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THE ASIAN ESP JOURNAL

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Welcome to the Autumn 2011 issue of *The Asian ESP Journal*!

It is our pleasure to publish six selected papers that have comprehensively and usefully examined a range of ESP-related topics ranging from a tested method to help graduate students' with their oral academic presentation (Cheryl Wei-yu Chen), a pragmatic analysis of MA thesis acknowledgements (Stephanie W. Cheng and Chih-wei Kuo), a corpus study of lexical bundles in journalistic discourse (Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi and Marzieh Rafiee), learning needs of Thai Civil Engineering students (Chamnong Kaewpet), a qualitative study of research results in Applied Linguistics and Education (Jason Miin-Hwa Lim), and a synthesis of the literature on recent developments in pedagogical research on Business English in China (Haisen Zhang and Guanfu Wang).

I hope you will enjoy reading the papers that report on ESP studies conducted in various countries and cities in Asia, namely Taiwan, Iran, Thailand, Malaysia, and China, and recommend the papers to your colleagues and students to enhance the impact of the studies.

Prof. Winnie Cheng, Chief Editor

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Evaluating One's Own Oral Academic Presentation: A Method to Assist Graduate Students' Academic Discourse Socialization

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Abstract

Situated in a graduate-level course in Taiwan, this case study investigates how the experience of evaluating their OAPs based on Morita's (2000) framework contributes to students' learning of the academic discourse. Their written evaluation revealed that students mainly perceived presentations as transmission of ideas and they felt much uncertainty and pressure as they entered into the academic community. Meanwhile, writing the evaluation compelled students to examine their OAPs in a detailed manner, and they were able to identify numerous areas for improvement for their future OAPs. This paper concludes by calling more research on academic discourse socialization.

Keywords: oral academic presentation, academic discourse socialization

1. Introduction

With the emergence of English as the lingua franca of the international research community, one common task students have to perform in university classrooms around the world is giving oral academic presentations (OAPs) in English. Studies have been conducted to understand, for example, how students perceive this task (Joughin, 2007) and how they prepare for it in different educational contexts (Kobayashi, 2003; Wu, 2008). Others have looked into the role of OAP in students' *academic discourse socialization* (e.g., Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2007), defined by Ho (2007) as "the process by which learners familiarize themselves with the spoken and written discourse/linguistic conventions in any academic setting" (p.11). The current study, situated in a Master's program in Teaching-English-to-Speakers-of-Other-Languages (TESOL) in a Taiwanese university, attempts to investigate the effects postgraduate students' evaluation of their own OAPs may have on their discourse socialization.

The next section first provides a review of the concept of academic discourse socialization, followed by a discussion of Morita's (2000) framework of good OAPs for which the participants' self-evaluation was based on.

2. Literature review

2.1 Academic discourse socialization

In their recent review of this topic,[1] Morita and Kobayashi (2008) speak of the different interpretations of academic discourse socialization in these words, "for some, it is largely a matter of acquiring a given set of knowledge, rules, and conventions, whereas for others, it is a more unpredictable, conflictual, and locally situated process" (p. 248). The works stemming

[1] A similar term is *disciplinary socialization/enculturation*, the socialization into an academic discipline or subspeciality (Li, 2005). Ho (2007) cautions that the two terms, "academic" vs. "disciplinary," entail different scopes of literacy events. While the former term entails the socialization process in academic settings in general, the latter narrows down the focus to discipline-specific communication practices and conventions. Ho suggests that disciplinary enculturation can be considered an umbrella term of academic socialization. Since the current study focuses on a specific type of academic discourse (i.e., OAP) in an academic setting, the term *academic discourse socialization* is adopted.

from the first interpretation typically attempt to explain "disciplinary practices, expectations, and discourses" (p. 244) to help learners develop their academic competence. For example, in many of Hyland's works on academic writing (2001, 2002, 2004), different linguistic features, such as self-mention and questions, were analyzed to yield fuller understanding of the nature of the academic written discourse.

However, this view of academic discourse socialization is not without criticisms. As pointed out by Morita and Kobayashi (2008), this position tends to be too simplistic, reducing the complex phenomenon of academic discourse socialization into a set of properties students need to master. Critics of this position (e.g., Street, 1996; Zamel, 1997) also maintain that academic discourse socialization should be viewed as a much more complex process of negotiation, rather than a one-way assimilation. Just like children's first language socialization, this process is not only dynamic, but also conflictual and unpredictable (Morita, 2000, 2004; Morita & Kobayashi, 2008). Implied in this position is the view which sees academic discourse socialization as involving the process of becoming a full member of a *discourse community*, defined by Weigle (2005) as "a group of people (e.g., scientists, journalists) who share a certain set of values about, and ways of using both oral and written language" (p. 129). In an academic setting, students have to learn how to convey their ideas through different types of *academic discourse*, defined by Hyland (2009) as "ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy" (p. 1). Closely related to the notion of *discourse community* is Lave and Wenger's *Community of Practice* (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), in which socialization of newcomers in any given community requires *legitimate peripheral participation*: a gradual move by newcomers from legitimate peripheral (i.e., they perform minute but necessary tasks that contribute to the overall goal of the community) to fuller participation through interacting with more seasoned members of the target community. Beaufort (2000) provides a real-life example of this form of learning in her study of business writing. The new college graduates of her study learned to write in the

context of a nonprofit organization by gradually assuming more central roles in drafting grant proposals, program reports, and other important documents.

The process of academic discourse socialization often evokes much uncertainty and tension, as students constantly negotiate "discourse, competence, identities, and power relations" so that their participation and status are recognized in a given classroom community (Morita, 2004, p. 583). Golde (1998) speaks of the "unusual double socialization" new graduate students have to go through—they are "simultaneously directly socialized into the role of graduate student and are given preparatory socialization into a profession" (p. 56). According to Golde, graduate students need to accomplish four major tasks: intellectual mastery, learning the realities of life as a graduate student, learning about the profession, and integrating oneself into the department. Carrying on Golde's concept of double socialization, Li and Casanave (2008) maintain that non-native speakers of English pursuing a higher degree in English-speaking countries need to cope with triple socialization, the third being the learning of a language and culture that their mainstream peers have been immersed since they were born. Although the current study is situated in an Asian university where students can use their first language as the daily communication tool, having to perform the essential academic tasks in English is still a daunting task for the students.

In recent years, the field of TESOL has witnessed an influx of studies on academic discourse socialization. Framing this process as a complex situated social practice, some of these studies focus on written discourse (e.g., Séror, 2008) while others on a particular type of oral task, such as OAP (Morita, 2000, 2004; Zappa-Hollman, 2001, 2007). The participants involved in these studies are typically international students studying in an English-speaking country (also see Duff, 2007). They are often referred to as "nontraditional students"[2] in the

[2] The author adopts Séror's (2008) definition for "nontraditional students" which refers to those who cross "linguistic and cultural borders to pursue higher education degrees in English speaking countries" (p. 15). These students are "nontraditional" in the sense that the educational institutions in English speaking countries were not originally designed to educate them, i.e., they were first set up to educate students who speak English as the native language.

literature (Morita & Kobayashi, 2008; Séror, 2008; Street, 2004). However, as Braine (2002) observes, more and more nonnative-English-speaking (NNES) graduate students in Asia are operating "in environments where they are able to use their L1 (first language) for research and communication with their teachers and peers, and yet must read and write in English" (p. 66). As a result of this trend, there is an urgent need to expand the research on academic discourse socialization to NNES students' experiences in these contexts. In fact, this is one future research area which Morita and Kobayashi (2008) point out in their review article on academic discourse socialization. The current study is an effort to contribute knowledge to this area.

Next, the focus turns to a brief literature review on OAPs and Morita's (2000) framework for good OAPs for which participants of the current study were asked to base their evaluation on.

2.2 OAPs

As Morita (2000) observes, oral presentation on a research article or book chapter is a "frequent, highly routinized part of classroom life" (p. 258) in higher education settings. OAPs may serve different purposes in different courses. For example, in Joughin's (2007) study, OAP served as a form of oral assessment for the instructor to evaluate students' understanding of course content in a theology course. In Morita's study (2000), OAP was designed to "promote analytical and critical reading and thinking skills on the part of the presenter" (p. 287). Before further discussing this type of academic discourse, it should be made clear that the OAP in this study is different from conference presentations in which presenters often talk about their own studies (Ventola et al., 2002; Webber, 2005). In the current study, OAP refers to students' oral presentation on a journal article or book chapter pre-selected by the instructor.

Earlier research on OAPs has addressed different issues related to this type of

academic discourse, including its complex and dynamic nature (Rendle-Short, 2006), student conceptions (Joughin, 2007), students' preparation process (Kobayashi, 2003; Wu, 2008), and courses specifically designed to help students develop their presentation skills (Hill & Storey, 2003; Mueller, 2000). Given the importance of OAP in academia, it is not surprising that the textbook market abounds with titles such as *Giving academic presentations* (Reinhart, 2002) which aim to help students improve their presentation skills.

One unexplored aspect in the research on OAPs is the pedagogical issue of assisting students in their academic discourse socialization (Morita and Kobayashi, 2008). To reiterate in the current research context (i.e., a TESOL Master's program in an Asian university), the issue of helping NNES graduate students develop their academic discourse skills has not been explored fully. Motivated by a reflective approach to language learning (cf. Farrell, 2009), the participants of this study were asked to evaluate their OAPs based on Morita's (2000) framework of good OAPs (see Appendix A). The key features in this framework include *summary*, *critique*, *implications*, *relevance*, *epistemic stance*, *emotional engagement*, *novelty*, *immediacy*, *conflict/tension*, *support items*, *audience involvement*, *delivery*, and *time management* (for detailed description of each feature, refer to Appendix A). Morita (2000) provides the following summary of these features (p. 302):

1. The OAP should contain a concise summary, a thoughtful and well-balanced critique, and a list of relevant pedagogical and research implications.
2. Presenters should engage and evoke interest in the audience.
3. Presenters should have an effective delivery style.
4. Presenters should manage time well.

Morita (2000) found that her participants typically employed many strategies to engage the audience. One strategy a student used was reading a passage from a novel to begin her OAP. In doing so, the presenter did not only demonstrate her expertise in the topic (i.e.,

communicating one's epistemic stance), but also successfully triggered the audience's interest in the presentation. Data from Morita's (2000) study also indicated that preparing for, observing, performing, and reviewing OAPs helped students learn the academic discourse and culture of graduate school. To prepare for their OAPs, students need to learn about their instructors' expectations and acquaint themselves with the academic culture of graduate seminars in North American universities. Observing how their peers delivered their OAPs helped students learn how to orally present an article and lead a class discussion in graduate seminars. Reviewing their OAPs also helped students become more aware of the subtle features of their presentations (e.g., turn taking and body language) which might have been neglected in the past. These all suggest that OAPs should not be taken merely as routinized, straightforward classroom activities. Rather, they are "complex cognitive and sociolinguistic phenomena," (p. 279) capable of revealing much information about students' learning of the academic discourse and culture.

3. The current study

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects that evaluating their own OAPs may have on graduate students' academic discourse socialization. It is guided by the following research questions:

(1) What emerging themes categorize students' self-evaluation of their OAPs?

(2) How does evaluating their own OAPs assist students in their academic discourse socialization?

3.1 Significance of the study

In the past decade, higher education in Taiwan has witnessed a huge expansion. According to statistics provided by the Ministry of Education (2008), the number of students in Master's programs grew by 424% between the academic year 1997 and 2006. This influx of graduate

students poses great challenges to the educational system, as learners now bring diverse personal learning histories and habits of meaning-making to schools (Hyland, 2009). More studies are needed to understand their learning experiences and ways of assisting them to cope with the demands in graduate school, especially when a significant part of this learning revolves around using a foreign language to perform all the essential academic tasks (e.g., giving OAPs in English on journal articles and writing their theses in English). The current study is an effort to contribute to this line of research.

3.2 The research context and participants

The research context of this study is a graduate-level course offered by a TESOL Master's program in a large research university (hereafter University X[3]) in Taiwan. The class met each week for three hours during an 18-week semester. Like typical graduate courses in education and other related fields, this course, with a focus on research and teaching of second language listening and speaking, is arranged as a graduate seminar in which students were expected to discuss issues raised from weekly reading (usually comprised of two journal articles). Each class meeting could be roughly divided into two sessions, with each session beginning with an OAP on a journal article (20-25 minutes), followed by discussion and teacher commentary. The presenter of each article was expected to summarize and critique the article, as well as lead a follow-up discussion on related issues. In this particular course, 18 journal articles were selected as the core readings to be discussed in nine weeks. In other class meetings, students presented their textbook evaluation and term papers, listened to invited speeches, and engaged in peer review of their term papers.

Nine students, all female in their early twenties, took this elective course to fulfill their graduation requirement in the spring of 2009. Among them, three (Wendy, Mandy, Ivy) were in their second year of study, and six (Amy, Cindy, Lisa, Jenny, Angela, Connie) were in the

[3] All the names referring to the research context and participants are pseudonyms.

first. These students had to pass a competitive entrance exam to be admitted to the program (with an admission rate of less than 10% each year) and could be categorized as advanced English learners.

3.3 Data collection and analysis

Data were collected via multiple sources during the five-month period of data collection. In the beginning of the semester, each participant chose a research article from the course packet that they would present in class. Each OAP was video-recorded, and one week after the presentation, each student was required to view her OAP at home and write a self-evaluation by using Morita's (2000) framework of good OAPs (Appendix A).[4] As soon as an evaluation was received, a semi-structured interview, lasting between 30 to 60 minutes, was conducted with each student to further probe into issues raised in her written document. Another source of written data was an assignment on epistemic stance (Appendix B) in which students were asked to explain their epistemic stance when presenting a research article. One additional data source was the fieldnote I, the teacher-researcher, took when I was listening to each OAP in class. In sum, the data included nine written self-evaluation on OAPs (3-5 pages each, written in English), nine epistemic-stance assignments (one page each, written in English), nine interviews (totaling 442 minutes, conducted in Chinese) and my fieldnotes.

With regard to data analysis, a research assistant first transcribed each interview. Then I read the verbatim transcriptions to look for errors and inconsistencies. When I encountered some unclear parts, I went back to the original interview recording to listen to what the interviewee was expressing at that time. After proofreading the transcripts, I then repeatedly read them as well as other written data in a meticulous manner to identify major themes. In the next section, these themes, under the umbrella of each research question, will be discussed.

[4] It should be noted that many students had to present twice. For these students, they could decide which OAP they wanted to evaluate. To allow themselves more time to work on their term projects, all students chose to evaluate on their first presentations.

4. Major findings

RQ1: What emerging themes categorize students' self-evaluation of their OAPs?

Four themes surfaced in my analysis of the data: (a) The participants mainly perceived their role as an information transmitter when giving an OAP in class; (b) they felt highly insecure as newcomers to the academic community; (c) some students reported gaps between the oral training they received in college and the demand for speaking academically in graduate school; and (d) their learning of how to speak academically well extended beyond the four walls of classroom. In the next section, more details will be provided for each theme.

*Theme 1: Student roles in OAP*s

The majority of students (eight out of nine) stated that they played the role of information transmitter or provider when giving an OAP in class. They saw their primary job as providing a concise summary of the assigned reading and delivering it in a clear manner in class:

> I am an information transmitter in an OAP. Through my presentation, the audience will gain a fuller picture of the paper (interview with Jenny).
>
> I am a presenter of the paper. I don't mention too many of my opinions. I try to capture the important points and present them to everyone (interview with Angela).
>
> The goal of my presentation was to "summarize" the research paper (Amy's evaluation paper).

Similar comments also recurred frequently in students' assignments on epistemic stance. As Lisa wrote in her assignment, "I seldom go beyond the article, in other words, what I've usually done is to merely swallow everything I read in the article and present the information to the audience in a more concise and organized way."

In order to present the material, some students also mentioned that they often had to read the assigned paper a few times in a very careful manner. Because of their careful reading, some students also felt they were in the position of helping their peers solve comprehension difficulties. For example, Mandy wrote in her paper on epistemic stance, "While presenting the article, I consider myself a little teacher. For example, while I'm reading through the presented article and there's something that I can't quite get the meaning of, I would therefore presume that my peer audience may also get confused at those detailed information." She continued, "I would read it through carefully, pinpoint those confusing points and provide some explanation in my presentation." In other words, one additional role Mandy played as a presenter is to help her peers clarify trouble spots and make sense of the content of the research article.

Theme 2: Students' feelings of insecurity and uncertainty

A recurring theme in the data is students' feelings of insecurity and uncertainty as newcomers to the academic community. As Jenny responded to a question about offering comments on published articles, she said that "I don't think I have the ability and status to comment on these papers. We are nobody." Many participants, especially the first-year students, were also uncertain about the expectations of the academic community and how they should talk. The experience of Amy, a first-year student who used to enjoy public speaking in college, illustrates the struggles. She wrote in her self-evaluation, "I am currently in the 'adjusting phase'...I am still struggling to learn what a good OAP should be. Recently, I tried to calm myself down and be more serious on the stage in order to act 'academically.'" In the interview, she also talked about her "toning down" in her recent OAPs, "I'm trying to find the academic tone. I found my previous presentation style was too 'free.'" It seems that the perceived academic way of speaking is one with a serious and flat tone.

It was also found that some students lacked confidence in giving OAPs because of

their insufficient English speaking ability. As Connie wrote in her assignment on epistemic stance, "I lack confidence on stage. Being afraid of speaking English and sharing my viewpoints in public is the crucial factor influencing my performance. I know the situation would be different if I could express my thoughts in Chinese." In her evaluation paper, the following comment could also be found, "After watching the video, I thought that my speech was too simple and childish. It doesn't sound academic."

Theme 3: Perceived gaps between college oral training and requirement of graduate school

Another emerging theme from the data is that for students who received much oral training in college, they found that the skills that were emphasized in their previous training were not congruent with the demands of the graduate school. Ivy and Amy's experiences illustrate this point. Both students came from English departments in Taiwan which offered a solid training in English speaking. According to them, impromptu speech and class debate were frequent class activities in their college life. They were trained to use body language and dramatic tone to talk about topics like "Pretend you are a crocodile and tell us about your daily life" (interview with Amy) in class. Having to present journal papers and engage in formal conversation in graduate seminars, they found that they could not apply their acquired skills to the new context. Ivy wrote in her evaluation paper, "I felt that I lost most of the 'fancy' techniques and skills to speak publicly, the skills I've learned in oral classes in university…Humor and feelings in my talks are missing after graduate training." As a result, she found that she spoke with a "flat and boring" tone in class presentation.

Theme 4: Learning from others

It was found that the academic community of the graduate seminar offers the first-year students opportunities to observe and learn from the second-year students. In fact, this is the first time that the first-year students took a course with their seniors. In her self-evaluation,

Amy reflected that part of the reason for adopting a more formal tone for her OAP this semester was because of the different audiences. For the first time in her graduate life, she had to present in front of her seniors. This triggered her to re-evaluate her old presentation style, one which she describes as "creative, lively, and somewhat playful," and try a more formal tone.

Watching how the more experienced students gave their OAPs also helped some first-year students learn how to improve their presentations. Jenny and Connie discussed their observation of Wendy's OAP:

> Wendy did such a good job. Her speech flow was so smooth, and every point she made was clear. In her presentation, you don't feel bored. I think mine is always a little bit boring (interview with Jenny).

> I found that Wendy would quickly scan her script if she forgot a point she wanted to make. This is something the six of us never do. I think I can try to write a few notes as reminders (interview with Connie).

As can be seen in the above remarks, having the opportunity to watch how the more knowledgeable seniors presented provided Jenny and Connie with concrete ideas on how to improve their OAPs.

In this study, it was found that students' learning extended beyond their immediate classroom community. They also benefited from observing how established scholars in the field give talks at academic events such as conferences and workshops. For example, Ivy talked about her admiration of how some keynote speakers of the conferences she had attended were able to convey their passion and professionalism at the same time. A few students also mentioned how Dr. Y., an internationally renowned scholar who paid University X a three-day visit in the middle of the semester and gave three workshops on second language writing, always tried to connect with the audience in his speeches. In sum, their participation in these key academic functions allowed them to observe how seasoned

members of the field talked and acted.

RQ2: How does evaluating their own OAPs assist students in their academic discourse socialization?

To reiterate, in their review article, Morita and Kobayashi (2008) identify the need to explore pedagogical means of assisting students in their academic discourse socialization. This is precisely one important purpose of the current study: to examine whether evaluating OAPs based on a research-based framework (Morita, 2000) is a plausible pedagogical intervention to help learners with their academic discourse socialization. In the interviews, students all indicated that this was their first time in their graduate study of having to record their class presentation and write a guided evaluation. Although many mentioned that they did not feel comfortable with listening to their own voices, they were able to produce many thoughtful comments in their evaluation papers. In viewing their OAP recording at home, they spotted some problems, and in their evaluation papers, they offered specific strategies for improvement. Table 1 summarizes the problems and strategies for improvement:

Table 1. Problems identified by students and their strategies for improvement

Students	Problems	Strategies for improvement
Wendy	● The frequent use of "informal language," including *you know*, *actually*, *like*	● More self-monitoring when delivering the OAP
Mandy	● Her presentation was interrupted several times as she spotted several typos on her handout.	● More careful proofreading
Ivy	● Flat tone ● Many fillers like "uh"	● Work on arousing listeners' interest ● More self-monitoring
Amy	● Lack of interaction with the audience	● Thorough preparation of the presentation and think of when and where to interact with audiences
Cindy	● Frequent use of the same	● Read studies on discourse

	discourse markers, like *OK & OK, next* ● Reading too much from the slides ● Lack of interaction with the audience	structures to learn more alternatives ● A thorough understanding of the article which will allow her to use her own words to talk about the study ● Design discussion questions
Lisa	● No eye contact	● Try not to stare at the computer screen
Jenny	● Mispronunciation of similar words (*effective* vs. *affective*) and use of too many fillers ● Eyes were fixed on the computer screen, no eye contact with audience	● More rehearsals and try to be calm on stage ● Less information on each PowerPoint slide
Angela	● Distorted fluency due to many fillers ● Mispronunciation of key words, like *prosody* and *experiment* ● To many words on a slide	● More practices ● Double-check the pronunciation. ● Try to list only key points on a slide
Connie	● Many pauses ● Unable to talk about her thoughts in English	● More practices and rehearsals ● More practices

As can be seen in Table 1, having to review their stage performance compels the students to spot areas for improvement. Although most of these areas were rather local in nature, improvement in them is, according to some participants, crucial in enhancing their self-image and confidence as members of the TESOL community. As hard-working students who are committed to self-improvement, these students also developed strategies to improve their OAPs. In fact, the positive effect of evaluating their OAPs is observable in some students' second class presentations. As mentioned earlier, some students needed to present twice during the semester. Among them, Angela's improvement was quite noticeable. In her second presentation,[5] she delivered a much more fluent speech with little mispronunciation of key

[5] This took place after the student had finished her first presentation, wrote an evaluation paper on it, and received the instructor's feedback.

words. After her presentation was over, her classmates could not help but comment immediately that her PowerPoint slides looked much "cleaner" and they were easier to follow. Likewise, Cindy, who felt that she read too much from the slides in her first presentation, was able to use more of her own words to deliver her second OAP (researcher's fieldnote, 2009/04/20).

Students also made the following comments on Morita's (2000) framework:

> I was delighted to find Morita's framework. It includes everything. It includes features that I had not thought of in the past two years of graduate study (interview with Ivy).
>
> When we think of presentations, we normally focus more on surface features like *speech delivery* or *time management*. I am glad that I learned other important features, like *relevance* and *novelty*, from Morita for my future presentations (interview with Cindy).
>
> From now on, when I prepare for a class presentation, I will put Morita's framework on my desk to remind me of the important features of a good OAP (interview with Lisa).

From the above quotes, it is evident that the experience of evaluating their OAPs based on Morita's (2000) framework prompted many students to realize that their OAPs should go beyond the transmission of ideas. The development of this new conception is crucial, as it will allow the students to take a more critical stance toward ideas and knowledge that have been generated in the discipline.

5. Discussion

It was found that most students perceived their role as an information transmitter when giving an OAP in class. As can be seen in Table 1, most of the problems they identified in their OAPs pertain to three features in Morita's (2000) framework—*support items*, *audience involvement*,

and *delivery*. Although they were expected to offer their own critique on the article, most of them simply regurgitated the main content and put together a presentation. In other words, most students failed to provide what Morita (2000) calls "a thoughtful and well-balanced critique" (p. 302) which brings new insights to the article. In fact, it was found in their evaluation papers that students often admitted that they did not provide any critique on the article during their presentation. Two students even omitted this item altogether in their evaluation papers. When asked about such omission, they said that they felt the item was "irrelevant" to delivering an OAP. Such a perception seems to echo with Joughin's (2007) statement that students who conceptualize OAPs as transmission of ideas tend to view the presentation as an end in itself, with a strong focus on the material that needs to be presented (in this case, the journal article).

Data also indicate that students were often unsure of what it means to speak academically. As Ridley (2004) states, the discourses in higher education settings can be "confusing and mysterious" (p. 91) for those new to an academic program. Such confusion often results in feelings of insecurity, as also found in Morita's (2000) study. However, Morita (2000) observed that her participants managed to speak "not only as novices in the academic community but also as experienced professionals or as participants with unique perspectives and specializations" (p. 303). As a result, multiple voices were created in the classroom. Compared with these participants, the participants in the current study are rather homogenous: they speak the same L1 and are females in their early twenties. More importantly, they do not have a well-established professional identity or specialization on which they can fall back or claim their authority when facing the insecurity and tension created by their entry into the TESOL field. Further exacerbating their anxiety is lack of confidence in their English proficiency, as some students commented that they found expressing complicated ideas in English rather challenging.

Further complicating the issue is the fact that students received very little relevant

training on academic speaking when they were in college. If any training was provided, it seemed to have different foci, such as learning how to arouse the audience's interest by speaking with an exaggerated tone (i.e., related to the categories of *emotional engagement*, *novelty*, and *audience involvement* in Morita's framework). As a result, some students expressed much uncertainty with how to speak in academic settings. Similar findings have also been reported in writing research (e.g., Foster, 2004; Johanson, 2001) where graduate students, mainstream and non-mainstream alike, found their earlier writing experiences in college did not prepare them for "more extended research-based literacy activities" (Casanave, 2008, p. 14) in graduate school. In countries like Taiwan where going for graduate school has become the standard choice among college graduates, some college training on academic speaking and writing should be in place to help students ease the transition between undergraduate and graduate study.

It was found that the participants benefited from their interaction with the more seasoned members of the academic community. In the case of the first-year students, they learned how the more skilled second-year students delivered OAPs; some of them even identified a role model they would like to emulate. Their learning extends well beyond the four walls of their classroom. As they watched how those established scholars performed the essential tasks of the research community (e.g., delivering keynote speeches in conferences and hosting workshops), they gained a deeper understanding of the nature of the academic discourse and scholarly interactions. All these findings illustrate the social and situated nature of the participants' learning (Morita, 2004).

The experience of evaluating their own OAPs was found to be beneficial for helping students to identity areas for improvement in their presentations. In their self-evaluation, attention was paid to many linguistic as well as paralinguistic features (see Table 1). For all the participants, this exercise offered them the first opportunity to examine their OAPs in a careful manner. They were also introduced to important, but often neglected features of good

OAPs (such as *novelty* and *immediacy*), encouraging them to play a more active role in the discipline by reading critically and voicing their opinions. Although the lasting effect of this reflective exercise is left to be examined, it has raised students' awareness of ways which they can improve their OAPs to speak more like members of the research community.

6. Conclusion

Situated in a Master's TESOL program in Taiwan, the current study is an effort to expand research on academic discourse socialization to non-western educational contexts. It also provides some insights on whether a pedagogical intervention could be beneficial for students' academic discourse socialization. One possible future research direction is to launch a longitudinal study which documents students' trajectories of academic discourse socialization, as they enter and finish an academic program. Such investigation will yield a fuller picture of the process learners go through and the possible factors which influence their socialization. Another possible direction is to examine whether other pedagogical means, such as peer evaluation on OAPs and teacher-student conference, can facilitate students' academic discourse socialization. It is hoped that more future studies will be conducted on this topic to yield fuller understanding of this complex process.

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Appendix A
Key features of good OAPs (adopted from Morita, 2000, p. 301)

Feature	Description
Time management	
Summary	● Provide a concise summary that covers only the main points or identifies key issues of the article. ● Avoid a long summary that discusses too many details or information already known to the audience.
Critique	● Provide a thoughtful critique of the article that brings new insights. ● Critique the article from a number of perspectives. ● Discuss both strengths and weaknesses of the article.
Implications	● Discuss pedagogical and research implications of the article for other relevant issues or situations (i.e., go beyond the article to, e.g., discuss applications of a theory to concrete language learning situations).
Relevance	● Make personal links to the topic when appropriate (e.g., provide personal anecdotes). ● Relate the topic to the audience members' experiences, needs, and situations.
Epistemic stance	● Communicate one's epistemic stance (e.g., show credibility as a relative expert, communicate one's strong interest in the topic, seek solidarity as a novice).
Emotional engagement	● Communicate one's emotional engagement (e.g., show enthusiasm, communicate one's feelings or strong opinions about something, use humor).
Novelty	● Communicate a sense of novelty (e.g., provide new information, use a different format, use support items).
Immediacy	● Communicate a sense of immediacy (e.g., discuss urgency of an issue, relate the article to immediate contexts).
Conflict/ tension	● Communicate a sense of conflict, debate, or dilemma, and stimulate audience members intellectually.
Support items	● Use relevant and effective support items (e.g., handouts, visual aids, video clips, newspaper articles, a passage from a novel).
Audience involvement	● Provide discussion questions that make audience members think and encourage their participation in discussions. ● Invite audience members' input by taking an interactive approach. ● Maintain the audiences' interest (cognitive involvement). ● Be perceptive of the audience's reaction (e.g., continually assess the interest level of the audience, try to involve members in discussions).
Delivery	● Use an effective delivery (e.g., maintain eye contact with the audience; use appropriate gestures, rate of speech, and volume; avoid speaking in a

monotone).

- Be conscious of time and allocate appropriate time to each subpart (i.e., summary, evaluate, discussion).

Appendix B

Assignment on epistemic stance

You are now quite experienced in making oral academic presentations (OAPs). In Morita's (2000) study, she discusses the term "epistemic stance," i.e., the presenter's attitudes, judgments, and beliefs in relation to what he/she knows about the article and issues relevant to it. <u>What is your epistemic stance when presenting the assigned article for this course? Do you see yourself as an expert on the topic? What makes you view yourself this way?</u>

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A Pragmatic Analysis of MA Thesis Acknowledgements

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Biodata

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Abstract

Most studies on gratitude have focused on spoken interaction. Less attention has been paid to written thanking expressions. From a pragmatic perspective, the present study explores the use of thanking strategies for different addressees in 20 MA thesis acknowledgements. Results reveal that explicit thanking strategies (using overt thanking words) are by far more frequently used than implicit thanking strategies (using no overt thanking words). The most common explicit thanking strategy is thanking + addressees + reasons (favor or positive feelings). Moreover, the choice of

strategies varies, depending mainly upon the nature and importance of the assistance or support the addressees have provided. Simple thanking strategies occur much more frequently than complex thanking strategies. A small number of recurrent thanking words and formulaic and personalized structures feature the linguistic realization of this conventionalized part genre. The addressees in thesis acknowledgements include six categories: advisors, committee members, other faculty members, participants, classmates/friends, and family members, arranged in descending order of frequency. Among them, advisors are invariably thanked first, and complex thanking strategies are usually employed to elaborate on their specific assistance. These results signify thesis acknowledgements as the socio-pragmatic embodiment of the graduates' professional as well as interpersonal supporting networks.

Keywords: pragmatic analysis; MA thesis; acknowledgement; thanking strategy; gratitude

1. Introduction

With the growing recognition of the role of pragmatics in second and foreign language learning, researchers have been investigating this important aspect of communication and language learning. Expressing gratitude is a speech act that is taught at an early age and is commonly performed by native speakers of most languages. We often express our gratitude in either spoken or written form. If the speech act of expressing gratitude is carried out appropriately, positive feelings may arise and reinforce the relationship between interlocutors. Conversely, inappropriate thanking expressions or lack of thanking expressions may be viewed as oddness, impoliteness, or even rudeness.

Over the past two decades, a number of studies have examined thanking expressions in oral form. The most widely used data collection methods are discourse completion tasks (DCTs) and role plays (Eisenstein & Bodman, 1986, 1993; Kasper, 2000; Schauer & Adolphs, 2006). Both methods allow researchers to investigate thanking behaviors in different contexts with various contextual variables, such as familiarity between interlocutors, social status, conversational topics, and genders. In contrast, much less attention has been paid to expressions of gratitude in written

form. One of the widespread written forms of gratitude is acknowledgements. Acknowledging the assistance or contribution of others is an established scholarly convention in academic writing. For example, the acknowledgement section in academic books or research articles is a place where researchers express their gratitude toward those who assist the publication or research. From a pragmatic perspective, acknowledgements not only play the role of reciprocal gift-giving in academic practice (Hyland, 2004) but also reflect important values of the academic community, including at least the following:

1. awareness of the interpersonal relations that contribute to the development of a researcher;
2. recognition of assistance from others to show modesty and gratitude;
3. construction of a professional identity; and
4. crediting of peers for intellectual support (Giannoni, 2002).

Studies have found that over half of all published articles contain acknowlegements, and over half of researchers read acknowledgements as they read new articles (Cronin, McKenzie, & Stiffler, 1992; Cronin & Overfelt, 1994). With their non-mandatory nature, the universal presence of acknowledgements points to their pragmatic significance. From the point of view of applied linguistics, it can be regarded as a genre (Hyland, 2004) or “part genre” (Giannoni, 2002), reflecting one of the communicative events of a researcher as a member of the academic discourse community. However, only recently have a small number of studies investigated this genre or “part genre” in the field of English for academic purposes (EAP) (Gesuato, 2004; Giannoni, 2002; Hyland, 2003, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004). "Acknowledgements have been largely neglected in applied linguistic studies, which have tended to focus on explicitly argumentative and persuasive genres. As a result, little is known of their structure and expression,…" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 260).

Acknowledgements in theses have received even less attention (Hyland, 2004). Most thesis writing resource books and style manuals focus on the seven sections/chapters in a thesis: Abstract, Introduction, Literature Review, Method, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion sections. Few have

instructed readers how to write thesis acknowledgements. Nevertheless, since acknowledgements come at the beginning of a thesis, a poor first impression may be made if they are inappropriately written (Swales & Feak, 2000, 2004).

On the other hand, acknowledgements in different genres are characterized by their distinctive communicative purposes as well as thanking strategies. For example, acknowledgements in books or journal articles show the authors' recognition and appreciation of academic assistance and financial support from colleagues and funding institutions; they are intended, more critically, for the "strong networks of association between researchers" (Hyland, 2003, p.246). Thesis acknowledgements, however, serve both as a record of the graduates' development of scholarly competence to become a member in the academic community and as the embodiment of their support networks. The authorial roles, individual purposes, and writer-reader relationships in thesis acknowledgements are very different from the choices available in research genres, allowing writers to express themselves unreservedly and sincerely (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Consequently, the ways of expressing thanks as well as the arrangement of the addressees in this genre could be pragmatically significant of these features.

Methodologically, although Discourse Completion Tests (DCTs) and role plays have often been adopted to investigate thanking expressions in oral form, as indicated earlier, DCT methodology perpetuates the focus on a closed set of speech act types identified either by default (e.g., the DCT was designed to elicit requests; therefore, participants' responses must be requested), or by specific linguistic features predetermined to signal a specific speech act (e.g., the use of *I'm sorry* must mean that the elicited speech act is an apology.) Therefore, it seems inappropriate to use DCTs for the analysis of written acknowledgements. In discourse analysis, corpus has recently been used as the source of speech act data for analysis. It can not only reveal how the speech act is expressed in various discourse contexts, but also base the analysis on a large amount of non-elicited real-world language use data.

In addition, most studies on expressions of gratitude have focused on one-to-one thanking

behavior in oral interactions. Few have examined thanking expressions in one-to-many interactions, especially in written form. A number of questions may arise when one expresses his or her thanks to many addressees. Will the addressees be thanked differently? Who is thanked first? Is there a preference in ordering the thanked addressees? Does such preference characterize social and cultural pragmatism? Specifically, how do the written forms of thanking expressions, particularly in acknowledgements, reveal the interpersonal relations of graduates in the academic community? These questions indicate that acknowledgement behaviors in theses are more complicated than they are usually regarded, and an in-depth pragmatic analysis of the thanking strategies employed can provide valuable and practical information for master and doctoral candidates.

The present study, thus, intends to take a pragmatic and corpus-based approach to investigating acknowledgements in MA theses written by Taiwanese students. Specifically, the study aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequently used thanking strategies in Taiwanese MA thesis acknowledgements?
2. What are the linguistic realizations of various thanking strategies in Taiwanese MA thesis acknowledgements?
3. How are thanking strategies employed for different addressees?
4. What is the arrangement preference for the thanked addressees?

2. The speech act of thanking

The concept of speech act, *speech* as an *act*, was originally proposed by Austin (1962), and later developed by Searle (1969) to form speech act theory. Speech acts, according to Searle (1969), are "the basic or minimal units of linguistic communication" (p. 16). Searle defined thanking as an expressive illocutionary act. When thanking, the speaker expresses gratitude for the hearer's participation in a prior action that is beneficial to the speaker. The speaker feels grateful or appreciative for the prior action and makes an utterance that counts as an expression of gratitude or

appreciation.

Bach and Harnish (1979) took a step further and considered that the genuine feeling of gratitude is not necessary but the expression of gratitude should meet social expectation; that is, one expresses gratitude as a social convention at being benefited. Leech (1983) also viewed thanking from a more social perspective and described it as a friendly function to establish and maintain a polite and friendly social atmosphere. Subsequently, Coulmas (1981) indicated that the quality of the interpersonal relation between the participants and the nature of the object of gratitude are equally important factors that determine the choice of expressions of gratitude. Acknowledgements in academic writing are written expressions of gratitude which reflect the interpersonal dynamics of an academic genre such as research articles or theses. In acknowledgements, not only who are thanked but also how they are thanked and the ordering of the thanked addressees may involve "social expectations" in the form of an academic convention which is especially challenging to non-native or novice researchers or graduate students.

Among the few studies on acknowledgments in academic writing (Cronin, McKenzie, & Rubio, 1993; Giannoni, 2002; Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004), Giannoni (2002) explored the similarities and differences between English and Italian research articles. He found both languages suggest the presence of a common rhetorical core. Italian employed a higher number of impersonal constructions, while English had a wider range and slightly higher proportion of overt thanking expressions. Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) examined the generic structure and linguistic patterns of acknowledgements in PhD and MA dissertations, proposing a move structure as shown in Table 1 in the Appendix.

Hyland (2004) found that not all acknowledgements contain all three moves; namely, reflecting move, thanking move, and announcing move; only the central thanking move is obligatory. With respect to addressees, thanking advisors for their academic assistance occurs in every text, but thanking is also allotted to other addressees, such as committee members, friends, classmates, organizations, participants, and family members. In addition, Hyland and Tse (2004) provided five

patterns of expressing gratitude, including nominalization, performative verb, adjective, passive, and bare mention, with performative verbs the most frequently used. They also found that the most frequently used authorial subject is the first-person pronouns *I* and *my*.

Taking a pragmatic approach, this study focuses on the thanking strategies, the linguistic realizations of these strategies, their relations to the addressees, and the ordering of addressees in master thesis acknowledgments. We hypothesize that academic assistance and interpersonal relationships are two most crucial factors that determine the choice of thanking strategies and the ordering of addressees.

3. Method

3.1 Corpus and coding scheme

The study is based on a corpus of 20 MA thesis acknowledgements by Taiwanese students in the field of applied linguistics from two prestigious universities in Taiwan from 2003 to 2009. All the theses are written in English, including the acknowledgements.

A coding scheme of thanking strategies was developed. It consists of two tiers: semantic units and thanking strategies. For the first tier, thanking expressions are categorized into six semantic units: (1) thanking, explicitly using words that contain expressions of gratitude, such as *thank*, *appreciate*, *gratitude*, *indebted*, and *grateful*, (2) addressees, (3) reasons due to the favor received, such as insightful comments, efforts, and academic guidance, (4) reasons due to positive feelings, such as love, support, and encouragement, (5) indispensability, using double negation structure, such as *without… not…* and *were it not… not…*, and (6) elaboration, elaborating on reasons for thanking. For the second tier, different semantic units are combined to form various thanking strategies. A thanking strategy consists of the semantic unit of addressees with or without an overt thanking word/phrase and other semantic units.

The thanking strategies are grouped into two main categories: explicit and implicit thanking. If a thanking strategy contains an overt thanking word/phrase, it is classified as an explicit thanking

strategy; otherwise, it is an implicit thanking strategy. Explicit thanking strategies are further divided into simple and complex thanking strategies. A simple thanking strategy consists of an overt thanking word/phrase and addressees, together with or without one of the semantic units of reasons (favor), reasons (positive feelings), and indispensability; a complex thanking strategy consists of a thanking word/phrase and addressees, together with more than one of the other semantic units.

The frequent combinations of semantic units that form different thanking strategies are listed in Table 2 in the Appendix.

3.2 Data analysis

The acknowledgements were analyzed for their thanking strategies and their linguistic realizations to determine how the student writers expressed gratitude. Thanking expressions directed towards an addressee or a group of addressees sharing the same thanking word/phrase was first segmented into semantic units and coded with appropriate unit code, such as //thanking//, //addressees//, or //reason, favor//. Then they were classified into explicit or implicit thanking, depending upon whether they contained a thanking unit. The combination of different semantic units further formed simple thanking strategies and complex thanking strategies. A thanking strategy may contain one or more than one sentence as long as only one addressee or one group of related addressees are involved, and one thanking word/phrase is used.

For analysis of linguistic realizations, lexical items that explicitly express gratitude, such as *thank*, *appreciate*, *gratitude* or *indebted*, were identified. A text analysis and concordance program AntConc was used to count and retrieve explicit thanking expressions from the corpus, but implicit thanking expressions (i.e. without overt expressions of thanks) were identified manually. A subset of the data was analyzed and coded independently by a second rater to ensure the reliability of analysis.

Following is an example of the analysis of expressions of gratitude using the above two-tier

coding scheme of semantic units and thanking strategies.

I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. X, my thesis advisor,
[thanking] [addressee]
for her constant guidance and patience with this thesis.
[reason, favor]
Dr. X's careful reading and insightful suggestions on all the drafts have made the
[elaboration]
thesis more complete.

Therefore, the semantic formula that characterizes the above expression would be:

[thanking] + [addressees] + [reason, favor] + [elaboration].

4. Results

Each of the theses in our corpus contains the section of acknowledgement. This confirms the importance of this section in MA theses even though it is not directly related to the research claims and significance of a thesis (Hyland & Tse, 2004). The average length of the acknowledgements is 304 words. The length varies greatly, ranging from 188 to 549 words. The average length, however, is much longer than that in the master theses (117 words) in Hyland and Tse (2004), who used master theses by students at Hong Kong universities.

Similar to Hyland and Tse (2004), all acknowledgements contain a thanking move. Five out of the 20 acknowledgements contain a reflecting move; specifically, three of them occur at the beginning while two at the end of the acknowledgement. Also, five of the acknowledgements contain an announcing move, all announcing the dedication of their theses to someone important to them, such as family or husband. However, none of the acknowledgements contain both.

4.1 Thanking strategies

In total, 163 thanking strategies were identified, as shown in Table 3. The table shows that

Taiwanese MA students in applied linguistics use explicit thanking strategies (96.93%) much more frequently than implicit thanking strategies. Only five occurrences of implicit thanking strategies were found. This suggests that students tend to use an overt expression of thanks in acknowledgements. Further examination of the thanking words revealed that they usually occur at an early position of a thanking strategy, either the sentence initial or right after the authorial subject. On the other hand, implicit strategies, despite the lack of obvious thanking words, usually indicate the indispensability or the assistance received from the addressees. They are directed towards the addressees who provided moral support rather than real assistance directly related to the completion of theses, such as family or friends. See Table 3 in the Appendix.

Comparing the subcategories of explicit thanking strategies, as shown in Table 4 in the Appendix, we can observe that simple thanking strategies (72.78%) outnumber complex thanking strategies (27.22%). When student writers express their gratitude to various addressees, some usually receive more weight than others. Only for addressees who contribute much to their thesis research do writers use complex thanking strategies; in other words, they would elaborate on specific details as the reasons for thanking or indicate the indispensability of the addressees' help or support for them to complete the theses. Details of the relation between the choice of thanking strategies and addressees will be given in 4.3. See Table 4 in the Appendix.

Of all thanking strategies, S2 (thanking + addressees + reasons [favor]) and S3 (thanking + addressees + reasons [positive feelings]) are the most frequently used strategies, with a total of 105 occurrences (66.45%). S2, in particular, accounts for almost half of all occurrences of the strategies (48.10%). This indicates that the student writers prefer to express their gratitude towards someone along with a reason, mostly academic assistance or moral support. Examples 1-4 in the following exemplify S2 and S3:

(1) *I also appreciate my committee members, Dr. X, and Dr. Y, who provided insightful comments and suggestions for the thesis.* (S2)

(2) *My special gratitude goes to X, and my cousin, X, who helped me on all the statistic and language problems.* (S2)

(3) *I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my family for their endless support and encouragement.* (S3)

(4) *I would also express my deepest thanks to my dear dad and mom, who have given me their love and support.* (S3)

In Examples 1 and 2, the semantic units of thanking and addressees are followed by indicating the favor received from the addressees: academic assistance in the forms of insightful comments and suggestions and help with statistic and language problems, respectively. In Examples 3 and 4, the reasons are rendered as positive indicating feelings of support and encouragement in the former and love and support in the latter.

C1, C3 and C2 are the most frequently used complex thanking strategies, constituting 24.68 % (39 occurrences) of all occurrences of thanking strategies. In C1 and C2, after the student writers express their thanks and reasons, they proceed to elaborate on the addressees' specific assistance. Ways of elaboration include exemplifying the reason indicated (as shown in Example 5), revealing the writer's feelings towards the addressees (as shown in Example 6), and the combination of the two (as shown in Example 7).

(5) *I would like to express my profound gratitude to Dr. X, my thesis advisor, for her constant guidance and patience with this thesis. Dr. X's careful reading and insightful suggestions on all the drafts have made the thesis more complete.* (C1)

(6) *I owe my deepest gratefulness to my family. Although they do not have the slightest idea about my thesis, they nevertheless give me their warm supports and consideration. They were always there to accompany me through the hard times during all these years.* (C2)

(7) *I want to express my heartfelt gratitude to my understanding and supportive husband. Many times when I had to be fully engaged in study, he assumed the responsibility of taking care of our children, which was definitely no easy task for him.* (C2)

In Example 5, "*careful reading and insightful suggestions on all the drafts"* exemplify how the student writer's thesis advisor guides him/her in thesis research. In Example 6, the student writer feels that his/her family *"were always there to accompany"* him/her. In Example 7, the elaboration both exemplifies how her husband supports her and reveals her feelings towards her husband.

In addition to C1 and C2, the student writers employ C3 to emphasize the indispensable help provided by the addressees, as shown in Examples 8 and 9 below:

(8) *I would like to thank X and her two classes for helping me a lot in this study. Without their help and participation, the completion of the thesis would not have been possible.* (C3)

(9) *I appreciate her continuous encouragement and advice during the writing of this thesis. Were it not for her help, the completion of the thesis would not have been possible.* (C3)

In both examples, indispensability highlights the importance and value of the help from the addressees. In summary, S2, S3, C1, C2 and C3 are the five most frequently used thanking strategies by Taiwanese MA students in applied linguistics in thesis acknowledgements, constituting 91.14% (144 occurrences) of all occurrences of explicit thanking strategies (158 occurrences).

On the other hand, we note that a complex thanking strategy usually goes beyond a single sentence. The second sentence and/or the third sentence, most of which do not contain an overt thanking word, often gives details that support the reason for thanking, or indicates the value or indispensability of the bestowed favor to the completion of thesis. This is demonstrated in the examples of complex thanking strategies provided above. Another complication in the presentation of a thanking strategy is the use of a shared thanking word for a number of related addressees, usually the student writer's family or friends. Thus, a first sentence containing an overt thanking word and a group of addressees is followed by several sentences, each of which contains an individual addressee and the reason for thanking, as shown in the following example:

(10) *In addition, I am profoundly indebted to my beloved family. My parents, Nien-shih*

Chuang and I-hui Hsieh, who love me and care a lot about me, encouraged me to go further studies. My sister, Chia-ning Chuang, who keeps me company all the time, talks to me and cheers me up whenever I am upset. I would also like to share the happiness with my brother, I-chun Chuang.

The thanking strategy for Example 10 has the semantic formula as follows:

[thanking] + [addressees] + [addressee 1] + [reason, positive feelings] + [addressee 2] + [reason, favor] + [addressee 3] + [reason, positive feelings]

4.2 Linguistic realizations of thanking strategies

As shown in 4.1, explicit thanking strategies constitute 96.93% of all thanking strategies; therefore, this section will focus on the linguistic realizations of explicit thanking strategies. All explicit thanking strategies contain an overt expression of gratitude in the form of a noun, verb, or adjective. Table 5 shows the frequency of each in all explicit thanking strategies identified. The nominal form is used most frequently (60.82%), followed by the verb form (24.56%), and then the adjective form (14.62%). This result is consistent with Hyland and Tse's (2004) finding that master students rely particularly on nominal forms to express gratitude in acknowledgements. In addition, since only 14 thanking words were found in 158 instances of explicit thanking strategies, each on average recurs 11.3 times, this may suggest that the meaning of this particular speech act of thanking lies not so much on the use of complicated structure or sophisticated vocabulary as on conventionalized and socialized expressions of gratitude. See Table 5 in the Appendix.

Of the 14 recurrent lexicons, as shown in Table 6, shown in the Appendix, *gratitude*, *thanks,* and *thank* are used more frequently. In nominal forms, *gratitude* and *thanks* constitute approximately 77%. There is a strong preference for *thank* in the verb form, with a total of approximately 79%, and *grateful* and *indebted* have the highest frequencies in the adjective form, with a total of approximately 80%. Thus, these five words seem to be the overt thanking words that Taiwanese graduates prefer to use to express their thanks in thesis acknowledgements. In most

cases, only one thanking lexical item is used in an explicit thanking strategy. In some cases, however, more than one thanking word is used, as in *I would like to show my thanks and gratitude to X* or *I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to Y.* See Table 6 in the Appendix.

In addition to using a range of lexical items to express gratitude, the student writers also use adjectives and adverbs as intensifiers of their gratitude. Some frequently occurring adjectives are *special*, *heartfelt, deepest*, *greatest*, *sincere*, *cordial, profound*, and *many*. Adverbs such as *extremely*, *greatly*, *deeply*, and *profoundly* as well as adverbial phrases like *from the bottom of my heart* are also used. The intensifiers used are limited to a number of recurring words. Sometimes a second thanking word is used when the reason for thanking is described in a second sentence, as shown in the following example:

(11) *I would like to express my profound and sincere <u>gratitude</u> to my advisor, X, for all her guidance and support. I <u>appreciate</u> her continuous encouragement and advice not only…but also….*

In terms of sentence structures, *I* and *my+ thanking word* are the most frequently used sentence subjects, constituting 84.8% of all sentences which contain a thanking word. In particular, *I*-sentences account for 65.20%. Of the 24 sentences (15.20%) which use other structures, 13 sentences use the structure of *Special/Many/A lot of thanks go to X*. Therefore, we may conclude that when expressing gratitude in thesis acknowledgements, the student writers in this study seem to regard it as a conventionalized academic practice in which familiar structures with personal involvement are used.

4.3 Relations between thanking strategies and addressees

In their MA acknowledgements, the student writers thank various addresses, including advisors, committee members, other faculty members, participants, classmates, friends, and family members. Table 7 shows how the student writers thank these addressees by using various thanking strategies.

Overall, simple thanking strategies are used much more frequently than complex thanking strategies for most addressees except advisors. Complex thanking strategies account for 65.53% of all occurrences of thanking strategies for advisors. Obviously, they are the most important persons to the student writers. After expressing overt thanking and stating the academic assistance from their advisors, the student writers usually go further to expand on what their advisors have done for them or the kind of assistance and support they have received from their advisors by using elaboration (C1, see Example 5) and/or indicating indispensability (C3, see Example 9). As shown in Table 7, C1 and C3 are used more often for advisors than for the other five addressees.

In addition, we found that the student writers may use two thanking strategies for a single addressee to intensify their gratitude. Examples of the combined thanking strategies are presented in Examples 11 and 12. The use of combined strategies mainly occurs when the student writers express gratitude to their advisors; it is less frequently used for other addressees.

(12) *I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Dr. X, for all of her guidance and support. I appreciate her continuous encouragement and advice during the writing of this thesis. Were it not for her help, the completion of the thesis would not have been possible.* (S2 + C3)

(13) *I would like to thank my two thesis advisors, Dr. X and Dr. Y, who have spent time and made efforts helping me complete my thesis. Through numerous meetings with them, I learned how to do academic work and also how to be a graduate student. I also want to thank them for enduring and revising my poor writing. Without their patience and guidance, I could not have completed the thesis and made up my mind for a future academic career.* (C1 + C3)

See Table 7 in the Appendix.

As indicated earlier, when thanks are allotted to committee members, other faculty members, and participants, simple thanking strategies are used more often than complex thanking strategies.

Particularly, S2 is the most frequently used strategy. The student writers clearly indicate the types of favor that the addressees have offered them. Following are examples of this thanking strategy for the various addressees.

(14) *My heartfelt gratitude also goes to my committee members, Dr. X and Dr. Y, who provided invaluable and insightful comments to improve the content of my thesis.* (S2)

(15) *I am also indebted to all the excellent professors in the Institute of TESOL in X University for the training of my academic acuteness and the discovery of my research interest.* (S2)

(16) *Moreover, I have to thank the 68 college students for their participation and cooperation.* (S2)

When expressing thanks to classmates and friends, the student writers use S2 and S3 most frequently; that is, they express their gratitude and then state their reasons (either for the favor or the positive feelings they have received). Frequently mentioned positive feelings from classmates and friends include support, care and encouragement. Examples 17 and 18 show the thanking strategy of S3 towards classmates and friends.

(17) *Finally, I would like to thank my friends, A, B, C and D, especially X and Y, for their endless encouragement and care.* (S3)

(18) *Special thanks go to my dear classmates, A, B, C, D and E and my best friends, X, Y and Z for their encouragement and warm consideration.* (S3)

Lastly, when the student writers express thanks to their family members, S3 is the thanking strategy used most frequently, followed by C2. Together they constitute 66.67% of the thanking strategies for family members. Both S3 and C2 show positive feelings that the student writers have received. Moreover, it can be observed that C2 is used much more often for family members than for the other addressees. This is probably due to the fact that family members usually provide moral

support (that is, positive feelings) rather than academic assistance. We can also note that implicit thanking strategies are used more often for family members than for the other addressees (although there are, in total, only five occurrences of implicit thanking strategies). This may result from the fact that the student writers are so close to their family members that they tend not to use conventionalized thanking expressions to express their gratitude. Examples 19 and 20 show the use of S3 and C2 towards family members, while Example 21 shows the use of implicit thanking strategy.

(19) *I would also like to express my deepest thanks to my family for their love and support over my years of schooling.* (S3)

(20) *Finally, I saved the deepest gratitude to my parents and brother. Owing to their love and financial support, I was able to concentrate on the thesis writing and to overcome many encountered difficulties during the three years at X. They are no doubt the most important people on my mind.* (C2)

(21) *My growth would not be possible without the support of my family who have excused me from all the house chores and indulged me to follow my heart.* (Implicit)

In summary, we found that the choice of thanking strategies varies when the student writers thank different addressees. S2, C1, and C3 are the three most frequently used thanking strategies for advisors; S2 for committee members, other faculty members, and participants; S2 and S3 for classmates and friends; and lastly, S3, C2 and implicit thanking strategies for family members. In general, advisors, committee members and other faculty members provide more academic assistance and support while classmates, friends and family members provide more general, non-academic support, usually moral or spiritual.

4.4 Number and arrangement of addressees

How many addressees may be contained in a single acknowledgement? Who should be thanked first and who should be thanked last? These are decisions that the student writers have to make in their

acknowledgements. The results of our analysis show that the number of addressees ranges from four to nine in individual MA acknowledgements, with an average of 5.4 per acknowledgement. Table 8 indicates how Taiwanese student writers arrange their thanked addressees. Of the six major categories of addressees, namely, advisors, committee members, other faculty members, participants, classmates/friends, and family members, advisors always occur at the initial position and committee members always follow the advisors (although two of the acknowledgements do not use the term "committee members;" instead, they indicate the names of the professors who have provided academic assistance for their theses.) Other faculty members, who may be thanked individually or as a group, occur most frequently in the third position. Participants in the thesis research and classmates/friends often occur next. Interestingly, family members, being very crucial persons to the student writers since they occur in all acknowledgements and complicated and elaborated thanking strategies are rendered to them, almost always occur at the final position. Again, this is probably due to the fact that they give love and support rather than academic assistance. See Table 8 in the Appendix.

In general, the arrangement of the addressees in thesis acknowledgements reflects the addressees' academic relevance to theses research and/or writing. Since advisors and committee members are the ones who give the most direct academic assistance to the student writers, they are put in the first and second positions. Other faculty members and participants are usually arranged in the mid positions as their academic relevance to theses is not as high as advisors and committee members. Lastly, since classmates/friends and family members mostly provide moral support and encouragement which bear no academic relevance to theses, they often occur in the final positions irrespective of the importance of such interpersonal relations to the student writers.

Another possible explanation for this arrangement pattern is the power difference between the student writers and the addressees. In Chinese culture, one should thank the most powerful person first. As advisors and committee members play the most critical role in deciding the pass or fail of the theses, the student writers always thank them first. Thus, the arrangement of addressees may

reveal not only the roles the addressees play during the student writers' thesis writing process, but also interpersonal, social, and even power relationships. Other faculty members, though not directly involved in the student writers' theses, have a high degree of power as a result of the teacher-student relationship. Additionally, as studies in applied linguistics often involve the use of participants, their help plays a crucial role in the student writers' thesis research; they are thanked in half of the acknowledgements. Finally, classmates, friends and family members are usually the closest or most intimate to the student writers in terms of interpersonal relationships; however, they do not hold any power over the student writers in terms of theses or academic performance; therefore, they are frequently thanked last.

5. Discussion and conclusion

In this study, we have analyzed thesis acknowledgements from a pragmatic perspective. Different from previous studies on acknowledgements in academic genres (e.g., Giannoni, 2002; Hyland, 2003, 2004) which focused on the move structure, we have attempted to investigate Taiwanese graduates' use of thanking strategies in acknowledgements. The results show that the student writers adopt explicit thanking strategies far more frequently than implicit thanking strategies. In explicit thanking expressions, conventionalized and socialized expressions of gratitude occur repeatedly; in particular, five familiar thanking words —*gratitude*, *thanks* (noun), *thank* (verb), *indebted,* and *grateful*— are used most frequently. These results suggest that Taiwanese master students generally regard this part genre as an academic convention to express gratitude explicitly to those who provide help in their thesis study. Moreover, *I* and *my+ thanking word* serve as the sentence subjects of a great majority of the explicit thanking statements. Such linguistic realizations feature a distinctively personal register in strong contrast to the impersonal and sophisticated textualization of the main text of the theses. They also represent the personal and emotional self of the student writers as young researchers who are fully aware of assistance and support from many others as they are establishing their professional identity. Statements indicating the indispensability of the help and encouragement can intensify the

appreciation.

As a whole, five explicit thanking strategies (S2, S3, C1, C2 and C3) are used frequently, and the choice of simple or complex thanking strategies for different addressees reflects the student writers' perception of the roles the addressees play in the process of their thesis research. Obviously, advisors are the central figure to be thanked for first and most, and the student writers mostly use complex thanking strategies for them, elaborating on the specific assistance their advisors have bestowed upon them and/or indicating the indispensability of the assistance, sometimes even coupled with a second thanking strategy to intensify their gratitude. Thanking strategies S2, C1 and C3 are used most frequently for advisors. When thanking committee members, other faculty members and participants, the student writers use S2 most frequently, indicating the kind of favor they have received as a reason for thanking. When they thank classmates and friends, they may thank for their assistance or friendship, thus using S2 and S3. Lastly, S3, C2 and implicit thanking strategies are used frequently for family members. The use of complex thanking strategies for family members reveals that love and moral support to the student writers are as important as real assistance. We, therefore, may conclude that the use of various thanking strategies suggests the relationship between the illocutionary act of thanking and the interpersonal dynamics of the speaker/writer.

Comparing these results with the use of thanking strategies in spoken corpora, we could find interesting similarities and differences. In a previous study (Cheng, 2010) on the speech act of thanking in the conversations in MICASE and the spoken part of BNC, we found that simple thanking strategies are also used much more frequently than elaborated thanking strategies in both corpora. However, it seems thanking in conversations can perform a wider range of discourse functions than in acknowledgements. Some thanking expressions have pragmatic functions other than expressing gratitude, such as showing relief, rejecting an offer, greeting, showing politeness, or as conversational ending. In contrast, thesis acknowledgements are mainly a written part genre intended to show modesty and gratitude; hence they may use more formal thanking words such as *acknowledge*, *indebtedness, gratefulness, and appreciation*.

With respect to the arrangement of the thanked addressees, advisors and committee members are always thanked first and second, followed by other faculty members and participants; classmates, friends and family members are usually arranged in the final positions in the acknowledgements. It appears that such an arrangement is mainly based on the relevance of the assistance or support to thesis research rather than its importance to the student writers. For example, family members, though being crucial to the students, occur last in most acknowledgements. It should be of interest to further investigate whether the ordering of the addressees would be different in acknowledgements written by student writers in other social or cultural contexts.

As Hyland (2003) indicates, "Beyond the role it plays in academic gift giving and self-presentation, however, the textualization of gratitude reveals social and cultural characteristics…" (p.242). The results of our study suggest that thesis acknowledgements, which are filled with graduates students' humble, sincere, and warm-hearted proclamation, are different from book or research article acknowledgements, which are more motivated by the demonstration of academic credibility. In this study, the choice of thanking strategies, linguistic realizations, and arrangement of addressees characterize thesis acknowledgements as a socialized yet personally and emotionally involved part genre.

The results of this study carry some implications. First, academic writing references and style guides rarely introduce the move structure or thanking strategies in acknowledgements. The thanking strategies and the formulaic thanking expressions identified in this study could shed light on how to write acknowledgements in theses and dissertations. In addition, the arrangement of addressees in acknowledgements reflects the nature and importance of their assistance and support. Graduate students should be informed of the appropriate thanking sequence to meet social expectations. Finally, acknowledgements in theses are different in some aspects from acknowledgements in other genres such as books or project reports. It would be of interest for future research to compare acknowledgements in different genres, such as the use of thanking strategies and their linguistic realizations in oral and written genres, from both rhetorical and

pragmatic perspectives.

Showing appreciation has important social value. The speech act of thanking in oral or written form, particularly the use of thanking strategies, provide very practical information for us to communicate appropriately in many social situations and meet social expectations. For non-native speakers/writers, learning the formulaic expressions of gratitude and the patterns of thanking strategies is part of the discourse competence they need to develop.

This study analyzes only a small corpus of 20 thesis acknowledgements by master students in the discipline of applied linguistics in Taiwan. As Henry and Roseberry (2001) indicated, "A small corpus of texts from a single genre can be analyzed … to provide linguistic information useful for language teaching" (p.93). Being a small-scale study, the present study highlights the pragmatic meanings of the choice of different thanking strategies in relation to different addressees and their arrangement in acknowledgements. Although acknowledgements are not an obligatory section in theses, more and more thesis writers voice their thanks in this rhetorically and pragmatically significant section. It would be beneficial for EAP students to become aware of the pragmatic functions of acknowledgements and to learn appropriate thanking strategies for their thesis acknowledgements.

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Appendix

Table 1

Move Structure of Dissertation Acknowledgements from Hyland (2004)

Reflecting Move	Introspective comment on the writer's research experience
Thanking Move	Mapping credit to individuals and institutions
a. Presenting participants	Introducing those to be thanked
b. Thanking for academic assistance	Thanks for intellectual support, ideas, analyses feedback, etc.
c. Thanking for resources	Thanks for data access and clerical, technical and financial support
d. Thanking for moral support	Thanks for encouragement, friendship, sympathy, patience, etc.
Announcing Move	Public statements of responsibility and inspiration
a. Accepting responsibility	An assertion of authorial responsibility for flaws or errors
b. Dedicating the thesis	A formal dedication of the thesis to an individual(s)

Table 2

Classification of Thanking Strategies

Explicit thanking strategy
Simple thanking strategy
S1 thanking + addressees
S2 thanking + addressees + reasons (favor)
S3 thanking + addressees + reasons (positive feelings)
S4 thanking + addressees + indispensability
Complex thanking strategy
C1 thanking + addressees + reasons (favor) + elaboration
C2 thanking + addressees + reasons (positive feelings) + elaboration
C3 thanking + addressees + reasons (favor) + indispensability
C4 thanking + addressees + reasons (positive feelings) + indispensability
C5 thanking + addressees + reasons (favor) + indispensability + elaboration
C6 thanking + addressees + reasons (positive feelings) + elaboration + indispensability
C7 thanking + addressees + indispensability + elaboration
Implicit thanking strategy

Table 3

Frequency of Thanking Strategies in MA Thesis Acknowledgements

Thanking strategy	Example	Total
Explicit thanking	"I would like to thank X…" "My heartfelt thanks go to X…"	158 (96.93%)
Implicit thanking	"Without the participation of X, this thesis would not have been possible." "Besides, X's company has made me feel the graduate study more enjoyable."	5 (3.07%)
Total		163 (100.00%)

Table 4

Frequency of Subcategories of Explicit Thanking Strategy

Explicit thanking strategy	Total	Subtotal
Simple thanking		
S1	5 (3.16%)	
S2	76 (48.10%)	115 (72.78%)
S3	29 (18.35%)	
S4	5 (3.16%)	
Complex thanking		
C1	17 (10.76%)	
C2	9 (5.70%)	
C3	13 (8.22%)	
C4	1 (0.63%)	43 (27.22%)
C5	1 (0.63%)	
C6	1 (0.63%)	
C7	1 (0.63%)	
Total	158 (100.00%)	158 (100.00%)

Table 5

Frequency of Linguistic Realizations in Terms of Parts of Speech in Explicit Thanking Strategies

Form	Lexical item	Occurrences
Noun	thanks/ debt/ gratitude/ appreciation/ indebtedness/ gratefulness	104 (60.82%)
Verb	thank/ appreciate (appreciated)[a]/ acknowledge	42 (24.56%)
Adjective	thankful/ indebted/ grateful/ appreciative	25 (14.62%)
Total		171 (100.00%)

Note. [a]All thanking lexical items are in active form except for one occurrence where *appreciated* is used in passive form.

Table 6

Frequency of lexical Realizations in Explicit Thanking Strategies

Form	Lexical item	Example	Total
Noun	gratitude	My sincere gratitude also goes to…	44 (42.31%)
	thanks	My special thanks go to…	36 (34.62%)
	appreciation	My deepest appreciation goes to…	15 (14.42%)
	gratefulness	I would like to express my deepest gratefulness to…	3 (2.88%)
	indebtedness	I would like to acknowledge my indebtedness to…[a]	2 (1.92%)
	debt	My inexpressible debt is to…	2 (1.92%)
Subtotal			104 (100.00%)
Verb	thank	I would like to thank…	33 (78.57%)
	appreciate	I also appreciate my committee members…	4 (9.52%)
	acknowledge	I would acknowledge the financial support from…	4 (9.52%)
	appreciated	Your kind assistance will be kept in my mind and also greatly appreciated…	1 (2.38%)
Subtotal			42 (100.00%)
Adjective	grateful	I am also grateful to…	11 (44.00%)
	indebted	I am deeply indebted to…	9 (36.00%)
	thankful	I am also thankful to…	4 (16.00%)
	appreciative	I am extremely appreciative of what has done for me.	1 (4.00%)
Subtotal			25 (100.00%)

Note. [a]The expression contains more than one thanking lexical items.

Table 7

Frequency of Types of Thanking Strategies to Addressees

	a	b	c	d	e	f[a]
S1	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.17%)	3 (14.29%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
S2	7 (24.14%)	18 (78.26%)	18 (75.00%)	14 (66.67%)	18 (50.00%)	1 (3.33%)
S3	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)	2 (8.33%)	0 (0%)	12 (33.33%)	14 (46.67%)
S4	2 (6.90%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.17%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (6.67%)
Sub-total	10 (34.49%)	19 (82.61%)	22 (91.67%)	17 (80.96%)	30 (83.33 %)	17 (56.67%)
C1	8 (27.59%)	1 (4.35%)	2 (8.33%)	1 (4.76%)	3 (8.33%)	2 (6.67%)
C2	1 (3.45%)	1 (4.35%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (2.78%)	6 (20.00%)
C3	8 (27.59%)	1 (4.35%)	0 (0%)	2 (9.52%)	2 (5.56%)	0 (0%)
C4	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)
C5	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
C6	1 (3.45%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
C7	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (3.33%)
Sub-total	19 (65.53%)	3 (13.05%)	2 (8.33%)	3 (14.28%)	6 (16.67%)	9 (33.33%)
I	0 (0%)	1 (4.35%)	0 (0%)	1 (4.76%)	0 (0%)	3 (10.00%)
Total	29 (100%)	23 (100%)	24 (100%)	21 (100%)	36 (100%)	30 (100%)

Note. a = advisor; b = committee members; c = other faculty members; d = participants; e = classmates or friends; f = family members; S1-4 = simple thanking strategy; C1-7 = complex thanking strategy; I = implicit thanking strategy.

[a]Family members include parents, siblings, spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends.

Table 8

Arrangement of Thanked Addressees

	a	b	c	d	e	f[a]
1	20	0	0	0	0	0
2	0	18	1	0	0	0
3	0	0	12	2	2	1
4	0	0	1	2	5	6
5	0	0	0	2	5	4
6	0	0	0	1	1	4
7	0	0	0	0	3	3
8	0	0	0	2	1	1
9	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	20	18	14	10	17	20
Not-mentioned	0	2	6	10	3	0

Note. a = advisor; b = committee members; c = other faculty members; d = participants; e = classmates or friends; f = family members.

[a]Family members include parents, siblings, spouses, boyfriends and girlfriends.

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Corpus Study of Lexical Bundles: Journalistic Discourse in Focus

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Biodata

Hossein Vahid Dastjerdi teaches in the English Language Department at the University of Isfahan, Iran. He is associate professor of applied linguistics and has taught courses of variegated character, including translation courses, for years. He has been a fellow of the English Centers at the universities of Isfahan and Shiraz where he has investigated into issues related to materials preparation for GE. and ESP. courses. He is the author of a number of books in this respect. He has also published a good number of articles on discourse, testing and translation in local and international journals. Dr. Vahid's current research interests include testing, materials development, translation, the metaphoricity of language, discourse analysis, pragmatics and critical discourse analysis. He is presently involved in a number of projects concerning translation studies as well as figurative language use.

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Abstract

One of the prerequisites of fluent language is the use of fixed or standard forms of expression. During the last century, the study of these building blocks has attracted the attention of many linguists and researchers. One of the terms assigned to these frequently used expressions is lexical bundles. This paper aims to investigate the use of lexical bundles in newspapers. It aims to shed more light on the frequency of occurrence and distribution of functional and structural types of lexical bundles and their probable relations as used by Iranian journalists. For this purpose, 680 pages of the newspaper *Iran Daily* were selected to form a corpus. Lexical bundles were identified with the use of a computer program, and then their structures and functions were described. The findings reveal that lexical bundles employed in journalistic materials are mostly used in the same way as academic writing in terms of structural distribution. As regards their functional types, the study shows that in this register, referential bundles occur more frequently than the other two groups of bundles, namely discourse organizers and stance bundles.

Keywords: lexical bundles, journalistic discourse, newspaper text types, referential bundles

1. Introduction

Common word clusters and word sequences play important roles in natural discourse and constitute a large portion of it (Schmitt & Carter, 2004). They have such a critical role that knowing the meaning of their individual words in a given context, without paying attention to the sequence in which they are used, would not be sufficient for EFL learners' perception in different registers.

According to Kjellmer (1994, 111-127), "There is no doubt that natural language has a certain block-like character. Words tend to occur in the same clusters again and again." Haswel (1991) also believes that the more writers in a second language want to mature in their writings, the more they should rely on collocations, and the less they use fixed expressions, the less they are considered to have the characteristics of apprentice writers. Thus, the reason why it is of great importance for L2 writers to use these formulaic sequences can be stated as follows:

The repeated nature of these "formulaic sequences," as defined by Schmitt & Carter (2004),

makes the students' task much easier, because the ready-made sets of words means they do not have to create each sentence word by word. Due to their frequent use, these clusters are the sign of fluent writing, and are thus an aid for the reader. These clusters are the lexico-grammatical base of a language, and so they are better revealed in corpus studies and in studies in which the aim is language-in-use (Coxhead & Byrd, 2007).

Multi-word sequences have been introduced and studied in many different rubrics (Biber & Barbieri, 2007) such as *conventionalized language form* (Yorio, 1980), *speech formula (*Pawley*,*1985), *ready-made expressions, multi-word* units (Cowie, 1999), and *fixed expressions (*Moon, 1992). The term "lexical bundles" was first given ,to these fixed expressions by Biber et al. (1999) in *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English.* The definition they offered for "lexical bundles" is "recurrent words that occur together (e.g. *the fact that*, *I don't think so, etc.)* regardless of their idiomaticity (i.e. the quality of being idiomatic), and regardless of their structural status. Lexical bundles are simply sequences of word forms that commonly go together in natural discourse " (p. 990). Regarding the structures and functions of them, lexical bundles have three main characteristics that distinguish them from other multi-word sequences. Firstly, lexical bundles frequently occur in different registers. Secondly, most lexical bundles are not idiomatic in nature and are not difficult to understand. . For example, the meanings of *at the end of* or *it is obvious that* are clear, and they are not idiomatic expressions. And finally, lexical bundles are not complete-unit expressions (Biber & Barbieri, 2007). According to Biber et al. (1999), only 15% of lexical bundles in conversation serve as complete phrases or clauses, and this number reduces to 5% in academic prose. In fact, lexical bundles are regarded as building blocks in written and spoken texts. They link two structural units: they begin at a clause or phrase structure, but the last words of the bundles can be the beginning element of the following structural unit (Biber & Barbieri, 2007).

The present study aims to investigate the structures and functions of lexical bundles in a written register such as newspaper. It seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the most frequent lexical bundles in Iranian journalist writings, and how are such lexical bundles classified functionally and structurally?

2. Are there any relationships between functional and structural categories of lexical bundles in newspaper text types?

Before setting out for the above task, a cursory look at the previously-conducted research studies on lexical bundles seems in order.

2. Lexical bundles: related review

English for Specific Purposes, English for Academic Purposes and Contrastive Analysis Linguistics are the main fields of study in which the findings of lexical bundle studies are employed. As regards the first two fields, lexical bundles are investigated in academic prose, either conversational or writing registers. Studies of this type include those conducted by Biber and Conrad (1999), who analyzed the use of lexical bundles in academic writing and conversation; Hewings and Hewings (2002), who compared the use of lexical bundles in the written production of published authors and university students; Cortes (2002, 2004), who identified four-word lexical bundles (called *target bundles)* used by published authors in history and biology and by students at three different levels in those disciplines; Biber, Conrad and Cortes (2004), who described the use of lexical bundles in two university instructional registers: classroom teaching and textbooks; Biber and Barbieri (2007), who investigated the use of lexical bundles in a wide range of spoken and written university registers, including both instructional registers and students advising/management registers (e.g., office hours, class management talk, written syllabi, etc.), and Hyland (2008), who explored the forms, functions and structures of lexical bundles in three disciplinary variation: research articles, doctoral dissertations, and master's theses. Regarding the use of lexical bundles in Contrastive Analysis field, one of the studies is the one conducted by Cortes (2002), which involved a

comparative analysis of lexical bundles in academic history writing in English and Spanish.

3. Methodology

3.1 Corpus of the study

The present study is based on an analysis of different parts of *Iran Daily* newspaper, including National, Domestic Economy, Middles East, World, Art & Culture, and Science. The texts used in this corpus were published in the period, February 1 to September 10 2009, issue 3331 to issue 3495. The newspaper was chosen as the source of corpus collection because it was online and accessible for downloading the necessary files. Six parts of the newspaper were selected because they contained more words than the other parts of the newspaper in each issue. Table 1 below shows the corpus used in this study:

Table 1: Corpus different sections of *Iran Daily* used in the analysis

Sections	No. of texts	No. of words
National	115	422,162
Domestic Economy	120	498,744
Middle East	15	29,932
World	110	270,358
Art & Culture	121	123,759
Science	105	241,644
Total	586	1,586,599

3.2 Bundles identifications

As Biber et al. (2004) state in their study on lexical bundles, frequency has the key role in the identification of bundles: "… frequency data identifies patterns that must be explained." (p. 376). Although the actual frequency cut-off selected by different researchers is arbitrary, in the present study, the cut-off point selected was 10 times in a million words, which is the same as that in Longman Corpus (1999). A text software (Antconc 3.2.1w) was employed to identify lexical bundles in the corpora of *Iran Daily* newspaper articles. It was used for the identification of all four-word bundles, their actual frequencies, and the number of texts within which they were used. When all the texts had been processed, the program was adjusted manually to identify all the bundles which occurred at least 10 times in more than 1,500,000 words and in five out of six of these selected texts. According to Biber et al. (1999), a word combination must recur at least 10 times per million words in a register and must be repeated in five or more texts to be qualified as lexical bundles. To limit the scope of this study, only four-word sequences were examined in the analysis, because five-word and six-word sequences are generally less common, and three-word bundles "can be considered as a kind of extended collocational association" (Biber et al, 1999, p. 994). In their corpus analysis, Biber et al (1999) divided lexical bundles into two groups: conversational and academic ones. In the present study, the same categories used in the academic prose in the Longman Corpus (1999) were employed, because journalistic discourse is more similar to academic prose than conversational register. To make the analysis easier, the structural groups of bundles were divided into five categories (NP, PP, VP, CF and Others).

4. Results and discussion

4.1 Structural types of lexical bundles

In Table 2 below, all the lexical bundles found in the corpus are categorized according to their structural correlates. As shown in Table 2, the bundles in the corpus, like academic prose, are structurally more phrasal.

Table 2: Lexical bundles in journalistic discourse classified according to their structural correlates

I. Lexical bundles incorporating noun phrase (NP)
1. Noun phrase with *of*-phrase fragment There are a large number of lexical bundles in the corpus consisting of a noun phrase followed by a post-modifying *of*-phrase. Here are the examples: **the head of the • the first half of, •the release of the, *the beginning of the, •other parts of the, •the anniversary of the, •that one of the,**the sidelines of the, •the course of the, *the result of the, •the president of the, •more than half of, *the future of the, •and one of the, •and the rest of, *a large number of, •the establishment of the , •one of the best, •the head of the, •the name of the, •a great deal of, ** one of the most, •a wide range of, •the middle of the, •one of the key, *a result of the, •one of the major, •the part of the , +Islamic Republic of Iran, **a member of the, *one of the world,**the rest of the, •one of the biggest,*the leader of the, * the results of the, *the start of the, , *the president of the, •parts of the world, + the end of the, •one of the main, •the size of the, •the history of the **2. Noun phrase with other post-modifier fragments** This group of lexical bundles, which are relatively few in number, was divided into the following two categories: ➢ **Noun phrase with post-nominal clause fragment**: •the fact that the, •the next five years, •and the fact that **Noun phrase with prepositional phrase fragment:** **the first time in, *relations between the two, •the first time since, •an interview with the, •an important role in, •the United States in, •a key role in, •a major role in, •a spokesman for the **3. Pronoun/noun phrase + be (+ …):** **This + be (+…):** •this is the first, *this is while the
II. Lexical bundles incorporating prepositional phrase (PP)
1. Prepositional phrase embedded with *of*-phrase fragment • on the eve of, *in one of the, *as one of the, •off the coast of, •at the start of, , •with the participation of, *in the number of, •in the process of, •at the beginning of, +by the end of, **on the sidelines of, **at the university of, •at the time of, **as a result of, **on the basis of, •on the part of , **as part of a, *in the history of, **in the city of, *on the condition of, , *in the field of, *in the form of, •in the course of, *with the aim of, •on the verge of, *with the help of, **at the end of, *as part of the, *in charge of the, *in the aftermath of, *in the face of , *the end of this, •in the absence

of, •on the occasion of

2. Other prepositional phrases (fragments)

•of President Barak Obama, *of the most important, +between the two countries, +in the Middle East, +for the first time, **in the near future, **in the Persian Gulf, **in the United States, *to the United States, *at the same time, *by the US and, •in the past two, •in the world and, •in the next few, •of the Middle East, •from around the world, •in the Muslim world, •between the two states, •for the first time, •over the next two, •in addition to the, •on the other hand, *according to a report, •at a press conference, •in more than a, **in an interview with, *in an effort to, •in the way that, +in the Middle East, ** in the Persian Gulf, *of the United States, ** in a bid to,

III. Lexical bundles incorporating verb phrase (VP)

1. Anticipatory *it* + verb phrase/adjective phrase

This group of bundles recurs not so frequently in the newspaper text types. There are two types of these bundles identified as follows:

- Anticipatory it + adjective phrase: *it is obvious that
- Anticipatory it + verb phrase (usually passive): *it is expected that, •it seems that the

2. Passive verb + prepositional phrase fragment

**was quoted as saying, *quoted him as saying, *quoted as saying by, •he was quoted as, **will be held in, •which was held in, •is made up of, +said in a statement, *took part in the

3. Copula be + noun phrase/ adjective phrase

As the title of this group of bundles indicates, the lexical bundles in this category begin with the copula 'be'. There are two main sub-categories located, which can be a noun phrase or an adjective phrase, depending on the subject predicative:

- **Copula be + noun phrase:** •be one of the, •is part of the, **is one of the, *was one of the, •would be the first, •will be the first
- **Copula be + adjective phrase:** *will be able to, •is the most important, •is in charge of

IV. Lexical bundles incorporating clause fragment (CF*)*

1. (Verb phrase +) that-clause fragment:

This category contains *that*-clause comprising the following two types:

- **Verb phrase + that-clause**: *he added that the
- **That-clause:** •that there is a

2. (Verb/adjective +) to-clause fragment: • **Predictive adjective + to-clause:** *will be able to, •is likely to be, • **(Passive) verb phrase + to-clause:** •is said to be, *is expected to be, **To-clause:** •to be able to,*to take part in, •to ensure that the, *to set up a, •to be one of, •to deal with the
V. Others
Other expressions: The following are lexical bundles in journalistic discourse that do not go under any of the other categories: •as well as in, *as soon as possible, *as well as a, **as well as the, •taking part in the, *take part in the, •will participate in the, •are participating in the, •and the fact that,*told a news conference, *he said in a, •has not yet been, •have so far been, •that some of the, *pave the way for, •all over the world, •the United States and, ** and the United States, •a joint news conference,

Key to symbols:(the number of times occurred in the corpus)

• = 10-19

*= 20-39

**= 40-99

+= Over 100

Figure 1 below shows the distribution of different structural types of lexical bundles in journalistic discourse:

Figure 1: Distribution of structural types of lexical bundles in journalistic discourse

4.2 Functional taxonomy of the lexical bundles in newspaper text type

In this section, the functions each lexical bundle performs in the newspaper corpus will be discussed. First, a brief overview of the functional performance of lexical bundles is presented. Then, the identified bundles will be classified according to the functions they performed in the context.

4.2.1 Referential expressions

Referential bundles generally refer to concrete or abstract entities or focus on some parts of the text itself (Biber & Barbieri, 2007). According to Biber et al. (2004) "Referential bundles generally identify an entity or single out some particular attributes of an entity as especially important" (p.371). There are four major sub-categories under referential category: identification/focus (to focus on the noun phrase following the bundles as important), imprecision indicators (either to indicate that a particular reference is not necessarily exact or to indicate that there are additional references which can be provided), bundles specifying attributes(which specifies some particular attributes of the following head noun) and time/place/text-deixis bundles (which refer to particular

time and place in the text) (Biber et al, 2004).

4.2.2 Discourse organizer bundles

These bundles establish relationships between the proceeding and the following discourse (Biber & Barberi, 2007). They are of two types: topic introduction/focus (to alert the audience that a new topic is going to be introduced) and topic elaboration/clarification bundles (which elaborate on the previously mentioned discourse) (Biber et al., 2004).

4.2.3 Stance bundles

Stance bundles express the attitude and the degree of certainty of the writers/speakers. There are two major subcategories: epistemic stance bundles (expressing certainty or uncertainty) and attitudinal/modality stance bundles (expressing the speakers'/writers' attitudes towards whatever comes in the following proposition).

Based on Biber et al.'s (2004) taxonomy, Table 3 below reveals the functional identification and classification of the bundles in the analyzed corpus. It is to be noted that one new subcategory was added below the "stance category," because it was not present in the category designed by Biber et al. (2004). It is attitudinal/instrumentality.

Table 3: Functional Classification of Lexical Bundles across Different Parts of Newspaper Text Types

Categories	Subcategories	Bundles
Referential bundles	Identification/focus	and one of the, one of the main, that one of the, be one of the, one of the biggest, one of the best, one of the key, one of the major, is one of the, of the most important, in one of the, are among the main, this is the first, would be the first, is the most important, will be the first, the president of the, of President Barak Obama, with the help of, a

		spokesman for the, a key role in, a major role in, other parts of the, take part in the, took part in the, taking part in the, with the participation of, will participate in the, are participating in the, the end of this, the first time in, for the first time
	Specifying attributes *Quantity specification (+)* *Tangible framing attributes (●)* *Intangible framing attributes (*)*	in the presence of*, the release of the*, in the absence of*, in the number of+, that some of the+, the part of the●, the size of the●, as a result of*, on the basis of*, and the rest of+, the large number of+, the rest of the+, a result of the*, on the form of●, the results of the*, in the number of+, other parts of the●, on the part of●, a great deal of+, a wide range of+, in the way that*, is in charge of*, the head of the●, is made up of+, the name of the●, the leader of the●, in charge of the*, an important role in+, in the field of●, a member of the+, as part of the+, more than half of+,
	Time(¤) *Place(*)* *Multi-functional reference(■)*	on the eve of¤, part of the world*, the anniversary of the¤, the course of the¤, the first half of■, in the Middle East*, off the cost of*, the history of the¤, on the occasion of¤, at the start of¤, in the Persian Gulf¤, in the course of*, the middle of the■, at the beginning of■, at the end of■, the end of the■, by the end of■, on the sidelines of*, at the university of*, the sidelines of the*, in the city of*, of the United States*, the beginning of the■, on the verge of¤, in the history of¤, the aftermath of the¤, the start of the¤, the end of this■, the future of the¤, between the two countries*, for the first time¤, by the end of■, in

		the near future¤, and the United States*, in the United States*, the Unites States and*, the first time in¤, the Middle East and*, to the United States,* the past two years¤, at the same time¤, by the US and*, in the world and*, the first time since¤, of the Middles East*, the United States in*, from around the world*, in the Muslim world*, between the two states*, for the first time¤, all over the world*, the next two years¤, at a press conference*, the United States in*, the next five years¤, a joint news conference*, has not yet been¤, have so far been¤, in the past two¤, in the next few¤, as soon as possible¤, in the next few¤, over the next two¤, in an interview with*, an interview with the*
Discourse organizers	Topic introduction	according to a report, said in a statement, told a news conference, he said in a, in the aftermath of
	Topic elaboration/clarification	as well as the, in addition to the, on the other hand, as well as a, as well as in, this is while the, he added that he, in the face of, which was held in, on the part of
Stance expressions	Attitudinal *Ability(+)* *Prediction(□)* *Intention(●)* *Instrumentality(*)* *Obligation(■)*	will be able to+, It is expected that□, to be able to+, with the aim of●, in an effort to+, to set up a●, is expected to be□, pave the way for*, to insure that the●, to deal with the*,

	Epistemic stance *Personal(¤)* *Impersonal(■)* in a bid to	is likely to be■, the fact that the■, and the fact that■, that there is a■, was quoted as saying¤, quoted him as saying¤, quoted as saying by¤, it seems that the■, he was quoted as¤,

*Note: Some lexical bundles may belong to more than one functional category.

As shown in Table 3 above, bundles in the analyzed journalistic texts mostly performed referential functions, mainly belonging to the subcategories of time and place markers, as shown in the following examples:

The film shows how traditional fishing has been replaced by smuggling of all kinds in a village in the Persian Gulf. The film focuses on the involvement of a teenage boy in this traffic and his fears. (Art & Culture, 16/June)

Japan's worst postwar recession appears to be easing, the Central Bank said on Friday as it upgraded its assessment of the world number two economy for the first time in almost three years. (Domestic Economy, 23/May)

The other type of referential bundles used in this corpus was those which specify particular attributes of the following noun phrase, either physical or concrete ones. The following examples indicate this:

No threat in the region is bigger for Israel leaders than regional governments becoming Iran's allies and partners on the basis of religious and historical commonalities. (Middle East, 6/May)

This spectrum includes a large number of elites, journalists and ordinary people. They have specific demands which they raise within the framework of a transparent literature. (World, 30/August)

Finally, identification/focus references are the last type of referential bundles found in the

corpus. For example:

Paulo Coelho <u>*is one of the*</u> *mostly read and influential authors of recent decades, whose books have sold over 100 million copies worldwide and have been translated into and published in dozens of languages.* (Art & Culture, 27/July)

Hydrogen can be extracted from water without contamination through electrolysis, and hydrogen is <u>*one of the best*</u> *sources of energy and most available fuels which can greatly reduce pollution, she said.* (Science, 12/April)

Discourse organizers covered different functions, including introducing a new topic, eliciting comparison and contrast, and finally framing bundles, all of which play the role of elaborating the preceding or coming discourse. The examples below show these bundles more indicatively:

<u>*According to a report*</u> *by the Asian Development Bank, the present reconstruction effort is two-pronged: first it focuses on rebuilding critical physical infrastructure and second, on building public modern sector institutions from the remnants of Soviet styles planning to ones that promotes market-led developments.* (Domestic Economy, 18/May)

Ghanavi explained that the patient's arterial blood enters the device via a tube; blood cells are then separated from the plasma and sent back into circulations. The plasma, <u>*on the other hand*</u>*, is guided into a glass globe, were toxins are separated.* (Science, 8/February)

Stance bundles were not so much used in the journalistic discourse. The identified bundles convey personal/impersonal attitudes to ability or prediction and also the writers' opinions about the events. Some examples include:

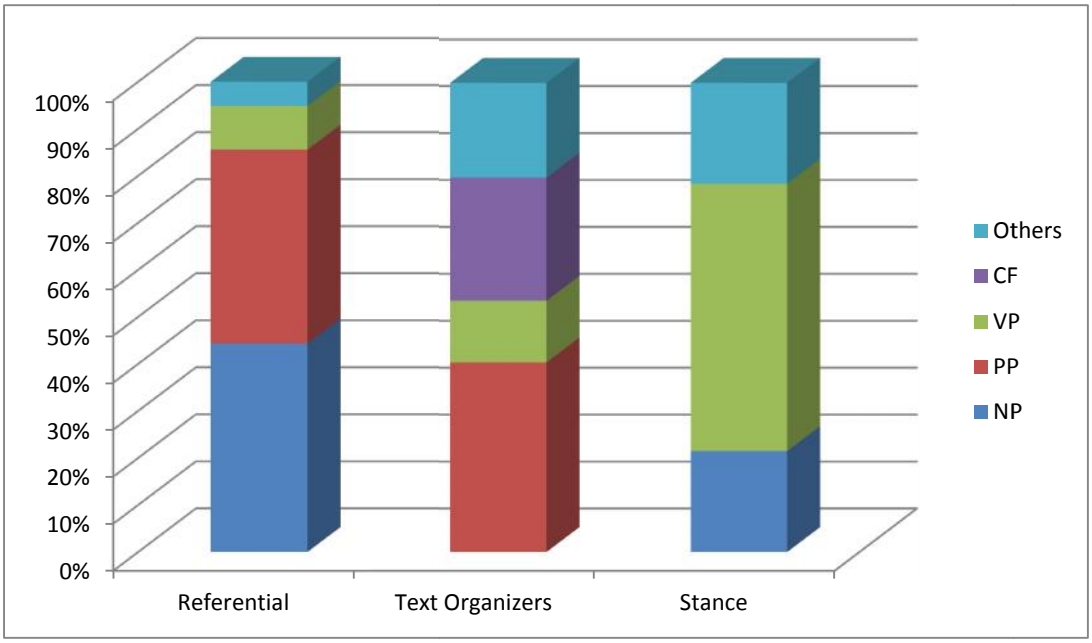
India's existing satellites get blinded at night and in the monsoon season but the one launched Monday will <u>*be able to work*</u> *in all light and weather conditions, Narasimhaiah added.* (World, 21/April)

Moreover, <u>it is expected that</u> in the legislative polls the Kurdistan democratic party and the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan which belongs to Iraqi president Jalal Talabani garner the majority of votes.(Middle East,27/July)

4.3 The relationship between functional and structural categories

Figure 2 below represents the distribution of structural types of bundles across the functional taxonomies. This figure reveals that there is a kind of relationship between the structural and functional categories. As can be seen, referential and text organizer bundles are composed entirely of phrasal bundles, being either noun phrase or prepositional phrase, while stance bundles mostly contain verbal fragments of bundles. As argued by Biber et al. (1999), those bundles which have the phrasal structure generally play the role of describing, identifying or making an abstract or concrete relationship to the following head nouns. Those bundles which contain verb fragments in their structures chiefly have the function to express the stance of writer or to mark logical and causative relations. Finally, the bundles which are under the category of clause fragment play the role of organizing the text and often occur as a complement fragment in the context.

Figure 2: The relationship between structural and functional categories



5. Concluding remarks and suggestions

Developing proficiency in a language requires the use of components of that language in an expert and mature manner. Using frequently fixed expressions is one of the main characteristics of professional, proficient writers. Lexical bundles, as one of the most influential elements in fixed expression clusters, are so recurrent that no one can deny their leading role in writing register.

The main objective of this study was to identify lexical bundles in Iranian journalistic discourse and to shed more light on the frequency of occurrence and distribution of functional and structural types of the identified lexical bundles and their relationships. This study aims to help second language learners who use journalistic discourse as a means of improving their language productions.

The analysis of lexical bundles in this study indicates that, like other studies on the lexical bundles in academic writings (e.g. Biber and Conrad, 1999; Hewings & Hewings, 2002) lexical bundles in newspapers have the same structural distribution. This shows that lexical bundles in journalistic discourse can be regarded the as the same as lexical bundles in academic writings.

As for the functional analysis, the findings show that journalists make use of referential

bundles more than the other two groups of bundles that are stance and text organizers. This is probably because journalistic discourse deals with reporting the events and incidents, which requires the use of place and time references more frequently.

Regarding the relationship between structural and functional categories, the findings reveal that for the most part, phrasal fragment bundles form referential bundles. As for text organizers, the results indicate that this group mainly consists of phrasal and clausal fragments. In the present study, more than half of the stance bundles are those bundles which have a verb fragment in their structures.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of written language discourse, specifically the role lexical bundles play in structuring the text. Further studies, however, can be done in this domain. As an instance, it will be more fruitful to identify the lexical bundles used by Iranian journalists who write in English and compare them with those used by English native speaker journalists. Besides, it will be useful to carry out a cross-linguistic research on Persian and English bundles to see if the use of them by writers of different linguistic and cultural backgrounds has been under the influence of translation.

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Learning Needs of Thai Civil Engineering Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to identify the learning needs of Thai civil engineering students who were preparing to attend an ESP course. Fifteen stakeholders who observed the teaching and learning process helped identify the needs of the students by participating in individual interviews. The participants included civil engineering lecturers, former civil engineering students of the course and ESP teachers. The learning needs were identified along the the following lines: Who were the learners? What would be their favoroable teaching and learning methods? What would make suitable teachers, instructional materials, study location and time of study? What would be their rationale for taking the ESP course? The interview findings reveal a variety of learner needs. The study highlights the usefulness of understanding the learners' needs before taking classes. The findings suggest that this is an effective way in which ESP lessons could be prepared, with the option of designing an ESP course based on learners' background knowledge of specialised content.

Such options are discussed in this paper for the benefit of ESP course design in the general Thai context.

Keywords: needs analysis, learning needs, engineering students, ESP, Thailand

1. Introduction

This study took into account the dissatisfaction expressed by Thai engineers and engineering students concerning their ability to use English. The essence of the dissatisfaction was that their English ability had never been satisfactory. Their ability had been repeatedly reported to be below average levels (Chaiyakosri, 2004; Wattanasakunpusakon, 1996). ESP courses are run to meet learners' specific needs (Dudley-Evans St John, 1998; Orr, 2002). Success or satisfactory results are always reported in the courses because they cater to learners' specific needs (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002; Garcia, 2002; Spector-Cohen, Kirschner, & Wexler, 2001). In the Thai context, studies on English for engineering focused mostly on problems and wants, not how an ESP course was successful in meeting students' needs (Bamrungpol, Panprem, Kaewpet, & Treenate, 2002). This suggests that the learners' real specific needs have not yet been seriously taken into consideration . In this situation, it was important to confirm that an ESP course, namely, Technical English 1, to be taught to a group to civil engineering students would adequately address the learners' specific needs.

The communicative events listed in the course description appeared to meet the learners' communication needs outside class. However, it was not certain what would be the most suitable process for guiding students to the required level in order to perform successfully during communicative events. By the end of the course, the students should be able to read articles, documents, periodicals and textbooks related to their fields of study; hold conversations in target disciplines; listen for gist, interpretation and summarization; write descriptions and reports, and give oral presentations on topics related to the profession (Faculty of Liberal Arts, Rajamangala Institute of Technology, 1996). As observed in several international publications, the communicative events appeared to be important to the learners' needs to communicate outside class.

According to Mudraya (2004), Thai students normally receive a list of English textbooks for self-study from their lecturers. Internationally, engineering students and engineers also communicate by engaging in professional conversations, listening to presentations and discussions, writing reports, and delivering oral presentations (Artemeva, 1998; Brinkman & Geest, 2003; Freeman, 2003; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004). The communicative events listed in the course description were deemed essential.

Establishing the most suitable route to elevate the learners to the target level required an analysis of their learning needs as recommended by Hutchinson & Waters (1987). This process is made more challenging because it cannot be assumed that all learners will achieve the same goal (Holliday, 1994), or that what is taught is the same as what students learn, or that students learn it when it is taught (Long, 2005a). These issues arise because learners are active and cognitive participants in the acquisition process (Long, 2005b). Furthermore, the learning situation itself involves several contextual, cognitive and humanistic variables. Contextually, "what works well in one situation may not work in another" (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998, p. 124). In the cognitive sense, learning takes place when "the matter to be learnt is meaningful to the learners" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, p. 46). From a humanistic perspective, "People think, but they also have feelings…the feelings that the learning process evokes will have a crucial bearing on the success or failure of the learning" (Hutchinson & Waters 1987, p. 46-47). In a broader context, Long (2005b) supports an investigation into learners' needs for particular groups of students because of numerous variables in learning situations. In the Thai context, a great deal remains to be discovered concerning the learners' needs.

Accordingly, this study set out to identify the learning needs of Thai civil engineering students who were going to attend the ESP course, Technical English 1, which was under investigation. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) provide an inclusive framework for analysing learning needs. These include looking at learners' demographic information, effective teaching and learning methods for the learners, teacher's knowledge of specialised content and their views on teaching

and learning ESP, availability of instructional materials, scheduled study location and time of study, and reasons for taking an ESP course. This framework helped shape the research questions of this study:

What were civil engineering students' learning needs as perceived by the stakeholders?

- Who were the learners?
- What would be suitable teaching and learning methods for them?
- What would make suitable teachers?
- What would make suitable instructional materials?
- What would make a suitable study location?
- What would make a suitable time of study?
- What would be the sound reasons for the learners to take the course?

2. Literature review

While identifying learning needs is an important issue for discussion in general in all areas of teaching, relatively few comprehensive frameworks exist for analysing them. Most studies focus only on particular aspects of learning needs. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) have provided the most inclusive scope of learning needs that should be investigated in the ESP field. However, the scope has not been elaborated. It comes in six groups of questions: Who are the learners? How do the learners learn? What resources (teachers, teaching aids/materials) are available? Where will the ESP course take place? Why are the learners taking the course? Adapted from Hutchinson & Waters, this paper will examine learning needs in relation to seven questions. The question on availability of resources is split to investigate teachers and teaching aids/materials separately, as they are considered to be two completely-different individuals. The seven groups of needs will be elaborated taking into account perspectives of many key writers in the field.

Who are the learners?

When talking about learners, the focus is on their socio-cultural background, learning background, age, gender, background knowledge of specialised content and of English, plus attitudes towards English, the culture of the English speaking world and studying English/ESP courses (Hutchinson & Waters 1987).

Richterich & Chancerel (1977) support the investigation into this group of learning needs. They insist on considering learners from the outset in the process of teaching and learning. Individual needs such as socio-cultural background, age, and gender are not often investigated as to how they have influenced teaching and learning English in engineering. Of the few, Kittidhaworn (2001) found that there were more numbers of female than male Thai students who thought that technical terms were important. The examination of students' background knowledge is suggested by Pritchard & Nasr (2004). They emphasise how activating learners' prior knowledge can help the learners to comprehend new ideas and information. Hutchinson & Waters (1987) suggest that learners' English ability should be built on their specialised knowledge, if any. Previous knowledge of English is an influential factor for learners' learning and deserves special consideration, especially when the learners enter universities with limited English knowledge (Pritchard & Nasr 2004, Wang & Liao 2008). Finally, learner attitudes and motivation are always significant factors that influence successful learning (Freeman, 2003). Friedman (1997) points out that instrumental motivation creates learners' positive attitudes towards foreign language study.

How do the learners learn?

When exploring how learners learn, the focus is on the teaching and learning styles to which the learners are accustomed as well as the factors that they find appealing or boring (Hutchinson & Waters 1987).

This group of learning needs is also crucial. It is necessary that teachers have full knowledge of learner's learning styles and preferred teaching and learning methods. Riazi &

Riasati (2007) and Xiao (2006) find that teachers are sometimes unaware of learners' preferred learning styles, and therefore teaching and learning are not successful. Further complicating the process, the styles of learners and teachers may not be compatible. For example, a teacher strives towards active participation from students, while the students remain attached to 'teacher talk' (Chia, Johnson, Chia, & Olive, 1999; McDonough & Chaikitmongkon, 2007). Clearly, these situations have to be dealt with appropriately.

Which teachers are available?

Teachers are relevant to learning needs in terms of their knowledge of specialised content and their views on teaching ESP courses to the students (Hutchinson & Waters 1987).

It is recommended that teachers should have adequate knowledge in order to help learners to learn successfully (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987). However, it is well-accepted that English teachers do not necessarily know as much as students regarding specialised content (Eggly, 2002; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004). In addition, teachers should be flexibe and creative in terms of curriculum delivery (Eggly, 2002), compassion (Eggly, 2002), confidence (Pritchard & Nasr, 2004), and care (Gordon, 2002).

Effective teaching and learning ESP for Thai teachers should probably involve the teachers' acknowledgement of the necessity of professional English, necessity to enhance learners' positive attitudes towards studying English and necessity to teach all four language skills in one course. The views are observable from some comments given in a study on English needs in the workplace by employers and engineers (Bamrungpol et al., 2002):

- English is 'must-know', not a 'should-know' thing. It impacts on both our profession and daily life.
- Personnel with good knowledge of English help enhance organisation's capacity.
- The feeling of 'love English' should be campaigned so that the students will want to learn.
- Enhance confidence in using English in students so that they do not fear making mistakes.

- All four skills should be trained and the training should reach a level that the students are able to really use the skills outside class.

What teaching aids/materials are available?

Teaching aids/materials are another important aspect of learning needs to be analysed by Hutchinson & Waters (1987).

Instructional materials can motivate or demotivate students. In most cases, authentic materials are suggested for use in ESP courses. 'Authentic' refers to materials that are produced for "purposes other than to teach language" (Nunan, 1985, p. 38). Grellet (1981) insists on the use of authentic materials because they encourage students to face the complexity of authentic texts with confidence (Pritchard & Nasr, 2004). Nunan (2004) recommends selecting materials that correspond to the learners' level, or carefully designing exercises to manage more difficult materials. Lightbown & Spada (1999) notice that although authentic materials might cause anxiety for students, a certain amount of tension can facilitate the learning process.

Where will the ESP course take place?

The location where learning takes place is another important factor to consider. Fisher (2001) finds that several structural factors such as natural and artificial lighting, colour, air quality, temperature, acoustics, school size and furniture influence learning outcomes and student behaviour. Conversely, other research indicates that school buildings or architectural factors are of secondary importance (Perez, Montano, & Perez, 2005). It was rather leadership available, teachers' relationships with students, appropriate use of existing spaces and effective pedagogies, which were essential factors in successful learning programmes (Idle, 2005; Knapp, Noschis, & Pasalar, 2007).

When will the ESP course take place?

In Hutchinson & Waters's (1987) framework, this group of needs includes the information about

when the ESP course will take place and how frequent it is (e.g., once a week).

Time of study which is a normal activity in designing a programme of study (Jordan, 1997) has not been researched in any depth. This might be because it is viewed as a common procedure carried out to meet individual situations. Among the few, Nunan (2003) points out that in order "[t]o achieve consistent and measurable improvements in the target language, learners need adequate exposure to it" (p. 608).

Why are the learners taking the course?

The reasons that learners take ESP courses include considerations about whether the courses are compulsory or elective, expectations about what the learners should achieve from attending the courses, and how the courses are perceived to be necessary for the learners (Hutchinson & Waters 1987).

This category of needs covers many influential factors for learning, and therefore should be investigated. The ESP courses are often compulsory, while in other cases they are not. Some students are forced to enrol in compulsory courses to pass the courses, while others enrol voluntarily , their motivation might be higher (Eggly, 2002). Similarly, when the course is perceived to be necessary or when specific needs are be identified, the learners' motivation as well as their achievement might be elevated, because the learners may feel the usefulness of the course.

3. Method

The research tools in this study involved selecting stakeholders, preparing questions for individual interviews, and collecting and analysing data.

3.1 Stakeholders

The stakeholders were selected using three principles, namely, gathering multiple perspectives, having a suitable number of 'outsiders' and 'insiders' (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998), and

selecting purposefully (Neuman, 2000). To increase the validity of this research, it was important to elicit the perspectives of all stakeholders involved. Jasso-Aguilar (2005) provides evidence that data from more than one source can be triangulated to produce credible results. Learner's needs are dependent on individual interpretations, perceptions and value judgments (Berwick, 1989; Brindley, 1989). In this study, fifteen stakeholders were interviewed to identify the students' learning needs. Five people were selected from each of these groups: civil engineering lecturers, former civil engineering students, and ESP teachers. The former students had already completed the course, but had to study other technical courses required by their programme of study. The stakeholders in this study were composed of lecturers 1-5, ESP teachers 1-5 and former students 1-5.

Ideally, both 'outsiders' and 'insiders' should be valued when analysing learner' needs (Hargreaves, 1989). Dudley-Evans & St John (1998) explain that outsiders can provide more objective information, whereas insiders can contribute subjective information better. In this study, insiders were those teaching or studying at the research site, while outsiders were those who were not. It was the teacher-researcher's intention that there should be more insiders than outsiders. This is because learning needs were most likely to be closely connected with the context where they existed (Holliday & Cooke, 1982; Long 2005b).

When stakeholders were selected, the qualitative research technique of purposeful sampling (Neuman, 2000) was employed. Purposeful sampling is used in qualitative studies when a unique and informative case is necessary (Lynch, 1996; Neuman, 2000). This technique was particularly useful for this study when selecting a suitable number of outsiders and insiders. In this study, information about the potential stakeholders was examined before invitations were given. The potential participants were required to have knowledge and experience related to the learning situation of Thai civil engineering students. Two of the five lecturers (classified as outsiders) came from other Thai universities. The other three lecturers (insiders) were active at the university where this research was conducted. Only one of the ESP teachers was classified as an outsider. The former students were all studying at the research site.

3.2 Individual interviews

Data on students' learning needs was collected by means of individual interviews. Individual interviews are the most direct way to access appropriate sources of data (Long, 2005a). Normally, data is collected with questionnaires, followed by individual interviews. However, three stakeholder candidates were reluctant to complete questionnaires. It was then decided that individual interviews alone would be used, as this method was likely to be more economical and effective.

Interview questions were written up adapting from the scheme of analysing learning needs of Hutchinson & Waters (1987). The questions were tested with stakeholder candidates from each of the three groups. The findings of the trials were used to improve clarity and preciseness of the questions (see Appendix).

3.3 Data collection and analysis

The data on the Thai civil engineering students' learning needs was collected and analysed qualitatively. Rich and insightful data, plus deep and thorough analysis (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002) were expected. The interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes. The interviews were audio taped and transcribed. The data was analysed following the recommendations of Macintyre (2000) and Lynch (1996). Specifically, the data was read through to identify themes, incidence patterns and trends in the variables and aspects of learning needs; irrelevant data were deleted. The findings were then interpreted and reported. When reporting, citations in Thai were transcribed and translated into English.

4. Findings

Several aspects of the learning needs of Thai civil engineering students were identified: Information about the learners, the stakeholders' perspectives on suitable teaching and learning methods, teachers, instructional materials, study locations, time of study and reasons for the

learners to study the course.

4.1 The learners

With the exception of some students who purposefully enrolled in civil engineering, most entered the field because their parents were in businesses. Some wanted to upgrade their qualifications after having worked for a couple of years as foremen.

The students may come from academic or technical fields. The students in academic fields graduated from upper secondary schools where they studied in mathematics-science programs. Those with a technical background already received a diploma in different areas, particularly construction. The students from academic fields need four years to complete their study, while the technical students' needed only three years. The students who were going to attend the course under investigation (Technical English 1) were from technical fields. This would be the only technical English course in which they were required to enrol.

Students from academic fields were between 17 and 19 years of age, while those from technical programs were between 20 and 23. The stakeholders estimated that eighty to ninety percent of civil engineering students were male. In the course under investigation, there were 35 to 40 students.

The background knowledge of specialised content of the students from technical fields was perceived by the stakeholders to be higher than the students enrolled in academic fields.

Many stakeholders held the perception that students from academic fields would have higher English ability than their peers in technical programmes. However, the students from both fields exhibited diverse levels of English ability, most of which were 'weak' (ESP teacher 5). It was reported at one university that there could be as many as ten different levels in one class (Former student 4). One cause of the students' weak ability in English was a tendency that they do not ' like learning English. According to one stakeholder, civil engineering students never gave much thought to English when they chose a programme to study (Former student 3).

It was reported that civil engineering students in general had positive attitudes towards English. The students and engineers wished to master English skills. Some participants offered the opinion that good opportunities came with English, and that English was a principal means of doing something difficult such as working abroad (Lecturer 1). However, all stakeholders were aware that English ability could not be improved without practice.

Two orientations were noticed with regard to how civil engineering students held a variety of views concerning the culture of the English speaking world, with the majority being interested. One former student did not consider it necessary to think highly of modern popular culture using English (Former student 3). By contrast, many stakeholders suggested that students in recent times realise the importance of learning about other cultures (e.g., Lecturer 1). One source pointed out that multi-media Internet sources had created the realisation (ESP teacher 4).

The civil engineering students' attitudes towards the English course varied widely. Many stakeholders believed that 80% of civil engineering students disliked studying English (e.g., Lecturer 1). Others believed that civil engineering students gave more importance to technical courses than to English courses (Former student 4). Conversely, one student explicitly said that he liked what he studied (Former student 1). For the former students who had had work experience, English had become important (Former student 4). A balanced view was shown that feelings about studying English was the responsibility of both English teachers and learners (Former student 5).

All stakeholders agreed that socio-cultural background, age and gender had no influence on studying the ESP course, while English ability, background knowledge and attitudes were found to have an effect. It was perceived that learners from academic fields had higher ability in English than those from technical programs (Lecturer 3), and this factor was likely to influence their ability to learn English. The influence of background knowledge of specialised content in studying English was raised by some stakeholders who believed that ESP courses should be specifically designed for particular fields (ESP teacher 4). Attitudes were also identified as factors that influenced learners' concentration on English lessons (Lecturer 4).

4.2 Suitable teaching and learning methods

Most ESP teachers pointed out that students were exposed to a teacher-centred approach where they were passive learners. Some stakeholders believed that students were satisfied with this style (e.g., ESP teacher 1), contrary to the opinion expressed by Former student 4, who asserted that students preferred exercises requiringinteraction. Several recommendations were given for appropriate teaching and learning methods, plus suggestions on which ones should be avoided. Appropriate teaching and learning methods were suggested as follows:

- Making agreements on teaching and learning in the first class; unclear????
- Designing lessons that echo real situations;
- Setting writing assignments in which students can write about their daily routines;
- Devoting one hour a week to homework;
- Setting self-study assignments in the library;
- Providing out of class activities such as study trips to international companies.

Ineffective teaching and learning methods were identified as:

- Teaching by reading textbooks, which is boring
- Focusing on exercises that require memorization
- Introducing too much content and too many unknown words
- Using long academic texts requiring extended concentration
- Engaging in one type of exercise throughout a lesson
- Correcting mistakes on scripts of speaking assignments

4.3 Suitable teachers

The stakeholders provided a wide array of opinions regarding the relative importance of teachers having knowledge of specialised content and suitable views on teaching and learning the ESP course.

On the one hand, it was considered that specialised knowledge was unnecessary when civil engineering students were mixed with students from other disciplines (ESP teacher 3); and that it was a teaching technique that helped the teacher to teach successfully (ESP teacher 1). Those who thought that knowledge of specialised content was necessary gave a range of reasons concerning how specific teachers' knowledge needed to be. At one end of the spectrum, it was recommended that teachers should at least possess knowledge of technical terms and a general scope of work in civil engineering (ESP teacher 4). For general engineering, it was recommended that content be drawn from any field when it was assigned by the lecturers in the students'' technical course (ESP teacher 4). Concerning knowledge of science and technology, it was believed that ESP teachers should teach at this level (ESP teacher 3). While others recommended that the ESL course be comprised of 70% English for science and technology and 30% English for civil engineering (ESP teacher 5). At the other end of the spectrum, it was suggested that business English should include either engineering or civil content. . It was explained that civil engineers already knew a suitable quantity of technical terms, but they lacked the English skills to formulate the terms into accurate sentences (Former student 1).

The stakeholders recommended several useful views on teaching and learning that could help the teachers of the Technical English 1 course. The first three recommendations were clearly connected with principles of needs analysis as recommended in the literature. It was suggested that teachers include only what students would really use (ESP teacher 3), learners' needs be analysed regularly (ESP teacher 4), and the teaching and learning context be taken into account (ESP teacher 1, Former student 4). Further recommendations were specifically related to the principles of teaching and learning. The principles are elaborated as follows:

Lack of parallelism

- Using materials that are accessible to the students, but maintain standards;
- Designing a course with a mixture of fun-oriented and academic activities;
- Encouraging communication in class;
- Encouraging students' participation;
- Assessing the students' ability only on what they have studied
- Giving tests shortly after teaching
- Using English as the medium of instruction

The fifth recommendation was particularly emphasised by Lecturer 4 who wanted students' attitudes to be set aside among other priorities. Other stakeholders recommended the following ways to maintain positive atmosphere and good relationships between teachers and students:

- Being sensitive to students' potentially disadvantaged academic ability
- Being sensitive to other constraints on the students
- Checking the students' understanding of the lessons with simple questions
- Translating English into Thai occasionally when English is used as a medium of instruction; Making mistakes is tolerable

4.4 Suitable instructional materials

It was recommended that instructional materials be composed of pictures and sound, employ contemporary technology and be authentic. Since the students liked seeing movies, video clips might be helpful (Lecturer 1). Technology was identified as being more motivating than written materials. If technology was not available, some form of pictures could make a suitable alternative (Former student 4). Using authentic materials such as documentaries from Discovery Channel or PBS were suggested (Lecturer 1). When the focus was on the availability of teaching materials, the ESP teachers commented that the budget provided for this purpose was inadequate and that materials and equipment were insufficient. However, it was argued that the main issue was teachers' effective use of materials, rather than availability of materials.

4.5 Suitable study location

Two concerns emerged regarding the location where the course should take place. The first issue was travelling distance. The room should be in a location that is convenient for students (Former student 2). The second issue was concerned with amenities in classrooms and focused on air-conditioning. While some stakeholders thought that the room should be air-conditioned to deal with the heat of Bangkok, some thought that air-conditioning would cause drowsiness (Former student 5).

4.6 Suitable time of study

There was diversity in the stakeholders' opinions concerning the most suitable academic year to study the course. Some stakeholders thought the course should be conducted during the students' first year with a focus on work-related English (e.g. ESP teacher 2). Others suggested that the students could make use of what they studied from the English course, such as reading textbooks, for other technical courses (e.g. Lecturer 1).

For considerations about the most suitable semester to study the course, one group of stakeholders thought the course should be run during a regular semester. The other group recommended the summer session when the course length was half of a regular semester, but weekly lessons were doubled. Paradoxically, the same reasons were given to support both of these options. While some suggested that the longer duration of a regular semester was claimed to be suitable for practising English, others argued that the regular semester should be dedicated to participating in technical courses (Former students 3 and 4).

Three formats of weekly time allocation were recommended. The first format was once a week for a three-hour lesson. The second format was two lessons, each being one and a half hours long. The third format was three lessons of one hour. Ironically, the same reason was given to support each of the three patterns. Each claimed that the allotted class time had already reached the

students' maximum limit of concentration (Former student 2).

As the course under investigation could be scheduled during either morning or afternoon sessions, the same reason was given for defending both options: The best time should be reserved for the most important course. On the one hand, quality time should be for professional courses; on the other, the best time should be for a general education course such as English (Lecturer 2). The stakeholders believed that the students concentrated on the lessons better in the mornings than in the afternoons (e.g., ESP teacher 4).

4.7 Suitable reasons for study

The stakeholders offered divergent views that supported offering the course both as an elective and as a compulsory subject. The main reason cited for making the course an elective was that students should have freedom to choose to study as they desired (Lecturer 1). A majority of the stakeholders supported the claim that the course should be compulsory because it was perceived to be necessary.

All of the stakeholders agreed that the course was necessary for the following reasons: First, students should study more than one English/ESP courses (Lecturer 2). Second, some students were attending special English classes outside the university (Former student 4). Third, extensive reading would give the students access to more professional knowledge (ESP teacher 3). Fourth, the course was useful for work with international companies that deal only with people and high technology. Such companies recruit Thai labour, although engineers who could mediate between management and labour were required (Lecturer 2). Finally, limited English speaking ability, especially for discussing everyday tasks and duties, was likely to hinder effective work performance. Thai civil engineering students or engineers might be considered fools if they could not effectively communicate in English, even if they performed their jobs well (Former student 4).

The stakeholders offered four different expectations of what students should achieve in the course. Student and teacher stakeholders agreed that the students should receive training on what they would really use (ESP teacher 4). The second expectation was for adding something positive

to the students' ability, i.e., they should know, do or communicate more effectively in English. This included gaining more confidence and experiencing a sense of improvement (Former student 1; Lecturer 5). The third expectation came mostly from the students, and was concerned with what should take place in the classes. The students expected to understand the lessons, pass the tests and acquire a variety of English skills (e.g., Former student 2). Meanwhile, most ESP teachers recommended that the students have the opportunity to learn all of the four skills, even though the course might focus on one or two (e.g., ESP teachers 1 and 3). However, they did not suggest any particular language skill. The same reason was given to support training in all of the skills. That is, it would take much time and much practice to become good at a proposed skill (ESP teachers 1 and 4; Lecturers 1 and 2).

5. Discussion of findings

The findings revealed a variety of perceptions of learners' needs. They highlighted the importance of conducting a learning needs analysis prior to a course and indicated an effective way to prepare ESP courses for Thai civil engineering students.

As there were a variety of learners' needs perceived by the stakeholders in their context, the needs can only be selective in an ESP course. Only some of needs can be met most of the time, because there may not be any options. These needs are related to normal conduct in a particular context. At the research site, needs were already met, even if they had not been identified by the stakeholders. For example, the course arranged communicative events that the civil engineering students would probably use outside of classes; The course would be taught in the freshman year during a regular semester; it would contain a three-hour weekly lesson; and it was compulsory. It might be also worthwhile, however, considering other ways to meet the needs, as other needs were also present and a different conduct has not yet been tested.

The findings have confirmed the significance of identifying the learners' needs before teaching and learning (Richterich & Chancerel, 1977). In situations such as at the research site, the

learners' English ability can be built on specialised content because the students had already acquired some of the knowledge. However, it is important to teach the language required to perform target communicative events. The students were not likely to have established sufficient background in English, as reported by the stakeholders. The ESP course could be designed differently in academic situations. The learners would not come to the course with knowledge of specialised content, but probably better English ability.

Students' attitudes are worth considering here. . It may be appropriate to say that Thai students do not hate the English language, but many of them dislike studying it. The negative attitudes might be a consequence of ineffective English teaching or because full acquisition of English could not be expected. Students learn better when their intellectual ability is not blocked by emotional states (Freeman, 2003; Krashen, 1985). Consequently, it is necessary to attend to their attitudes seriously while the courses are underway.

Three issues deserve attention regarding teaching and learning. Even though it is not necessary to use a particular approach in ESP instruction (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), it would be useful to have a set of sound principles for preparing lessons (Nation, 2000; Richards, 2001). For example, lessons should aim at incorporating students' existing knowledge and developing ability until the communicative goal of the lesson has been satisfactorily achieved (Dudley-Evans & St John, 1998; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987; Nunan, 2004; and Richards, 2001). Secondly, differences in perceived learners' roles should be dealt with before classes. Differences in learners' roles could result in ineffective lesson planning. At the research site, the learners would first be assigned passive roles, because that was more familiar. Later, they would take more active roles, as preferred by some former students. Thirdly, in situations where students have tight schedules and cannot commit themselves to English homework, carrying assessments at the end of each lesson could be effective. Finally, the stakeholders also suggested that using simple, slow and clear English as a medium of instruction should be popular.

For teachers, it may not be necessary for them to have highly specialised knowledge in

some contexts. ESP courses are organised differently at Thai universities. As the findings suggested, in some places, the teachers only need knowledge of specialised content at a 'science and technology' level. This is because the ESP courses were offered to a broad range of students. At the research site, however, teachers would be required to have adequate specialised knowledge in civil engineering in order to teach the students effectively.

Both authentic and created instructional materials could be used. Authentic materials should be employed, especially those comprising pictures and sound. Materials of appropriate difficulty should be selected to motivate the students to learn, as recommended by the stakeholders and in the literature (Grellet, 1981; Nunan, 2004; Prichard & Nasr, 2004). Commercial materials might not be appropriate, because they are not designed for use in a specific context. New instructional materials should be designed when existing ones no longer sufficiently meet learners' needs (Block, 1991).

When possible, the course should take place in a well-equipped location with the fewest distractions possible. When desired conditions are not available, lessons should be planned in a way that functions well within their contexts, as recommended in the literature (Idle, 2005; Knapp et al., 2007) and the stakeholders.

When the timetable is scheduled in terms of the year or semester of study, weekly time allocation and time of day, the lessons clearly have to be adapted to the situation. Teaching and learning are more important variables than timetabling in determining the success or failure of the course.

Attempts should be made for students to engage in communicative events as specified in course descriptions. Even though it is natural that not all students reach the same aims at the same levels (Holliday, 1994; Lightbown & Spada, 1999; Hutchinson & Waters, 1987), all of them should accomplish something and have a sense of achievement as a result of attending the classes, as advised by the stakeholders. Attempts should also be made to design a course that is truly a necessity for the students. The necessity of an ESP course might be conceived differently from the present study. Therefore, an analysis of needs should be conducted for other contexts and integrated

into the respective course. Moreover, it would be beneficial to add more ESP courses to all engineering programmes. Engineering students need more professional English exposure, which is generally scarce outside class.

6. Conclusion

The knowledge gained in this study could be of direct use for civil engineering students studying at the research site. The number of civil engineering students was the largest at the research site (Faculty of Engineering, Rajamangala University of Technology Krungthep, 2007). The findings could also be useful for the majority of Thai civil engineers. The percentage of registered engineers in this branch was the largest in the record of the Council of Engineering of Thailand (Council of Engineers, 2007). This study could also point out the way to additional research (Liyanage & Birch, 2001), which might improve the quality of ESP instruction. Demand for English use in engineering has increased dramatically around the world. In the Thai context, increasing quantities of job positions require effective English ability (Meinhardt Thailand Co. Ltd.; Wisit Engineering Consultants Co., Ltd.). It is crucial that ESP courses be run as effectively as possible to address learners' needs to communicate.

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Appendix

Figure 1 Interview Questions

Who are the learners?

1. Could you tell me a little bit about civil engineering students' socio-cultural background and learning background (at this university)? How old are they? Are most of them male or female? Are these factors likely to have influence on the process of teaching and learning English?
2. What specialised knowledge in civil engineering did the students already have before enrolling in the English/ESP course/s?
3. What did the students already know about English?
4. Generally, what are the students' attitudes towards English, the cultures of the English speaking world and towards studying English/ESP?

How do the learners learn?

1. What is the teaching and learning style that students are accustomed to?
2. What teaching and learning methods are appropriate, or ineffective, for them?

What kind of teacher is suitable?

3. In order to teach an English/ESP course to civil engineering students, do you think an English/ESP teacher needs specialised knowledge? If yes, what type of knowledge?
4. In order to teach the course to students successfully, how should a teacher view teaching English/ESP to the students?

What type of teaching and learning materials is suitable for this group of students?

Where should the English/ESP course take place? What should the surroundings of the course be like?

When should the English/ESP course take place?

1. In what semester and year of study should the course be taught?
2. How should the weekly time allocation of the course be organised?
3. At what time of the day should the course be taught?

Why are the students taking the course?

1. What should they achieve from the course?
2. Should the course be a compulsory or an elective subject?
3. How necessary, or unnecessary, is an 'English' course for civil engineering students?

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Looking Beyond Comparative Descriptions of Subject Behaviours: A Pedagogically Motivated Qualitative Study of Research Results in Applied Linguistics and Education

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Biodata

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Abstract

Guiding novice research paper writers to present findings may form an essential component in an ESP course at the tertiary level. To enlighten second language learners on the possible types of findings generally presented in the Results section of research papers, the researcher analysed seven

categories of results in journal articles on applied linguistics and education. By means of a genre-based approach recommended by Swales (1990; 2004) and employed by Brett (1994), various categories of findings were analysed with reference to both rhetorical functions and prominent linguistic resources. The results have shown that text segments related to findings may exhibit distinctly different linguistic characteristics that need to be highlighted in exercises aimed at helping learners distinguish categories of findings. This investigation is of considerable pedagogical significance, in that the close link between experienced writers' communicative intentions and their linguistic choices can be effectively demonstrated to help learners present findings in the two academic fields.

Keywords: English for research purposes, genre analysis, discourse analysis, second language acquisition, educational linguistics, educational and applied linguistics research.

1. Introduction

Findings presented in research reports or journal papers often constitute a very interesting and enlightening facet of the research genre. While expert writers may be familiar with the requirements of the journals in which they intend to get their articles published, novice writers, particularly those at the undergraduate level in tertiary institutions, may encounter numerous problems in regard to the presentation of research results. Teaching second language (L2) learners how to present results, therefore, requires thorough explanations of the features of the Results section, especially the organisational patterning and linguistic resources used to accomplish various communicative functions. With regard to such patterning, past studies (e.g., Brett, 1994; Yang and Allison, 2003, 2004; Lim, 2005) appear to have provided a wide range of findings about the ways in which the Results section is generally structured.

2. Literature review

The organisational pattern of the Results section of research papers has been discussed by Weissberg and Buker (1990), who presented a four-element structure for the Results section, consisting of 'research procedures', 'location of results', 'the most important findings', and 'comments on the findings'. In contrast, Brett (1994) presented a more detailed generic structure comprising (i) metatextual categories (consisting of pointers to tables and figures), (ii) presentation categories (which mainly deal with research procedures, restatements of hypotheses, and statements of findings), and (iii) comment categories (focusing on explanations of results, evaluation and comparison of findings in past and present research, summarising findings, and implications of the study).

Brett's (1994) structure has been accepted, adopted, or modified by subsequent researchers (e.g., Williams, 1999; Yang and Allison, 2003; Lim, 2005), who studied the Results sections in medical science, applied linguistics, and business management. Nonetheless, these studies appear to focus largely on organisational patterning or overall schematic structures of the different Results sections of research articles, while linguistic mechanisms (used to accomplish the communicative functions) are only mentioned in passing. Such an emphasis on discourse patterning has also raised concerns over the extent to which teachers can effectively use findings obtained from genre-based studies to help L2 learners achieve the linguistic competence required to comprehend and write segments in the Results section (Lim, 2007). More precisely, if teachers of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) are concerned about equipping L2 learners with the basic skills required to write different text segments of the Results section, in-depth studies need to be conducted to find out how different communicative functions are fulfilled linguistically.

With respect to the needs mentioned above, past research appears to offer some clues on the linguistic characteristics of the research genre in general. While Salager-Meyer (1992) investigated the distribution of verb tense and modality in medical abstracts, Thomas and Hawes (1994) focused on the use of reporting verbs in medical journal articles. Subsequently, Salager-Meyer (1994) and

Hyland (1996) also studied hedging as a linguistic device used in scientific research articles. More specifically, Swales (1990) discussed in great detail the linguistic choices of the Introduction section of a research article in terms of its schematic structure. On the whole, even though some researchers (e.g., Nwogu, 1997) focused on the general linguistic features of the entire research article, relatively scant attention was directed to the wide range of important linguistic choices that can possibly be employed to meet the specific communicative functions of the Results section. Nwogu (1997), in particular, highlighted the use of preparatory expressions (e.g., 'at the beginning of the study'), passive and present tense forms to refer to visuals (or tables/figures), past tense verbs used to report results, and hedging devices employed to explain some medical observations.

Likewise, Lim (2007) has discussed the linguistic features of certain segments in the results of educational and linguistic research articles. Nevertheless, the investigation focused merely on the presentation of findings related to subjects' behaviours. The term 'subjects' behaviours' in this paper refers to the actions, activities, achievements or performance of the people involved and studied in a research project. These people (i.e. subjects) may include teachers, learners, staff, members of the public, readers, listeners, speakers, and/or listeners who have provided data needed by the researcher/s in a project. This study builds on these two earlier studies in order to investigate categories of findings which are not directly related to comparative descriptions of subject behaviours (hereafter non-CDSB findings).

Research Questions

Given the gap in foregoing research, this study focuses on the possible rhetorical and linguistic mechanisms used to write these important text segments in the Results section of research papers in two academic fields: applied linguistics and education. Two related research questions have been formulated as follows:

Research Question 1: Apart from the steps used in comparative descriptions of subject behaviours, what are the rhetorical steps used in presenting findings in applied linguistics and educational research papers?

Research Question 2: What linguistic mechanisms are generally used in applied linguistics and educational research papers to accomplish the communicative functions in presenting findings that are not directly associated with comparative descriptions of subject behaviours?

Given the gap in past research and the pedagogical significance of conducting a study in the suggested area, this paper explores how different categories of findings are presented and realized linguistically in education and applied linguistics. The current study may be of great pedagogical significance for two reasons. First, a wide range of studies in applied linguistics and education involve no comparative descriptions of subjects' behaviours. Second, even research reports primarily based on information elicited from human subjects may also incorporate text segments containing findings which are not comparative descriptions of subject behaviours. This means that ESP instructors and researchers need to know how these rhetorical functions are fulfilled linguistically, if they intend to enlighten L2 learners on ways of presenting the non-CDSB findings.

The rationale for focusing on the research articles in these two fields is that research reports written in important language-related disciplines such as the teaching of English as a second language (TESL) and English Language Studies (ELS) are often published in journals on applied linguistics and education (Lim, 2009). It is therefore essential for both ESP instructors and second language novice writers to familiarize themselves with the requirements and expectations of the two research communities. This pedagogically motivated study is intended to help learners (i) recognize and differentiate divergent categories of findings while teaching learners to comprehend research results and (ii) internalize or use a richer repertoire of linguistic resources to present a range of results, especially those which are beyond (or not directly related to) CDSB in applied

linguistics and educational research reports. Relevant teaching materials can then be prepared to introduce learners to different language resources which can be effectively employed to present the aforementioned categories of findings.

3. Research methods

The research methods employed in this comparative study of research results are described in terms of (i) the procedures used to select research articles (hereafter RAs) in the two academic disciplines and (ii) the procedures employed to study the rhetorical steps and lexico-grammatical choices in the research articles.

3.1 Data collection procedure

In this investigation, attention is focused on how writers in the fields of education and applied linguistics present a range of non-CDSB findings. This study investigates the rhetorical steps that are not directly related to the aforementioned comparative descriptions; however, in some cases, these steps have been incorporated in papers based on studies involving human subjects as the main sources of data. A total of 20 Results sections were selected from four journals pertaining to applied linguistics and education. The first ten research articles (i.e., RAs 1 through 10) were chosen from two high-status linguistics journals, which are *TESOL Quarterly* and *English for Specific Purposes*, while the remaining ten papers (RAs 11 through 20) were taken from two other reputed educational journals, namely *Educational Research* and *Educational Psychology*. This means that five articles were obtained from each of the four international refereed journals. The sample was large enough for a detailed analysis of rhetorical steps and linguistic resources, given that the purpose of the present qualitative study was on highlighting the relationships between rhetorical functions and linguistic features of non-CDSB findings rather than a statistical count of individual linguistic

features.

The research papers were chosen by the guiding principle that each article should include all the four major sections, namely Introduction, Method/s, Results and Discussion. The inclusion of the Method/s section in an article is an important sampling restriction in this study, because this study focuses on how researchers present findings using data collection and analysis procedures which have been described in the preceding Method/s section. Hence, articles that do not contain one of the four sections, especially the Method section, were not included in the corpora. In addition, attempts were made to avoid biases in the sampling procedure and to ensure that sufficient data exhibiting a wide range of linguistic choices could be incorporated in the sample for analysis. The texts were systematically selected in a purposive manner to ensure that the sample contained linguistic resources used by educational and applied linguistics researchers. No more than one article was selected from each issue, and likewise, no more than two articles in the same subject area in each of the two disciplines were selected.

3.2 Procedures for analysing rhetorical steps and lexico-grammatical choices

Using the corpora collected, the researcher studied the Results sections in terms of subsections, paragraphs, moves and steps. Attempts were made to distinguish the various rhetorical moves in the papers using procedures of genre analysis recommended by Swales (1990; 2004) and explained by Bhatia (1993). The rhetorical analysis involved a focus on the semantic content of non-CDSB text segments and the linguistic features characterising them. Some of these text segments, particularly 'time-related change/s', 'relationships between variables', and 'substantiation of findings' were identified as major rhetorical categories in several past studies on the Results sections of sociological research reports (Brett, 1994), biomedical RAs (Williams, 1999), and business management papers (Lim, 2005).

In an attempt to study how experienced writers present the non-CDSB findings, the researcher focused on segments of the Results sections that were associated with the presentation of findings. Subsequently, those findings which were not directly related to the aforementioned comparative descriptions of subjects were analysed in detail. This methodological procedure was essential, in that a wide range of text segments in the two fields can be considered as 'major findings' even though they are not directly connected with any comparative descriptions of human subjects' behaviours. In this study, each Results section was divided into smaller units with reference to (i) linguistic clues used in texts to begin moves/steps and to indicate internal boundaries (Nwogu, 1997), (ii) distinct markers such as headings and subheadings (Yang and Allison, 2003), and (iii) typographical features (Mauranen, 1993; Connor, Davis and Rycker, 1995; Connor and Mauranen, 1999). More precisely, the aforementioned categories of findings which are presented in matrix clauses are given the focus in the current analysis. (Due to spatial constraint, this paper does not discuss the embedment of findings in other rhetorical moves, such as pointers (text segments that indicate locations of results) and explanations of findings.] As the objective of this paper is to find out how different categories of non-CDSB findings are presented linguistically in applied linguistics and educational papers, constituent steps related to such findings will be explained and compared in terms of their distribution in the corpora. After the communicative functions had been identified, a linguistic analysis was conducted by studying the lexical usage and syntactic structures used repeatedly in the sample. The analysis of the salient linguistic features was conducted with reference to the descriptions of English usage presented by Greenbaum and Quirk (1992), Lim (2006; 2008; 2009), Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985), and Thomas and Hawes (1994).

4. Results and discussion

The analysis has shown that writers may present non-CDSB findings by (i) indicating relationships

between variables, (ii) describing time-related changes, (iii) exemplifying findings, (iv) describing categories, (v) indicating unexpected changes, (vi) substantiating findings, and (vii) summarizing findings. The distribution of these rhetorical steps is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Distribution of rhetorical steps that present non-CDSB findings in the linguistic and educational research papers

	Article No.	Step 1 Indicating relation-ships between variables:	Step 2: Descri-bing time-related changes	Step 3: Exempli-fying findings	Step 4: Describing categories	Step 5: Indicating unexpected changes	Step 6: Substan-tiating findings	Step 7: Summari-zing findings
Linguistic	***RA 1***	-	-	+	-	-	+	-
Research	***RA 2***	+	-	+	+	-	-	-
Articles	***RA 3***	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
	RA 4	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
	RA 5	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
	RA 6	+	-	+	+	-	+	+
	RA 7	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
	RA 8	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
	RA 9	+	-	+	+	-	-	+
	RA 10	-	-	+	+	-	-	-
No. of Papers		***5***	***1***	***8***	***6***	***0***	***2***	***3***
Educational	***RA 11***	-	+	+	-	-	-	-
Research	***RA 12***	-	+	-	-	-	-	-
Articles	***RA 13***	+	-	-	-	-	-	-
	RA 14	+	-	+	-	+	+	-
	RA 15	-	-	+	+	+	+	+
	RA 16	+	+	-	+	-	-	+
	RA 17	+		-	+	-	-	-
	RA 18	+	+	-	+	-	+	-
	RA 19	+	-	-	-	-	-	+
	RA 20	+	-	-	+	-	-	-
No. of Papers		***7***	***4***	***3***	***5***	***2***	***3***	***3***

Table 1 shows that the steps that occur in most of the RAs are 'indicating relationships between variables' (60%), 'exemplifying findings' (55%), and 'describing categories' (55%) while 'indicating unexpected changes occurred in 10% of the research papers. In order to illustrate how each of the rhetorical steps is realized semantically and lexico-grammatically, a more detailed analysis is presented in the ensuing section.

Step 1: Indicating relationships between variables

Indication of relationships between variables is an important step that appears to be linked with other strategies for presenting findings. In some descriptions of groups or individuals, for example, descriptions of relationships between variables seem to form part of the findings being presented. Such descriptions of relationships are often associated with other presentational steps. The following instances illustrate that in a description of some individuals in qualitative studies, certain factors or variables may occasionally (but not always) become part of the findings as shown below:

(1) However, performance **factors**, perhaps related to anxiety about the situation or to the complexity of the series of events they were trying to relate, especially in contrast to their ability in English, appear to **have resulted in** retellings that received lower ratings. (RA 2: 319)

(2) Results also showed that…there was still a **significant correlation between** the learner's inferential success (obtained by adding up the success scores and the learner gained for each unknown word in the 3-point scale system) **and** the percentage of the remaining unknown words in the surrounding context…The **correlation coefficient** is negative because success was correlated with the density of unknown words, thus indicating that **the higher the proportion** of unknown words in the surrounding context, **the lower the likelihood** of success. (RA 3: 653)

(3) L1 knowledge had the lowest mean of success (14.3%) and **was least associated with** successful inferences. Statistical comparison of the means of knowledge sources and a two-way chi-square test on the frequency of these knowledge sources and the degree of their success revealed **no statistically significant differences** in the **contribution** of different knowledge sources…(RA 4: 658)

(4) This indicates that whereas some of the knowledge sources **contributed** more **to** successful inferencing than others, success **did not depend** much **on** what kind of knowledge sources was used. (RA 4: 658-659)

(5) Another point concerns the **relationship** of success **with** the number versus the kind of strategies used. (RA 4: 660)
(6) These findings suggest that success in inferencing **may not be related** as much **to** the quantity as to the quality of the strategies used… (RA 4: 660)
(7) Comics use had no **significant effect on** the performance of these participants as a group … However, comic strips did **interact significantly with** participants proficiency level (F1, 105) = 8.16, p = .005. The **interaction** suggests that comics use had a **differential effect on** the two groups… (RA 5: 235)
(8) It may be interesting therefore to speculate that there is some sort of **relationship** between political history, broader culture, and classroom conduct. (RA 6: 66)
(9) Successful **performance** on the business genres also **required** a range of other **skills** such as the ability to summarize information, the ability to support decisions with evidence…Finally, **success** on task completion **was contingent upon** students' understanding of the assignment provided on an assignment, which could be quite length and complex. (RA 9: 129)
(10) In addition, four applications, music, graphics, games and CD-ROM, showed **significant interactions between** gender and age… (RA 13: 161)
(11) However, the results certainly do not seem to support the view that these young people are **less likely** to **identify** mathematics in activities they associate **with** females. Similarly, there is no evidence that interviewees' perceptions of the maths involved in an activity **are linked to** the age of people they associate with that activity, nor with a combination of age and gender (for example, older women and knitting). (RA 14: 256)
(12) It can be seen that both the surface approach, the strategic approach, the strategic approach, and NFC **correlate significantly with** achievement (P < 0.01). None of the other variables measuring style or motivation **correlate significantly with** the measure of achievement. (RA 17: 201)
(13) A similar **association** was seen **between** the amount of class discussion and the two variables of social support … (RA 18: 266)
(14) In a stepwise regression procedure for the same variables in the same order, type of text **predicted** 16% of the variance (R^2 = 0.16, F = 26.4, P < 0.0001), and all the other variables together **explained** only an additional 5%...(RA 19: 355)
(15) Attitude scores were found to **correlate positively with** years of teaching experience (r = 0.34, P , 0.01). (RA 20: 296)

The instances given above show that the most distinctive features of 'indicating relationships between variables' are (i) transitive verbs denoting correlations (e.g., 'affect', predicted', 'explained', 'contributed', etc.) and (ii) phrasal verbs or adjective-preposition combinations indicating presence/absence of linkage (e.g., 'have resulted in', 'was least associated with', 'contributed to', 'did not depend on', 'may not be related to', 'interact with', 'contingent upon',

‘identify with’, ‘are linked with’, ‘correlate significantly with’, ‘correlate positively with’, etc.). More obviously, noun-preposition combinations denoting relationships and inter-dependence (e.g., ‘relationship with’, ‘effect on’, ‘impact on’, etc.) and nouns stating causes, effects and inter-connections (e.g., ‘factors’, ‘effects’, ‘correlation’, ‘contribution’, ‘influences’, ‘interactions’, ‘associations’, etc.) are frequently used to indicate relationships between dependent and independent variables.

Step 2: Describing time-related changes

The presentation of findings may come in the form of changes pertaining to the temporal dimension as a variable. Such changes normally occur because (i) certain dependent and independent variables are related in some ways, (ii) several dependent variables are inter-related, or (iii) the researchers have introduced an intervening variable such as some planned instruction or a course that took a certain period of time. This is a principal step which may or may not be linked with other steps. If time itself is regarded as a variable, this step is related to the preceding step 1 (i.e., ‘indicating relationships between variables’) explained above. Likewise, if changes and development in relation to time are mentioned, this step is associated with a presentational step associated with subjects’ behaviours (i.e., ‘describing an individual behaviour’) which has been reported in a previous study (Lim, 2007). The explanations below focus on time-related changes which do not mainly involve other steps under the central move (i.e., ‘presenting findings’).

Sub-step 2.1: Indicating changes in stages

Changes in variables with respect to time can be indicated by a spectrum of linguistic resources, particularly those intended to demonstrate the developmental stages, as shown below:

(16) The results from the researcher's diary recorded at each phase of the programme indicated that **in phase 1** the majority of learners **expressed discontent** about having too many responsibilities in the course, **questioned the relevance** of applying Internet-based information searches to translation tasks. **In phase 2** the majority **expressed difficulties** in selecting effective Internet-based keyword searches … (RA 11: 150)

(17) Overall improvement in group means **over the 21 months** **from pretest to posttest 3** (see Table 1) showed a **gain** of 2 years 5 months in reading age (RA) for Experimental Group 2... (RA 16: 31)

(18) The control group **started** **at a higher level** than both experimental groups, and their mean performance **increased** briefly **from pretest to posttest 1** at a rate greater than CA. **Thereafter**, **progress** in relation to CA **declined** such that **by posttest 3** performance was 1% below baseline level… (RA 16: 33)

(19) The largest mean improvement in rate of **progress** when adjusted for age **from pretest to posttest 1** was shown by Experimental Group 2. **Thereafter**, rate of **progress** **levelled out** showing a **decline** of 1% **at posttest 2** which was maintained… (RA 16: 33)

(20) Discussions between teachers and students also occurred quite often, but significantly more often **at the seventh** than **at the eighth or ninth grades**. (RA 18: 265)

Writers of educational research papers often use *time-relationship adjuncts* (e.g., 'in phase 2', 'by posttest 3', 'at posttest 2', 'thereafter', etc.) and *duration adjuncts* (e.g., 'over the 21 months' 'from pretest to posttest 3', 'at the eighth or ninth grades', etc.) to signal different stages in the process of data collection, and present findings obtained through interviews, observations, or questionnaires. What deserves attention is that in the second and third examples given above, both changes over a period of time and the differences between groups (by referring to group means) are discussed as findings. This shows that steps which are directly related to comparative descriptions of subjects' behaviours [i.e., 'describing groups' as reported in a previous study (Lim, 2005)] and step 3 (i.e., 'describing time-related changes') can be embedded in one another. As periodical changes are discussed, it is not surprising that verbs indicating time-related variations (i.e., 'increased',

‘declined’, ‘levelled out’, etc.) and nouns denoting quantitative or qualitative changes (i.e., ‘gain’, ‘decline’, ‘progress’, etc.) constitute a prominent feature of this rhetorical step.

Sub-step 2.2.: Indicating changes after an intervention

This intervention may have caused an increase or decrease in some dependent variables, such as scores in performance reported in applied linguistics and educational research papers. Alternatively, some dependent variables may remain constant after the introduction of the intervening variable. Instances of this step are presented as follows:

(21) Although there was no significant **difference** in the **pre- and post-scores**, the **impact** of strategy and self-regulation **instruction on** students’ planning and revising of their essays can be more clearly seen in the **improvement** in the quality of their essays. (RA 7: 277)

(22) The results show that there was **not much change** in how students felt about writing **before and after instruction**… (RA 7: 282)

(23) The results in Table 16 show that students **sought help more after instruction** (all 29 students). (RA 7: 286)

(24) In the **pre-course questionnaire** approximately 8 per cent of the students said they **had not been encouraged** to assess their progress in terms of subject knowledge, while in the **post-course questionnaire** approximately 94 percent of the students said they **had been motivated** to assess their progress (RA 11: 147)

Even though the focus now is on the changes before and after an intervention and should be considered as time-related changes, the researchers are somehow seeking to find out the relationships (if any) between the intervening variable (e.g., instruction or course) and the dependent variables (e.g., ‘test scores’). On the whole, as the presentation of this type of time-related relationships between variables involves very different linguistic features associated with both time and variations, it has been regarded as a separate rhetorical step under the presentational move.

Step 3: Exemplifying findings

'Exemplifying findings' is another free rhetorical step which may appear at any parts of the Results section. Examples may be given by citing (i) some texts in corpus-based linguistics research, or (ii) excerpts in the form of spoken or written statements obtained from interviews, questionnaires, or think-aloud verbal protocols in both applied linguistics and educational research. The following examples illustrate how cited texts or excerpts become prominent parts of 'exemplifying findings':

(25) The first time **I** drove EL Paso to San Diego, **I** **saw** a sign that read Watch for Falling Rocks. And though **I** **watched** and waited for rocks to roll down the steep cliff walls and attack my car and me, **I** never **saw** any falling rocks. Today one of the things **I**'m most **afraid** of are the rocks we throw at each other. (RA 1: 55)

(26) In the "dominant" phase of colonialism, European colonisers exercise direct control of the colonized, **destroy** the native legal and cultural systems, and **negate** non-European civilizations in order to ruthlessly **exploit** the resources of the subjugated with the excuse of attempting to "civilize" them. (RA 1: 58)

(27) Only after the final, 'cause **I** **really like** what we talked about, communism and all that stuff. It helps **me** understand what all they've gone through over there. (RA 6: 63)

(28) His own comments are revealing:
Lluis: The book (Dangerous Liaisons], is much better than the movie. **I** haven't read it, but **I** put it on the list…(RA 6: 63)

(29) **I** expect the panel committee will read my thesis, but also scholars and academic researchers **would** also **be** interested. (AL PhD interview) (RA 10: 310)

(30) **I** **would like** to take this opportunity to express **my** immense gratitude to all those persons who have given their invaluable support and assistance. (RA 10: 313)

(31) I **noted** that throughout the year I received the support and encouragement of all. I had a gut feeling that the entire system was ready to go out of its way for me…. I feel **wonderful**; the teachers are **warm** and **supportive** all the time.' (RA 12: 36)

These comments often include emotionally charged statements which understandably comprise (i) verbs pertaining to observation (e.g., 'saw', 'watched', 'noted', etc.), (ii) emotive lexemes (e.g., 'like', 'afraid', 'warm', 'supportive', etc.), and (iii) other lexemes connoting the writers' strong

emotions (e.g., 'destroy', 'negative', 'exploit', etc.), particularly if the subjects' experiences form an essential component of the findings. By citing such emotive statements, the writers of linguistics articles are able to illustrate the attitude of the subjects towards a language. Citations of original statements given by subjects, interviewees, speakers, or writers of the discourse often include statements filled with first-person pronouns (e.g., 'I', 'my', 'we', etc.) and verbs in the present conditional tense (e.g., 'would be', 'would like', etc.). Descriptions of physical and emotional experiences generally constitute an essential part of the exemplifications of findings related to an individual's behaviours.

The examples given above include only (i) texts or speeches produced by human subjects who provided answers in interviews and questionnaires and (ii) excerpts from some corpus-based investigations into the communicative patterns of texts produced by speakers or writers narrating and describing personal experience or views. Other corpus-based linguistics research papers that report findings on texts that are more formal and less personal in nature, however, include a wide range of cited texts exhibiting different linguistic features.

In the discussion that follows, we will focus on exemplifications of findings which are not in the form of cited texts because (i) the linguistic features of such texts may vary from one genre to another and (ii) a detailed account of such an analysis can be found in the research papers published. Hence, it is important to discuss exemplifications which are not parts of the cited texts and find out the most salient characteristics of such exemplifications. 'Exemplifying findings' may be used to provide an example of an individual's behaviour in some qualitative studies involving several subjects or about 20 subjects (as reported in RAs 4, 6, and 7) and some corpus-based research (as reported in RA 9):

(32) **For example**, **many of these learners** mistakenly related *permeated* to *meat*, *waver* to *wave*, and *affluence* to *influence*. (RA 4: 653)
(33) **For example**, **Zoraida and Teresa, immigrant US Students**, followed the simple information processing approach of copying and repeating the information in their classes, both in Spanish and English…(RA 6: 56)
(34) **For example**, in unit 1, **students** had to write an argumentative essay using the brainstorming strategy to argue for better environment by IEM... (RA 7: 275)
(35) **For example**, **one professor** wrote in a syllabus of an undergraduate marketing class that the case analysis assignment "simulates real-world problems you will confront as a marketing professional" …(RA 9: 123)
(36) **For example**, **business reports and proposals** often required students to integrate and synthesize quantitative and/or qualitative information from primary and secondary sources… (RA 9: 128)
(37) **For example**, **process and description** were particularly useful for design projects…(RA 9: 129)

The examples above illustrate that in linguistics research papers, the subject of a sentence in step 3 often refers to (i) learners, students, and teachers, or (ii) speakers or writers who produce some discourse in corpus-based research, (iii) texts under certain genres which have been analysed, and (iv) rhetorical modes or patterns used in the genres. These subjects provide an overview of the groups, individuals, or objects for which examples are generally given in the presentation of findings.

As shown in the instances taken from RAs 2 and 6, an exemplification may also be used to furnish an instance of behaviour shown by a group in a qualitative study involving not more than 20 subjects. In these cases, when a group's behaviours are described, an individual's behaviour is cited as an example of the behaviour shown by a part of the group. This is the point where we can see a transition from a description of a group behaviour to that of an individual. In such a shift, an exemplification of findings becomes the point of transition. While the aforementioned examples illustrate how exemplifications may begin with *appositional conjuncts* (e.g., 'for example', etc.), which is noticeably the most salient feature of 'exemplifying findings', this step also exhibits some

other variations in sentence beginnings as shown below:

(38) **Following is an example** of how Lupita mentally translated into Spanish after reading the English text: The first time I drove …(RA 1: 46)
(39) Here we describe **two of these cases**… In the first case, Kiwon's initial story, about the death of a young student when she had been a teacher, seemed to bring up so much emotion … (RA 2: 318)
(40) Two **examples** from MICASE that **illustrate** this function are *out of whack* and *threw her for a loop*. **Example 1**, while providing an evaluation, is also an **instance** of what McCrathy refers to as the "observation plus comment function" … (RA 3: 427)
(41) The following **excerpt** from the protocol of one of the students who was attempting to infer the meaning of the word *permeated* **illustrates** the **typical** problem with such words. (RA 4: 654)
(42) In contrast, the majority (nine) of the **14 examples** of this type in *Discorp* **include** *max* **as in**: All having said, *it may be concluded* that the role SMEs play in both the social and economic development of Third World countries should be given prominence… (dis 12) (RA 8: 375)
(43) **Some examples** of responses coded in all three of these categories are **as follows** (with evidence supporting the categorizations in italics)… (RA 15: 171)

On the whole, step 3 is characterised by the use of nouns pertaining to exemplification (e.g., 'example', 'cases', 'instance', 'excerpt', etc.). The instances above illustrate that when *appositional conjuncts* are not used, cited parts obtained from a questionnaire, an observation, or interview are usually mentioned and occasionally preceded by a statement regarding the frequency of the type of instances.

Step 4: Describing categories

'Describing categories' should be considered a separate rhetorical step in research papers in applied linguistics. Despite the fact that categories are often described in relation to the descriptions of groups in many applied linguistics and educational studies using subject responses as sources of data, the descriptions mainly focus on the differences within a group or between groups in terms of the frequencies of the use of various categories. They are therefore not descriptions of categories as far as the main communicative function is concerned. Some of these studies (involving subjects' responses and comparisons of corpora), however, may involve a detailed description of categories

as the focus, and should therefore be viewed as a description of categories in step 4. For instance, when two corpora are compared (as reported in RA 8), they actually represent two different groups of writers (e.g., student writers versus established writers), and hence the descriptions are indirectly connected with comparative descriptions of subject behaviours as reported by Lim (2007). Nevertheless, when merely one corpus is involved in a corpus-based study (as reported in RA 3), no groups of speakers (or writers) are specified and compared in the study, the focus is thus on the functions and frequencies of the categories, and not on the differences within any subgroup or group of writers. This explains why such text segments should be considered as those related to the descriptions of categories in step 4, instead of comparative descriptions of (sub-)groups of writers or speakers.

Sub-step 4.1: Describing a category

The writers of research articles in applied linguistics and education usually describe a category by stating the characteristics of a category, with which they can then classify the category in a hierarchical structure. The so-called 'category' in applied linguistics may refer to (i) a genre of texts, (ii) a rhetorical mode or pattern identified in some genres, (iii) a set of documents collected by the researchers concerned, (iv) a type of tasks or assignments given to language learners, (v) a corpus that has been collected, (vi) a specific linguistic category which is prominent in a text segment, or (vii) a rhetorical category which has been identified in spoken or written discourse. One of the ways of describing a category is to subdivide a category into smaller categories or subcategories as shown in the following examples:

(44) As reflected in the table, **writing assignments** in business courses **encompassed** **genres** that research (e.g., Horowits, 1986) has shown to be employed across academic disciplines, **such as** the article/book report/critique, the reflection paper, and the library research paper, and **genres** that are more specifically connected to the business discipline, **namely** business **genres** such as case analysis, business report, business proposal, design report, and business letter and memo…(RA 9: 118)

(45) Nine types of **assignments** **emerged** through repeated **examination** of syllabi/handouts, with seven **categories** each **containing** at least ten assignments. Assignments that did not fall under any of the nine **categories** were placed into the "Miscellaneous" **category**… (RA 9: 118)

(46) Another business **genre**, which was required mostly of undergraduate accounting students, **was comprised of** two specific **types**: the letter and memo…Assignments involving these **types** of writing **represented** **inter- and intra-organization** business correspondence concerning business issues and practice…(RA 9: 122)

(47) **Steps** within the thanking **move** **comprised** 90% of all the acts in the corpus and generally followed the **sequence** given in Fig. 1, although there is a considerable **recursion** of steps, particularly of those acknowledging academic and moral support. (RA 10: 309)

(48) These are **dissertations** which tend to be **considerably longer** than those in other disciplines … (RA 10: 320)

(49) This **step** is **typically short** and **rarely more than a sentence** in length. (RA 10: 313)

As sub-categorisation or classification is involved, descriptions involving classifications and hierarchical structures naturally constitute part of the step. This explains why nouns denoting types or categories (e.g., 'genres', 'types', etc.) and structural organisations (e.g., 'inter- and intra-organisation', 'sequence', recursion', etc.) often become a salient linguistic characteristic of this sub-step in step 4. Occasionally, a description of structure/s may necessitate a statement concerning the lengths of text segments in some applied linguistics research papers. Hence, adjective phrases describing lengths (e.g., 'considerably longer', 'relatively short', 'rarely more than a sentence', etc.) are employed to give additional structural information. It is evident that *compositional verbs* (e.g., 'encompassed', 'containing' 'was comprised of'', 'represented', 'comprised', etc.) and *appositional linkers* (e.g., 'namely', 'such as', etc.) are often used in this step in order to show how a category (e.g., 'assignments') can be divided into subcategories (e.g., assignments in different genres as shown in the example given above).

Another way of describing a category is understandably to state the characteristics that may come in the form of functions, purposes, and specific features of the category.

(50) We also found idioms used **for description**, a **function** that **often** overlaps with that of evaluation, representing an instance of cross-**function**ing, discussed above. Evaluative uses are **often** also **descriptive** … but description does not always entail evaluation. (RA 3: 428)

(51) Another **function** closely related to description is that of providing a paraphrase or gloss of the discourse content. This **function** is particularly **well suited** to academic spoken discourse, given its heavy use of explication. (RA 3: 429)

(52) Speakers also use idioms **to emphasize** content or reinforce an explanation, two **functions** that complement the **goals** of academic discourse particularly well. In such cases, there is a tendency for the speaker **to repeat** the idiom, often with truncation or creative variations. (RA 3: 431)

(53) Idioms can also be used **to create** collaborative discourse and **establish** a sense of solidarity within a group of speakers… (RA 3: 431)

(54) **Differences** are, however, more apparent in **category 1b**. The majority of these **hedges can be placed into** one of three **groups**: those which include *appears* or *seems* (e.g., *it appears*), those which include a modal verb (e.g., *it can be argued*), and those in which hedging is marked through another verb (e.g., *it is argued*, *it is contended*). (RA 8: 374)

(55) In *Discorp*, the predominant **use** of this pattern in this category is **to present** the implications for business practitioners of what students have observed in their dissertation projects. (RA 8: 379)

(56) Second, a major **function** of the business genres was **to socialize** students into the business world. An important **purpose** of the business genres was **to prepare** students for real-world tasks by allowing students opportunities to develop and sharpen skills needed for functioning in the real business world… (RA 9: 123)

(57) This represented the empirical research assignment in which students were asked **to present** the research topic and questions, **review** related research literature… (RA 9: 119)

(58) **Problem-solution** was a rhetorical **mode** often used in the business **genres**, as students were expected **to identify** the problem or strategies/plans **to meet** the need or achieve the goals. (RA 9: 128)

(59) The **purpose** of acknowledgements is **to allocate** credit to institutions and individuals who have contributed to the dissertation in some way. To achieve this **purpose**, student acknowledgements have a three tier structure consisting of a main thanking move framed by optional Reflecting and Announcing moves. (RA 10: 308)

The first four instances given above show that when functions are described as the characteristic of a category of idioms in applied linguistics research papers reporting corpus-based findings,

transitive infinitive verb phrases (e.g., 'to emphasize', 'to repeat', 'to create', 'to present', 'to socialize', 'to prepare', 'to identify', 'to meet', 'to allocate', etc.) are frequently used to state the communicative functions of the category. More distinctly, nouns denoting purpose (e.g., 'function', 'goals', 'use' and 'purpose' as shown in examples 2, 6 and 7 above) are generally employed in describing a category in corpus-based applied linguistics research papers.

The purpose of using a particular category of assignments or tasks can also be accomplished by using a subject-verb (S-V) structure as shown below:

(60) **This type of assignment** **centred around** a single source of reading, namely an article or a book…**The tasks** **entailed** not only summarizing the contents of the reading but also analyzing the source material… (RA 9: 119)

(61) **This type of assignment** **focused on** a topic or issue and **asked** students **to address** the topic or issue through synthesizing information from multiple sources of reading…(RA 9: 119)

(62) **A few assignments** also **required** students to write a user's manual and provide a budget and a schedule. (RA 9: 122)

(63) **This step** **addresses** the dependence of dissertation writers on the cooperation or direct assistance of those they study or who provide material support. (RA 10: 317)

In the S-V structure, the subject (e.g., 'this type of assignment', 'the tasks', 'this type of assignment', etc.) refers to the category of assignments or tasks in applied linguistics research while the verb or prepositional verb (e.g., 'centred around', 'entailed', 'focused on', 'asked', 'required', etc.) is used in a sentence predicate to describe the type of the tasks or assignments.

In applied linguistics research papers, a category may refer to (i) a set of operations that learners are involved in the process reading or writing (as reported in RA 6), or (ii) a set of assignments given to learners (as reported in RA 9).

(64) We **found** that the NOM sessions that were followed by improved retellings **were** often **characterized** by several of these interactional moves on the part of the teacher. (RA 2: 313)

(65) Our analysis in terms of **operations** showed that the flows of information were often **complex** and did not necessarily run from exposure to display directly, a basic ordering that might be assumed. (RA 6: 55)

How these operations worked in reading and writing and how these assignments were done can then be described by reference to some related phenomena which have been observed by the researchers/writers of the papers.

Sub-step 4.2 Comparing categories

Categories may be compared with reference to specific characteristics that differentiate a category from another, as shown in the examples below:

(66) On first blush, **higher quality** NOM sessions to **better** retellings, as in Isabel's case, and **lower quality** sessions to **unimprove**d retellings, as in Sin-Young's case. (RA 2: 318)

(67) Expressed in terms of either instances… **neither** the **humanities** nor the **hard sciences** show striking **differences**, and similarly, idiom frequencies were **only slightly higher** in the **monologic** than in the **interactive** speech events. (RA 3: 425)

It is noticeable that the salient feature of this step is the use of comparative adjective phrases modifying categories being compared (e.g., 'higher quality', 'better', 'lower quality', 'unimproved', 'only slightly higher', etc.). As categories are compared, it is understandable that adjective phrases are often used to distinguish one category from another. These pairs of adjective phrases (e.g., 'monologic' and 'interactive', 'higher quality' and 'lower quality', etc.) are often antithetic in terms of semantic functions.

An alternative way of describing a category is to present findings pertaining to the frequencies of the categories concerned. This may also include the distribution of (i) categories across a corpus in applied linguistics or (ii) different factors or causes of some behaviours and types of teaching methods in educational research.

(68) In all, we **found** **238 idiom types** (unique idioms), with **562 tokens** in the corpus, that met our criteria…of these , 123, or **over half of** all types, **occurred** **only once**, and only 23, or **10%**, **occurred** **more than four times** in the corpus. (RA 3: 425)

(69) As further evidence that idioms are **distributed** **across** **a range** of academic events, even after a not quite exhaustive search, as described above, we **found** that 11 transcripts of a variety of speech events **contained** 10 or more idioms. These speech events **included** in these transcripts were as **diverse** as an organic chemistry study group… (RA 3: 426)

(70) Case analysis was the **category** with **most assignments** (79), **followed by** article/book report (56), and business report (30). This pattern was observed at **both** the **undergraduate** and **graduate** levels. (RA 9: 118-119)

(71) The **most widely represented** of the **seven dimensions** were 'Citizenship and stewardship' and 'Interdependence' (both **a little more than three-quarters** of the sample), **followed closely by** Sustainable change' (**nearly two-thirds** of respondents). (RA 15: 175)

(72) Teacher instruction and working independently were **the most commonly applied** **teaching methods** at all grade levels. (RA 18: 265)

(73) Comparison of standardised regression coefficients (linear regression model, no interaction terms included) showed that verbal activity was the **factor** **of highest relative importance** in relation to stress, whereas group work and class discussions were **the most important factors** for support from the teacher…(RA 18: 269)

As shown above, the linguistic categories, assignment categories, or dimensions may be compared with others in the same sample or corpus by referring to their frequencies of occurrence. The examples indicate that *findings verb* (e.g., 'found', 'identified', etc.) are used to introduce the frequencies of categories. It is therefore not surprising that *stative compositional verbs* (e.g., 'included', 'contained', etc.) often collocate with (i) lexemes connoting variety (e.g., 'range', diverse', 'distributed', etc.), (ii) adjective phrases indicating frequencies and proportions (e.g., 'over half of', etc.), and (iii) adverb phrases of frequency (e.g., 'only once', 'more than four times', etc.). In the comparisons of categories, verb-preposition combinations indicating sequence (e.g., 'followed by', 'followed closely by', etc.) and superlative adverb phrases (e.g., 'most commonly applied', etc.) appear prominent in showing the relative frequencies of the categories in a descending order.

Step 5: Indicating unexpected findings

Unexpected findings may fall under any of the categories of findings explained above. What is different is that these findings are reported to be striking or surprising.

(74) It **<u>might have been expected</u>** that having identified a particular type of mathematics in one activity, an interviewee **<u>would</u>** then **<u>see</u>** if this was relevant to any of the other activities. **<u>However</u>**, even when a similar skill is involved in two activities, participants frequently named it as a use of mathematics in one context but not the other. (RA 14: 255)

(75) **<u>However</u>**, the **<u>most striking</u>** and perhaps **<u>surprising</u>** feature of Table 2 is the almost complete omission of any mention of 'Diversity'. We **<u>had anticipated</u>** spontaneous expression of a need to preserve biodiversity, in particular, from the science students, given the wide media attention (and presumably academic attention) accorded in recent years to the decline in many biological species worldwide … (RA 15: 177)

Such unexpected findings are rare and have been identified only in the educational research papers. What merits attention is that the writers often contrast what had been expected before the research with the actual findings obtained in their research. This explains why adjective phrases indicating astonishment (e.g., 'most striking', 'surprising', etc.), *antithetic conjuncts* (e.g., 'however') and verbs indicating anticipation in the perfective tenses (e.g., 'might have been expected', 'had anticipated', etc.) are often employed to highlight stark differences between a presumed situation and the actual results.

Step 6: Substantiating findings

Findings concerning some of the major types of findings may be supported by an additional set of results. The writers may quote another set of findings to substantiate some findings presented about a group of subjects, individual subject, relationships between variables, or some time-related changes. Like step 3 (i.e., 'exemplifying findings'), this is another free-occurring presentational step that may occur anywhere after a presentation of major findings in the Results section. The

following examples show how different subsets of results are compared:

(76) Edith's view of mental translation as a resource **was confirmed** in the think-aloud task… (RA 1: 51)
(77) Her complaints **were echoed by** Pilar, who said that the practiques gave her "the impression that you don't study…I don't know, it's probably the way yo study, but I don't know how to." (RA 6: 62)
(78) The **tendency** for geographers to recognize this dimension more readily **corresponds with** the **greater prevalence** of the 'Social' category in the **earlier analysis** identifying features of sustainable development… (RA 15: 176)
(79) These findings **corresponded** well **to** changes (or lack of changes) observed in the regression coefficients from an unadjusted model to a model with mutual adjustment… (RA 18: 269)

In this step, one subset of results presented at a particular position in the Results section is often compared with another subset of results in order to provide support for the findings reported earlier. The instances given illustrate that a very prominent signal of substantiation of results is the use of phrasal verbs indicating congruence (e.g., 'were echoed by', 'corresponds with', 'corresponded to', etc.).

Step 7: Summarising findings

It has to be acknowledged that 'summarising findings' may appear at the end of the Results section to enable readers to recapitulate the main ideas and aspects that have been discussed. Nevertheless, it can also be used as a rhetorical device in the middle or initial parts of the Results section so as to provide readers with an overview of a set of important results to be presented subsequently. The following examples illustrate the prominent linguistic features of 'summarising findings' in both applied linguistics and educational research papers:

(80) **In sum**, we found **a common pattern** of successful informational interactions **across** the three institutions, vultures, courses, and languages we examined. Academic achievement **could** be understood **in all sites** **in all courses** as the result of thought-out, sophisticated uses of the same four information operations … (RA 6: 59)

(81) **In sum**, **although** cultural differences did not **affect** the structure of academic achievement of the case-study students, they **appear** to have had profound **influences** on attitudes towards learning and means of learning. (RA 6: 66)

(82) **Thus**, the data analyzed **suggested** that **while** there was **a shared emphasis** on problem-solving and decision-making across business areas and business genres, the tools with which to solve the problems and make decisions could differ…(RA 9: 127)

(83) **Thus** **it seems** there is no evidence to support a link between associating an activity with intelligent or challenge-seeking people and identifying mathematics within that activity. (RA 14: 256)

(84) **To conclude** this section it is interesting to note that **the average number** of dimension in a response was about 2.9…(RA 15: 177)

(85) **In summary**, **we can say that** two-thirds of the sample thought that ESD and environmental education were different and the reasons given for this were, **in our view**, usually sound…(RA 15: 179)

(86) In addition, **taken together**, the results for both experimental groups from pretest to posttest 3 showed substantial maintenance of training effects in phonological awareness in both the short and longer term…. (RA 16: 37)

The instances above show that the use of *summative conjuncts* (e.g., 'in sum', 'thus', 'to conclude this section', 'in summary', 'taken together', etc.) is a prominent linguistic device for signalling a summary of major findings. Some noun-preposition combinations indicating overall consistency or regularity (e.g., 'a common pattern', 'a shared emphasis', 'the average number' etc.) also form a salient feature of this step. More interestingly, with the exception of examples taken from research papers in *Educational Psychology* (as shown in the last three examples), writers often use this step to recapitulate the main points presented earlier by using hedging devices in the form of verbs (e.g., 'could', 'appear', 'suggested', 'seems', etc.) to indicate a higher degree of tentativity and to stifle potential criticisms (against the summarised findings) from potential readers of the research papers.

5. Conclusions and pedagogical implications

On the basis of the analysis presented above, it can be concluded that seven rhetorical steps are associated with non-CDSB findings in the Results sections of applied linguistics and educational research articles. Of these steps, step 3 (e.g., 'exemplifying findings') appears in 80% of the applied linguistics RAs, but only 30% of the educational RAs. The stark difference may be attributed to the possibility that linguists generally consider it essential to furnish sufficient examples to support a statement of finding while presenting their results. In contrast, educational researchers demonstrate a relatively higher tendency to present merely statements of findings without providing examples to support them. In both disciplines, research writers provide instances to support their findings, particularly in qualitative studies involving a relatively small number of subjects. Interestingly, the related examples are more frequently intended as an illustration of an individual subject's behaviours (rather than a comparative description of subjects' behaviours).

In comparison to exemplification of findings, step 4 (i.e., 'describing categories') is relatively prevalent in both applied linguistics and educational research RAs, given that they appear in 60% and 50% of the research papers in the two disciplines. This is not surprising as the data (derived from both human subjects in both disciplines or spoken/written discourse in applied linguistics RAs) are often divided into categories in the discussion presented in the Results sections. The instances given often include cited parts of spoken or discourse produced by human subjects as answers in interviews, talks, or questionnaires, or excerpts from corpus-based investigations into the communicative patterns of discourse produced by speakers or writers sharing personal experience and views.

By and large, 'indicating relationships between variables' is the only non-CDSB rhetorical step that occurs most frequently in the corpora, and it is particularly evident in the educational RAs where relationships between variables are described in most (70%) of the research papers. The findings of this study suggest that educational researchers, particularly quantitative researchers,

place greater emphasis on reporting relationships between variables.

As far as pedagogical implications are concerned, it appears justifiable to accord a central position to step 1 (i.e., 'indicating relationships between variables') when ESP instructors begin to teach learners how to present the non-CDSB findings. Step 1 seems to be indirectly linked to other rhetorical steps, such as (i) 'describing time-related changes' in which the temporal dimension is a variable studied in relation to other variables and (ii) 'exemplifying findings' which furnishes numerous instances pertaining to indication of relationships between variables. Likewise, in step 4, categories are often differentiated and described with an intention to suggest that a relationship exist between some variables. Furthermore, in step 5 (i.e., 'indicating unexpected findings'), educational researchers also indirectly highlight unanticipated relationships between human subjects or categories and other variables. (It should, however, be acknowledged that the corpus of results presented in the applied linguistics RAs contains no unexpected changes as non-CDSB findings.) More evidently, if we consider how findings are supported in step 6 (i.e., 'substantiating findings') and summed up in step 7 (i.e., 'summarising findings'), we can notice that an important variable (particularly a factor/cause/independent variable) is often given a prominent position to illustrate how it affects other variables or categories of variables in the research context (See the examples for steps 6 and 7).

Apart from highlighting the aforementioned network comprising linkages between 'indicating relationships between variables' and the remaining six rhetorical steps, instructors may also show L2 learners how lexico-grammatical choices are closely connected with the rhetorical functions of the steps . In order to provide learners with the schema that can effectively help them recognize the central rhetorical step related to indications of relationships between variables, ESP instructors can introduce a list of (i) transitive or phrasal verbs denoting correlations, (ii) adjective-preposition combinations indicating presence/absence of linkages, (iii) noun-preposition combinations denoting relationships and inter-dependence, and (iv) nouns indicating causes/factors,

effects/results and inter-connections, given that they are frequently used to indicate relationships between dependent and independent variables in both applied linguistics and educational research papers.

Notwithstanding the distinct characteristics of step 1 which can be highlighted in an ESP teacher's attempt to introduce L2 learners to the major set of findings in the Results section, the salient features of other steps merit some attention, especially since the construction of sentences in steps 2 through 6 requires skills to use different sets of linguistic resources. For instance, *time-relationship adjuncts* and *duration adjuncts* are useful signals that learners can possibly employ to present findings on time-related variations in various stages of the data collection process. In the area of vocabulary acquisition, it is suggested that ESP students be trained to select appropriate synonyms (from a Results section) for a given word or phrase. In the exercises, learners may also choose synonymous expressions (from a specified paragraph) for some verbs indicating time-related variations and nouns denoting quantitative or qualitative changes (given in the questions). In applied linguistics research, novice writers may be introduced to the use of emotive lexemes and verbs indicating observation which are needed for exemplifying their findings or describing their subjects' personal experience, views, and attitudes in qualitative studies. The use of *appositional conjuncts*, as illustrated in this paper, can also be taught as a point of transition from the description of a group's behaviours to that of an individual in a qualitative study involving not more than 20 subjects.

So far as describing categories are concerned, it has been found that the so-called 'category' in these applied linguistics research papers may refer to a genre, a corpus, a rhetorical pattern, a linguistic category, or a set of documents/tasks/assignments that have been collected. This is a step in which instructors can introduce to learners a sufficiently wide range of *stative compositional verbs* and lexemes connoting variety, particularly nouns pertaining to typological and hierarchical structures as illustrated in this paper. If learners are uncertain as to what needs to be discussed and

compared while describing categories, ESP instructors can also focus their attention on discussing the functions, purposes, and special features of each category in reporting results, using not merely nouns denoting purposes but also transitive infinitive verb phrases indicating functions of a category. Another salient feature that merits attention in an ESP lesson on research paper writing is the use of comparative adjectives and antithetic adjective phrases for describing similarities and differences between categories in both disciplines. The use of comparative and superlative adjectives, however, is similar to those used in the steps for comparing groups of subjects which have been reported in previous analyses (e.g., Weissberg and Buker, 1990; Lim, 2005).

In cases where unexpected findings are to be presented, a smoother flow from anticipated findings to less anticipated results may be established by using verbs indicating anticipation in the perfective tenses and *antithetic conjuncts* so as to contrast expectations before the research with the actual findings obtained in the new study. Likewise, when a sub-set of results are substantiated by other findings, instructors may teach learners how to use a range of phrasal verbs indicating congruence. Finally, learners can also distinguish common sets of results from summative statements of findings by learning to recognise the use of *summative conjuncts*, hedging devices, and noun-preposition combinations indicating overall consistency or regularity. L2 learners may need exposure to these prominent linguistic devices when they learn to recapitulate the main points presented earlier in order to stifle potential criticisms against their concluding remarks or statements.

In short, even though the dominant norms appearing in the mainstream journal papers analyzed above need not be treated as undisputable writing conventions, the conventional steps illustrated can be used as possible tools for raising the awareness of learners and novice academic writers to a wide range of prominent linguistic features related to the non-CDSB findings in applied linguistics and educational RAs. Some of these features have not been reported in (i) past studies that focused exclusively on the Results sections (e.g., Williams, 1999; Lim, 2005) or (ii) previous

research that analysed the entire research article that included findings (e.g., Nwogu, 1997; Posteguillo, 1999). This means that as researchers and instructors attempt to show learners how rhetorical functions can be achieved by specific linguistic mechanisms, greater emphasis needs to be laid on the lexico-grammatical characteristics of each constituent step that falls under the presentational move in a particular academic discipline. The emphasis is vital given that past studies that looked into the linguistic features of the statements of findings in other disciplines (Nwogu, 1997; Williams, 1999) have not revealed most of the useful linguistic mechanisms found in this study. The new findings on linguistic mechanisms identified in this genre-based study, however, can be effectively incorporated and highlighted in teaching materials in an ESP course intended for L2 learners in applied linguistics and education.

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Recent Developments in Pedagogical Research on Business English in China: A Synthesis of Literature

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the current status of pedagogical research on business English in China in terms of what has been achieved by Chinese researchers and practitioners as well as future challenges that they are facing. The study draws on a review of research articles published from 1999 to 2008 in Chinese academic journals. The articles (N=99) were retrieved for such review from a most well-known Chinese academic database, which is called the "National Knowledge Infrastructure" (CNKI). The analysis was made based on the data available from the database and results reveal that Chinese studies of business English are generally sporadic, discrete, and lack a sound base for recognized and justified research methods although "a giant leap" has been achieved in this field. The study concludes that pedagogical research on business English in China is still in an embryonic stage of development, that quality studies are few, and that more need to be accomplished. Finally, implications and future studies are provided.

Keywords: business English; ESP; pedagogical research; multi-competent business English talents

1. Introduction

A Google search of "business English" in Chinese conducted on September 3, 2009 yields 5,340,000 results. In a review of the foreign language programs offered by China's top 112 universities under the "211 Project[i]," there are 83% of the universities which have integrated business English (BE) into their foreign language programs. The number of BE learners even outside of the national educational system has also been growing at an exponential rate. An increasing number of learners study Business English (BE) in BE examination-oriented cram schools and other weekend or evening schools. For example, there are over 100,000 candidates taking the exams of Business English Certificates (BEC) every year in China (Beijing Examinations, 2009). According to a news report (Liu, 2008), the number of BEC candidates has surpassed that of TOEFL candidates since 2007 and BEC in China has turned out to be the second largest international language examination after IELTS (International English Language Testing

System), both of which are developed by Cambridge ESOL. It is evident that "[t]he teaching of business English is a very large and important enterprise in China" (Paltridge, 2007, p. 397).

More encouragingly, the year of 2007 marks a significant milestone in the history of BE teaching in China. The Ministry of Education has accredited one of the Chinese universities with the qualifications of offering BE programs as a college undergraduate major. Since that year, six more universities have also enjoyed the same privilege so far and the number of such institutions is expected to be rising in the coming years. This has demonstrated that Chinese BE practitioners are now beginning to embrace a brand-new era for a prosperous development of BE programs across the nation. New business English-oriented journals in China are mushrooming, though they are still in book form due to the constraints of available journal numbers from the publishers' point of view. These book-form journals are published by some nationally recognized leading universities in this particular field. Specifically, *Business English* is published by the University of International Business and Economics, *Business English Teaching and Research* by Shanghai Institute of Foreign Trade, and *English for Specific Purposes* by Beijing Foreign Studies University. Such an ongoing move is well in line with an international phenomenon which also witnesses the growth of such journals as *Journal of English for Specific Purposes*, *The Asian ESP Journal*, and *English for Specific Purposes World*.

Historically, the teaching of English for foreign trade has given rise to an elite of business people in China since the nation implemented the Open Door Policy in 1978. The booming businesses and rising prosperity driven by doing business globally in the form of imports and exports sparked an increasing popularity in learning English for foreign trade among Chinese foreign language learners in the 1980s and later BE from the 1990s to the new millennium (Lang, 1999). To date, it has become a phenomenon that almost all foreign language programs in Chinese universities have been bombarded with BE or BE-oriented courses so as to increase their added appeal and to enhance the competitiveness of their programs.

Nevertheless, since BE has been taught in China, there has long existed an underlying conceptual difference in the Chinese academia in terms of the academic status of the emerging field of BE. Most people, who failed to find a place for BE or ESP in the discipline classification, have tended to cast a cold eye toward BE or, broadly speaking, ESP. In their eyes, BE is not worth the consideration of being integrated into foreign language programs. The official recognition of the importance of BE as an undergraduate major in the Chinese academia as well as in the national economic growth from the government level has dramatically helped boost the confidence of BE practitioners and will assuredly bring forward the field of BE in both teaching and research.

However, the road ahead is not rosy at all. There are a lot of opportunities for sure but at the same time many foreseeable challenges are also abundant. On the one hand, the accredited institutions can be justified to admit students as the BE major in a four-year undergraduate program. Before the title of the BE major was crowned, most of them tried to make use of the loopholes in educational policies by adding "BE-oriented" to English-as-a-foreign-language programs to widen their appeal. Now these institutions can confidently offer BE-major programs in a perfectly justifiable manner. Moreover, they can continue to develop their master's degree programs on the basis of their successful experiences in order to meet the increasing demand of educational and business markets at the graduate level. Furthermore, BE practitioners can spare no effort to perfect their teaching and conduct research in this nationally recognized field.

On the other hand, pedagogical BE research still remains a virgin land and there are a lot of areas that need to be cultivated. Broadly speaking, most of the BE-related published papers are poor in quality and narrow in scale (Liu, 2006). Nationally recognized academic programs of this particular kind are not only new but also few. Internationally, however, much broader issues, such as needs analysis (Bosher & Smalkoski, 2002) genre analysis (Amirian, Kassaian, & Tavakoli, 2008; Badger, 2003; dos Santos, 2002; Marco, 2000; Martín, 2003; Parkinson, 2000; Rowley-Jolivet, 2002); discourse analysis (Pathak, 2008; Sampson, 2008); linguistic and stylistic analyses of English used in specific academic disciplines (Hancioğlu, Neufeld, & Eldridge, 2008; Wang,

Liang, & Ge, 2008), professional and workplace contexts (Forey, 2004; So-mui & Mead, 2000), action research (Chen, 2000), and metaphor (Charteris-Black, 2000; Henderson, 2000; Rodriguez, 2003; White, 2003) have been covered in reputable and internationally recognized journals. Master's programs are relatively more mature due to their longer history and experience, such as those offered by the City University of Hong Kong, the University of Birmingham, the University of Essex, and De La Salle University, as well as Ph.D. programs such as the one offered by the Italian University System.

The rise of BE as a major poses immediate challenges on faculty development, curriculum development, and modes of multi-competent BE talent development as well as academic requirements such as quality standards and criteria of BE teaching, just to name a few (Wang & Zhang, 2006). There is no doubt that there are many other issues that require concern. The existing problems in the teaching of BE and the challenges ahead combined need to be addressed head-on in order to ensure a healthy development of BE programs not only as a college major but also as a research field in the years to come.

Obviously, BE researchers and practitioners in China are standing at a crossroads. The choice of road for how they will embrace the opportunities and challenges in the foreseeable future could exert a dramatic impact not only on how BE as a college major will develop but also on the quality of the students of this major. Then, what is the current status of BE pedagogical research in China? What is the next road that Chinese researchers and practitioners should take while embracing both opportunities and challenges of building BE as an academic major? This paper attempts to address these questions by investigating the current status of BE teaching and research in China through reviewing the articles that have been published in China's academic journals from 1999 to 2008 in order to shed light on the path to future development of BE education in China from pedagogical research perspectives.

2. Methodology

2.1 Selection of studies

Studies of BE in China can be found in a wide array of publications, such as monographs, academic journals, and conference proceedings, as well as online working papers and the like. The studies selected for the current research only involve those in Chinese academic journals published from 1999 to 2008 and available from CNKI (National Knowledge Infrastructure), which is China's largest and most authoritative academic digital database (Hudong Encyclopedia, 2008).

The source of studies can be representative of the current state of pedagogical research in China for three reasons. First, these studies are the most up-to-date published research results in this field. They are publicly recognized academic achievement in the field. Second, the researchers are the most active practitioners in the field and have unrivalled hands-on experience of BE teaching and research. They are also a circle of people who give their most attention to this field and accordingly are capable of painting a general picture of the field. Last but not least, the database is the largest and most comprehensive academic database in China, which ensures that all related journal articles are subject to the present study. With the use of the database, the objective selection of the journal articles can be maximized.

2.2 Criteria for the selection of journals articles

Chinese academic journals are generally classified into two types, core journals and non-core journals, by subject or domain. Therefore, core journals can be subdivided into core foreign language (CFL) journals, which refer to those with a special emphasis on the studies of foreign languages, and core non-foreign language (CNFL) journals, which are more oriented toward other studies of social sciences, with foreign language studies being included as a tiny part of them.

Along the same line, non-core journals can also be subdivided in the same way. In general, core journals represent nationally recognized journals of high quality, authoritativeness, and credibility (Ye, Tian, Lai, & Ma, 2009) and non-core journals are less influential. Therefore, the core journal articles are selected to reflect the representativeness of the data under study.

2.3 Data collection procedures

CNKI encompasses six databases. One of them is the one for the full text of journal articles and the rest are the ones for the full text of Ph.D. dissertations, outstanding master's and Ph.D. degree theses, conference papers, news articles, and yearbooks respectively.

According to the purpose of this study, the database for the full text of Chinese journal papers was selected by clicking on the hyperlink of the database for Full Text of Chinese Journal Papers (Zhong Guo Qi Kan Quan Wen Shu Ju Ku). Then, selected were keywords in the drop-down menu "search items", and "business English" (Shang Wu Ying Yu) in Chinese was typed into the search box. Next, the year of publication was restricted from 1999 to 2008. In the drop-down menu titled "the scope of journals", "core journals" were selected. "Relevance" was selected for ranking the search results in the drop-down menu "rank." Last, the "search" button was clicked to start the first search. After the results from the first search were retrieved, second, third, and fourth searches were conducted with the keywords "English for foreign trade" (Wai Mao Ying Yu) and "English for specific purposes" (Te Shu Yong Tu Ying Yu) in Chinese, as well as "ESP" in English respectively. Any results which were not original academic studies in nature, such as book reviews, ads, and the like, were excluded from this study. The number of the retrieved studies was sufficient for the current study because these studies encompass what have been published in China's *accredited* academic journals and are therefore better representative of what has been achieved in the field of BE teaching and research in the Chinese context.

3. Results

3.1 Number of the studies published in China's CFL and CNFL journals

There are altogether 99 studies retrieved from the search. According to the three keywords used in the search, 'business English' has been used most frequently in the studies, which account for 70.7% of the total number of the studies, with 'ESP' taking up 21.2% and 'English for foreign trade'

8.08% respectively.

Moreover, there are 68.7% of the studies published in the CNFL journals while the percentage of the studies published in the CFL journals is much smaller, accounting for only 31.3% of the total. Although the number of the studies published in the CNFL journals is overwhelmingly large, the length of the studies is short: each is only one or two pages long.

3.2 Distribution of the studies published in both CFL and CNFL journals on a yearly basis

Figure 1 shows that relatively a small number of studies were published in both the CFL and the CNFL journals between 1999 and 2004 (M=6.83, SD=1.84). However, the number of the published studies rose sharply from 5 in 2004 to 23 studies in 2006 (M=13.20, SD=9.31). In contrast, a sharp downturn was observed in the number of published studies from 2006 to 2008 (M=10, SD=14.14). The studies, which were published solely in the CFL journals over the past decade, have more or less followed a similar pattern and accounting for 31.3% of the total while those published in the CNFL journals took up 68.7%. It is evident that there are more studies published in the CNFL journals than in the CFL journals. It was noticeable that the number published in the latter journals annually is fewer than 10 studies.

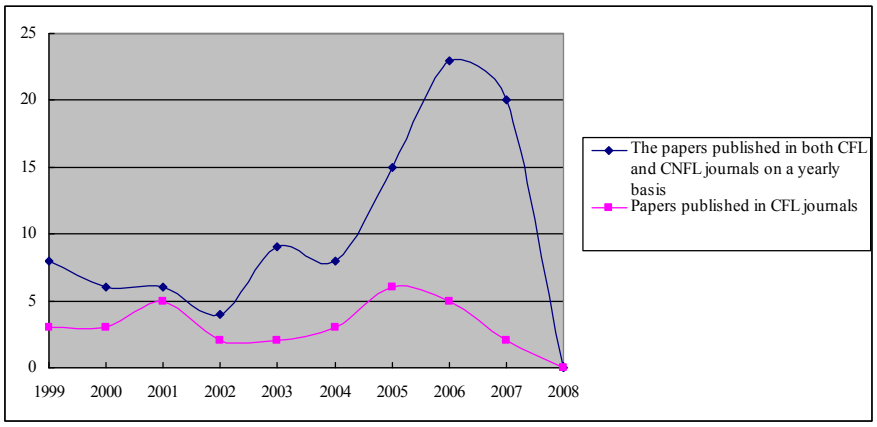

Fig. 1. The distribution pattern of the papers published on a yearly basis

3.3 Major themes covered in the studies

Figure 2 shows that the research themes are not given equal attention (M=10.56, SD=23.1). Of all the themes covered in the studies, teaching methods had been most extensively researched, accounting for 72.7%, followed by multi-competent BE talents training (6%), development of the academic discipline (4%), curriculum development (4%), and linguistic features (4%), in decreasing order of frequency. The rest of the themes covered in the studies were found to be relatively much less researched.

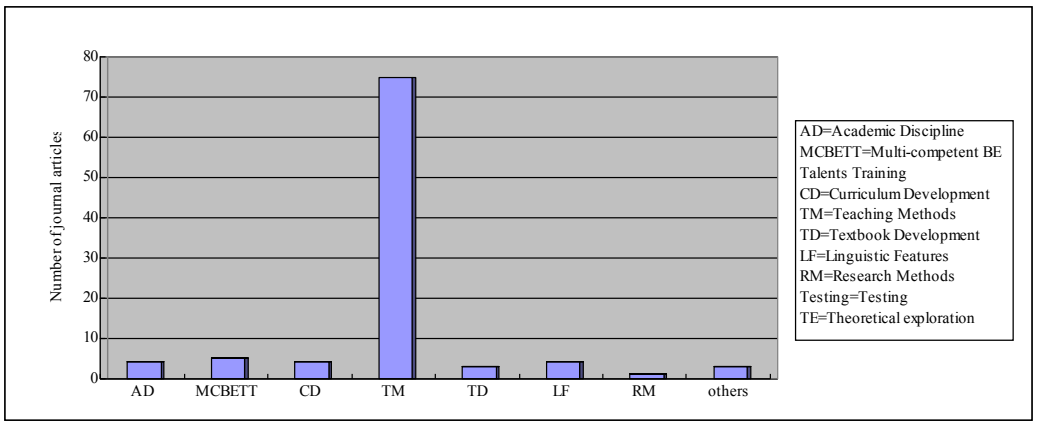

Fig. 2. Number of major research themes

3.4 Research methods employed in the studies

The research methods used in most of the studies did not fall into any of the quantitative, qualitative, or mixed research categories. Only 2% of the studies were published in the CFL and the CNFL journals, respectively, in which a quantitative research method was employed. Nevertheless, most of these studies were survey-based and no experimental or quasi-experimental studies have been undertaken. However, a large number of essay-like articles were found without introduction, literature review, methodology, results, etc. These studies account for 29.3% of the total published in the CFL journals and 66.7% published in the CNFL journals.

4. Analysis and discussion

As revealed from the data above, the overall BE studies in China still remain in an embryonic stage. More strikingly, most of the studies are subjective in nature and merely a reflection of a researcher's personal opinion. Very few of them have been empirically tested, and therefore there is little empirical evidence to support their findings. For example, Liu (2001) argued that Robinson's (1991) view of ESP is "the central teaching theory of ESP in the West" (p. 25) without providing a literature review. He took a "contrastive approach," which was derived from his teaching practice, as an approach that can "better cater to the needs of Chinese students in the teaching of ESP" (p. 26) without evidence of an empirical comparative study. Similarly, Cai (2006) summarized her hands-on experience of oral business English teaching processes and concluded that students' initiative and motivation have been improved when the teaching of such a language skill is guided by the theory of constructivism without the support of statistical evidence.

4.1 Top five themes of BE research in China

Although research studies of BE in China are concerned with quite a number of research themes, the top five themes identified above represent the ones that Chinese BE researchers have given more attention to. In this section, some of the representative research studies are reviewed to expound these major themes.

4.1.1 BE teaching methods

BE teaching methods have been extensively explored by Chinese practitioners, but no widely accepted pedagogical modes or methods have been identified, and they generally remain a mixed bag. Yao (2007) explored the use of case studies in the teaching of an intensive BE reading course. She identified five advantages of this teaching method over traditional lecture-led ones: 1) attention to skill building; 2) authenticity of pedagogical cases; 3) maintenance of the objectivity of cases; 4) learners' engagement and motivation; and 5) diversity and optimality of solutions to instructional

cases.

Kong and Gan (2007) proposed a blended approach to the teaching of writing in terms of integrating student-involved teaching and case studies, as well as translation-based teaching for the appropriateness of the subject matter. Feng (2006) argued that collaborative learning is an effective method for teaching BE because it can be conducive to the "mastery of practical language skills, acquisition of business-oriented expertise and improvement of communication skills" (p. 56). As "collaboration encourages student participation via peer interaction in the learning process" (Collis & Moonen, 2009, p. 327), students are able to have sufficient amount of "comprehensible input" (Krashen, 1985, p. 2) and "comprehensible output" (Swain, 1985, p. 249), which have been proven to be a facilitating factor for second language acquisition (Mackey, 1995).

Zhou (2003) discussed how a communicative approach can be integrated into BE teaching from the perspectives of instructional content and methods. Instructional content should involve four things: 1) authentic target language materials and practical skills that are related to business activities performed by people in the arena of international trade; 2) culturally diversified learning materials that suit the trading context; 3) an emphasis on specialist language and expertise that are used in overall business transactions; and 4) a blended learning of the four skills. Teaching methods should be based on the communicative approach, involving a diverse deployment of learner-centered instructional methods, with an instructor being a facilitator throughout the entire learning process. Shen and Wang (2003) also argued that developing students' communicative competence is one of the ultimate goals in BE teaching and that the communicative approach can lend itself to the building of such competence. They pointed out that when this approach is adopted, teachers should realize that the role of the teacher should not be minimized. They also suggest that the approach should be pedagogically task-based and that linguistic competence as well as language performance should be given equal attention. They finally concluded that the communicative approach does not mean the exclusion of other effective pedagogical approaches.

Yuan (2006) discussed the effectiveness of adopting a module-based teaching model

borrowed from an Australian vocational college in the teaching of BE students in her institution. She argued that although module-based teaching was effective in terms of transforming China's vocational education from the conceptual, curricular, and pedagogical perspectives, a full copy of the model was inappropriate due to the vast differences in national vocational situations as well as educational systems and objectives. She continued to argue that the best strategy for ensuring a borrowed model is successful is to suit the Chinese-specific situations and educational systems.

Liu (2001) described a contrastive approach, employed in the teaching of "English for international marketing", "English for foreign trade", and "English for business English," in which a teacher asked his or her students to contrast the "vocabulary, specialized terms, sentences, and stylistic features" (p. 26) of a business text with the identical features of a non-business text. This approach was used in his teaching of ESP learners for a number of years and he claimed it to be effective in that it was developed based on language receptivity of the learners who grew up in the Chinese foreign language-learning context and therefore was most suitable for Chinese learners.

Xiao (2000) explored the translation of BE into Chinese from rhetorical and contextual perspectives and concluded that the appropriate understanding and choice of lexical meaning is the principal condition for ensuring the quality of BE translation. This idea has been supported by Chen (2002), who exemplified the importance of a correct understanding and choice of word meaning in translating documents for international trade. Chen pointed out that profound knowledge in international trade and familiarity with the specialist terms are fundamental to high quality translation. Moreover, Fan (2007) discussed the translation of English for e-commerce from the word-formation perspective and also echoed the importance of acquiring expertise in business-related fields. Guo (2003) and Shuai (2004) discussed the issue of value equivalence in translation and voiced the concern about the role of culture in helping maintain the quality of translation.

4.1.2 Training of multi-competent BE talents

Multi-competent BE talents' (MCBET's) education has been a much-discussed issue in Chinese

academia and the term “MCBET’s” has become a buzz word in China over the past decade or more. Although turning out multi-competent foreign language talents (MCFLT’s) was the goal of a new syllabus for foreign language majors in China’s higher education institutions (EGSCTFL, 2000), the term “MCFLT’s” is more widely known to be associated with MCBET’s education.

According to Nan (2005), MCBET’s education refers to “the teaching of the non-English subject matter to BE learners through the media of English” (p. 43). More specifically, these learners are not restricted to the spheres of literature and linguistics but go beyond the language territory to make themselves proficient in business-related fields, such as trade, marketing, accounting, finance, economics, law, business administration, etc., as well as in cross-cultural communication. Over the past decade or more, there has been a much-discussed issue in terms of what kinds of competence that BE learners should possess after they graduate from college. In Chinese academia, there has been a consensus that these learners, or MCBET’s, as called by many (Chen, 2005; Nan, 2005), should have an integrated array of skills such as higher English language proficiency, profound business knowledge, and strong cross-cultural communication skills (Cai, 2001; Chen, 2005; Dou, 2005; Wang & Zhang, 2006; Zhang, 2007).

4.1.3 Building of BE curricula

Curriculum development is a crucial and integral part of the building of BE as an academic major. However, over the past decade, curriculum development has been promoted mainly based on intuitive perceptions of curriculum developers, rather than empirical studies of learner needs and societal demand. Consequently, drastic adjustments have to be made to curricula frequently in some institutions.

In order to enhance the effectiveness of curriculum development, Wang and Chen (2001) proposed four principles of designing a BE curriculum system. Principle 1 is the principle of needs, which should be based on the needs of overall economic environment, learner academic and career needs, and the needs of Sino-foreign joint academic programs, as well as improved language

proficiency of high school learners. Principle 2 is the principle of taking advantage of experiences of international institutions which have had successful BE programs. Principle 3 is the principle of making what has been borrowed from institutions in developed countries serve Chinese institutions, to develop BE programs that encompass the unique characteristics of different Chinese institutions. Principle 4 is the principle of continuous improvement. As situations change constantly, modifications need to be made to curricula and programs on a regular basis so as to meet the challenges of economic and social needs.

To throw light on how the BE curricula can be better improved in China, Dou (2005) made a comparison of the BE courses offered by educational institutions of English-speaking countries such as the United States, Great Britain, and Australia, as well as those provided by non-English-speaking countries such as South Africa, Germany, Spanish, Israel, Finland, Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore, and Mainland China. Based on the analyses, she argued that the course modules for BE basic courses and BE major courses should be continued for Chinese higher education institutions. However, she proceeded to state that improvement must be made in curriculum setup and class hours, in terms of providing more small-module-based learning opportunities and reducing unnecessary class hours to augment instructional efficiency. In the meantime, instructors should be encouraged to offer more courses that can meet the needs of the learners as well as social and economic development.

4.1.4 Building of BE as a discipline

There has been a lot of debate going on in Chinese academia about whether BE should be developed into an independent discipline. The voices of the proponents can be heard loud and clear through academic publications while those of opponents remain seemingly silent in open publications, though such opposing forces can still be felt hard in the dynamics of one's academic life.

Lin (2005) argued that BE as an independent discipline has long been an unarguable fact

due to the fact that "more than 600 Chinese universities have established BE academic programs across the nation and hundreds and thousands of MCBET's have been turned out, who have made great contribution to China's economic development" (p. 1). He proposed that the establishment of an independent discipline should depend upon two necessary conditions. The first one involves clear and independent research object, research tasks, a complete logic system of a given discipline, and well-structured research groups. The second includes nationally and even internationally recognized academic leaders, landmark theoretical works, national or international academic organizations, specialist journals, specialist publishers of a particular field, and a large multitude of academic monographs and textbooks, as well as widely adopted core courses in key universities. He further argued that BE research needs to center on the following four aspects of teaching and their relationships: subject (teachers), receptor (BE learners), object (teaching content), and carrier (instructional modes and methods).

Wang (1999) argued that BE as a discipline has taken shape in China. There are a number of salient features that reveal the foundation of such a discipline: wider recognition of the concept of BE and the role of BE in China; diversified BE courses; a vast array of textbooks and other publications; regular regional and national conferences on BE; as well as the founding of specialized committee on BE under China Association for International Trade. Xian and Tang (2005) acknowledged that the discipline of BE is one that blends the disciplines of linguistics, economics, and business administration, and that the theories of linguistics and applied linguistics, as well as economics, should be the theoretical foundation of the BE discipline.

4.1.5 Linguistic features of BE

BE linguistic features are researched more from the perspective of comparative differences between English for general purposes and English for business, such as marketing, trade, banking, insurance, etc. The texts on which the studies were based originated from business correspondences such as emails and letters, as well as business textbooks.

According to Liu and Wu (2002), BE is featured with the formal style of letter writing, which conforms to the "7C's" (Correctness, Conciseness, Clearness, Completeness, Concreteness, Courtesy, and Character). Moreover, due to the limited number of targeted readers, BE is content-focused. Liu and Wu also found that BE abounds with clichés and complex sentence structures, and is professionally differentiated. Their views are also echoed by Zhu (1999), who explored the features in Chinese translations of English, arguing that BE is also characterized by its cultural significance and by dynamic development driven by the economic and technological advances of our times.

4.2 Current challenges and the next path to take for Chinese BE researchers and practitioners

Evidently, the above-mentioned studies, along with many others, have partly helped build a solid foundation for BE as an academic major in China. The contribution of these Chinese forerunners in the field of BE education to the development of Chinese multi-competent talents is enormous and invaluable in terms of their enduring efforts and spirit. However, this does not mean that Chinese BE practitioners can rest well on their laurels, but rather a lot of challenges still lie ahead of them.

First, the number of quality BE research studies still remains small. Broadly speaking, there might have been more research conducted in the field of BE education as a whole (Zhang, 2007), but few have been published or few were academically qualified to be published, especially in core foreign language journals, and core non-foreign language journals. Besides, most of the studies on the same theme are discrete in that they are conducted not by "standing on the shoulders of giants" but by starting to make an account of their own experience or their own subjective opinions. This pitfall might result from the requirements of some of the journals, but giving no attention to what previous similar studies have ever done, while carrying out a new study, is clearly the sign of a weakness of research. This might explain why there are so few BE research studies that have ever been published in core foreign language journals, due to the fact that these journals tend to have

more stringent academic requirements.

Second, researchers' methodology needs to be improved. Most of the papers in this review are more of an essay than a research paper, in the sense that they neither fall under the category of qualitative research nor belong to the category of quantitative or mixed research methodology. They are simply an account of what the authors did, or what they conceptualized about their so-called effective teaching methods, or anything they claimed to be better, without comparing or empirically proving whether they were truly much better than others. The poor research methodology might be attributed to the lack of practitioners' teaching experience or poor academic backgrounds, as most of them just graduated from college, with only a master's degree and a few years of experience in teaching and research. They are usually not well-informed about how academic research is done in terms of research design, data collection, and analysis, as well as presentation of results and findings. From an international perspective, however, a study with a lack of methodology published in mainstream academic journals has long since become history, and methodology is now being taken as the basis for an integral part of the quality of any study. Chinese BE counterparts need to work toward that path by equipping themselves with the knowledge and skills of educational scientific research and by presenting their experiences based on well-designed empirical cross-sectional and longitudinal studies.

Third, curriculum development should be research-based. BE curriculum is characterized by practicality and career-orientedness, which need to closely respond to the needs of businesses as well as to social and economic development. Such characteristics require that curriculum development should be determined by what is needed by the learners and society, today and tomorrow, instead of any so-called authoritative persons' subjective preferences. In order to turn out qualified graduates who can well meet the needs of job markets as well as challenges tomorrow, BE program-offering institutions and designers are expected to know more about the needs of learners, businesses, and the industry as well as to have a vision to the future of social and economic development so as to ensure not only the quantity but also the quality of MCFLT's or BE job-

seekers in the years ahead.

Fourth, BE teacher professional development (TPD) needs to be further enhanced. The research on BE TPD has become a forgotten land in the sense that little has been done in this area. Moreover, it has lagged far behind what BE teachers are in need of. As BE academic programs are booming across the nation, there will be more teachers with no business or business-related backgrounds joining the profession. The development for these newly recruited teachers, as well as for those who need to update their specialist knowledge and skills, must be put on the agenda of educational institutions so as to ensure quality of teaching and research. A multi-dimensional nationwide system of professional development is highly desirable for maintaining a high quality of teaching and research in China. Such a system should be able to provide multiple learning opportunities for multiple people in multiple ways such as virtual learning communities; online learning resources like video presentations, handouts, and an online support system; short-term face-to-face training sessions; and apprentice learning. Only in this way can China's BE education enjoy a sustainable development. Above all, MCFLT's development can be turned into reality.

Finally, a broader area is required to be researched. As revealed from the data available over the past decade, the studies have been mainly restricted to a few areas. Admittedly, in-depth studies are still expected in these areas due to the fact that many more issues remain to be explored. However, they should also be extended to cover much wider areas such as the theoretical framework of BE teaching, corpus-based BE teaching, technology-based BE teaching, the teaching of the four BE skills, BE curriculum building, as well as development of BE teaching and research teams. In addition, equal attention should also be paid to areas such as the role of educational policies in BE education, specifically the impact of government and institutional policy making on BE education and dynamic improvement of BE curriculum that corresponds to the national social and economic development. Furthermore, a diversified array of research methods such as experimental studies, case studies, and action research should be promoted in BE teaching and research so as to provide empirical evidence for the enhancing effectiveness and innovativeness of

BE teaching.

5. Conclusions

This synthesis has showcased that pedagogical research on BE in China still remains at a developmental stage and that the road ahead for Chinese BE practitioners is bright but long and challenging. Some of the general features can be summarized as follows:

1) BE as an academic major in Chinese universities has been recognized and approved by the Chinese Ministry of Education and this will help BE to become even more increasingly popular in the years to come and that upward momentum will continue in many years ahead.
2) BE as a major is beginning to take shape in a limited number of Chinese educational institutions in terms of curriculum development and MCFLT's development models, but a lot more need to be accomplished.
3) BE practitioners are still practicing the late Chinese Premier Deng Xiaoping's philosophy of "feeling the way across the river over the stones". They are well aware of the goal of promoting BE education in China but unsure of how to reach the goal by constantly exploring the possibilities along the way both in curriculum building and pedagogical practices.
4) Research studies on BE are sporadic over the years and tend to be confined to specific, limited, and isolated case studies, in which quality studies are very few as manifested by the tiny number of the studies published in the CFL and CNFL journals in China, not to mention international academic journals.
5) Curriculum building, textbook development, and BE teacher professional development, including many other issues related to BE as a major or maybe as a discipline in the foreseeable future in China, should be based more on empirical research instead of on personal subjective perceptions, which will help avoid a lot of twists and turns on the exploratory journey ahead.

While BE researchers and practitioners in China are exploring the field of BE or ESP as a whole, they may need to enrich their experiences by looking beyond the Chinese context to those educational and research institutions in other parts of the world in order to speed up "feeling the way across the river over the stones." Informative and insightful might be some of the most recent cases such as those of Brazil (Antonieta & Celani, 2008), Tunisia (Jebahi, 2009), Colombia (Bailey, Rey, & Rosado, 2009), Iran (Zangani, 2009), as well as a study of both Brazil and Tunisia (Labassi, 2010), among many others. Such reference, for one thing, can help Chinese scholars in this particular field "stand on the shoulders of giants" to improve the quality of their programs as well as their pedagogical research. For another, it can also help give rise to the quality of decision-making by Chinese BE educational leaders with an international perspective. Because BE education in China is an integral part of the global ESP endeavor, a reference to the work of their counterparts who have had time-tested success stories in BE program development and research can be beneficial as well as pedagogically, theoretically, and practically enlightening.

Although what has been found in this study is unique for the Chinese scenario, it can also offer some experiences and lessons for institutions of other cultures, especially those which are on the way to developing their BE programs and experiencing similar situations. By learning about Chinese experiences and lessons in the field of BE, they can be better informed to proceed right from the beginning and to avoid some unnecessary twists and turns along the journey. Future studies may go beyond what has been revealed in Chinese academic journals to encompass a broader array of other studies in monographs, dissertations, and conference proceedings. Also, a comparative meta-analysis of the BE studies conducted by Chinese and international scholars is worthy of the effort. Such an endeavor can allow Chinese researchers and practitioners to be able to see where they are and where they need to go in terms of future directions of BE development. With the multiple telescopes of these researchers and practitioners, from both domestic and international perspectives, the vision of the future development of the BE field can be much clearer, and more contributions can be made to the field of BE or ESP as a whole.

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[i] The project was initiated by the State Council and the Chinese Ministry of Education in 1993, aiming at building about 100 top Chinese universities through financial support from the Ministry and local governments in the 21st century (Education online, 2005).