Master's Thesis Defense Presentation Slides in Applied Linguistics: Move Analysis of the Introduction by Chinese Students

Mei He[a] and Issra Pramoolsook[b]*

[a]School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand
[b]School of Foreign Languages, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand
*Corresponding author: issra@sut.ac.th

Article information	
Abstract	Thesis defense presentation slides (TDPS) are a significant and unique genre in the final ritual of master's students' learning journey. However, few studies have explored this genre, especially its rhetorical structure, so students have scant knowledge of it. This study investigates the moves and steps of this genre focusing on their Introduction section. A move analysis was conducted of 20 TDPS introductions produced by Chinese master's students in Applied Linguistics. Adopting Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework, interviews with the TDPS authors were then conducted. This study confirms that the framework for M.A. theses, i.e., the source genre of TDPS, is applicable to the exploration of the TDPS rhetorical structure. Only Move 3 *Occupying the niche* was found to be obligatory. No obligatory step was identified, and just three steps were found to be conventional. This study provides insights into how Chinese students produce this underexplored genre and argues for more attention to be paid to studies of its rhetorical structure. The findings could raise students' awareness of genre when attempting to produce effective and acceptable presentation slides to better communicate with their target audience.

Introduction

Master's students need to acquire several genres. Thesis defense is one of these genres (Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005), which has a long history (Roberts & Hyatt, 2019). Generally, four main phases are involved in the thesis defense process, i.e., "preliminaries," "the defense proper," "in-camera session," and "closing segment" (Swales, 2004). The second phase is the most challenging and requires master's students to deliver an oral presentation of their thesis with a sequence of slides and answer questions about their research. During this phase, one genre that master's students need to produce is thesis defense presentation slides (TDPS).

TDPS are an independent genre closely related to the written thesis. They are a kind of visual aid (Yates & Orlikowski, 2007) to support the oral commentary of students in "the defense proper" stage of the thesis defense. Therefore, the primary communicative purpose of TDPS is to support or to facilitate the oral presentation (Schoeneborn, 2013; Wecker, 2012). Moreover, they are used to structure and string together the components of the oral commentary during the presentation (Dubois, 1980; Weissberg, 1993). In certain instances, they are utilized as speaking notes as well (Hertz et al., 2016). The most immediate target audience of TDPS is the committee members who have already read the thesis before the thesis defense. Another audience is the supervisors to whom the students show that they are ready for the defense and feedback. Fellow students or faculty members might be another potential audience.

Despite the fact that TDPS is a necessary and significant genre for master's students, little or no instruction is provided for them on how to prepare or present slides (Tardy, 2009). The most popular way they learn this particular genre is to observe their seniors' presentations. Therefore, they obtain scant genre knowledge of TDPS and suffer from a lack of a clear framework to produce them (Pieketaleyee & Bazargani, 2018).

In the literature, more attention has been paid to the presentation slides in other contexts, such as classrooms, conferences, and seminars (Forey & Feng, 2016; Morell, 2015; Wecker, 2012; Zareva, 2013, 2016). Few studies have explored the TDPS genre, especially its rhetorical structure. Besides, the investigations into presentation slides have been conducted in the teaching context to examine their effect on the learning of students (Baker et al., 2018; Levasseur & Kanan Sawyer 2006; Nouri & Shahid 2005; Pi & Hong, 2016; Zdaniuk et al., 2019), and several scholars have looked into students' slide design (Chen, 2021; Shin et al., 2020), slide formats (Castelló et al., 2020), categories of visuals on slides (Azizifar et al., 2014; Rowley-Jolivet, 2002) and integration of slide-text into spoken expositions of a lecture (Hallewell & Crook, 2020). Moreover, general strategies in designing slides have been explored in a number of studies (e.g., Berk, 2011; Mackiewicz, 2008), as well as students' perception of presentation slides (Apperson et al., 2008; Bucher & Niemann, 2012). Nevertheless, a large number of students, supervisors, and researchers are still unfamiliar with the rhetorical structure of the TDPS genre, especially students who may find it challenging when having to produce slides in this particular genre.

Limited research on TDPS leaves a research gap that has yet to be fulfilled. As a significant genre for master's students who may find it challenging to produce TDPS, there is a need to explore their rhetorical structure. According to Hertz et al. (2016), students should be taught how to design slides, and how to present them effectively with PowerPoint. Furthermore, making the knowledge of writing

explicit to inexperienced writers through genre analysis might be an effective way to help them cope with the challenges they encounter (Putri & Kurniawan, 2021; Ren & Li, 2011). Therefore, the present research aimed to explore the rhetorical structure of TDPS, specifically the Introduction section. Previous studies have revealed that presentation slides are structured closely to their original written reports, such as theses and research articles (Atai & Talebzadeh, 2012; Diani, 2015; Pieketaleyee & Bazargani, 2018; Rowley-Jolivet, 2002; Tardy, 2005; Weissberg, 1993). Since the Introduction section of a thesis can be difficult for inexperienced students (Nguyen & Pramoolsook, 2014; Zainuddin & Shaari, 2021), it can be assumed that its counterpart in TDPS is challenging for them as well. Hence, the Introduction section of TDPS was selected as the focus of the current research.

Literature Review

To the best of our knowledge, only one study (i.e., Pieketaleyee & Bazargani, 2018) has explored the moves and steps of the Introduction section of TDPS. Collecting 50 PowerPoint presentations prepared by language teaching Iranian students for their thesis defense, Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) investigated the moves and steps employed by the Iranian students when presenting the Introduction and Literature Review sections of their thesis. The researchers adopted the framework proposed by Chen and Kuo (2012) to analyze the selected theses' moves and steps to identify the rhetorical structure of the slides. The move analysis of the Introduction section of TDPS revealed that three conventional moves (*Establishing a territory*, *Establishing a niche*, and *Occupying the niche*), in concordance with Swales' (1990) CARS model, were frequently used by the student writers, and no obligatory move was found in their corpus. Compared with Chen and Kuo's (2012) framework, all four moves of the framework were found in the corpus. However, fewer steps under the moves were identified, and some steps were completely missing in the presentation slides, such as *Continuing a tradition*

under the second move and *Describing parameters of research* under the third move.

With a corpus of 438 slides which constituted 20 Applied Linguistics conference presentations produced by Iranian linguists, Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) analyzed the rhetorical structure of presentation slides at the move level. As for the Introduction section, the results showed that all the three moves for research articles in the CARS model (Swales, 1990) were identified in the corpus. In addition, it was found that more slides were utilized to realize the first move, *Establishing the territory,* and this move occurred in all the presentations, thus, enjoying the obligatory status. The other two moves were found to be conventional. It seems that conference slide writers have a tendency to provide the knowledge about the field to the audience.

In the same vein, analyzing 56 sets of presentation slides produced by native and non-native English speakers at three Applied Linguistics conferences, Diani (2015) found that Move 1 *Establishing a territory* was obligatory, which is in line with the results of Atai and Talebzadeh (2012). However, Move 2 *Establishing a niche* and Move 3 *Occupying the niche* were identified as the optional move and obligatory move, respectively, which was in disagreement with the findings of Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) who found these two moves were all conventional. Such differences may have been caused by the contexts of these two studies as the presentation slides in the study by Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) were produced by Iranian writers, whereas those in the study by Diani (2015) included both native and non-native writers from international conferences. Such discrepancy seems to suggest that cultural variations exist in the moves adopted by different writers who write conference presentation slides.

In conclusion, the generic moves and steps of this particular TDPS genre are obviously underexplored, especially those written by master's students from a

Chinese cultural background. Thus, the purpose of the current study was to address this research gap by answering the research question: what are the moves, steps, and structure of the Introduction in TDPS produced by Chinese master's students in Applied Linguistics?

Methods

Data Collection

The data were collected from a public comprehensive university located in southwest China. This university has 38 colleges, offering 52 master's programs in total, ranging from disciplines in technology and natural sciences to those in humanities and social sciences. Two criteria were established to collect TDPS. Firstly, TDPS from the Applied Linguistics discipline were chosen. The reason for selecting this discipline was that in mainland China, only English-related majors are required to produce TDPS in English. Moreover, among English-related majors, only those in Applied Linguistics were produced in the traditional IMRD style. Secondly, to determine the current tendency and to find out the recurrent rhetorical structure of the TDPS employed in this discourse community, TDPS of the theses successfully defended within the academic years 2017 to 2021 were collected. In the end, 20 TDPSs were included to build the needed corpus. It should be mentioned that since the content of TDPS was selected and extracted from theses, the original theses of the 20 TDPS were collected and consulted as well to elicit a clearer picture of the production of the slides. The sample size of the 20 TDPSs was considered manageable and sufficient, following the criteria set in previous studies (Atai & Talebzadeh, 2012; Flowerdew & Forest, 2009). Furthermore, it should be mentioned that the current study had a smaller corpus compared with a similar study undertaken by Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018). However, to compensate for this limitation, interviews with the actual writers of the slides were conducted to validate and verify the findings from the textual analysis.

The next procedure was to identify and extract the Introduction section from the whole TDPS. Uncertainty about the boundaries of the Introduction section was addressed by confirming with the corresponding writers of those slides. The 20 Introduction sections in TDPSs (hereafter PSIs) were extracted and the codes PSI01 to PSI20 were randomly assigned for ethical consideration and convenience of the analysis. The total number of slides in each PSI ranged from two to six, with an average of 3.5 slides in one PSI.

The present research regarded TDPS as a written form of the Introduction section (Atai & Talebzadeh, 2012; Pieketaleyee & Bazargani, 2018; Tardy, 2005); therefore, 20 sets of PSIs were transformed into an editable file format so that their content could be analyzed manually and tagged electronically for an easy calculation of the frequency of the moves and steps.

Data Analysis

Following the frameworks proposed by Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) and Chen and Kuo (2012), as shown in the table below, there were three moves in the framework with four steps under Move 1, four steps under Move 2, and 15 steps under Move 3. Additionally, an independent move *Referring to other studies* was proposed for the investigation of the functions of citations in the framework. However, the citation practice was not the focus of the present study, and this move was subsequently removed to make it more appropriate to achieve the focused research objectives.

Table 1

Move-Step Framework for Thesis Introduction (Chen & Kuo, 2012)

Moves	Steps
Move 1: Establishing a territory	a) Providing topic generalization/background
	b) Indicating centrality/importance of topic

	c)	Defining terms
	d)	Reviewing previous research
Move 2:		
Establishing a niche	a)	Indicating gap in previous research
	b)	Question-raising
	c)	Counter-claiming
	d)	Continuing/extending a tradition
Move 3:		
Occupying the niche	a)	Indicating purposes/aims/objectives
	b)	Indicating scope of research
	c)	Indicating chapter/section structure
	d)	Indicating theoretical position
	e)	Announcing research/work carried out
	f)	Describing parameters of research
	g)	Stating research questions/hypotheses
	h)	Defining terms
	i)	Indicating research method
	j)	Indicating findings/results
	k)	Indicating models proposed
	l)	Indicating applications
	m)	Indicating value or significance
	n)	Providing justification
	o)	Indicating thesis structure
Referring to other studies	a)	Providing background information
	b)	Providing definition of terms
	c)	Providing support or justification

Subsequently, the modified framework was applied into the identification of the moves and steps of the 20 PSIs. In this process, a functional-semantic approach was conducted in which cognitive judgement instead of the linguistic

criteria was utilized to recognize the local communicative functions of the text segments and textual boundaries (Kwan, 2006). After the coding of all the data, the move-step sequence of each PSI was tabulated to observe the recurrent patterns. The frequency of the moves and steps was also calculated. Following Kanoksilapatham (2005) and Nguyen and Pramoolsook (2015), the move or step presented in all the PSIs (100%) was regarded as obligatory, while that appearing less than 60% was optional. Those holding the frequency in between were considered conventional. Moreover, similar to Yang and Allison (2003), for the sake of conciseness of the analysis, the sub-steps were not explored. Finally, the findings were compared with those in other pertinent studies.

Being aware of the issue of subjectivity during coding, an interrater was invited to code the data. The invited interrater, holding an M.A. degree, had been working as an English instructor for five years with experience in discourse analysis and corpus analysis. After the interrater was trained to code the data, they analyzed the 20 PSIs, and the results were then compared with those of the first researcher. The interrater agreement was 93.4%, which indicated a high frequency of consistency. Disagreements between the two raters were discussed until all of them were addressed.

In addition, semi-structured interviews with the TDPS authors were conducted after the textual analysis. The interview questions were mainly related to the results of the move analysis of the PSIs that were deemed interesting. Furthermore, the writers were encouraged to share their experience in producing the PSIs, especially the challenges and difficulties they had encountered.

Results and Discussion

Slide Headings

A thesis is generally organized by chapters with sections and/or subsections under each chapter, while presentation slides are composed in a sequence (Tardy,

2005). Furthermore, except for the first title slide and the last Thank You slide, the slides in between usually have a heading and/or subheading as well as the body text, which is the default layout setting of Microsoft PowerPoint (Atai & Talebzadeh, 2012; Green, 2021). Writers might also change the layout of their PowerPoint slides as they deem appropriate or effective. A common feature of the PSIs is the prevalence of slide headings which play a significant role to guide the audience through the contents being presented in that specific slide. Slide headings, similar to section headings in the thesis (Bunton, 2002), may imply the moves and steps on that particular slide. Thus, the slide headings were first examined in this study.

Among the 20 PSIs investigated, 11 of them had the heading "Introduction," which was in a single slide serving as the boundary device, at the top of every single slide, or only on the first slide of the slide set. However, one writer utilized the word "Introduction" to demonstrate the research background rather than to imply the whole introductory part of their thesis. To be specific, one PSI stated "Introduction" as the slide heading to present the content about "Background," "Deficiencies of previous studies," and "Present study," followed by a slide with the heading "Research objectives" to show the research purposes which were also the content under the heading "Present study." An informal interview with the writer subsequently revealed that he used the heading "Introduction" to pack all the basic information of his research and prepared the slides according to the flow of his speech in the thesis defense rather than following the structure of the original thesis. It seemed that there were two ways to organize TDPS, one was to follow the structure of the original thesis and the other was to comply with the flow of the speaker's speech.

Most of the slide headings or subheadings were generic section headings from the theses. According to the sequence of the headings used, half of the PSIs (50%) had the slide heading "Research background" or "Background" to direct the

audience to the items that indicated the information that provided background of the research. Other headings that were used varied, including "Motivation," "Rationale," "Rationale of the study," "Research orientation," and "Basis for the selected topic," all of which were not found in the introduction of the theses. Furthermore, 18 out of the 20 PSIs had the slide heading to indicate the research objectives, such as "Research objectives," "Objectives of the study," "Purpose," or "Objectives." A majority of the PSIs (75%) had one slide titled "Research questions." In addition, headings that demonstrated the research significance were found in eight of the PSIs, such as "Significance of the study" and "Significance." Moreover, two PSIs were found to have "Terminology" as a slide heading and one PSI had "Layout of the thesis" to finish the introductory section of the PSI.

From the slide headings, it can be concluded that research background, research objectives, and research questions were the most commonly found, reflecting the writers' belief that these three parts were the most important information to introduce their research. Varied headings used by the writers to create the PSIs seemed to imply that they had more freedom to create the slides. It also indicated that there may not be a strict convention for this particular genre.

Moves in the PSIs

The total number of PSIs identified based on the framework proposed by Chen and Kuo (2012), as well as frequencies, are shown in Table 2 below. All three moves of *Establishing a Territory*, *Establishing a Niche*, and *Occupying the Niche* were found. In regards to their frequency, Move 1 was considered conventional as it was presented in the majority of the presentation slides (80%). This is in line with the finding of Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) that Move 1 was most frequently found, indicating that it is necessary to introduce the audience to some background information right at the beginning of the thesis defense. However, Move 1 was found to be obligatory in the Applied Linguistics conference

presentation slides in the studies by Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) and Diani (2015). This may have been because there was a diverse audience at the conference and the presenters may have wanted to provide certain background information to familiarize the audience with their topics for ease of comprehension.

Table 2

Moves in the 20 PSIs

Moves	No.	%	Status
Move 1: Establishing a Territory	16	80	Conventional
Move 2: Establishing a Niche	11	55	Optional
Move 3: Occupying the Niche	20	100	Obligatory

The findings also showed that the frequency of Move 2 was 55%, thus suggesting that it was optional in the present corpus. A different finding was reported by Pieketaleyee and Bazargani's (2018) that Move 2 was obligatory in TEFL thesis defense presentation slides produced by Iranian master's students. One plausible explanation is there may be cultural differences when presenting thesis research. It is worth noting that the finding of the present study, that Move 2 was optional, is consistent with that of Diani (2015) which revealed that Move 2 had a lower frequency of only 12.5%. On the other hand, Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) reported that Move 2 was conventional in their corpus. A closer examination showed that the slides in the study by Diani (2015) were produced by native and non-native English speakers, whereas those in the study by Atai and Talebzadeh (2012) were produced exclusively by Iranian linguists. Again, cultural differences may explain such discrepancy when including Move 2 in presentation slides.

As the main purpose of thesis defense presentations is to report one's own research, Move 3 was found in all the presentations, thus indicating that it was an obligatory move. Likewise, Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) and Diani (2015) found that Move 3 was obligatory. Also, Move 3 had a high frequency of 87.5% in

a study by Atai and Talebzadeh (2012). As such, it could be concluded that occupying the niche is significant and necessary when making presentation slides. In terms of the move sequence, the three moves were in a single progression in the majority of the presentation slides as shown in Table 3, except for one presentation (PSI18) in which a recursive Move 1 slide was followed by five recursive Move 3 slides. This finding was contrary to the findings that the moves contained in the Introduction section of a thesis were cyclical (e.g., Bunton, 2002; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Kawase, 2018). It could be that there is a time restriction when doing an oral presentation, so the writers have to extract only the main points of their thesis and keep the elaboration of details only in the written version of the thesis.

Table 3

Move Sequence of the 20 PSIs

Text	Move sequences	Text	Move sequence
PSI1	M1-M3	PSI11	M3-M2-M3
PSI2	M1-M2-M3	PSI12	M3
PSI3	M1-M2-M3	PSI13	M1-M3
PSI4	M1-M3	PSI14	M3-M1-M3
PSI5	M1-M2-M3	PSI15	M3-M1-M2-M3
PSI6	M2-M3	PSI16	M3-M1-M3
PSI7	M3	PSI17	M1-M3
PSI8	M1-M3	PSI18	M1-M2-M1-M3
PSI9	M1-M2-M3	PSI19	M3-M1-M2-M3
PSI10	M1-M2-M3	PSI20	M1-M2-M3

(Note: M1 = a step or steps of Move 1; M2 = a step or steps of Move 2; M3 = a step or steps of Move 3)

As indicated in Table 3, two of the slide sets (PSI7 and PSI12) utilized only Move 3 to introduce their research, so the introduction of the presentation was about the writers' own research. The identified move patterns in the present

corpus were M1-M3 and M1-M2-M3, with the frequency of 35% and 40%, respectively. The move progression of M1-M2-M3 identified in the framework of Chen and Kuo (2012) was employed more frequently in the present corpus, and this suggests that the oral presentation of the Introduction section of a thesis generally conforms to the convention proposed by Swales' (1990, 2004) CARS models for research articles.

Steps in the PSIs

The steps identified in the PSIs were similar to those in the proposed framework of Chen and Kuo (2012), but about half of their steps were not identified in the present corpus (see Table 4). On the contrary, Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) found that only four out of the 24 steps were not identified in their corpus. Put another way, Iranian thesis writers in their study adopted more steps to present their thesis during their oral defense than those used by Chinese student writers in this study. One possible explanation for this finding is that the presentation time of 15 to 25 minutes the Iranian students had was significantly longer than the duration of 15 minutes that the Chinese students in this study had. Therefore, it may have been necessary to use fewer steps in their slides.

It is noteworthy that the step *Defining terms* is included in both Move 1 and Move 3, but their communicative functions are different. The one under Move 1 is concerned with a wide research field (Bunton, 2002), whereas the one under Move 3 is to offer the operational definitions of the terms used in the writers' study. There were instances of defining terms found in two slide sets, which were presented under the title "Terminology," and they were considered belonging to Move 3.

Table 4

Steps in the 20 PSIs

	Steps	No.	%	Status
Move 1	Providing topic generalization/ background	14	70	Conventional
	Indicating centrality/ importance of topic	5	25	Optional
	Defining terms	0	0	/
	Reviewing previous research	4	20	Optional
Move 2	Indicating gaps in previous research	11	55	Optional
	Question-raising	0	0	/
	Counter-claiming	0	0	/
	Continuing/extending a tradition	0	0	/
	Indicating a problem/need	0	0	/
Move 3	Indicating purposes/aims/objectives	18	90	Conventional
	Indicating scope of research	1	5	Optional
	Indicating chapter /section structure	3	15	Optional
	Indicating theoretical position	2	10	Optional
	Announcing research/ work carried out	2	10	Optional
	Describing parameters of research	0	0	/
	Stating research questions/hypotheses	15	75	Conventional
	Defining terms	2	10	Optional
	Indicating research method	1	5	Optional
	Indicating findings/results	0	0	/
	Indicating models proposed	0	0	/
	Indicating applications	0	0	/
	Indicating value or significance	8	40	Optional
	Providing justification	0	0	/
	Indicating thesis structure	3	15	Optional

Among all the steps found in the PSIs, *Indicating purposes/aims/objectives* had the highest frequency (90%). This suggests that the writers considered the research objectives most significant when introducing their study during the thesis defense. Other frequently utilized steps included *Stating research questions/hypotheses* (75%) and *Providing topic generalization/background* (70%). These three steps were the only conventional steps in the PSIs in the present corpus, and no obligatory steps were identified. Such findings indicated that there was no convention for master's students to produce their presentation slides, and the steps varied across student writers who were members of the same discourse community in this study.

In regards to the realization of Move 1, the step *Providing topic generalization/background* was most frequently employed, which was similar to the finding of Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018). In fact, it is conventional to present background information in the thesis defense. Moreover, few of the slide sets contained the steps *Indicating centrality/importance of topic* (25%) or *Reviewing previous research* (20%), which suggests that the content related to these two steps was not necessary when giving an oral presentation to a live audience. Besides, no *Defining terms* step was found in the present corpus, and this may have been because the student writers were aware of the fact that the target audience, or their thesis committee members, were experts in the field.

Move 2 was found to be optional in the present study. It was found only in the step *Indicating gaps in previous research*. In other words, all the PSIs which had Move 2 only employed the step *Indicating gaps in previous research*. The other four steps of Move 2 were not identified. Such findings were not congruent with the findings of Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018) who found *Indicating a problem/need* to be an obligatory step in all presentation slides. Moreover, *Question-raising* and *Counter-claiming* were also found in their corpus. Interviews with the writers revealed that they considered the research gap as the strongest

motivation for their research because it underscored the value of their research. Additionally, some of the writers explained that it could be assumed that where there was a research gap, there was also a research need, so providing rationale for their research did not need to be stated explicitly even though it may be orally mentioned during the presentation.

Among the 15 steps under Move 3, only two steps, *Indicating purposes/ aims/objectives* and *Stating research questions/hypotheses*, were found with a high frequency of 90% and 75%, respectively. Frequent uses of these two steps showed that they were conventional steps as it was necessary to clarify research aims and research questions during the presentation. Closer examination also showed that sometimes research questions that were missing in the introductory section later appeared in the Methodology section. There was only one slide set that did not explicitly state the research questions of the study. Besides these two steps, eight out of the 20 PSIs (40%) included the step *Indicating value or significance*, even though it was just an optional step in the present corpus. In contrast, it was found to be a conventional step with a high frequency of 94% in the study by Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018). Such a discrepancy may be explained by differences in presentation times that required student writers to present only the steps that were most important.

Furthermore, under Move 3, few PSIs included the steps of *Defining terms* (10%) and *Indicating thesis structure* (15%). It should be mentioned that two of the three PSIs had a single slide demonstrating the chapter headings of their thesis rather than the outline for their presentation, thus both were coded as *Indicating thesis structure*. It seems that these writers may have misunderstood the function of the outline of their presentation. The writers may have also deliberately intended to show that their thesis structures were complete despite some parts being omitted during their presentation. In addition, no *Indicating applications* step was identified even though these three steps were conventional in the study by

Pieketaleyee and Bazargani (2018). It seems that Chinese writers presented less content in the Introduction slides than their Iranian counterparts, as they may have had their country's convention to follow.

A noteworthy finding was that the step *Indicating chapter/section structure* was identified in four PSIs which utilized a single slide as a boundary device to reveal the outline of the introductory part of the slides. For example, as shown in Figure 1, "Introduction" was placed in the middle of a single slide to signal the beginning of the presentation of related content. The word "Introduction," "Research background," "Research objectives," and "Research Questions" were listed in a smaller font size to indicate the outline of this part to guide the audience through. It could be concluded that a single slide was more preferred in the present study as a boundary device when indicating the chapter structure in the slide sets.

Figure 1

Example of the Step Indicating Chapter/Section Structure (PSI19_S3)
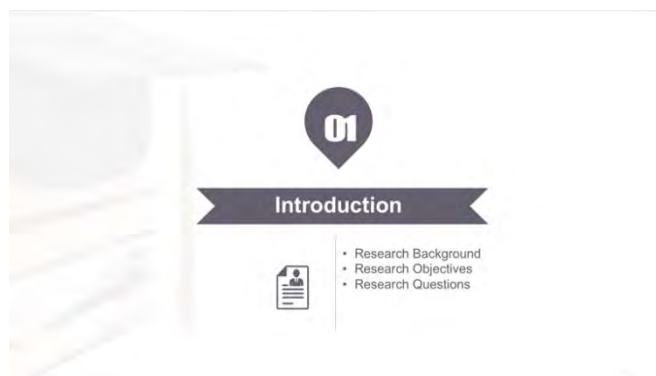
As for the step patterns, the majority of the PSIs only had one step within Move 1 and Move 2. More steps were found under Move 3. However, only one step sequence was identified under Move 3 in more than half of the PSIs (60%)—S1-S7, which indicated that when these two steps were utilized, the step *Indicating purposes/aims/objectives* (S1) always preceded the step *Stating research questions/hypotheses* (S7). This showed a close relationship between research purposes and research questions/hypotheses. Very few step patterns were

identified which suggests that there seemed to be no convention or norms for master's students to follow in the production of Introduction slides.

Conclusion

This study investigated the rhetorical structure of the underexplored genre TDPS, specifically its Introduction section. The framework proposed for thesis writing by Chen and Kuo (2012) was adopted to identify the moves and steps of the PSIs, which confirms the applicability of the framework to analyze its corresponding genre. The moves and steps identified in the PSIs were within the framework of Chen and Kuo (2012) since no new moves or steps were found in the current corpus. At the move level, three moves were utilized. Move 1 *Establishing a territory* was conventional, whereas Move 2 *Establishing a niche* and Move 3 *Occupying the niche* were optional and obligatory, respectively. This led to a conclusion that the PSI is more about introducing the writers' own research and the works conducted by themselves to the target audience. As for the move patterns, the majority of the PSIs were in a single progression of M1-M2-M3, which was different from the presentation of a written thesis in which moves are recursive and cyclical (Bunton, 2002; Chen & Kuo, 2012; Kawase, 2018). Furthermore, at the step level, no obligatory steps were found. *Indicating purposes/aims/objectives* was the most frequently utilized step, followed by *Stating research questions/hypotheses* and *Providing topic generalization/ background*. These three steps were the only conventional steps identified in this study, and the rest of the existing steps were all optional. Regarding the step sequence, only one step pattern was presented in more than half of the PSIs, in which research objectives were immediately followed by research questions.

The findings of this study contribute to the knowledge of the genre of PSIs. They can help raise student writers' awareness of how this genre is composed especially as a product of the original genre it comes from, i.e., a master's thesis, to make it more acceptable, comprehensible, and effective to the discourse

community. In addition, as a unique genre (Tardy, 2009) with its pervasive use in thesis defense sessions, it is meaningful to include this kind of genre in a writing course. Thus, this study provided empirical evidence that could be utilized by instructors and faculty members who wish to develop a course or instructional materials related to thesis writing.

As the present study focused only on the Introduction section, further studies could be conducted to explore other sections of the TDPS. In addition, it appears that the move and step variations are demonstrated in different cultural contexts. Therefore, comparative studies of the rhetorical structures of the TDPS produced by writers from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds could be undertaken as well.

About the Authors

Mei He is currently a Ph.D. student at the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. Her research interests include academic discourse, genre analysis, academic writing, intertextuality, and interdiscursivity.

Issra Pramoolsook holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics and English Language Teaching and is an associate professor at the School of Foreign Languages, Institute of Social Technology, Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand. His research interests include disciplinary and professional discourses analysis, genre analysis, L2 writing, and genre-based approach to teaching writing.

References

Apperson, J. M., Laws, E. L., & Scepansky, J. A. (2008). An assessment of student preferences for PowerPoint presentation structure in undergraduate courses. *Computers & Education, 50*(1), 148–153.

Atai, M. R., & Talebzadeh, H. (2012). Exploring visual and textual discourse of applied linguistics PowerPoint conference presentations. *ESP across Cultures*, *9*, 7–26.

Azizifar, A., Kmalvand, A., & Ghorbanzade, N. (2014). An investigation into visual language in PowerPoint presentations in Applied Linguistics. *Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities*, *3*(3), 84–96.

Baker, J. P., Goodboy, A. K., Bowman, N. D., & Wright, A. A. (2018). Does teaching with PowerPoint increase students' learning? A meta-analysis. *Computers & Education*, *126*, 376–387.

Berk, R. A. (2011). Research on PowerPoint: From basic features to multimedia. *International Journal of Technology in Teaching and Learning*, *7*(1), 24–35.

Bucher, H. J., & Niemann, P. (2012). Visualizing science: the reception of PowerPoint presentations. *Visual Communication*, *11*(3), 283–306.

Bunton, D. (2002). Generic moves in Ph.D. thesis introductions. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic discourse* (pp. 57–75). Pearson Education Limited.

Castelló, A., Chavez, D., & Cladellas, R. (2020). Association between slides-format and Major's contents: Effects on perceived attention and significant learning. *Multimedia Tools and Applications*, *79*(33), 24969–24992.

Chen, C. W. Y. (2021). PowerPoint as a multimodal retelling tool: Students' slide design, collaboration, and goal-setting. *Innovation in Language Learning and Teaching*, 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1080/17501229.2021.1895801

Chen, T. Y., & Kuo, C. H. (2012). A genre-based analysis of the information structure of master's theses in applied linguistics. *The Asian ESP Journal*, *8*(1), 24–52.

Diani, G. (2015). Visual communication in Applied Linguistics conference presentations. In B. C., Camiciottoli & I. Fortanet-Gómez (Eds.). *Multimodal analysis in academic settings: From research to teaching* (pp. 83–107). Routledge.

Dubois, B. L. (1980). The use of slides in biomedical speeches. *The ESP Journal*, *1*(1), 45–50. https://doi.org/10.1016/0272-2380(80)90009-8

Flowerdew, J, & Forest, R. W. (2009). Schematic structure and lexico-grammatical realization in corpus-based genre analysis: The case of research in the PhD literature review. In M. Charles, D. Pecorari, & S. Hunston (Eds.), *Academic writing: At the interface of corpus and discourse* (pp. 15–36). Continuum.

Forey, G & Feng, D. (2016) Interpersonal meaning and audience engagement in academic presentations. In K. Hyland & P. Shaw (Eds.), *The Routledge handbook of English for Academic Purposes*. (pp. 416–430). Routledge.

Green, E.P. (2021). *Healthy presentations: How to craft exceptional lectures in medicine, the health professions, and the biomedical sciences*. Springer.

Hallewell, M. J., & Crook, C. (2020). Performing PowerPoint lectures: Examining the extent of slide-text integration into lecturers' spoken expositions. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *44*(4), 467–482.

Hertz, B., Kerkhof, P., & van Woerkum, C. (2016). PowerPoint slides as speaking notes: The influence of speaking anxiety on the use of text on slides. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*, *79*(3), 348–359.

Kanoksilapatham, B. (2005). Rhetorical structure of biochemistry research articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, *24*(3), 269–292.

Kawase, T. (2018). Metadiscourse in the introductions of PhD theses and research articles. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *20*, 114–124.

Kwan, B. S. C. (2006). The schematic structure of literature reviews in doctoral theses of applied linguistics. *English for Specific Purposes*, *25*(1), 30–55.

Levasseur, D. G., & Kanan Sawyer, J. (2006). Pedagogy meets PowerPoint: A research review of the effects of computer-generated slides in the classroom. *The Review of Communication*, *6*(1-2), 101–123.

Mackiewicz, J. (2008). Comparing PowerPoint experts' and university students' opinions about PowerPoint presentations. *Journal of Technical Writing and Communication*, *38*(2), 149–165.

Morell, T. (2015). International conference paper presentation: A multimodal analysis to determine effectiveness. *English for Specific Purposes*, *37*, 137–150.

Nguyen, T. T. L., & Pramoolsook, I. (2014). Rhetorical structure of introduction chapters written by novice Vietnamese TESOL postgraduates. *3L: The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, *20*(1), 61–74.

Nguyen, T. T. L., & Pramoolsook, I. (2015). A move analysis of method chapters by Vietnamese TESOL master's students. *Research Scholar: An International Refereed e-Journal of Literary Explorations*, *3*(1), 14–28.

Nouri, H., & Shahid, A. (2005). The effect of PowerPoint presentations on student learning and attitudes. *Global Perspectives on Accounting Education*, *2*(1), 53–73.

Pi, Z., & Hong, J. (2016). Learning process and learning outcomes of video podcasts including the instructor and PPT slides: A Chinese case. *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, *53*(2), 135–144.

Pieketaleyee, A., & Bazargani, D. T. (2018). Exploring the moves and steps in TEFL MA theses introduction and review of literature PowerPoint presentations: A genre analysis approach. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *8*(9), 1186–1194.

Putri, T. D., & Kurniawan, E. (2021). Rhetorical move and genre knowledge development in local and international graduates' thesis and dissertation abstracts. *LLT Journal: A Journal on Language and Language Teaching*, *24*(2), 324–336.

Ren, H., & Li, Y. (2011). A comparison study on the rhetorical moves of abstracts in published research articles and master's foreign-language theses. *English Language Teaching*, *4*(1), 162–166.

Roberts, C. & Hyatt, L. (2019). *The dissertation journey: A practical and comprehensive guide to planning, writing, and defending your dissertation* (3rd ed.). Corwin Press.

Rowley-Jolivet, E. (2002). Visual discourse in scientific conference papers: A genre-based study. *English for Specific Purposes*, *21*(1), 19–40.

Rowley-Jolivet, E., & Carter-Thomas, S. (2005). The rhetoric of conference presentation introductions: Context, argument and interaction. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *15*, 45–70.

Schoeneborn, D. (2013). The pervasive power of PowerPoint: How a genre of professional communication permeates organizational communication. *Organization Studies*, *34*(12), 1777–1801.

Shin, D. S., Cimasko, T., & Yi, Y. (2020). Development of metalanguage for multimodal composing: A case study of an L2 writer's design of multimedia texts. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *47*, 1–14.

Swales, J. M. (1990). *Genre analysis: English in academic and research settings*. Cambridge University Press.

Swales, J. M. (2004). *Research genres: Explorations and applications*. Cambridge University Press.

Tardy, C. M. (2005). Expressions of disciplinarity and individuality in a multimodal genre. *Computers and Composition*, *22*(3), 319–336.

Tardy, C. M. (2009). *Building genre knowledge*. Parlor Press.

Wecker, C. (2012). Slide presentation and speech suppressors: When and why learners miss oral information. *Computers and Education*, *59*(2), 260–273.

Weissberg, B. (1993). The graduate seminar: Another research-process genre. *English for Specific Purposes*, *12*(1), 23–35.

Yang, R., & Allison, D. (2003). Research articles in applied linguistics: Moving from results to conclusions. *English for Specific Purposes*, *22*, 365–385.

Yates, J., & Orlikowski, W. (2007). The PowerPoint presentation and its corollaries: How genres shape communicative action in organizations. In M. Zachry & C. Thralls (Eds.), *The Cultural turn: Communicative practices in workplaces and the professions* (pp. 67–92). Baywood Publishing.

Zainuddin, S. Z., & Shaari, A. H. (2021). A genre-inspired investigation of establishing the territory in thesis introductions by Malaysian ESL writers. *3L: Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies*, *27*(2), 144–160.

Zareva, A. (2013). Self-mention and the projection of multiple identity roles in TESOL graduate student presentations: The influence of the written academic genres. *English for Specific Purposes*, *32*(2), 72–83.

Zareva, A. (2016). Multi-word verbs in student academic presentations. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *23*, 83–98.

Zdaniuk, A., Gruman, J. A., & Cassidy, S. A. (2019). PowerPoint slide provision and student performance: The moderating roles of self-efficacy and gender. *Journal of Further and Higher Education*, *43*(4), 467-481.