The 8th International Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) Seminar - Aligning Theoretical Knowledge with Professional Practice

A Genre Analysis of Islamic Academic Research Article Introductions

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Abstract

This study explores the rhetorical organization of Islamic research article introductions based on Swales' (1990) CARS (Create a Research Space) model. Based on the model, sixty Islamic research article introductions were analyzed in terms of the move structure and linguistic features that signal the use of the move. Findings show that most of the introductions contain all the moves prescribed by the model but the introductions that strictly follow the CARS Move structure is relatively small. This suggests that most of the introductions employ the rhetorical moves proposed by the CARS model, but deviate in terms of their organization.

1. Introduction

In second language (L2) writing, it is crucial for learners to have an understanding of genre knowledge. It will help them produce texts or written discourses according to the convention characterized by the discourse community and achieve the communicative purpose of the discourse. This genre awareness becomes particularly important and useful for learners at tertiary level, as they need to write academic texts according to the disciplinary specialization at university. Thus, the concept of genre helps "locate what is particular to each kind

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of writing and what skills and knowledge students need in order to be able to communicate effectively within each kind" Bazerman [1].

Academic texts such the research article (RA) is considered as genre and it is identified by "a recognizable communicative purpose and by the presence of characteristic features with standardized form, function, and presentation that are part of its general conventions", Thomas & Hawes [2]. Thus, in order to produce an effective research article, the writer must adhere to this generic rules and convention. The ability to write research article according to the discourse conventions can help the writer gain recognition in his/her academic disciplines through the publication of the research article.

In this regard, genre analysis has become a useful tool in describing and relating the linguistic features of a genre to their function and purpose. It provides a method to identify the communicative strategies or moves and the linguistic features found in genres. This system of analysis of academic texts "can be utilized for a number of applied linguistic purposes, including the teaching of English for Specific Purposes" Bhatia [3].

An influential research by Swales [4] helped to form the theory of genre in English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Swales [4] defined genre as "a class of communicative events, the members of which share some set of communicative purposes." Swales's [4] research focused on the rhetorical organization of certain sections of the research article, particularly the introduction section. Central to this approach is the move structure analysis, which involves the identification of a "recurrent pattern commonly used to organize the content of a genre, and then relating the stages of this content-organizing pattern to specific linguistic features" Bruce [5]. Following his research, Swales [4] proposed the Create a Research Space (CARS) model that can be used as an analytical tool to investigate the rhetorical structure of research article introductions.

Many studies have been done on the rhetorical structure of research article introductions. In her study, Samraj [6] employed the CARS model to analyze the research article introductions from two related fields; Wildlife Behaviour and Conservation Biology. A greater degree of embedding was found in the analyzed texts, which was not captured by the CARS model. The study revealed that reference to previous literature is an element that can be found in different moves in the model. In addition, the researcher found variation in strategies/steps such as the use of "positive justification" that is not accounted for in the CARS model. Anthony [7] also found the use of a new step in the software engineering's RA introductions. This "evaluation step" appears in all of the introductions and in this step, the present research is evaluated with regards to its novelty or applicability in the professional context. Both researchers agree that the CARS model did capture the main rhetorical organizations of the introduction. However, it needs to be more flexible to account for certain variations or features that are discipline specific.

The CARS model has also been used to analyze RA introductions in languages other than English. These cross-cultural studies reveal the differences and cultural influences in the rhetorical organization of RA introductions. Hirano [8] found that the Brazilian ESP RA introductions lack Move 2 where the writers need to establish a niche for their research. This suggests that Brazilian writers when writing in Portuguese tend to avoid establishing a niche, which requires them to expose the fault in researches by their Brazilian colleagues. The feeling of solidarity with the local research community may lead the Brazilian scholars to avoid conflict with other researchers. The cultural influence can also be seen in Thai RA introductions. In her study, Jogthong [9] reports that Thai writers avoid using Move 1 Step 1 (Centrality claims) in their RA introductions. She explains that this may be due to the Thai culture in which it is improper for the writers to assert claims of their own work and promote themselves in public. This cultural aspect may also cause them to be reluctant to criticize others' work in Step 3 (Reviewing previous research) as this act would be seen as disrespecting their fellow researchers. From the previous studies, it can be concluded that disciplinary variations and cultural aspects can influence the rhetorical structure and language use in the research article introductions.

Though researchers set out to investigate the rhetorical organization of RA introductions in different academic fields and different languages, to the best of our knowledge, no study has been done with regard to the rhetorical organization of Islamic RA introductions. The present study, therefore, will analyze the rhetorical organization of

Islamic academic RA introductions based on Swales's [4] CARS model. Through move analysis, we aim to identify whether Islamic RA introductions follow or differ from the CARS model and to identify the variations in the steps used within each move between Islamic RA introductions and the CARS model. The results of this study can provide useful information on the rhetorical organization of Islamic RA introductions and enhance the understanding of rhetorical structure of Islamic RA introductions for novice writers. Moreover, the results of this study can have implications for the teaching of academic writing and English for Specific Purposes (ESP).

2. Data and method of analysis

The corpus used in this study consists of 60 Islamic research article introductions. The research articles were randomly selected from four Islamic journals; American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences, Journal of Islamic Studies, Hamdard Islamicus and IIUM Intellectual Discourse. These journals are dedicated to the scholarly study of all aspects of Islam and the Muslim world. Thus, the research articles published in these journals are fairly representative of the Islamic research articles. In terms of the boundary of introduction, some of the data were labeled under the 'Introduction' heading. For some of the data that were not labeled under the 'Introduction' heading, they were clearly identified by their position in the article which is located in the first position after the 'abstract' section and followed by 'Methodology' or 'Discussion' section. For the analysis of these Islamic RA introductions, Swales's [4] CARS model was used. The model proposes that RA introductions comprise three moves which begin with a move where the author establishes a territory and this is followed by the second move of establishing a niche and finally the third move where the author occupies the niche.

The model is shown in Figure 1

Move 1 Establishing a territory

Step 1 Claiming centrality

and/or **Step 2** Making topic generalization(s)

and/or **Step 3** Reviewing items of previous research

Move 2 Establishing a niche

Step 1 A Counter-claiming

or   **Step 1 B** Indicating a gap

or   **Step 1 C** Question-raising

or   **Step 1 D** Continuing a tradition

Move 3 Occupying the niche

Step 1 A Outlining purposes

Step 1 B Announcing present research

Step 2   Announcing principal findings

Step 3   Indicating research article structure

Designing Rhetorical Effort

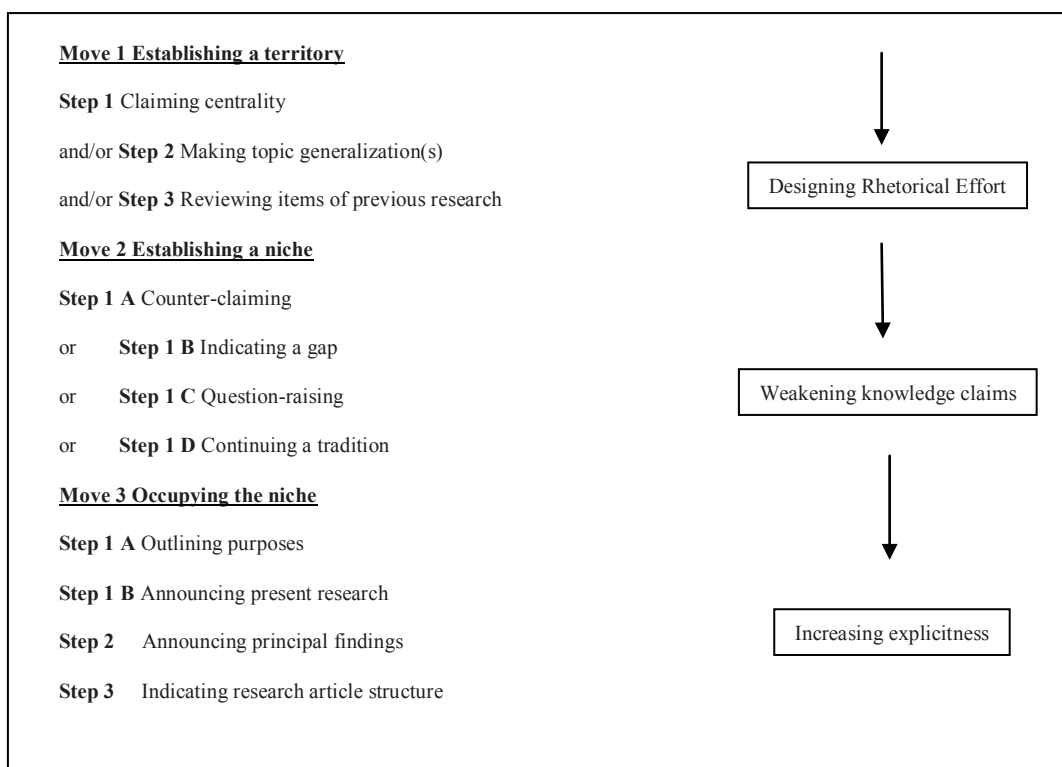Weakening knowledge claims

Increasing explicitness

Figure 1: Swales's (1990) Create a Research Space (CARS) model

Each research article introduction in this study was analyzed in terms of the Move-step sequences. The basic unit of analysis is the individual sentence which was examined based on the content and linguistic features, then classified into the moves and steps of the CARS model. In a very limited number of cases, a sentence can have two moves and the classification process can be difficult and not straightforward. Hence, the researchers followed Ozturk's [10] study in which, if a sentence has more than one move, it will be assigned to the move that seems more salient. On the other hand, sentences whose classifications could not be determined on the basis of Swales's CARS model were assigned into 'unidentified' category.

The organization of moves in the RA introductions was analyzed to determine the overall pattern (macro-structure). From here it can be identified whether the pattern follow or differ from the Swales's CARS model. A more detailed analysis was done on the steps used within each move. They were identified based on the linguistic features suggested by Swales [4] that signify the use of a particular step. Through this stage of analysis, we were able to recognize which steps are preferred by the writers and discover the variations of the steps used in Islamic academic RA introductions.

3. Results

The finding on move-structure of Islamic RA introductions is summarized in Table 1. It shows the types of move-pattern found in the corpus and the number of article introductions that have the pattern.

Table 1 Overall move structures of Islamic RA introductions

Move-pattern	Number of article introductions
1	6
1-2-3	10
1-2-3-1-2-1	1
1-2-3-1-3	2
1-2-3-1-3-1	1
1-2-3-1-3-2-3	1
1-2	1
1-2-1	1
1-2-1-2-1-3-1	1
1-2-1-2-3	3
1-2-1-3	4
1-2-1-3-2-3	1
1-3	11
1-3-1	1
1-3-1-2	1
1-3-1-2-1-3	1
1-3-1-3	2
1-3-1-3-1	1
1-3-1-3-1-3	1
1-3-2	1
1-3-2-3	1
2-1-2-1-2-3	1
2-1-2-1-3	1

2-3	1
3-1	2
3-1-2-3	1
3-1-3	1
3-1-3-1	1
Total	60

The results in Table 1 show the variations of move structure in the Islamic academic RA introductions. The table shows that ten out of sixty article introductions exhibit the linear move-structure of M1-M2-M3 as prescribed in the Swales's CARS model. This suggests the significant deviation from the structure proposed by the CARS model. The predominant pattern was found to be the M1-M3 structure with eleven out of sixty article introductions displaying this move structure. Introduction 19 below exhibits the M1-M3 structure. S1 (Sentence 1) to S8 (Sentence 8) refer to the sequence of sentences that appear in Introduction no. 19.

Excerpt 1

Move	Step	
1	1	**S1)** Born at Rayy in 940 A.C., Ahmad b. Muhammad b. Yaqub, surnamed Miskawaih, was an eminent moralist, historian and theistic thinker of the Buwahid Persia.
1	2	**S2)** He started his career as secretary to Abu Muhammad Muhallabi (d. 964), the Vizier to the Buwahid prince Mu'izz al-Dawlah, who captured Baghdad in 945.
1	2	**S3)** Miskawaih also served the Buwahid ruler Adad al-Dawlah (d.982) as his secretary and librarian.
1	2	**S4)** He died at Isfahan in 1030.
1	1	**S5)** Miskawaih is the founder of philosophical ethics in the world of Islam and is known to the world chiefly through his celebrated manual of ethics, *Tahdhib al-Akhlaq wa Tathir al-A'araq*.
1	2	**S6)** The manual, in keeping with its title, takes a moral view of human personality, as opposed to the amoral theories of personality current in modern times.
1	2	**S7)** The reason for this difference, radical as it may seem, lies in the vital difference of psychology, metaphysical in the one, and empirical in the other case, on which these views of personality are based.
3	1B	**S8)** I shall therefore briefly discuss below the nature of metaphysical and empirical psychology before discussing Miskawaih's thoughts on human personality.

In this introduction, the author begins with Move 1 (establishing a territory). He makes centrality claims by stating Miskawaih as an eminent moralist, historian and theistic thinker of Persia (**S1**). In the following sentences, he makes statements of knowledge on Miskawaih's life and works. Then, the author ends the introduction (**S8**) with Move 3 (occupying the niche) by informing readers what he will be discussing in the paper, thus introducing his study to his readers. Here we can see how the author carefully establishes the territory in the beginning of the introduction, but then proceeds directly to Move 3 (occupying the niche) without first establishing a niche (Move 2).

> Another noteworthy finding in the move structure of Islamic RA introductions is the emergence of M1 structure. Table 1 shows that 6 out of 60 article introductions have only Move 1 in the entire introduction. In these introductions, the authors use Move 1 without progressing to the next two moves (Move 2 and Move 3). These introductions generally comprise statements about the knowledge on the research topic or statements about the current state, progress, or complexity of the issue/data.

With regards to the results concerning the step structure, the findings are summarized in Table 2 below:

Table 2 Number of sentences for each step within the move

MOVE	STEP	Number of instances found in the article introductions
1	1	41
	2	325
	3	112
2	1A	7
	1B	27
	1C	23
	1D	-
	Additional steps	12
3	1A	13
	1B	94
	2	4
	3	44
Unidentified		14

Table 2 shows that the most used step within Move 1 is step 2 (Making topic generalization) with 325 sentences belonging to this step. This step is prevalent in the corpus whereby authors make an elaborated description on the topic frame or make general statements about the topic/issue and its current state or progress.

With regards to step 3 (Reviewing items of previous research), most of the authors of Islamic article introductions are found to review issues and ideas rather than review previous works/researches by other scholars. Instead of reporting the findings of other studies and pointing out what has not been done in the previous research, the literature reviews often refer to issues, notions or ideas. In addition, reference to the Quran and Hadith can be found frequently in Islamic article introductions. These citations of Quran and references to Hadith are another variation of literature review that authors of Islamic article regularly employ in the article introduction.

In their effort to establish a niche (Move 2), the authors of Islamic article introductions prefer to use step 1B (Indicating a gap) with 27 sentences allocated to this step. In addition to the four steps postulated in the CARS model for Move 2, 10 sentences in the sample introductions fall under the category of 'additional steps'. These steps consist of expressed needs/desires/interests, logical conclusions and contrastive comments. However, the gaps, limitations or weaknesses are often indicated in the situation or the issue rather than in the previous research. This variation of Step 1B is illustrated in the following examples.

Excerpt 2

Introduction	Sentence No.	
16	13	*However*, they are constantly demanding rights to preserve Islamic values and their distinct identities as Muslims
32	4	While in some cases the OIC has successfully brought the two conflicting parties together, in others *it has failed* to achieve its goal
49	7	The demand side – the incentive of students and their parents – *often goes unnoticed*

In Move 3, authors need to occupy the niche that has been established earlier. The most preferable step to actualize Move 3 in Islamic RA introductions appears to be Step 1B (Announcing present research) with 94 sentences belonging to this step. This indicates that most of the authors announce or introduce their research to the readers. Interestingly, this introduction of present research can take many forms, from a brief statement to an elaborative introduction that entails what the researcher will do, the perspective of the study and the description of the main features of the research.

Step 3 (Indicating research article structure) becomes the second most used step within Move 3 with 44 occurrences. This high occurrence indicates that many of the authors did not merely end their article introductions with the announcement of the present research but continue with the information on the RA structure and the remaining content of the research article. By providing this specific information, readers would know what to expect in the discussion section and it also gives them an outline that can guide and facilitate their reading and understanding of the whole article.

The table also shows a category of sentences which we have named 'unidentified'. This category refers to sentences in the Islamic RA introductions cannot be classified into any of the move-steps prescribed in the CARS model. These sentences possess elements that do not fit the standard CARS model, thus making them impractical to be assigned to any of the move or steps in the model. The first example of these unidentified sentences, which is given below, is in the form of a Quranic verse in Introduction 12.

Excerpt 3

Introduction	
12	**S1)** O humanity! We have made you male and female, and appointed you to be peoples and tribes in order that you know one another. (Qur'an 49:13)

4. Discussion

The results reported in the previous section show that the overall move-pattern of Islamic academic RA introductions does not closely follow the pattern proposed by the CARS model. The variation in application and organization of the moves is evident in the corpus. Fifteen out of sixty article introductions employ all the moves proposed by the CARS model. Of this, five article introductions whose move structures repeat some of the moves were considered as close to the structure in the CARS model.

The result does not only demonstrate the variation in the order of moves but also the omission of moves in the Islamic RA introductions. The finding reveals M1-M3 structure as the predominant structure, which shows the omission of Move 2 (establishing a niche) in the introductions. The nature of the Islamic article may have influenced the omission of Move 2 in the introductions. The majority of the Islamic articles are theoretical type of

paper in which the approach taken by the author is mainly to analyze, critically discuss an issue and offer a constructive study that can benefit the readers. As these are the objectives of their papers, the authors might have felt that Move 2 where they needed to indicate a gap, counter-claim ideas or criticize previous studies were irrelevant or unnecessary and thus might have chosen to leave out this move.

The finding for step preference shows Step 2 (Making topic generalization) as the most preferred step to be used in the Islamic RA introductions. This step was allocated to 325 sentences and this significant number reveals that the majority of the authors devoted the space in their introductions to this step. In this step, the authors naturally make statements about relevant issue or address current state of knowledge involving the research topic. The extensive use of topic generalization suggests that authors prefer this step as a strategy to help establish their research territory. They may consider this step as a comprehensive approach that not only provides their readers with background knowledge and familiarizes them with the topic, but conveys the importance of the research as well. In this way, the authors can avoid using step 1 which is centrality claim, which they may regard as too assertive in conveying the importance of the research to the readers.

Furthermore, a variation can be seen in the application of step 3 (Reviewing items of previous research). The authors tend to review issues and ideas rather than review previous works/researches by other scholars. This form of literature review is seen as part of the topic generalization or background knowledge as they are frequently located between step 2 (making topic generalization). Thus, it can be said that their primary function is not to create a research space in the literature, but to support the background knowledge provided by the authors. This is demonstrated in the example from Introduction 10:

Excerpt 4

Move	Step	Introduction	Sentence No.	
1	2	10	3	In the last few decades, Muslim revivalist groups in Southeast Asia have challenged the existing political power structures
1	3	10	4	For example, in multireligious Malaysia, the relationship between state and religion has become increasingly interconnected and intertwined, largely due to the pressure of Islamic movements and opposition groups that have attempted to influence the government in order to shape and transform society in a manner that corresponds to Islamic ideals and values.
1	2	10	5	This has led to an increased Islamicity on the part of the government and growing concerns by some ethno-religious minorities about how far the government's Islamization will go.

In the example above, after addressing the issue of Muslim revivalist groups (sentence 3), the author reviews the same issue that has happened in Malaysia. The author then continues to discuss the effect of Islamic movement (sentence 5). Here sentence 4 does not only serve as a form of literature review, but part of the background knowledge, to complement the discussion by the author on the topic. It adds to the readers' knowledge on the subject matter.

A distinctive form of literature review, the reference to the Quran and Hadith is prevalent in the Islamic RA introductions. It provides great support to the authors' discussion on the topic and help to clarify any uncertainty that may arise on the particular issue/topic. The following excerpts demonstrate the reference to the Quran and Hadith literature in the Islamic article introductions:

Excerpt 5

Introduction	Sentence No.	
7	6	These concepts and their foundational role in shaping the early Muslim polity are reflected clearly in hadith literature and individual monographs that deal with the moral excellences of the Prophet's Companions.
53	4	It has been, inter alia, ordained that when you deal with each other, in transactions involving future obligations, transactions in this behalf should be reduced into writing, and the writing so made should be attested by witnesses (*al-Baqarah*, 11:282 and 283).

The distinction in the application of step can also be identified in the use of Step 1B within Move 2. In this regard, the function of step 1B (Indicating a gap) is realized by indicating the gaps, limitations and weaknesses in the situation or the issue rather than in the previous research. Contrary to the experimental paper where there is an extensive reference to previous research, the majority of the Islamic articles are theoretical in nature in which the focus is on the discussion and understanding of issues/topics in relation to Islam. Thus, authors may consider this form of step 1B as more relevant and efficient in providing justification for the research whereby the gap is established based on the situation or issue. In this way, it will help readers to realize the necessity of the study by looking at the scarcity or problem in the situation/issue. This variation of Step 1B is illustrated in the sentence below.

Excerpt 6

Introduction	Sentence No.	
16	12	Since Canada allows freedom of religion, the Muslims have not demanded any kind of autonomy.
16	13	*However*, they are constantly demanding rights to preserve Islamic values and their distinct identities as Muslims.

In sentence 13, the sentence connector, '*however*' functions as the linguistic signal that indicates the act of indicating of gap by the author. But, the gap mentioned here relates to an issue of Muslim rights. Sentence 12 is making topic generalization as it informs readers on the Muslim situation in Canada. They are given freedom of religion in the country, but they still need to fight for their rights to preserve Islamic values and identity as Muslims. This shows some weaknesses or limitations concerning Muslim rights in Canada.

The results seem to indicate that most of the Islamic RA authors choose to announce their present research (Step 1B) in their introductions. However, the announcement or introduction of the present research to the readers is expressed in various manners. This variation emphasizes the distinctiveness of Islamic RA introductions. The introduction of the present research can be in the form of brief statements to an elaborate introduction that entails what the researcher will do, the perspective of the study and the description of the main features of the research.

Even though the announcement of present research is expressed in elaborate statements, some of them can be quite vague and may well be overlooked by the readers. However, they are normally recognized by the use of deictic references to the present text as shown through the italicized words in the following examples:

Excerpt 7

Introduction	Sentence No.	
14	4	That separatist elements, some of them with Islamist agendas, exist in Xinjiang is not at issue *here*.
22	5	Much of the discussion *in this paper* centres upon Muslim women who are the citizens of Muslim-nation states in the Arab world, Iran, the Indo-Pak sub-continent and in South East Asia.
36	16	The perspective chosen *in this investigation* is external in terms of nationality but internal in terms of religious affiliation; that is to say, as Egyptians the commentators were not affected by the events in Turkey; as Muslims, however, they could not be totally indifferent to what was taking place in another part of the Islamic community (*umma*).

Apart from the variation in the moves and steps used in the corpus, this study identified several features that cannot be accounted for in the CARS model. From the analysis, the researchers found Quranic citation that occurs in some of the article introductions. The Quranic verse/citation is a unique feature that can be found frequently in Islamic article introduction. It may be seen as irrelevant in relation to the CARS model, but it certainly holds a significant value as a primary source of knowledge for Muslims. Thus, the presence of Quranic citation in the Islamic article introductions is regarded as constantly relevant and significant.

Another type of sentence that cannot be classified into any of the moves and steps in the CARS model is the sentence whereby the author expresses the possible contribution of the study. Below are the examples of this category of sentence.

Excerpt 8

Introduction	Sentence No.	
57	15	This essay may help the English intelligentsia get a viable way to come closer to the original purport of the Quran.
21	7	With this, it is hoped, a better understanding of the whole genre may be available.

These sentences do not give preview of the principal findings of the study, but indicates what the study will contribute. It expresses the hope of the author that the study will provide a positive input to the understanding of the research topic.

5. Conclusion

The primary aims of this study were to explore the move-pattern of Islamic academic RA introductions and identification of variations in the steps used to actualize each move. The result pointed to the fact that the move-structure of Islamic RA introductions does not closely resemble the move-structure proposed by the CARS model. The variations in terms of the organization and application of moves were evident with only 10 introductions strictly following the move structure proposed by the CARS model.

Variations can also be seen in the steps used to actualize each move. The authors' preference for certain steps within the move shows how they choose to approach their introduction writing and appeal to the readers. The disciplinary variation can be said as a major contributing factor to the variation of rhetorical organization found in the Islamic RA introductions. The subject matter of Islamic article involved issues related to Muslim and Islamic teaching. The style of writing is more on discussion where information and content of the introduction is organized in a way that can provide readers with background knowledge of the subject matter. Hence, the gaps,

limitations or weaknesses are often indicated in the situation or the issue rather than in the previous research as the focus of the paper is to gain better understanding and discuss the issue or topic.

In addition, the authors' purpose in writing the introduction also influences its organization. In these Islamic articles, it can be said that the authors' main task is to analyze, critically discuss an issue and offer a constructive study that can benefit the readers. Hence, the article introduction is also designed to serve this purpose. Authors do not feel the need to indicate a gap, counter-claim ideas or criticize the previous studies in their introduction. The authors' choice to use only Move 1 in some of the article introductions also reflects their focus or purpose of the article introductions. Here, the main concern of the article introductions might be to provide readers with comprehensive theoretical background and establish a strong basis for their research. Thus, in this study, the way the Islamic article introductions are written and rhetorically organized is very much influenced by the communicative purpose of the author.

Apart from the variations in the organization of the moves and implementation of the steps, there are several unique features found in the Islamic RA introductions that cannot be explained using the CARS model. The Quranic citation and reference to the Hadith and Quran are unique characteristics of the Islamic RA introductions. This indicates that even though the CARS model represents the standard pattern of research article introduction, it does not account for some unique features or variations found in the Islamic article introductions. These unique features and differences found in the corpus may be due to the disciplinary variations of Islamic research articles. Hence, a degree of flexibility is needed in applying the model as different disciplines may implement different rhetorical choices that lead to the variations in the research article introductions.

Nevertheless, Swales's 1990 CARS model is useful as an analytical tool to investigate and examine the rhetorical organization of RA introductions. Moreover, it can also be used as a basic guideline for novice writers in constructing a research article introduction that achieve their communicative purpose, appropriate to the respective discourse community and facilitate the readers' understanding as well. It should be noted that this study investigated a small corpus of Islamic academic RA introductions. As such, the findings reported here might not reflect the overall rhetorical organization of Islamic RA introductions. Further research with much larger corpus is necessary to generalize the discovery on rhetorical organization of Islamic RA introductions.

Nonetheless, the findings of this study may have some implications for the learning and teaching of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It exposes students to the variation of rhetorical moves in Islamic RA introductions, develops better understanding of the construction and organization of a research article introduction and provides teachers with relevant information that can help to improve their teaching approach and materials for the ESP course.

Acknowledgements

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