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## **Research Article Introductions: Sub-disciplinary Variations in Applied Linguistics**

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### **Abstract**

The present study aimed to investigate the generic organization of research article introductions in local Iranian and international journals in English for Specific Purposes, English for General Purposes, and Discourse Analysis. Overall, 120 published articles were selected from the established journals representing the above subdisciplines. Each subdiscipline was represented by 20 local and 20 international articles. Following Swales' (2004) new Create A Research Space (CARS) model, the researcher analyzed the articles for their specific generic patterns. Findings demonstrated that despite some consistency in the international corpus, there emerged marked differences in utilizing second and third moves in international articles. Also, intra-subdisciplinary analysis revealed divergent generic organization in EGP and DA in local and international data. Results suggested insufficient awareness of some Iranian RA writers regarding the generic structure of introduction. The findings of the study have implications for RA writers to improve their RA introductions.

**Keywords:** 1. Research Article 2. Introduction 3. English for Specific Academic Purposes 4. Discourse Analysis 5. Subdiscipline.

## 1. Introduction

The field of genre analysis accounts for tremendous theoretical and practical changes in academic settings in the past two decades. Researchers in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) have conducted a host of studies on spoken and written genres in order to identify and analyze their major and minor structures. According to Dudley Evans and John (1998: 87), one of the main advantages of genre analysis is its ability to relate textual findings to features of the discourse community within which a genre is produced (91-92). That is, genre analysis relates the linguistic features of a genre to the action they perform (Henry & Roseberry, 2001: 154).

This trend in academic discourse has resulted in a substantial literature in English on a variety of academic genres such as abstracts, presentations, lectures, theses, dissertations, and research articles. The *Research article* (RA), however, has received a great deal of attention by genre analysts because of "its importance for the circulation of academic knowledge" (Peacock, 2002: 480). Research articles, as contended by Kousantoni (2006), constitute one of the key genres used by scientific communities for the dissemination and ratification of knowledge (20). Researchers, therefore, have examined the rhetorical structure of RAs including acknowledgements (Giannoni, 2002), abstracts (Samraj, 2005; Martin, 2003), methods (Hwa Lim, 2006), results (Brett, 1994; Williams, 1999), discussions (Holmes, 1997; Peacock, 2002) and discussions and conclusions (Ruiying & Allison, 2003). However, the introduction, among other article sections, has received special attention particularly following Swales' (1990) Create A Research Space (CARS) model. These studies have shown that, in general, the CARS model can account for the structural organization (move structure) of RA introductions irrespective of discipline.

Research has however demonstrated that the organization of RA introductions varies significantly not only across disciplines (Holmes, 1997; Samraj, 2002, 2005; Swales, 1990; Swales & Najjar, 1987, as cited in Swales, 1990) but also within disciplines (Ozturk, 2007). Ozturk (2007) explored the degree of variability in the structure of research article introductions of second language acquisition and second language writing research as two subdisciplines of applied linguistics. A number of

subdisciplinary variations were identified. The two subdisciplines employed different and almost unrelated move structures. In Second Language Acquisition one type of move was predominant while in the Second Language Writing two different types of moves were almost equally frequent (25).

Ozturk (2007) suggests that the three-move structure commonly employed in the hard sciences is apparently predominant in second language acquisition research as an established area of study with a relatively discrete and clearly defined boundary (33). Second language writing research, on the other hand, "can be regarded as an emerging field of inquiry within applied linguistics" (33). So the patterns of move structure were marked by extensive use of topic generalization and literature review. She assumes that second language writing researchers are pressed to provide more theoretical background in order to familiarize the readers from related or parent disciplines with the issue investigated. (34). Hence, they make use of extensive topic generalizations and review of literature.

The results of recent studies (Ozturk, 2007; Samraj 2002; Anthony, 1999 cited in Swales, 2004) call the applicability of CARS model into question. Recently Swales (2004) himself modified his CARS model reducing the number of steps in Move1 to only one: *topic generalizations of increasing specificity*. Review of literature is now not restricted to Move 1 Step 3 but it is said to occur throughout the introduction and the article as a whole (227). The four options of Move 2 in the 1990 model have been reduced to two, and now there is a new optional step (step 2) called *presenting positive justification* (230). Move 3 is renamed to *presenting the present work*, and the number of steps has been raised to seven with one obligatory, three optional and three "PSIF" (probable in some fields) steps (232).

The present study reports on an analysis of article introductions from three related subdisciplines of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for General Purposes (EGP), and Discourse Analysis (DA), as components of applied linguistics. Comparison of this type allows one to see how a genre is treated in a more established or in a less established subdiscipline. EGP has a longer history than ESP and DA as more newly developed areas within the broader field of applied linguistics. The

analysis included the RA introductions published in local and international journals in the above subdisciplines. The results of the present analysis indicated that although there are broad similarities in the rhetorical organization of this genre across its subdisciplines, there are nuances that add to our knowledge of subdisciplinary variations in academic writing. Since studies of these rhetorical aspects have focused largely on the introduction (e.g., Fakhri 2004; Keshavarz, Atai, & Barzegar, 2007; Samraj, 2005; Swales, 1990) or the results and discussion/conclusion sections (e.g., Brett, 1994; Holmes, 1997; Williams, 1999; Yang & Allison, 2003), and comparatively less attention has been given to introduction, local and international, in the subdisciplines from the same parent discipline, which may form an important component of both quantitative and qualitative studies in applied linguistics, this study attempts to address the following questions:

1. What rhetorical structures (Moves and Steps) characterize the English RA introductions published in local and international journals?
2. What generic differences are found in the introductions of the sub-disciplines of applied linguistics?

## **2. Methodology**

### **2.1 Definition of subdisciplines**

The subdisciplines selected in this study were English for Specific Purposes (ESP), English for General Purposes (EGP), and Discourse Analysis (DA). An awareness of the distinction between the subdisciplines is crucial to a full understanding of these terms and for identifying their boundaries for comparison.

#### **2.1.1 English for general purposes**

Jordan (1997) contends that EGP refers to the teaching of the speech-based and text-based language skills to school children for exam purposes or to non-schoolers for social purposes such as conversation encounters or survival English. So EGP isolates the skills associated with activities such as listening to street talks, practicing language structures, learning general functional vocabulary, reading textbooks, and other reading materials such as writing essays (4). According to this definition, RAs which targeted the four basic skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing and their sub-skills like vocabulary and grammar with no

content specific purpose orientation were regarded as EGP articles in the present study.

### **2.1.2 English for specific academic purposes**

Hutchinson and Waters (1987) define ESP as a goal-directed approach that focuses on learners and learning conditions. ESP is built on the notion of specificity of learners' needs as different from specificity of language. For them ESP is an enterprise that emphasizes language, pedagogy, and learner's interests. Dudley-Evans and John (1998) see these features as absolute characteristics of ESP. According to this definition, RAs dealing with specific needs, purposes, or the specific content area of academic study, using whatever tool for analysis, were considered as ESP articles.

### **2.1.3 Discourse analysis**

Discourse analysis, as defined by McCarthy (1991), deals with language in context; it evolves out of studies in "linguistics, semiotics, psychology, anthropology, and sociology", and it studies language use "from conversation to highly insituationalised forms of talk" (5). Based on this definition RAs that explored speech acts, discourse markers, cohesion and coherence, conversation and text analysis, communication strategies, critical discourse analysis and related issues were regarded as DA data.

## **2.2 Selection of subdisciplines**

Selection of the subdisciplines was motivated by the rapid growth in the number of research writers, particularly non-native speakers of English, which might have a bearing on the overall organization adopted for a research paper. The aim was, thus, to build a corpus representative of applied linguistics papers. A further reason was the tendency of the Iranian researchers to attach themselves to one of the above sub-disciplines which share a common set of general purposes. Another motivation was actually the large number of RAs that are published in the above areas and the number of journals representing these fields of study at national and international levels.

## **2.3 Materials**

The corpus consisted of 60 English article introductions from well-

established international and 59 from local English journals in the field of applied linguistics. That is, each subdiscipline was represented by 40 RA introductions, 20 introductions from local and 20 from international journals, except for ESP with 39 papers. Each subdiscipline was represented by an international journal, namely *English for Specific Purposes*, *English Language Teaching (ELT)*, and *Discourse Studies*. On the national basis these subdisciplines were represented by local journals of *Iranian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL)*, *Roshd FLTJ*, *Teaching English Language and Literature Society of Iran (TELLSI)*, *Iranian Journal of Language Studies (IJLS)*, *Journal of Faculty of Letters and Humanities* of Shahid Chamran University, *Journal of Humanities* of AL-Zahra university, and *Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities* of Shiraz University. The selection of local journals was motivated by their availability, that they are outlets for scholarly publication, and that they are considered as established journals by local EFL and ESL experts in the field. Since these local peer-reviewed journals are not defined by subdisciplinary characteristics, they accept articles related to the broad area of applied linguistics. Therefore, the content of these journals was closely examined to select the articles which represented the above mentioned subdisciplines. Despite great care exercised in defining the subdisciplines, still choosing a paper in the ESP journal as an ESP paper was a real conundrum. In order to minimize the risk of putting papers in the wrong category, two other researchers were also requested to judge the papers from about 360 international paper titles in ESP and DA and about 300 titles in national journals. The criterion was full agreement by the three raters on each paper.

A thorny trouble was accessing the local ESP articles because many of the articles in local journals have general English orientations rather than specific purposes or discourse orientation. Eventually, only those articles which were agreed (by the three researchers) to belong to a particular subdiscipline were selected. As the research was restricted to empirical studies, theoretical articles and articles published in special issues were excluded from the scope of the present study. The reason was the observation that the overall organization of an article may vary with its type (Crookes, 1986). In order to make the analysis more accurate and reliable and avoid the intervening variable of time, only RAs published

2000 onward were selected and included in the study. The following Table illustrates the number of articles published in local and international journals.

Table 1: Number of local and international articles in the three subdisciplines

	DA	ESP	EGP
National articles	20	19	20
International articles	20	20	20

## 2.4 Instrumentation

The instrument in this study was Swales' (2004: 230-232) CARS model for the analysis and comparison of introduction sections of local and international articles referred to earlier. The CARS model seems to be the most comprehensive framework, and its earlier version has been successfully and extensively applied by researchers on introductions in different disciplines. Also, as Ozturk (2007) maintains, the 2004 version of the CARS model successfully accounts for most of the limitations mentioned by many researchers against the previous one (27).

## 2.5 Procedure

The articles were selected based on their relevance to the subdisciplines. Since the study was to investigate the overall (macro) structure of RA introductions in the subdisciplines under study, all the other sections subsequent to introduction were excluded from this analysis. After the selection the texts were sorted to identify the moves and steps and their order in the text in each group. The notion of communicative purpose was central for analysis of RA introductions. However, there were cases where the communicative purpose of a unit text was not self-evident, or where multiple functions were served in the context. The common practice in these cases, as stated by Holmes (1997: 325), was to analyze the text according to the most salient function. This procedure, as contended by Holmes (1997) and Ruiying and Allison (2004), involves a degree of subjectivity that is perhaps unavoidable.

The analysis was carried out mainly by the researcher; however, in order to minimize the risk of arbitrariness, a subset of ten introductions from the corpus was randomly selected for further validation purposes.

Thus, this subset was analyzed by the researcher and a colleague who specializes in applied linguistics, independently, to determine the coder reliability and agree on the method of analysis. The results indicated a correlation of 0.92, i.e., a close correspondence of analysis. In order to improve and ensure the intra-rater reliability of the analyses the data was also analyzed for the second time by the researcher himself after a month interval and Phi coefficient of correlation was calculated. The obtained correlation was 0.95, indicating a strong relationship between the two times of analysis. Then the frequency of moves and steps for each group was calculated to detect the possible differences and to see whether the differences were significant. Subsequent to that the distribution patterns of moves and steps in each subdiscipline and average number of steps per text were computed. Then the relative frequency of moves and steps in each text was calculated to make the comparison possible.

### **3. Results and Discussion**

Due to the functional nature of the present study, the results and discussion on the findings are presented as follows:

a) Intra-subdisciplinary differences in the above mentioned subdisciplines in terms of move and steps applied (e.g., EGP introductions in local and international journals);

b) Inter-subdisciplinary comparison to check the moves and steps used by Iranian and non-Iranian writers in the above subdisciplines (e.g., EGP vs. DA introductions).

#### **3.1 Intra-subdisciplinary comparison of RA introductions**

##### **3.1.1 ESP introductions**

Analysis showed that introductions in ESP demonstrate similarities and differences. As depicted in Table 2, move 1 displayed very slight fluctuation between local and international introductions. However, more variations were observed in the other moves. Greater differences were observed in move 2, where researchers try to establish a niche for their research project.



Table 2: Frequencies of moves in ESP introductions

Move	Local	International
M1	17	18
M2	22	35
S1 A	10	24
S1 B	0	0
S 2	13	16
M3	28	31
S1	14	20
S2	11	5
S3	10	8
S4	2	5
S5	1	5
S6	1	2
S7	1	2

M1. *Establishing a territory*

M2. *Establishing a niche*

M3. *Presenting the present work*

Since the frequency difference in move 2 appeared great (22 to 35, as shown in Table 2), *chi-square* analysis was applied; this difference was, however, less than five in move 1 (17 to 18, as indicated in Table 2) and move 3 (28 to 31, as revealed in Table 2), and so this statistics was not used. Despite frequency differences in move 2, analysis revealed no statistically significant difference at  $p < 0.05$  ( $X = 2.94$ ). The results agreed with Fallahi Moghimi and Mobasher's (2007) analysis of 120 English and Persian Mechanical Engineering RA introductions. Their contrastive genre analysis revealed no significant differences in terms of move structure in Persian and English RAs introductions.

As shown in Table 2, international authors of ESP articles tended to lay more emphasis on move 2, which is *establishing the niche*. This move was realized through step 1A, *indicating the gap*, while step 1B, *adding to what is known* was not utilized at all. Step 2, *presenting positive justification*, was also substantially used in both corpora. Both Iranian and non-Iranian writers resorted to this move in order to establish a niche, to justify their research, and to show its validity. Therefore, the authors had to establish that the previous research literature was not complete and required more inquiry. To do this, authors presented challenges, indicated gaps, and raised problems.

Contrary to Iranian writers, non-Iranian writers of ESP had the tendency to put more emphasis on step 1A by showing the gap in the research history, the step which was not pinpointed as such by Iranians. Frequencies of move 3 utilized by Iranian and non-Iranian authors proved negligible differences between the groups. *Announcing present research*, the only obligatory step (S1) in Move 3, was used extensively by the international researchers, so this step was present in about all international RAs, but in local articles this was less frequent which implies that some local writers might not be aware of the obligatory function of this particular step or they used step 2 in place of step 1 to announce the present study. There was also a greater tendency by Iranian researchers to explicitly announce the research questions (M3-S2). Other steps were sporadically utilized in both corpora, with a greater frequency in international articles, alluding indirectly to the optional nature of these steps, and that they might not be characteristics of applied linguistics introductions. The greater frequency of these steps in international articles might also indicate the diversity involved in the structure of scholarly articles. It is likely that experienced researchers start an argument and let the argument unfold as they proceed, adopting rhetorical structures that suit the argument rather than sticking strictly to the generic conventions as suggested in the literature. The deviation from the standard practice is not only interesting but may also lead to greater creativity.

One structure that appeared in two international articles, which was not accounted for in Swales' (2004) model, enabled the RA authors to describe or define the corpus of their analysis. This part of the introduction may be considered as an optional step within move 3 because it contributes to presenting the reported study. This structure was called *data description*. Note the following example derived from an article published internationally.

*The aim of this paper is to demonstrate how ....*

*The genre chosen for the analysis was the Letter of Application. The communicative aim of this genre is to obtain an overview for a job by highlighting the most relevant information in the candidate's curriculum vitae. It allows the writer an open-ended creative opportunity for self-promotion....* (International authors).

The above authors, after stating the aim of their study (M3-S1), turned into elaborating the data used in their study, which was the *Letter of Application*, and explained its communicative functions. This element may help to situate the reported study and give the reader a clear picture of the sample of analysis and shed some light on the rationale for selection of the sample. Due to the function that was fulfilled in the texts, this element might be regarded as a distinguished new optional step.

### 3.1.2 Discourse analysis introductions

Differences in M1 and M2 were not great, but greater diversity was observed in M3 where authors state their goals and mention the structure of their study. The following Table depicts the frequency of moves and steps utilized in introductions of DA articles.

Table 3: *Frequencies of moves and steps in DA introductions*

	Local DA	International DA
M 1	20	16
M2	22	21
M3	31	52
S1	14	33
S2	9	6
S3	10	5
S4	3	13
S5	0	3
S6	1	1
S7	2	4

*Chi-square* test revealed the difference was significant at  $p < 0.05$  ( $X = 5.76$ ; critical value = 3.84). The sum of all the occurrences of steps of M3 was greater than M2 and M1 in both subcorpora alluding to the crucial nature of this move, and that this may be a subdiscipline specific feature. Results were in line with Keshavarz, Atai, and Barzegar's (2007) study of national and international RA introductions in applied linguistics in which they reported the same result in move 3 in their corpora.

Analysis of M3 revealed a difference particularly in S1, S3, and S4. As illustrated in Table 4, all the international RAs included step1, that is, *stating purpose or announcing the present research*, though not incorporated in some local articles. The preferred means for doing this, following Swales (2004), is "to stress the applicability of the research

reported, followed by claims about novelty of what is about to be described" (231). Statistically speaking, it was ignored by 30% of Iranian authors. Another option in move 3 is step 4, *summarizing the methods*, which was found in international RAs to a much greater extent. Swales (2004) adds that this step is used "especially in papers whose principal outcome can be deemed to reside in their methodological innovations, extended definitional discussions of key terms, detailing (and sometimes justifying ) the research questions or hypotheses, and announcing the principal outcomes" (231). Accordingly, this step was not attended by the majority of local researchers suggesting paucity of methodological innovations and greater replication in their studies. A further possible reason might be that Iranian researchers might have a fixed structure of RA in mind which they apply (un)consciously to their research presuming that nothing can be said about method until the researcher is through with the introduction after which the methodology naturally follows. This rigidity thwarts creativity in Iranian RAs and sometimes makes the RA appear under-informative.

Some international authors preferred to begin their articles by move 3, the pattern which was not conventional in the EGP, ESP, and not even in the local DA corpus. Statistically, 40% (8 out of 20) of RAs in the DA subdiscipline started and finished with move 3, which revealed particular attention and space devoted to occupying the niche. Only one local DA began by this move. We might expect a classroom essay to begin by initially stating the purpose; however, published articles do not usually start this way. Note the following examples:

1. *This article is concerned with a means by which members of a particular professional group, airline pilots, develop and maintain an ongoing sense of the coherence of their work: and –prefaced turns of talk.* (International author).

2. *In this article, we introduce a new pattern for initiating conversation on a mobile phone. Mobile phone talk is an ideal object for.....* (International author).

As pointed out above, authors may open their RA introduction with move 3. Swales (1990) mentions that "although this option is certainly possible, it does not seem as generally common as many might suppose" (165). In a study which was carried out by Swales and Najjar (1987, cited

in Swales, 1990), 10 out of 110 RAs opened with move 3. Swales mentions that this issue needs a little further investigation. Accordingly, he checked 19 RAs published in *RTE (Research in the Teaching of English)* in 1987 and found that move 3 was fronted in three out of 19 RAs (cited in Swales, 1990, p. 166). Thus, he reported that such cases were certainly more frequent than identified in Swales and Najjar (1987). The greater frequency of this attention-getting opening as compared to Swales (1990) and Swales and Najjar (1987) may be considered a subdisciplinary specific feature. In many discourse studies studied in the present research researchers deal with samples of authentic language for analysis and interpretation trying to argue meaning in context; so they need more space in the discussion section to expand their claims and arguments, and because they should comply with journal policy on the length of their article, they economize in earlier sections.

*Data description*, the new element of the introduction which was introduced earlier, was also utilized in international article introductions. In general, this element defines the material, sample, or the text based on which the analysis was carried out. Accordingly, as the result of the present study reveals, *data description*, not reported in previous studies, was present in 25% (5 out of 20) of DA introductions though ignored by the local writers.

### 3.1.3 EGP introductions

EGP introductions demonstrated similar rhetorical tendencies in local and international context of publication. The patterns of tendencies, moves and steps, are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4: Frequencies of moves and steps in EGP introductions

	Local DA	International DA
M 1	20	18
M2	24	12
M3	24	24
S1	15	16
S2	13	7
S3	8	5
S4	2	2
S5	0	2
S6	1	0
S7	0	0

*Chi-square* test of M2 showed a significant difference at 0.05 ( $X=4.00$ ; critical value= 3.84). Through this move researchers try to assure the readers of the importance, relevance, and recency of their research. Also, they attempt to convince the readers that what is going to be reported does not violate the public goals of the discourse community. Further, in move 2 they try to persuade the readers that the research was carried out to add something to the existing pool of knowledge. The ultimate goal is to reestablish the significance of the research in the eyes of the discourse community.

The frequency of move 2 in local articles was double the same move in international articles probably suggesting that international authors feel less need to present a long justification or indication of a gap to be filled. The greater concern of local authors is likely to show research depravity in the area so that they can occupy space for publication by winning approval from the journal editors. The difference may also indicate that Iranian writers are likely to possess a low share of knowledge in structuring their RA introductions according to the standards set by the target discourse community compared with international writers in EGP. On the contrary, since it is assumed (at least the researcher's assumption) that articles published internationally are more genuine in terms of the information that they offer, researchers usually emphasize research continuity, hence perhaps less need to depict a gap. Local researchers awareness of rhetorical organization of introduction may stem from their cultural tendency, that is, as Fakhri (2004) puts it forth, "the main features of Arabic discourse such as repetition and high-flown, ornamented expressions interact with rhetorical aspects of introduction" (1138).

### **3.1.4 Summary of the intra-subdisciplinary comparisons**

International writers tended to stress moves differently in different contexts of study. For example in ESP, international researchers appear elaborative on move 2, but no such thing appears in EGP. This degree of variety can be explored by the notions of *established* and *emerging* fields. Following Samraj (2005), *emerging* fields refer to "fields of inquiry that borrow from more than one parent discipline" (144). Taking Hyland's (1999) study a departure point, the researcher suggests that in established fields of inquiry writers see themselves "as inhabiting a

relatively discreet and clearly identified area of study and their research as proceeding along a well defined path” (352). Therefore, in established subdisciplines like EGP writers can presuppose a certain amount of background, which would result in less focus on M2. In less established fields, as Hyland (1999) contends, “problem areas and topics are generally more diffuse and range over wider academic and historical territory, and there is less assurance that questions can be answered by following a single path” (354). Similarly, Holmes (1997) considered that the presence of such a lengthy background might reflect the absence of an agreed theoretical framework (328).

In light of the above discussion, it is suggested that ESP and DA are regarded as more emerging areas of inquiry within applied linguistics being marked by extensive use of topic generalization and literature review. So it appears that the distinct nature of the subdisciplines, especially move 2 in EGP and move 3 in DA, was not observed by Iranian writers, and this caused markedly different RAs than the norms and conventions set by the experts. Accordingly, with the diversity involved in the rhetorical conventions of local and international article introductions, explicit awareness of the conventions accepted by the discourse community for introductions might prove effective.

### **3.2 Inter-subdisciplinary comparison of move 1**

Any research to be reported needs to establish a territory in which it operates. The readers of the target discourse community should be informed and assured that the research is relevant to the public and agreed goals of that discourse community. To do this, research article writers make use of *establishing a territory* move in which, before introducing their own orientation, RAs authors try to establish a wider territory to convince the potential readers that the research is important. To create research space the writers make topic generalization of increasing specificity. The frequency of first move that was realized in the three international subdisciplines is displayed in Table 5.

Table 5: The frequencies of move 1 in local and international introductions

	ESP	EGP	DA
International	18	18	16
Local	17	20	20

No significant differences were observed in frequency of move 1 in the above groups of data. ESP and DA introductions in international articles tend to have relatively longer and more extensive citations of related background in order to establish space for their research, but in EGP this part is restricted to only a brief review of few previous works. This is consistent with Ozturk's (2007) that pointed to the existence of variation across second language acquisition and second language writing. She found that due to the interdisciplinary and emerging nature of second language writing research authors need to use extensive topic generalization and literature review contrary to second language acquisition research (p.33). The difference is illustrated in the following examples from ESP and EGP introductions. The topic of ESP article is *embedded business email* and the topic of EGP is *the value of English story books*.

1. *Business email communication has received increasing attention in the last decade (DeSanctis & Monge, 1998; Gains, 1999; Gimenez, 2000; Nickerson, 1999, 2000; among others). With a few notable exceptions (e.g., Nickerson, 2000; Yates, Orli-kowski, & Okamura, 1999; Yates, Orlikowski, & Woerner, 2003), most studies in email communication so far have concentrated on one-way, self-contained messages (Fulk & DeSanctis, 1995; Hinds & Kiesler, 1995), paying attention to ... (Gains, 1999), its role in the business communication process (Louhiala-Salminen, 2002), and its purposes ... (Gimenez, 2002; Nickerson, 1998). However, new exigencies of the business community ... have required .... One way in which emails have responded to ....* (International author).

(2) *With the introduction of English lessons to EFL children in many countries, the use of English picture books has attracted ... For example, some researchers suggest that stories are ... (Brewster et al. 2002; Ghosn 2002) and have the potential to transfer EFL learners ... to a more ... (Collie and Slater, 1987). Some point out that pictures in ... can*



*serve to ... (Smallwood 1987; Johnston, 1994).* (International author)

The nature of ESP and DA and the diversity of topics might be the reason why researchers working within these fields felt the need to provide more theoretical background in order to familiarize their readers to the issues investigated. In contrast, EGP researchers assumed a certain amount of background knowledge of terminology by the readers because, as Ozturk (2007) noted, they consider their area of study well defined and, hence, established (34).

Contrary to their international counterparts, the extracted local RAs showed no quantitative difference in terms of their introduction length. One explanation for fluctuations from the normal rhetoric of RAs may be that locally no expert discourse community has been established for these subdisciplines that accordingly, as Swales (1990) contended, the agreed goals of each discourse community are set and defined by the experts of that community. So the subdisciplines do not enjoy the deserved space for publication and research as there are no professional subdisciplinary-specific journals and publication context in Iran, and the outcome of this general discourse community would be published in local journals with general orientations. Scholarly journals in applied linguistics publish articles with multifarious focuses. Much worse, sometimes a journal that is published in a faculty of Humanities might issue articles in Persian literature, applied linguistics, history, and social sciences only periodically.

### 3.3 Inter-subdisciplinary comparison of move 2

Table 6 demonstrates frequencies and Table 7 depicts the chi-square applied to see if any variation could be realized.

Table 6: Frequencies of move 2 in international introductions of articles

International Data	ESP	EGP	DA
M 2	35	12	21
S1A	23	9	13
S1B	0	0	0
S2	15	7	9

According to the results displayed in Table 6, the difference in the

occurrence of this move in ESP and EGP was significant. Move 2 in ESP was nearly treble its corresponding pair in EGP, and the same move in DA was nearly double its counterpart in EGP.

Samraj (2002) explains that the presence or absence of move 2 in article introduction may stem from a variety of reasons. Fredrickson and Swales (1994, cited in Samraj, 2002) justify the low presence of move 2 in Swedish linguistics RAs by suggesting that the writers of these RAs do not need to compete for research space because of the size of the community. Also Fakhri (1997, Cited in Fakhri, 2004) in her study of Malay RAs reported that move 2 was quite uncommon in her corpus attributing this to the lack of fierce competition for research space which results in a rhetorical structure that may appear different when compared to the rhetorical style of more typical RAs.

It is also likely that ESP and DA are more competing areas of study, so their authors try to indicate a gap which their research is intended to bridge and justify their study resulting in wider usage of move 2. EGP authors might not be under such pressure of competition to *establish a niche* (move 2) like their peers in ESP and DA and this results in less application of this move. The insight gained from this study suggested significant subdisciplinary differences between the English research article introductions published in international journals.

Table 7: Chi-square values of move 2 in international articles

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi-square in EGP & DA	3.12	1	.07
Chi-square in EGP & ESP	11.25	1	.00
Chi-square in ESP & DA	3.50	1	.06

P<0.05      Critical value=3.84

Step 1A *-indicating the gap-* and step 2- *presenting positive justification-* enjoyed more frequency in ESP and DA than EGP. Interestingly, step 1B- *adding to what is known-* was not utilized at all. Also, Fallahi Moghimi and Mobasher (2007) did not find any occurrence of Swales' (1990) two steps of move 2 in Mechanical Engineering RA introductions. They did not report occurrence of *-question raising* (2.1C) and *continuing a tradition* (2.1D). Accordingly, it can be argued that the

steps with rare occurrence, like *adding to what is known* (2.1B), in the present study may be discipline specific.

In local subdisciplines variation in terms of move 2 and its constituting steps was slight alluding this status to the nature of publication context in Iran as described above. So the RAs are rhetorically not specific enough to meet the conditions set by the experts of subdisciplinary communities. Table 8 illustrates the frequency of Move 2 in local article introductions.

Table 8: Frequencies of move 2 in local introductions

Local Data	ESP	EGP	DA
M 2	22	24	22
S 1A	10	17	17
S 1B	0	0	0
S 2	13	14	18

The obtained results contradict those of Keshavarz, et al (2007) in that they reported no variation in RAs by Iranian and non-Iranian writers in terms of move 2 manifestations. One limitation of their work is that they ignored the possible discrepancies imminent in different subdisciplines of applied linguistics. In light of the results of the present study, it is argued that there exist variations in utilizing move 2 in local and international subdisciplines.

As displayed in Table 6 all the international RAs in ESP and DA had one or more occurrences of this move while in EGP this occurrence had a very sudden downfall, that 40% (8 out of 20) lacked any step representing M2. The more explicit work was evident in ESP and DA owing to their emerging and inter-subdisciplinary nature, contrary to EGP as a subfield with more historical depth. The issue which was likely neglected by local contributors is that they were almost consistent in *establishing the niche* for their works in different subdisciplines which might lead to rhetorically abnormal RAs and unnatural introductions compared to typical international ones. Authors working within EGP under the umbrella of applied linguistics do not have to perform much persuasive work because the subdiscipline has a central body of theory which is shared by scholars in the field. In contrast, the absence of clear boundaries in ESP and DA research calls for more persuasive argument

and justifications.

### 3.4 Inter-subdisciplinary comparison of move 3

The sole obligatory element in move 3 is step1, and as Swales (1990) argues, its onset is typically marked by the use of deictic references to the present text (p. 159). The occurrence of move 3 and its steps in each international subdiscipline was identified and tabulated in Table 9. The *chi-square test* was also computed as shown in Table 10.

Table 9: Frequencies of move 3 in the international article introductions

	ESP	EGP	DA
M3	31	24	52
S1	20	16	33
S2	5	7	6
S3	8	5	5
S4	5	2	13
S5	5	2	3
S6	2	0	1
S7	2	0	4

Table 10: Chi-square Value of Move 3 in International article Introductions

	Value	df	Sig
Chi-square in EGP & DA	10.31	1	.00
Chi-square in EGP & ESP	.08	1	.34
Chi-square in ESP & DA	5.31	1	.02

P<0.05      Critical value=3.84

Move 3 gives the research writer a chance to report upon the interest in the work, and as Swales (2004) notes “in appropriate circumstances, early positive evaluations, early justifications, and early clarifications can work to both impress and reassure the reader that the paper is worth pursuing further” (232). So, as a subdisciplinary characteristic, DA and ESP authors in this study employed move 3 extensively to situate the issue being investigated. As stated earlier, the nature of DA and ESP as more emerging areas of inquiry may press their researchers toward more elaborated usage of this move.

As shown in Table 9, almost all the introductions included step1, that

is, *stating purpose or announcing present research*, but step 4, that is *summarizing methods*, distinguished DA from ESP and EGP. The last three steps enjoyed the least availability which may imply that their existence depends on the disciplinary conventions. For example, step 7 that is always nearly a final element in move 3 is to *outline (or roadmap) the structure of RAs*. Swales (2004) mentions the occurrence of “this step seems to be inversely related to whether the disciplinary field has an established IMRD-like sectional arrangement” (232). He adds that this step was absent in Kanoksilpatham’s (2003) IMRD biochemistry corpus. Swales emphasizes that in other fields that lack such an arrangement, such as computer science, information science, biostatistics, or economics, this structure-outlining option becomes close to obligatory. Owing to the results, the last three options of move 3 are not regarded as a normal characteristic of standard RA introductions of applied linguistics. Frequency analysis of Move 3 in the local corpus and chi square test are depicted in the following Tables.

Table 11: Frequencies of move 3 in local introductions

	ESP	EGP	DA
M3	28	24	31
S1	14	15	14
S2	11	13	9
S3	10	8	10
S4	2	2	3
S5	1	0	0
S6	1	1	1
S7	1	0	2

Table 12: Chi-square value of move 3 in local introductions

	Value	df	Sig.
Chi-square in EGP & DA	.89	1	.34
Chi-square in EGP & ESP	.30	1	.57
Chi-square in ESP & DA	.15	1	.69

P<0.05      Critical value=3.84

Contrary to international corpus, application of move 3 in local data revealed no statistically significant difference indicating little rhetorical variation in the subfields. Irrespective of the subdiscipline they belong to,

local writers tried to assure readers that their research was organized, purposeful, and successful, the issue which international researchers dealt with differently, according to the nature and characteristics of the agreed goals which are set by the expert community in the field. This shows that Iranian authors might not have sufficient awareness and knowledge of the rhetorical structure of this move. Alternatively, the gatekeepers might not be too strict in characteristic features of the subdisciplines in focus, so they would be satisfied by a general structure of an article. It is also a bitter fact that favoritism still lurks in smaller discourse communities. The pressure of being published and getting professional promotions sometimes leads the contributors into finding ways through the backdoor, even though the article might be rhetorically inappropriate. This is a bitter pill that we sometimes have to swallow. Overall, results rejected significant subdisciplinary differences between the English research article introductions published in Iranian journals.

Table 11 reveals that S1 (*presenting the present work*), the obligatory constituent of this move, was declined by several local researchers in all three subdisciplines. Keshavarz, et al (2007) also found that 24% of Iranian writers failed to defend and occupy the established niche (26). Also, Fallahi Moghimi and Mobasher (2007) found that the step *outlining purposes*, the obligatory element of move 3, was utilized in English articles more than Persian ones. They reported 28 occurrences of this step in English introductions, while the occurrence of the same step was limited to 19 in Persian introductions (66), which implies that Iranian writers do not attempt to reveal the purpose of their study unlike their international counterparts in RA introductions. In light of the result of the present study, Iranian scholars seem to exhibit little assertiveness in move 3 and consequently, some of them fail to reveal purposes of their work (M3-S1) in the introduction.

Also, it was noted that previous research in local articles was simply summarized as background information with no challenges directed toward other scholars and with very little self-promotion. According to Swales (1990), one of the main strategies used in introductions is for the author to relate his or her study to previous research in order to determine the significance of its contribution. This is achieved by extensive discussion of previous research which leads naturally to the current

author's contribution. Note the following example from an international ESP sample.

*... Swales's (1990) ground-breaking work has generated studies ... . However, certain criticism of .... First, move boundaries are ...; lack of explicit rules ... (Paltridge, 1994). The absence of rules leads to .... In addition, the implementations of Swales .... For instance, many move-based studies tend to involve a relatively ... (e.g., Peng, 1987; Williams, 1999; Wood, 1982), limiting the generalizability of the results. Moreover, few move-based studies (e.g., Nwogu, 1997; Posteguillo, 1999) have worked with .... Finally, many studies (e.g., Brett, 1994; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Yang & Allison, 2003; Samraj, 2002; Swales & Najjar, 1987) focused only on .... In spite of these limitations, Swales analytical framework and other researchers' work in move analysis have been essential in popularizing the importance of understanding how research articles are constructed. (International author)*

As underlined in the above example, the author, after discussing the related studies, made some evaluation by expressing his assessment of the earlier works. Local authors, rather than evaluating previous research, challenging it, and pointing out its limitation (for the purpose of creating a research space for their study) in the introduction, simply summarized it and integrated it through the development of their articles as background move. Taylor and Chen (1991, cited in Fakhri, 2004) also made the same claim. They reported that the absence of evaluation of previous research can be attributed to the unacceptability of argumentative styles and self-promotion in the cultures considered.

In international ESP and DA corpus the extensive discussion of previous works was rampant, and authors utilized previous studies in different parts of introductions, so following Swales (2004) benchmark, this element was no longer restricted to move 1 and was manifested in moves 2 or 3 too.

Integrating the other scholars' works in various sections of RA introductions rather than citing it in the *establishing a niche* can itself serve to promote the author's contribution by making it appear more scholarly and convincing to read. Bearing this argumentation in mind, this element may be used even in the third move as shown in this example from an ESP sample.

*Following other studies on contrastive academic writing, such as Clyon (1987), Cmejrkova (1996), Mauranen (1993) or Taylor and Chen (1991), this paper has the general purpose of contributing, to a small extent, to demonstrating that scientific discourse is not universal but that there are socio-cultural factors that may condition the preference for certain rhetorical strategies by the members of different scientific communities. (International author)*

These findings are strongly supported by Samraj (2002) whose study reveals that the review of literature can, in fact, be found in all three moves (7).

The descriptive rather than argumentative nature of local article introductions may stem from the lack of competitive publishing environment and avoidance of self-promotion in the Iranian culture. The authors of the local studies are familiar with the academic practices in their respective culture and the socio-cultural stigmatization of direct confrontation and self-promotion. So lack of critical evaluation may be ascribed to cross-cultural variation regarding the creation and communication of knowledge. Fakhri (2004) reports that the relative paucity of explicit statements in Ras by Arab authors show that communicative styles in different cultures vary in terms of directness, that is, the degree to which speakers and writers reveal their intentions. Western cultures prefer straightforward communication styles whereas the Japanese, Iranian, and Arab cultures value indirectness (1131).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The findings of present study have pointed to the existence of variations across the introductions of articles in ESP, DA, and EGP published internationally; it also yields new insights into the phenomenon of intra-subdisciplinary variation in the structural organization of RA introductions.

The differences in organizational structures could be ascribed to subdisciplinary tendencies. For example, the elements of persuasions and promotions are more strongly present in international ESP and DA research projects alluding to the relatively young and interdisciplinary nature of ESP and DA and the historical profundity and disciplinary nature of EGP. These dimensions may account for the textual



characteristics of RA introductions in the above subdisciplines. Awareness of rhetorical specification of introduction is very crucial especially for those who wish to publish in international journals. In organizing the RA introduction attention should be paid not only to wider discipline, but also to the patterns employed in a particular subdiscipline.

This study has implications not just for genre theory but also for pedagogy. Samraj (2005) argues that "the results of previous studies on academic genres have been translated into pedagogical applications" (p. 153). Accordingly, the results of this study can be used to teach advanced level students pursuing master's and doctoral degrees the structure of research article introductions as a workshop in their subdisciplines. The results can be used to familiarize novice researchers with the variations found in academic writing across different subdisciplines. Finally, since the majority of Iranian researchers face problems in writing well-grounded and typical research article introductions due to their insufficient knowledge of generic structure, there seems to be a sound reason to sensitize the local researchers to properly attend to this key section in research articles. This line of study may be extended to other subdisciplines of applied linguistics to make more valid generalizations on subdisciplinary variations.

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