

**RHETORICAL CHOICES IN INTRODUCTIONS OF EXAMINATION ESSAYS:
A CROSS-DISCIPLINARY STUDY**

Joseph B. A. Afful

University of Cape Coast - GHANA

ABSTRACT

Recent studies in academic discourse show that rhetorical choices in student academic writing differ across disciplines. Focusing on the introductions of examination essays, the present study examines the rhetorical choices made by second-year undergraduates in Literature-in-English and Sociology courses in a Ghanaian state university. A combined framework comprising Swales' rhetorical move approach and Halliday's systemic functional grammar was adopted to investigate a total of 120 examinations essays. The analysis showed three key findings. Firstly, the Sociology introductions differed from the English introductions in their deployment of definition in Move 1. Secondly, the English introductions differed from Sociology ones in the use of verbal processes in Move 2 and the use of personal pronouns, discourse verbs, and purpose expressions in Move 3. Further, both Sociology and English introductions utilized lexical repetition as a principal rhetorical feature. These findings have important implications for the description of undergraduate writing, writing pedagogy at undergraduate level, and future research in the rhetoric of disciplinary discourse.

Key words: cross-disciplinary, introduction, linguistic features, undergraduate writing,

RESUMEN ABSTRACTO

Estudios recientes en el discurso académico demuestran que las decisiones retóricas en la escritura académica de los alumnos difieren a través de las disciplinas. Centrándonos en las introducciones de los ensayos a ser evaluados, el presente estudio examina las decisiones retóricas hechas por estudiantes de segundo año sub graduado en cursos de Literatura en Inglés y Sociología en una universidad del estado de Ghana. Se adoptó un marco combinado que consiste del movimiento retórico Swales y la gramática funcional sistémica de Halliday para investigar un total de 120 ensayos a ser examinados. El análisis demostró tres descubrimientos claves. Primero, las introducciones en sociología difieren de las introducciones del inglés en su desempeño de definición en el Movimiento 1. Segundo, las introducciones del inglés difieren de las de sociología en el uso del proceso del verbo en el Movimiento 2, y el uso de pronombres personales, verbos discursivos y expresiones de propósito en el Movimiento 3. Además, tanto las

introducciones del inglés como las de sociología usan repetición léxica como carácter retórico principal. Estos hallazgos tienen implicaciones importantes en la descripción de la escritura de los sub graduados, la escritura pedagógica a nivel sub graduado y la investigación futura en la retórica del discurso disciplinario.

Palabras clave: *Disciplinario-cruzado, introducción, caracteres lingüísticos, escritura sub graduada.*

Joseph B. A. Afful is Senior Lecturer at the Department of English and Head of Department of Communication Studies, both at the. He obtained his PhD at the National University of Singapore. His research interest are Advanced Academic Literacy, Academic Discourse, (Critical) Discourse Studies, Sociolinguistics/Pragmatics, and the Interface between Academic Writing and Postgraduate Pedagogy

Introduction

The last twenty-five (25) years have witnessed an increasing interest in student writing, given that through student writing (and not only expert writing), we are enabled to see disciplinary variation rhetorically and epistemologically. In the last decade alone, this trend has often meant going beyond the text to focus on the social dynamics of the social context such as power and identity (e.g., Thompson, 2001). Despite this concern with the social context, textual analysis in the study of academic writing and, in particular, the language choices that inform texts remain equally important and valid, as evident in a plethora of studies at undergraduate (North, 2003; 2005) and postgraduate (e.g., Bunton, 1999; 2003; 2005) levels.

Following earlier textual studies of student writing, the present study reports an aspect of a larger research on the rhetorical features (introductions and conclusions) that underline the writing of examination essays by Ghanaian undergraduates in three disciplines (Afful, 2005). Three key findings emerged: (a) English Studies students

introduce their essays, using a three-move structure, namely Move 1 (contextualizing), Move 2 (engaging closely), and Move 3 (previewing or stating purpose of essay); (b) the second move (engaging closely) occupied the greatest textual space; and (c) English students employed personal pronouns, discourse verbs, and purpose expressions in the third (i.e., the last) move.

This paper examines the rhetorical choices second-year undergraduate students in two different disciplinary communities make. This study takes a comparative perspective in investigating the rhetorical items used by undergraduate students in the departments of English and Sociology. I take the view that undergraduate students make rhetorical choices, even if they are unable to consciously articulate it, following the practices of established expert writers in their disciplinary communities in order to marry their purpose and audience. The conceptual framework of the study is briefly articulated by highlighting the pertinent literature. The methodological procedure that guides the study is then described. Thereafter, the analysis and discussion of the findings follow. I conclude with the implications based on the findings of the study.

Conceptual Framework: Past Studies

A key rhetorical aspect acknowledged in academic writing (Swales, 1981a; 1981b; 1990a), the introduction has received considerable attention by discourse analysis and English for Specific Purposes (ESP) specialists. Swales is noted to have been the first to explore the rhetoric of the introduction of research articles (RAs), postulating the CARS (create a research space) model, although initial criticisms led him to revise it. In his revised work, Swales (1990a) indicates that there are three ‘moves’ which are

undertaken by expert writers: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche.

The Swalesian approach continues to be influential in the investigation of various aspects of the introduction in published writing (e.g., Crookes, 1986; Hyland, 2000; Varghese & Abraham, 2004) and graduate writing (Bunton, 1999; 2002; 2005; Samraj, 1995; 2004; 2005; Swales, 1990b) but less popular in studies of undergraduate writing (Kusel, 1992). Three main strands of studies in undergraduate writing emerge from the literature. The first is the set of studies that focuses on introduction in Composition and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) context (e.g., Adika, 1999; Barton, 1993; Scarcella, 1984; Wu, 1997). For instance, Scarcella (1984) distinguishes between the introduction of native and non-native students in an American educational institution in terms of some rhetorical choices, claiming, among other things, that whereas native students deployed metatextual elements in orienting their readers, their non-native counterparts simply depended largely on repetition of key items. Years later, Barton (1994), working on student introductions, focused on language use that highlighted generalizations about human life or experience. Wu (1997) and Adika (1999), whose work among undergraduates is in Ghana and Singapore respectively, pay more attention to organizational aspects, rather than language choices.

The second group of studies on introductions of undergraduate writing is more evaluative as it attempts to show the relationship between quality of writing and the absence or presence of introductions, thus distinguishing between low-rated, mid-rated, and high-rated essays (Hult, 1986; Wall *et al*, 1988; Lawe-Davies, 1998; Townsend *et al*, 1991). These studies indicate that student essays with introductions are, in general, more

highly rated than those without introductions in both disciplinary and EAP contexts, thus suggesting their critical importance. Further, because of its heavy pedagogical leaning, this second category of studies associate certain rhetorical choices with various rated essays (low-rated, mid-rated, and high-rated) in a bid to teach students the kind of introductions to aspire to write and those to avoid.

The final set of studies, which is the most pertinent to the present study, deals with mono-disciplinary contexts such as Geography (Hewings, 1999; 2000) Oceanography (Kelly & Bazerman, 2003), History of Science (North, 2003; 2005a; 2005b) Sociology (Starfield, 2004) or multiple disciplines as found in Kusel (1992). In this set of studies, there is an attempt to show either the distinctiveness of either a discipline or the similarity and dissimilarities of introductions against a chosen variable, often linguistic. In particular, Bazerman's study reports the density of cohesive ties in the introduction of Oceanography among other rhetorical units such as the methodology, discussion and conclusion while focusing on thematization as a key rhetorical feature in the introduction of undergraduate writing in the History of Science. Starfield's (2004) study among students in a South African university in a foundation Sociology course highlights specific rhetorical features such as complex nominalization, metatextual elements, and impersonal language forms. In contrast to these above-mentioned studies, Kusel's (1992) work involves more disciplines namely Teacher Education, English Literature, History, Geography, and Language Teaching) from a rhetorical-functional approach, although the discussion on linguistic features remains mute.

Clearly, all three sets of studies conducted into the introduction in undergraduate writing contribute to our understanding of disciplinarity, but very little is known about

the rhetorical choices undergraduates make in their introductions, the exception being Starfield (2004). Moreover, earlier studies have concentrated on students in Anglo-American and Asia-Pacific contexts. Very little is known of students in the Sub-Saharan context, in general, and Ghanaian undergraduate students, in particular, in respect of the rhetorical choices they make in their introductions.

Aim of the Present Study

The present study aims to compare the rhetorical choices that are made by undergraduates in two departments, namely English and Sociology. Given that these introductions are considered within Swales' move analytical framework (see Afful, 2005), it is assumed that students will make distinct language choices in all moves, defined here as the sub-communicative units that help to realize the overall communicative function of a text, across all three disciplines. I also draw on Halliday's (1994) systemic functional grammar to discuss pertinent rhetorical features. The specific questions to be answered in this study are formulated as:

- What key rhetorical choices characterize the moves in introductions written by the English and Sociology undergraduates? and
- Do English and Sociology undergraduates use similar or different linguistic features in moves of their introductions?

Such an examination is worth considering, given that a student writer in a disciplinary community may be seen as one who does not only carefully apportion and sequence ideas stimulated by the examination prompt but also maximizes the impact of rhetorical features on the minds of his/her readers.

Methods and Procedures

This section reports the use of a textual analytical approach in a wider study that combined both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The choice of this approach, given the research questions formulated in Section 3, enables close attention to be paid to the salient rhetorical choices made by students in the English and Sociology introductions in order to offer insight into their formulation.

Educational Setting

The specific educational site for the present research is the University of Cape Coast (UCC), a public university in Ghana that offers undergraduate and graduate courses to local and international students in four faculties: Arts, Social Sciences, Science, and Education. The UCC is chosen for this study because of my membership there as a lecturer. My status as an ‘insider’ could be drawn on for the benefit of the research. Moreover, major studies on student writing in Ghana had often ignored UCC, focusing often on the University of Ghana (UG), Ghana’s premier public university.

Since independence in 1957, English has remained the sole official language in Ghana and continues to be the medium of instruction at all levels of education. Like all other Ghanaian (both public and private) universities, English remains one of the entry requirements into UCC. Once a student is admitted into the university, s/he is required to offer a compulsory foundation writing course, Communicative Skills (CS), (termed Academic Literacy, English for Academic Purposes (EAP), and Freshman Composition

elsewhere.) As a mandatory institutional requirement, CS, like many academic literacy programmes in the USA, the UK, Australia, and South Africa ensures that students are introduced to study skills and writing skills. First-year undergraduates are taught both the micro and macro aspects of writing to facilitate their gradual transition from the pre-university level to the university level.

Data

The source of data for the present study is 120 examination essays written by second-year undergraduates to the examination prompts, as shown in Figure 1:

- Identify and explain the significance of any three literary devices used in Jared Angira's 'No Coffin No Grave'. (EEP 1)
- With reference to any two sonnets, comment on the significance of the structure of the sonnet. (EEP 2)
- Examine some of the circumstances that normally give rise to marital violence. (SEP 1)
- Examine any five sexual paraphelia (abnormalities) and show how these impact negatively on marriage. (SEP 2)

Figure 1: The Examination Prompts

As I was made to understand in my interaction with faculty, students in the two disciplines were given the opportunity to select questions of their choice. Not surprisingly, it was difficult to obtain all the 60 examination essays on one prompt; hence, the selection of two prompts for each discipline. Specifically, two courses, *Introduction to Literature* and *Family and Socialization* representing the Humanities and

Social Sciences, were chosen. These courses encourage a reasonably sustained extended writing. Besides, these courses were introductory courses and stood a great chance in enabling us to see the language choices privileged in the chosen disciplines.

Analytical Procedure

Two salient steps were taken in the analysis to facilitate examination of the language choices concerned: operationalizing the key variables (that is, introduction and move) in the study and identifying them. First, I defined ‘introduction’ in terms of both structure and function. Structurally, the introduction was considered as the first of a cluster of paragraphs in an essay, while functionally, it was seen as a cluster of sentences that express a unified meaning in terms of orienting readers towards the ‘body’ of the essay. Both criterial features were considered necessary for a cluster of sentences to qualify as an introduction. Given that I draw on a modified version of Swales’ (1981a; 1990a) move analysis of introductions of RAs in order to have a sense of the rhetorical nature of the introductions and to enhance discussion of the lexical features, I needed to select ‘move’. Following Connor (2000), I defined a ‘move’ as a functional unit used for some identifiable purpose and can vary in size, but contains at least one proposition. Besides, a move is not coterminous with structural units such as a sentence and paragraph. Since examination essays are relatively shorter texts than coursework essays or research papers, it was likely that the moves in examination essays at the junior undergraduate level will be appropriated in one paragraph.

Three moves were identified in the present data:

Move 1: Contextualizing issues raised in the examination prompt

Move 2: Engaging closely with issue/s of concern

Move 3: Previewing the structure of the essay

Essentially, Move 1 (contextualizing, hereafter) situates the issues raised in an examination prompt in a broad framework and differs from Swales' (1990a) move, as the undergraduate students make no attempt to suggest the centrality of the issue/s or other steps in the original model. Move 2 (engaging, hereafter) shows a greater and closer engagement with issues raised in the examination prompt. Move 3 (previewing, hereafter) previews the essay's structure or declares the writer's purpose. (Elsewhere (Afful, 2005), the identification of the introductions and moves are elaborated.)

Due to space constraint, only one sample is offered below to show how the generic structure of an introduction is instantiated.

(Move 1)	Fitting burial is the earnest desire of every person who dies. However, it would be very disgusting and unbearable when, if possible, the dead realizes that he or she was not given what he wanted/ This is very true in this beautiful
(Move 2)	run-on-line poem 'No Coffin No Grave' by Jared Angira.)
(Move 3)	He used significant literary devices to achieve this wonderful poem. Among these devices are sound effects, institutional irony and imagery.
EST 16	

Figure 2: Sample of an Introduction

Discussion of Findings

This sub-section discusses the finding related to the similarities and differences in the use of various language choices in each move across the English and Sociology introductions, starting from Move 1.

Language Choices in Move 1

The key language choices here were namely lexical repetition, evaluative terms, and definitions, as evidenced below. (Throughout this paper, the samples are offered unedited.)

- 1 Fitting burial is the earnest desire of every person who dies. However, it would be very disgusting and unbearable when, if possible, the dead realizes that he or she was not given what he wanted. (EST 16)
- 2 Literary devices are used to make poems beautiful, rich, and interesting. (EST 20)
- 3 Structure in poetry can be defined as the poet's division of the poem into various stanzas, the idea conveyed in each stanza, rhyming scheme, and it's importance to the overall poem. (EST 47)
- 4 Marriage is defined by Randal Collins as a culturally approved and sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman to perform certain functions as well as satisfy certain biological impulses. (SST 8)
- 5 When two people get marriage, they normally go for a honeymoon. This is a western culture that has been adopted by many nations such as Ghana. During the honeymoon interaction period people get to know themselves better. If the couples have not involved themselves in any sexual relation before they get marriage, it is there that they are able to know themselves intimately. (SST 3)
- 6 In marriage especially with newly wedded couples, there is always a high rate of euphoria among them. The face to face interaction increases. The fresh interaction brings about too much excitement. This is normally followed by honeymoon where the two stay coolly to enjoy themselves. (SST 13)

The point of commonality in the predominant use of lexical repetition of key terms is that both groups of students draw on their respective examination prompts. At

this initial stage, students used these lexical reiterations to contextualize their essays, rather than to support their points, as suggested in other studies (Hult, 1986; Reynolds, 1996). A second point of similarity in the use of lexical repetition is that it operates at the word or phrasal level, given the nature of the examination prompts. For example, words such as ‘No Coffin No Grave’, ‘sonnet’, ‘structure’, on the one hand, and ‘marriage’ and ‘sex’, on the other hand, tended to be repeated in the English and Sociology introductions respectively. This contrasts with Reynold’s (1996) finding that lexical repetitions at the sentential level are likely to be the default form in an argumentative discourse structure.

But, as expected, because of the different epistemological orientation of the two disciplines (English and Sociology) and, of course, the different examination prompts, the exact forms of lexical reiteration were realized differently. For instance, lexicalization in the English introductions yields key expressions such as ‘theme’, ‘politicians/political figure/political leader’, ‘Jared Angira’, ‘literary devices’, ‘burial’, ‘death’ in EEP 1 as well as ‘sonnet’, ‘Shakespearean’, ‘Petrarchan’, ‘sestet’, ‘quatrain’, ‘couplet’, ‘structure’, ‘rhyme pattern’ in introductions responding to EEP 2. Similarly, the Sociology introductions repeat key terms or words such as ‘sublime passion’, ‘marriage’, ‘sex’, ‘male and female’, ‘sexual abnormalities’, and ‘sexual relations’ relating to the first Sociology prompt

Furthermore, these key words are not only repeated but also thematized. Some scholars have suggested that thematization of key terms has a rhetorical dimension. MacDonald (1994) and North (2003), for instance, argue that thematization differ from one disciplinary community to another. It is possible that in the present study the difference in thematization can be attributed to both the nature of the courses selected for

the study and differences in examinees' preferences. The fact is that Sociology and, in particular, the course that was selected for the study here – *Family and Socialization* – focuses on social issues, unlike Literature-in-English and, in particular, *Introduction to Literature*, which focuses on aspects related to literary studies. Therefore, while thematization in the English introductions revolves around 'the poet', 'the poem', 'Shakespeare', 'sonnet', and 'structure', in response to examination prompts (EEP 1 and 2), the thematization in Sociology introductions revolves around the terms 'marriage', 'sex', 'sexual abnormalities', and 'marital violence' in response to EEP 1 and 2. Interestingly, even when different examinees answered the same examination prompt there were differences in the key terms that were thematized, indicating individual student preference.

The second key language feature in Move 1 (backgrounding) across the English and Sociology introductions involves definitions. The use of definitions as a contextualization device in the disciplinary rhetoric of student academic writing is consistent with the findings in other studies (e.g., Henry & Roseberry, 1997; Lawe-Davies, 1998; Wall *et al*, 1988). Additionally, the salient type of definitions displayed by both the English and Sociology examinees belongs to the category Flowerdew (1992) and Temmerman (1999, p. 172) label as 'formal', that is, the definitions of the form 'X is Y for which Z holds', where Y is the higher category to which X belongs and Z gives the specific characteristics that distinguish X from the other members of category Y. As argued by Flowerdew (1992), definitions can be context-dependent. Not surprisingly, in this study, Sociology students attribute their definitions to two sources – the literature, or, theorized knowledge and experience, similar to Baynham's (1999) work among first-year

nursing students. In the present study, the definition of marriage in the Sociology introductions is often given by quoting or paraphrasing one notable scholar, Randall Collins, or by simply making reference to ‘sociologists’ and ‘sexual therapists’, while the use of experience as an authoritative source is lexicalized as ‘...it can be defined’. In contrast, Literature-in-English students fail to explicitly lexicalize their sources, giving the impression that they are either originators of the definitions or reproducers of what is generally accepted in the disciplinary community.

Three further inter-related factors can be attributed to the different types of definitions used in the English and Sociology introductions. The first relates to the different ways in which course lecturers of these two disciplines possibly treat attribution of definitions in an examination essay genre. Thus, an ability to either quote directly or paraphrase the views of authorities, together with the name of the authority may be valued in Sociology, while it may be less so in the other discipline, at least, at the junior undergraduate level. Moreover, it may be that the type of writing task as well as genre that students are engaged in determines to a large extent whether they need to indicate the source of their definition or not. Consequently, and lastly, the different nature of definitions and the accompanying use or non-use of attribution in the data set may be a function of the complex interaction of disciplinarity, writing tasks, course lecturer preference, and genre.

The next linguistic expression that bears mention in Move 1 (contextualizing) is the evaluative terms. This could suggest influences from the examination prompt, the disciplines involved, and perhaps examinee preferences. Although English students were expected to evaluate the success of the literary texts in both examination prompts,

surprisingly answers to the second examination prompt hardly produced any evaluative terms such as the adjectives (e.g., ‘interesting’, ‘rich’, and ‘beautiful’), which were produced in response to the first prompt. In contrast, Sociology students provided evaluative terms in Move 2. The difference in the evaluative terms offered by the Sociology students is that they included nouns such as ‘problems’, ‘offence’, and ‘taboo’ as well as adjectives such as ‘negative’. In general, however, we notice the limited use of evaluative terms in Move 1 (contextualizing) in the English and Sociology introductions.

Finally, among the linguistic expressions in Move 1 (contextualizing) across the English and Sociology introductions, the least striking may be the process verbs. In general, both disciplines employ the present tense of the relational verb ‘to be’, thus showing the currency of the issues being discussed. This is not particularly surprising as in the present move both disciplinary texts focus on defining key terms and definitions are typically expressed through relational verbs, that is, ‘X is Y’. A further difference worth noting is that whereas the English introductions that are offered in response to examination prompt 2 often utilized a relational process verb, Sociology introductions additionally used verbal process verbs such as ‘can be defined’ and ‘is defined’ or sometimes ‘defines’ as in ‘Marriage is defined by Randal Collins as a culturally approved and sanctioned relationship between a man and a woman....’ and ‘Sex can be defined as higher intensive ritual between male and female’ .

Language Choices in Move 2

The language choices in Move 2 of the English and Sociology introductions offer no considerable difference from those discussed in the earlier move. Further linguistic

features such as discourse verbs and a story-like schema are discussed. The following examples can be considered:

- 7 There is no point disputing the fact that Jared Angira uses appropriate literary devices to make effective the message he wants to put across and also to arouse the interest of the reader and enhance the meaning of the poem to the reader. (EST 10)
- 8 In Jared Angira's 'No Coffin No Grave' he talks about a politician who was murdered in a night club and who had many dreams to accomplish during his reign and even wished to be buried under a tree in his palace. (EST 15)
- 9 The lines are divided into two, octave and sestet. As such, the idea is represented in the octave and there is resolution in the sestet. However, there is a further division of the sonnet into quatrain. In each quatrain, the poet discusses his ideas. (EST 46)
- 10 After the euphoria, the couple is left to face the reality of the world and this is the period which gives rise to circumstances that give rise to marital violence. (SST 21)
- 11 In some societies, sex is seen as a taboo for those who are not married to even talk about it let alone practice it. Among the Indians, it is a serious offence to indulge in sex before marriage but among the Trobrians, it is allowed to involve in sex anytime one wants to indulge in it. (SST 39)

In both English and Sociology introductions, candidates appear to utilize a narrative-like discourse as an expansionary or elaborational device in the second move. This appears though to be limited to the English introductions responding to EEP 1 and the Sociology introductions responding to SEP 1. In English, it typically manifests, for example in 'Jared Angira's 'No Coffin No Grave' talks about a politician who after his death wanted to be buried like a VIP' but had the direct opposite of what he wished' and 'In Jared Angira's 'No Coffin No Grave' he talks about a politician who was murdered in a night club and who had many dreams to accomplish during his reign and even wished

to be buried under a tree in his palace'. In the Sociology introductions, this narrative-like schema occurs, for instance, in

In marriage especially with newly wedded couples, there is always a high rate of euphoria among them. The face-to-face interaction increases. The fresh interaction brings about too much excitement. This is normally followed by honeymoon where the two stay coolly to enjoy themselves....

and

Marriage brings joy and great intoxication especially during the first three months of the marriage and most especially during and immediately after honeymoon. This is because of the euphoria that is associated with a dream come true. After the first three months when either partner begins to request for commitment, the marriage begins to face problems.

The use of this "story-like" feature in the English (especially, those answering EEP 1) introductions can be explained by alluding to the nature of the text under consideration, a narrative poem. The English examinees summarize the plot in the poems they are commenting on. On the other hand, the story-like elements in the Sociology introductions appear to reflect general 'procedures'; that is, what normally happens in a marriage'. But it is also true to say that both groups of students use the 'story-like' feature, given the kind of questions they are answering.

The use of verb processes in Move 2 (engaging closely) represents a further source of difference across both disciplines. Used by the English examinees rather than the Sociology examinees, these 'verbalizers' allow the candidates to report on what the poet or author is purported to be doing in a literary work. They include verbal process types such as 'wants to put across', 'talks about', 'arguments are raised', 'discusses', and 'are being asked'. What I noticed in the students' use of these discourse verbs or, what is termed in writing guides (e.g., Oliver, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2000; Weissberg & Buker,

1990) as, 'reporting verbs' is their limited range. That the Sociology students never used them could point to disciplinary variation, at least, at the junior undergraduate level.

Thus, we can distinguish Move 2 (engaging closely) and Move 1 (contextualizing issues) on account of the key linguistic features that have been considered. It is, however, worth noting that it may be difficult to argue for the story-like feature in this Move, with regard to English and Sociology, as a source of difference across both disciplines, given that it appears to be prompt-driven and a mark of individual differences.

Language Choices in Move 3

The language choices in the third move offers the most interesting insights into the character of the two disciplines regarding the use of personal pronouns, discourse verbs, futuristic/purpose expressions, and seriation / list. In this sub-section, I argue that the linguistic realization in Move 3 (previewing) provides the strongest evidence of differences in both disciplines.

- 12 There are a lot of literary devices used. Some of these are onomatopoeia, personification, simile, symbolism, imagery, irony, and many others. I would therefore like to talk about the most dominant literary devices used. These are personification, symbolism and irony. (EST 3)
- 13 To bring out his theme of injustice, the poet makes use of a number of literary devices among which are these three. (EST 30)
- 14 I would like to refer to the Shakespearean sonnets 3 and 12 for my comment on the significance of the structure of the sonnet. (EST 33)
- 15 This essay will focus on the significance of the structure of sonnets three and eighteen. (EST 38)
- 16 There are several circumstances that give rise to conflict in marriage. Some are from social pressure, unfulfilled dreams, sexual problems, external influence that

- is from the parents of the couple and from friends, arrival of children, premature marriage, monotony, boredom, and finance. (SST 6)
- 17 This confusion arises through the following circumstances. (SST 15)
- 18 After the euphoria, the couple is left to face the reality of the world and this is the period which gives rise to circumstances that give rise to marital violence. (SST 21)
- 19 Some of the sexual abnormalities are homosexuality, corprophelia, pedophilia, europhelia, and zoophelia. (SST 35)

With respect to the use of personal pronouns, the dominant form was the first person pronoun, 'I'. Through this linguistic form, we see a clear distinction between English and Sociology introductions as the personal pronoun 'I' is dominant in the English introductions, but sparse in the Sociology ones. The use of the personal pronoun as a key language feature of the Humanities texts is generally consistent with the literature (e.g., Hyland, 2002; Tang & John 1999). Specifically, it is in tandem with Hyland's (2002) argument that in the hands of student-writers the personal pronoun is likely to be used mainly as an organizing device in the introduction. Moreover, the finding related to the use of the personal pronoun 'I' finds support in the widely accepted view that the use of personal pronoun in its various linguistic, pragmatic and rhetorical ramifications is context-dependent (e.g., Chang & Swales, 1999; Hyland, 2001).

Although personal stance can be expressed through other linguistic features, as shown in the literature (Elbow, 1994; Ivanic & Camps, 2001; Prior, 2001), in the present study the personal pronoun 'I' was found in the introductions of English students. Perhaps, this is because it is the most visible way used by undergraduate students to denote their personal stance.

The next linguistic expression that is used in Move 3 (previewing) is discourse verbs. Although this feature has been discussed under Move 2 (engaging closely) in relation to the English introductions, its use here differs fundamentally from the one used in Move 2. In Move 3 (previewing), the semantic signification is not in terms of what the writer of a cited text is seen to be doing in the text but rather what the examinee is seen to be doing in relation to the text. The discourse verbs that tend to be used by the English students are ‘talk about’, ‘bring out’, ‘refer to’, and ‘focus on’, which are all verbal processes. In addition, they are often modalized as in ‘would like to refer’ and ‘will focus’. These are hardly found in the Sociology introductions.

Further, English introductions tended to use futuristic/purpose expressions to declare the intention of structuring the essay while Sociology introductions either minimally did or did not do so at all. As shown earlier, English examinees use futuristic/purpose expressions such as ‘am going to’, ‘would...like to’ and ‘’m going to’, and ‘will focus’. It is easy to allude to the examination prompts and the disciplinary norms at the junior undergraduate level as possible factors in explaining this situation. The last language choice in both English and Sociology introductions relates to how listing is used. Obviously, this is prompt-driven, as both groups of students are required to discuss either a specific number of issues or more than one factor. Specifically, the English examination prompt, EPP 1, demands ‘three literary devices’ while the Sociology examination prompts, SEP 1 and SEP 2, expect ‘some of the circumstances’ and ‘five sexual paraphelia’. What is more insightful about listing as a linguistic (or rather discursal feature) device lies in its use. Both disciplines employ listing on the word level instead of the phrasal or sentential level. We see this in ‘... These are personification,

symbolism and irony’, ‘the use of personification, symbolism, and simile in the poem’ and ‘...Some are from social pressure, unfulfilled dreams, sexual problems, external influence that is from the parents of the couple and from friends...’ and ‘Some of the sexual abnormalities are homosexuality, corprophelia, paedophelia, urophelia, and zoophelia’ .

As cited in the previous paragraph, there is some flexibility in the form of listing employed by the Sociology students as the nominal phrases in which listing is presented could be more than one word. Besides, listing could be either explicit or implicit. Explicit listing has been already mentioned in the previous paragraph. Implicit listing in turn involves the use of metatextual elements such as ‘...the poet makes use of a number of literary devices among which are these three’ (English), ‘This confusion arises through the following circumstances’, and ‘...Among some of which are as follows’ (Sociology). These instances of implicit listing suggest a level of anticipation which is fulfilled as the reader continues reading. It seems reasonable to argue then that if ‘interestingness’ is a crucial element in academic writing, then this kind of listing (implicit) in the introduction might be encouraged among students, although most students in both disciplines in this study preferred explicit listing to implicit listing in their introductions.

From the above discussion, the use of personal pronoun, discourse verbs, and purpose/futuristic expressions in Move 3 (previewing) provides a strong argument for differences in the introductions in both disciplines. Specifically, English introductions tend to use the above-mentioned linguistic features in greater proportion, while the Sociology introductions rarely used them. The language choices that seem to be common to both disciplines are verb processes as well as the discorsal feature, listing.

Conclusions and Implications

The basic question that has driven this study is the extent to which differences can be identified in the introductions of two disciplines, English and Sociology, from the viewpoint of language choices in undergraduate writing. Findings from the analysis indeed suggest differences as well as similarities.

Although these findings relate to disciplinary writing in a non-native writing, they have implications for writing pedagogy and the description of undergraduate writing elsewhere as well as future research on disciplinary rhetoric. First, concerning writing pedagogy, there is need for discipline-specific teachers to provide explicit direction on the language choices in students' introductory paragraphs, while providing opportunities for undergraduate students to explore these independently, with some guidance. Explicit discussion of language features in moves can be enabling or empowering for student writers who are trying to join the 'conversation' in a particular disciplinary community, and especially in a time-constrained genre like the examination essay. Derived from the above significance is the contribution that the present study makes to the growing scholarship on the description of disciplinary discourse and for that matter disciplinary variation in undergraduate writing (e.g., North, 2003; 2005a; 2005b; Starfield, 2004). The third implication concerns future research based on the findings of the present study. For instance, it will be interesting to compare the language choices that are made by junior undergraduates and senior undergraduates in their introductions in order to ascertain any instance of development towards those in the introductions of expert writers in similar subjects.

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