

A Comparative Analysis of Rhetorical Organization of Master's Thesis Introductions Written in English and Turkish on Turkish Sign Language

Türk İşaret Dili Konulu İngilizce ve Türkçe Yüksek Lisans Tezi Girişlerinin Retorik Organizasyonunun Karşılaştırmalı Bir Analiz

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ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Türk İşaret Dili (TİD) alanında hazırlanan İngilizce ve Türkçe yüksek lisans tezlerindeki girişlerin retorik organizasyonunu incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın amacı ise Swales'in CARS modeli'nin Loi tarafından genişletilmiş versiyonu kullanılarak TİD konulu yüksek lisans tezlerinin giriş bölümlerinde kullanılan yapısal kalıpları ve retorik stratejileri iki dilde karşılaştırmaktır. Derlem temelli analiz yoluyla bu çalışma, TİD alanı kapsamında yazarların araştırma alanını nasıl oluşturduklarını, literatürdeki boşluğu nasıl dile getirdiklerini ve araştırma amaçlarını ve hedeflerini nasıl sunduklarını araştırır ve inceler. Karşılaştırmalı bir yaklaşım kullanarak, özellikle TİD araştırması alanında akademik söylem uygulamalarındaki diller arası ve kültürler arası farklılıkları anlamamıza katkıda bulunmaktadır. Bulgular, İngilizce ve Türkçe akademik yazıyı şekillendiren retorik geleneklere ve alandaki yeni araştırmacılar için akademik yazıma dair pedagojik boyutlara dair iç görüler sunmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Retorik, Yüksek Lisans Tezleri, Giriş, Türk İşaret Dili, TİD, CARS Modeli

ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the rhetorical organization of introductions in English and Turkish master's theses on Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili [TİD]). The purpose of this study is to compare the structural patterns and rhetorical strategies used

makalede intihal bulunmadığı teyit edilmiştir.

This article has been reviewed by at least two referees and confirmed to be free of plagiarism.

in the introduction sections of master's theses on TİD, using Swales' CARS model's revised version by Loi (2009), in two languages. Through corpus-based analysis, this study examines how writers establish the research space, articulate the gap in the literature, and present their research purpose and objectives within the context of TİD studies. This study, by using a comparative approach, contributes to our understanding of cross-linguistic variations in academic discourse practices, particularly within TİD research. The findings provide insights into the rhetorical conventions that shape academic writing in English and Turkish and pedagogical implications to improve the academic writing of novice researchers in the field.

Keywords: Rhetorical, Master's Theses, Introduction, Turkish Sign Language, TİD, CARS Model.

0. Introduction

In academic research, the rhetorical organization of a written work plays a significant role in conveying information to the reader effectively. This organization comprises several components such as an introduction, literature review, methodology, findings, and conclusion, each of which serves specific purposes in shaping the discourse (Swales 1990). Among these components, the introduction is of particular importance because it establishes the context for the study, reveals its relevance, summarizes the research objectives, and offers an overview of the subsequent chapters (Feak and Swales 2009). The structure and organization of introductions vary across languages and cultures, reflecting different rhetorical traditions and conventions (Hyland 2004).

In the relevant literature, compared to other academic genres such as research papers or PhD theses, research on the rhetorical organization of master's theses, especially introductory parts, has been limited. These studies have mainly focused on the linguistic or structural characteristics of these texts (e.g., Basturkmen, 2009; Kwan, 2006; Swales, 1990; Thompson, 2005) and/or examined their variation across different fields of study (e.g. Charles, 2003; Samraj, 2008) such as biology, engineering, applied linguistics. Thus, it seems that the unique social functions served by master's theses have been overlooked. In fact, theses are the initial attempts of students to add to the body of knowledge within their discipline. At this point, especially, Swales and Feak (2004) emphasize the role of well-organized introductory parts in academic texts to create a research space and to seek for recognition by the wider academic discourse communities. Namely, they need to demonstrate the scholarly knowledge and academic proficiency of master's candidates to a panel of experts who will ultimately determine whether or not to grant them "admission to the academy" (Paltridge 2002: 132). Samraj (2008) has also argued that "student-produced texts, especially those produced by 'quasi' members at the end of a master's program, do not completely embody the discursive practices of the disciplines" (p. 5). Accordingly, to improve academic writing pedagogy for master's theses, it is of importance to explore and

analyze the particular discourse characteristics of master's theses in terms of rhetorical organization based on validated models (Paltridge 2002; Samraj 2008).

The other important gap observed in the literature is that there is a lack of studies specifically on academic genres in certain disciplines such as Turkish Sign Language (Türk İşaret Dili [TİD]). Actually, in recent years, there has been a growing academic interest in academic texts on TİD (e.g. Arık 2013; Gür & Geçikli 2022), yet they focus on the thematic contents of the texts rather than the rhetorical organization. In this regard, Samraj (2005) discusses that, to explore "disciplinary norms in academic writing", it is significant to analyze the texts from different disciplines by addressing the observed differences in the texts from "established" and "emerging disciplines" in the literature, which is also supported by Öztürk (2007).

Accordingly, this study thus aims to fill the gap by making a comparative analysis of the rhetorical structures used in the introductions of English and Turkish master's theses in the field of TİD. In the present study, we try to identify similarities and differences in authors' rhetorical organizations by examining how they frame their introduction sections in Turkish and English. Through this comparative analysis, we aim to shed light on how academic culture while writing in both languages shapes the rhetorical aspects of academic texts in sign language studies.

1. Methodology

1.1. Research Design and Corpus

In the current study, both categorical aspects based on the qualitative paradigm and numerical data based on the quantitative paradigm are used. This explains the rhetorical devices (moves and stages) used in the TİD domain in the sampled master theses' introductions. Quantifiable statistics are also reported to demonstrate further the breakdown of moves and steps in these introductions. To provide recommendations for the instruction of theses' academic organizations to novice researchers in the TİD field, codings are limited to the study's corpus. Therefore, generalizing the distinctive patterns of theses' introductions throughout all genres such as research papers, conference papers, etc. in the field is not the main goal of this study.

Prior research that examined the rhetorical structure in two distinct cultures has faced criticism for neglecting to account for the comparability of publications being studied (see Loi 2010; Shim 2005; Swales 2004). The challenges related to sampling resulted in problems in terms of presenting credible results using a more representative sample. As a result, it is essential to work on comparable or "equivalent" corpora (Moreno 2008:7). According to Moreno (2008), for two corpora to be considered equivalent, they must possess a high degree of similarity as opposed to being identical. Thus, in this study, the authenticity of the texts was considered to ensure the validity of the findings. In this regard, the researchers considered the contexts where the MA theses were produced because the

contextual aspects are significant in the organization of the theses. The other point taken into account is the disciplinary variation as previous research showed that each discipline has its rhetorical organization perspective (e.g., Samraj 2002, 2004; Swales 1990). Thus, this study focuses on a single field (i.e., TİD). The other reason behind the selection of the TİD field is that the researchers of the study are involved in studies within linguistics, specifically TİD and genre analysis. As to the third parameter, driven from the evidence provided in the literature regarding the schematic structure of the academic genres, the study moved on to the empirical theses in TİD, which followed an introduction-literature review-methodology-results-discussion-conclusion structure. The last factor is the period that was considered in the corpus selection as, especially for theses, in some years there might be no publication, or publication in just one language, which may require eliminating these years.

Accordingly, all MA theses published in Turkey (34 English and 28 Turkish theses on TİD) were first downloaded. Next, each year was specifically analyzed in terms of comparability, and it was seen that the theses published in 2001–2010 and in 2017 and 2022 were in one language code, which violates the study's main aim of comparing Turkish and English theses. Thus, the theses in these years were eliminated. As there was also no MA publication in 2011, the corpus was selected within a span of nine years (i.e., MA theses published in 2012–2016 and 2018–2021). Then, the researchers moved on random sampling strategy to reduce sampling bias as in some years the number of theses published in one language code outnumbered the ones in the other language code. In due course, the main corpus of the study is 44 MA theses - 22 Turkish and 22 English- in the field of Turkish sign language (i.e., TİD).

1.2. Coding Framework

For the analysis and coding of the moves and steps in both sets of MA introductions, the current study moved on Swales' (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model's revised version by Loi (2010). Numerous genre-based studies in the past (e.g., Ahmad 1997; Fakhri, 2004; Jogthong 2001; Loi & Sweetnam Evans 2010; Ozturk 2007; Samraj 2002) have demonstrated that Swales' CARS model is a valid and practical instrument for analyzing the rhetorical organization of introductory parts. Still, due to the contextual factors, in some of the studies, the researchers added certain steps as a result of their analysis of the corpora they worked with (see, e.g., Loi 2010; Soler-Monreal et al., 2011). Therefore, for the current study, the researchers reviewed all other elaborated versions of the Swales' CARS model and after expert views, decided to use the elaborated version of the CARS model by Loi (2011) as the coding framework of the study.

Table 1. Loi's Version of Swales CARS Model (1990, 2004)

Moves	Steps
Move 1 Establishing a territory	Step 1 Claiming centrality
	and/or Step 2 Defining terms and concepts
	and/or Step 3 Presenting the theoretical basis
	and/or Step 4 Reviewing literature/findings of previous research
Move 2 Establishing a niche	Step 1 Indicating a gap
	and/or Step 2 Raising a question
	and/or Step 3 Counter-claiming
Move 3 Occupying the niche / Presenting the present work	Step 1 Announcing the purpose of the study
	and/or Step 2 Specifying the focus of the research
	and/or Step 3 Foreshadowing the methodology
	and/or Step 4 Introducing the research hypothesis
	and/or Step 5 Introducing the research questions
	and/or Step 6 Presenting the positive justification
	and/or Step 7 Introducing the implications of the findings
	and/or Step 8 Claiming the significance of the study

Table 1 shows the moves and steps in Loi's version the researchers used while coding the MA introductions in TID. To briefly explain, according to the model, the introductions consist of three distinct moves. Typically, they commence with an initial move in which the writer introduces the subject matter of the study. During the second move, writers establish a specific area of study, commonly referred to as a research space or niche. This space is subsequently filled or occupied in the third move.

1.3. Coding and Analysis

Before the coding process, a four-hour training session was conducted by one of the study's researchers to brief the other coder on the framework and supply information regarding how to code. Once more, initially operating independently, the researchers coded the introductions concurrently. In addition, during the process, the researchers scheduled periodic meetings to review and clarify any remaining uncertainties. The percentage agreement metric was employed to assess the inter-coder agreement, and, following the completion of the coding procedure; the aggregate agreement was measured to be 78.11%.

Here, it is important to point out that each sentence was focused as the primary unit of coding, but in some cases, sentences may cover two moves at the same time. In such samples, following the recommendations put forth by Crookes (1986), the move and step that seemed more prominent were designated.

2. Results and Discussion

2.1. General Rhetorical Organization of English and Turkish MA Theses' introductions on TİD

In terms of the general rhetorical organization of English and Turkish MA theses' introductions, for Move 1, it is seen that both corpora share quite similar characteristics regarding the steps' employment (see Table 2). However, as for Move 2 and Move 3, the employment percentage of each step across the two corpora displays marked variation. At this point, English introductions seemingly follow Loi's version of Swales' CARS model, which suggests that, for English texts, this framework may serve as a valuable tool for providing a detailed and informative point of the rhetorical organization. The other probable reason behind the similarity between English introductions and the framework is that Swales' model was basically developed on English texts (Loi 2010:272).

Table 2. Rhetorical Organization of English and Turkish MA Thesis Introductions on TİD

		English Introductions		Turkish Introductions	
Moves		Steps			
Move 1	Establishing a territory	Step 1	Claiming centrality	Claiming centrality	
		and/or Step 2	Defining terms and concepts **	Defining terms and concepts **	
		and/or Step 3	Presenting the theoretical basis	Presenting the theoretical basis	
		and/or Step 4	Reviewing literature/findings of previous research	Reviewing literature/findings of previous research	
Move 2	Establishing a niche	Step 1	Indicating a gap*	Indicating a gap**	
		and/or Step 2	Raising a question	Raising a question	
		and/or Step 3	Counter-claiming**	Counter-claiming**	
Move 3	Occupying the niche / Presenting the present work	Step 1	Announcing the purpose of the study	Announcing the purpose of the study	
		and/or Step 2	Specifying the focus of the research ***	Specifying the focus of the research ***	
		and/or Step 3	Foreshadowing the methodology	Foreshadowing the methodology	
		and/or Step 4	Introducing the research hypothesis	Introducing the research hypothesis*	
		and/or Step 5	Introducing the research questions	Introducing the research questions*	
		and/or Step 6	Presenting the positive justification	Presenting the positive justification**	
		and/or Step 7	Introducing the implications of the findings***	Introducing the implications of the findings***	
		and/or Step 8	Claiming the significance of the study	Claiming the significance of the study *	

Note.

1. Bold is used to highlight the steps mainly observed in English and Turkish introductions (above 55 % of each corpus).
2. One asterisk (*) shows that the step is partly observed (30 %- 50 % of each corpus).
3. Two asterisks (**) show that the step is rarely observed (5 %- 25 % of each corpus).
4. Three asterisks (***) show that the step is not observed in both corpora.

Regarding the Turkish corpus' rhetorical organization compared to the English one's, the analysis revealed a culture-specific diversity. These observations on Turkish introductions in the current study accord with earlier observations by the studies focused on texts in languages other than English (see Taylor & Chen's study in 1991 on Chinese texts; Ahmad's study in 1997 on Malay texts; Jogthong's study in 2001 on Thai texts; Al-Qahtani's study in 2006 and Najjar's study in 1990 on Arabic texts). This noticeable variation could be attributed to the discourse communities the authors of the theses address. In this regard, in the previous studies on English texts, the findings show close affinity to CARS' model and its revised versions, which is in line with the findings of the current study, and this affinity is explained on the basis of the effort to seek acceptance by international academic discourse communities in relevant fields (e.g., Loi 2010; Shi 2002). As for peripheral discourses outside the English language center, there are some other explanations in terms of rhetorical organization differences between L1 and English texts. For example, Canagarajah (2002) stated the issues with which the academics in peripheral discourses face in the organization of rhetorical strategies, especially in composing brief introductory parts in English as the international conventions generally require brief but by showing the "relevance of the study to the international community" (Flowerdew 2001:135), which might be an explanation for the differences between English and Turkish introductions in TİD. The other discussion in the literature regarding L1 and L2 differences is based upon whether the discipline is established or emerging one. As regards this aspect, Hyland (1999:354) stated that in emerging disciplines "problem areas and topics are generally more diffuse and range over wider academic and historical territory, and there is less assurance that questions can be answered by following a single path". Then, the rhetorical difference between English and Turkish MA theses' introductions may be due to the fact that TİD research is a recent emerging field of academic study and, as emphasized in Hyland's assertion, spreads over a wide area, so there is no certain way of rhetorical organization. The last likely cause for the difference between English and Turkish introductions is that the institutional choices may affect the organization of theses' introductions. Indeed, in Turkish academic discourse, there are many institutions, and each institution has its rhetorical parameters for thesis organizations. Thus, it seems possible that this variation across institutions may affect the rhetorical organization of the theses in different language codes.

In terms of Move Sequence remarked, the authors commonly start their introductions with Move 1, that is by establishing a territory. Except for five English introductions starting with Move 2, the left ones were noted to start with Move 1 (17 introductions or 77% of the total), while all Turkish introductions begin with Move 1. Similar findings were also reported in previous studies (e.g. Al-Qahtani 2006; Loi 2010), which revealed that the analyzed introductions also started with *establishing the territory*.

In all of the Turkish and English MA theses introductions, Move 2 (establishing a niche) followed Move 1 (establishing the territory) and, typically, both Turkish and English introductions conclude with Move 3 (occupying the niche/ presenting

the present work), as put in the CARS model (Swales 2004). At this point, it is essential to point out that, in English corpus, in the sequence of Moves, Move 2 was frequently seen, whereas, in Turkish introductions, the sequence was mainly organized with Move 1 and Move 3. In general, in English introductions, [1-2-1-2-1-2-2-1-3-3] or [1-2-1-2-1-2-3-2-3-3] were the move sequence commonly noted. On the other hand, the common Move sequences observed in Turkish MA introductions in TİD were [1-2-1-3-1-1-2-1-3-3] or [1-2-1-2-1-3-3-1-3-3].

2.2. Moves and Steps Employment in Both Corpora

As to the employment of each step under each Move, within Move 1, *Step 1 (claiming centrality)*, *Step 3 (presenting the theoretical basis)*, and *Step 4 (reviewing literature /findings of previous research)* were mainly observed in both English and Turkish introductions. In this regard, these findings align with the findings of the previous studies variation (e.g., Ahmad 1997; Al-Qahtani 2006; Jogthong 2001; Fakhri 2004; Flowerdew & Li 2009; Hirano 2009; Loi 2010; Sheldon 2011; Alotaibi 2013), which shared common observations regarding the frequent use of these steps in the introductions. In both corpora of TİD MA theses' introductions, regarding the centrality claim, it was seen that the writers generally start to argue the importance of the issue or topic addressed in their study and the current position of the relevant issue/topic in the field. In terms of the common frequency in presenting the theoretical basis (81 % of Turkish corpus and 85 % of English corpus), it is an expected result because, in linguistic-based studies, the theoretical premises play a crucial role in shaping the content and methodological aspects of the study. Concerning the other step, reviewing the literature/findings of previous research, this rhetorical act is the straightforward part of introductory parts observed nearly in all disciplines. In fact, in the current study, 97% of the English corpus and 93% of the Turkish corpus include this reviewing-based rhetorical strategy, which demonstrates that the authors in two corpora appeared to make an effort to situate their study in the relevant domain. The other probable rationale behind the employment of this rhetorical strategy is, as pointed out by Bhatia (1993), that this act has a discursive value not only in terms of situating the study but also grounding the study on the literature to establish the significance of the study. Lastly, to mention Move 1 Step 2 (defining terms and concepts), the findings show that this step is rarely observed in both corpora (20% in the Turkish corpus and 25% in the English corpus). The probable explanation for this rarity is that the terms or concepts might be given in detail in the following sections of the theses such as Literature Review or if these terms are basically methodological premises, Methodology. The other possible reason could be that the studies might be specifically based on theories rather than terms or concepts, which, indeed, in the current study, *Step 3 (presenting the theoretical basis)* is one of the most frequent rhetorical acts employed in both corpora (86 % in Turkish corpus and 90 % in English corpus).

As for the steps in Move 2, it is essential to point out that there was a significant variation between Turkish and English MA theses' introductions in TİD. In this regard, this finding is inconsistent with the findings of the previous studies, which

observed significant differences between local texts and English ones by emphasizing the culture-specific effect regarding this variation (e.g., Ahmad 1997; Jogthong 2001; Fakhri 2004; Flowerdew & Li 2009; Hirano 2009; Sheldon 2011; Alotaibi 2013). To specifically explain, only *Move 2 Step 2 raising a question* was the dominant rhetorical act in both corpora (77% in Turkish theses and 85% in English theses). To *Move 2 Step 1 indicating a gap*, the current study found that 38% of the English corpus included this step while only 6% of Turkish introductions employed *indicating gap*. In this regard, it seems that the novice researchers in the TİD domain may prefer face protecting act as a rhetorical strategy through question raising rather than as put in Goffman's Face-work theory (1967, 1972) in terms of manifestation of themselves in TİD academic discourse community through hedging the claims in their study. This could also be the potential explanation behind the rarity (in the English corpus) and lack (in the Turkish corpus) of *Move 2 Step 3 claiming centrality*.

Concerning the last Move, *Move 3 Occupying the niche*, the two corpora obviously differ from each other in terms of the employment percentage of the steps. To start with the two steps, which were commonly seen in both Turkish and English MA introductions (approximately 95 % of each corpus), it appears that, in TİD, the novice researchers mostly prefer *Move 3 Step 1 announcing the purpose of the study*, which was common nearly in all disciplines' introductions (Hirano 2009; Loi 2010; Sheldon 2011; Alotaibi 2013), and *Move 3 Step 3 foreshadowing methodology*, which was common in pure sciences generally (Samraj, 2005). The lack of *Move 3 Step 2 specifying the focus of research* could be attributed to the tendency of researchers to mention the main aim of their study and methodological premises. As to *Move 3 Step 4 (introducing research hypothesis)* and *Move 3 Step 5 (introducing research question)*, it was observed that 70% of the English introductions in TİD included research hypotheses and questions while the proportion of the employment of these acts was 31% in Turkish ones. In this regard, there are two likely causes for the difference between the two corpora. The first one is that, in Turkish theses, the researchers may present hypotheses and questions in methodology sections. The second probable reason could be that the studies in Turkish theses may not be based on research questions and hypotheses. At this point, it is also likely that the methodological aspects could shape the studies in terms of organizing research questions and hypotheses. *Move 3 Step 7 introducing the implications of the findings* were not observed in both corpora, which could be an expected outcome as the researchers may most probably share the implications in the discussion or conclusion parts. The remaining two steps, *Move 3 Step 6 (presenting the positive justification)* and *Move 3 Step 8 (claiming the significance of the study)* were seen nearly in all English theses' introductory parts (94% of the corpus), but in the Turkish corpus, claiming the significance of the study was observed in 46% of the introductions while presenting the positive justification was in 10% of the theses. Here, these findings in Turkish theses may be due to the fact that the researchers might not need to address again the significance and the positive justification of their study as they might consider that they had already emphasized the established value of

their study through raising a question or indicating gap and claiming centrality, thanks to which they address the niche in the field.

3. Conclusions

According to this study, the introductions in both English and Turkish support the overall framework proposed by the Swales' (1990, 2004) Create a Research Space (CARS) model's revised version by Loi (2010). The introductions in both corpora seemingly align with the three moves outlined in the framework. Nevertheless, the alignment between the CARS model and the current corpus is only partial as this study also highlights the similarities and differences between English and Turkish MA introductions in TİD.

The findings of the present study can be valuable for instructing novice researchers in TİD with a strong command of English and Turkish in academic writing. This study suggests an analytic-synthetic approach that can be used to teach English and Turkish academic writing. Teachers typically ask students to analyze rhetorical variables in academic prose before guiding them to create their drafts, using an analytic-synthetic approach. Put simply, the knowledge acquired from the tasks becomes a valuable resource for students to enhance their ability to write appropriate English academic prose (Swales & Feak 2004). It would be helpful if the teacher began by focusing on a specific section of academic prose, such as the introduction. Then, students could use the knowledge they gained from genre-analysis tasks in this section to analyze the rhetorical structures in other sections of a thesis like method, result, and discussion. Engaging in this genre practice can assist novice researchers of TİD in developing the necessary background knowledge to effectively write academic texts. The organization of academic introductions, which was made possible by the move analysis, may serve as a model for genre-analysis assignments in academic purposes-based courses and future research. The findings of the present study provide valuable insights into the cross-cultural differences between English and Turkish MA introductions. This research has the potential to greatly benefit instructors and Turkish novice researchers in an academic writing classroom by enhancing their understanding in multiple ways.

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