



The Rhetorical Structure of Introductions in English Review Articles

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1. INTRODUCTION

Review articles are important in academic research. Therefore, the reader can read only one review article instead of several research articles. Moreover, review articles have a higher citation rate than other articles and can thus increase the impact factor of journals. Yet, these types of articles are not very common and very few of them are published in scientific journals, especially in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics. One of the reasons for the very few number of such articles is that such articles are difficult to write. Unfortunately, research on such articles is rare. To the best of our knowledge, only Zare & Naseri (2021) have examined the rhetorical structure of English conceptual review articles.

Zare & Naseri (2021) examined the moves and steps, used in the abstracts of English conceptual review articles, published in linguistics and applied linguistics fields in prestigious international journals. Based on their observations, the writers of English conceptual review articles use moves and sub-moves in their abstracts which are different from those. These moves include a) territory, b) problem, c) purpose, d) structure, and e) conclusion. The 'territory' move clarifies the scope of the paper and summarizes the results of previous research. The 'problem' move points to the abundance of research and indicates a gap or a problem in the field. The 'purpose' move expresses the goals of the article and states limitations in the scope of the article, if any. The 'structure' move describes the methodology and structure of the article. Finally, the 'conclusion' move reflects the author's views and suggestions, and expresses the relevance and contribution of these views to previous research. The purpose of this study was to investigate the rhetorical structure of the introduction section of English conceptual review articles, published in prestigious international journals in the fields of linguistics and applied linguistics.

2. MATERIALS AND METHOD

A corpus consisting of the introduction section of 100 English-language conceptual

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review articles formed the basis of this study. These articles had been published in international highprofile journals in linguistics and applied linguistics from 2000 to 2018. Each major (linguistics and applied linguistics) accounted for 50 articles. In selecting the articles, different authorship aspects such as the number of authors, nationality, English language level, and whether English was their mother tongue or not were not considered. Also, only articles with separate introduction sections formed the corpus. In terms of the analytical procedure, a two-stage analytical method, based on move and sub-move, with a top-down corpus-driven discourse-analytic genre analysis approach was used. The top-down approach refers to the recognition of moves and sub-moves based on the rhetorical functions of discourse units, rather than their lexical or structural features. The corpus-driven approach refers to the fact that in order to examine the rhetorical structure of English conceptual review articles, the researchers of this study approached the articles in the corpus with a blank slate and without considering what earlier research had to offer. Therefore, we first studied some of the articles to see what moves emerged. Then, we examined them in the entire corpus. MAXQDA 2018 was used to detect and code the moves and sub-moves. After coding the moves and sub-moves, their range and frequency distribution were calculated. A third coder was invited in case disagreements happened between the two coders.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study showed that, firstly, in terms of rhetorical structure, the introduction of English conceptual review articles is slightly different from the introduction of research articles. Second, this difference is related to the use of the following three moves, along with their sub-moves. These moves and sub-moves are: (a) Introducing the field, including 1) Expressing the importance/ centrality of the subject, 2) Summarizing the results of existing studies and inferring from them, (b) Stating the gap/ research question in the field, including 1) Referring to the existing gap, 2) Stating the question(s), (c) Introducing the present research, including 1) Expressing the objectives of the present research, 2) Presenting the hypothesis, 3) Presenting definitions/ explanations, 4) Presenting findings and implications, 6) Expressing the general structure of the article. The high frequency and range of these moves and their similarity to the moves of introductions in research articles indicate their importance and comprehensiveness, regardless of individual characteristics.

4. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The results of the present study, although not definitive, considering the limitations of the research, can be useful. Theoretically, the findings of the present study can be used to provide a corpus-driven rhetorical model for the introduction of English conceptual review articles. Practically, the results of the present study can be used to prepare textbooks, related to the writing of such articles, and teach them to those who do not have sufficient knowledge of English or even those who have a high command of English, but have difficulty in writing English conceptual review articles.

Keywords: Rhetorical Structure; The English Conceptual Review Article; The Introduction