RHETORICAL PATTERNS OF DISCUSSION SECTIONS OF REPUTABLE INTERNATIONAL JOURNALS

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Abstract
This study aims to investigate the rhetorical patterns in the discussion sections of reputable international journals (Q1) in the field of English language teaching using a qualitative content analysis design. The discussion sections of the selected journals are analyzed using the Ruiying and Allison model (2003). A total of 30 articles served as the research corpus. This study will reveal the rhetorical patterns (based on the Ruiying and Allison model). The findings indicate that certain moves and steps are consistently present across the articles, reflecting conventional or obligatory rhetorical practices. Moves 2 and all steps of Move 4 were observed in 100% of the articles, identifying them as obligatory elements in structuring discussion sections. Other moves, such as Moves 1, 3, 5, 6–Step 1, and 6–Step 2, appeared in 90–96.6% of the articles, demonstrating their conventional but non-obligatory nature. In contrast, optional steps, including Move 6–Step 3 and Move 7–Step 3, were present in only 30–36.7% of the articles, suggesting that they are not essential to the overall rhetorical structure. These results can serve as valuable resources for academic writing courses.

Keywords: Rhetorical patterns, academic writing, discussion section

INTRODUCTION

Academic articles are written forms of research dissemination, typically published in scholarly journals. To be accepted, these articles must be composed using specific rhetorical conventions (Alsharif, 2022). The concept of journal reputation is often discussed in relation to publication, with reputations ranging from local to international levels. In Indonesia, academic journals are classified into four categories: national journals, accredited national journals, international journals, and reputable international journals (Arsyad, 2013). This study focuses on the reputable international journals as its main object of analysis.

A reputable international journal is characterized by adherence to scientific and ethical standards, a valid ISSN, use of an official UN language, online availability, professional management, an internationally diverse expert editorial board and authorship, national accreditation with DOAJ green tick recognition, and indexing in reputable databases such as Scopus or Web of Science with at least a Q3 ranking. Reputable international journals are often categorized into four quartiles—Q1, Q2, Q3, and Q4. These quartile rankings are determined based on the number of citations a journal receives. Quartiles serve as a ranking system for reputable journals within specific subject areas. Each academic discipline has its own group of journals; for instance, medicine and social sciences have separate journal sets. In the field of language studies, subfields such as language teaching, linguistics, and

literature are commonly found (Cahyono, 2004). Within linguistics, there is a specific branch known as applied linguistics.

To publish in an international journal, a writer must follow the specific guidelines and style of the target journal (Arsyad, 2001). However, this requirement often becomes a major challenge and leads to frequent rejections. Previous studies have shown that publishing in Scopus-indexed journals usually involves numerous rounds of revisions. As commonly acknowledged, authors must undergo a lengthy and rigorous process before their work is accepted by a reputable, indexed journal such as those listed in Scopus. One of the factors contributing to article rejection in reputable or international journals is the rhetorical pattern used by authors, which may not align with the rhetorical conventions of those journals. Arsyad (2001) stated that the rhetorical patterns employed by Indonesian authors in the fields of social sciences and humanities differ from those used by international authors. This implies that methodologically, authors must master the art and steps or rhetorical moves in articulating their arguments within an article (Hyland, 2004).

The responsibility of guiding students to write academic articles lies with lecturers teaching related courses. These courses include paragraph writing, genre writing, essay writing, and, most importantly, academic writing (Arsyad, 2013). Among these, academic writing is the final and most crucial course that requires students to produce a publishable article. Ideally, this article would be targeted for reputable international journals. However, this goal has not yet been fully realized. This issue requires urgent attention and action.

There are several ways that universities can support students in achieving this goal. One approach is to offer structured and well-programmed guidance through writing-focused courses as mentioned above. Academic Writing, as the culminating course, bears the greatest responsibility in mentoring students toward article publication. Although the syllabus for the Academic Writing course at many universities already requires students to produce an article by the end of the semester, it does not explicitly emphasize publication in reputable international journals. Furthermore, there is currently no textbook or specific instructional material that focuses on rhetorical structures in writing, particularly for internationally published articles.

Another reason this study investigates the discussion section is due to its frequent role as a problematic area in article writing. Arsyad (2022) found that Indonesian authors face significant rhetorical challenges in writing the introduction, results, and discussion sections, though they encounter fewer difficulties with the abstract and methodology. This suggests that the discussion section is still not well understood by many authors. Since it represents a critical component where theory and field data converge, it is essential to examine it more closely.

Previous research has provided valuable contributions to understanding the structure and rhetorical patterns of discussion sections. Studies such as Fazilatfar and Naseri (2014) and Liu and Buckingham (2018) highlighted the link between rhetorical moves, author identity, and metadiscourse use, while Hussin and Nimehchisalem (2018) and Lubis (2020) revealed patterns in student writings and common gaps in critical engagement. Broader analyses, like Al-Shujairi (2021), identified disciplinary and journal-tier differences in rhetorical structures, and recent investigations in the Indonesian context (Ulya, 2022;

Irawati, 2022; Wadison et al., 2022; Injelia et al, 2025) further illuminated variations in move selection influenced by experience, exposure, and confidence. Collectively, these studies have laid a strong foundation for understanding how discussion sections are constructed across different contexts.

Building on these contributions, the present study seeks to answer two key questions that remain underexplored in the field of English language teaching (ELT): first, how rhetorical patterns are realized in the discussion sections of Q1 international peer-reviewed journals based on the Ruiying and Allison (2003) model; and second, what the key linguistic cues are that writers employ in crafting these sections. By focusing on recent, high-quality journals, this study addresses the limitations of earlier research that often focused on student writings, limited journal tiers, or older publications. The findings will provide up-to-date empirical evidence on contemporary rhetorical practices, offering guidance for novice writers, insights for academic writing instruction, and validation of the Ruiying and Allison model's relevance in analyzing discussion sections in current ELT research. Therefore, the research questions of this study are how are rhetorical patterns realized in the discussion sections of Q1 international peer-reviewed journals in the field of English language teaching, based on the Ruiying and Allison model?

LITERATURE REVIEW
Genre and register in academic writing
The word genre is applied in three fields, namely ESP (English for Specific Purposes), rhetoric, and SFL (Systemic Functional Linguistics). According to Arsyad (2022), 'genre' is a characteristic of text based on external criteria, for example, a text written or spoken by a certain person, for a certain reader/listener, in a specific context, for a specific purpose, and known by the discourse community as a type of 'genre'. Examples of 'genre' in this view include university calendars, documentation essays, research reports, lectures, and tutorials. Meanwhile, text type more describes rhetorical modes or internal discourse patterns, such as problem-solution, exposition, and argument.

Register is the way someone uses language differently in different situations. According to Nordquist (2019), registers appear in all modes of communication, written, spoken, and signed, and can range from highly formal to very intimate depending on grammar, syntax, and tone. Effective communication can even occur without using actual words. Register includes all forms of communication such as written, spoken, and signs or images. Register is not always marked by specific grammar and sentences but can also be without words. In other words, register aims to examine the relationship between language functions determined by situational or social factors and the linguistic forms of language (Arsyad, 2022; Hakim et al 2024). Talking about register related to the specificity of something depends on the linguistic features used. Different topics require different ways of delivery. Different types of writing will require different logic and strategies, as well as different words or diction.

Topic, audience, word choice, grammar, and context influence how ideas are expressed, whether in writing or orally. The art of effectively conveying ideas is known as rhetoric. As a science, rhetoric has rational, empirical, general, and cumulative properties (Sulistyarini & Zainal, 2018). *Rational* means that ideas are logically and systematically organized; *empirical* indicates that content is based on observable facts; *general* implies that truths are publicly accessible; and *cumulative* refers to the development of knowledge over

time. Rhetoric can also be understood in two senses: narrow and broad. Narrowly, it is the art of speaking; broadly, it encompasses the use of language in both oral and written forms. In practice, oral media include speeches, discussions, classroom teaching, lectures, dialogues, and hosting events, while written media cover research reports, theses, dissertations, essays, and articles.

Rhetoric moves in academic writing

Various scholars have proposed different frameworks to describe how Discussion sections are structured in research articles (e.g., Dudley-Evans, 1994; Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Peacock, 2002; Swales, 1990). Each model captures particular rhetorical features that writers typically employ when presenting and interpreting findings. Among these, the model by Ruiying and Allison (2003) is used in the present study because it synthesizes the key communicative functions highlighted in earlier frameworks, such as reporting results, interpreting their meaning, evaluating their significance, and drawing implications. This comprehensive integration makes the Allison model especially suitable for illustrating the full range of rhetorical work performed in the Discussion section.

Table 1. Discussion Section Strategies in Reputable International Journals Ruiying and Allison model (2003)

Move	Description	Steps
Move 1	Background information	
Move 2	Reporting results	
Move 3	Summarising results	
Move 4	Commenting on results	1. Interpreting results
		2. Comparing results with literature
		3. Accounting for results
		4. Evaluating results
Move 5	Summarising the study	
Move 6	Evaluating the study	1. Indicating limitations
		2. Indicating significance/advantage
		3. Evaluating methodology
Move 7	Deductions from the research	1. Making suggestions
		2. Recommending further research
		3. Drawing pedagogic implications

The diagram illustrates a structured framework for writing the discussion section of a research article, emphasizing a systematic progression from presenting background information to deriving pedagogical implications. It begins with Move 1, which provides essential background information to contextualize the study, followed by Move 2, where the researcher reports the results. Move 3 then summarises these results, offering a concise overview of the key findings. Move 4, the most detailed section, involves commenting on the results through four steps: interpreting the results, comparing them with existing literature, accounting for unexpected findings, and evaluating the overall significance of the results. This move ensures that the research is not only presented but also critically analyzed in relation to prior studies.

The framework continues with Move 5, which summarises the study as a whole, reinforcing the main findings and their contribution. Move 6 focuses on evaluating the study itself, highlighting potential limitations, the significance or advantages of the research, and a critical assessment of the methodology used. Finally, Move 7 addresses the deductions that can be drawn from the research, including practical suggestions, recommendations for further studies, and pedagogical implications for educational practice. By following this structured approach, researchers can ensure a coherent and comprehensive discussion that bridges their findings with the wider scholarly context and practical applications.

Several studies have examined discussion sections in reputable international journals. Fazilatfar and Naseri (2014), for instance, analyzed 30 Iranian applied linguistics articles and found that different rhetorical moves are linked to specific author identity types, reflecting the expectations of the field. Liu and Buckingham (2018) examined the structure of discussion sections in applied linguistics and the use of metadiscourse markers. Their findings support the reliability of Ruiying and Allison's framework and help novice writers understand move patterns and the functional use of metadiscourse across research article discussions. Another study was conducted by Hussin and Nimehchisalem (2018), focused on analyzing the Results and Discussion chapters of 10 English final-year projects at a Malaysian university using Ruiying and Allison's move model. They found that students most often used the moves *Reporting results* and *Commenting on results*, while *Background information* and *Summarizing results* were less frequent. The study highlights the need for teaching materials that strengthen students' awareness of effective rhetorical structure in academic writing.

Lubis (2020) analyzed 113 Findings and Discussion sections by Indonesian undergraduate NNES writers and found that, while students often followed expected moves when interpreting and comparing results, they rarely showed critical engagement or explained their claims, and their writing frequently contained grammatical and idea-related errors.

Al-Shujairi (2021) conducted a qualitative review of discussion sections from research articles published over the past 36 years across multiple disciplines and journal tiers. The analysis revealed an evolution in rhetorical structure, including the emergence of two additional moves, research implications and research limitations. The study also identified notable differences between soft and hard science disciplines as well as between low- and high-impact journals, concluding that persistent difficulties in producing well-structured discussion sections stem from limited awareness of these rhetorical move patterns.

Ulya (2022) examined rhetorical move variations in discussion sections of research articles published in reputable SINTA 1 and SINTA 2 journals. Using qualitative content analysis and Ruiying and Allison's (2003) model, the study analyzed 40 discussion sections published in 2021. The results showed that three steps consistently appeared across articles—reporting results, interpreting results, and comparing results with previous literature—indicating that most authors adhered to the moves and steps proposed in the Ruiying and Allison framework. Nurcik et al. (2022) analyzed 30 Scopus-indexed hard-science abstracts using Hyland's (2000) model to compare national and international authors. Both groups emphasized method and findings moves, but differed in several introduction and method steps. National authors tended to omit the conclusion move, while international authors treated topic generalization as conventional. Tense usage also varied, with international authors favoring the present tense for research objectives and national authors preferring the past. The study concluded that most differences occurred at the step level rather than the move level.

Irawati (2022) investigated factors influencing the rhetorical patterns of research article discussion sections by interviewing 10 bilingual authors who had published in both English and Indonesian. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, the study found that authors' move choices were shaped by learning from others' writing, levels of self-confidence, writing frequency, and awareness of micro- and macro-structural features. Increased exposure to published articles and growing publication experience enhanced authors' confidence and sensitivity to rhetorical structure. Finally, Wadison et al. (2022) examined the rhetorical structure of the Results and Discussion sections in undergraduate

theses at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. Using a qualitative approach, the study found that students frequently omitted key elements such as background information, summarizing results, interpreting findings, and comparing or accounting for results. The authors recommended using the Ruiying and Allison (2003) model, noting that it offers a more comprehensive framework than the existing institutional guidelines.

METHOD

This study employed a content analysis method (Drisco & Maschi, 2016. It investigated rhetorical patterns based on the Ruiying and Allison model (2003). The research procedure followed several steps: Selecting linguistics-themed articles from reputable international journals, particularly open-access journals ranked in Quartile 1 (Q1); extracting the discussion sections from 30 selected articles; analyzing these sections using the Ruiying and Allison framework; identifying the rhetorical patterns within each article's discussion section; and drawing conclusions by identifying the keywords used in each rhetorical move.

The corpus of the study consisted of the discussion sections from 30 Q1 journal articles. Data collection was carried out through documentation, specifically by analyzing rhetorical patterns in the discussion sections of reputable Q1 and Q2 international journals in English language teaching. The data obtained from these 20 articles were analyzed based on the rhetorical model proposed by Ruiying and Allison.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section is the findings and discussion parts of the study. The findings are elaborated based on the data while the discussion is the analysis compared to the previous research findings. The Ruiying and Allison (2003) model is used to analyze the moves and steps present in the discussion sections of reputable international journal articles in the field of linguistics in this study. The Ruiying and Allison model is a framework or sequence for writing the discussion section of an article. There are 7 main moves and 10 steps in this model, specifically move 4 has 4 steps, move 6 has 3 steps, and move 7 has 3 steps. There are 30 discussion sections from 30 articles originating from 6 reputable international journals in the field of linguistics. Table 1 provides information about the moves and steps found in the 30 discussion sections from the 30 articles published in reputable international journals in the field of linguistics.

Table 1. Frequency and Criteria of Move and Step Occurrence (N = 30) (Ruiying & Allison, 2003)

Move/Step	Frequency	Percentage	Criteria
Move 1	28	93.3%	Conventional
Move 2	30	100%	Obligatory
Move 3	29	96.6%	Conventional
Move 4 – Step 1	30	100%	Obligatory
Move 4 – Step 2	30	100%	Obligatory
Move 4 – Step 3	30	100%	Obligatory
Move 4 – Step 4	27	90%	Conventional
Move 5	29	96.6%	Conventional
Move 6 – Step 1	27	90%	Conventional
Move 6 – Step 2	29	96.6%	Conventional
Move 6 – Step 3	9	30%	Optional
Move 7 – Step 1	26	86.6%	Conventional
Move 7 – Step 2	25	83.3%	Conventional
Move 7 – Step 3	11	36.7%	Optional

Table 1 presents the frequency and percentage of rhetorical moves and steps identified in 30 discussion sections of articles published in reputable international journals in the field of linguistics. The moves were classified according to Ruiying and Allison's (2003) framework and further categorized as mandatory, conventional, or optional based on Kanoksilapatham (2005). The following subsections elaborate each move and its steps, supported by example sentences from the corpus.

Move 1: Stating the Background

Move 1 appeared in 28 out of 30 discussion sections (93.3%), categorized as conventional. Authors expressed the background using three main types: research questions, research objectives/purposes, and theoretical or methodological context (Wirada & Amnuai, 2013). Examples include:

Example 1: *"RQ1 asked whether nonnative listeners at different proficiency levels (intermediate to low-advanced) profit from different types of co-textual and contextual cues in SWR of another nonnative accent."* (Studies in Second Language Acquisition, article 1, Thir, 2023)

This sentence presents the research question as the study's background, aimed at signaling the start of the discussion section by reminding readers of the study's central focus and preparing them for the interpretation of the findings that follows.

Move 2: Reporting Results

Move 2, *Reporting Results*, occurred in all 30 discussion sections (100%), indicating that it is a mandatory component. In this move, authors present their findings directly, often using explicit linguistic cues that signal research outcomes. This can be seen in the following example:

Example 2: *"It is found that the grammatical errors produced by Google Translate further exacerbate the issue, leading to a failure to convey the pragmatic content from the SL to the TL."* (3L, article 1, Qassem & Aldaheri, 2023)

The underlined phrases serve as linguistic cues for reporting research outcomes by explicitly signaling that the author is presenting findings. This help readers recognize the transition from background information to result reporting.

Move 3: Summarizing Results

Move 3 occurred in 29 out of 30 discussion sections (96.6%), falling into the conventional category. Authors summarized research findings without providing interpretation. Examples include:

Example 9: *"Table 3 summarises the comparisons of English monophthongs with those in Indone, the analysissian and Acehnese."* (SIELE, article 1, Masykar et al., 2023)

Example 10: *"Overall, co-textual and contextual information emerged as the most important variable for intelligibility to listeners at upper-intermediate level and above and*

as at least the second most important variable for intelligibility to listeners at intermediate level." (SSLA, article 1, Thir, 2023)

Example 11: *"Summarizing the findings on mood and gender differences: 'Specifically, we found (1) faster RTs to L1 compared to L2 neutral words in a positive mood...'"* (JOB, article 1, Naranowics et al., 2022)

Example 12: *"The findings of this study revealed that language teachers' identity positionings are in a constant state of flux due to their personal experiences as well as the available ideologies in the social contexts."* (TESI-EJ, article 2, Mansori, 2021)

The examples above illustrate how writers condense their main results, such as overall patterns, comparisons, or general conclusions, to give readers a clear snapshot of what the study has revealed.

Move 4: Commenting on Results

Move 4 appeared in all 30 discussion sections (100%), with four steps: interpreting data, comparing with literature, accounting for results, and evaluating results.

Step 1: Interpreting Data (mandatory)

Example 13: *"The machine's limitations in identifying the performative functions of utterances within dialogues can be attributed to various factors, including the use of idiomatic expressions, polysemous words, and deixis. Additionally, the machine's failure to grasp the context results in an inability to effectively convey the speakers' intentions."* (3L, article 1, Qassem & Aldaheri, 2023)

Example 14: *"The overuse of non-prototypical structure by non-native speakers compared to native speakers is often perceived as an indicator of error (Granger, 2015), however, it is not the case in this study."* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Example 15: *"One might argue that schematic information is less accessible to many nonnative listeners from various linguacultural backgrounds because schemata are highly culture dependent and thus necessarily more elusive than semantic or syntactic relationships between linguistic entities."* (SSLA, article 1, Thir, 2023)

Example 16: *"The female advantage in a positive compared to negative mood observed here is consistent with the Affect-as-information hypothesis…"* (JOB, article 1, Naranowics et al., 2022)

The examples illustrate how writers attribute causes to their findings, question commonly held assumptions, and connect their results to established theories, which shows that interpretation plays a crucial role in clarifying the significance of the study and guiding readers toward a deeper understanding of its implications.

Step 2: Comparing with Literature (mandatory)

Example 17: *"Such loss has been reported in neighbouring varieties of English (Deterding, 2003; Pillai et al., 2010; Sharbawi, 2006; Tan & Low, 2010)."* (SIELE, article 1, Masyikar et al., 2023)

Example 18: *"Granger (2015) supports this and advises researchers and teachers to avoid drawing certain conclusions because students fail to perform exactly like the native speakers."* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Example 19: *"These findings are in line with other studies that found sentential co-text to benefit intelligibility to L2 listeners (e.g., Mack, 1992; Lagrou et al., 2013; Osimk, 2009) but contrast with an earlier claim that listeners below the highly advanced level would be unable to use such information compensatorily when listening to another nonnative accent (Jenkins, 2000, 2002)."* (SSLA, article 1, Thir, 2023)

Example 20: *"However, these present findings were contrary to RAs in applied linguistics written by Iranian authors (Barghamadi & Siyyari, 2021; Kuhi & Mollanghizadeh, 2013), Persian authors (Shooshtari et al., 2017), and Indonesian authors in the discussion section (Samanhudi & O'Boyle, 2022)."* (SIELE, article 4, Nodoushan, 2023)

The data above shows that in this step, writers demonstrate how their results align with, extend, or contradict earlier research, as shown in the examples. These comparisons help position the current study within the broader scholarly conversation and highlight its contribution by confirming existing patterns or identifying meaningful differences.

Step 3: Accounting for Results (mandatory)

Example 21: *"The issue of unclear signals in phrases like 'wants to meet up,' timing shifts in 'hitting up and then dinner,' and the lack of straightforward meanings in expressions like 'what you doing?' 'perfect' and 'Ciao' has several reasons."* (SIELE, article 4, Nodoushan, 2023)

Example 22: *"The differences between the two studies may be attributed, among others, to a varying proportion of females to males and participants' dissimilar L2 proficiency levels."* (JOB, article 1, Naranowics et al., 2022)

Example 23: *"Differences in experiences, cultural background, individual physiology, and social communities all contribute to differences in language use, meaning that we never share the 'same' language as anybody we interact with (Clark, 1998)."* (Journal of Pragmatics, article 1, Breitholtz et al., 2023)

As shown in the data, writers identify factors that may have influenced the outcomes, such as linguistic ambiguity, participant demographics, proficiency levels, cultural background, or individual differences. By offering these explanations, authors help readers understand why certain results occurred and provide a clearer rationale for the patterns observed in the study.

Step 4: Evaluating Results (conventional, 90%)

Example 24: *"Despite the development of Neural Machine Translation, it still faces difficulties in conveying dialogue acts."* (3L, article 1, Qassem & Aldaheri, 2023)

Example 25: *"Evidence of overuse therefore should not be generalised as denoting erroneous forms."* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Example 26: *"The results of the present study appear particularly remarkable given the transcription task may have encouraged listeners to focus on a target word's phonological*

form and thus resulted in a greater amount of bottom-up processing than in naturally occurring language use.” (SSLA, article 1, Thir, 2023)

The examples show how writers highlight challenges, caution against overgeneralization, or emphasize noteworthy aspects of the results. They also demonstrate how evaluation helps frame the study's overall contribution.

Move 5: Summarizing the Study

Move 5 appeared in 29 out of 30 discussion sections (96.6%), classified as conventional. Examples include:

Example 27: *“The findings would be useful for teaching LVC structures.”* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Example 28: *“Altogether, this study extends Federmeier et al.'s (2001) findings by demonstrating that gender may also modulate emotional word processing irrespective of language nativeness in unbalanced bilinguals experiencing positive and negative moods.”* (JOB, article 1, Naranowics et al., 2022)

In this move, authors briefly restate the study's overall contribution or key takeaway, as seen in the examples that highlight pedagogical implications or extensions of previous findings. This step helps readers grasp the central message of the research before moving to the final parts of the discussion.

Move 6: Indicating Limitations, Significance, and Evaluating Methodology

Move 6 consists of three steps: *Indicating Limitations, Significance, and Evaluating Methodology.* The findings of these aspects are the following.

Step 1: Indicating Limitations

Example 29: *“The machine's limitations in identifying the performative functions of utterances within dialogues can be attributed to various factors, including the use of idiomatic expressions, polysemous words, and deixis.”* (3L, article 1, Qassem & Aldaheri, 2023)

Example 30: *“One limitation of the current study that needs to be acknowledged relates to its ecological validity. Clearly, real-world conditions of processing language differ from those in the current experiment.”* (SSLA, article 1, Thir, 2023)

Step 2: Describing Significance or Benefits

Example 31: *“One possible explanation for this is that in the dialect of the current speakers, the West Aceh dialect, the vowel /ʌ/ is different in terms of vowel quality from the Acehnese dialect in Pase (Pillai & Yusuf, 2012).”* (SIELE, article 1, Masykar et al., 2023)

Step 3: Evaluating Methodology (optional, 30%)

Example 32: *“Most of the studies (e.g., Wolter & Gyllstad, 2013) compared the scores of native speakers and non-native speakers or compared the scores of those who live in the ESL and EFL contexts (e.g., Lee, 2016). In these studies, the participants have different exposure rates to the target language and this can be the reason why the participants in the*

ESL context were faster and responded more accurately than the participants in EFL contexts." (TESI-EJ, article 3, Yigit, 2021)

Move 6, which includes indicating limitations, describing significance, and evaluating methodology, reflects how authors critically position their work within the research landscape. By acknowledging limitations, they show transparency about factors that may restrict the study's scope or generalizability. Highlighting significance allows writers to emphasize the value or contributions of their findings, while methodological evaluation, though optional, helps justify the research design or explain how methodological choices may have shaped the results. Together, these steps enhance the study's credibility and clarify its relevance and robustness.

Move 7: Deductions and Implications

Move 7 has three steps: making suggestions, recommending further research, and drawing pedagogic implications.

Step 1: Making Suggestions (conventional, 90%)

Example 33: *"There is an urgent need for some focus on emerging lexico-grammatical items in ELT materials in Malaysian classrooms."* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Step 2: Recommending Further Research (conventional, 86.6%)

Example 34: *"This study recommends continuous feeding of the machine in various fields since the semantic and pragmatic level is increasing in living languages, and their uses are evolving over time."* (3L, article 1, Qassem & Aldaheri, 2023)

Step 3: Drawing Pedagogic Implications

Example 35: *"Teachers can explain grammatical and lexical patterning involving high-frequency verbs in context."* (TESI-EJ, article 1, Ong & Rahim, 2021)

Example 36: *"Current literature indicates that an explicit approach to teaching collocations would be ideal."* (SIELE, article 6, Barghamadi et al., 2023)

These findings illustrate the presence, frequency, and linguistic realization of moves and steps in discussion sections of high-quality international articles. Each move and step is represented by example sentences, indicating the type of rhetorical action taken by the author and the language cues used.

DISCUSSION

The findings presented in the previous section show clear patterns in how authors of Q1 international journals construct their discussion sections, with most moves and steps following the rhetorical structure outlined by Ruiying and Allison (2003). In this section, these patterns are further interpreted to explain why certain moves appear more frequently, how they function within the overall argumentative structure, and how they relate to conventions observed in earlier genre-analysis research. By linking the quantitative distribution of moves with their rhetorical purposes, the discussion provides a deeper understanding of how established publication norms shape the organization and linguistic realization of discussion sections in high-impact journals in the field of English language teaching and linguistics.

A close examination of the corpus shows that the Discussion sections are largely shaped by moves and steps that occur with very high frequency, particularly those ranging between 90% and 100%. The most prominent among these is Move 2, which appears in every article analyzed. Its universal presence underscores its essential role: authors must present the key findings before any interpretation can take place, a tendency also emphasized in earlier investigations (Al-Shujairi, 2021; Amnuai, 2019; Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2012). Move 4 exhibits a similarly strong pattern, with the first three steps consistently used across all texts and the fourth step occurring in most cases. Together, these steps construct the interpretive core of the Discussion by explaining results, situating them within existing literature, and accounting for the outcomes. This prominence echoes previous genre-based research (e.g., Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2012; Hussin & Nimehchisalem, 2018; Lubis, 2020), which identifies Move 4 as the central rhetorical engine of the section. Beyond these obligatory components, several other moves, such as Move 1, Move 3, Move 5, and the first two steps of Move 6, also appear frequently enough to be considered conventional. Their consistent use helps create a clear and logical progression from setting the context, summarizing findings, and highlighting contributions to acknowledging limitations, a pattern also noted in prior studies (Amnuai & Wannaruk, 2012; Ruiying & Allison, 2003; Ulya, 2022).

A number of moves in the Discussion section fall into the moderate-frequency category (around 80–89%), most notably Steps 1 and 2 of Move 7. Although these steps relate to offering suggestions and proposing directions for future inquiry, they do not appear consistently across the corpus. One plausible explanation is that many authors prefer to shift such content to the conclusion or recommendation parts of the article, a practice that has also been observed in earlier studies (Hussin & Nimehchisalem, 2018). Their uneven distribution suggests that, while implications and recommendations are acknowledged as valuable components of academic writing, they are not generally treated as core rhetorical features of the Discussion in high-impact journals.

In comparison, steps that surface only occasionally, Move 6 Step 3, which deals with methodological reflection, and Move 7 Step 3, which involves outlining pedagogical implications, appear in roughly one-third of the texts and are therefore considered optional. Writers rarely include commentary on methodological procedures or pedagogical applications at this stage because the Discussion section in reputable journals tends to concentrate on interpreting the results and positioning them within the broader scholarly conversation. This pattern contrasts with findings from Al-Shujairi (2021), who identified additional rhetorical elements in the model he examined, indicating variability across contexts. The infrequent placement of pedagogical implications aligns with earlier observations (Hussin & Nimehchisalem, 2018) that such insights are typically reserved for final sections rather than embedded within the Discussion. Overall, the tendencies observed here resonate with the conclusions of Hussin and Nimehchisalem (2018) and Ulya (2022), emphasizing that authors in high-ranking linguistics journals prioritize explanation, interpretation, and evaluation of findings, while peripheral methodological and pedagogical considerations receive less emphasis.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the rhetorical construction of Discussion sections in Q1 international journals follows a pattern in which core interpretive moves dominate, while peripheral elements appear far less consistently. Obligatory moves, especially those that present and interpret results, form the backbone of the section and ensure that authors directly address their research questions and situate their findings within

existing scholarship. Conventional moves contribute to coherence by supporting the flow from contextualization to evaluation, even though their appearance is not fully uniform. In contrast, optional step, particularly methodological evaluations and pedagogical implications, occur only sporadically because such content is often relocated to other sections of the article. Taken together, these patterns indicate that high-impact journals prioritize clarity, analytical depth, and alignment with disciplinary expectations, reinforcing the central role of result interpretation while limiting extended commentary beyond the main argument.

CONCLUSION

From the research objective of identifying the writing rhetoric elaborated in the form of move and step identification using the Ruiying and Allison 2003 model, as well as investigating the strategies or ways of interpreting findings, comparing findings, and justifying findings with previous findings in the discussion section of articles published in reputable international journals in the field of linguistics quartile 1, there are several conclusions.

First, the writing rhetoric of the discussion section of articles published in reputable international journals in the field of linguistics quartile 1 is generally systematic, evidenced by the fact that all moves in the Ruiying and Allison model (one of the models for writing the discussion section besides Swales (1990) with its CARS, the IMRaD model, the PEACOCK model (2002), the BUTTON model (1998), and Hopkins & Dud-ly Evan (1988)) are present. However, not all steps appear in the discussion sections of the 30 discussion sections that constitute the data corpus of this research.

Second, moves and steps appear with unequal percentages. This happens because some are theoretically proven to appear most frequently, namely move 2 and move 4. These two moves are the most important parts of an article's discussion section because in these two moves, there is data reporting, interpretation, and justification of a research's findings.

Third, there are different numbers of strategies among the three questions about how to interpret data, compare data, and justify data or findings. This depends on the topic being sought in a research question because it determines how many theoretical ways are needed. Each strategy that appears goes hand in hand with the information being sought. For example, when comparing findings with the literature, there are four strategies. Here, the researcher must compare with existing theories, compare with results of similar research, compare with results of different research, and compare with conflicting findings. All four strategies are needed to validate the findings obtained.

Several suggestions and recommendations emerged after conducting and analyzing the discussion section of articles in reputable international journals in the field of linguistics quartile 1. Future researchers could consider selecting the discussion section in the field of literature as their data corpus and increasing the number of article discussion sections to be analyzed. Furthermore, it is hoped that future researchers can utilize other models for data analysis, such as Dudley-Evans and others. It is also recommended for future researchers or writers to analyze other parts of a journal, such as the conclusion and suggestions.

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