

Moves, steps and linguistic signals in RA discussion sections

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Abstract

A great deal of genre research has focused on aspects of written academic English. Corpus-based studies have paid extensive attention to research articles (RAs), which are considered as prototypical examples of knowledge production. A number of studies have been devoted to the study of the macrostructure of RAs belonging to different disciplines (Ruiying & Allison, 2004; Posteguillo, 1999; Nwogu, 1997; Bhatia, 1993; Peng, 1987). Other analyses have focused on the organisational pattern of specific sections of English RAs, particularly introductions (Samraj, 2002; Dudley-Evans & Henderson, 1990; Swales, 1981, 1990; Swales & Najjar, 1987), and discussions. As regards discussion sections, research has been carried out in RAs from a wide range of disciplines (Peacock, 2002; Lewin et al. 2001; Holmes, 1997; Lewin & Fine, 1996; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Dudley-Evans, 1994; Hopkins and Dudley-Evans, 1988). In their analysis of applied linguistics RAs, Ruiying & Allison (2003) identified seven moves in discussion sections (1. *Background information*; 2. *Reporting results*; 3. *Summarising results*; 4. *Commenting on results*; 5. *Summarizing the study*; 6. *Evaluating the study*; 7. *Deductions from the research*).

The purpose of our study was to check how far this 7-move scheme established by Ruiying & Allison for discussion sections proved valid for the closing sections of 46 RAs published between 2001 and 2003, in 18 specialised leading journals from the fields of Computer Science, Robotics, Telecommunications and Nanotechnology. We limited the scope of our research to the closing sections including the word *discussion* in their headings to investigate the relationship between this heading and the communicative purposes of the section and placed our emphasis on identifying linguistic signals supporting our findings at the move and step levels. Although we found the moves and steps already suggested by Ruiying and Allison, new steps were

specified in moves 1 and 4. In this paper, an adapted, more detailed list of rhetorical strategies is proposed.

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