

STRUCTURAL PATTERNS IN ELT CONFERENCE PROCEEDING INTRODUCTIONS

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Abstract

Research article introductions play an important role in establishing the significance, focus, and contribution of a study. Although many studies have examined the rhetorical structure of research article introductions, limited attention has been given to introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings, particularly those written by Indonesian student writers. This study aims to identify the generic structure of introduction sections in ten English language teaching conference proceeding articles written by students from English education study programs in Indonesia. Using a qualitative case study design, the study analysed the introductions based on the modified CARS (Create a Research Space) model. The findings show that Move 1, establishing a territory, and Move 3, occupying a niche, appeared in all introductions, whereas Move 2, establishing a niche, appeared less consistently. The most frequent steps were claiming centrality, making topic generalisations, counter-claiming, outlining the purpose, and listing research questions or hypotheses. However, reviewing previous research, indicating a gap, continuing a tradition, and stating the value of the research appeared less frequently. These findings suggest that the writers were generally able to introduce their topics and present their studies, but they need stronger rhetorical awareness in using previous literature to establish clear research gaps and justify the significance of their research.

Keywords: CARS; Conference; ELT; Patterns; Proceeding

INTRODUCTION

Conferences are crucial for communicating scientific findings. They allow scientists to expand their own social networks and talk about the preliminary findings of their research (González-Albo & Bordons, 2011). Indonesia is a nation that actively hosts both domestic and international seminars and conferences. It attempts to give scientists a place to learn about the most recent advancements in their area of expertise and to stay up to date on the most recent research trends in their field.

Participants present their research or papers at conferences, and the findings are then published as proceeding articles. Journal proceeding papers resemble normal articles, although monographic publications are shorter and require fewer citations. Monographic proceedings papers undergo a less stringent review process, which has a minimal impact on publication speed (González-Albo & Bordons, 2011). The proceeding article's goal is to provide a succinct written account of the presentations made at scientific conferences. They are often brief, go through a general readability evaluation, but their scientific content is not subjected to a rigorous peer review process. Since they only summarize the information delivered during a conference, they are rarely rejected (ISHS, 2024).

There are sections included in writing research articles, whether they are ongoing articles or journal articles. The introduction, techniques, discussion, results, and conclusions are some of these. The first section's introduction is crucial. Research paper introductions typically serve to motivate readers to read the entire article and to provide a logical explanation of the research (Swales & Feak, 2004). Furthermore, this portion is regarded as the most important part for a number of reasons. Firstly, readers are reading this section for the first time. Secondly, it presents the article's main topic in precise detail. Thirdly, it provides a brief justification for earlier research in particular fields (Safnil, 2001). Additionally, this section of the work is meant to highlight the analysis and importance that the current study offers for the growth of human understanding (Kendal, 2015). Consequently, it's critical to understand the introduction's generic structure.

Research on the format of research article introductions (henceforth RAI) addressed disciplinary variance in certain ways. Samraj (2002) proposed that differences in the realisation of the structure of RAIs may exist between two related fields, namely conservation biology and animal behaviour. She discovered that compared to assertions about wildlife behaviour, conservation biology RAIs supported stronger centrality claims. Shehzad (2005) and Kanoksilapatham (2011), who deal with computer science and civil engineering, respectively, offer evidence in support of her conclusions. The authors of each relevant discipline were obviously impacted by their disciplinary conventions, as they reported multiple typical ways in which they achieved the schematic form of their article openers.

Although previous studies have analysed the generic structure of research article introductions, they have rarely examined introductions in conference proceedings. For this reason, the present study focuses on research article introductions published in English language teaching conference proceedings. These introductions may display distinctive structural and rhetorical features because conference proceedings often target specific audiences and tend to emphasise current findings, innovative practices, and emerging trends in English language teaching.

Despite the growing number of studies on research article introductions, limited attention has been given to the rhetorical structure of introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings, particularly those written by Indonesian student writers. Most previous studies have examined introductions in journal articles or

compared rhetorical patterns across disciplines, while conference proceeding articles remain relatively underexplored. This gap is important because conference proceedings have different publication purposes, review processes, and audience expectations from journal articles. Therefore, analysing the introductions of conference proceeding articles can provide a more specific understanding of how student writers establish research territory, identify a niche, and present their studies in this academic context.

Based on this focus, the study addresses three research questions: (1) What generic structures appear in research article introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings? (2) How do the writers present their research in these introductions? (3) What ideal pattern of generic structure can be identified from the introductions analysed?

METHOD

This study examined the generic structure of research article introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings. It used a qualitative case study design because this approach is suitable for analysing genre practices in a focused corpus. This view is consistent with Hyland (2004), who argues that qualitative and small-scale studies are useful for exploring patterns in academic writing. The data consisted of ten research article introductions taken from English language teaching conference proceedings.

The data were selected according to three criteria. First, each article had to focus on English language teaching. Second, each article had to be written by students from English education study programs in Indonesia. Third, each article had to be published in 2023. To analyse the introductions, this study adopted the Create a Research Space (CARS) model proposed by Swales and Feak (2004), as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. CARS Model by Swales and Feak (2004)

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING A TERRITORY	
Step 1	Claiming centrality
Step 2	Making topic generalisations
Step 3	Reviewing items of previous research
MOVE 2: ESTABLISHING A NICHE	
Step 1	Counter-claiming
Step 2	Indicating a gap
Step 3	Question-raising
Step 4	Continuing a tradition
MOVE 3: OCCUPYING A NICHE	
Step 1	Outlining purpose
Step 2	Listing research question/hypothesis
Step 3	Announcing principal finding
Step 4	Stating the value of the research
Step 5	Indicating the structure of research paper

The analysis was conducted in several stages. First, the researcher read each selected introduction to understand its overall organisation. Next, the researcher identified and coded the moves and steps based on the CARS model. Finally, the frequency of each move and step was calculated to identify the dominant rhetorical patterns in the corpus.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study are presented in this section. It starts with presenting the frequency of move occurrences in the research article introduction in English language teaching conference proceedings. There are 10 selected research articles from five different proceedings of five different conferences held in Indonesia in the year of 2023. The list of the selected works is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. The titles of research article conference proceeding

Source	Selected work
Proceeding of International Conference on Educational Teacher Training & Education	Muharrir, A. (2023, July)
	Machmud, S. D. et al. (2023, April)
Bukittinggi International Conference on Education (BiCED) Proceeding	Alek, A. (2023)
	Yolanda, S. et al. (2023)
English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLic) Proceedings	Tanihardjo, J., & Jovianto, J. (2023, June)
	Uzma, F., & Sumarni, S. (2023, June).
Proceedings of the International Conference on English Language and Teaching (ICOELT 2022)	Fadilah, A., & Ardi, H. (2023, December).
	Zainil, Y. (2023, December)
Proceedings of Conference on English Language Teaching (CELT)	Wahyuni, S., & Nurhandini, R. (2023, July).
	Permatasari, I. (2023, July).

As shown in Table 3 below, Move 1 and Move 3 appeared in all ten introductions, whereas Move 2 did not occur in every text. This indicates that not all writers explicitly established a niche in their introductions. In Move 1, claiming centrality was the most frequent strategy for establishing a territory. In Move 2, counter-claiming was the most common strategy for establishing a niche. In Move 3, outlining the purpose and listing research questions were the most frequent strategies for occupying a niche. Overall, the findings suggest that the writers generally followed the CARS model, although they did not always apply all moves and steps consistently.

Table 3. Data analysis based on Swales and Feak (2004)

Move and Step		
	Appearance (N= 10	Percentage

Move 1: Establishing a territory	10	100 %
Step 1 Claiming centrality	10	100 %
Step 2 Making topic generalization	9	90 %
Step 3 Reviewing items of previous research	5	50 %
Move 2: Establishing a niche	9	90 %
Step 1 Counter claiming	6	60 %
Step 2 Indicating a gap	4	40 %
Step 3 Question-raising	0	0 %
Step 4 Continuing a tradition	2	20 %
Move 3: Occupying the niche	10	100 %
Step 1 Outlining purpose	6	60 %
Step 2 Listing research question / hypothesis	6	60 %
Step 3 Announcing principal finding	0	0 %
Step 4 Stating the value of the research	1	10 %
Step 5 Indicating the structure of research paper	0	0 %

This overall pattern is broadly consistent with Swales' CARS model, which assumes that effective introductions generally move from establishing a research territory to creating and occupying a niche. However, the uneven occurrence of Move 2 shows an important difference from studies such as Rahman et al. (2017), Samraj (2002), and Kanoksilapatham (2011), where niche establishment was more clearly realised. The difference suggests that the student writers in this corpus were more confident in introducing topics and stating research purposes than in critically positioning their studies against previous research.

Move 1 Establishing a Territory

Move 1 functions to establish the importance of the research topic and to convince readers that the topic deserves attention. In this study, all introductions began by establishing a territory, which is consistent with Rahman et al. (2017). However, the writers did not always use every step within Move 1.

Step 1 Claiming Centrality

By claiming centrality, the writers imply that the subject under discussion is important today, as demonstrated by several previous studies. Every research article introduction uses this stage, as seen by the example below:

"Richards (2008) said that speaking is a fundamental skill that foreign language learners should master. Speaking is an important aspect to people in their lives. Because by speaking people can communicate their feelings, share their ideas and opinions. Speaking is the most important skill and the mastery of speaking skills in English is important for second and foreign language learners. Speaking is one of the important parts in teaching language also because it includes one of four basic language skills to speak in the foreign language in order to share ideas with other people. A speaker needs to find the most appropriate words and correct grammar to express meaning accurately and specifically and needs to organise the discourse so that the listener will understand."

The complete occurrence of claiming centrality in the corpus indicates that the writers considered it necessary to persuade readers that their topics were important. This finding supports Rahman et al. (2017), who also found that writers of applied linguistics research articles frequently used claiming centrality to open their introductions. It also corresponds with Samraj's (2002) argument that centrality claims vary according to disciplinary expectations. In the present study, the high use of this step may reflect the practical orientation of English language teaching research, where writers often justify their studies by referring to classroom problems, language skills, or teaching practices.

Step 2 Making Topic Generalisation

Making topic generalisations allows writers to provide general background information about the research phenomenon or field. According to Swales (1990), this step helps writers move from a broad discussion of the topic toward a more specific research focus. As shown in Table 3, this step appeared in nine introductions, making it one of the most frequent strategies in Move 1. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"Technology integration into the learning process is regarded as an effective way for instructors and students to support teaching-learning activities. Several automated feedback tools, such as Grammarly, Hemingway, NounPlus, Ginger, etc are available to help students improve the grammar of their writing."

The frequent use of topic generalisation shows that the writers tended to begin their introductions with broad statements before narrowing the discussion. This pattern is similar to the findings of Suryani et al. (2014), who reported that non-native writers often rely on general background information to introduce their research areas. However, it differs from studies on more experienced academic writers, such as Sheldon (2011), where introductions tend to include more explicit and strategic engagement with previous literature. Thus, the present finding suggests that broad generalisation may function as an accessible rhetorical strategy for student writers, although it may not always be sufficient to establish a strong research niche.

Step 3 Reviewing Items of Previous Research

Reviewing previous research appeared five times in the corpus. This finding differs from Rahman et al. (2017), who found that this step was commonly used in applied linguistics research article introductions. However, it is consistent with Suryani et al. (2013), who reported that non-native English writers often begin introductions with broad topic generalisations before narrowing the focus. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"Furthermore, the researcher found the previous research entitled analysing the students' problems in speaking as performance at the English education department of Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Alauddin Makassar conducted by Salmawati (2020). The finding of her research showed the students' problems were linguistic and nonlinguistic problems. Linguistic problems included lack of vocabulary with percentage 100%, poor in grammar 87.5%, poor in pronunciation 68.75%, while in nonlinguistic included fear of making mistakes 68.75%, lack of confidence 81.25%, and apprehension of other evaluation 20%. Linguistic problems were the most problems that students often faced in speaking as performance."

The relatively limited use of previous research review is important because this step helps writers demonstrate familiarity with the field and prepare the ground for identifying a gap. Compared with Rahman et al. (2017) and Jalilifar (2010), who found that reviewing prior studies was a common feature of research article introductions, the present corpus shows weaker engagement with previous scholarship. This may be related to the writers' status as students and to the nature of conference proceedings, which are often shorter than journal articles. Nevertheless, the finding indicates that stronger use of literature review would help the writers build more convincing introductions.

Overall, the findings for Move 1 show that the writers were able to introduce their research topics and emphasise their importance. Nevertheless, only half of the introductions reviewed previous studies explicitly. This pattern suggests that the writers tended to rely more on topic generalisations than on detailed engagement with previous literature.

Move 2 Establishing a Niche

Move 2 establishes a niche by showing why the present study is necessary. In the CARS model, this move connects previous research with the current study by identifying limitations, gaps, questions, or areas that require further investigation (Swales & Feak, 2004). Therefore, Move 2 is important because it justifies the need for the research and clarifies the contribution of the study. In this study, Move 2 appeared less consistently than Move 1 and Move 3, and Step 3 did not appear.

Step 1 Counter-claiming

Counter-claiming indicates that writers respond critically to previous claims or existing practices. Writers may use contrastive markers such as however, nevertheless, yet, but, and unfortunately to signal disagreement or limitation. In this study, counter-claiming appeared in six introductions, making it the most frequent step in Move 2. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"But the fact is the model that is often used by teachers in general learning is a Direct Learning model. The direct learning model is a learning model that is more centred on the teacher and prioritises effective learning strategies to expand teaching material information, where the direct learning model is developed to streamline teaching materials to fit the time given in the period certain. Based on interviews with English teachers in these schools, teachers more often use this model in learning English. This is one that contributes to the achievement of learning outcomes in English at the school which is still unsatisfactory."

This example shows how the writer contrasts the expected teaching practice with the actual practice found in the classroom. By doing so, the writer creates a reason for conducting the present study.

The prominence of counter-claiming suggests that many writers established a niche by contrasting ideal conditions with actual classroom situations. This differs from studies such as Pho (2008), Samraj (2002), and Kanoksilapatham (2011), in which niche establishment was often realised through explicit research gaps or limitations in previous studies. In this corpus, counter-claiming was more frequently grounded in practical

problems than in scholarly debate. This pattern reflects the applied nature of English language teaching research, but it also shows that the writers need to connect classroom problems more clearly with gaps in existing literature.

Step 2 Indicating a Gap

Indicating a gap enables writers to show what has not yet been sufficiently explored in previous research (Swales, 1990). In this study, this step appeared in only four introductions. This relatively low frequency suggests that many writers did not clearly identify a research gap before presenting their studies. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

“Google Classroom is a very effective medium in teaching and learning English. However, no one of them discusses the effect of using Google classroom in teaching reading. That is why it is very crucial to do research about the effect of using Google Classroom in Teaching Reading especially for junior high school students.”

The low frequency of explicit gap indication contrasts with the findings of Rahman et al. (2017), Saz-Rubio (2011), and Samraj (2002), who showed that identifying a gap is a central strategy in research article introductions. In the present corpus, some writers signalled a gap by stating that a topic had not been discussed, but this was not always supported by a detailed review of previous studies. As a result, the gap sometimes appeared as a general claim rather than as a carefully argued research space. This suggests that student writers may need more guidance in using previous literature to justify the originality of their studies.

Step 4 Continuing a Tradition

Continuing a tradition allows writers to position their study as an extension of previous research. It shows that the current study builds on existing knowledge and contributes to the development of a particular field (Swales, 1990). This step appeared in two introductions. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

“Therefore, additional study is required on the effectiveness and obstacles of cooperative learning in English language learning, according to a comprehensive review of the relevant literature.”

The rare occurrence of continuing a tradition indicates that only a few writers positioned their studies as direct extensions of existing research. This differs from the pattern reported by Kanoksilapatham (2011), where writers in engineering research articles often connected their studies to ongoing disciplinary inquiry. In the present study, the limited use of this step may suggest that the writers focused more on immediate pedagogical problems than on the cumulative development of research. However, using this step more effectively could help them show how their studies contribute to broader conversations in English language teaching.

The findings indicate that counter-claiming was more common than explicitly indicating a gap. This differs from Saz-Rubio (2011), Rahman et al. (2017), Pho (2008), Samraj (2002), and Kanoksilapatham (2011), who found that gap indication was frequently used in research article introductions. The limited use of gap indication in the present

corpus suggests that many writers had difficulty contextualising their studies within previous literature and explaining the originality of their research.

Move 3 Occupying a Niche

Swales (1990) states that Move 3 is anticipated to accomplish multiple objectives, including (1) confirming the established counterclaim, (2) filling in the research void, (3) responding to specific queries, and (4) continuing the conclusively demonstrated tradition. The findings below show that the selected article introductions did not provide data on Step 3.

Step 1: Outlining purpose

As shown in Table 3, outlining purpose appeared in 60% of the introductions. This indicates that outlining purpose was one of the most frequently used steps in Move 3. The finding is consistent with Swales (1990), who states that introductions often conclude by clarifying the purpose of the study. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"The researcher presents the purpose of the study as follows: 1. To know whether there is correlation between students' emotional quotient and their learning achievement on English. 2. To know the direction of the correlation between students' emotional quotient and their learning achievement in English. 3. To know the magnitude of students' emotional quotient and their learning achievement in English."

The frequent use of outlining purpose confirms that the writers were able to state what their studies intended to investigate. This finding is in line with Jalilifar (2010), Jogthong (2001), and Rahman et al. (2017), who found that stating the research purpose is a common realisation of Move 3. However, in the present corpus, the purpose statements were not always preceded by a strong niche. This means that although the writers clearly stated what they wanted to do, they did not always explain why the study was necessary in relation to previous research.

Step 2 Listing Research Question / Hypothesis

Listing research questions or hypotheses also appeared in six introductions, or 60% of the corpus. This step helps writers specify the focus of the study and guide readers toward the intended investigation. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"Consequently, for research objectives, responses to the following research questions were sought: RQ1. What are the trends in Cooperative Learning in The English Language Learning? RQ2. What were the main findings from the available literature?"

The use of research questions or hypotheses also reflects the writers' effort to make the focus of the study explicit. This supports the findings of Rahman et al. (2017), who identified research questions as one of the common ways to occupy a niche in applied linguistics introductions. Nevertheless, compared with Sheldon (2011), where research questions were often integrated with a clearer argumentative flow, the questions in the present corpus sometimes appeared without sufficient preceding justification. Therefore, research questions would be more effective if they followed a clearly established gap or problem.

Step 4 Stating the Value of the Research

Stating the value of the research occurred only once, or in 10% of the introductions. This low frequency indicates that most writers did not explicitly explain the contribution or significance of their studies. The following excerpt illustrates this step:

"The review makes a valuable contribution to the current body of literature by emphasising the significant impact that technology can have on both language education and the broader range of skills required for success in a digital society."

The very low occurrence of stating the value of the research suggests that most writers did not explicitly communicate the contribution of their studies. This differs from the expectation in the CARS model, where occupying a niche may involve showing the value, relevance, or contribution of the research. It also contrasts with studies of more advanced academic writing, such as Sheldon (2011), in which writers often use evaluative statements to highlight the significance of their work. In this corpus, the lack of value statements may reduce the persuasive force of the introductions because readers may not immediately see how the studies contribute to English language teaching research or practice.

In summary, Table 3 shows that outlining purpose and listing research questions or hypotheses were the most frequent steps in Move 3. This finding is consistent with Jalilifar (2010), Jogthong (2001), and Rahman et al. (2017), who found that these steps commonly realise Move 3. However, only three of the five possible steps in Move 3 appeared in the corpus. This result differs from Rahman et al. (2017) and Sheldon (2011), who reported that writers used all steps in Move 3. The difference may be related to corpus size and writer background. The present study analysed only ten introductions written by Indonesian students, whereas previous studies used different corpora and often focused on texts written by English-language writers.

Overall, the analysis shows that the introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings generally follow the CARS model. All introductions employed Move 1 and Move 3, but not all employed Move 2. In addition, the writers did not apply every step within each move. Most writers established a territory by claiming centrality, established a niche by counter-claiming, and occupied a niche by outlining the purpose or listing research questions.

According to Hunston (2002), an introduction should show readers why the research is significant and why a knowledge gap requires further exploration. In the present corpus, the writers commonly supported their studies by referring to real-world phenomena, official documents, urgent issues in the field, and interesting topics. These strategies helped attract readers' attention. However, the writers did not always use literature reviews to identify research gaps or to position their studies clearly within previous research. This pattern is similar to the findings of Amnuai and Wannaruk (2013), who found that Thai research article introductions often did not display knowledge gaps because they engaged only limitedly with previous literature.

In these introductions, previous literature was mainly used to show that the topic was relevant and that the study was worth conducting. Citations were also used to support arguments, provide evidence, demonstrate the writers' knowledge of the field, and emphasise the importance of the topic (Arsyad & Adila, 2018; Arsyad, 2000). However, the literature was less often used to evaluate previous studies or to identify clear gaps. This suggests that the writers tended to use citations for support rather than for critical positioning.

These findings suggest that writers of English language teaching conference proceeding articles need stronger awareness of how to construct effective introductions. In particular, they need to evaluate previous literature more critically, identify research gaps more clearly, and explain the contribution of their studies. The CARS model proposed by Swales and Feak (2004) can serve as a useful guide because it helps writers move from establishing a research territory, to identifying a niche, and finally to occupying that niche through a clear statement of purpose, research questions, or research value.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the generic structure of research article introductions in English language teaching conference proceedings written by students from English education study programs in Indonesia. The findings show that the introductions generally followed the CARS model proposed by Swales and Feak (2004), although the moves and steps were not applied consistently. Move 1 and Move 3 appeared in all introductions, while Move 2 appeared less consistently. This indicates that the writers were generally able to establish a research territory and present their studies, but they did not always establish a clear niche through gap indication or critical engagement with previous research.

The writers presented their research mainly by claiming the importance of the topic, making topic generalisations, counter-claiming, outlining the purpose of the study, and listing research questions or hypotheses. However, they used previous research review, gap indication, continuing a tradition, and stating the value of the research less frequently. Based on these findings, the ideal pattern for research article introductions in this context should include establishing the importance of the topic, reviewing relevant previous studies, identifying a clear research gap, stating the purpose or research questions, and explaining the value of the study.

This study contributes to the understanding of rhetorical patterns in English language teaching conference proceeding articles, particularly those written by Indonesian student writers. Pedagogically, the findings suggest that students need more explicit guidance in using previous literature to identify research gaps and justify the significance of their studies. However, because this study analysed only ten introductions, the findings should be interpreted cautiously. Future research may examine a larger corpus, compare conference proceeding articles with journal articles, or investigate introductions from

different disciplines to provide a broader understanding of students' academic writing practices.

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