Research Paper

A Comparison of Moves in Discussion Sections of PhD Dissertations and MA Theses in TEFL and their Relevant Journal Articles

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Abstract

Academic written genres have recently aroused growing interest from various fields of study. However, there is an increasing concern that students have only limited knowledge of what academic genres involve. Despite the pivotal role of the discussion sections in academic genres, there remains a paucity of evidence on detailed examination of their moves. Following Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model, discussion sections of PhD dissertations, MA theses, and their relevant articles in TEFL were manually analyzed by two human coders to explore what common conventional and optional moves discussions share and what variety they display. Despite few differences, comparison of the three corpora comprising 182 discussions revealed statistically significant similarities in terms of move types and frequencies. Interestingly, calculation and comparison of the move frequencies revealed that moves four (i.e., commenting on results), two (i.e., reporting results), and one (i.e., background information) were the most frequent and predominant ones in the same order and were thus considered as conventional, and the rest of the moves, which occurred less frequently, were labelled as optional. This study could have pedagogical implications for teaching reading and writing skills for academic purposes.

Keywords: Academic Discourse, Discourse Analysis, Discussion, Genre Analysis, Move

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1. Introduction

Academic written genres have recently aroused growing interest from various fields of study. Such growing interest has been motivated by theoretical and pedagogical reasons. From a theoretical viewpoint, such shift of interest has been motivated owing to the fact that it is the writing that creates various features of different areas of study and knowledge construction, and that dissemination of information in each field often occurs by means of texts. From a pedagogical viewpoint, writing is considered as one of the main tasks academic communities are required to fulfil (Hyland, 2000). Knowledge of the textual organization and conventions of academic written genres is an integral part of effective writing for academic purposes (Hyland, 2016). Such profound knowledge could be enhanced through genre analysis (Hyland & Jiang, 2017), which has offered writing instructors the analytical tools to analyze genres as well as to teach a pedagogically appropriate form of discourse awareness to their students (Poole & Samarj, 2002). Genre analysis as a more particular type of discourse analysis can explain why and how some textual patterns are used by particular groups of writers (Hyland, 2011). Genre analysis describes the communicative purposes of a text by classifying the various discourse units within the text. A text is defined as "a sequence of 'moves', where each move represents a stretch of text serving a particular communicative function" (Biber et al., 2007, p. 15). A great deal about the generic structure of texts could be learnt through move analysis. As Ruiying and Allison (2003) remark, move "enables the categorization of chunks of text in terms of their particular

communicative intentions" (p. 370). Move analysis, as "one of the most common examples of a text level analysis of discourse structure" (Upton & Cohen, 2009, p. 589), explores the steps of given genres and the restrictions on common order of moves (Hyland, 2011). Move is a commonly-used concept in genre analysis and yet it is a notion difficult to define precisely. While scholars have suggested a variety of definitions of the term move (e.g., Bhatia, 2001; Hyland, 2011; Nwogu, 1997; Richards & Schmidt, 2002; Vergaro, 2004), this paper will use that of Connor et al. (2007) who define it as a text segment serving a "specific communicative function" (p. 23). In addition to its own function, each text segment (i.e., move) helps to develop the entire "communicative purposes of the genre" (p. 23).

It is important to develop university students' knowledge of genres as well as strategies expert writers draw on to build such knowledge. These aims can be achieved through analyzing moves in academic discourse. Academic discourse refers to the ways academic communities think and use language. Its importance lies in the fact that accomplishment of many complicated activities in society such as education, pedagogy, and knowledge construction depends on language (Hyland, 2011).

Discourse analysis has become a popular method of analysis in many areas of social sciences. It has also been growingly recognized as a research method in writing, pedagogy, and applied linguistics (Bazerman & Prior, 2004). Discourse analysis refers to a wide variety of ways of examining language in actual practice. It studies texts with respect to the contexts of their use (Hyland, 2011). Discourse analysis is known to contribute directly to language pedagogy. According to McCarthy et al. (2010), explaining and analyzing language use in various contexts help language teachers to correctly specify in curricula and instructional materials the various genres and discourses which students are likely to encounter, and choose and

analyze those which are related to students' special needs. Additionally, using models of writing proposed by discourse analysts enables teachers to describe the most basic characteristics of the types of texts. Discourse analysis can also enable materials developers to evaluate language of textbooks to see to what extent it resembles language used in contexts.

   Researchers and writing teachers can also gain a great deal from discourse analysis. Likewise, Bazerman and Prior (2004) believe discourse analysis can help writing teachers and researchers to closely study language and the way it is presented, produced, and perceived. It offers researchers ways of exploring regular patterns of communication to "uncover signs of social identities, institutions, and norms as well as the means by which these social formations are established, negotiated, enacted, and changed through communicative practice" (p. 3). Research on discourse has also given researchers understanding of methods the members of academy employ to construct knowledge, disclosing the ways "their discoursal decisions are socially grounded in the knowledge structures and rhetorical repertoires of their disciplines" (Hyland, 2011, p. 184).

   It is generally acknowledged that effective academic writing is central to higher education and plays an important role in academic graduates' success. Effective writing could increase employment opportunities as well as academic publishing success. Undoubtedly, possessing a reasonable level of understanding of what academic genre involves is a prerequisite for graduation. Hyland (1999) states "understanding the written genres in one's field is essential to full acculturation and success" (p. 4). It is a widely held view that academic writing at high level is not simply a matter of expressing ideas through written mode of discourse and ensuring that they are presented in "good English" (Atkinson & Curtis 1998, p. 17). In order to become competent academic writers, novice writers need to promote their written

discourse competence, which requires application of a great variety of knowledge to produce texts conforming to linguistic and social norms (Bruce, 2008).

Existing body of research recognizes the critical role played by dissertation and thesis writing in PhD and MA programs. For instance, Hyland (2008) mentions both PhD dissertations and MA theses, "carry the burden of assessment and determine future life chances" (p. 47). Thompson (2009) holds the view that the achievement of a PhD student's research is dependent upon the extent to which the written quality of her/his dissertation meets the expectations of the intended academic audience. Despite this, academic writing is recently considered an issue. There is an increasing concern that students have only limited knowledge of what academic genres involve. Nonnative English speakers often encounter challenges at graduate level and view dissertation or thesis writing as an almost insurmountable obstacle to completion of a graduate degree. It is publicly and pedagogically reported that students writing at advanced level of education does not meet academic expectations (Lillis & Turner, 2001). Supervisors report that students have problem with creation of content fitting each chapter of thesis and proper organization of chapters and their constituent sections (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006).

It is generally acknowledged that discussion section is an intrinsic part of almost every dissertation, thesis, and article written in English. This section allows plenty of space for discussing the many facets of the findings and comparing them with those of previous research. It is crucial to acknowledge the importance of discussion as it does not merely report the results. It extends beyond the presentation of the findings and relates the research outcomes to current body of literature (Rudestam & Newton, 2015).

A Comparison of Moves

Notwithstanding the central role of discussions in academic texts, knowledge of their structure is still very rudimentary.

Over the recent decades, interest in analyzing academic genres has increased substantially. A variety of genres (e.g., dissertation, thesis, and article) and sections (e.g., abstract and introduction) have been analyzed from various perspectives. Little attention, however, has been directed towards generic structure of discussions (Dudley-Evans, 1994). In addition to this obvious gap in the existing literature, scant attention has been paid to this section in the domain of pedagogy. Discussion is a prominent but complicated part to write; however, academic writing courses give students inadequate instruction on how to write it effectively. Students report that they experience the most considerable difficulty with discussion section (Dudley-Evans, 1994). To the best of the researchers' knowledge, the case is particularly true for many Iranian students majoring in TEFL. A huge gap is also seen in writing teaching materials. While there are instructions about structure and organization of method and result chapters, such information about writing discussion is lacking (Rudestam & Newton, 2015). Given the significance of discussion, it is wise to explore its generic structure written by a particular community of expert writers.

2. Literature Review

The growing interest in discourse analysis has led to development of many models for analyzing academic texts, thereby generating a bulk of research on move analysis. Since a few years ago, some genre analysts have limited their focus on analyzing moves in academic texts across disciplines. Several comparisons have been made across genres; however, the sections analyzed in these studies, and the approach or model based on which the texts have been analyzed are hardly identical.

During the past 30 years, much more information has become available for PhD and MA students. While there exists a large number of publications on thesis and dissertation writing (e.g., Allen, 1973; Athanasou et al., 2012; Becker, 2010; Brause, 2012; Clark, 2006; Cone & Foster, 1993; Dunleavy, 2003; Evans, 1995; Evans et al., 2011; Garson, 2001; Joyner et al., 2018; Madsen, 1992; Mauch & Park, 2003; Murray, 2011; Oliver, 2013; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007; Philips & Pugh, 1994; Preece, 1994; Rountree & Laing, 1996; Rudestam & Newton, 2015; Sternberg, 1981; Thomas & Brubaker, 2000; Turabian, 2007), guidelines on their move structures as well as the writing practice of MA and PhD graduates in TEFL are still lacking in many of the available resources, and there is still a dearth of published advice on how to construct the content of each chapter. Evidently, while there is a plethora of guidelines on thesis and dissertation writing, very few of these existing sources encompass analysis of authentic texts (Mauch & Birch, 1998; Paltridge, 2002). It is unfortunate that much of available resources addressing doctoral writing questions are constructed in "the untheorized self-help, advice genre (Kamler & Thomson, 2008, p. 508). As Paltridge's (2002) concludes, "it would seem, then, to assume that some of the titles of books on thesis and dissertation writing are misleading" (p. 136).

Recent years have witnessed an increasing number of studies examining particular sections of theses and dissertations from various analytical perspectives. Little has been reported about the generic structure of discussions in TEFL as a subdiscipline of applied linguistics. Moreover, the focus of previous studies has been largely on articles. In the field of applied linguistics, discussions of articles were examined by Ruiying and Allison (2003), Fallahi and Erzi (2003), Fallah (2004), Amirian et al. (2008), Khany and Tazik (2010), Jalilifar et al. (2012), and Dobakhti (2016). Discussions of

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MA theses were examined by Nodoushan and Kabaz (2011), and discussions of doctoral theses were analyzed by Geng and Wharton (2016). A move analysis of discussion sections in theses of English specialization students at PhD level was conducted by Hlaing (2023). Phongjit and Gampper (2023) also analyzed that-stance in discussions of articles. Khodabandeh and Kasir (2019) analyzed verbs in the discussions of master's theses. In a cross disciplinary study carried out by Adel and Ghorbani Moghadam (2015), a comparison of moves in conclusion sections of articles in three disciplines of psychology, Persian literature and applied linguistics was performed. In other disciplines, discussions of articles were studied by Hopkins and Dudley–Evans (1988), Holmes (1997), Posteguillo (1999), Holmes (2001), Peacock (2002), Martinez (2003), Kanoksilapatham (2005), Loi et al. (2015), Sabet and Kazempouri (2015), Loi et al. (2016), and Joseph and Lim (2018).

Scholars working in the area of ESP are increasingly aware that more studies are required to be conducted if pedagogical materials and teaching methodologies aim at preparing learners for what they actually require to do in English. Research in the field of ESP requires, especially, an analytical system which could explain different types of written discourses that students need to compose or comprehend (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988).

As systemic functional linguistic and ESP approaches to genre assume, "students learn best when they are provided with explicit knowledge about the types of texts they need to learn to read and write, as well as the language and structural features specific to those texts" (Lee, 2012, p. 121). The overall objective of ESL writing programs at graduate level should be to guide writers in "their field-specific research communities and to provide them with relevant writing practice" (Frodesen, 1995, p. 333). What is included in a course of writing "is pretty basic stuff-perhaps too basic have a place in a graduate program" (Rose & McClafferty, 2001, pp. 28-29). It is

necessary to design "a curriculum that maximizes the opportunities for learners to get enough experience of the units of language in use in order to internalize them" (Kennedy, 2003, p. 483). EAP practitioners, thus, need to incorporate, in a systematic way, explicit instruction of rhetorical moves of dissertation, thesis, and article fitting each discipline or knowledge domain.

Although studies over the past few years have expanded our knowledge base in relation to discussions, it is safe to say that there is almost no report of move-based studies comparing discussions of dissertations and theses with those of their relevant articles. Comparative studies analyzing moves within a given genre are effective in exploring "distinct values and practices among communities of users" (Tardy, 2011, p. 56). Motivated by practical and pedagogical needs and dissatisfied with inadequacies of much of existing academic writing courses and available published advices, this study set out to analyze discussion section of academic texts. The aim was to see to what extent discussions constructed by a particular community of Iranian academic writers conform to a model proposed for writing this section. This paper sought to address the following research questions:

1. What type of rhetorical moves do Iranian graduates in TEFL use in discussion section of dissertations, theses, and their relevant articles?
2. How do dissertations, theses, and their relevant journal articles written by Iranian graduates in TEFL differ in terms of rhetorical moves in their discussions?

3. Methodology

3.1. Corpus Selectin Criteria

Data for this study were collected using purposeful sampling method. Some criteria were thus set to guide the selection of the corpus, namely participant writers' major, speaking background, educational status, and university affiliations. Within the framework of these criteria, attempts were made to

select three representative corpora of formal situational variety written by a population of comparable status. It was decided that only dissertations and theses whose outcomes were published in journals be compiled. All dissertations and theses were written in the field of TEFL. The writers of such texts are language experts who are "more familiar than researchers in other disciplines with the nature of these research genres (e.g., linguistic and rhetorical features)" (Kawase, 2015, p. 116). Moreover, the abovementioned academic discourses are "central to the academic enterprise and are the very stuff of education and knowledge creation" (Hyland, 2011, p. 171). In Koutsantoni's (2006) words, "research articles and research theses constitute two key genres used by scientific communities for the dissemination and ratification of knowledge" (p. 19). The reason for choosing written discourse was the fact that "knowledge produced by the academy is cast largely in written language" (Hyland, 2006, p. 34).

Only dissertations and theses written by graduates in TEFL were included in this study since it is an increasingly area of interest within applied linguistics. Writers of these texts were nonnative English speakers of both genders in different age ranges. To be considered as a representative population of Iranian graduates, data were compiled from both state and private universities.

The noteworthy point here is that in order to analyze academic discourse empirically, the data have to represent the target of research. It is necessary to choose a sample whose features equally exist in the broader sample. Thus, what is required is to give careful consideration to all characteristics of the target population under investigation which, in academic discourse analysis, means studying an academic community of a given culture is better to contain, for instance, participants of both genders and various university status and age ranges (Sanderson, 2008).

Three sets of data comprising 182 discussions were drawn from two main sources, namely universities and journals. The first two sets were compiled from dissertations and theses successfully completed by Iranian graduates of nine state and private universities. To access university databases, it was necessary to obtain ethical approval from the graduate coordinators of the departments. To do so, request letters were submitted to relevant authorities. A total of 55 PhD dissertations and 36 MA theses defended between 1994 and 2015 were finally compiled. The third set included their relevant articles published in 47 national and international journals. In choosing the discussions, it was decided that the final section of chapter four constitutes the discussions in the case of dissertations and theses and the sections entitled discussion in the case of the articles.

3.2 Model

A large number of models (e.g., Holmes, 1997; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Kanoksilapatham, 2005; Nwogu, 1997; Peng, 1987; Swales, 1990) are currently available for analyzing moves; however, their constituent parts are different, and each model suits a given discipline or section. The current move analysis was based on the model proposed by Ruiying and Allison (2003). This model was chosen because it is appropriate for applied linguistics.

A Comparison of Moves

Move 1: Preparatory/Background information

Move 2: Reporting results

Move 3: Summarising results

Move 4: Commenting on results
    Step 1: Interpreting results
    Step 2: Comparing results with literature
    Step 3: Accounting for results
    Step 4: Evaluating results

Move 5: Summarising the study

Move 6: Evaluating the study
    Step 1: Indicating limitations
    Step 2: Indicating significance/advantage
    Step 3: Evaluating methodology

Move 7: Deduction from the research
    Step 1: Making suggestions
    Step 2: Recommending further research
    Step 3: Drawing pedagogic implications

Figure 1. Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model

As can be seen from Figure 1, Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model classifies textual units within discussions into seven moves comprising ten steps. The realization of a move could be through a single step or a group of steps (Ruiying & Allison, 2003). Steps are "the smaller rhetorical segments composing a move" (Maswana et al., 2015, p. 1). It should be pointed that due to the practical constraints, it was beyond the scope of this research to analyze the constituent steps. Thus, in order to facilitate the analysis, the basic unit for analyzing the discussions was only move. The researchers adopted one-level analysis of the moves which required exclusion of the steps from the analysis.

3.3 Method of Analysis

Following Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model, the analysis of moves was carried out manually by two human coders. An advantage of manual

analysis is that it allows repeated readings of the texts at different intervals. The collaborative nature of the manual analysis offers another advantage. To control for bias, all discussions were assigned unique codes (i.e., D1, D2, …, D182). Prior to analysis, training sessions were held to ensure if coders have agreement on the moves. Training is usually given to analysts to improve interrater reliability. It also motivates them to study "the definitions in the coding rubric, and to arrive at a more explicit description of what each coding category represents" (Biber et al., 2007, p. 35).

3.4 Procedure

In order to conduct this study, the researchers employed the following procedure:

First, all images of discussions were converted into plain text files to facilitate labelling and enumerating the moves. All discussions were then checked thoroughly for any possible grammatical or textual error. Second, code numbers were assigned to discussions. Third, each codified discussion was meticulously read twice before identifying their moves. Fourth, drawing upon Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model, discussions were analyzed at move level with consideration of cotext, the whole rhetorical purpose of the text, linguistic indicators, lexical items, and meaning of text segment. In the case of text segments performing multiple functions, the main function of the text was taken into account to determine its move. After identifying the moves, each move category was assigned a unique code (i.e., M1, M2, …, M7). There was a two-month time lag between the last two steps, which provided the coders with ample opportunity to recheck the discussions. The frequency and type of the identified moves in the three corpora were finally recorded in separate tables. In this study, frequency refers to the number of occurrences of moves in discussions. Adopting criteria set by Biber et al.

(2007) and Cortes (2013), moves with more frequency of occurrence were labelled as conventional, and other moves with less frequency as optional.

4. Results

In order to explore the difference between different types of move frequencies of theses and dissertations, it was required to compare the frequencies of different moves across theses and dissertations; however, this was not a fair comparison to be made between theses and dissertations since it is generally accepted that a dissertation is much lengthier than a thesis. This means that if any difference were found between the absolute frequencies of moves in theses and dissertations, it would be attributed to the higher number of words in a dissertation disregarding the total size of texts in theses and dissertations. In order to make this comparison fair, the relative frequency of each move was computed for each move to be included in the analysis of the question. Relative frequency for each move was computed by dividing the absolute frequency of each Move by the total number of moves in a thesis or dissertation. In order to compare means in terms of each move across theses and dissertations, it was necessary to examine the normality of the data in order to choose between parametric and nonparametric statistics.

Table 1
Descriptive Statistics

Move relative frequency	Dissertation. Thesis	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Move 1	Thesis	.1531	.13180	36
	Dissertation	.2095	.14257	55
	Total	.1872	.14042	91
Move 2	Thesis	.3556	.23295	36
	Dissertation	.3412	.18590	55
	Total	.3469	.20466	91
Move 3	Thesis	.0080	.03476	36
	Dissertation	.0128	.01953	55
	Total	.0109	.02654	91
Move 4	Thesis	.4122	.24337	36

	Dissertation	.3840	.19402	55
	Total	.3952	.21404	91
Move 5	Thesis	.0323	.04333	36
	Dissertation	.0284	.04163	55
	Total	.0299	.04211	91
Move 6	Thesis	.0173	.03987	36
	Dissertation	.0094	.02166	55
	Total	.0125	.03025	91
Move 7	Thesis	.0215	.04002	36
	Dissertation	.0147	.02728	55
	Total	.0174	.03287	91

Table 1 provides the description of the Moves data in both theses and dissertations. Normality assumption was checked running Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, whose results showed that the data did not meet normality assumption; therefore, Mann-Whitney U test as a nonparametric test was employed.

The results of Mann-Whitney test indicated that theses and dissertations were significantly different from one another ($p > .05$) in terms of moves one and three. With regard to the description in Table 1, it is understood that dissertations make higher use of moves one and three than theses.

In order to explore the difference between different types of move frequencies of articles and the relevant theses and dissertations, the absolute frequencies of moves in articles and theses/dissertations were converted into relative frequencies since articles and theses/dissertations are of different lengths. In order to compare the articles and theses/dissertations in terms of the moves relative frequencies, the means of relative frequencies needed to be compared. Since the same students' theses/dissertations and articles were supposed to be compared, repeated-measures design needed to be considered. To do so, it was necessary to examine the normality of the data in order to choose between parametric and nonparametric statistics.

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Table 2
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Std. Error		
Article: Move1:	89	.00	.50	.14	.12881	1.026	.255	.419	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move1:	91	.00	.86	.18	.14042	1.752	.253	5.527	.50
Article: Move 2:	89	.00	.84	.28	.19666	.761	.255	-.363	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 2:	91	.00	1.00	.34	.20466	.891	.253	.820	.50
Article: Move 3:	89	.00	.15	.01	.02798	2.772	.255	8.529	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 3:	91	.00	.20	.01	.02654	4.778	.253	29.434	.50
Article: Move 4:	89	.00	.92	.44	.22988	-.128	.255	-.778	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 4:	91	.00	.83	.39	.21404	-.118	.253	-.746	.50
Article: Move 5:	89	.00	.29	.03	.06757	1.910	.255	3.207	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 5:	91	.00	.18	.02	.04211	1.758	.253	2.911	.50
Article: Move 6:	89	.00	.25	.01	.04205	3.138	.255	11.912	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 6:	91	.00	.17	.01	.03025	3.046	.253	9.945	.50
Article: Move 7:	89	.00	.44	.05	.10540	2.310	.255	4.763	.50
Thesis.Diss: Move 7:	91	.00	.17	.01	.03287	2.448	.253	6.646	.50
Valid N (listwise)	89								

Table 2 provides the description of the moves data in both theses/dissertations and articles. Normality assumption was checked running Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests, whose results showed that the data did not meet normality assumption; therefore, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test as a nonparametric repeated-measures test was employed.

The results of Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test indicated that theses/dissertations and articles are significantly different from one another in terms of moves one, two, four, and seven ($p < .05$). To have a more detailed view of these significant differences, Table 2 of description was checked. Accordingly, theses/dissertations make higher use of moves one and two. On the other hand, articles make higher use of moves four and seven.

To explore the difference between different types of move frequencies in journal articles published in different types of journals, the journals were

classified into two different categorizations. The first categorization was a broad one which divided journals only into reliable and unindexed ones. In the second categorization, reliable journals were divided into generally reliable, ISI, and science research journals, which were considered along with the unindexed ones in the analysis (see Appendices F & G).

Table 3
Frequencies of Journal Types (Broad Categorization)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Reliable	39	42.9	42.9	42.9
Valid	Unindexed	52	57.1	57.1	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	100.0	

Table 4
Frequencies of Journal Types (Detailed Categorization)

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
	Science-research	28	30.8	30.8	30.8
	Unindexed	52	57.1	57.1	87.9
Valid	ISI	3	3.3	3.3	91.2
	Reliable	8	8.8	8.8	100.0
	Total	91	100.0	100.0	

Tables 3 and 4 present the frequencies of different journal types based on the categorizations described.

Table 5
Description of Moves in Journal Types (Broad Categorization)

Dependent Variable	Journal Types	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Article Move1	Reliable	.168	.021	.127	.209
	Unindexed	.130	.018	.094	.166
Article Move 2	Reliable	.270	.032	.207	.332
	Unindexed	.301	.028	.245	.356
Article Move 3	Reliable	.014	.004	.005	.023
	Unindexed	.010	.004	.002	.018
Article Move 4	Reliable	.428	.037	.355	.502
	Unindexed	.453	.033	.388	.518
Article Move 5	Reliable	.053	.011	.032	.074
	Unindexed	.029	.009	.010	.048
Article Move 6	Reliable	.022	.007	.008	.035

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	Unindexed	.016	.006	.004	.028
Article Move 7	Reliable	.045	.017	.011	.079
	Unindexed	.061	.015	.031	.091

Table 6

Description of Moves in Journal Types (Detailed Categorization)

Dependent Variable	Article type	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
				Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Article: Move1	Science-research	.174	.024	.125	.222
	Unindexed	.130	.018	.094	.166
	ISI	.092	.074	-.056	.240
	Reliable	.178	.046	.088	.269
Article: Move 2	Science-research	.237	.037	.164	.310
	Unindexed	.301	.027	.246	.355
	ISI	.200	.112	-.022	.422
	Reliable	.409	.068	.273	.545
Article: Move 3	Science-research	.013	.005	.003	.023
	Unindexed	.010	.004	.003	.018
	ISI	.059	.015	.028	.089
	Reliable	3.385E-018	.009	-.019	.019
Article: Move 4	Science-research	.440	.044	.353	.526
	Unindexed	.453	.033	.388	.518
	ISI	.550	.133	.285	.815
	Reliable	.344	.082	.181	.506
Article: Move 5	Science-research	.069	.012	.044	.093
	Unindexed	.029	.009	.011	.047
	ISI	.033	.038	-.042	.108
	Reliable	.007	.023	-.039	.053
Article: Move 6	Science-research	.022	.008	.006	.038
	Unindexed	.016	.006	.004	.028
	ISI	.051	.024	.003	.100
	Reliable	.008	.015	-.021	.038
Article: Move 7	Science-research	.046	.020	.006	.086
	Unindexed	.061	.015	.031	.091
	ISI	.015	.062	-.108	.137
	Reliable	.054	.038	-.021	.129

Tables 5 and 6 also present the description of move types across different types of journals.

Since exploring the difference between different types of move frequencies in journal articles published in different types of journals required the comparison of moves relative frequencies across different journals types, independent samples mean comparison statistics needed to be employed. In order to choose between parametric and nonparametric statistics, the normality of all the data were checked via normality tests, whose results indicated that the great majority of the data were significantly deviant from normal distribution ($p < .05$). Therefore, to compare the journal types in the broad categorization (with two types), Mann-Whitney U test was employed, and to compare the journal types in terms of the moves in the detailed categorization (with four types), Kruskal Wallis test was employed. The Mann-Whitney U test compared reliable and unindexed journals in terms of different move type relative frequencies. Obviously, no significant difference was found between reliable and unindexed journals' articles in terms of different move type relative frequencies ($p > .05$).

The Kruskal Wallis test compared four categories of journals in terms of different move type relative frequencies. Evidently, these journals were significantly different from one another in terms of move 5 ($p < .05$). Since Kruskal Wallis Test does not show where between the groups of journals the significant difference exists, follow-up post hoc comparisons were run via Dunn's test, whose results are presented in Table 7.

A Comparison of Moves

Table 7
Dunn's Test

Sample 1-Sample 2	Test Statistics	Std. Error	Std. Test Statistics	Sig	Adj. Sig.
Reliable-unindexed	8.265	8.525	.970	.332	1.000
Reliable-ISI	19.542	15.156	1.289	.197	1.000
Reliable-science-research	20.893	8.975	2.328	.020	.119
Unindexed-ISI	-11.277	13.307	-.847	.397	1.000
Unindexed-science-research	12.628	5.284	2.390	.017	.101
ISI-science-research	1.351	13.600	.099	.921	1.000

As Table 7 indicates, there is a significant difference between reliable and science-research journals, and unindexed and science research journals in terms of the fifth move. Consulting the descriptive statistics in Table 5 indicates that science research journals are of higher use of move five than reliable and unindexed journals. Moreover, the difference between ISI and science research journals in terms of move five is not significant ($p > .05$).

In order to explore the difference between different types of move frequencies in theses, it was required to compare the mean relative frequency of each move within theses. Evidently, the design was repeated-measures; however, the normality of the data needed to be checked to choose between parametric and nonparametric tests, whose results showed that the great majority of the data were significantly deviant from normal distribution; therefore, Friedman test as a nonparametric repeated-measures test to compare several means was employed.

Table 8
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Move 3	36	.00	.20	.0080	.03476	5.203	.393	28.479	.768
Move 6	36	.00	.17	.0173	.03987	2.595	.393	6.379	.768
Move 7	36	.00	.17	.0215	.04002	2.031	.393	4.112	.768
Move 5	36	.00	.13	.0323	.04333	1.129	.393	.071	.768
Move 1	36	.00	.55	.1531	.13180	1.176	.393	1.584	.768
Move 2	36	.08	1.00	.3556	.23295	1.419	.393	1.554	.768
Move 4	36	.00	.83	.4122	.24337	-.527	.393	-.778	.768
Valid N (listwise)	36								

Table 8 provides the descriptive statistics of the relative frequencies of the moves within theses. The means are rank-ordered in an ascending order, which shows that move three has the lowest mean frequency, and that move four is the most frequently used move in theses; however, in order to see whether there was any significant difference between all the moves' frequencies, Friedman test was run, whose results showed that somewhere among the means of different moves' relative frequencies, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$).

In order to see which moves have significantly different relative frequencies in theses, post hoc pair-wise comparisons between pairs of moves were made running multiple Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests, whose results indicated that in general moves four and two were the most frequently used moves which were significantly different from the rest of the moves in theses ($p < .05$). By the same token, moves one, five, seven, six, and three were, in a descending order, significantly the least used moves in theses.

In order to explore the difference between different types of move frequencies in dissertations, it was required to compare the mean relative frequency of each move within dissertations. Evidently, the design was repeated-measures; however, the normality of the data needed to be checked to choose between parametric and nonparametric tests. Normality assumption was checked running Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which showed that the data did not meet normality assumption; therefore, Friedman test as a nonparametric repeated-measures test to compare several means was employed.

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Table 9
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Move 6	55	.00	.09	.0094	.02166	2.684	.322	6.685	.634
Move 3	55	.00	.09	.0128	.01953	2.284	.322	6.158	.634
Move 7	55	.00	.15	.0147	.02728	2.822	.322	10.037	.634
Move 5	55	.00	.18	.0284	.04163	2.262	.322	5.547	.634
Move 1	55	.03	.86	.2095	.14257	2.172	.322	7.578	.634
Move 2	55	.00	.73	.3412	.18590	.185	.322	-.752	.634
Move 4	55	.05	.82	.3840	.19402	.292	.322	-.618	.634
Valid N (listwise)	55								

Table 9 provides the descriptive statistics of the relative frequencies of the moves within dissertations. The means are rank-ordered in an ascending order, which shows that move 6 has the lowest mean frequency, and move 4 is the most frequently used move in dissertations; however, in order to see whether there was any significant difference between all the moves' frequencies, Friedman test was run, whose results showed that somewhere among the means of different moves' relative frequencies, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$).

In order to see which moves have significantly different relative frequencies in dissertations, post hoc pair-wise comparisons between pairs of moves were made running multiple Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests, whose results indicated that in general move four and two were the most frequently used moves which were significantly different from the rest of the moves in dissertations ($p < .05$). By the same token, moves one, five, seven, three, and six were, in a descending order, significantly the least used moves in dissertations.

In order to explore the difference between different types of move frequencies in articles, it was required to compare the mean relative

frequency of each move within articles. Evidently, the design was repeated-measures; however, the normality of the data needed to be checked to choose between parametric and nonparametric tests. Normality assumption was checked running Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, which showed that the data did not meet normality assumption; therefore, Friedman test as a nonparametric repeated-measures test to compare several means was employed.

Table 10
Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
							Std. Error		Std. Error
Article: Move 3	89	.00	.15	.0120	.02798	2.772	.255	8.529	.506
Article: Move 6	89	.00	.25	.0184	.04205	3.138	.255	11.91	.506
Article: Move 5	89	.00	.29	.0396	.06757	1.910	.255	3.207	.506
Article: Move 7	89	.00	.44	.0539	.10540	2.310	.255	4.763	.506
Article: Move1	89	.00	.50	.1467	.12881	1.026	.255	.419	.506
Article: Move 2	89	.00	.84	.2871	.19666	.761	.255	-.363	.506
Article: Move 4	89	.00	.92	.4423	.22988	-.128	.255	-.778	.506
Valid N (listwise)	89								

Table 10 provides the descriptive statistics of the relative frequencies of the moves within articles. The means are rank-ordered in an ascending order, which shows that move three has the lowest mean frequency, and move four is the most frequently used move in articles; however, in order to see whether there was any significant difference between all the moves' frequencies, Friedman test was run, whose results showed that somewhere among the means of different moves' relative frequencies, there was a significant difference ($p < .05$).

In order to see which moves have significantly different relative frequencies in articles, post hoc pair-wise comparisons between pairs of moves were made running multiple Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests, whose results indicated that in general moves four and two were the most frequently

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used moves which were significantly different from the rest of the moves in articles ($p < .05$). By the same token, moves one, seven, five, six, and three were, in a descending order, significantly the least used moves in articles.

Table 11
Moves Relative Frequency Means Ascendingly Ordered

Theses		Dissertations		Articles	
Move	Mean	Move	Mean	Move	Mean
Move 3	.0080	Move 6	.0094	Move 3	.0120
Move 6	.0173	Move 3	.0128	Move 6	.0184
Move 7	.0215	Move 7	.0147	Move 5	.0396
Move 5	.0323	Move 5	.0284	Move 7	.0539
Move 1	.1531	Move 1	.2095	Move1	.1467
Move 2	.3556	Move 2	.3412	Move 2	.2871
Move 4	.4122	Move 4	.3840	Move 4	.4423

At the end, it is worth mentioning that according to Table 11, comparing the order of the moves in terms of relative frequency in theses, dissertations, and articles indicate that almost a similar pattern or order was observed in that moves four, two, and one were the most frequent ones in theses, dissertations, and articles in the same order, and the rest of the moves with few differences in order were the least frequently used moves in theses, dissertations, and articles.

5. Discussion

The results of data analysis revealed that in all three sets of corpora moves four, two, and one were of high frequency, thus were considered as conventional. The rest of the moves, which were the least frequently used ones, were labelled as optional. In general, this study showed that discussions written by Iranian PhD and MA graduates in TEFL serve three major communicative functions, namely commenting on results, reporting results, and presenting background information. The results with respect to high frequency of moves two and four are in partial agreement with those of few studies.

With regard to move four, the results of this study share commonalities with those of Ruiying and Allison (2003) who found move four as "the most frequent and obligatory move" (p. 375), in discussion of articles in applied linguistics. The findings of this study are also partially consistent with those of Nodoushan and Khabaz (2011) who analyzed discussions of applied linguistics theses and those of journal papers based on Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model. They reported moves two and four as obligatory. They also found that Iranian MA graduates tend to take move six as optional. The results of this study are also consistent with those of Wannaruk and Amnuai (2015) who investigated rhetorical moves structure of applied linguistics articles discussions. They reported that the most frequent move in discussion was move 18 (i.e., commenting on results). The findings with respect to move four are also in keeping with those of Dobakhti (2016) who analyzed discussions of qualitative articles in applied linguistics. One of the most frequent moves in her study was commenting on findings. Other researchers, whose findings are in line with those of the current research are Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) who analyzed discussions of articles and dissertations, and found statement of result as the only obligatory move. Likewise, Soleimani and Soleimani (2015) analyzed generic organization of thesis discussion written by Iranian MA students in TEFL and chemistry. Their study showed that moves one and two were the two obligatory moves for both groups of writers. Similarly, Hlaing (2023) who analyzed theses in applied linguistics and English literature domains based on Ruiying and Allisons' (2003) model found move two as obligatory.

In sum, the results revealed that dissertations make higher use of moves one and three than theses. Several reasons may account for this difference. Typically, PhD graduates are more familiar with literature than MA graduates. So, they are much more expected to offer justification for their

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dissertations outcomes based on background information (Madsen, 1992). This can be a reason why dissertations make higher use of move one, which restates major issues such as research questions, objectives of study, and information concerning theory and methodology (Ruiying & Allison, 2003). Regarding the high observed frequency of move three in dissertations, it can be suggested that in comparison with MA theses, dissertations have bigger data sample size and much more variables due to their broad scope of the study. As Madsen (1992) remarks, a doctoral thesis is usually broader than a thesis in terms of scope and purpose. So, in order to be more comprehensive, PhD students feel much more necessity to summarize their findings. This can be a reason why dissertations make higher use of move three.

The results also revealed that frequency of move seven in dissertations/theses is less than articles. One factor that might account for this result is the fact that dissertations/theses writers' use of move seven in discussion may have been influenced by the final chapter of dissertations/theses, whose function is to make suggestions, draw pedagogic implications, and recommend further research. In fact, the communicative focus of this chapter is identical to that of move seven.

With respect to move six, it should be mentioned that its communicative focus is indicating limitation, mentioning significance, and evaluating methodology. These issues are often fully addressed in the beginning chapters of dissertations and theses. Hence, this might be a possible explanation for low frequency of move six in their discussions. In a similar study by Nodoushan and Khabaz (2011), the low frequency of move six was attributed to Iranian writers' dislike of self-evaluation.

An interesting pattern emerged within the findings. Comparing the order of the moves in terms of relative frequency in theses, dissertations, and articles indicates that almost a similar pattern or order was observed in that

moves four, two, and one were the most frequent ones in theses, dissertations, and articles in the same order, and the rest of the moves with few differences in order were the least frequently used moves in theses, dissertations, and articles. The use of moves four, two, and one, as the most frequent ones in the three corpora confirms that preference of Iranian TEFL graduates was almost the same with respect to discussing their findings based on theoretical and methodological information, statistical evidence, and personal interpretation.

One point is worthy of comment here. The model of analysis used in this study proposes some steps under the category of some moves. This might be a reason why the researcher could find more examples of some moves (e.g., move four) in the corpora; however, this is not the case with respect to all moves. For instance, although move one is not comprised of steps, it has a broad communicative focus. This could be the reason why this move was appeared to be of high frequency in the corpora.

6. Conclusion

The major limitation of this study lies in the fact that it did not encompass the entire population of Iranian graduates in TEFL as the researchers did not have full access to data from all state and private universities. A corpus of this size is not representative of all discussions written by Iranian graduates in TEFL, and might be insufficient to make valid generalizations about the rhetorical preferences of the national discourse community. Thus, future studies might expand their focus by including other sources of data collection. Considering such limitation, much work remains to be done and a number of future research possibilities might be suggested. This study could be complemented by ethnographic methods such as interviews with writers of the corpora. This study was limited by its focus on only one section of academic texts. Future studies might also incorporate other sections.

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This research has thrown up some questions in need of investigation. It was beyond the scope of this study to examine the impact of the authors' age or gender on their tendencies towards the use of particular moves. It would be interesting to examine the effects of such situational factors on writers' preferred moves. The study would have been more interesting if it had included writers' publishing experience. Another possible area of research would be to investigate whether writers' university affiliation influence move preferences. This study focused on the discussions in the area of TEFL. To identify subdisciplinary variations, it would seem desirable for future research to expand on present findings by analyzing this section in other subdisciplines of applied linguistics. The goal of the current analysis was not to explore move sequences and move cycles, but to describe what move is frequently used by graduates in TEFL. Exploring hierarchical patterns of moves and the move-step sequences in discussions could give future researchers more complete picture of their structure. Another fruitful area could be exploring the extent to which the research methods or nature of studies exert impact on the choice of rhetorical moves in discussions.

This study was a one-level account of discussions of dissertations, theses, and their relevant articles written. It has gone some way towards advancing the understanding of communicative purpose of discussions within a single discipline across three academic genres. The main conclusion to be drawn from this study was that the core element of discussions in the three corpora was commenting on results, which offers thorough evidence for Iranian scholars' strong tendency towards interpreting and evaluating results, accounting for results, and comparing them with existing literature.

The results generally proved that the generic structure of the discussions bore marked resemblance to the model proposed for an ideal discussion in applied linguistics. One salient point emerging from this study is worthy of

note. Among the three corpora, moves four, two, and one were the most frequent ones in the same order. Given these results, it became clearly evident that the discussions were clearly dominated by three conventional moves. It is also safe to conclude that the writing practice of Iranian PhD and MA graduates in TEFL are strikingly similar in terms of employment of conventional and optional moves in discussions. Such observed commonalities might be due to the contextual factors, disciplinary expectations, writers' intended discourse community, and cultural background.

This study could have pedagogical implications for teaching reading skills. As Kanoksilapatham (2005) remarks, "the rhetorical structure captured by move analysis can be presented in the classroom to raise learners' consciousness of discipline specific reading skills" (p. 288). Likewise, Hyland and Tse (2007) remark that "the best way to prepare students for their studies is not to search for overarching, universally appropriate teaching items, but to provide them with an understanding of the features of the discourse they will encounter in their particular courses" (p. 251).

The findings could be incorporated into writing materials for academic purposes as well. Writing materials developers could design materials which adequately inform inexperienced undergraduate students of the prevalent rhetorical moves and writing practices of expert academic writers. The results can also be extended to teaching writing at academic levels to help students and their advisors at thesis or dissertation writing levels. This is significant since it is acknowledged that students have difficulty understanding genres of academia (Soler-Monreal, 2015). It is crucial to provide learners with practical advice which is not simply writing rule but that clarifies "what

crafting a scholarly identity in and through text actually entails" (Kamler & Thomson, 2008, p. 511).

Graduate students who are nonnative speakers of English, but whose language of study, nevertheless, is English, might need to be guided not only in conducting their study, but also in reporting their findings in a manner that reaches English standards (Allison et al., 1998).

Advisors should use data from corpus-based studies or authentic genre examples, like those of the current research, to familiarize students with generic structure of theses or dissertations. They could bring model texts written by expert writers to classroom, describe their structures, and ask students to identify and highlight moves which perform particular communicative functions and are amenable to their field of study.

Although academic writing is central to pedagogy at college or university levels, the curriculum usually overlooks this aspect. Put succinctly, it is usually presumed that students are familiar with norms of academic writing. Explicit instruction of academic regularities is, therefore, lacking in academic fields (Curry & Lillis, 2003), and "there is little professional discussion of what we can do to help our students write more effectively" (Rose & McClafferty, 2001)

In the researchers' view, the present EAP programs in Iran are in need of practical reform. Efficient allocation of time to genre awareness raising is obviously lacking in PhD and MA TEFL programs. Students gain mastery over their writing providing they are explicitly guided on how various fields use and produce different types of texts and how knowledge is presented in these texts (Coffin & Hewings, 2003). It is hoped that the findings of this research would offer remarkable insights into enhancing novice academic writers' knowledge of moves typically used by proficient writers, thereby

leading to their full understanding of academic writing regularities as well as enabling them to write well-structured discussions.

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