Rhetorical Structure of Introduction Chapters written by Novice Vietnamese TESOL postgraduates

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ABSTRACT

It is generally agreed that writing a thesis is a challenging task for both native and non-native English speaking students. Despite a considerable number of studies on this specific genre elsewhere, there is a scarcity of work in Vietnam to help TESOL students to write a thesis. Furthermore, the Introduction is considered one of two most difficult chapters to write. This paper, therefore, presents a study on the rhetorical structure of Introduction chapters of twelve M.A. theses from the three universities in the South of Vietnam. Employing the modified CARS' model by Bunton (2002), the results showed that three moves and 15 steps were employed by this group of non-native English writers despite the fact that they had little or no formal instruction on how to write this genre. Additionally, a new step was also identified in this corpus. These findings reflect Vietnamese students' ability to conform to the norms and to adapt the norms to suit cultural expectations. This paper proposes practical implications for teaching this particular group of novice writers in Vietnam as well as in settings with similar cultural values on how to compose the Introduction section.

Keywords: Introduction chapters; rhetorical structure; Master's thesis; Vietnamese writers; TESOL

INTRODUCTION

Vietnam has placed a strong emphasis on English language education at all levels with the aim of ensuring that all young people have a good grasp of the language by 2020. To meet this demand from the Ministry of Education and Training (MoET), about seven universities in Vietnam are allowed to offer Master's programs in English for English teachers who may not have the opportunity to pursue their higher education abroad. These three year programmes are mainly conducted by Vietnamese teachers whose doctorates were obtained both overseas and in Vietnam. Although these M.A. programs are for English majors, the Vietnamese language is partly used as a mode of instruction. Every year, about 30 new students are recruited for the programs by each university based on its selection criteria.

While some test their candidates on English knowledge namely, semantics, syntax, morphology and politics, other universities, particularly the universities with new Master's programs accept all applications. These Master's programs require their students to finish 60 credits (including 18 credits for Politics) and a thesis for their graduation. However, recently some of these universities allow their students to choose between two types of Master's programs: one with credit completion and a thesis and the other without a thesis, but graduation after completing the required number of credits. This change not only responds to

the increasing demand for more English teachers with higher education by MoET but also helps those who are less able to write an academic thesis, obtain a Master's degree.

Writing a thesis in English poses difficulties for non-native English speaking students (Shaw 1991), and it is not an exception for these Masters students in Vietnam whose major is in English when they have little or no formal instruction on how to write each part of a thesis. These students just consult the guidelines, published books on thesis writing, or theses written by students in previous courses in their school library, and then format their own theses. Although the guidelines on thesis writing provided by each university are worded slightly differently from each other, they all include almost identical required parts for each chapter of a thesis. Take the guidelines for the thesis *Introduction* chapter provided by these universities as an example. This chapter should include the *Background to the study*, *Rationale of the study, Statement of purposes*, *Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters*. However, Paltridge (2002) found that guidelines and handbooks which focus on thesis writing do not show students the range of thesis options nor do they provide the rationale for the various choices thesis writers make. He also argued that thesis writing is a difficult process, even for the native English writers because they need to possess a good level of language proficiency and textual, genre and social knowledge.

Very few studies have focused on the structure of the Master's thesis although a large number of studies on research articles (Kanoksilapatham 2005, 2007, Swales 1981, 1990, 2004) and some on Ph.D. dissertations have been conducted (Bunton 2002, 2005, Dong 1998, Kwan 2006, Swales 2004, Thompson 1999, 2005). Some studies of Master's theses have explored the organisation of certain sections such as *Acknowledgements* (Zhang 2012), *Introduction* and *Discussion* sections (Dudley-Evans 1986) and *Conclusions* (Hewings 1993) and the overall organization of the thesis across disciplines (Paltridge 2002), in Applied Linguistics (Chen & Kuo 2012) and with a focus on the structure of *Introductions* across three disciplines (Samraj 2008). Although these studies have provided us with a preliminary understanding of the generic structure of Master's theses, the focus is on texts produced in British, American, and Australian institutions. What is apparent is the scarcity of studies on texts written by non-English writers and especially those written by Vietnamese.

In addition, it is generally accepted that the *Introduction* chapter plays a key role in showing the relevance and the significance of the research being reported to previous work in the field. In other words, the *Introduction* provides the connection between the intended reader's knowledge and the writer' own work by pointing out where the work will stand in the knowledge base of the field. Yet, students and supervisors (Dudley-Evans 1986, Shaw 1991) indicated that among all sections in a thesis, the *Introduction* is one of the most difficult chapters to write.

This investigation therefore, attempts to study the *Introduction* chapters of Masters theses written by Vietnamese TESOL students. It especially focuses on identifying the generic moves and steps and structures of these *Introduction* chapters. The results of this study is likely to contribute to the literature on how non-native writers, in particular Vietnamese students, compose this specific genre in English and respond to the need pointed out by Dudley-Evans (1999) and Thompson (1999) for more studies and investigation on the texts generated by students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The pioneering work in analysing moves and steps in *Introduction* sections is Swales' (1981) analysis of research articles. From accumulated contributions made by other scholars, he revised his model for the first time in 1990 and then in 2004. These two revised models

include three moves: *Establishing a territory*, *Establishing a niche* and *Occupying the niche (1990)/Presenting the present work (2004)* instead of four moves in his 1981 model.

Based on the original move structure analysis by Swales (1981), Dudley-Evans (1986) (Appendix A) proposed a six-move structure with two or three possible steps within them in *Introductions* of seven Masters theses. In his model, the first three moves concentrate on establishing the field while it is done by only Move 1 in the CARS model. Then in Move 4, the authors can define the scope of the topic they are interested in by introducing the parameters of the research or by showing how the research is related to the previous one in the field. Move 5 in Dudley-Evans' model is similar to CARS' Move 2 because it indicates the need for the present one to fill the gap or to extend the research further. The last move is similar to CARS' Move 3 in which the purposes of the research are given. It could be argued that establishing a niche is the central move of all because it is the move where the need for the current research is indicated. This 'gap' move is also a link between the current study and the others in the field. In other words, this move helps to situate the current research in the literature in the field.

Bunton (2002) used Swales' CARS 1990 model to analyse the generic moves and steps of the *Introductions* of 45 Ph.D. dissertations across eight disciplines and found a small variation between different disciplines. He also indicated that the moves were used in cyclical patterns similar to those reported in the literature and the most frequent cycle in his corpus is Move 1-2, rather than Move 1-2-3 when the authors review the previous research before identifying the gap or raising problems, but do not go on to announce their own research. As for the steps, he found all 14 steps identified by Swales (1990) and Dudley-Evans (1986) in his corpus. Although most of the steps in CARS and Dudley-Evans' model are present in his corpus of the Ph.D. thesis *Introductions*, 10 new steps were also distinguished and added to Modified CARS model for Ph.D. dissertation *Introductions* (Appendix B). This new model was used as a main analysis framework for this study although Dudley-Evans' model is also referred to.

METHODOLOGY

The data consist of 12 electronic Master's theses written during the years 2009-2012 by Vietnamese students in TESOL. Only the theses produced during this period of time in the South of Vietnam were selected since generic structures are subject to variation across time and this selection of theses is expected to reflect the current practice of thesis writing by this group of Master's students in this part of Vietnam. These theses were randomly obtained with the writers' consent and from the libraries of all three universities providing this Master's program in the South of Vietnam (four from each). After permissions were obtained from the heads of the English departments, the librarians of each of these universities or the TESOL Master's program coordinators were contacted for the thesis writers' emails and phone numbers. The researchers then contacted the thesis writers for permission to use their theses. After receiving the thesis writers' permission, the researcher informed the librarians or the program coordinators and the electronic theses were sent to the researchers.

To create a corpus, the *Introduction* chapters of these theses were copied and pasted onto a separate file and they were also randomly coded from I 1 to I 12 for the ease of reference and the anonymity of the thesis writers. The resulting corpus of 12 *Introductions* comprised 74 pages of text (an average of 6.5 pages each) and 21,119 words. There are two reasons for the selected number of the *Introduction* chapters in this corpus. First, it was the inaccessibility to the resources of universities with this Master's program in the Central and the North of Vietnam. Second a review of the literature revealed that Dudley-Evans (1986) analysed only 7 Masters theses, Bunton (2002) explored the structures of 45 *Introductions*

across 8 disciplines (an average of 5.5 *Introduction*/a discipline) while Samraj (2008) analysed 24 *Introduction* chapters across three disciplines (an average of 8 each). Since this current study focuses on only one discipline (TESOL), the number of 12 *Introduction* chapters is acceptable.

These *Introductions* were first analysed for their overall organization by looking at the section headings. The section headings within these introductory chapters were noted and compared because they indicate the function of the section and may provide an indication of the moves and steps in the chapter. This was followed by a detailed investigation in terms of moves and steps using Bunton's (2002) Modified CARS model for Ph.D. dissertation *Introductions* as a reference framework. The *Introduction* were then analysed and re-analysed one or more times in the light of findings from the other *Introductions*. To ensure the reliability of the textual analysis, a random analysis of 25% of these texts was conducted by an expert. The results indicated a high percentage of agreement between the two researchers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

SECTION HEADINGS

Table 1 below shows the section headings that occurred in more than one *Introduction* with the number of occurrences indicated in the last column. It was found that three of the *Introductions* contained general information about the topic of research, two with research purposes and one with research subjects and instruments at the very beginning of the chapter. However, although five *Introductions* described the structure of the *Introduction* chapter (*Chapter structure*) they did not have the heading for this section. The headings are sequenced in the table in the order in which they appeared in their *Introductions*. The bold section headings are those required in the guidelines provided by these universities. This table also indicates the number of the sections that each *Introduction* contained.

Section headings are of interest because they tell the readers how the authors see the structure of their text. However, one of these 12 *Introductions* (I 7) was not divided into sections and so had no section headings. It is the shortest *Introduction* of all with only 642 words in 2 pages. Almost all of the section headings in the other 11 *Introductions* were 'generic' (Bunton 2002), i.e. they could be used in an *Introduction* on any topic, and all of these 11 *Introduction* chapters had more than five sections (Table 1). Two *Introductions* contained topic-specific headings, which are related to a particular topic of the research e.g. *The context of English grammar teaching in Vietnamese high school* and *Learner Autonomy in Vietnam* (instead of *Background of the study*). No partially generic section headings were found in this corpus although the heading *Theoretical framework found* in two *Introductions* may belong to this group because they were the framework for the specific research topic.

TABLE 1: Generic section headings in the 12 Masters theses Introductions

No	Section headings	I 1	I 2	I 3	I 4	I 5	I 6	I 7	I 8	I 9	I 10	I 11	I 12	Total (headings)
	Chapter structure	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓		**5**
1	**Background of the study**	✓		✓	✓	✓					✓	✓		**6**
2	**Rationale of the study**		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓			✓	**6**
3	**Statement of Purposes, Aims & Objectives**	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	**9**
4	**Aims & Research questions**		✓							✓		✓		**3**
5	**Research questions and hypothesis**	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓			**7**
6	**Significance/ Importance of the study**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	**10**

														Total
7	Theoretical framework		✓			✓								**2**
8	Overview of methodology	✓										✓		**2**
9	Scope/ Focus of the study			✓		✓					✓	✓		**4**
10	Definitions of key terms	✓	✓			✓	✓							**4**
11	**Organisation/ Structure/ Overview of the thesis**	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		**10**
	Total of section headings (in each thesis)	**7**	**6**	**7**	**5**	**5**	**7**	**0**	**5**	**5**	**5**	**6**	**6**	

Despite some variations in these headings due to the wording difference in the guidelines provided by each university, the headings in these *Introductions* included all suggested parts of the *Introduction* chapter (e.g. *Background to the study*, *Rationale of the study*, *Statement of purpose, Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters*) with a high frequency (more than 50%). One interesting point is that if the *Introduction* had the section *Background of the study,* it did not have the *Rationale* section and vice versa. However, an exception was found in one *Introduction* where *Background of the study* appeared after *the rationale, the purpose, the research questions,* and *the significance of the study* were given. The reason for this difference is that the author separated the general context of the research topic from the particular research setting. The author had to present the current study by stating the research purpose, questions and its significance after claiming the general importance of the topic and establishing the niche in *the rationale*.

The generic section headings in these *Introduction* chapters indicate the field, the niche the study would occupy, and the announcement of the current study. However, the overall focus of these generic section headings is on introducing the present study (9 out 11 sections; except *Background of the study* and *Rationale of the study*) and this is similar to Bunton's (2002) finding where section headings present many aspects of the current research. In addition to this, more than half of these 9 generic section headings i.e. *Aims/Objectives/Research questions/Hypothesis/Methodology* and *Defining terms* are the steps in Move 3 of Bunton's Modified CARS model.

MOVES

Table 2 below shows the moves and steps found in this corpus of the *Introduction* chapter. Each check (✓) indicates one occurrence of a certain step in each *Introduction,* and the last column shows the total number of *Introductions* in which a particular step was found. The bold numbers indicate the numbers of *Introductions* with the moves or steps suggested in the guidelines provided by these universities. The final step in Move 3 with (**) is the newly identified step in this M.A. *Introduction* chapter corpus.

TABLE 2: Move and Steps

Moves & Steps	I 1	I 2	I 3	I 4	I 5	I 6	I 7	I 8	I 9	I 10	I 11	I 12	Total
Move 1: Establishing a Territory													
1: Claiming centrality													
2: Making topic generalizations and giving background information	✓✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**12**
3: Defining terms													
4: Reviewing previous research		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓	✓		8
Research parameters													

Move 2: Establishing a Niche													
1A: Indicating a gap in research				✓					✓				**2**
1B: *Indicating a problem or need*	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓			✓	**8**
1C: Question-raising					✓					✓			**2**
1D: Continuing a tradition													
Counter-claiming													
Move 3: Announcing the Present Research (Occupying the Niche)													
1: Purposes, *aims*, or *objectives*	✓✓✓✓	✓✓✓	✓✓	✓	✓	✓✓✓✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓✓	**12**
2: Work carried out													
3: *Method*	✓✓					✓					✓		**3**
4: *Materials or Subjects*			✓			✓✓✓							**2**
5: Findings or Results													
6: *Product of research/Model proposed*													
7: Significance/Justification	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**11**
8: Thesis structure	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**10**
Chapter structure	✓					✓		✓	✓		✓		**5**
Research questions/Hypotheses	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	**12**
Theoretical position		✓				✓							**2**
Defining terms	✓	✓				✓							**3**
Parameters of research	✓		✓			✓						✓	**4**
Application of product													
Evaluation of product													
** Chapter summary	✓					✓							**2**

These twelve *Introductions* had all three moves in Bunton's (2002) Modified CARS model; *Establishing a Territory*, *Establish a Niche*, and *Occupying the Niche* although there was a variety of steps used to accomplish each move. This could be explained by the fact that these writers simply followed the guidelines for thesis writing provided by their universities. In these guidelines, Move 1 is expected to be completed in the section headed *Background to the study*. *Rationale of the study* is where the niche for their current study is established while *Statement of purpose*, *Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters* are Move 3's components.

However, there seemed to be a combination of Moves 1 and 2 in this corpus of *Introductions* where the indication of context or territory and the perceived gap or question were given in either the section headed *Background to the study* or *Rationale of the study*. There was only one *Introduction* (I 3) which had both, but the field and the need for that study were stated in *Rationale of the study* while *Background to the study* showed the particular related information to the current research like the school curriculum and course book. Furthermore, the presence of Move 2 in this corpus conforms to those in Samraj's (2008), which found that of the three disciplines (Philosophy, Biology and Linguistics), only the Linguistics *Introductions* consistently had the second move.

The way to introduce the field of study and the background information related to the topic in the first Move in these *Introduction* chapters is similar to the three-move progression described by Dudley-Evans (1986) because the authors of these *Introductions* seemed to lead their readers from very general to specific topics in a narrative style as in Example 1 below, which made the first move in these *Introductions* the longest (the length of the first Move in 9

of these *Introductions* is more than half that of the whole chapter). The possible reason for the length of *Introductions* in these Vietnamese student Master's theses could be due to the well-established convention of including literature review (Bhatia 1993). Furthermore, although Kaplan's (1966) former description of the circular pattern of Asians' written discourse has caused controversial arguments, it seems to be another explanation for this style of writing by these Vietnamese writers.

1. *"Approximately 400 million people speak English as their first language nowadays and about the same number use it as a second language* (M1, S1)*... Languages taught in Vietnam* (M1, S2)*… The development of the country as well as the change of the English textbook for the period from 1986 up till now can be divided into two stages*:…(M1, S2). *However, to do this, it is necessary to establish clear-cut criteria, as Nguyen (2008) puts it, "Can we evaluate textbooks when we do not have any standardized criteria?* (M2, S1B)(I5)

One noteworthy move feature in this *Introduction* corpus is that there was no move cycle. In other words, all three moves follow in a single progression (Establish a Territory – Establish a Niche – Occupy a niche) where the authors previewed previous research, and then pointed out gaps or problems or raised questions, and finally went on to announce their own research in the sections labelled *Statement of Purposes/Aims & Objectives of the study, Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters.* This feature is quite different from the literature which states the moves in the *Introduction* chapters are cyclical (Bunton 2002, Crookes 1986). This difference could be due to the fewer number of words required for a Master's thesis (approximately 20,000 words, but not more than 45,000 words) compared with that of a doctoral dissertation. Furthermore, Swales (2004) insists that these 'straight-shot' *Introductions* can be regarded as more attainable to novice writers, which these Master's thesis writers in Vietnam belong to.

STEPS

15 out of 24 steps described in Bunton (2002) and one newly identified step were found in this corpus (Table 2). The most frequently used steps (almost 100%) are those with the headings suggested in the guidelines by the universities and they tended to be the obligatory steps in this corpus. In Move 1, Steps 2 and 4 were used to complete the *Background to the study* section suggested in the guidelines. Move 2 with the suggested name *Rationale of the study* in the guidelines was accomplished by Steps 1A, 1B and 1C. Move 3 with the suggested names *Statement of purpose*, *Research questions/Hypotheses*, *Significance of the study* and *Overview of thesis chapters* in the guidelines was realized by the corresponding steps in Bunton's model. This conformity to the model is likely to reflect the way Vietnamese have been trained at school where conforming to the norms, formula or patterns are employed.

However, some variations from the guidelines in the steps found in these *Introductions* need to be considered. First, Step 2 of Move 1 in three *Introductions* (I 1, I 3 and I 6) was cyclical. That is the field and general information of the topic under investigation appeared at the very beginning of the *Introduction* chapter in some paragraphs without section headings while these pieces of information were repeated in the section *Background to the study* or *Rationale of the study*.

Second, there was a variation in the step to establish the niche of the reported study (Move 2). In this corpus, this linking move was completed by either Step 1A (*Indicating a gap*) (I 4 and I 10), or Step 1B (*Indicating a problem or need*) (I 1, I 2, I 3, I 5, I 7, I 8, I 9 and I 12) or Step 1C (*Question-raising*) (I 6 and I 11) (Appendix B). This shows that Step 1B was most favored in Move 2 by these Vietnamese authors. Their preference tends to suggest

that this step is likely to be the easiest way for these writers to argue for the relevance of their current study.

Third, although Step 1 in Move 3 was found in all twelve *Introductions* with a separate section under the headings *Statement of Purposes, Aims & Objectives, Aims & Research questions* (except for I 7 which had no section heading), this step was cyclical in three *Introductions*. This step was first introduced at the very beginning of the chapter, then in its main section (*Statement of Purposes, Aims & Objectives*) and finally in the Chapter summary as shown in Example 2 below.

> **2.** *This thesis reports the results of the study on **104 third-year university students** at Y University. The study **aimed to examine** the use of the analytic scoring scale ……. The study also **surveyed** students' attitudes ...* **(This appeared at the beginning of the chapter)** (I 6)
>
> ***The purpose of this study was to test** the theory stating that the analytic scoring scale would be better …….(* **This appeared in the Purpose section**) (I 6)
>
> *Briefly, this Chapter mentions general aspects of the study titled Z at Y University. **The study aimed to prove** that analytic scoring scale would be more effective ... In this study, **only 104 students**…. The study also **surveyed** learners' attitudes ...* **(This appeared in the Chapter summary)** (I 6)

Similar to Step 1 of Move 3, Step 3 (*Methods*) of Move 3 was also found to be cyclical in three *Introductions* (I 1, I 6 and I 12). Two *Introductions* (I 1and I 12) had a separate section for this step (*Overview of methodology*) while the other (I 6) simply stated the methods used for their research at the beginning of the chapter and in the Chapter summary (Example 2). Step 4 (*Subjects*) of Move 3 was also seen at the beginning of the chapter, in the *Purpose* section, in *Scope of the study* and in *Chapter summary* in I 6 (Example 2).

Fourth, research questions and hypotheses were found in all twelve *Introductions* although they were considered to occur occasionally in Bunton's model (2002). This finding shows not only these authors' compliance to the guidelines, but also the similarity to Bunton's claims (2002, p.71) that "research questions and hypotheses were more commonly seen in Social Science and Education". Another point about research questions and hypotheses found in this *Introduction* corpus similar to Bunton's finding is that they were enumerated although one *Introduction* (I8) did not have research questions but its hypothesis was seen in the section named *Background* instead of Move 3, as illustrated in Example 3 below.

> **3.** *From the literature, the researcher **hypothesized** that adapting and implementing the process approach could be a possible effective strategy, which could help enhance learners' writing performance and their perceptions towards learning to write.* (I 8)

Fifth, *Parameters of research* (with a different heading in this corpus *Scope/Focus of the study*) and some other occasionally present steps in Bunton's Modified CARS model for Ph.D. thesis *Introductions*; namely *Chapter structure, Theoretical position, Defining terms* were found in some *Introductions* of this corpus although they were not indicated in the guidelines provided by their universities. This may be attributed to the writers' flexibility in their writing and the appropriateness to the specific topic being reported. For instance, when their research topic was about a specific construct, this construct was defined under the section heading *Defining Terms*. However, there is a difference in how the *Scope of the study* was completed. While three *Introductions* delimited their research with the use of verbs like 'focus on' or 'confine itself to', one stated the sample and the variables of the study under the section heading *Scope of the study*. The *Scope of the Study* section in this particular thesis

should have been named *Method* because it functioned as the method section. This difference in one *Introduction* may be considered as an exception.

Another difference is in the step of *Chapter structure* between Bunton's model and this *Introduction* corpus. *Chapter structure* is listed as "occasionally present step" and occurred as part of an early move to *Occupy the niche* (Bunton, 2002, p. 70). However, five out of twelve *Introductions* in this corpus had this step at the very beginning of the chapter. Finally, because TESOL belongs to soft and applied disciplines, some steps in Bunton's model (*Materials*, *Product of research/Model proposed*, *Application of product,* and *Evaluation of product)* which are in the science and engineering theses were not found in this corpus.

<div align="center">NEWLY IDENTIFIED STEPS</div>

The last step found in a separate section headed *Chapter summary* in two *Introductions* (I 1 and I 6) in this corpus summarized the content of the *Introduction* chapter. While one concluded the chapter with the summary and the thesis structure (I 1), the other just restated the main content of the chapter (I 6). The presence of this newly identified step in a separate section in two *Introductions* and in the *Thesis structure* section of the other nine *Introductions* (Table 2) indicates that this step is conventional, as suggested by Kanoksilapatham (2005), in the *Introduction* chapters of TESOL Master's theses in Vietnam. The presence of this chapter-summary step and the step *Chapter structure* at the beginning of the chapter, may reflect the tendency that these writers were influenced by the three-part structure of an academic essay (Introduction-Body-Conclusion) that they used to follow at their university study. In fact, they both started their *Introduction* chapter with the *Chapter structure* and ended it with the *Chapter summary*. However, this convention acceptable to certain universities that provide this Master's program requires follow-up interviews in future research.

<div align="center">PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS</div>

The results of the textual analysis in this study suggest that this group of non-native English novice writers in Vietnam need to be formally instructed on how to compose their own theses. In fact, as also indicated in Min, San, Petras and Mohamad's (2013) study on Asian novice writers' writing issues, it is crucial to make novice researchers aware of the required knowledge of a particular genre through formal training in their postgraduate programs. Therefore, some suggestions for helping this group of Vietnamese writers properly construct their thesis are made. First, they should be formally instructed on how to compose this genre with a range of thesis options and the rationale for various choices these writers make altogether with the textual, genre and social knowledge in their particular setting in Vietnam. This can be done by providing them with the sample texts of Master's theses written by both native and non-native English writers and inviting them to share their opinions and comments related to the writers' choices on each. This partly responds to the weaknesses in guidelines and handbooks on thesis writing as indicated by Paltridge (2002). Then, an analysis of the texts of Master's thesis *Introductions* should be conducted with these novice writers. This text analyzing stage or Text Modelling stage proposed by Callaghan and Rothery (1988) aims to familiarise writers with the structure and the fixed language expressions employed to achieve the most common moves in *Introduction* chapters of Master's theses. Examples of fixed expressions that this group of writers can make use of writing Moves 2 and 3 of the *Introduction* chapters are provided in Appendix C. Finally, the next two stages in the Sydney School's Teaching and Learning Cycle; namely, *Joint Negotiation of Text*, and *Independent*

Construction of Text will follow. In particular, in the former stage, these writers are prepared to produce the new text of the same genre by observing, note making and discussing with their teacher. This step aims to shape these thesis writers' contributions into a text of an *Introduction* chapter. In the later stage they are provided an opportunity to construct an instance of this genre on their own.

LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The researchers acknowledge that follow-up interviews with these theses' writers and their supervisors would provide more in-depth information about the practice of writing this specific genre. Although this project identified some interesting features about the move and step structures in the *Introduction* chapters written by a group of Vietnamese writers, it was conducted on a small corpus of their TESOL Master's theses. Therefore, more studies of this kind with a bigger corpus and on other chapters of their theses should be conducted in order to provide a more comprehensive picture of how this academic genre is written by this group of non-native English speaking writers in Vietnam. Such an investigation will also respond to the need for more studies and investigation on the texts generated by students (Dudley-Evans 1999, Thompson 1999) and in particular, on the those produced by non-native English writers. Besides this, findings from such studies would have practical implications for teaching this group of non-native writers on how to properly compose this particular genre.

CONCLUSION

The present study sought to identify the generic moves and steps and the structures of *Introduction* chapters of Master's theses written by Vietnamese students in the field of TESOL. Based on the modified CARS model (Bunton 2002), this project found that these *Introduction* chapters had all three moves in a single progression and 15 steps described by Bunton (2002). The reason for this is that these writers simply followed the guidelines provided by their universities and this tends to show the cultural expectation in Vietnam where conformity to the norms is highlighted. Their conformity to the model was also reflected in the use of section headings, where there was a high frequency in the use of suggested section headings in these *Introductions*. Additionally, the moves and steps with corresponding section headings in the guidelines tended to be the obligatory ones in this corpus. However, Moves 1 and 2 were included in the same section headed *Rationale* or *Background of the study*, which made this section the longest in the *Introduction* chapters. *Chapter summary* was further identified in this *Introduction* chapter corpus as a new step.

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APPENDICES

Move 1: Introducing the field

Move 2: Introducing the general topic (within the held)

Move 3: Introducing the particular topic (within the general topic)

Move 4: Defining the scope of the particular topic by:

  (i) introducing research parameters

  (ii) summarizing previous research

Move 5: Preparing for the present research by

  (i) indicating a gap in previous research

  (ii) indicating a possible extension of previous research

Move 6: Introducing the present research by

  (i) stating the aim of the research, or

  (ii) describing briefly the work carried out

  (iii) justifying the research

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

Notes: The moves in this model may not occur in a single progression, but may well be cyclical. For example, the sequence of moves may be: 1-2, 1-2, 1-2-3 A=Arts, So=Social Sciences, Eg=Engineering, Si=Science, M=Medicine. Newly identified steps are in italics

APPENDIX C: Examples of Fixed Language Expressions in the current corpus used to write Move 2 and 3 in Introduction Chapters of Master's Theses

Steps in Moves 2 and 3	Fixed language expressions
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	
1A: Indicating a gap in research	- …, much research needs to be done about … (10) - ..., the researcher found that they were only limited to survey investigation of ... (4) - There was no research that had been carried out to examine…(4)
1B: Indicating a problem or need	- For all of these reasons, it would be necessary to have an investigation into ... *(***need***)* (12) - In years of teaching …, the researcher has continuously got complaints from these students, stating that they have not known what their strengths are and what their weaknesses are with the scores given holistically by teachers. (**problem**) (9)
1C: Question-raising	- . …Furthermore, at the end of each term, many classes ask the teachers (the would-be test writers) to give them extra revision lessons. ***Do these phenomena just reflect something wrong in the test administration or is there something problematic with the papers, for example, a mismatch between the content of the test papers and the instructional content or a mismatch among the papers themselves? Is the alternative form reliability of the papers high enough for them to be used alternatively?*** These are the questions calling for researches to validate the quality of the papers.(11) -…However, to do this it is necessary to establish clear-cut criteria, as Nguyen (2008) puts it, "Can we evaluate textbooks when we do not have any standardized criteria?" (need + question-raising) (6)
Move 3: Announcing the Present Research (Occupying the Niche)	
1: Purposes, aims, or objectives	- The study aimed at examining/ studying/ discovering/ exploring…(1) - The project aimed to investigate…(6) - It also surveys…(6) - The purpose(s)/ aim(s) of this study was/ were to…(3) - The specific aims of the research are as follows: (to- infinitive) (2) - The following are the specific objectives of the research: (to-infinitive) (12) - This project was conducted with the aim of…(8)
3: Method	- To achieve the aims mentioned above, this study employed interviews and class observations to collect…(1) - … was the main instrument for collecting data in this study.(6)
7: Significance/Justification	- The study highlights the important role of…(5) - The study offers/ provides the theoretical basis for/ insights into…(9) - The study has important implications in relation to…(8) - The findings of the study are of value in terms of…(4) - The findings of this study would make some contributions to…(11) - The study would enrich the approach of…/ raise awareness among…(12) - Insights into…would be of great help to teachers…(3) - If this study is successfully carried out, it would help…(2) - Although the topic of this research is not a novel idea, its significance lies in the practicality.(1) - It is hopeful that this study will make a considerable contribution to…(6)
8: Thesis structure	- The thesis consists of/ includes … chapters:... Chapter 1 presents/ addresses…. Chapter 2 reviews…. Chapter 3 focuses on/ describes…. Chapter 4 provides/discusses/ reports/ analyses and interprets…Chapter 5 summarizes… (1,3 , 8 and 10) - The thesis consists of five chapters, including (1)…, (2)…(4, 9, and 12)
Chapter structure	- This chapter describes…. The chapter ends with…(8)
Research questions/Hypotheses	- To achieve the above-mentioned aims, the research attempts to work out the answers to the following questions: (11) - In order to achieve those objectives, the following research questions must be addressed: (2) - To elaborate the research aim, the following research questions have been used: (3) - The main research question embeds three sub-questions. (4) - It is my hypothesis that…(9) - The researcher hypothesized that…(8)
Defining terms	- The term "…" is used to refer to…(1) - The term "…" used in this study for…(6)
Parameters of research	- The study only focuses on…(3) - The study confines itself to …(12)

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