

## **Conclusions in Research Articles: A Filipino-Japanese Contrastive Rhetoric Study**

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### **Abstract**

The present study attempted to identify organizational and compulsory moves from two writing cultures. Selected research articles (RAs) written by Filipino and Japanese authors were comprehensively analyzed. It was found that there was intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of Filipino and Japanese RA authors. Specifically, Filipino RA authors, on the one hand, seemingly indicated in their RAs' conclusion sections the probable contributions that their studies might have contributed to the growing body of knowledge; on the other hand, Japanese RA authors, apparently employed in their conclusions a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study, which characterizes their cultural rhetorical pattern called "ketsu." A number of pedagogic implications were provided for future instruction in teaching ESL/EFL.

**Keywords:** Research articles' conclusions, contrastive rhetoric, organizational moves, rhetorical preferences, conclusion model/pattern, research article sections

### **Introduction**

Research articles (RAs) are known to be contributors to the growing body of knowledge in any fields of discipline. Many researchers have devoted more attention to the rhetorical analyses of the different components found in RAs in different fields of discipline such as abstract (e.g. Ping, et. al., 2010; Salager-Meyer, 1992), introduction section (e.g. Swales 1981, 1990; Swales & Najjar 1987), result section (e.g. Thompson, 1993), and discussion section (e.g. Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988).

Sandoval (2010) implied that one of the difficult sections of RA to write is the conclusion part. According to him, some RA authors devote ample time formulating their RA conclusion section because it “provides not only an outline of the study conducted, but also other significant elements such as implications and recommendations (p.1).” In addition, it is in this part that RA authors express the significance of the major findings of their studies, thus giving them the privilege to become credible researchers in their field of specialization. One study that reports on separate *Conclusion* sections in RAs is Yang and Allison (2003) as they set out how writers in applied linguistics move from results to conclusions. They established three-move scheme organizational moves in all the RAs that they used in their studies with corresponding move’s steps as shown in table 1.

As can be seen in table 1, there are three moves found in the conclusion model namely: Move 1, *Summarizing the study*; Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, with three corresponding steps such as *Indicating significance/advantage*, *Indicating limitations*, and *Evaluating methodology*; and Move 3, *Deductions from the research* with two steps namely: *Recommending further study* and *Drawing conclusion*. Furthermore, Yang and Allison (2003) have provided definitions for each move and corresponding examples. These examples highlighted common phrasal or clausal components found in the corpus that they used in their study. The definitions and samples are as follows:

Table 1  
*Yang’s and Allison’s Conclusion Model*

MOVES	STEPS
Move 1 – Summarizing the study	
Move 2 – Evaluating the study	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indicating significance/ advantage</li> <li>2. Indicating limitations</li> <li>3. Evaluating methodology</li> </ol>
Move 3 – Deductions from the research	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recommending further study</li> <li>2. Drawing pedagogic implication</li> </ol>

“Move 1 - Summarizing the study, this is the move that RA authors use to provide a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study (e.g. *In summary, the research presented in this paper offers a contrastive textlinguistic study of rhetorical differences between texts...*); Move 2 - Evaluating the study, this move functions to evaluate the overall study by pointing out the limitations (e.g. *The present study has raised a number of interesting differences, but a larger corpus is needed to establish how far they can be generalized...*), indicating the contributions (e.g. *What is new in our study is the links we try to find with school performance, and the within family dynamics of the accommodation process...*) or evaluating the methodology (e.g. *...She performed extremely well in the experiment, but it is questionable whether her experimental data represent the strategy she would employ outside of the laboratory*); and Move 3 - Deductions from the research, this is the moves where authors extend beyond the results by suggesting what can be done to solve the problems identified by the research, pointing out the line of further study (e.g. *Further research might be profitably conducted within a single discipline to determine the degree of variability according to subdiscipline...*) or drawing pedagogic implications (e.g. *The findings of this study may have some implications for the teaching of EAP....*)” (pp. 382-383).

The present study is anchored on the conclusion model established by Yang and Allison (2003). This linguistic framework has prompted the researcher to conduct the study that would further shed light on the intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences in the RAs' conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese RA authors, thereby adding a new dimension to the study of conclusion section in RAs in the field of applied linguistics.

As far as rhetorical preferences or organizational moves of written discourse are concerned, contrastive rhetoric studies employing different writing cultures have been conducted. One popular study was done by Hinds (1983) when he found that Japanese employed rhetorical pattern called: *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*: where “*ki*, introduces the topic; *shoo*, develops the topic; *ten*, forms an abrupt transition or a vaguely related point; and *katsu*, concludes the topic.” Another study that commented on the possible influences in writing

in the target language is conducted by Kamimura and Oi (1998, cited in Dayag, 2009), when they compared two writing cultures, Japanese and American students. The former has the tendency to employ emotional/affective appeal when they write argumentative texts, whereas the latter has the tendency to employ rational appeal when writing the same type of text. In addition, Tahagaki (2002) mentioned that Japanese write for accuracy in English (L2), for they focus more on mechanical and grammatical revisions in L2 than in Japanese (L1). For this reason, Japanese do not apparently want to be misunderstood because if misunderstanding occurs, they think of themselves as impolite for not making any possible ways to avoid misapprehension.

Another remarkable linguistic framework with regard to cultural categories of communication was suggested by Lewis (2005). He categorized cultures into three groupings: linear-actives are straightforward and direct in discussion; reactives are fact-driven before reacting to something; and multi-actives are loquacious leading to repeated interruptions. In particular, Japanese culture, according to Lewis (2005), belongs to reactive cultures, whereas Filipino culture belongs to the middle of reactive and multi-active cultures. However, Filipinos are more of reactives and less of multi-actives.

Another interesting study that tackles cultural communication in written discourse is examined by Tsuda (1992). This sociolinguistic research regarding humility in Japanese revealed that Japanese in general refrain from personal compliments because they want to be polite all the time. Therefore, they are predisposed not to write everything, thereby maintaining their politeness. Tsuda (1992) further explained that Japanese likely leave what is unwritten to their readers.

In connection to this assumption, Hinds (1987) found that Asians, Japanese in particular, produce reader-responsible prose as opposed to Anglo-American writing that is writer-responsible. Japanese, according to Tsuda (1992) have the tendency not to express whatever they want to scribble, for they leave to the readers the responsibility to understand what is not written. In relation to this linguistic assertion, Hall (1976) proposed two categorizations of cultures into high context versus low context cultures in order to understand their basic differences in communication style and

cultural issues. This view is supported by Bujtaba and Balboas (2009) categorizing Japanese and Filipino as high-context cultures, thus making the two cultures and other Asian cultures less verbal in writing formal information.

A number of researches on rhetorical moves and preferences on the different sections of RAs have been explored; however, few attempts have been made to conduct contrastive rhetorical studies on the conclusion sections of RAs written by more than one writing cultures. This study is proposed to determine and analyze some selected RAs' conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors for their generic moves and steps that they employed in writing their conclusions. Specifically, this study sought to answer two questions: (1) What are the generic structures or organizational moves found in RA conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors?; and (2) Is there a compulsory move in the conclusion parts of all the RAs under study?

### **Method**

A total of 16 RAs were analyzed in this study: eight RAs were written by Filipino authors and another eight by Japanese authors. The said RAs were all singly written in English language and extracted from the field of applied linguistics. Moreover, the duration, within which the RAs have been published, were from the years 2005 to 2010. All RAs were published in international journals. RAs' conclusion sections under study were subjected to word and paragraph counting to get the average length of RAs' conclusion sections. As a limitation of the study, the number of pages in which the conclusion parts were written were not considered because all RAs' conclusion sections did not seem to exceed to two pages. Furthermore, as part of the major contrastive analyses of all the RAs, rhetorical structures or organizational moves and their corresponding steps were analyzed to determine the overall structural components in the conclusion parts or sections of RAs under study, following Yang's and Allison's (2003) *Conclusion* model. Moreover, the researcher asked two intercoders, who are English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and have completed graduate education in English from reputable universities, to code the moves and steps in

the conclusion sections of all the RAs. Furthermore, the intercoders were provided a hard copy of Yang's and Allison's (2003) *Conclusion* model for comprehensive directions and identification of the components found in the conclusion sections. Trial sessions were done by the researcher with the intercoders before giving them two weeks to complete the task. The researcher and the two intercoders met to analytically compare the coded moves and steps in the conclusion sections of RAs under study. The preliminary intercoder agreement was 93% but reached 100% after listening to several justifications and settling some of the disagreements as regards the coded moves and steps found in the conclusion sections particularly written by Japanese authors under study.

### **Results and Discussion**

Table 2 presents how long Filipino and Japanese RA authors have put in writing their RAs' conclusions in terms of the number of words and paragraphs in the conclusion section of their RAs.

The data in table 2 shows that Japanese RAs' conclusions produced more words with an obtained mean of 450, which almost doubled the number of words produced by Filipino authors in their RAs. Furthermore, the mean obtained as regards the number of paragraphs produced by Japanese authors in their RAs' conclusions likewise outnumbered its counterpart. These findings suggest that Japanese RA authors may be more prolix in writing their RAs' conclusions than Filipino RA authors.

This seeming prolixity of Japanese RA authors may be attributed to meticulousness in every minute detail in the conclusion section and that could be the probable reason why Japanese RA authors under study produced more number of words and paragraphs than Filipino authors produced. Conversely, Japanese production of more words and paragraphs in writing their conclusions when compared to Filipino authors under study did not seem to support Bujtaba and Balboa's (2009) account, underscoring that "in high-context cultures such as Philippines, Afghanistan, Lebanon, Thailand, Japan, or India, there is a less verbally detailed communication and less written/formal information (p. 1)."

Table 2  
*Number of Words and Paragraphs in Filipino and Japanese RAs' Conclusion Sections*

Filipino RAs' Conclusion Sections		Japanese RAs' Conclusion Sections	
NW <sup>a</sup>	NP <sup>b</sup>	NW	NP
536	3	265	3
234	5	694	5
239	2	706	4
210	1	566	3
292	2	379	3
277	3	116	1
212	2	166	1
80	1	705	7
MNW <sup>c</sup>	MNP <sup>d</sup>	MNW	MNP
<b>260</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>450</b>	<b>3</b>

NW<sup>a</sup> ,number of words

NP<sup>b</sup> ,number of paragraphs

MNW<sup>c</sup> ,mean of number of words

MNP<sup>d</sup> ,mean of number of paragraphs

Tahagaki (2002) stated that when Japanese write in L2, they see to it that they are not misunderstood, thus possessing the tendency to seemingly write longer texts in L2 to establish accuracy of their factual views and informed opinions. In addition, this finding may also prove Lewis' (2005) division of cultural categories of communication, pointing that Japanese are culturally considered "reactives" in communication in such as way that they seemingly "form some proofs or data first before reacting" (p.89), thereby applying this rhetorical style in the conclusion part of their research papers to be more precise and definitive.

On the contrary, the findings may probably put Filipino RA authors as high-context culture communicators because of the less number of words and paragraphs that Filipino RAs authors produced, thereby supporting Bujtaba and Balboa's (2009) stance that high-context culture communicators consider "often what is left unsaid is as important as what is said (p.1)." The less production of words and paragraphs of Filipino RA authors compared with their

counterparts may mean that Filipino RA authors may likely be reader- responsible in this context alone, thus supporting Hinds' (1987, cited in Dayag, 2009) claim that Asians are reader-responsible.

Table 3 summarizes the averages obtained as regards the moves and move's steps found in the RAs' conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese authors. As shown in the table, all Japanese RA authors had summaries in their RAs' conclusion sections. This finding suggests that Move 1, *Summarizing the study*, in writing the conclusion section of an RA is a mandatory section for Japanese RA authors. This interesting result may stem from what Hinds (1983) established after examining rhetorical style in Japanese expository writing which is not seen in English. He further emphasized that "this writing style is termed as *ki-shoo-ten-ketsu*" (Hinds, 1983, p.1). The said rhetorical pattern, employed by Japanese in their writing outputs, seemingly subsist in Japanese writing culture that may be transferred, to some extent, in writing using the target language. The notion of *ketsu*, concluding the topic, may be significant to all of the Japanese RA authors under study.

Table 3

*Average Occurrence of Moves and Move's Steps in Filipino and Japanese RAs' Conclusion Sections*

MOVES	STEP	Filipino % <sup>a</sup>	Japanese %
Move 1 – Summarizing the Study		75	100
Move 2 – Evaluating the study	1. Indicating significance/ advantage	100.	25
	2. Indicating limitations	13	63
	3. Evaluating methodology	0	50
Move 3 – Deductions from the research	1. Recommending further study	25	50
	2. Drawing pedagogic implication	88	75

%<sup>a</sup> Average occurrence of moves and move's steps

The said Japanese authors may apparently consider that restatement of the main findings or claims is probably an obligatory



part in the conclusion section of the RAs. On the other hand, the data show that Filipino RA authors obtained a perfect mean in Step 1, *Indicating significance/advantage*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, as compared to Japanese RA authors with obtained mean of 25 percent. One possible point why Filipino RA authors found Step 1 of Move 2 in conclusion sections of RAs as a mandatory part may have connection to what Sandoval (2010) said that researchers, indicating the significance of their studies, attempt to establish credibility of notions, thus making them credible researchers in their own discipline. Conversely, Japanese RA authors may have been preempted or driven by their seeming humility. Tsuda (1992) in his sociolinguistic research about humility in Japanese, he claimed that Japanese in general refrain from personal compliments because they want to be polite all the time. Employing argumentative strategies in writing, Japanese may have the tendency to exploit affective appeal, whereas Americans may have the tendency to exploit rational appeal in composing argumentative texts (Kamimura & Oi, 1998, cited in Dayag, 2009). Four out of eight Japanese RA authors evaluated the methodologies that they employed in their research papers as compared to Filipino RA authors that did not obtain any percentage. This finding may be attributed to Japanese humility as seen when they evaluate their writing outputs more in L2 than in L1 because they want to apparently evade being labeled as presumptuous and to probably appear more respectful specifically when they express their own opinions (Tahagaki, 2002). Cultural assumptions from Tsuda's (1992) paper provide strong support to this point of view claiming that "humility in Japanese is deeply rooted in their cultures" (p. 5). For both writing cultures, they likely confirm that Step 2, *Drawing pedagogic implication*, of Move 3, *Deductions from the research*, may be very significant by the obtained mean of both sets of authors, thus extending beyond the results by depicting a number of solutions to the problems identified in the research. Moreover, four out of eight Japanese RA authors may find that Step 3, *Evaluating methodology*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, seemingly worth mentioning the restrictions of the methodologies that they employed in their RAs. For Tsuda (1992) Japanese prefer to assess what they do rather than to compliment their attained achievements.

Furthermore, the data show that there are compulsory moves in the conclusion sections found in the RAs written by Filipino and Japanese authors. To reiterate, Filipino RA authors, on the one hand, found Step 1, *Indicating significance/advantage* of Move 2, *Evaluating the study*, in conclusion section as a mandatory move; on the other hand, Move 1, *Summarizing the study*, is found to be a compulsory move by Japanese RA authors.

Finally, Filipino RA authors seemingly indicate the probable contributions that their studies might have contributed to the body of knowledge. However, Japanese RA authors apparently provide a brief account of the main points from the perspective of the overall study, thereby, probably attributing this writing style to their cultural rhetorical pattern called *ketsu*.

In summary, the present study attempted to identify the generic structures or organizational moves found in RA conclusions written by Filipino and Japanese authors and to determine if there is a compulsory move in the conclusion parts of all the RAs. The three-move scheme established by Yang's and Allison's (2003) proved valid for Japanese RA authors, whereas for Filipino RA authors, Step 2, *Evaluating methodology*, of Move 2, *Evaluating the study* may not be an imperative part of the conclusion section, thus leaving this specific component less significant than other steps.

There are two compulsory moves found in each writing culture: Japanese RA authors are probably confined to write summaries in their RAs' conclusion sections attributing this writing pattern to the notion of *ketsu*, whereas Filipino RA authors seemingly opted to indicate significance of their research as a way of indicating their contribution to the body of knowledge. The findings of the present study are categorically inconclusive for the limited number of RAs used for comprehensive rhetorical analyses.

Furthermore, teachers of English as a Second Language (ESL)/English as a Foreign Language (EFL) need to become informed as regards the findings of the present study so that their awareness with regard to the linguistic assumptions embedded in this study may likely be lifted. Developing cultural sensitivity and cultural consideration makes ESL teachers effective to some extent.

In some circumstances, EFL teachers in particular should consider cultural rhetorical variations in assessing the writing outputs

that EFL learners produce. Evading culture-bound writing rubrics is an effective approach to foster non-discriminatory writing culture in an ELF classroom. Furthermore, ESL/EFL academic writing teachers may provide students a guide on how to write conclusions specifically in RAs, thereby helping many students eliminate their writing dilemma. In addition, providing standard rhetorical patterns in writing research papers may be useful both for EFL and ESL students. Swales and Feak (1994; 2000) proposed useful writing strategies and helpful rhetorical moves and steps in writing research papers found in their two paperbacks namely: *Academic Writing for Graduate Students: A Course for Nonnative Speakers of English* and *English in Today's Research World*. The said paperbacks are intended for non-native learners who find writing research papers difficult and complicated.

Although findings presented by the present study may provide partial explanations as far as organizational moves and move's steps found in the RAs of two writing cultures, Filipino and Japanese RA authors, are concerned, more research studies are needed in order to further establish intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences in the RAs' conclusion sections written by Filipino and Japanese RA authors.

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