

Structuring the Research Article Introduction: Rhetorical Choices and Contextual Influences among Algerian EFL Researchers in Applied Linguistics

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Abstract:

This study adopted a descriptive qualitative design to examine both the rhetorical practices and the contextual factors influencing Algerian researchers' structuring of research article introductions in the field of English Applied Linguistics. The study also aimed to assess whether these structuring patterns aligned with Swales' CARS model. Data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire completed by 25 university teachers across various Algerian institutions. The findings revealed common challenges in articulating the research gap, maintaining rhetorical coherence, and meeting journal expectations. Participants reported acquiring structural knowledge through reading and imitation rather than formal instruction. They also emphasized the strong influence of disciplinary norms, institutional standards and cultural background on rhetorical choices. The analysis of rhetorical moves revealed only a partial alignment with the CARS model. Finally, the study findings indicate a clear need for genre-based training in research article introduction writing to foster genre pedagogy and improve publication outcomes.

Keywords: Research Article Introduction, Rhetorical Structure, Contextual Factors, Applied Linguistics, Genre-Based Training.

Introduction

Writing academic research article introductions (RAIs) follows established rhetorical conventions that may vary across disciplines and linguistic backgrounds. To help non-native English-speaking researchers develop effective academic writing skills, few genre-based approaches to academic writing instruction have been established in the field of English for academic purposes (EAP). Swales' (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model is one of the most influential frameworks in genre analysis. It outlines the typical move structure of RA introductions: (1) establishing a territory, (2) establishing a niche, (3) occupying the niche. There is an extensive research on how EFL researchers construct their RA introductions (Alqahtani, 2006; Ozturk, 2007; Swales' & Feak, 2012; Alotaibi, 2013, Hyland, 2016; Reza & Amiri, 2020), but little is known about the decision-making processes behind these structures and RAI writers' conscious usages of rhetorical strategies.

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Within the Algerian context, EFL researchers face unique challenges in writing for academic publication due to socio-cultural and disciplinary influences (Amara, 2008; Adjina, 2016). This can be attributed to the lack of explicit training in genre-based approaches leading to variations in how Algerian EFL researchers structure their RA introductions. Although some textual analyses of Algerian research article sections have been identified in the body of literature (e.g., Amara, 2009; Adjina, 2016; Aggoun & Ghouar, 2018; Aggoun, 2020; Hamadouche, 2023), there is lack of investigations into how Algerian EFL writers manage and justify their rhetorical choices.

Therefore, the current study follows a descriptive approach to understand how Algerian researchers in the field of Applied linguistics manage to structure their RA introductions written in English, focusing on their writing challenges and strategies, rhetorical practices, and factors influencing their decision-making. More specifically, we aim to reveal whether their structuring patterns align with Swales' CARS model and how disciplinary and sociocultural factors influence their writing choices. The findings of this study will contribute to a better understanding of EFL academic writing and research practices in Algeria. Therefore, the study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the challenges faced by Algerian EFL writers when structuring the RA introduction?
2. What rhetorical strategies do Algerian EFL writers use to organize the RA introduction in the field of Applied Linguistics?
3. How do disciplinary and sociocultural factors influence their decision making when structuring the RA introduction?
4. What are their perceptions of genre-based training in RA introduction writing?

1. Review of Related Literature

In this section, we provide a brief overview of the major concern of our study, namely the research article introduction and Swales' CARS model. The review also discusses issues related to writing for scholarly publication, including the main difficulties faced by non-native English writers and the role of genre based instruction in mitigating challenges of academic writing.

1.1. The Research Article Introduction and Swales' CARS Model

The introduction is a crucial part of the research article as it establishes the context of the study, engages readers, and explains the rationale behind the research. However, due to varying rhetorical conventions across cultures and the demanding nature of writing for an international audience (Swales & Feak, 2009), many EFL researchers struggle to master the introduction, particularly its rhetorical structure and communicative functions (Sheldon, 2013). Therefore, developing effective models for structuring introductions has become essential, especially for EFL researchers.

Swales' (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model has become one the most used frameworks in genre-based analysis and writing instruction. It highlights how the research article typically exhibits a generic structure and socio-rhetorical communicative purposes, which are organized into textual units known as Moves. According to Dudley Evans and St. John (1998), "a move refers to a discoursed segment that performs a particular communicative

function'' (p.89). In Swales' model, three rhetorical moves were identified in research article introductions:

- Move 1 (Establishing a territory): In this part of the introduction, authors tend to introduce their research topic, highlight the significance of the study and claim its centrality in a given research field, often through general statements and citations.
- Move 2 (Establishing a Niche): In this move, authors indicate a gap or limitation in previous research. This is an attempt to create a research space in the existing body of research.
- Move 3 (Occupying the niche). This is a final sub-section of the introduction where authors present the purpose of their research and outline their aims, state the research questions and/or hypotheses and justify the value of their study.

Swales' CARS model has been widely adopted in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) courses, and several studies have found it effective for teaching students how to structure research article introductions (eg., Alsayed et al., 2022; Yasin & Qamariah, 2023) and for raising their genre awareness (Swales and Feak, 2009). Moreover, the model has been applied in numerous studies to analyze published introductions revealing significant patterns in how writers from diverse cultural (eg., Alqahtani, 2006; Loi & Evans, 2010; Mueller, 2017; Benraiss and Bani Koumachi, 2023) and disciplinary (eg., Samraj, 2002; Ozturk, 2007; Afshar, Doosti, & Movassagh, 2018; Lu, Yoon, & Casal, 2021) backgrounds construct and organize their research articles.

1.2. Writing for Scholarly Publication

Lillis and Scot (2007) assert that academic writing is essential for university education and scholarly communication. It is especially important for sharing original data and findings with the global academic community through writing for international journals. In this regard, Tuck (2018) claims that engaging in the process of publishing helps researchers raise their awareness of their research interests and challenges, thereby developing their academic writing skills.

A range of rhetorical practices such as textual organization, structuring of arguments, the use of citations and audience engagement are integral to academic writing and they are widely regarded as essential conventions for scholarly publication (Azizah & Budiman, 2017). Citations, for instance, are vital in academic writing not only to avoid plagiarism, but also to acknowledge prior academic contributions (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2000; Samraj, 2002). Therefore, students should master referencing to strengthen their arguments and build on existing research. Integral referencing and non-integral referencing are two important techniques used in academic writing to incorporate different sources. In integral referencing, the focus is partly on the author whose name appears within the sentence. The focus in non-integral referencing, on the other hand, is more on the idea or information, and the author's name appears in parentheses or footnotes (Swales, 2004).

Textual organization is another key rhetorical practice in academic writing. For example, in research article introductions, academic writers organize their ideas logically and persuasively to guide readers from general background to the specific scope of their research (Anthony, 1999; Hyland, 2004). A well-structured introduction ensures clarity, coherence and effective engagement with the reader within specific genres (Swales & Feak, 2009).

Reader engagement refers to the textual strategies writers use to involve, communicate and negotiate with their readers (Hyland, 2005). Bahatia (2002) suggests that anticipating the

reader's feedback and establishing a clear interaction with them through the text reflects an awareness of the audience which is central in academic writing as a form of social action.

In his study of the challenges facing university-level English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers in Nepal when writing the research articles, Tiwari (2023) could identify three main categories: rhetorical, disciplinary and cultural. The non-native English writers described their struggle with structuring their RAs, establishing authorial voice and using citation and argumentation. According to Tiwari (2023), these challenges were influenced by their cultural values that ensure indirectness and collectivism rather than directness and assertiveness, making it harder to align with western academic norms. Disciplinary norms of specific fields were also found to be challenging because they are often implicit, varying across sub-disciplines and journals. Finally, the study revealed that cultural expectations about politeness, formality and objectivity greatly differed between native and western cultures.

There is, then, a need for a more process-oriented approach that emphasizes the crucial role of social context, audience, purpose and disciplinary conventions. Learners need clear instruction on these conventions to write different types of texts effectively. The genre-based approach (GBA), in particular, has been proven to be useful in allowing learners to meet their academic needs; and to become effective readers and writers. Recent studies by Giraldo (2019), Rezvani (2020), Nagao (2021), Abdel Latif et al., (2024) highlighted the significance of providing genre-based instruction helping scholars understand rhetorical structures and linguistic patterns, increase their confidence and hence, overcome the challenges of writing for publication.

2. Method

2.1. Research Design

The study adopts a descriptive qualitative research design. It aims to describe existing strategies and patterns in how Algerian researchers in the field of Applied Linguistics structure their research article introductions written in English. The study builds on genre-based insights, particularly Swales' CARS model to understand the reasoning behind structuring RA introductions among these writers and factors influencing their decision-making.

2.2. Data Collection Instrument

The data were collected through a semi-structured questionnaire. The latter included both closed-ended and open-ended questions to balance structure with depth. The design of the questionnaire was informed by Swales' (1990, 2004) CARS model which describes the typical rhetorical moves of research article introductions, Move 1 (Establishing a Territory), Move 2 (Establishing a Niche) and Move 3 (Occupying the Niche). Participants were asked questions like how to start the introduction, how to identify a research gap, how to present the research objectives, and how they adapt their writing to specific expectations. The open-ended questions allowed the participants to explain the rationale of their choices and writing practices.

2.3. Participants and Sampling Technique

The participants of this study (25 participants) were Algerian researchers in the field of English Applied linguistics and University teachers from various Algerian universities, including the university of Biskra, Oum El Bouaghi, Constantine, Sidi Bel Abbas, Ouargla, Batna and Algiers. All participants had published at least one research article in English, which

was a key criterion for their selection. This condition ensured that the sample consisted of individuals with shared academic field, relevant expertise and publication experience and hence capable of providing informed and reflective responses about their academic writing practices. Therefore, the purposive sampling technique was employed to select participants with these requirements.

2.4. Data Analysis

The purpose of the analysis is to describe how the participant Algerian researchers structure the research article introduction section and to identify the contextual factors influencing their rhetorical choices. First, the analysis is grounded in Swales' CARS model, focusing on participants' responses about the use (presence, sequence and perceived importance) of the three established rhetorical moves. The descriptive analysis of rhetorical practices aimed at showing the degree to which Swales' model aligns with the Algerian actual rhetorical choices and writing behaviors in the EFL context. Second, besides the rhetorical structure, the analysis also aimed to understand the contextual factors shaping the participants' writing decisions and practices. The open ended questions were raised to reveal writers' perspectives on the influence of institutional and disciplinary conventions, the role of academic training and genre-based instruction, and reported challenges in structuring RA introductions. Through the combination of structured coding based on Swales' model and thematic analysis of participants reflections, the study sought to provide a systematic description of Algerian researchers' approach of writing RA introductions.

3. Results:

This section presents the key findings and interpretations of the study organized according to the main areas covered in the questionnaire. The latter begins with Section 1 which gathers information about the participants' academic background. Section 2 follows with questions exploring their writing approaches and challenges. Sections 3 and 4 focus on the participants' rhetorical practices in structuring the RA introduction and the factors influencing these practices, respectively. Finally, Section 5 aims to uncover participants' perceptions of genre-based instruction in RA introduction writing.

Section 1: Participant Background (Descriptive Profile)

This section presents an overview of the participants' profiles to better understand the background of their rhetorical choices and to contextualize the findings through 4 closed-ended questions:

Q1. What is your academic qualification?

Q2. How many research articles have you written in English?

Q3. Have you published any research articles in international journals?

Q4. How did you learn to write RA introductions? (Multiple choice)

The purpose of these questions is to understand the participants' academic level, writing experience and exposure to international publishing and academic writing instruction. This background could influence how and why they write research articles. Responses are summarized in the following table (Table. 1):

Table 1: Summary of Participants' Academic Background and Research Writing Experience

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Question	Options	%
Academic qualification	Magister	16%
	PhD	84%
Articles written in English	1-3	34%
	4-6	24%
	More than 6	40%
Published internationally?	Yes	76%
	No	24%
How did you learn to write RA introductions?	Self study	84%
	Academic books	40%
	University courses	28%
	Supervisor feedback	20%
	Workshops	12%
	Other	4%

The source: produced by the author

As Table. 1 illustrates, 84% of respondents hold a PhD while a smaller portion (16%) hold Magister degree. This indicates that the majority of participants are experienced researchers and doctoral candidates pursuing advanced academic research. As for the writing experience of the respondents, a significant number (40%) had authored more than six articles in English while 24% of them reported having authored 4-6 articles suggesting a moderate participation and finally, more limited experience was detected among 34% of respondents. This reflects a mix of academic contributions between the Algerian novice and more experienced researchers. At the global level, the majority of participants (76%) have assured that they had published research articles in international journals suggesting familiarity with international academic writing standards.

In Question 4, we aimed to explore how participants learned to write RA introductions, identifying the sources that shaped their knowledge of writing skills. The results showed that most participants (84%) learned to write the RA introduction through self-study. Relying on academic books (40%) and university courses (28%) were the other frequently cited sources (40%). 20% of participants mentioned supervisor feedback while fewer participants reported using workshops (12%) and other sources (4%). The results indicate that many respondents prefer self-directed learning over formal training or structured support.

Section 2: Writing Approaches and challenges

To better understand their practical experiences and rhetorical models (if any), the participants were asked about the difficulties they face when writing RA introductions and their approaches to structuring them. The section started with the following question:

Q5. What challenges do you face when writing RA introductions?

Responses to this question presented a variety of challenges facing the Algerian researchers when writing RA introductions. Responses are grouped into five main themes.

A common challenge described by some participants was establishing a clear research gap and strong hook. One respondent explained ‘‘my main challenge is establishing a strong

research gap and hook” while another respondent stated “this section is difficult to write, especially for doctorate students who need sometimes to include previous studies (literature review)”. This may indicate that some Algerian researchers still have limited knowledge of how to situate their research within existing academic literature, which can affect their confidence in presenting their work as significant.

Others mentioned problems related to academic language use including word choice, style, tone and reader engagement. For example, a major problem according to one of the respondents is “maintaining a coherent flow and achieving the appropriate tone and style expected in academic writing”. Another respondent reported “writing an introduction that engages the reader...without repetition of the same verbs or rhetorical expressions”. This suggests that even more experienced researchers find academic writing difficult to manage, especially in terms of coherence, clarity, precision and rhetorical choices.

Structure and organization of the RA introduction was also highlighted as a prominent challenge among Algerian researchers. One respondent reported struggling with “how to start it, what to say and what not to say” while another gave a clearer assertion by adding “the only challenge is how to structure the introduction, following the conventions of rhetorical organization”. This shows that rhetorical structure is still a major concern among Algerian researchers who may need more exposure to and practice of typical rhetorical models.

Furthermore, the majority of participants considered journal and disciplinary conventions as another crucial area of concern. One mentioned “I only struggle with following the conventions of the discipline and the different requirements set by different journals”. Similarly, others expressed the difficulty to “confine to different writing templates” and “journals conventions that do not usually align with what I know”. This may indicate that Algerian researchers are still confused by the varying disciplinary and journal expectations which reflects their continuous need to adapt to unfamiliar writing norms.

Finally, beyond language and structure, content-related difficulties were also reported by the respondents who mentioned challenges with “finding a strong thesis statement”, “knowing what to talk about exactly”, and “moving smoothly from one idea to another”. This may reflect their struggle with narrowing the research focus and make strong and clear statements.

Q6. When writing RA introductions, do you consciously follow a specific model or structure? If yes, can you describe it?

The results showed that 40% of respondents said ‘No’, suggesting that this portion of researchers completely lacks awareness or confidence in applying structured rhetorical models. On the other hand, 60% of them responded ‘Yes’, indicating that more than half of the participants apply rhetorical models of structuring RA introductions purposefully and consciously. However, when the 60% who said ‘yes’ were asked to describe the models they use, not all responses were clear. Many of these participants described the structure of the entire article (e.g., introduction, methodology, results, conclusion) rather than just the introduction. This may indicate a misunderstanding of the question, or lack of clarity about the internal structure of the RA introduction.

Moreover, some participants mentioned that they just imitate other articles rather than following a specific writing model. This is still a conscious self-guided practice even in the absence of formal training.

Other participants; however, described more generic structures, such as starting from general background and narrowing down to the gap and research questions, using the ‘reversed triangle’ metaphor. This reflects some level of awareness of academic conventions gained through reading and writing experience rather than formal instruction. Finally, Swales’ CARS model was explicitly referred to by few participants (3 respondents) who mentioned that they started using it only recently “due to lack of awareness of its existence before” as one respondent explained. This could imply limited exposure to genre-based writing training in Algeria.

Section 3: Rhetorical Practices in Structuring the RA introduction

The questions within this section are designed based on Swales’ (1990,2004) CARS model to identify common rhetorical practices among Algerian EFL researchers and to what extent they align with Swales’ model to structuring the RA introduction. The section starts with questions related to Move 1 (Establishing a territory) in the CARS model in which we try to understand how the participants begin the RA introduction. We focus on how they introduce the research topic, highlight its significance and review previous research in this rhetorical part of the introduction.

To begin with, the following table (Table 2) summarizes the first three questions along with their responses within Section 3:

(Note: Respondents were allowed to choose more than one answer)

Table 2: Summary of Participants’ Rhetorical preferences in Move 1

Question	Options	%
Q7. How do you introduce your topic in the RA introduction?	- Begin with a general topic overview	96%
	- Indicate a research gap	44%
	-State the study’s objectives	32%
Q8. How do you highlight its significance?	- Present extensive background information	44%
	- Cite key studies	44%
	- Explain real world applications	68%
Q9. How do you review previous research in your RA introduction?	- Summarize key studies	56%
	- identify research gaps	36%
	- Criticize previous studies	4%
	- Other	4%

The source: produced by the author

Question 7 aimed at identifying the general rhetorical units (moves) that Algerian researchers in the field of Applied linguistics choose to include in the RA introduction. The results revealed that the vast majority (96%) tend to begin their introduction with a general overview of the topic (Move 1) while less than half (44%) explicitly indicate a research gap in their introductions (Move 2) and only 33% clearly state the study’s objectives in this section of the research article (Move 3). This suggests that the respondents do not fully follow the rhetorical sequence proposed by Swales in the CARS model, especially in terms of establishing the niche and occupying it.

Results also showed that most Algerian participants (68%) prefer to explain real world applications to highlight the importance of the research topic selected for the study. This may reflect their expectations about the significance of discussing practical applications on article acceptance and publication. Theoretical grounding through presenting extensive background (44%) and citations of previous research (44%) was also another tendency toward showing the relevance of the research topic among Algerian writers.

Regarding their preferred ways of reviewing literature, summarizing key studies was a strong tendency among 56% of respondents which aligns with the writing conventions of academic papers. However, only 36% of participants use the literature review to indicate a research gap and very few (4%) use it for critical synthesis. This indicates that Algerian writers mainly use literature review for descriptive rather than evaluative purposes.

According to Swales (1990, 2004), indicating a gap is a key rhetorical step in Move 2 (Establishing a niche) of the CARS model. Hence, the next question explores how Algerian participants identify a gap or limitation in prior research:

Q 10. How do you indicate a gap or limitation in previous research? (Multiple choice) Would you please justify your choice?

Responses to this question showed that a vast majority of respondents (88%) prefer to use explicit wording to clearly state the gap. A small number (8%) said they do not state the gap overtly, while 4% indicated using a different approach. This overwhelming explicitness reported by participants may suggest that Algerian researchers are aware of the need to indicate a gap in literature. However, building on the previous result in Question 9, we understood that most of these researchers use direct statements (explicit language) rather than critical engagement with existing research works.

When asked to justify their choice and explain the rationale of their actual strategy of indicating a gap, most participants emphasized clarity, precision and directness. ‘‘Explicitness is recommended in scientific writing’’, ‘‘I go straight to the point and state where the gap is’’. These actual responses may reflect awareness of the importance of making visible and clear statements of the research gap. Few participants; however, mentioned that they only give hints without explicitly indicating a gap. This possibly indicates uncertainty and sensitivity in making strong claims.

Finally, questions related to the final rhetorical move of the CARS model (Move 3 - Occupying the niche), addressed how participants typically realize this move of the RA introduction.

Q11. How do you present your research objectives in the RA introduction? (Multiple choice) Please explain your choice?

This step was assigned as the most obligatory constituent of Move 3 in Swales’ model where the objective of the study should be stated purposively or/and descriptively. This study revealed that 88% of participants state their research objectively directly whereas, 12% prefer to present a general overview with no specific objectives. Participants explanations involved the need to maintain clarity and precision through direct statements of the objectives. This reflects a strong awareness of the reader expectations that often demand clarity and directness.

Respondents presented justifications like ‘‘one must state the objectives clearly’’, ‘‘to avoid misunderstanding, we should give direct, specific and concise objectives’’.

Other respondents explained that their strategy of stating the objectives varies depending on the nature of the study and the journal. One mentioned ‘‘It depends on the topic and the nature of the article’’. This is perhaps an attempt to adapt to genre and audience expectations. Participants were also asked about other steps expected within Move 3 in the CARS model. Responses are summarized in Table 3 below:

Table 3: Participants’ rhetorical Choices in Move 3

Question	Option	%
Q12. Do you explicitly state the research questions and hypotheses in the RA introduction?	Yes	56%
	No (Reformulate)	44%
Q13. Do you briefly explain the methods in the RA introduction?	Yes	47%
	No	44%
Q14. Do you outline the structure of the article in the RA introduction?	Yes	40%
	No	60%

The source: produced by the author

As Table 3 illustrates, over than half of the participants (56%) reported that they state the research questions (RQs) and/or hypotheses (if any) explicitly in the RA introduction. Some respondents mentioned ‘‘yes, this is what is conventional in our discourse community’’, indicating preference for explicitness and familiarity with international publication conventions. A significant portion (44%) of respondents; however, said they prefer either to omit or reformulate the RQs and hypotheses. Some of them indicated that they ‘‘usually reformulate the research questions as topic statements rather than questions’’, showing a growing need to develop different stylistic writing strategies.

Similarly, 47% briefly explain the methods in the RA introduction, emphasizing clarity ‘‘right from the beginning’’ as one respondent mentioned. Meanwhile, 53% prefer to reserve these details to their designated section ‘Methodology’. This split reflects divergent orientation towards strictly following standard academic structure vs. clearly guiding the reader through the article.

As for outlining the structure of the RA, Swales (2004) highlighted that this step is probable in some fields, but unlikely in others. The majority of respondents (53%) in this study rejected this choice due to reasons such as brevity and genre-standards. Responses held arguments like ‘‘an article is usually a short piece of research, or ‘this is not a common practice’’. On the other hand, 37.5% showed more flexibility in this regard, noting that they do not always include the outline explicitly, but when they do, it is primarily to guide the reader through what follows. These responses reflect a flexible approach where both genre conventions and reader engagement are equally emphasized by Algerian researchers.

Section 4: Factors Influencing the Structuring of RA Introductions

This section explores the participants' perceptions of how institutional, disciplinary and cultural factors influence their decisions when structuring their RA introductions, starting with the following question:

Q15: Depending on which factors do you decide on structuring the RA introduction?

Multiple answers are allowed in this question that aims to understand the extent to which academic expectations and personal preferences shape Algerian researchers' structural decision as Table. 4 demonstrates:

Table 4: Participants' Responses to Factors influencing the structuring of RA introductions

Factor	% of Participants
Journal guidelines and reviewer expectations	68%
Research field and academic discipline	56%
Intuition and personal experience	44%
Previous academic writing training	12%

The source: produced by the author

These results show that publishing norms and reviewer expectations play a major role for 68% of participants when deciding on their writing practices, indicating clear genre awareness and a conscious intention to attain publication acceptance. Moreover, 56% viewed disciplinary conventions that vary across fields as influential, suggesting a strong emphasis on field-dependent decisions and an acknowledgement of discipline-specific expectations. 44% also identified intuition and personal judgment as a key factor in shaping Algerian researchers' rhetorical decisions, demonstrating a balance between institutional context and individual perspective. However, only 12% cited academic training, indicating less reliance on formal writing instruction. This may explain why they rely more heavily on journal instructions and disciplinary requirements over prior formal support.

The following open-ended questions aimed to dig deeper into how the participants perceive the influence of disciplinary and sociocultural affiliations on their rhetorical organization of the RA introduction.

Q16: How does your field of study (discipline) influence the way you organize the RA introduction?

The results showed that most respondents emphasize the importance of recognizing and adhering to the conventional patterns of their research field (Applied linguistics). The participants described this approach through direct and assertive statements like 'I try to adhere to the conventions of my discipline', 'Our discipline decides how we write', 'I try to strictly adhere to its conventions and norms'. Other respondents added that aligning their rhetorical structure to established disciplinary standards is due to an extensive exposure to leading journals and prior research works in the field. More importantly, some of the participant researchers reflected on the nature of Applied linguistics as an academic field with specific goals, focus, relevance and significance. Structural and stylistic aspects related to the field (such as APA and citation style) were also mentioned by few participants. This reflects a general understanding of the role of field-specific writing norms in shaping the Applied linguistics RA introduction.

However, a minority of respondents seemed to minimize the impact of discipline-specific norms. Responses like “I do not think it affects at all”, “I believe that in social sciences, introductions should follow the same pattern with slight variations” were presented, which suggests that writing conventions are universally shared across disciplines with minimal differences. This may indicate limited generic and disciplinary awareness, revealing an ongoing need for more genre-based academic support.

Q17: How do you think RA authors’ linguistic and cultural background can influence the way they structure the introduction?

Responses to this question also demonstrated strong awareness among the participants towards the influence of linguistic and cultural norms on RA authors’ rhetorical preferences. Communicative features across cultures like directness vs. indirectness, elaboration vs. linearity and clarity, and emphasis on narrative vs. factual tone were all believed to play a dynamic role in shaping the RA writing practices. Moreover, many participants discussed the influence of linguistic transfer and cultural identity on academic writing, noting that the mother tongue may affect the rhetorical structure, stylistic choices and reasoning, embedded in the RA introduction. According to some respondents, such cultural and linguistic influences can be better controlled by more exposure, experience and training in EFL academic writing.

In this regard, the participant researchers stressed that international genre conventions and publication standards largely dominated their decisions when structuring academic genres. One respondent noted that “authors must follow the norms of publishers....linguistic backgrounds are of little relevance”. This reflects a strategic commitment to conforming to conventional writing styles over local or individual writing patterns. Based on this finding, it became important to see whether Algerian researchers are open to giving or receiving training on how to write RA introductions. The following section addresses this final concern of the study by revealing participants’ perceptions of Genre-Based instruction.

Section 5: Perceptions of Genre-Based Training in RA Introduction Writing

This section focuses on participants’ views of the usefulness of genre-based instruction, the key writing aspects that should be emphasized, and the importance of understanding how Applied linguistics RA introductions are typically structured in high-impact journals.

Q18: How would offering training in research writing using genre-based approach be helpful to EFL Applied Linguistics writers?

The responses revealed a broad recognition of the positive implications of genre-based writing instruction among Algerian EFL researchers in Applied linguistics. Most participants emphasized that this type of structured instruction helps students develop their understanding of academic conventions regarding structure and language use. Genre-based training was also viewed as a means of improving chances of publication, especially where structured, clear and concise writing is expected. The psychological impact of such training was also addressed by some respondents who ensured that genre-based approaches can also be helpful with boosting confidence and academic engagement among novice researchers.

Despite these reflections, a number of participants pointed out that most Algerian junior university teachers and PhD students had never received formal instruction in genre-based

writing. This lack of training had led to noticeable educational gaps and limited genre awareness. These participants also emphasized the need to address this instructional gap, by integrating genre-based approaches into academic writing instruction, especially for early-career researchers. “This should be part of PhD candidates’ preparatory year”, as one respondent remarked.

Q19: What aspects of introduction writing should be emphasized in academic writing workshops?

The results show that all participants agree that the RA introduction is not just an opening, but a strategic rhetorical section in which the study is persuasively introduced. As for the main aspects to be emphasized in teaching how to write this section, some respondents highlighted the need to teach the rhetorical organization of the RA introduction. They mentioned “Swales CARS model”, “move analysis”, “moves and sub-moves” as major elements of this instruction. Gap identification was also pointed at as the most challenging, yet crucial rhetorical move in the in RA introduction. As some respondents noted, teaching strategies for recognizing and presenting the research gap is essential.

Some participants also mentioned that an explicit instruction on how to write an informative literature background with a concise evaluative synthesis is needed. This comment aligns with findings in Section 3 of this study, which showed that some Algerian researchers struggle with writing evaluative literature backgrounds.

Notably, one respondent stated “we all more or less have ideas, but we need execution”. This reflects the pedagogical gap between theory and practice, where more practical tools and step-by step guidance are increasingly demanded.

Q20: Why is it important to learn more about the structure of RA introductions in high-impact journals in your field?

Through this question, the aim was to uncover participants’ perceptions of the implications of rhetorical awareness in introduction writing, and how it may enhance their publication success and integration into high-impact discourse communities.

Most participants showed interest and willingness to increase their chances of acceptance and visibility. Aligning the rhetorical and structural patterns with international norms is a “prerequisite” as some respondents mentioned. This reflects a pragmatic awareness of publication success requirements.

Besides structural mastery, clarity and argumentation were also emphasized by some respondents who believe that writing a strong RA introduction is not only about conforming to formal structure, but also about maintaining coherence, communication and persuasion. Moreover, a statement like “the introduction should provide a clear idea about the content and be tempting enough to invite the readers” reflects a recognition of the role of reader engagement, which is a key expectation in high-impact publishing.

However, some responses highlighted that non-native researchers may lack awareness of certain genre expectations unless these are explicitly taught. They also stressed that studying high-impact research articles is essential for EFL writers to reduce the risk of paper rejection. This is obviously an implicit call for more explicit genre training and instruction.

4. Discussion

This descriptive research examined how Algerian researchers in the field of Applied Linguistics prefer to structure their research article introductions in English. The study aimed at understanding academic writing challenges, rhetorical choices, influencing factors, and perceptions towards genre-based instruction.

Findings revealed that many researchers struggle with establishing a strong research gap which typically serves to position one's study within a larger body of research. This difficulty has been previously recognized by some pioneering scholars in the field of EFL academic writing (eg., Swales, 2004; Hyland, 2007; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007) as a gap in genre awareness, particularly for non-native English writers. In addition, maintaining rhetorical clarity and structural coherence emerged as a central challenge among Algerian researchers, who also reported some linguistic and stylistic difficulties. This suggests that even experienced RA writers often find academic writing demanding, especially when aiming to align with international academic standards.

When it comes to actual writing strategies, few researchers explicitly followed Swales' model or any standardized approach. Instead, their structural knowledge was often developed through reading and imitation rather than through formal genre-based instruction, a finding also uncovered by Li (2011). Accordingly, the analysis of rhetorical moves in the current study revealed only a partial alignment with the CARS model. Algerian researchers were generally found to emphasize Move 1 through a general overview of the topic, provide less elaboration of Move 2, and follow selective patterns in Move 3. More importantly, while these researchers expressed awareness of the importance of clarity and explicitness in introduction writing, their understanding of explicitness only centered on the use of direct and clear language, rather than evaluative engagement with the literature.

Regarding the key factors influencing their structuring patterns, journal guidelines, reviewer expectations and disciplinary conventions were most influential, whereas previous training and formal mentorship were less cited. This suggests that the structuring practices of Algerian researchers are primarily shaped by institutional and disciplinary exposure rather than consistent pedagogical support. The impact of cultural and linguistic background was also acknowledged by the participant researchers. This aligns with contrastive rhetoric research (Connor, 1996; Alqahtani, 2006). Despite this, many respondents highlighted the dominance of international publication standards, indicating an increasing orientation toward international academic discourse.

Finally, respondents stressed the importance of genre-based instruction in enhancing rhetorical awareness, increasing publication success, and building academic confidence, particularly among early career researchers. They also emphasized the need for more explicit and practical approaches (Hyland, 2007) to teaching specific rhetorical strategies, such as move structure, gap signaling, and literature synthesis.

Conclusion

This study aimed to identify rhetorical patterns, uncover contextual factors, and assess the extent of genre awareness among Algerian EFL researchers in Applied linguistics. The

findings highlight the need to integrate more explicit genre-based academic writing instruction in Algeria to support researchers in developing effective rhetorical strategies, and to foster their participation in global academic communities. Future research may explore the impact of implementing such instruction in local academic contexts, and examine how it affects researchers' genre awareness and writing competence.

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