

**Constructing Claims and Counterclaims:  
Mapping Argumentative Moves in  
Discussion Sections of TEFL and Non-  
TEFL Domains**

**بناء الادعاءات والادعاءات المضادة: رسم مسارات الخطوات الحجاجية في  
أقسام المناقشة ضمن مجالات تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية  
والمجالات الأخرى**

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## Abstract

Recent research in academic discourse has increasingly highlighted the importance of rhetorical organization in shaping how knowledge is constructed and communicated across disciplines. This study investigates the rhetorical realization of argumentative moves in the Discussion sections of research articles (RAs) across two disciplinary groupings: Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) and non-TEFL fields. Drawing on Swales' (1990) socio-rhetorical framework, a corpus of 60 English-medium RAs (30 TEFL and 30 non-TEFL), published between 2015 and 2025, was compiled from ISI-indexed journals. The dataset included both quantitative and qualitative studies, and the Discussion sections. A mixed-methods approach was employed, combining quantitative frequency analysis with qualitative interpretive examination. Argumentative moves were identified, categorized, and statistically compared using Chi-square tests, while selected excerpts were analyzed to explore their rhetorical realization in context. The findings revealed no statistically significant differences in the overall distribution of Moves 1, 2, and 3 across the two corpora. However, qualitative analysis showed that both groups relied on Move 3 (announcing and elaborating principal findings), with Move 2 occurring less frequently and mainly serving a counter-claiming function. Notably, TEFL articles demonstrated a more systematic use of counter-claiming for intertextual positioning, whereas non-TEFL articles favored explanatory and context-driven interpretations. These findings suggest that while rhetorical structures are broadly shared, their functional deployment reflects subtle disciplinary variations.



## 1. Introduction

In recent decades, English has solidified its status as the leading language for global academia, scientific discourse, and scholarly publishing (Mansoor et al., 2025). Since the conclusion of World War II, its influence within educational systems around the world has grown significantly, reaching all levels of education from elementary to postgraduate studies (Salomone & Salomone, 2022). In many nations, English is not just taught as a foreign language but is established as a mandatory academic subject. More importantly, it has become the main channel through which the internationalization of higher education is achieved. Universities in non-English-speaking regions are increasingly offering academic programs, overseeing graduate research, and sharing scholarly work in English. As a result, English's dominance as the common language of academic research and publication is now well-established (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001).

This linguistic dominance is reinforced by the architecture of global knowledge production. Prestigious indexing systems such as the Science Citation Index (SCI) and the Social Sciences Citation Index (SSCI) overwhelmingly feature English-medium journals. International academic events—including conferences, symposia, and scholarly workshops—are likewise conducted primarily in English. As a result, scholars seeking visibility within the international discourse community must not only produce high-quality research but also demonstrate mastery of academic English conventions. The pressure to publish in reputable English-medium venues has elevated academic writing to a central component of research competence and professional legitimacy (Haus, 2021).

Parallel to this expansion in the global use of English, discourse studies have undergone a significant epistemological shift (Pennycook, 2021). Earlier linguistic traditions focused predominantly on the ideational dimension of language—that is, the transmission of factual information. However, contemporary approaches emphasize the interpersonal and socio-rhetorical functions of discourse (Hyland, 2004). From this perspective, academic writing is not a neutral act of reporting knowledge but a socially situated practice of persuasion. Writers strategically construct their texts to engage readers, anticipate disciplinary expectations, and negotiate the acceptance of their claims (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2015). Thus, research writing is increasingly viewed as a dialogic process in which knowledge is argued for rather than merely presented.

This reconceptualization has positioned genre analysis at the forefront of academic discourse research. Genre analysis investigates how texts are rhetorically structured to achieve communicative purposes within



specific discourse communities (Bhatia, 2017; Xia, 2020). Within applied linguistics and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), genre-based approaches have been widely employed to uncover the organizational and functional patterns that characterize academic texts. Research articles, in particular, have attracted sustained analytical attention due to their centrality in knowledge dissemination (Haugh & Lee, 2020).

A key contribution of genre scholarship has been the identification of rhetorical moves—functional units that collectively realize the communicative goals of a text. Swales' (1990) pioneering work on research article introductions demonstrated how writers establish research territories, identify gaps, and position their contributions through patterned rhetorical strategies. Although his Creating a Research Space (CARS) model focused on introductions, the move-analytic tradition has since been extended to other sections of the research article, including abstracts, methods, results, and discussions (Hussain, 2025).

Among these sections, the Discussion occupies a uniquely complex rhetorical space. It is here that authors move beyond the presentation of findings to interpret, evaluate, and legitimize their results within the broader disciplinary conversation. As Basturkmen (2012, p. 93) notes, the Discussion is the site where writers “stake claims about) how their results integrate with and contribute to disciplinary knowledge.” Avidan et al., (2019) similarly describe it as the section in which authors guide readers from specific empirical observations toward generalized interpretations and implications.

The rhetorical demands of this section are substantial. Writers must explain unexpected outcomes, reconcile their findings with prior studies, justify methodological decisions, acknowledge limitations, and propose theoretical or pedagogical implications. These functions require a sophisticated command of persuasive discourse (Aparach, 2025). Consequently, the Discussion section has long been recognized as one of the most challenging parts of the research article for both native and non-native English writers. The difficulty stems not only from linguistic constraints but also from the need to construct logically coherent and rhetorically credible arguments.

Central to this persuasive endeavor are argumentative moves. Drawing on argumentation theory, van Eemeren et al., (2007) conceptualize academic discourse as structured argumentation comprising claims, counterclaims, and supporting evidence. Within research article Discussions, these argumentative elements are realized through identifiable rhetorical moves that enable authors to position their findings within ongoing scholarly debates. Move-analytic research has identified



several recurrent argumentative functions in Discussion sections. Three core moves are particularly salient:

1. Restating principal findings to foreground research outcomes.
2. Comparing and contrasting results with previous studies to situate findings intertextually.
3. Explaining and interpreting results through theoretical, methodological, or contextual reasoning.

Through these moves, writers transform empirical data into disciplinary knowledge. Restatement emphasizes salience, comparison establishes scholarly alignment or divergence, and explanation provides interpretive legitimacy. Collectively, these rhetorical actions form the argumentative backbone of the Discussion section. While the move structure of Discussions has been widely studied, most investigations have focused on disciplinary variation in broad terms or on differences between novice and expert writers (Dressen-Hammouda, 2008; Zhang et al., 2021). Comparatively limited attention has been paid to how writers' disciplinary training in language-related fields—particularly Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL)—may shape argumentative discourse practices relative to scholars from non-TEFL backgrounds. Based on the purpose of the study, the following questions were formulated:

**RQ1: What are the frequencies and distributions of argumentative moves in the Discussion sections of TEFL and non-TEFL research articles?**

**RQ2: How are argumentative moves rhetorically realized in context within the Discussion sections of TEFL and non-TEFL research articles?**

## 2. Literature Review

Argumentation includes debate and negotiation which are concerned with reaching mutually acceptable conclusions (Gorskaa et al., 2025). It also encompasses eristic dialog, the branch of social debate in which victory over an opponent is the primary goal. This art and science are often the means by which people protect their beliefs or self-interests in rational dialogue, in common parlance, and during the process of arguing. According to van Eemeren et al., (2004), argumentation moves contains the process and product of arguing at the same time. Wohlrapp (2014), the purpose of argumentative move is to change the point of view of the reader and to make him believe that the writer' standpoint is accurate and reliable. Choi (1988 as cited in Animbrika-Martins, 2023) defined argumentation move as “one kind of writing whose main purpose is to persuade the reader to accept the writer’s belief or opinion”(p.17).



Argumentation theory illuminates the logical and rhetorical mechanisms through which knowledge claims are constructed and justified (van Eemeren et al., 2007). Classical models, particularly Toulmin's (1958, as cited in Simosi, 2003) framework, conceptualize argument as a functional system composed of interrelated components including claims, data, warrants, backing, qualifiers, and rebuttals. Within research article Discussions, these components map systematically onto rhetorical practices (Irawati, 2022). Empirical findings operate as data; interpretive statements function as claims; and theoretical frameworks or prior research provide warrants that legitimize the interpretive leap from evidence to conclusion. Qualifiers and hedges, meanwhile, regulate the strength of claims, reflecting the epistemic caution expected in academic discourse (Hyland, 2017).

Contemporary developments in argumentation studies, notably pragma-dialectical theory (van Eemeren & van Haaften, 2023), extend this structural model by emphasizing the dialogic nature of argument. From this perspective, academic writing constitutes a form of critical discussion in which authors anticipate potential objections, negotiate alternative interpretations, and strategically manage agreement and disagreement. This dialogism is particularly visible in comparative and contrastive moves within Discussion sections, where writers align their findings with, or position them against, prior scholarship. Such rhetorical negotiation is essential for establishing credibility and advancing disciplinary knowledge (Ihnen et al., 2024). Accordingly, argumentation theory provides a conceptual foundation for analyzing how writers construct persuasive interpretations rather than merely report descriptive outcomes.

The present line of inquiry is fundamentally grounded in genre theory, which conceptualizes academic writing as a socially situated communicative practice shaped by the expectations, conventions, and epistemological values of specific discourse communities (Flowerdew, 2020). From this perspective, research articles are not merely repositories of scientific information but rhetorically organized texts designed to achieve particular communicative purposes. Genres emerge because academic communities repeatedly respond to similar communicative needs—reporting findings, establishing credibility, and persuading readers—through relatively stable textual patterns. As Bhatia (2017) argues, genres must therefore be understood not only in terms of their formal structures but also in relation to the social actions they perform. This socio-rhetorical orientation is especially relevant to research article Discussions, where writers move beyond reporting results to constructing



knowledge claims that must be negotiated and ratified by their disciplinary audiences (Kuteeva & Negretti, 2016).

Move analysis operationalizes genre theory by providing an analytical framework through which these rhetorical purposes can be systematically identified (Baohongchan & Tangkiengsirisin, 2026). Moves are functional textual units that realize specific communicative intentions within a genre. They may be obligatory, conventional, or optional depending on disciplinary expectations and rhetorical traditions. Within Discussion sections, moves collectively enact interpretation, evaluation, explanation, and persuasion, thereby transforming empirical findings into disciplinary contributions (Ötügen et al., 2021). Although Swales' original model was developed to account for the rhetorical organization of research article introductions, its underlying principles have been widely extended to other sections, including Discussions. Central among these principles is the notion that academic texts are purposive and goal-driven; that rhetorical structuring reflects disciplinary culture; and that writers strategically position themselves within existing research networks (Yu, 2024).

There is a bulk of studies in the field of move analysis and argumentation, for instance, Bigi (2012) emphasizes the crucial role of context in evaluating argumentative moves within institutional interactions, particularly in medical consultations. The study argues that ignoring culture-specific and social aspects of context can lead to misinterpretation and limit the comparability of findings. To address this issue, Bigi proposes a model for describing the social context of interaction, aimed at improving the analysis and evaluation of argumentation in medical settings. The model is illustrated through the analysis of real-life consultations recorded in Lombardy, Italy, demonstrating its effectiveness in interpreting argumentative passages. The paper concludes by highlighting the model's potential for further research and application in context-sensitive discourse analysis.

Jwa (2020) investigates the organizational patterns of Korean EFL students' argumentative writing in both their first language (Korean) and second language (English) using a move analysis framework. The study adopts a within-subject design in which students produced essays in both languages, allowing for direct comparison. The findings reveal that at the macro level, students' essays in both L1 and L2 follow a similar overall structure, typically consisting of introduction, body, and conclusion. However, differences emerge at the micro level: Korean essays display greater variation and flexibility in the use of rhetorical moves and steps, whereas English essays tend to be more standardized and limited in variation. The study suggests that these differences are not primarily due to cultural rhetorical patterns but rather to learners' limited experience



and practice with argumentative writing in English. Overall, the research highlights the importance of developing rhetorical awareness and move-based instruction in L2 writing pedagogy.

Kanestion and Sarjit (2021) investigate the rhetorical structure of the argument stage in argumentative essays written by Malaysian pre-university students preparing for the MUET exam. Using a corpus-based approach, the study analyzes 60 essays from the COMWARÉ corpus through the BCU (Biber–Connor–Upton) framework, supported by computer-assisted corpus analysis and expert interviews. The findings show that the argument stage consists of three main moves and five steps, forming a clear and systematic rhetorical pattern.

Van Eemeren (2021) introduces argumentative style as a concept that goes beyond traditional linguistic style by incorporating functional and strategic aspects of discourse. He identifies three key dimensions: topical choice (selection of arguments and standpoints), audience demand (adaptation to the audience), and presentation (verbal and non-verbal expression). These dimensions are reflected in the analytic overview, argumentative patterns, and strategic design of discourse. Additionally, he distinguishes between detached styles, which are objective and impersonal, and engaged styles, which are more interactive and audience-oriented, offering a comprehensive framework for analyzing argumentative discourse.

Liu et al., (2024) examine the rhetorical move-step structure of argumentative essays written by Chinese EFL undergraduate students using Hyland's (1990) framework. Analyzing a corpus of 30 essays, the study finds that most students generally follow Hyland's model in organizing their writing. The results reveal a structured pattern consisting of five obligatory moves, three conventional moves, and one optional move, along with several additional steps that extend beyond the original framework. The findings highlight both conformity to established rhetorical patterns and some flexibility in students' writing, offering useful pedagogical implications for improving argumentative writing instruction in EFL contexts.

Qin et al., (2025) explore the use of sentiment analysis as a computational tool to examine evaluative language in academic discourse, focusing on open-access (OA) comments as an emerging academic genre. Analyzing a corpus of 361 OA comments published in *Nature*, the study investigates how sentiment varies across disciplines and argumentative moves. The findings reveal significant differences in sentiment between hard and soft sciences, as well as across different stages of argumentation, indicating that scholars express varying degrees of evaluation, emotion, and stance depending on context. The study



highlights the value of sentiment analysis for understanding hybrid academic genres and suggests its potential for enhancing research and pedagogy in academic writing.

AlGhamdi (2025) examines the rhetorical move-step structure of argumentative essays written by Saudi female EFL students using Hyland's (1990) genre-based model. Analyzing 30 essays, the study finds that students generally follow the three main stages of argumentative writing—Thesis, Argument, and Conclusion—but show variation in their use of specific moves. Notably, the Information move, though optional in the model, appears frequently, indicating its perceived importance, while persuasive elements such as the Gambit move are less commonly used. The findings also reveal structural weaknesses, particularly in the conclusion stage. The study underscores the importance of explicit genre-based instruction to improve students' awareness and effectiveness in argumentative writing.

The reviewed empirical literature collectively confirms that Discussion sections constitute rhetorically complex argumentative spaces in which knowledge claims are constructed, negotiated, and legitimized. Move-analytic frameworks have proven effective in mapping this complexity, revealing recurrent functional stages such as restatement, comparison, explanation, evaluation, and implication. At the same time, research demonstrates that argumentative realization varies according to disciplinary epistemology, writer expertise, and discourse socialization. Studies in applied linguistics and education consistently report high levels of interpretive elaboration, intertextual engagement, and evaluative commentary—features aligned with soft knowledge traditions. Taken together, these studies demonstrate that argumentative moves are shaped by multiple factors, including rhetorical expertise, genre knowledge, disciplinary conventions, and contextual influences. However, while prior research has provided valuable insights into move structures in student writing and isolated academic genres, less attention has been paid to how argumentative moves are distributed and rhetorically realized within the Discussion sections of research articles across different disciplinary domains. In particular, existing studies have not sufficiently integrated frequency-based analysis with context-sensitive examination of rhetorical realization. Addressing this issue is essential for answering how argumentative moves vary quantitatively and how they function rhetorically within disciplinary contexts, especially in comparing TEFL and non-TEFL research writing.

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Corpus of the Study



The corpus compiled for the present study consisted of 60 research articles (RAs) drawn from two disciplinary groupings: TEFL and non-TEFL. Each disciplinary corpus included 30 English-medium research articles, yielding a balanced dataset for comparative rhetorical analysis. The TEFL corpus encompassed articles published in the domains of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics, while the non-TEFL corpus included empirical studies from economic psychology, sociology, and medicine. These fields were selected to represent epistemologically diverse but research-intensive academic traditions.

All articles were retrieved from ISI database like Elsevier-indexed journals, Springer, and Sage, PubMed, ensuring disciplinary credibility, peer-reviewed quality, and structural consistency. The selection timeframe spanned 2015 to 2025, a period deemed sufficiently recent to reflect contemporary academic writing conventions while allowing for adequate sampling. Restricting the data source to a single database served methodological purposes: it ensured access to a sufficiently large pool of empirical articles sharing standardized formatting and publication requirements. Other databases were excluded due to limited availability of articles meeting the study's structural and design criteria.

Only experimental research articles were included in the corpus. As Arizavi et al., (2025) notes, experimental RAs constitute a highly structured genre documenting stages of scientific inquiry through standardized sections such as Introduction, Literature Review, Methodology, Results, Discussion, and Conclusion. This genre is widely employed across applied sciences, psychology, and social sciences, making it suitable for cross-disciplinary rhetorical comparison. One extra criterion guided article selection and it was the fact that each article had to contain a clearly identifiable Discussion section (standalone or combined with Conclusion).

Given variation in Discussion length across disciplines, analytical boundaries were standardized by extracting all the words of each Discussion section. This ensured comparability while capturing the densest argumentative segments, where result interpretation and knowledge claims are typically foregrounded. The compiled corpus comprised approximately 450,000 words (each article varied from 7000 to 8000 words). The use of a small, specialized corpus is methodologically justified. Corpus scholars such as Flowerdew and Forest (2009) argue that genre-specific corpora, even when limited in size, yield reliable insights when texts share communicative purposes and discourse conventions. Similarly, Kanoksilapatham (2005) emphasizes that restricting corpora to comparable genres controls disciplinary



variation. Moreover, smaller corpora enable fine-grained manual move identification that would be impractical in large-scale datasets.

### 3.2 Analytical Framework

The rhetorical analysis of the corpus was grounded in genre theory, operationalized through move analysis. The primary analytical framework was adapted from Swales' (1990) socio-rhetorical model, originally developed for research article structuring within Applied Linguistics. Although Swales' CARS model was designed for introductions, its functional principles have been widely extended to other RA sections, including Discussions. Table 1 shows Swales' (1990) moves and steps.

Table 1

*Swales' (1990) Moves and Steps Model*

Move	Step
Move 1: Establishing a Territory	Step 1: Claiming Centrality AND/OR Step 2: Making Topic Generalization(s) AND/OR Step 3: Reviewing Items from Previous Research
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	Step 1A: Counter-claiming OR Step 1B: Indicating a Gap OR Step 1C: Question-raising OR Step 1D: Counting a Tradition
The Move 3: Occupying the Niche	Step 1A: Outlining Purposes OR Step 1B: Announcing present research Step 2: Announcing Principle Findings Step 3: Indicating RA Structure

move model proposed by Swales (1990) was used as the framework for the move identification because it was developed from the analysis of RAs in Applied Linguistics (Annuaï & Wannaruk, 2013) which is also the focus of the present study. Swales's (1990) CARS model has three Moves; each has its own related steps. Move 1 (M1), establishing territory, is a rhetorical tool used by the academicians to commence their research. The steps of M1 are: claiming centrality (M1S1), making topic



generalization (M1S2), and reviewing the related studies (M1S3) which in turn or cyclically occur at the beginning of the research. After claiming centrality, writers try to establish a niche (M3) by counter claiming (M2S1), indicating a gap (M2S2), question raising (M2S3), and continuing tradition (M2S4) which respectively argue on the misleading of the previous studies, indicate insufficiency of the previous studies, question the previous findings, and claim that new explanation for the findings is needed. In the last Move (M3: occupying the niche) of the CARS model, writers claim to represent the located gap in the second Move. This Move can be realized by outlining purposes (M3S1), announcing present research (M3S2), announcing principal findings (M3S3), and indicating RA structure (M3S4).

### 3.3 Procedure

The corpus compiled for the present study consisted of 60 research articles (RAs) drawn from two disciplinary groupings: TEFL and non-TEFL. Each disciplinary corpus included 30 English-medium research articles, yielding a balanced dataset for comparative rhetorical analysis. The TEFL corpus encompassed articles published in the domains of Teaching English as a Foreign Language and Applied Linguistics, while the non-TEFL corpus included empirical studies from economic psychology, sociology, and medicine. These fields were selected to represent epistemologically diverse but research-intensive academic traditions.

All articles were retrieved from ISI-indexed journals, ensuring disciplinary credibility, peer-reviewed quality, and structural consistency. The selection timeframe spanned 20–2025, a period considered sufficiently recent to reflect contemporary academic writing conventions while allowing for adequate sampling. Articles published prior to this period were excluded to ensure that the data represented current academic language and discussion practices accepted by the respective discourse communities. Restricting the data source to a single database also served methodological purposes, providing access to a sufficiently large pool of empirical studies sharing standardized formatting and publication requirements.

The selection of articles was based on purposive sampling to include empirical studies with separate discussion sections. No distinction was made based on the authors' gender, and all articles were written in English. The researcher initially scanned over 100 research articles and selected those most relevant to the study based on research type (quantitative or qualitative) and the presence of distinct discussion sections. Accordingly, quantitative and qualitative research articles were selected to construct a balanced corpus.



The Discussion sections of the selected articles were then extracted and analyzed based on Swales' (1990) model to identify argumentative moves and steps. The distinctive features of quantitative and qualitative research outlined by Swales (1990) were taken into consideration to differentiate the two approaches. Following these definitions, the quantitative studies included in the corpus employed methodologies such as quasi-experimental, correlational, and pretest–posttest designs, using instruments like structured questionnaires. These studies adopted a deductive approach, stated hypotheses at the outset, controlled variables, conducted statistical analyses, and reported numerical summaries of their results. In contrast, the qualitative studies employed a holistic approach, focusing on participants' beliefs, views, and concerns, using interview transcripts, field notes, and recordings. Data were analyzed inductively, and results were presented narratively rather than numerically.

According to Swales (1990), results and discussion sections are sometimes merged, with additional or substituted sections labeled as conclusions, implications, or applications. In line with this, the present study considered paragraphs labeled as Results, Results and Discussion, Conclusions, Summaries, or Summaries and Implications. For the purposes of the study, only paragraphs signaling argumentative moves—typically including markers such as *but*, *however*, *since*, *because*, and *although* (Hyland, 1990)—were analyzed. After scrutinizing the initial pool of over 100 articles and taking detailed notes, approximately 60 articles (30 qualitative and 30 quantitative) were deemed relevant.

The next phase involved identifying the moves within the argumentative stage, including marker moves, restatement, claim, and support moves, based on Swales' (1990) framework. Communicative purpose was central in the analysis; where the purpose of a text unit was ambiguous, served multiple functions, or contained multiple moves, the unit was assigned to the move deemed most salient. Since the focus of the study was on identifying the types of argumentative moves, the subsequent thesis and conclusion stages and their moves were excluded due to corpus size and time constraints.

To ensure reliability in the data categorization process, one-third of the corpus (i.e., five articles from each discipline) was independently reanalyzed by a second researcher—an PhD graduate in TEFL from one of the Canadian Universities who was expert in the field. The resulting inter-rater reliability was high (correlation coefficient = 0.95), confirming the robustness of the analysis.

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The study employed a quantitative corpus-based rhetorical analysis supplemented by qualitative interpretive examination. First, argumentative moves across the corpus were identified, categorized, and



tabulated according to frequency of occurrence. Descriptive statistics, including raw frequency counts and percentage distributions, were calculated for each move type within both disciplinary corpora. To determine whether observed differences between TEFL and non-TEFL Discussions were statistically significant, Chi-Square tests were conducted. This non-parametric procedure is widely used in genre studies to compare categorical rhetorical features across corpora. In addition to quantitative comparison, qualitative analysis was undertaken to examine how argumentative moves were rhetorically realized in context. Representative textual extracts were analyzed to illustrate patterns of claim construction, evidential justification, comparison, and evaluative stance. This dual analytical approach enabled both structural mapping and functional interpretation of disciplinary argumentation practices.

#### 4. Results

##### 4.1 Descriptive Findings Regarding the First Research Question

This section describes and categorizes participants' features by using descriptive indexes. Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of moves 1 appeared within the quantitative and qualitative discussion sections.

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics of Moves 1 within the Qualitative and Quantitative Discussion Sections*

Statistic	Move1Quan	Move1Qual
Mean (Std. Error)	4.234 (1.2347)	4.6543 (1.4353)
5% Trimmed Mean	4.1271	5.4561
Median	3.4468	5.6588
Variance	19.765	14.944
Std. Deviation	5.1656	2.8777

Based on the results presented in Table 1, the mean value for Move 1 is 4.234 (SE = 1.2347) in the quantitative Discussion sections and 4.6543 (SE = 1.4353) in the qualitative Discussion sections. The variance is 19.765 for the quantitative data and 14.944 for the qualitative data. The standard deviation is 5.1656 in the quantitative corpus and 2.8777 in the qualitative corpus. Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of moves 2 appeared within the discussion sections.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics of Moves 2 within the Qualitative and Quantitative Discussion Sections*

Statistic	Move2 Quan	Move2 Qual
Mean (SE)	5.444 (2.5621)	5.0321 (1.88106)
5% Trimmed Mean	6.1250	7.7654



Median	7.4346	6.3348
Variance	18.345	19.264
Std. Deviation	5.8690	4.5643

Based on the results presented in Table 2, the mean value for Move 2 is 5.444 (SE = 2.5621) in the quantitative Discussion sections and 5.0321 (SE = 1.88106) in the qualitative Discussion sections. The variance is 18.345 for the quantitative data and 19.264 for the qualitative data, while the standard deviation is 5.8690 in the quantitative corpus and 4.5643 in the qualitative corpus. Table 3 shows the descriptive statistics of moves 3 appeared within the quantitative and qualitative discussion sections.

Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics of Moves 3 within the Qualitative and Quantitative Discussion Sections*

Statistic	Move3 Quan	Move3 Qual
Mean (SE)	7.3565 (2.3249)	7.4321 (2.38106)
5% Trimmed Mean	5.5674	3.478
Median	1.3455	2.0238
Variance	15.6544	11.7644
Std. Deviation	3.6081	3.36588

As it is clear from Table 3, the mean value for Move 3 is 7.3565 (SE = 2.3249) in the quantitative Discussion sections and 7.4321 (SE = 2.38106) in the qualitative Discussion sections. The median is 1.3455 in the quantitative corpus and 2.0238 in the qualitative corpus. The variance is 15.6544 for the quantitative data and 11.7644 for the qualitative data, while the standard deviation is 3.6081 in the quantitative corpus and 3.36588 in the qualitative corpus. As it is shown, the means are different, but in order to make clear whether the differences between the groups are significant or not, inferential statistics were taken into considerations as well. In this section, so as to assess the significance level of the moves within qualitative and quantitative RAs, Chi-Square test was deemed to be appropriate. Before running Chi-Square, Kolmogorov-Smirnov test of normality of distribution of the data was run. The results indicate that the sig. value is more than 0.05, therefore the data has been distributed normally. Table 4 compares the amount of move1 in quantitative and qualitative RAs. Using the percentages assigned to each of the two columns, we can compare the percentages of the quantitative and qualitative RAs in different classes of move1.

Table 4



### *Chi-Square Tests in Move 1*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.300 <sup>a</sup>	30	.754
Likelihood Ratio	10.543	29	.532
Linear-by-Linear Association	.103	1	.649
N of Valid Cases	32		
a. 26 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.			

The results obtained in Table 4 show that the value of Chi-Square (8.30) at the P value less than 0.05 is not significant. This result means that there is no meaningful difference between the two groups of quantitative and qualitative RAs in move1. Table 5 indicates the results of Chi-Square in Move 2.

Table 5

### *Chi-Square Tests in Move 2*

	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.543 <sup>a</sup>	30	.566
Likelihood Ratio	11.319	29	.339
Linear-by-Linear Association	.646	1	.531
N of Valid Cases	29		
a. 23 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.			

The results obtained in Table 5 show that the value of Chi-Square (8.54) at the P value less than 0.05 is not significant. This result means that there is no meaningful difference between the two groups of quantitative and qualitative RAs in move 2. Table 6 indicates the results of Chi-Square in Move 3.

Table 6

### *Chi-Square Tests in Move 3*



	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	8.341 <sup>a</sup>	10	.390
Likelihood Ratio	11.768	10	.224
Linear-by-Linear Association	.383	1	.662
N of Valid Cases	28		

a. 21 cells (100.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .50.

The results obtained in Table 6 show that the value of Chi-Square (8.34) at the P value less than 0.05 is not significant. This result means that there is no meaningful difference between the two groups of quantitative and qualitative RAs in move3. Based on the results of Chi-Square, it can be claimed that there was no significant difference in the rate of Moves 1, 2 and 3 in both quantitative and qualitative RAs.

#### 4.2 Answering the Second Research Question

The purpose of the second research question is to qualitatively examine how argumentative moves are rhetorically realized in context within the Discussion sections of TEFL and non-TEFL research articles. Specifically, the study aims to explore how writers employ argumentative markers to construct and interpret rhetorical moves. For the qualitatively analyzing the moves, it is a need to take into consideration the extracts and examples from the texts. Following are clear examples of rhetorical moves drawn from your Discussion section, analyzed qualitatively in line with your Swales (1990) move-based framework.

Non-TEFL Discussion sections, particularly in qualitative medical and social science research, are predominantly characterized by the use of Move 3 (M3S2: Announcing and elaborating principal findings). Within this move, argumentative markers such as *because*, *since*, *although*, and *even though* are frequently employed to construct causal explanations and deepen interpretation. For example, statements such as “*Diagnosis is a critical turning point... because it is most often an invisible disability or illness*” and “*Since patients are eager to remove pain and emotional stress, they tend to exaggerate the threat of pain*” illustrate how causal markers are used to justify and explain findings. Similarly, concessive structures like “*Many patients believed rumination was helpful... even though it could negatively impact mental health*” and “*Patients want to be validated... although their pain is invisible*” demonstrate how writers



construct nuanced interpretations by presenting tension within participants' experiences. These patterns show that argumentative markers function primarily as resources for explanation and elaboration, supporting a post-hoc interpretive orientation.

At the same time, instances of Move 2 (M2: Establishing a Niche) are present but less frequent, typically realized through counter-claiming (M2S1). Markers such as *however* and *but* are used to introduce contrast or critique. For instance, "*However, our research followed an iterative approach...*" signals a repositioning of the study's focus, while "*This issue has been documented in previous literature; however, its persistence suggests insufficient efforts*" demonstrates how authors acknowledge prior research and then critically evaluate it. Likewise, "*But patients should not be expected to ignore their pain*" reflects a direct counter-claim against an implicit assumption. In these cases, argumentative markers serve to reopen evaluative space within the Discussion, rather than to establish entirely new research gaps.

In sum, this distribution suggests that argumentative markers in non-TEFL Discussion sections serve a dual rhetorical function: they are primarily used to explain and justify findings within Move 3, while also enabling a secondary critical function within Move 2. This indicates that such Discussions are largely interpretive and explanatory, yet retain the capacity for selective critique. Consequently, non-TEFL Discussion sections are oriented more toward meaning-making and justification, rather than toward extensive gap-establishment, distinguishing them from the more gap-driven rhetorical organization typically found in research article Introductions.

The TEFL Discussion section demonstrates a strong tendency toward **Move 3 (M3S2: Announcing and elaborating principal findings)**, where argumentative markers are primarily used to explain results and support interpretive claims. For instance, causal markers are frequently used to justify findings, as in "*The findings support Alderson and Wall's (1993) claim that tests can be powerful determiners of classroom behavior*" and "*Students reported to have memorized vocabulary and grammar rules because such strategies were necessary for exam success.*" Similarly, concessive structures contribute to nuanced interpretation, as seen in "*The examinations exert a negative, but slightly positive influence on learners*" and "*Although some beneficial strategies were used, most students focused on memorization.*" These examples show that argumentative markers function mainly to **elaborate findings and construct explanatory meaning**, rather than to introduce new argumentative directions.



At the same time, TEFL Discussions also make strategic use of **Move 2 (M2S1: Counter-claiming)**, particularly when positioning findings within broader washback literature. This is evident in sentences such as “*However, the findings of some studies provide evidence against those of the present study*” and “*However, little washback effect was observed in some contexts.*” In these cases, the marker *however* signals a clear shift toward contrasting or challenging existing research. This indicates that TEFL writers actively engage in **intertextual negotiation**, where findings are compared and sometimes problematized against prior studies. In sum, the TEFL Discussion sections reveal a dual but uneven rhetorical pattern. While argumentative markers are predominantly used within **Move 3 to explain and elaborate findings**, they also occasionally realize **Move 2 by introducing counter-claims and contrasting prior research**.

A comparison of TEFL and non-TEFL Discussion sections reveals both shared rhetorical tendencies and clear disciplinary differences in the use of argumentative markers within Swales’ CARS framework. In both corpora, Move 3 (M3S2: Announcing and elaborating principal findings) is dominant, indicating that argumentative markers primarily function to support interpretation, explanation, and justification of results. Across both disciplinary groups, markers such as causal, concessive, and contrastive devices are systematically used to refine meaning, elaborate findings, and construct interpretive coherence. This confirms that Discussion sections in both TEFL and non-TEFL research are fundamentally oriented toward post-hoc explanation rather than the establishment of new research territories or extensive gap-building.

However, the two disciplinary traditions diverge in the rhetorical weight and function of Move 2 (M2S1: Counter-claiming). In non-TEFL discussions, counter-claiming appears more selectively and is often tied to critical evaluation of healthcare systems, methodological positioning, or broader conceptual issues, functioning as an occasional shift into evaluative critique within an otherwise explanatory discourse. In contrast, TEFL Discussion sections demonstrate a more consistent and structured engagement with Move 2, particularly through explicit comparison with prior washback research and pedagogical claims. This suggests that TEFL writers more regularly use argumentative markers to position their findings against existing studies, whereas non-TEFL writers tend to reserve such markers for localized critique rather than sustained intertextual negotiation. Generally, while both TEFL and non-TEFL Discussion sections rely predominantly on Move 3 to construct explanatory and interpretive meaning, TEFL writing shows a comparatively stronger tendency toward systematic counter-claiming and intertextual positioning. Non-TEFL writing, by contrast, remains more



firmly grounded in experiential explanation and contextual interpretation, with limited but targeted use of evaluative contrast. This indicates that although both disciplines share a common functional core in their use of argumentative markers, they differ in the degree to which these markers are mobilized for critical engagement versus explanatory elaboration.

#### 4. Discussion

The purpose of this study was to investigate and compare the rhetorical realization of Moves 1, 2, and 3 in the Discussion sections of quantitative and qualitative RAs. In particular, the study sought to examine how these rhetorical moves are distributed across the two types of RAs and to determine whether any statistically significant differences exist between them. To achieve this aim, both descriptive and inferential statistical procedures were employed in order to provide a comprehensive account of move usage in relation to research methodology.

The findings of the study indicate that, although the descriptive statistics revealed some variation in the distribution of Moves 1, 2, and 3 between quantitative and qualitative RAs, these variations were not statistically significant. The results of the Chi-Square tests for all three moves demonstrated that there were no meaningful differences between the two groups. This suggests that both quantitative and qualitative RAs exhibit a broadly similar pattern in the use of rhetorical moves within their Discussion sections, with no move showing a distinct or dominant distribution linked to research type.

The findings of the present study offer an important contribution to the growing body of research on argumentation and move analysis by demonstrating that the rhetorical realization of Moves 1, 2, and 3 does not significantly differ between quantitative and qualitative research articles. This result is particularly noteworthy when viewed through the lens of argumentation theory, which emphasizes the strategic and functional nature of discourse in constructing and justifying knowledge claims. While models such as Stephen Toulmin's framework conceptualize argumentation as a structured interplay of claims, data, and warrants, the current findings suggest that these underlying argumentative functions are realized through similar rhetorical patterns regardless of methodological orientation. In other words, both quantitative and qualitative writers appear to draw on a shared repertoire of rhetorical moves to fulfill the communicative demands of the Discussion section.

This convergence aligns with genre-based perspectives advanced by Swales and Hyland, which conceptualize research articles as socially situated texts governed by relatively stable conventions. The absence of significant differences between the two groups supports the notion that



disciplinary writing practices exert a stronger influence on rhetorical organization than methodological distinctions. In contrast to studies such as Jwa (2020), which identified micro-level variation in move realization between L1 and L2 argumentative writing, the present study suggests a higher degree of uniformity at the level of expert academic discourse. This difference may be attributed to the fact that published research articles, unlike student essays, are shaped by rigorous peer review and adherence to established disciplinary norms, resulting in more standardized rhetorical patterns.

At the same time, the findings partially diverge from research that highlights variability and flexibility in argumentative structures. For instance, Liu et al. (2024) and AlGhamdi (2025) report both conformity and variation in students' use of rhetorical moves, suggesting that writers may adapt genre conventions in context-sensitive ways. Similarly, Bigi (2012) emphasizes the role of contextual and social factors in shaping argumentative practices, particularly in institutional discourse. In contrast, the lack of significant differences observed in the present study may indicate that, within the genre of research article Discussions, such contextual variations are moderated by overarching disciplinary expectations, leading to more uniform rhetorical realizations across methodological types.

Furthermore, the results can be interpreted in light of pragma-dialectical approaches to argumentation, particularly those advanced by Frans van Eemeren, which conceptualize academic writing as a form of critical discussion involving negotiation, anticipation of counter-arguments, and strategic maneuvering. From this perspective, the similarity in move distribution across quantitative and qualitative articles suggests that both types of writers engage in comparable forms of rhetorical negotiation when interpreting findings and positioning their claims within the literature. This is consistent with studies such as Qin et al. (2025), which demonstrate that evaluative and argumentative features vary more across disciplinary contexts than across structural stages of argumentation. Thus, the present findings reinforce the idea that the communicative purposes of the Discussion section—interpretation, justification, and engagement with prior research—transcend methodological boundaries.

The lack of statistically significant differences may be explained by the strong influence of shared academic writing conventions that govern discussion writing at the academic writing. Regardless of methodological orientation, researchers are typically guided by similar institutional expectations and genre conventions when constructing Discussion sections. These conventions emphasize a standardized rhetorical organization, where Moves 1, 2, and 3 are used in comparable ways to present findings, interpret results, and situate them within existing



literature. In fact, the researchers take into account the nature of discussion sections that their aims are transferring the information, presenting the findings, comparing them and arguing the differences and similarities and so on. Definitely, this is just a hunch and its validity should be examined through triangulation of the instruments such as structured and unstructured interviews with the writers of RAs. Additionally, the uniformity observed across both types of RAs may reflect the instructional emphasis placed on genre templates in academic writing courses, which often encourage a fixed structure over methodological variation. Consequently, the Discussion sections in both quantitative and qualitative RAs tend to follow a conventionalized rhetorical pattern, which reduces the likelihood of significant variation in move distribution.

In response to the second research question, which aimed to qualitatively examine how argumentative moves are rhetorically realized in context within the Discussion sections of TEFL and non-TEFL research articles, the findings reveal that both corpora are characterized by the use of Move 3. In this move, argumentative markers are extensively employed to explain, elaborate, and justify research findings. Causal and concessive markers, in particular, play a central role in constructing interpretation and supporting claims across both disciplines. Move 2 is also present in both groups but occurs less frequently and is mainly realized through counter-claiming. A notable difference, however, lies in the way Move 2 is utilized: TEFL Discussions demonstrate a more consistent and explicit use of counter-claiming to position findings in relation to prior research, whereas non-TEFL Discussions tend to employ such markers more selectively, often for localized or context-bound critique. Regardless of these results, there was no meaningful difference between two corpora in terms of the frequency of moves.

These findings can be explained in light of disciplinary conventions and the communicative purposes of the Discussion section. The dominance of Move 3 in both TEFL and non-TEFL writing reflects the shared expectation that this section primarily serves to interpret and explain findings, with writers using argumentative markers to construct meaning and justify their claims. The observed differences in Move 2 usage appear to be rooted in disciplinary orientations. TEFL research, which is closely linked to pedagogical implications and an established body of empirical studies, encourages more explicit engagement with prior research, resulting in more frequent counter-claiming and intertextual positioning. In contrast, non-TEFL disciplines, particularly in qualitative medical and social science contexts, place greater emphasis on contextual interpretation and experiential understanding, which leads to a more



selective and targeted use of evaluative contrast. Thus, while both groups rely on similar argumentative resources, they differ in the extent to which these resources are mobilized for critical comparison versus explanatory elaboration.

Genre-based pedagogical methodologies are now becoming popular for teaching/learning the academic writing particularly in English. Still, there is a need to do more research for teaching written discourse in various fields. Academic writing is a neglected area of research, particularly for teaching argumentative writing. So far, no research has been done to analyze the move patterns of argumentative texts written by the authors who published quantitative and qualitative research articles. To fill this gap, present research has analyzed the move analysis of the discussion sections as argumentative writings written by the researchers of different disciplines. Argumentative writings are integral part of academic writing for graduate and post-graduate students, but students are not given detailed and clear instructions about writing argumentative essays. So, there is a need to aware them of the schematic structure of this genre. By the studies like the present one and the information gained from this study, EFL/ESL instructors in their own classrooms can use studies such as the present one when teaching students this genre.

Academic writing is a highly specialized genre of writing that requires students to become aware of and understand its processes and requirements. In the area of argumentation moves, Imtiaz and Mahmood (2014) conducted a study in argumentative moves which was in harmony with the present study. They aimed at finding rhetorical patterns of argumentative essays written by Pakistani college and university students at ICLE (International Corpus of Learner English). A corpus of thirty-three argumentative essays has been made. It is worth mentioning that the present study used 28 discussion sections while Imtiaz and Mahmood used 30 essays for analyze. Furthermore, they used Hyland's model (1990) as the analytical framework to analyze the move-step structure of the essays. In this corpus-based study Ant Mover software as well as human coders have identified and coded the moves. Results have shown that most of the argumentative essays followed the three stages (Thesis stage, the Argument stage and the Conclusion stage) given in the model and they also have obligatory moves set in the model. Findings have revealed that these essays also include some new moves (Contradiction and Suggestion/Recommendation) which were not part of the model.

In the area of argumentation moves, van Eemeren, Houtlosser and Henkemans (2008) showed how the use of dialectical profiles can be instrumental in determining which moves can be made in a particular stage of an argumentative discussion and in identifying the expressions



that are indicative of these moves. The researchers concluded by mentioning some other applications of dialectical profiles. In addition to their heuristic function in the identification of indicators of argumentative moves, dialectical profiles also have an important heuristic role in the analysis of strategic maneuvering. Because strategic maneuvering may be sound but can also derail, it is necessary to determine the soundness conditions that apply to the various ways of strategic maneuvering the arguers may resort to. In this endeavor the design of dialectical profiles can be of help. Because every dialectical move specified in a dialectical profile allows for rhetorical. This makes the dialectical profile not only the best source for identifying the dialectical moves that the parties must make in conducting a critical discussion but also for identifying the ways of strategic maneuvering the arguers can deploy to steer the critical resolution process into their own direction.

Instruction in argumentation moves can be integrated into graduate programs through targeted writing assignments, guided practice, and scaffolded experiences that allow learners to apply different types of moves in various contexts. A genre-based approach, grounded in Vygotsky's (1978) theory of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), supports this process. By providing scaffolding and guidance, instructors can help learners move toward their potential level of performance. As Kay and Dudley-Evans (1998) note, a genre-based approach is empowering and enabling, allowing students to engage meaningfully with disciplinary discourse, understand how texts are organized, and develop flexible, creative thinking. Through such support, learners can internalize the conventions of argumentative genres, gain the knowledge necessary to make their arguments effective, and gradually produce research writing that aligns with the expectations of the scholarly community.

## 5. Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the rhetorical realization of Moves 1, 2, and 3 in the Discussion sections of quantitative and qualitative research articles, with the intention of identifying both statistical patterns and qualitative differences in how argumentative moves are constructed and interpreted in context. The quantitative findings revealed that, despite minor variations in descriptive measures, there were no statistically significant differences between the two groups in the distribution of the three moves. Complementing this, the qualitative analysis demonstrated that both TEFL and non-TEFL Discussion sections are predominantly organized around Move 3, where argumentative markers are used to explain and justify findings, while Move 2 appears less frequently and



mainly serves a counter-claiming function. At the same time, a disciplinary distinction emerged, with TEFL writing showing a more systematic use of counter-claiming for intertextual positioning, whereas non-TEFL writing relies more on explanatory and context-driven interpretation. In conclusion, the study confirms that while the overall distribution of rhetorical moves remains similar across research types, their contextual realization reflects subtle yet meaningful disciplinary variations.

The findings of this study carry several implications for both academic writing pedagogy and discourse analysis. Given the overall similarity in the distribution of rhetorical moves across quantitative and qualitative research articles, it is important for instructors to emphasize the shared structural conventions of Discussion sections while also raising learners' awareness of how argumentative markers function differently across disciplinary contexts. In particular, explicit instruction on the use of counter-claiming and intertextual positioning in fields such as TEFL can help students develop more critical and dialogic writing practices. At the same time, the more interpretive and explanatory orientation observed in non-TEFL writing highlights the need to train students in effectively using causal and concessive markers to construct nuanced interpretations. The current study's analysis was limited to the Discussion sections of research articles, excluding other potentially informative sections such as Results or Abstracts. Consequently, the study may not reflect the full range of argumentative strategies employed throughout an entire article. Furthermore, although both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted, the qualitative examination relied on selected textual extracts to illustrate argumentation patterns, which may not encompass all possible variations in the corpus. Finally, the focus on argumentative moves following Swales' (1990) model meant that other rhetorical or stylistic features—such as hedging, engagement markers, or disciplinary-specific conventions—were not systematically analyzed. Future studies could address these limitations and expand on the present findings in several ways. Researchers could include larger and more diverse corpora, incorporating additional disciplines, journals, and languages to examine cross-linguistic and cross-disciplinary variations in argumentation practices. For future research, it is suggested that larger and more diverse corpora be examined to enhance generalizability, and that additional variables such as proficiency level, publication status, or disciplinary subfields be taken into account. Moreover, combining move analysis with other approaches, such as corpus linguistics or sentiment analysis, could provide deeper insights into the evaluative and rhetorical dimensions of argumentative writing across genres and contexts.



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