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‘The Discussion Section in Essence’ Poem

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Introduction:

Seeking applicability of research results

- Whenever researchers present their current work at an applied linguistics-related conference, it is always a good idea to discuss the applicability of their results.
- I was about to present mine at the 2015 PRISEAL (Publishing and Presenting Research Internationally: Issues for Speakers of English as an Additional Language) Conference held in Coimbra, Portugal, in October 2015.
- So, just one week before, I thought to myself: ‘What am I going to tell my audience about what I am thinking of doing with my own results?’



Method 1: Sharing what I have learned

- I wondered: If I only had one minute to explain to would-be authors of empirical research articles in English whose L1 is not English what kinds of things to say in their Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section for publication in an international journal, what would I tell them? How would I do so?
- So I went back to the main table of results of my contrastive rhetoric study on the Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section of empirical research articles across Spanish as L1 and international English (Forthcoming research article) and let the results speak to me... (see table below)

Method 2: Grasping main ideas

MOVES AND STEPS IN DISCUSSION (& CONCLUSIONS) SECTIONS	Sp(%)	Eng(%)	Sp RAs	Eng RAs
MOVE 1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION	24%	30%	13	15
STEP 1.1. Re-stating key features of the current study	9%	8%	10	14
STEP 1.2. Reporting background information with citations	10%	18%	11	12
STEP 1.3. Providing background information without citations	5%	4%	7	11
MOVE 2. SUMMARIZING OR RESTATING KEY FINDINGS	26%	20%	15	15
STEP 2.1. Presenting a neutral or expected finding	15%	11%	15	15
STEP 2.2. Presenting a finding as contrasting or unexpected	5%	4%	6	10
STEP 2.3. Highlighting a finding	2%	0%	4	1
MOVE 3. DISCUSSING KEY FINDINGS AND OTHER FEATURES	24%	27%	13	15
STEP 3.1. Deducing from findings	8%	10%	10	14
STEP 3.2. Comparing with previous studies	6%	7%	7	12
STEP 3.3. Discussing causes and effects; speculating	6%	7%	8	10
STEP 3.4. Making a prediction	2%	3%	5	8
STEP 3.5. Expressing support to an existing theory or method	1%	1%	4	7
STEP 3.6. Commenting on a finding or side-effect	1%	1%	3	4
MOVE 4. EVALUATING CURRENT AND PAST RESEARCH	12%	14%	10	14
STEP 4.1. Pointing out a negative feature or a limitation of the current study	4%	4%	7	10
STEP 4.2. Evaluating the state of knowledge, practice or previous studies	1%	5%	4	9
STEP 4.3. Pointing out a positive feature of the current study	3%	2%	5	8
STEP 4.4. Stating contribution or addition to the discipline	2%	1%	5	7
MOVE 5. DRAWING IMPLICATIONS	15%	9%	10	14
STEP 5.1. Making recommendations for future practice or research	12%	7%	9	13
STEP 5.2. Suggesting applicability or usability of findings or outcomes	3%	1%	6	4
STEP 5.3. Hypothesising for future research	0%	1%	1	2
Nuclear Discourse Units (STEPS)	85%	85%	15	15
Total number of Discourse Units (Announcing + Nuclear + Elaborative)	100%	100%	15	15

Frequency of rhetorical steps as used in English:

- **Obligatory**
- **Highly frequent**
- **Frequent**
- **Rare**

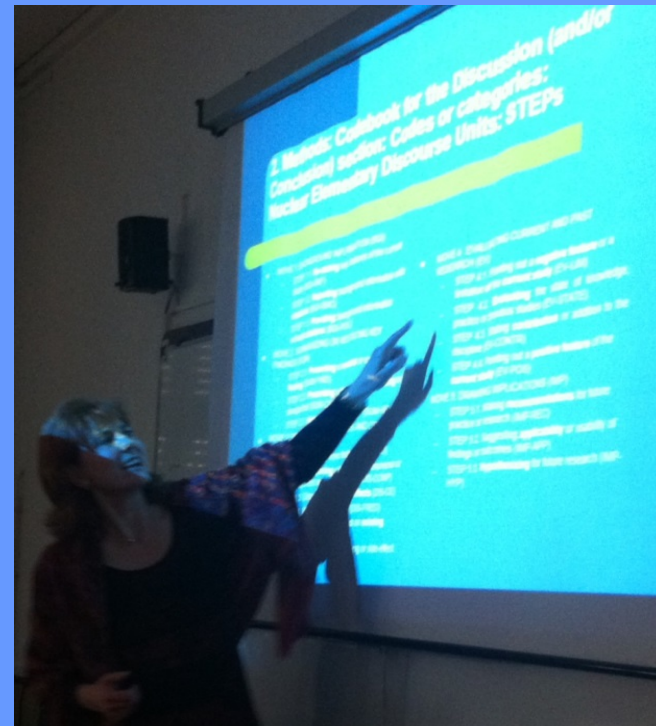


The Discussion Section in Essence Poem
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Method 3: Feeling inspired...

- Since my advice was going to be about how to get published in international journals in English, I focussed on my results in relation to the English corpus of empirical research articles.
- Simultaneously, I was trying to notice the kinds of things that researchers say in international journals in English that they would not say as much in national journals in Spanish.
- Aiming to express my observations in a language that any researcher could understand, the funny thing was that my answer came out in verse, and a bit like a parody! (See slide below)



'The Discussion Section in Essence' Poem

Write your Discussion section as if talking to your peers about the meaning of your results to your discipline and about the value of your research. Use 'we' if you are writing on behalf of your co-authors too, as suggested by this poem.

The Discussion Section in Essence

Click on the play icon
to hear the poem.



Remember this was our plan
In view of what others have done
Our findings are now summarized
To prove whether we were right

This evidence shows what we expected
So our hypothesis is corroborated
But this one is very surprising
We wonder why; it's disappointing

Factor X could well be the cause
Some others could not agree more
Such theory gets our support
Our predictions are likely to hold

Our study has some limitations
But, please, note its many innovations
It makes a great contribution
As it offers the desired solution

We now show a few implications
We can make some recommendations
Our results could well be applied
But some things need to be clarified

Ana Moreno, León, Spain, 23/10/2015
Dedicated to John Swales

Discussion: Having fun!

- Indeed, while I was reading the verses aloud, I felt as surprised as you are. It really sounded like a parody! But I liked the idea. Isn't it fun? After all, doing science is a lot of fun! Why not making learning about how to write about science enjoyable too?
- Then, I thought that this poem, together with my table of results, could well serve as the basis for a number of very useful pedagogical tasks. So this is what I am developing now: tasks that can help researchers around the world to write the Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section of their empirical research manuscripts for publication in international journals more confidently.
- Keep an eye on the ENEIDA Website to be launched soon [eneida.unileon.es]



Discussion: What the poem means...

1. My contrastive study across English and Spanish (Moreno, in process) is **based on** the analysis of **the rhetorical structure of 30 exemplary empirical research articles**, 15 in Spanish and 15 in English, drawn from the **EXEMPRAES Corpora** (Moreno, in process). These corpora are made up of research articles recommended by expert informants from such knowledge areas as **the life sciences, other natural and experimental sciences, healthcare sciences** and **social sciences**.
2. The five **stanzas** in the poem do **NOT** represent paragraphs in a Discussion section. They just aim to roughly capture **the major issues that are typically covered** in this section; that is, the **rhetorical moves** that the authors in my study have made (see table for more details).
3. Even though the **order of the verses** might suggest one possible logical reasoning, this has only been done to **help people learn the poem**. The **combinations** of steps are **multiple in actual argumentation**.
4. Thus, the **verses just aim to represent possible things to say or to imply in a Discussion (and/or Conclusion) section** (see table above for more details).
5. I wish the **poem** were always **shown in its context**: this presentation.

Dedication

- I wish to dedicate this poem to John Swales for teaching me to analyse discourse in functional terms and always in context, and for his encouragement to keep having an applied perspective in mind.
- The insights I have learned from him and his work have illuminated me so much throughout my career, both in my role as a lecturer and as a researcher, that I could not be more grateful to him.
- On top of everything, he has been a great friend and support!



Acknowledgements

- I am really grateful to **Itesh Sachdev** and **Laurence Anthony** for their helpful comments on an earlier version of the poem and for their encouragement to present it at the conference.
- I also wish to thank **my enthusiastic audience**, who showed great interest in the poem and also commented on its effectiveness and potential pedagogical value.

Thank you!

Reference

- The poem can be cited as:

Moreno, Ana I. (2015). 'The Discussion Section in Essence' Poem. The effect of national/international audience on the rhetorical structure of research article Discussion sections. PRISEAL Conference, University of Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal, 30 Oct-01 Nov 2015.

