

Move Analysis of Results-Discussion Chapters in TESOL Master's Theses Written by Vietnamese Students

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ABSTRACT

Results and Discussion chapters are considered difficult to write in a thesis, especially for non-native English writers. However, few studies have been conducted on how writers compose these two genres. This study, therefore, explores the move-step structures of these two chapters in 24 Master's theses written by Vietnamese postgraduates. Based on the framework by Chen and Kuo (2012) and the discourse-based interviews with actual thesis writers and supervisors, the study found that this group of writers constructed the genres according to their perceived communicative purposes of these chapters. Moreover, the presence of section/chapter introduction-next section/chapter introduction-section/chapter summary cycles tends to reflect the distinctive composition of these texts at the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam. These findings suggest that explicit instructions on rhetorical structures of these two genres should be provided to non-native English writers and attention should also be paid to specific practice of a genre composition in a particular discourse community.

Keywords: results; discussion; Master's thesis; Vietnamese writers; TESOL

INTRODUCTION

Move-based approaches have been intensively used in investigating different conventional English research article (RA) sections (Brett 1994, Holmes 1997, Kanoksilapatham 2005, 2007, Lim 2006, Nwogu 1997, Peacock 2002, 2011, Posteguillo 1999, Swales 1990, Thompson 1993, Williams 1999, Yang & Allison 2003) and have also been extended to compare the rhetorical moves used in English RAs and those of RAs written in other languages (Loi & Evans 2010). Despite a remarkable number of RA investigations employing the move-based approach, few move-based studies were conducted on doctoral (PhD) dissertations (Bunton 2002, 2005, Dong 1998, Hyland 2004, Kwan 2006, Swales 2004, Thompson 2001, 2005) and Master's (MA) theses. Some move-based research has explored the organisation of certain chapters of MA theses, such as Acknowledgements (Zhang 2012), Introductions (Nguyen & Pramoolsook 2014b, Samraj 2008), Literature Review chapters (Nguyen & Pramoolsook 2014a), Method chapters (Nguyen & Pramoolsook 2015), Introduction and Discussion sections (Dudley-Evans 1986), Conclusions (Hewings 1993) and the overall thesis organisation (Paltridge 2002). Although these studies have provided us with a general view of the generic structure of MA theses, the majority focus 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 research work on Vietnamese writers are virtually non-existent. This investigation, therefore, continues to explore the generic move-step

structures of the Result and Discussion chapters of TESOL M.A. theses written by Vietnamese students.

Results and Discussion chapters are crucial parts of MA theses, in which authors present their findings and provide interpretations of their studies. The former typically includes tables, graphs and figures, which present numerical products of various statistical manipulations. These numbers, therefore, have to be reconstituted or interpreted either in the same sections or chapters or in the latter in order to show how they integrate with and contribute to disciplinary knowledge (Basturkmen 2012). Without the interpretation or discussion, the presented numbers would remain meaningless and new knowledge claims cannot be made. Due to their mutual dependence, authors can either separate results and findings and discussions or combine them into one section or chapter entitled Results and Discussion (Chen & Kuo 2012, Dong 1998, Paltridge 2002, Yang & Allison 2003). However, due to their lack of prior experience in writing them, students and novice writers may find these sections or chapters difficult to write despite the availability of samples (Basturkmen 2009, Lim 2010). In fact, writing these chapters requires them to meld content from the literature review with the research design and results of the study at hand and it should be written in the persuasive and argumentative styles (Swales 1990, Swales & Feak 2004). Min, San, Petras and Mohamad (2013) also show that Asian novice writers have problems in reporting findings and they tend to fail in justifying the validity of their claims. Despite these difficulties, as revealed in the informal conversations with thesis writers and their supervisors in the current investigation, TESOL MA students in Vietnam have little or no formal instruction on how to write each part of a thesis, but are simply provided with guidelines. These students consult with 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 general identical required parts for each chapter of a thesis (Appendix A). Paltridge (2002) states 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.

Previous research on the structural organisation of the RA results has shown some disciplinary variations. In Thompson's (1993) study of the Results sections of Biochemistry RAs, six rhetorical moves were identified, and being consistent with Kanoksilapatham's (2005) study, Move 1 (*methodological justifications*) and Move 2 (*interpretations of results*) appeared most frequently. Thompson's statement that biochemists not only presented results but also employed a variety of rhetorical moves to argue for the validity of scientific facts and knowledge claims challenged the traditional convention of factual reporting in the Result sections. Brett's (1994) study of Sociology RA Results found 13 rhetorical moves classified into three groups (metatextual, presentation and comment), and only *Statement of finding/results* was obligatory. A subsequent study using Brett's (1994) model for medical RA Results sections by Williams (1999) also confirms the disciplinary variation in these sections. In their analysis of 20 Applied Linguistics RA sections from the results to closure, Yang and Allison (2003) found that there were six highly cyclical moves in the Results sections and seven moves in the Discussion sections. Moreover, these last sections of RAs in this field tended to relate to one another. In particular, the Results section can cross over to the Discussion section in terms of the Move *Commenting on results*, and the Discussion section can cross over to the Conclusion section in terms of *Summarising the study*, *Evaluating the study* and *Deductions from the study*. With regard to the move structure of Results chapters in MA theses on Applied Linguistics, Chen and Kuo (2012) modified Yang and Allison's (2003) with an elaborate description of the steps in Moves 1, 2, 3 and 6, and an addition of an independent move of *Referring to other studies* with three steps (Table 1) in

their analysis of 20 MA theses. Their results indicate that the first three moves could represent the primary communicative purpose of the Results chapters of MA theses on Applied Linguistics.

TABLE 1. Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework for the Results chapter of MA theses in Applied Linguistics

Move 1: Introducing the Results chapter	Providing background information or how results are presented Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied
Move 2: Reporting results	Locating graphics Reporting major findings
Move 3: Commenting on results	Interpreting results Comparing results with literature Evaluating results (including strengths, limitations, generalisations, etc. of results) Accounting for results (giving reasons)
Move 4: Summarising results	Making conclusions of results
Move 5: Evaluating the study	Indicating limitations of the study Indicating significance/advantage of the study
Move 6: Deductions from the (research) study	Recommending further research Drawing pedagogic implications Making suggestions
Referring to other studies	Providing background information Providing definition of terms Providing support or justification

Regarding the Discussion sections or chapters, previous studies have revealed variations in the structural organisation. Besides a varied organisation of Discussion sections, Dudley-Evans (1986, 1994) found the common three-part structure (Introduction, Evaluation of Results, and Conclusions and Future Work) with different numbers of rhetorical moves. A slightly modified version was identified by Hopkins and Dudley-Evans (1988) in both the Discussion chapters and RA sections of dissertations. Employing this modified framework, Holmes' (1997) analysis of social science RA Discussion sections revealed that although there were fundamental similarities to those in the natural sciences, the Discussion sections of social science RAs displayed the complete absence of some moves. Peacock (2002) analysed the rhetorical moves of 252 RA Discussions in seven disciplines and found the frequent moves of *Claims*, *Findings* and *References to previous research* and no obligatory moves. Fallahi and Erzi's (2003) analysis of RA Discussion sections from seven language teaching journals revealed a different distribution from those in the frameworks of Dudley-Evans (1994) and Swales (1990). It can, therefore, be concluded that RA Discussions were subject to disciplinary variations. Amirian, Kassaian, and Tavakoli (2008) analysed Applied Linguistic RAs in order to examine the possible differences at the level of move schemata and lexico-grammatical realisations of Discussion sections. Their findings indicated not only the discrepancies in the move frequency and sequences but also cultural writing styles. Persian writers tended to make strong claims when explaining and justifying their findings, and they tried to validate their findings by repetitively referring to past literature. Chen and Kuo (2012) modified Yang and Allison's (2003) framework for the move-step analysis of 10 separate Discussion chapters in Applied Linguistics MA theses. Except for the new name for Move 1, *Introducing the Discussions chapter*, instead of *Background Information*, their modified framework is exactly the same as Yang and Allison's (2003), which consists of seven moves, but with more details for the steps of Moves 1, 2 and 3 (Table 2). Their analysis showed that only *Reporting major findings* was obligatory and the first four moves, which demonstrate the rhetorical functions of summarising, evaluating, and deducing from the reported study of the MA thesis Discussion chapter, occurred more frequently.

TABLE 2. Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework for the Discussion chapter of M.A. theses in Applied Linguistics

Move 1: Introducing the Discussion chapter	Providing background information (such as purpose, design, research questions/ hypotheses, etc.) or how discussions are presented
Move 2: Reporting results	Reporting major findings
Move 3: Summarising results	Making conclusions of results
Move 4: Commenting on results	Interpreting results Comparing results with literature Accounting for results (giving reasons) Evaluating results (including strengths, limitations, etc. of results)
Move 5: Summarising the study	Summarising the study briefly
Move 6: Evaluating the study	Indicating limitations Indicating significance/advantage Evaluating methodology
Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study	Making suggestions Recommending further research Drawing pedagogic implications
Reference to other studies	Providing support or justification

In general, besides a few studies on texts written by non-English writers and possible challenges for Vietnamese postgraduates, previous research indicates the variations regarding the move structures of the Results and Discussion sections or chapters across disciplines and cultures. The current study thus plans to investigate how Vietnamese TESOL M.A. students construct the generic structures of the Results and Discussion chapters in their theses. The results of this study are likely to contribute to the literature on how non-native writers compose these specific genres in English and provide insights into effective instructional strategies to help ESL/EFL learners compose their thesis Results and Discussion chapters. Furthermore, this study also responds to the need pointed out by Dudley-Evans (1999) and Thompson (1999) for more studies and investigations on the texts generated by students.

METHOD

The data consisted of 24 TESOL MA theses written during the years 2009-2012 by Vietnamese students. These theses were randomly obtained with the writers' consent from the libraries of all three universities providing this MA program (eight from each) in the South of Vietnam. After permissions were obtained from the heads of the English Departments, the researchers contacted thesis writers for permission to use the theses. After receiving the thesis writers' permission, the researchers informed the librarians or the program coordinators and the electronic theses were sent to the researchers.

To create a corpus, each thesis was randomly coded from T1-T24 for ease of reference and to ensure anonymity of the thesis writers. Each Results and Discussion chapter of these theses was then copied and pasted onto a separate file and they were also randomly coded from 1 to 24 (for example, R1-R24 for Results and D1-D24 for Discussion chapters). The resulting corpus for the present study of these Results-Discussion chapters consisted of 201,354 words.

Move identification in this present research was based on the revised frameworks for analyzing the Results and Discussion by Chen and Kuo (2012) (Tables 1 & 2) Besides a complete move-step model for analyzing each thesis chapter, their revised framework has a new independent move of *Referring to other studies* in each chapter, which is absent from all previous move-step studies. However, the existence of 11 combined Results and Discussion chapters in this corpus drove the researchers to collapse the frameworks for analyzing these two chapters into one. The differences between these two frameworks are the order of *Commenting on results* (Move 3), which precedes *Summarising results* (Move 4) in the

Results framework while this move follows *Summarising results* in the Discussion and the addition of Move 5 *Summarising the study* in the latter. In order to analyse the combined Results-Discussion chapters, the researchers decided to keep the order of the first four moves of the Results framework and to combine them with the last four moves of the Discussion framework, making an eight move framework.

The researchers began by 1) identifying the moves and steps, either compulsory or optional, in relation to the overall communicative purpose, and 2) investigating how these moves and steps are ordered. After the moves and steps were identified, their frequency in each chapter of the theses was recorded in order to verify the extent to which a particular move or step is used. The criteria; namely ‘obligatory, conventional and optional’ suggested by Kanoksilapatham (2005), were employed for classifying the frequency of the moves and steps found in this TESOL M.A. thesis corpus. It is possible to find new moves and steps; however, they are not considered as new move(s)-step(s) unless they are found with about 50% in the corpus (Nwogu 1997). Since move analysis involves a certain degree of subjectivity (Crookes 1986), an inter-rater, who holds a doctoral degree and specialises in corpus-based analysis, analysed the texts in this corpus separately, yielding a high inter-rater reliability rate (97%). Apart from the genre-based analysis on these texts, discourse-based, semi-structured interviews with six thesis writers and three thesis supervisors, who actually wrote and supervised these theses, on the ground of their availability were included to provide clarifications and insightful understanding regarding unconventional aspects of writing this genre in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam (Biber, Connor & Upton 2007, Hyland 2000) (Appendix B). The interviews were conducted in Vietnamese language and recorded, but only the information that helped clarify the issues related to the thesis writing process was translated with the aim of shedding more light on how this group of MA students composed these two genres in Vietnam.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

OVERALL STRUCTURES OF THE CONCLUDING CHAPTERS

TABLE 3. Appearance of the chapters from Results to Conclusion

Chapters	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	T	Total		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	0	1	2		3	4
Results	+	+		+	+		+	+	+			+	+	+				+		+	+			13	
Result & Discussions				+			+			+	+				+	+	+		+			+	+	+	11
Discussions	+	+		+	+		+	+	+			+	+	+				+		+	+			13	
Conclusions	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	24

Table 3 shows the appearance of the Results and Conclusions in 24 MA TESOL theses in terms of their communicative purposes, and the sequence of chapters in this table displays their normal order of occurrences. However, the headings used in these closing chapters varied although they are generic (Bunton 2002) or conventional (Yang & Allison 2003). Among the 24 theses, 19 had combined chapter headings for the results and discussion of the reported studies (Data analysis and Discussion, Results and Discussion, or Findings and Discussion in 10, 5 and 4 theses, respectively). In the interviews with thesis writers, it was discovered that Results, Findings or Data analysis were alternatively used as headings for the rhetorical purpose of their Results chapters in the TESOL discourse community in Vietnam. Among these 19 chapters with the combined section headings, 11 have mixed

sections for presenting the findings and discussions while the results and discussions in eight theses were separately presented. The different presentation of these Results and Discussion chapters could be due to the provided guidelines (Appendix A). Due to their divided status under the combined chapter heading, the Results and Discussion in these eight theses were classified as separate chapters. Three out of the remaining five theses divided results and discussions into two separate chapters, making three six-chapter theses. The discussions in the last two theses were found to be in the same chapter with the conclusions, but they were divided into separate sections; they were recorded as separate ones. In general, as can be seen in Table 3, all 24 theses in this corpus had conclusions, 11 contained combined Results-Discussion chapters and the other 13 theses separated Results from Discussion. The way these closing texts in the TESOL MA theses written by Vietnamese students were divided is similar to that by international writers in Chen and Kuo (2012) in which the Discussion chapters in one third of their theses with the ILrMDC (Introduction-Literature Review-Methods-Discussion-Conclusions) pattern were found to be embedded in either the Results or Conclusions.

STRUCTURES OF RESULTS CHAPTERS

As seen in Table 4, the first two moves (*Introducing the Results chapter* and *Reporting results*) were obligatory in the current corpus of 13 Results chapters of TESOL MA theses. Moreover, while Move 3 (*Commenting on results*) and Move 4 (*Summarising results*) were conventional and optional (69% and 38.5% respectively), there tended to be a complete absence of Move 5 (*Evaluating the study*) and Move 6 (*Deductions from the study*).

TABLE 4. Frequency of moves-steps in 13 Results chapters

Moves & Steps	Total*	%	Freq.
- <i>Summarising the previous chapter</i>	5	38	0.38
Move 1: Introducing the Results chapter (4 headings)	13	100	1
Providing background information or how results are presented	6(6)	46	0.46
Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied	64(12)	92	4.92
Move 2: Reporting results	13(13)	100	1
- <i>Section introduction (each Result)</i>	19(7)	53.8	1.46
Locating graphics	220(13)	100	16.92
Reporting major findings	244(13)	100	18.77
Move 3: Commenting on results	10(10)	77	0.77
Interpreting results	72(9)	69.2	5.54
Comparing results with literature	3(1)	7.7	0.08
Evaluating results (strengths, limitations, generalisations, etc. of results)	0	0	0
Accounting for results (giving reasons)	6(6)	46	0.46
- <i>Section summary (each result summary)</i>	34(10)	77	2.62
- <i>Next section introduction</i>	3(3)	23	0.23
Move 4: Summarising results (each result summary)	8(8)	69	0.61
Making conclusions of results	8(8)	69	0.61
Move 5: Evaluating the study	0	0	0
Indicating limitations of the study	0	0	0
Indicating significance/advantage of the study	0	0	0
Move 6: Deductions from the (research) study	1	8	0.08
Recommending further research	1(1)	8	0.08
Drawing pedagogic implications	0	0	0
Making suggestions	0	0	0
Referring to other studies	7(7)	54	0.54
Providing background information	4(4)	31	0.3
Providing definition of terms	1(1)	7.8	0.08
Providing support or justification	21(7)	54	1.6
- <i>Summarising the chapter</i>	4(4)	31	0.3
- <i>Introducing the next chapter content</i>	2(2)	15.4	0.15

* The total of moves/steps (total theses)

* The italic steps indicate the newly identified ones in the corpus

Although these findings are not in line with that of Yang and Allison (2003) which indicated that Moves 2 and 3 of the RA Results sections are obligatory, they support Chen and Kuo's (2012), in which the first two moves were found to be present in all Results. This similarity could be because of the same target genre, i.e. master's thesis, between these two corpora while RAs are the target genre in Yang and Allison (2003). Although previous studies (Brett 1994, Chen & Kuo 2012, Nwogu 1997, Posteguillo 1999, Yang & Allison 2003) claim that the Results chapters do not only report on the research results but comment on them as well, this study identified few instances of commenting on research results (Move 3) as compared with the instances of results reported in Move 2. In fact, while there were 244 main findings reported, only 72 of them were interpreted (Table 4). Although the infrequent occurrence of Move 3 in these Results chapters by Vietnamese share the commonality with MA students in Basturkmen (2009), this finding was accounted by the presence of separate Discussion chapters that follow, as revealed in the interview with a thesis writer (T1).

(Excerpt 3.1) “...as I separated the findings and discussions of my thesis, I suppose they should be separately presented. Am I right?...” (T1)

The move sequence in these Results chapters follows the order of presentation in Table 4. In particular, all these 13 separate Results chapters started with the chapter introduction, followed by several cycles of the research findings, making Move 2 (*Reporting results*) cyclical. These several research-finding cycles were in turn followed by some instances of comments on results (Move 3) and result summaries (Move 4). However, it is interesting to note the newly identified steps that preceded or followed these main move cycles in these chapters. Five of these 13 chapters were found to begin with the previous chapter summary (Example 1), and four ended with the chapter summary and an introduction of the next chapter content (Example 2). As revealed in the interviews with thesis writers and their supervisors, this practice reflected these writers' intention in connecting all chapters in their theses together and is a common way of organising each chapter of their theses, despite the fact that it is not included in the guidelines. Furthermore, this way of organising these Results chapters tended to reflect the influence of a three-part structure of an academic essay (Introduction-Body-Conclusion) that they used to follow at their university study. Due to their low frequency of occurrences in these Results chapters (38% and 31% respectively); however, they are not recorded as new steps. *Referring to other studies* was found in six Results chapters, accounting for 46% of 13 theses with separately presented Results, and among three steps identified in this additional move by Chen and Kuo (2012), *Providing support or justification* was these writers' preferred step (21 instances).

(1) *The previous chapter presented the research design, research instruments like questionnaire and interview guide, and the data collection procedures. Based on the data collected from the questionnaire, in this chapter I will present the analysis of the statistical information related to..... Findings concerning..... are also explored. In addition, a focus on qualitative data from the interview....* (R9)

(2) *To summarise, this chapter has presented the main findings related to four main research questions. First,.... Second,.... Next,.... Summaries and discussions of these findings will be presented in the next chapter.* (R9)

Two steps in Move 2 (*Locating graphics* and *Reporting major findings*) occurred with the highest frequency in all 13 Results chapters (16.92 and 18.77 times per chapter respectively), making these two steps obligatory and the highest cycle. Another two steps (*Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied* and *Interpreting results*) were found to be conventional because they occurred in twelve and nine theses, (92% and 63.6% respectively). Moreover, *Reporting major findings* was found to follow *Locating graphics* in

the majority of the cases identified in the corpus. However, this finding does not confirm those of international writers in Chen and Kuo's (2012) in which the cycle of *Reporting major findings* (Move 2)-*Interpreting results* (Move 3) accounted for the highest frequency of steps. This cyclical difference tends to reveal that whenever international writers reported the research findings, they provided their interpretation. In contrast, Vietnamese thesis writers were likely to locate the tables or graphs where results are displayed, and then present the results of their study without comments. As shown in Table 5, *Reporting major findings* tended to be the central step of all sequence patterns of steps and *Locating graphics-Reporting major findings* was by far the highest frequency of occurrence.

TABLE 5. Move-step cycling in 13 Results chapters

Move/step cycles	Total	Average occurrence per chapter
Graphics-Findings	211	16.23
Methods-Graphics-Findings	59	4.54
Graphics-Findings-Interpreting	52	4
Methods-Findings	15	1.15
Methods-Graphics-Findings-Interpreting	12	0.92

Finally, three steps were newly identified in this Results chapter corpus. Seven of these 13 Result chapters contained *Section introduction*, three with *Next section introduction* and 10 with *Summary of each section* (Table 4). These three steps formed a sub-cycle in some Results chapters as shown in Example 3. The step *Next section introduction* was optional (23%), but *Section introduction* and *Summary of each section* were classified as new steps in these Results chapters (53.8% and 76.9% respectively).

(3) **4.2. Results of the questionnaire to teacher respondents**

As shown in the earlier framework of analysis, the data provided from the questionnaire to teacher respondents was divided into three small sections for analysis. The results of the first section are presented as below. (section introduction)

Generally speaking, in the process of teaching vocabulary to elementary adult learners at this center, teachers could run into seven major difficulties originated from their learners. The most considerable difficulty was ...The second major problem reported in the study was. ... The third problematic things Above all,.... (section summary)

In addition to the major difficulties derived from learners found in section A, section B of this questionnaire was also specially designed to find out possible difficulties that teachers might encounter from themselves. The data included in section B was analysed and interpreted as follows. (next section introduction)

Section B - Difficulties arising from teachers. ... (R8).

STRUCTURES OF THE DISCUSSION CHAPTERS

As described in the overall structures of chapters from results to closure in the current corpus, only three (T9, T20 and T21) of the 13 theses had a separate heading (Discussion) while the rest was found under the combined headings of Results-Discussion and Discussion-Conclusions. The way these texts were divided in this corpus could account for the complete absence of Move 2 (*Reporting results*) in these Discussion chapters. Move 3 (*Summarising results*) and Move 4 (*Commenting on results*), in contrast, occurred in every text, making them the obligatory moves in these Discussion chapters. However, the absence of result reporting in the Discussion tended to reflect these writers' conscious choice in separating results from discussions although they were presented under the same heading in a majority of theses (61.5%).

TABLE 6. Frequency of moves-steps in 13 Discussion chapters

Moves & Steps	Total*	%	Freq.
- <i>Summarising the previous chapter</i>	1(1)	7.7	0.18
Move 1: Introducing the Discussion chapter	8(8)	62	0.62
Providing background information and how discussions are presented	8(8)	62	0.62
Move 2: Reporting results	0	0	0
Graphics	0	0	0
Reporting major findings	0	0	0
Move 3: Summarising results	13(13)	100	1
Making conclusions of results	71(13)	100	5.46
Move 4: Commenting on results	13(13)	100	1
Interpreting results	46(13)	100	3.54
Comparing results with literature	16(7)	53.8	1.23
Accounting for results (giving reasons)	23(9)	69	1.77
Evaluating results	5(2)	15.4	0.38
Move 5: Summarising the study	2(2)	15.4	0.15
Summarising the study briefly	2(2)	15.4	0.15
Move 6: Evaluating the study	4(4)	31	0.3
Indicating limitations	3(3)	23	0.23
Indicating significance/advantage	5(3)	23	0.38
Evaluating methodology	0	0	0
Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study	3(3)	23	0.23
Making suggestions	2(2)	15.4	0.15
Recommending further research	1(1)	7.7	0.08
Drawing pedagogic implications	0	0	0
- <i>Section summary</i>	8(5)	38.5	0.61
Referring to other studies	11(11)	84.6	0.85
Providing support or justification	69(11)	84.6	5.31
Providing background information	12(6)	46	0.92
- <i>Chapter summary</i>	9(9)	69	0.69
- <i>Next chapter introduction</i>	5(5)	38	0.38

* The total of moves/steps (total theses)

* The italic steps indicate the newly identified ones in the corpus

Moves 5, 6 and 7, on the contrary, were found with a low frequency of occurrence, and their infrequent occurrences indicated that few evaluations and claims were made in the Discussion chapters by these Vietnamese writers. This finding is in line with Peacock's (2002) finding that non-native English writers made far fewer claims than their native counterparts. Unlike optional Moves 5-7, Move 1 (*Introducing the Discussion chapter*) and *Referring to other studies* were seen in eight chapters, making them conventional. Whereas the prominent occurrence of the independent move confirms Peacock's (2002) finding which indicates that *Referring to previous research* seems to be important in Language and Linguistics, the high frequency of Move 1 does not. This difference could be due to the different genre types; namely RAs in his study, which requires concise writing while MA thesis, the target genre of this study, accepts details and information repetition (Basturkmen 2009).

Regarding move cycles, Moves 3 and 4 occurred frequently (Table 6), and their frequent occurrence show the communicative purposes of the Discussion chapters that these Vietnamese thesis writers had in mind, as revealed in Excerpt 3.1 above. Moreover, it was observed that all moves in these Discussion chapters followed the order of the moves in the framework, except the independent move of *Referring to other studies* because previous studies were employed when the authors commented on the results.

In terms of steps, *Making conclusions of results* (Move 3) and *Interpreting results* (Move 4) were obligatory in these Discussion chapters. *Accounting for results* and *Comparing results with literature*, were classified as conventional and optional steps, respectively (69% and 53%). The analysis of step sequences showed that *Making conclusions of results* was always followed by *Interpreting results*, making the highest average occurrence per chapter (Table 7). Moreover, this cycle can be understood that all main

findings were provided with interpretations by these Vietnamese writers whereas only 80% of Discussion chapters in Chen and Kuo (2012) had this cycle. However, the absence of this two-step cycle in international writers' Discussion could be explained by more various sequences of three step patterns of Move 4, making their Discussion chapters more elaborated.

TABLE 7. Step cycling in 13 Discussion chapters

Move/step cycles	Total	Average occurrence per chapter
Main findings-Interpret	44	3.38
Main findings-Interpreting-(Reference)-Accounting	23	1.77
Main findings-Comparing	20	1.54
Background-Main findings-Interpreting	11	0.85

Similar to the findings in the Results chapters, *Chapter summary* was found in 9 out of 13 Discussion chapters (69%) and two of these had a section heading for this communicative purpose. Because this newly identified step was found in more than 50% of the corpus, it was considered as a new step (Nwogu 1997). However, this new step should be regarded as a new move according to move definitions by Swales (1981) and Holmes (1997). In fact, this text at the end of the chapter not only performs a specific communicative function of its own but also contributes to the overall communicative purpose of the genre (Example 4). In relation to Move 1, which aims to open the Discussion chapter, this newly identified move, *Chapter summary*, was employed to close the chapter by these Vietnamese writers. Besides *Chapter summary*, *Section introduction* and *Section summary* were found in two and five Discussion chapters, respectively. As stated earlier in the interviews with thesis writers and their supervisors, this convention is a common practice in their universities.

(4) **“Summary**

This Chapter reported on the outcomes of the data-gathering phase. The results from the analysis above seem to address all of the research questions in a positive way. In fact, through the surveys and interviews, the teachers displayed..... The results from class observations and interviews suggest.....

In the next chapter, the findings from the study presented in this chapter and the three problem statements stated in the first chapter will be interlaced again to discuss the final conclusion of this thesis.” (D2)

STRUCTURES OF THE COMBINED RESULTS-DISCUSSION CHAPTERS

Table 8 shows the frequency of moves-steps and their sequence in each combined Results-Discussion chapter. Based on the new framework for analyzing the combined chapters, the study revealed that the first three moves are compulsory while Moves 4-7 and *Referring to other studies* are optional and conventional, respectively. However, this finding is different from that of the Results chapters in which the authors tended to simply report on the research results without interpretation. The authors who followed this chapter structure, on the contrary, interpreted the research findings reported with a very high average occurrence (11.1). Moreover, the majority of these authors (72.7%) compared their findings with previous studies in the literature and accounted for the results found with an average of two and three times per chapter, respectively.

TABLE 8. Frequency of moves-steps in 11 Results-Discussion chapters

Moves & Steps	Total*	%	Freq.
<i>- Summarising the previous chapter</i>	3(3)	27.2	0.27
Move 1: Introducing the Results-Discussion chapter	11(11)	100	1
Providing background information	13(9)	82	1.18
how the chapter is presented	11(11)	100	1
Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied	74(9)	82	6.73
Move 2: Reporting results	11(11)	100	1
<i>- section structure</i>	21(6)	54.5	1.9
Locating graphics	178(11)	100	16.2
Reporting major findings	240(11)	100	21.82
Move 3: Commenting on results	11(11)	100	1
Interpreting results	122(11)	100	11.1
Comparing results with literature	22(7)	63.6	2
Evaluating results	1(1)	9	0.09
Accounting for results (giving reasons)	36(7)	63.6	3.27
<i>- Section summary</i>	5(3)	27.2	0.45
<i>- Next section introduction</i>	292	18.2	0.18
Move 4: Summarising results	5(5)	45.5	0.45
Making conclusions of results	6(5)	45.5	0.54
Move 5: Summarising the study	0	0	0
Summarising the study briefly	0	0	0
Move 6: Evaluating the study	2(2)	18.2	0.18
Indicating limitations of the study	0	0	0
Indicating significance/advantage of the study	2(2)	18.2	0.18
Move 7: Deductions from the (research) study	3(3)	27.3	0.27
Recommending further research	0	0	0
Drawing pedagogic implications	3(3)	27.3	27.3
Making suggestions	5(5)	45.5	0.45
Referring to other studies	11(11)	100	1
Providing background information	9(7)	63.6	0.82
Providing definition of terms	0	0	0
Providing support or justification	66(11)	100	6
<i>- Summarising the chapter</i>	10(10)	90.1	0.9
<i>- Introducing the next chapter content</i>	2(2)	18.2	0.18

* The total of moves/steps (total theses)

* The italic steps indicate the newly identified ones in the corpus

Although Chen and Kuo (2012) claim that the first three moves could represent the primary communicative purposes of the Results chapters, their presence in all Results-Discussion chapters is likely to reflect the communicative purposes of these combined chapters perceived by this group of Vietnamese writers. However, although the actual thesis writers (T6, T11, T17, and T23) stated that they combined these two sections with the purpose of avoiding missing the reported results in the discussion, a thesis supervisor (S2) stated that the combination of Results and Discussion resulted from the fact that these Vietnamese thesis writers did not have sufficient information for discussing their findings. The information in Move 3 (Table 8) seems to confirm what this supervisor claimed as the reported findings were mainly interpreted with few instances of accounting and comparing results with literature.

The moves in these combined chapters followed the same order in the framework, i.e. they started with Move 1, followed by several cycles of Moves 2 and 3, and ended with Moves 4, 6 or 7. Move 5 (*Summarising the study*) was found at the end of one chapter and it provided the summary of all the results found in the study. 9 out of 11 combined Results-Discussion chapters (81.8%) contained *Referring to other studies*, and its most commonly used function is *Providing support or justification* with an average of six times per chapter.

Different from the findings of the separate Results chapters in which only *Locating graphics* and *Reporting major findings* (Move 2) were found to be obligatory, these combined Results-Discussion chapters had four compulsory steps (*How the chapter is*

presented (Move 1), *Locating graphics*, *Reporting major findings* (Move 2) and *Interpreting results* (Move 3)). Another four steps (*Providing background information* (Move 1), *Indicating methods used or statistical procedure applied* (Move 1), *Accounting for results* (Move 3), and *Providing support or justification* (independent move)), were recorded as conventional because they were found in nine and seven theses (81.8% and 72.7%, respectively). A higher number of both obligatory and conventional steps identified in these combined chapters, as compared with the Results chapters, indicates that they were more elaborately presented.

In terms of step cycling, these Results-Discussion chapters contained more steps of Move 3 in the cycles than the separate Results chapters. In fact, although the cycle of *Graphics-Findings* (Move 2) also accounted for the highest frequency of occurrences, the cycles with Move 3 steps were prominent (Table 9). This combination of these Move 3 steps in the cycles could reflect the writers' conscious choice in following the combined Results-Discussion chapter structure.

TABLE 9. Step cycling in 11 Results-Discussion chapters

Move/step cycles	Total	Average occurrence per chapter
Graphics-Findings	173	15.73
Methods-Graphics-Findings-Interpreting	57	5.18
Methods-Graphics-Findings	23	2.1
Graphics-Findings-Interpreting	20	1.82
Methods-Findings-Interpreting	14	1.28
Methods-Graphics-Findings-Interpreting-Accounting	14	1.28

Similar to the findings in the Results chapters, the cycle of *section introduction-section summary-next section introduction* was found in these Results-Discussion chapters but with a low frequency of occurrences and only *section introduction* was seen in five chapters (Table 8). *Chapter summary* which provides a summary of the whole chapter and an introduction to the content in the next chapter, was found in 10 out of 11 theses with the combined Results-Discussion chapters and half of them have a heading for this section. Similar to the finding in the separate Discussion chapters, *Chapter summary* in these combined Results-Discussion ones was suggested as a new move.

CONCLUSION

The present study planned to explore the move-step structures of Results and Discussion chapters of 24 Master's theses written by Vietnamese TESOL students. Based on the modified frameworks by Chen and Kuo (2012) and the discourse-based interviews with actual thesis writers and supervisors, the analysis revealed that these writers constructed these texts according to their perceived communicative purposes. In particular, *Introducing the Results chapter* (Move 1) and *Reporting results* (Move 2) were obligatory in the Results while *Summarising results* (Move 3) and *Commenting on results* (Move 4) occurred in every Discussion chapter. Unlike these separate Results and Discussion chapters, all 11 combined Results-Discussion chapters had the first three moves (*Introducing Results-Discussion chapters*, *Reporting results* and *Commenting on results*), which were the main elements of Result chapters by international writers. These findings revealed not only the rhetorical structures of these TESOL thesis chapters in Vietnam but also these writers' insufficient knowledge about these two genres when they were only provided with the guidelines. These findings, therefore, suggest that these Vietnamese writers should be explicitly taught about how these chapters are constructed in order to familiarise them with these genres. With raised

genre awareness, they could become sensitive to the moves and steps and the rhetorical functions, and would be able to effectively establish the significance of their reported studies in these chapters. This study also found the common practice of including chapter or section introduction and conclusion which summarises and/or introduces the next section or chapter content although they are not given in the guidelines. This finding reflects a distinctive way of section or chapter organisation by Vietnamese and a tendency that these writers were influenced by the three-part structure of an academic essay that they used to follow at university. Despite the small scale of the study, to a certain extent, our findings can be generalised to novice Vietnamese TESOL M.A. students, and some implications are obvious from our findings.

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APPENDIX A: THESIS GUIDELINES

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

The results, discussion and conclusion sections of a thesis may appear as separate chapters or may be combined in different ways. There models below show the possible combinations.

Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Results	Results & Discussion	Results
Discussion		Discussion & Conclusion
Conclusion	Conclusion	

These models are taken from Murrison, E & Webb, C. (1991). *Writing a research paper*. From the series: Writing Practice for University Students.

The results are normally written up using complete paragraphs but are often supported by tables and/or graphs.

The function of a discussion section is to: (1) interpret the results presented in the results section; and (2) discuss them in relation to your research question and to the results of previous research in the field.

Of course, to present any discussion about results from previous research, you must already have introduced this research in your literature review.

APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What made you choose to use the combined chapter for Results and Discussions, or Discussions and Conclusions?
2. Why were there few instances of Move 3 in separate Result chapters?
3. Did you have to open every chapter with a brief review of the previous chapter and an introduction and conclude every chapter of your thesis or introduce the content of the next chapter?
4. Is the practice of concluding each chapter of a thesis or introducing the content of the next chapter acceptable in your discourse community? (*Supervisors*)