the meta-generic specifications of thesis writing. For a pre-thesis EAP writing class with novice research students (such as the one reported here), the genre-focused instruction should take into account that this is the very beginning point of students' thesis writing journey and so highlight thesis-relevant concepts and writing strategies, especially those tacit dimensions (e.g., the underlying rhetorical functions) that would probably not otherwise be addressed, in order to initiate the novice research students into the process of writing theses which will confront them in disciplinary practice. Meanwhile, task design for thesis writing strategies (e.g., writing a critique, referring to source materials) can emphasize abstract thinking skills (Pecorari, 2006; Ridley, 2004), for example, exercises of synthesizing the prior literature from different perspectives, and evaluating a same cited work with the use of different reporting verbs. This could help to strengthen learners' procedural meta-cognitive genre awareness in the learning process.

References

Bunton, D. (2002). Generic moves in PhD thesis introductions. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic Discourse* (pp. 57−75). London: Longman.

Cheng, A. (2006). Understanding learners and learning in ESP genre-based writing instruction. *English for Specific Purposes*, *25*(1), 76−89. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.07.002

Cheng, A. (2008). Individualized engagement with genre in academic literacy tasks. *English for Specific Purposes*, *27*(4), 387−411. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2008.05.001

Cheng, A. (2011). Language features as the pathways to genre: Students' attention to non-prototypical features and its implications. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *20*(1), 69−82. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2010.12.002

Huang, J. C. (2014). Learning to write for publication in English through genre-based pedagogy: A case in Taiwan. *System*, *45*, 175−186. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2014.05.010

Hyland, K. (2000). *Disciplinary discourses: Social interactions in academic writing*. Harlow: Longman.

Johns, A. M. (2008). Genre awareness for the novice academic student: An ongoing quest. *Language Teaching*, *41*, 237−252. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004892

Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2008). The failure of dissertation advice books: Toward alternative pedagogies for doctoral writing. *Educational Researcher*, *37*(8), 507−514. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X08327390

Kuteeva, M. (2013). Graduate learners' approaches to genre-analysis tasks: Variations across and within four disciplines. *English for Specific Purposes*, *32*(2), 84−96. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2012.11.004

Kuteeva, M., & Negretti, R. (2016). Graduate students' genre knowledge and perceived disciplinary practices: Creating a research space across disciplines. *English for Specific Purposes*, *41*, 36−49. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2015.08.004

Mansourizadeh, K., & Ahmad, K. U. (2011). Citation practices among non-native expert and novice scientific writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *10*, 152−161. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.03.004

Negretti, R., & Kuteeva, M. (2011). Fostering metacognitive genre awareness in L2 academic reading and writing: A case study of pre-service English teachers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *20*(2), 95−110. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2011.02.002

Negretti, R., & McGrath, L. (2018). Scaffolding genre knowledge and metacognition: Insights from an L2 doctoral research writing course. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *40*, 12−31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2017.12.002

Neuman, W. L. (2011). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Boston, Mass.: Pearson Education.

Paltridge, B. (2012). Theses and dissertations in English for specific purposes. In C. Chapelle (Ed.), *The encyclopaedia of applied linguistics*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405198431.wbeal1211

Paltridge, B., & Starfield, S. (2007). *Thesis and dissertation writing in a second language*. London: Routledge Falmer. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203960813

Pecorari, D. (2006). Visible and occluded citation features in postgraduate second-language writing. *English for Specific Purposes*, *25*, 4−29. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.04.004

Peters, S. (2011). Asserting or deflecting expertise? Exploring the rhetorical practices of master's theses in the philosophy of education. *English for Specific Purposes*, *30*(3), 176−185. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2011.02.005

Ridley, D. (2004). Puzzling experiences in higher education: Critical moments for conversation. *Studies in Higher Education*, *29*(1), 91−107. https://doi.org/10.1080/1234567032000164895

Samraj, B. (2013). Form and function of citations in discussion sections of Master's theses and research articles. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *12*, 299−310. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2013.09.001

Starfield, S. (2003). The evolution of a thesis-writing course for Arts and Social Sciences students: What can applied linguistics offer? *Hong Kong Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *8*, 137−154.

Swales, J. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. (2004). *Research genres: Exploration and applications*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139524827

Swales, J., & Feak, C. B. (2004). *Academic writing for graduate students: A course for non-native speakers* (2nd ed.). Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Tardy, C. M. (2006). Researching first and second language genre learning: A comparative review and a look ahead. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *15*(2), 79−101. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2006.04.003

Tardy, C. M. (2009). *Building genre knowledge*. West Lafayette, IN: Parlor Press.

Tardy, C. M., Sommer-Farias, B., & Gevers, J. (2020). Teaching and researching genre knowledge: Toward an enhanced theoretical framework. *Written Communication*, *37*(3), 287−321. https://doi.org/10.1177/0741088320916554

Thompson, P. (2013). Thesis and dissertation writing. In B. Paltridge & S. Starfield (Eds.), *Handbook of English for specific purposes* (pp. 283−299). Boston: Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118339855

Wang, W. (2018). *Researching learning and learners in genre-based academic writing instruction*. Bern: Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/b13181

Wang, W. (2019). Exploring academic writing learners' metacognitive knowledge, genre awareness and genre knowledge development. *Foreign Language Education in China*, *2*(2), 73−80, 93.

Notes

Note 1. For the detailed information of the study context and participants, also see Wang, W. (2018). *Researching learning and learners in genre-based academic writing instruction* (pp. 69−72). Bern: Peter Lang. https://doi.org/10.3726/b13181

Note 2. The students' disciplinary specificity, especially that of the English literature, was taken into account both in teaching (by providing sample texts of theses in students' disciplines with detailed analysis) and in analysing students' texts (the variation of move-step structure by each participant was considered and evaluated).

Note 3. A colleague of mine who is experienced in qualitative analysis for academic writing research was invited to ask me questions about data categorization and crosscheck the interpretation, so as to minimize the possible personal bias and remove ambiguous points in the results.

Appendix A

Move-Step Structure of Participants' Written Texts

Table A1. Move-step structure of Yao's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 2-9; Para. 10, S. 1	Previous studies approached Milton's ambivalent attitude to women in *Paradise Lost* from the biblical origins or the text of *Paradise Lost* itself.
M2-a	Para. 10, S. 2	Milton's ambivalent attitude to women in *Paradise Lost* has seldom been studied from the perspective of Milton's historical background.
M3-a	Para. 11, S. 1	This study is to explore Milton's ambivalent attitude to women in *Paradise Lost* from the perspective of Milton's historical background.

Note: Move1- Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2- Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3- Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research.

Table A2. Move-step structure of Fei's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 4, S. 1-4/6-7; Para. 5, S. 2-4; Para. 6, S. 2-4; Para. 8, S. 2-4	Previous studies have investigated Edward Said's conception of "late style" by analysing Edward Said's own works.
M2-a	Para. 5, S. 5; Para. 6, S. 1; Para. 8, S. 5	There are two problems in previous research on Edward Said's late style: (a) these studies tended to confuse Edward Said's late style with his political concerns, and (b) these studies seldom compared Edward Said's late works with his early works for understanding the conception of late style.
M3-a	Para. 1, S. 5; Para. 7, S.1; Para. 8, S. 12-13	This study is to examine Edward Said's late style by (a) focusing on the sense of approaching death, self-making, and a deviation from the former style, instead of the political orientations; and (b) comparing Edward Said's late work *Out of Place* with his early work *After the Last Sky*.

Note: Move1- Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2- Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3- Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research.

Table A3. Move-step structure of Mei's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 1, S. 2; Para. 2; Para. 3, S. 2-8; Para. 4, S.1-5; Para. 5, S. 2	Previous studies on Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* tend to adopt the male-centred perspective.
M2-a	Para. 5, S. 1, S. 3, S. 9	Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* has been seldom studied by the woman-centred approach and the historical perspective of the Middle Ages.
M3-a	Para. 7, S. 1	This study takes the historical perspective of the Middle Ages to analyse Morgan le Fay in *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight*.

Note: Move1- Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2- Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3- Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research.

Table A4. Move-step structure of Ming's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 11, S. 3-5	Previous studies on translation competence have focused more on theory development than pedagogy.
M2-a	Para. 11, S. 4, S. 6	Few studies have explored the pedagogy for developing learners' transfer competence (an essential component of translation competence) in translation teaching.
M3-a	Para. 12, S. 1	This study is to develop a pedagogical approach to developing learners' transfer competence.

Note: Move1- Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2- Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3- Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research.

Table A5 Move-step structure of Fan's written text (Draft 2)

Move-Step (obligatory)	Paragraph (Para.) and sentence (S.)	Propositional content
M1-c	Para. 1, S. 3; Para. 4, S. 1	Previous studies have focused on three dimensions of Keats' poetic principle of Negative Capability: beauty, truth, and imagination.
M2-a	Para. 1, S. 4; Para. 4, S. 2, S. 4	Another dimension needs to be considered in Negative Capability: tribulation in the real world.
M3-a	Para. 4, S. 3; Para. 6, S. 1	This study examines the integration of beauty, truth, and imagination of Negative Capability by analysing Keats' poem "Ode to a Nightingale"*.

Note: Move1- Step c refers to introducing and reviewing items of previous research; Move 2- Step a refers to indicating a gap in the previous research; Move 3- Step a refers to outlining purposes/aims, or stating the nature of the present research. *The propositional content of M3-a in Fan's Draft 2 was problematic. It did not address M2-a.