Comparative Analysis of Transition Use in ELT Research Introductions: Thai versus International Authors

Natthaphong Sirijanchuen* iD

Faculty of Humanities, Srinakharinwirot University, Bangkok, Thailand

_____

Abstract

Exploring how academic writing styles differ across cultures provides additional insights into scholarly communication practices. Therefore, this study investigated the use of transition markers in the Introduction sections of ELT research articles written by Thai and international authors, aiming to uncover the differences in their academic writing. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research analyzed 50 introductions from two reputable Scopus-indexed journals, focusing on the frequency and types of transitions employed in the primary move structure, as outlined in Swales' CARS model (2004). Move 1, Establishing a Territory, involves creating a context for research by providing general background information. Move 2, Establishing a Niche, focuses on highlighting gaps in the existing literature and justifying the need for this study. Move 3: Presenting the Present Work, describes the current research, including its purpose, methodology, results, and significance. The findings revealed that Thai authors (TA) utilize transition markers more extensively, emphasizing explicit connections to enhance clarity and coherence. Conversely, international authors (IA) demonstrate a preference for a minimalistic approach, using fewer transitions and relying more on reader inferences. This study highlights the significant rhetorical and stylistic differences influenced by educational and cultural backgrounds. This study offers insights for designing targeted academic writing instruction to accommodate diverse rhetorical preferences in global scholarly discourse.

---

* Corresponding author.

E-mail address: natthaphongs@g.swu.ac.th

Introduction

In the competitive arena of academic publishing today (Flowerdew, 2022), it is widely recognized that the introduction of a research paper is essential for captivating readers and effectively demonstrating how research fills a significant gap in the field (Swales, 1990, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2012). Thus, the Introduction section serves as a vital platform where academic authors establish the relevance and scope of their research, positioning their study within broader academic discourse (Bunton, 2002; Kawase, 2018; Ozturk, 2007). This is where transition markers as cohesive elements of metadiscourse resources such as also, moreover, although, however, because, therefore etc. play a crucial role in ensuring the coherence and logical flow of ideas within the section (Hyland, 2005, 2010; Hyland & Tse, 2004). These markers fulfill various functions, such as illustrating the sequence of events, introducing new concepts or examples, presenting contrasting opinions, and signaling a summary or conclusion. By using transition markers, authors not only make it easier for readers to follow their arguments but also strengthen the logical connections between sentences and paragraphs, enhancing the overall flow of the text (Gardner & Han, 2018; Tanskanen, 2006). Taken together, the markers not only guide readers through valid argumentation but also reflect authors' diverse rhetorical styles and cultural backgrounds in the rhetorical structures of the introduction.

Despite the abundance of research analyzing rhetorical moves in the Introduction section, none of the studies have specifically focused on comparing the use of transition markers in the introductory paragraphs of ELT research articles, an academic area that remains under-researched. While some studies have addressed an aspect of transition in academic texts (e.g., Hyland, 2005, 2010; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Kim & Lim, 2016), they have not isolated the Introduction section for a focused analysis of transition usage. Moreover, existing research has predominantly focused on European and North American academic writing norms, with less emphasis on Asian academic contexts (Chen 2009). This gap in the literature indicates a need for more detailed analyses that consider different cultural contexts, particularly examining how academic authors from various backgrounds structure the Introduction section (Swales, 2004). Such studies are crucial for understanding the interplay between linguistic style and cultural identity in academic writing, which can inform English for Academic Purposes (EAP) curricula and support non-native English speakers in global academic communities, where English serves as the lingua franca (Bennett, 2012; Björkman, 2013; Canagarajah, 2022; Wu, 2020).

Literature Review

1. The Introduction Section in Academic Writing

The introduction of research articles has attracted a great deal of attention from scholars in recent decades. This academic genre is of particular interest because it serves as the initial section that outlines the overall framework of research articles across various disciplines and fields. It provides a clear overview of the problem statements, relevant literature, research gaps, and objectives. Crucially, in the introduction, academic authors provide the background and rationale for their research, refer to relevant studies, and address key gaps in the literature (Swales, 1990, 2004; Swales & Feak, 2012). This section is central to the transformation of

knowledge, as authors must perform the rhetorical act of convincing readers of the value, importance, and credibility of their work (Chahal 2014). The introduction also features distinct characteristics that provide a basic overview of the content, which is essential for readers to determine the worth of delving deeper into the article. Furthermore, crafting an introduction can often present challenges to writers. As such, many choose to complete this section only after a huge number of articles have been written, highlighting the complexity and effort required to construct it effectively (Swales, 1990, 2004; Feak & Swales, 2012). Farnia and Barati (2017) further emphasize this point, revealing that writing the introduction is particularly challenging for non-native English speakers in an EFL context, who must exert considerable effort in deciding the writing approach and determining the type and amount of information needed to adequately engage their target audience.

Many previous studies have thoroughly examined the rhetorical move structures of the Introduction section in academic writing in diverse disciplinary fields. Anthony (1999), for instance, investigated the accuracy of standard models in the introduction of software engineering research articles and pointed to differences in rhetorical approaches. In the same vein, Ozturk (2007) discusses variability in the introductions of applied linguistics articles, while Wang and Yang (2015) focus on promotional strategies in claiming centrality in the same field. Chahal (2014) studies the rhetorical moves of research article introductions in cultural studies, and Nicholson et al. (2018) examine what introductory paragraphs reveal about the scientific intentions and contributions of scientific papers. In graduate students' writing, Bunton (2002) and Kawase (2018) examine move patterns in doctoral dissertation introductions and identify standardized patterns and variations that inform our understanding of academic discourse structure. In terms of exploring academic authors' diverse cultural backgrounds, Hirano (2009), for example, extended the investigation of transitions into a comparative analysis between English and Brazilian-Portuguese introductions to research articles. Similarly, Sheldon (2011) contrasts rhetorical differences in the introductions of research articles written by native English speakers, second-language English speakers, and Castilian Spanish writers, showing the complex interplay of linguistic, cultural, and disciplinary influences on the use of linguistic features in academic writing. Finally, Sawaki (2023) explores the direct questions and promotional intent in the introductions of Japanese peer-reviewed research articles, in contrast to those written in English. These studies focus on the significance of scholarly research in analyzing the Introduction section.

2. The Introduction Section's Rhetorical Moves

To develop a new research framework that aligns with the growing focus on the analysis of research article introductions (RAIs), Swales' Create-A-Research-Space (CARS) model (2004) employs a 'move' or 'move-based' approach to analyze discursive data. According to Swales (2004, p. 228), 'a move' in genre analysis is defined as "a discursive or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in written or spoken discourse." The identification of such discursive units is closely related to two aspects. First, a move is seen as a communicative unit that can be used together with other linguistic elements at the sentence or paragraph level. Second, lexical markers may indicate various communicative functions that

are distinctly categorized into obligatory moves and obligatory/optional steps within the discourse. The revised model details these moves, steps, and structures them to enhance the analysis of academic texts.

Table 1
Swales' Model of Moves and Steps in Rais (2004)

MOVE 1:
Establishing a Territory citations required -via topic generalizations of increasing specificity)
MOVE 2:
Establishing a Niche citations possible -via
Step 1A: Indicating a gap or
Step 1B: Adding to what is known
Step 2: optional (Presenting positive justification)
MOVE 3:
Presenting the Present Work citations possible -via
Step 1: obligatory (Announcing present research descriptively and/or purposefully)
Step 2: *optional (Presenting RQs or hypotheses)
Step 3: optional (Definitional clarifications)
Step 4: optional (Summarizing methods)
Step 5: PISF (**Announcing principal outcomes)
Step 6: PISF (Stating the value of the present study)
Step 7: PISF (Outlining the structure of the paper)

Note. *Steps 2-4 are not only optional but less fixed in their order of occurrence than the others
**PISF: Probable in some fields, but unlikely in others
Source: Swales (2004), 230-23

Swales' Create-A-Research-Space (CARS) model (2004) provides a systematic approach to structuring research article introductions, divided into three main moves:

Move 1: Establishing a Territory: This move involves setting the context for the research by presenting general information and progressively narrowing it down to specifics. It requires citations to support these topic generalizations.

Move 2: Establishing a Niche - Here, the focus is on identifying a gap in the existing literature. This can be achieved by either pointing out the gap (Step 1A) or adding existing knowledge (Step 1 B). There is also an optional step (Step 2), which involves providing a positive justification for the research.

Move 3: Presenting the Present Work: This move presents several steps: announcing the research in a descriptive and purposeful manner (Step 1), optionally presenting research questions or hypotheses (Step 2), offering definitional clarifications (Step 3), summarizing the methods used (Step 4), announcing the main outcomes (Step 5), stating the significance of the present study (Step 6), and outlining the paper's structure (Step 7). Some of these steps, such as Steps 2-4, are optional, and their sequence can vary. The acronym PISF (Probable in some fields, but unlikely in others) refers to steps that are common in certain disciplines but not in others (Swales, 2004, pp. 230-23).

3. Styles of Academic Writing in Different Cultures

Academic writing styles can vary significantly across cultures because of the influence of diverse rhetorical traditions and educational systems, particularly in the context of English as an academic lingua franca (Mauranen 1993; Mauranen et al. 2016). Originally, thought patterns in English developed from the Anglo-European cultural context, following a sequence rooted in Platonic-Aristotelian logic, which originated with ancient Greek philosophers and was further refined by Roman, Medieval European, and later Western intellectuals (Kaplan, 2013). This linear approach to academic writing emphasizes clarity, explicit argumentation, and logical progression, which may differ from writing styles in other cultures that prioritize different rhetorical elements, such as indirectness, context, or community-oriented perspectives.

In the 1960s, ESL/EFL teachers began observing patterns in the writing of second language learners that appeared to result from first language transfers (Kaplan & Grabe, 2002). Kaplan (1966) introduced the concept of contrasting rhetoric to explain this phenomenon. He later stated that "It is not a better nor a worse system than any other, but it is different." (Kaplan, 2013, p.12). Hinds (1987) suggested the hypothesis that some cross-cultural differences in writing could be explained by the degree of responsibility in interpreting texts. He proposed that certain languages are writer-responsible, meaning that the writer must provide most of the information needed for understanding, while others are reader-responsible, requiring readers to interpret and infer more from the text.

Cultural differences among people from diverse backgrounds are prevalent today, potentially influencing international scholars' unique academic writing styles (Mauranen et al. 2016; Mauranen et al. 2020). Numerous studies have supported the idea that writing styles vary significantly across cultures. Seminal works such as Kaplan (1966) have suggested that Western academic writing, especially in English-speaking countries, typically emphasizes clarity, directness, and a linear progression of ideas. In contrast, academic writing in Asian cultures, including the Chinese, Japanese, and Thai contexts, often exhibits a more indirect and context-dependent style. This writing may be more circular, presenting ideas in a less linear manner, and relying heavily on the reader's ability to infer connections (Kaplan, 1966). Additionally, in these contexts, direct expression is less common, with a greater focus on maintaining harmony and respecting authority, thereby avoiding direct criticism of the existing literature (Liu, 2009). Comparative studies have further highlighted these differences. For example, research by Liu and Liu (2005) indicates that Chinese authors often employ more background information and less direct argumentation than their Western counterparts do. These stylistic differences have significant implications for multicultural academic settings.

However, changes in writing style may occur. Influenced by the EFL paradigm, Asian authors are encouraged to make their arguments more explicit and support them with clear evidence and logical reasoning (Kirkpatrick, 2011). The use of linguistic devices, such as explicit transition markers, could be a common feature to ensure coherence and guide the reader through the argument (Hyland, 2005; Swales & Feak, 2012). This style aligns with a reader-responsible approach in which the writer provides clear signals to facilitate the reader's understanding (Hinds, 1987). Understanding cultural nuances and possible changes in writing styles is important since it ensures that diverse rhetorical approaches are recognized and valued in academic writing.

4. Transitions in Academic Writing

Transitions play a crucial role in academic writing by enhancing clarity and cohesion and effectively navigating readers through intricate arguments and concepts. As linguistic markers, transitions organize text by clarifying the relationships between sections and ideas (Swales & Feak, 2012). They are particularly vital in the introductory sections of research articles, where they help authors establish a research framework, identify research gaps, and outline their contributions (Hyland 2005). Transitions link major clauses and propositions, fostering textual cohesion and enabling the reader to grasp pragmatic meanings, such as cause-effect relationships or contrasts between the ideas and opinions presented. These connections are often facilitated through intra-sentential connectors like "although," "since," and "because," or inter-sentential connectors such as "however," "in addition," "therefore," and "furthermore." Typically manifesting as conjunctions and other linking phrases, transitions ensure that ideas within the text are logically connected, aiding readers in understanding the intended relationships between the information presented before and after each transition.

Research has extensively explored transitions within the broader scope of metadiscourse, which are mainly categorized into additive, adversative, causal, and sequential relations. According to Hyland (2005), these categories fulfill various communicative functions that enhance the reader's ability to follow and evaluate the writer's argument. Studies such as that by Biber et al. (1999) have underscored the importance of understanding these functions within different academic genres and disciplines, noting significant variability in how transitions are employed. Cross-cultural studies of academic writing have revealed that rhetorical styles and the use of transitions can vary considerably across linguistic and cultural backgrounds. For instance, Moreno (2004) identified significant differences in the use and frequency of transitions between English and Spanish academic texts, suggesting that cultural norms heavily influence academic discourse. Similarly, Mur-DueÃ ± as (2007) observed that non-native English speakers from different linguistic backgrounds tend to employ transitions differently when writing in English, influenced by their first language's rhetorical traditions. In the context of Asian academic writing, several studies have focused on specific linguistic features, including transitions. Kirkpatrick (2011) and Mauranen et al. (2020) asserted that East Asian academic writers often exhibit patterns that reflect rhetorical strategies from their cultural and educational backgrounds, which can differ markedly from Western writing norms. These studies suggest that such differences may lead to misunderstandings or misinterpretations in international academic settings, stressing the need for a deeper understanding of these divergent practices.

Drawing on the classification by Cao & Hu (2014, pp. 22-23), which analyzed quantitative and qualitative research articles in applied linguistics, education, and psychology, transitions in academic writing can be primarily categorized into three sub-types: additive, contrastive, and inferential transitions, each serving a unique function in text structuring.

Table 2

Transitions' Types in Academic Writing (Cao & Hu, 2014)

Transition Type	Function	Example
Additive	Introduces additional information	"Their writers, *moreover*, are normally studying..." "… the study *also* offers insights into a crucial, and often overlooked, dimension of these resources."
Contrastive	Shows comparison or contrast	"We should, *however*, identify and assess the high-risk factors..." "This was not confirmed. *On the contrary*, students in the ID condition reported significantly higher levels of positive behavior."
Inferential	Indicates cause and effect	"I'd avoid using jargon *because* my examiners should be in the same discipline..." *"Consequently*, there is much more DNA in a eukaryotic chromosome..."

Cao and Hu's (2014) categorization of transition types outlines three basic types of transitions most frequently used in academic texts: additive, contrastive, and inferential. Each type of transition has a distinct and important function in shaping coherent academic narratives, allowing authors to seamlessly guide readers through sophisticated arguments and dense academic discussions. Additive transitions serve to accumulate points and integrate new information that complements or expands on previously stated ideas. The function of additive transitions is to layer information and ensure that each new part is built on the last. Contrastive transitions are crucial when making sharp distinctions or presenting unexpected contrasts. They emphasize divergent viewpoints or reveal surprising insights that can challenge conventional ideas. Inferential transitions are essential for building well-reasoned arguments. They help make logical connections between cause and effect. Through the purposeful use of these transitions, academic writers can improve the clarity and persuasiveness of their work and make complex ideas more accessible and engaging for their audiences. Understanding and using these transitions effectively is important for students and professionals alike, as they grapple with the demands of academic discourse and attempt to communicate their research findings and arguments clearly and persuasively.

This structured overview serves as a basis for analyzing how the density of transition markers varies, which types are favored, and how their use differs in the rhetorical moves outlined by Swales's seminal CARS model (2004) in the introduction of ELT research articles by Thai and international authors.

Research Objectives

The current study addresses this research gap by conducting a comparative analysis of transition usage in the Introduction section of ELT research articles written by Thai and international authors. This study highlights how the two groups of authors employ various types of transitions to signal the main rhetorical moves in the Introduction section, based on Swales' CARS model (2004). This research aims to uncover whether the patterns of transition

use reflect broader cultural differences in academic discourse and rhetorical organization, contributing to a better understanding of academic writing practices. This study aims to address the following research questions:

1. How does the frequency of transition markers in the Introduction section of ELT research articles differ between Thai and international authors?

2. How do transition markers vary across different rhetorical moves in the introductory writings of Thai and international authors?

Methodology

1. Research Design and Corpora

This study adopted a mixed-methods design that combined both quantitative and qualitative research methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem. This integration allows for the validation and cross-checking of the findings. By utilizing mixed methods, researchers can explore complex phenomena in greater depth and address a broader range of research questions (Creswell, 1999). Quantitatively, it quantified the frequency of specified transition markers, while qualitatively exploring the roles these transitions play within different rhetorical structures. The corpus consisted of 50 introductory sections from ELT research articles, evenly divided between those written by Thai and international authors. This setup enabled a comparative analysis of the use of transition markers in English Language Teaching. To ensure consistency, only research articles with a clearly separated introduction section and Literature Review were selected.

For the Thai corpus, articles were randomly selected from the *Language Education and Acquisition Research Network (LEARN)*, based at Thammasat University, Thailand, a Scopus-indexed Q1 journal. Specifically, selections were made from Volume 16 (2023), Issues 1 and 2, and Volume 17 (2024), Issue 1. This ensured that the selected articles accurately represented the local academic output. The authors' native Thai background was confirmed through biographical data, including names and affiliations. For the international segment, articles published by Wiley-Blackwell, a well-regarded journal since 1967, were chosen from TESOL Quarterly. Articles from Volume 57 (2023), Issues 1 to 4, and volume 58 (2024), Issue 1, were used, with four articles selected per issue to cover a wide range of topics and methods. This helps increase the validity of the study by examining the dimensions of academic writing styles produced by Thai and international authors.

Selection from both *LEARN Journal* and *TESOL Quarterly* was strategic, reflecting the local significance of the former in the Thai academic landscape and the global influence of the latter in ELT. This selection process from recent volumes (2023-2024) was aimed at building comparable corpora reflecting current trends in the use of transition markers in ELT, underscoring the unique insights and contributions of both Thai and international academic circles.

Table 3

Target Corpora of Thai Authors (TA) and International Authors (IA)

Corpus	Journal	No. of articles	No. of words
Thai Scholars (TS)	LEARN Journal	25	18,118
International Scholars (IS)	TESOL Quarterly Journal	25	17,734

This table presents the composition of the corpora used in this study. The two corpora were evenly matched in terms of the number of articles, with each containing 25 articles. The word count was also comparable, with the TS corpus comprising 18,118 words and the IS corpus comprising 17,734 words. The study focuses on how transitions function as rhetorical devices in the introduction sections across academic cultures, including all articles that featured transitions, irrespective of the methodological approach.

2. Procedures and Data Analysis

The analysis was conducted by examining the transition markers used in each main rhetorical move structure of the Introduction section: *M1: Establishing a Territory, M2: Establishing a Niche, and M3: Presenting the Present Work.* Although the lengths of all members in each corpus were carefully chosen to ensure a close match in word counts, a perfect alignment of lengths between the two sets was not feasible when analyzed through each rhetorical move. The number of words was not parallel, especially given that most words in the TA corpus were concentrated in M1: Establishing a Territory (78.15%). In contrast, the IA corpus placed a clear emphasis on discussing their work in *M3, Presenting the Present Work*, which accounted for 27.77% of the total word count.

Table 4

Distribution of Words Across Rhetorical Moves in TA and IA Corpora

Corpora	TA Corpus		IA Corpus	
Rhetorical Move	No. of the words	%	No. of the words	%
M1: Establishing a Territory	14,159	78.15	11,176	63.02
M2: Establishing a Niche	1,680	9.27	1,633	9.21
M3: Presenting the Present Work	2,279	12.58	4,925	27.77
Total	18,118	100	17,734	100

To facilitate a balanced comparison in the quantitative analysis, a normalization process to 1,000 words was applied. This approach allowed for a fair assessment of the frequency of transition occurrences using both raw frequency and percentage data (Hyland, 2005, 2010). This approach provides insights into how densely these elements are utilized in relation to the overall length of the text. For qualitative analysis, transitions were classified into three subtypes —additive, contrastive, and inferential—according to their functional roles within the text (Cao & Hu, 2014).

The corpora were initially organized into PDF files and labeled accordingly, with Thai authors' introductions marked as TA1, TA2, TA3, etc., and those by international authors labeled as IA1, IA2, IA3, etc. Before the analysis, any non-textual elements, such as tables and figures, were excluded from these documents. The search for transition markers was conducted using AntConc 4.2.4w software (Anthony, 2023). Each introduction section underwent digital processing and formatting during the analytical phase. Transition markers were then identified using a list of commonly used transition words and phrases in academic writing, such as 'however,' 'moreover,' and 'therefore.' This list was derived from prior research on academic transition (Hyland, 2005; Swales & Feak, 2012). To maintain consistency, only transitions that connect two or more ideas using either intra-sentential or inter-sentential connectors were chosen as the target items for analysis. More importantly, the analysis involved a detailed examination of the context in which each transition occurred to better understand their contributions to the rhetorical structure of the introduction. For example, the word "as" can have different meanings and functions. Only instances where "as" functioned as an inferential transition indicating cause and effect, such as in the sentence "According to Vygotsky (1978), communication and interaction with peers are important for learning as knowledge from working in groups contributes to a positive learning process" (TA7), were included in the data collection. Conversely, uses of "as" in sentences like "A computer serves as a learning medium between the teacher and the learner" (TA3) were excluded. To ensure data reliability, an independent rater verified the transition markers and achieved at least a 90% agreement rate with the researcher's initial analysis.

Results

1. How does the frequency of transition markers in the Introduction section of ELT research articles differ between Thai and international authors?

Table 5
Frequency of Transitions in the Introduction Section Produced by TA and IA

Corpora	TA Corpus 18,118 words		IA Corpus 17,734 words	
Rhetorical Move	RF	NF	RF	NF
M1: Establishing a Territory	378	20.86	181	10.21
M2: Establishing a Niche	57	3.15	44	2.48
M3: Presenting the Present Work	53	2.92	51	2.87
Total	488	26.93	276	15.56

Note. RF – raw frequency, NF – frequency normalized to 1,000 words

The overall frequency of transition markers in the Introduction sections of ELT research articles reveals notable differences between Thai authors (TA) and international authors (IA). The TA corpus, consisting of 18,118 words, had 488 transition markers, resulting in a normalized frequency (NF) of 26.93 transitions per 1,000 words. In contrast, the IA corpus, with 17,734 words, recorded 316 transition markers, producing a normalized frequency (NF) of only 15.56 transitions per 1,000 words.

When examining the use of transitions in *Rhetorical Move 1: Establishing a Territory*, the TA corpus demonstrates significantly higher usage. Thai authors employed 378 transitions in this move, with an NF of 20.86 transitions. Comparatively, the IA corpus used 181 transitions in this move, showing an NF of 10.21 transitions. This indicates that Thai authors used nearly twice as many transitions in this rhetorical move as their international counterparts did. Their heavy use of transitions reflects a rhetorical style that emphasizes a clear expression of transition markers in the initial move of establishing a research territory.

In *Rhetorical Move 2: Establishing a Niche*, the frequency of transition markers was lower for both groups with a much smaller number of words, yet the TA corpus showed slightly higher usage. Thai authors used 57 transitions, which corresponds to an NF of 3.15 transitions, while the international authors recorded 44 transitions with an NF of 2.48 transitions per 1,000 words. This suggests a focus on the use of transitions to indicate research gaps and the need for study. Both groups used transitions to highlight research gaps and justify the necessity of their studies, although Thai authors did so slightly more frequently.

Similarly, in *Rhetorical Move 3: Presenting the Present Work*, the TA corpus still surpasses the IA corpus in the use of transitions. International authors used 51 transitions, with an NF of 2.87 transitions, compared to 53 transitions in the TA corpus, which had an NF of 2.92 transitions. This could indicate that Thai authors are likely to place a stronger emphasis on the clear presentation of their current research contributions and findings and choose a rhetorical style that introduces and details their current research via the use of transition.

2. How do transition markers vary across different rhetorical moves in the introductory writings of Thai and international authors?

Table 6

Frequency of Transitions in Move 1: Establishing a Territory

Corpora	TA Corpus 14,159 words		IA Corpus 11,176 words	
Types of Transitions	RF	NF	RF	NF
Additive	216	15.19	114	10.20
Contrastive	63	4.44	36	3.22
Inferential	99	6.99	31	2.77
Total	378	26.62	181	16.19

Note. RF – raw frequency, NF – frequency normalized to 1,000 words

In *Move 1: Establishing a Territory*, the TA corpus shows a higher overall frequency of transitions than the IA corpus. Specifically, the TA corpus used 216 additive transitions, resulting in a normalized frequency (NF) of 15.19 transitions per 1,000 words. In comparison, the IA corpus used 114 additive transitions with an NF of 10.20 transitions per 1,000 words. This indicates a greater emphasis on additive transitions by Thai authors, who more frequently use words and phrases such as *"and," "also," "including," "in addition (to),"* and

"additionally" when establishing the context and background for their research (*see Appendices*). For contrastive transitions in Move 1, the TA corpus recorded 63 occurrences, corresponding to an NF of 4.44 transitions, while the IA corpus recorded 36 contrastive transitions, resulting in an NF of 3.22 transitions. This shows that Thai authors use contrastive transitions more frequently than their international counterparts in this rhetorical move. Regarding inferential transitions, the TA corpus further highlights the higher frequency of transition marker usage by Thai authors in establishing a research territory. Thai authors used 99 transitions, which were calculated to an NF of 6.99 transitions. Meanwhile, the IA corpus used 31 inferential transitions, resulting in an NF of 2.77 transitions per 1,000 words.

Table 7

Frequency of Transitions in Move 2: Establishing a Niche

Corpora	TA Corpus 1,680 words		IA Corpus 1,633 words	
Rhetorical Move	RF	NF	RF	NF
Additive	19	11.31	12	7.35
Contrastive	27	16.07	20	12.24
Inferential	11	6.54	12	7.35
Total	57	33.92	44	26.94

Note. RF – raw frequency, NF – frequency normalized to 1,000 words

The analysis of transition markers in *Move 2: Establishing a Niche* also reveals differences in the use of additive, contrastive, and inferential transitions between the two corpora. The TA corpus, consisting of 1,680 words, recorded 57 transition markers, resulting in a normalized frequency (NF) of 33.92 transitions. The IA corpus, on the other hand, with 1,633 words, recorded a total of 44 transition markers with an NF of 26.94 transitions per 1,000 words.

For additive transitions, the TA corpus used additive transitions more frequently to build upon ideas when establishing a niche with 19 transitions, showing an NF of 11.31 transitions. In contrast, the IA corpus used only 12 additive transitions, with an NF of 7.35 transitions. In terms of contrastive transitions, the TA corpus recorded 27 occurrences, corresponding to an NF of 16.07 transitions. The IA corpus recorded 20 contrastive transitions, resulting in an NF of 12.24 transitions per 1,000 words. This shows that Thai authors use contrastive transitions more frequently to highlight distinctions and differences in their research. Lastly, the TA corpus used 11 inferential transitions, which was an NF of 6.54 transitions. Meanwhile, the IA corpus used 12 inferential transitions, resulting in an NF of 7.35 transitions per 1,000 words. This suggests that international authors rely slightly more on inferential transitions to refer back to the previously mentioned information.

In *Move 2*, the IA corpus exhibited a slightly higher frequency of inferential transitions, even though the TA corpus employed a higher frequency of additive and contrastive transitions. Thai authors tend to place a stronger emphasis on building and contrasting ideas to establish a niche

for their research, while international authors tend to use inferential transitions a bit more frequently in this rhetorical move.

Table 8
Frequency of Transitions in Move 3: Presenting the Present Work

Corpora	TA Corpus 2,279 words		IA Corpus 4,925 words	
Rhetorical Move	RF	NF	RF	NF
Additive	25	10.96	25	5.08
Contrastive	7	3.07	9	1.82
Inferential	21	9.21	17	3.45
Total	53	23.24	51	10.35

Note. RF – raw frequency, NF – frequency normalized to 1,000 words

The analysis of transition markers in *Move 3: Presenting the Present Work* revealed a similar trend in the use of transitions compared to previous moves. When normalized to 1,000 words, Thai authors used a much higher frequency of all transition markers than their international counterparts did. The TA corpus, consisting of 2,279 words, recorded 53 transition markers, resulting in a normalized frequency (NF) of 23.24 transitions per 1,000 words. In contrast, the IA corpus, with a larger size of 4,925 words, recorded a total of 51 transition markers, producing an NF of only 10.35 transitions per 1,000 words.

For additive transitions, the TA corpus used 25 transitions, resulting in an NF of 10.96 transitions per 1,000 words. The IA corpus, on the other hand, employed the same raw frequency of 25 additive transitions, but with an NF of merely 3.45 transitions. In terms of contrastive transitions, the TA corpus recorded seven occurrences, corresponding to an NF of 3.07 transitions, while the IA corpus recorded nine contrastive transitions, resulting in an NF of 1.82 transitions. Regarding inferential transitions, the TA corpus used 21 transitions, which was an NF of 9.21 transitions. Meanwhile, the IA corpus used 17 inferential transitions, with an NF of 3.45 transitions per 1,000 words. This suggests that Thai authors rely more on transitions to indicate logical relationships and causality in their research.

Overall, the use of transitions plays a more prominent role in the introduction of ELT research articles written by Thai authors (TA) than those written by international authors (IA). This suggests that Thai authors are more inclined to use a greater number of transitions to construct their arguments in academic texts than their international counterparts. Interestingly, although international authors used significantly more words in Move 3 to explain their current research, their use of transitions was still much more limited than that of Thai authors. This clearly reflects the distinct rhetorical preferences and practices in the academic writing of the two groups.

Discussion

The observed differences in transition marker density between Thai authors (TA) and international authors (IA) revealed several key points in academic writing practices. The higher density of transitions in the TA corpus across all rhetorical moves suggests that TA tends to prioritize more explicit connections between ideas to ensure clarity and coherence. This could be attributed to educational practices in Thailand, where there might be a stronger emphasis on providing clear logical connections to guide the reader through the text. This approach helps in making the argumentation more accessible, especially in an academic context where the readership include non-native speakers of English (Mauranen et al., 2020; Swales & Feak, 2012; Thomas, 2017)

In contrast, the lower density of transitions in the IA corpus may indicate a different rhetorical approach, where authors assume a higher level of reader engagement and inferencing ability (Lee et al., 2021; McNamara, 2021). International authors may rely more on the reader's ability to realize relationships between ideas without the need for explicit transition markers. This could also be influenced by the conventions and expectations of the academic communities they are part of, which often value conciseness (Bennett, 2012; Tanskanen, 2006). In addition, fewer transitions suggest a different pacing in the narrative construction that prefers a minimalistic approach to making implicit causal connections in the text (Canagarajah, 2002a; Mauranen, 1993).

These findings align with prior research that highlights cultural differences in academic writing. Wu et al. (2020) investigated how users of English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) convey meaning in research articles using various syntactic structures compared to American English (AmE). Their study identified significant variations in nine aspects of syntactic complexity. That is, ELF authors tend to use longer sentences, coordinate phrases, and complex nominal structures to enhance clarity and explicitness. ELF research articles also show greater reliance on nominal phrases for explicit communication (Mauranen et al., 2016). This supports the notion that cultural and educational backgrounds tend to significantly influence rhetorical styles (Canagarajah, 2002a, 2002b, 2022; Connor et al., 2016), including the use of transitions in academic writing.

Hinds (1987) describes the concept of "reader-responsible" and "writer-responsible" cultures in academic writing. In reader-responsible cultures, such as those found in many Western contexts, readers are expected to infer relationships and connections between ideas, which aligns with the lower transition density observed in the IA corpus. Conversely, in writer-responsible cultures, such as in many Asian contexts, the writer is expected to provide clear and explicit connections, supporting the higher transition density found in the TA corpus. According to Soltani and Kuhi (2022), in writer-responsible cultures, a text is viewed as an interactive space in which the writer takes on significant responsibility, providing clear cues to aid the reader's understanding. Specifically, in English, the writer owns the text and aims to make it as accessible and comprehensible as possible for the reader to ensure clarity and coherence.

This could be the main reason why Thai authors (TA) tend to explicitly use transitions to guide readers through their arguments. In contrast, international authors tend to employ a different approach, often relying on the reader's ability to infer connections without the use of explicit markers. To illustrate, let us consider the following instances.

- "***Therefore***, the present study aims to examine the effects of CSR instruction on Thai EAP university learners' reading comprehension…" (TA7)
- "***Although*** positive effects were found, little research has been conducted on secondary school students. ***Therefore***, the present study explored how the PBL approach could be employed in English lessons" (TA21)

Oftentimes, the transition "Therefore" explicitly connects the preceding context to the current study's aim, making the logical progression clear. The use of *"Although"* and *"Therefore"* clearly signals contrast and causality, guiding the reader step-by-step through the argument. These examples illustrate the preference for explicit transitions among Thai authors, providing a clear connection that helps readers navigate the text. In contrast, the examples below from the IA corpus show that statements can flow smoothly without explicit transition markers or using other connecting phrases, depending on the reader to infer the connection between the research context and the study's aim.

- "***This study seeks to offer*** contextualized insights on how neo-nationalism might simultaneously reflect the difficulty of …." (IA12)
- "***With this understanding of teacher identity***, *this study aims to* investigate a little-questioned issue in the field of TESOL—the impact of non-White, novice native English-speaking teachers' teaching experiences on their self-perceptions …" (IA5)

Without using explicit transition markers, the prepositional phrase "With this understanding of teacher identity" functions as an implicit connector, guiding the reader through the argument without the need for explicit transitions. To expect readers to draw logical inferences, these instances emphasize international authors' tendency to use fewer explicit transitions. This approach is indicative of a more streamlined writing style, commonly favored in Western academic traditions, where brevity and conciseness are highly valued (Gaillet & Guglielmo, 2014; Thomas, 2017).

In discussing the transition types in *Move 2: Establishing a Niche*, the frequency of additive and inferential transitions between the TA and IA corpora suggests comparable use when establishing a niche. Additive transitions (e.g., furthermore, in addition) build upon previously mentioned ideas, whereas inferential transitions (e.g., therefore, thus) indicate logical relationships and causality, which are essential for identifying research gaps. These findings suggest that Thai and international authors employ different rhetorical strategies to establish a niche within their research articles. However, Thai authors seem to favor a detailed and explicit approach, using a higher number of contrastive transitions to construct a clear argument and research gaps. The significant reliance on contrastive transitions by both groups reflects a common strategy to highlight research deficiencies and set the stage for new inquiries. This is

important in academic writing, directly engaging in scholarly debates by questioning existing findings. This creates a gap or establishes a niche for further research (Swales 1990, 2004; Hyland 2005).

It is worth mentioning that although they use fewer transitions, the IA's frequent use of transitions in *Move 3: Presenting the Present Work* aligns with the assertively critical style favored in academic norms when addressing their scholarly work (Cheung & Lau, 2020; Wheeler et al., 2021). This style involves directly engaging with Step 6: Stating the value of the present study and positioning the current research as necessary and significant. For example:

- "This study ***thus*** contributes to the emerging body of literature on SFL genre pedagogy in U.S. elementary classrooms" (IA6)
- "…***Therefore***, this study sheds light on the professional and policy discourses that could impact BE teachers' identity construction in such contexts." (IA20)

Strengthening the significance of their study and demonstrating a thorough understanding of scholarly debates. This helps IA better explain how their work differs from or improves upon existing research. Emphasizing the novelty and relevance of the current research, this rhetorical strategy ensures that the reader is aware of the specific contributions and innovations brought by the new study, making the argument more compelling and persuasive. This practice reflects Western academic preference for a straightforward and direct exposition of ideas, where clear distinctions and debates are encouraged to advance knowledge (Hyland et al., 2022). By fostering an interactive scholarly environment, this approach clarifies the authors' stance and invites critical engagement from the academic community (Thompson, 2011). Overall, with the use of transitions, the international authors' strategy in Move 3 maintains a balance between extending their arguments and addressing counterpoints, enhancing the depth and rigor of the current research (Cheung & Lau, 2020; Wheeler et al., 2021).

Conclusion

This comparative analysis of transition usage in the Introduction sections of academic articles authored by Thai and international authors revealed crucial insights into the stylistic and rhetorical preferences that distinguish these two groups. This study found that Thai authors generally use transitions more densely to establish explicit relationships in their arguments. In contrast, international authors prefer a minimalistic style that relies on implicit causal connections within the text. This study underscores the effective use of transition in academic writing. This is to recognize the cultural rhetorical preferences that influence argument structures in global academic discourse. Understanding these divergent rhetorical strategies informs us about different academic writing patterns and aids in designing targeted instruction for academic writing. Educators can further guide students on the strategic use of transitions to suit various rhetorical moves, thereby enhancing the clarity and persuasiveness of their writing. This is particularly crucial in international academic settings, where students must navigate and adapt to diverse rhetorical expectations to succeed in global scholarly discourse. By

acknowledging and teaching these differences, educators can better prepare students to meet the demands of academic writing in different cultural contexts.

This study had some limitations. First, the scope was restricted to the Introduction sections of ELT research articles, which may not fully represent the complete rhetorical styles of other sections or the written academic genres of other fields. Additionally, the corpus size, although adequate for analysis, was relatively small, which might limit the generalizability of the findings. Another limitation is the classification of authors into broad categories of "Thai" and "International," which may oversimplify the diversity within these groups and potentially overlooks intra-group variations. For example, the "International" group includes authors from diverse countries with unique academic traditions, languages, and cultural backgrounds, which can significantly affect their writing style. Similarly, the "Thai" group encompasses authors with different levels of exposure to international academic standards and educational backgrounds. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the individual variations and unique styles present within each category.

Recommendations

Future research could address these limitations by expanding the analysis to include full articles or multiple sections from a broader range of academic disciplines and journals. This would enhance our understanding of academic writing styles across various contexts and specialties. Future studies could also examine the impact of different educational backgrounds or the role of the first language (L1) in the use of transitions. Additionally, it would be beneficial to include a more detailed categorization of "international" authors, possibly by considering their specific linguistic and cultural backgrounds, to better understand the diversity within this group. Moreover, given the evolving nature of academic writing in a globalized context, diachronic studies can be conducted to observe changes and trends in transition usage over time. Such studies could offer deeper insights into how academic communication styles adapt in response to the increasing interaction between different academic cultures.

References

Anthony, L. (1999). Writing research article introductions in software engineering: How accurate is a standard model? Professional communication. *IEEE Transactions*, *42*(1), 38–46.

Anthony, L. (2023). *AntConc* (version 4.2.4) [Computer software]. Waseda University. https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software

Bennett, K. (2012). English academic style manuals: A survey. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *11*(2), 123–133.

Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan, E. (1999). *Longman grammar of spoken and written English*. Pearson Education.

Björkman, B. (2013). *English as an academic lingua franca: An investigation of form and communicative effectiveness*, *3*. Walter de Gruyter.

Bunton, D. (2002). Genre moves in Ph.D. thesis introductions. In J. Flowerdew (Ed.), *Academic discourse* (p. 57.e75). Longman.

Canagarajah, S. (2002a). *A geopolitics of academic writing*. University of Pittsburgh Press.

Canagarajah, S. (2002b). Multilingual writers and the academic community: Towards a critical relationship. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *1*(1), 29–44. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1475-1585(02)00007-3

Canagarajah, S. (2022). Language diversity in academic writing: Toward decolonizing scholarly publishing. *Journal of Multicultural Discourses*, *17*(2), 107–128. https://doi.org/10.1080/17447143.2022.2063873

Cao, F., & Hu, G. (2014). Interactive metadiscourse in research articles: A comparative study of paradigmatic and disciplinary influences. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *66*, 15–31. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2014.02.007

Chahal, D. (2014). Research article introductions in cultural studies: A genre analysis exploration of rhetorical structure. *Journal of Teaching English for Specific and Academic Purposes*, *2*(1), 1–20.

Chen, Y. (2009). Asian Texts in English Translation: Rhetorical Features and Disciplinary Cultures. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *8*(4), 264–276.

Cheung, Y. L., & Lau, L. (2020). Authorial voice in academic writing. *Ibérica*, (39), 215–242. https://doi.org/10.17398/2340-2784.39.215

Connor, U., Ene, E., & Traversa, A. (2016). Intercultural rhetoric. In *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 270–282). Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (1999). Mixed-method research: Introduction and application. In *Handbook of educational policy* (pp. 455–472). Academic Press.

Farnia, M., & Barati, S. (2017). Writing introduction sections of research articles in applied linguistics: Cross-linguistic study of native and non-native writers. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *7*(2), 486–494. https://doi.org/10.17509/ijal.v7i2.8357

Flowerdew, J. (2022). Models of English for research publication purposes. *World Englishes*, *41*(4), 571–583. https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12606

Gaillet, L. L., & Guglielmo, L. (2014). *Scholarly publishing in a changing academic landscape: Models for success*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Gardner, S., & Han, C. (2018). Transitions of contrast in Chinese and English university Student Writing. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, *18*(4), 861–882.

Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: A new typology. In U. Connor & R. B. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 text* (pp. 141–152). Addison-Wesley.

Hirano, E. (2009). Research article introductions in English for specific purposes: A comparison between Brazilian Portuguese and English. *English for Specific Purposes*, *28*(4), 240–250. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2009.02.001

Hyland, K. (2005). Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing. *Continuum*.

Hyland, K. (2010). Metadiscourse: Mapping interactions in academic writing. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 9(2). https://doi.org/10.35360/njes.220

Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, *25*(2), 156–177. https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/25.2.156

Hyland, K., Wang, W., & Jiang, F. K. (2022). Metadiscourse across languages and genres: An overview. *Lingua*, *265*, 103205. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lingua.2021.103205

Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language Learning*, *16*(1–2), 1–20. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-1770.1966.tb00804.x

Kaplan, R. B. (2013). Cultural thought patterns. *Landmark Essays on ESL Writing*, *17*, 11.

Kaplan, R. B., & Grabe, W. (2002). A modern history of written discourse analysis. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *11*(3), 191–223. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(02)00085-1

Kawase, T. (2018). Rhetorical structure of the introductions of applied linguistics PhD theses. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *31*, 18–27. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2017.12.005

Kim, Y., & Lim, J. (2016). Rhetorical structure and persuasive language in the subgenre of online advertisements. *English for Specific Purposes*, *41*, 1–16.

Kirkpatrick, A. (2011). *World Englishes: Implications for international communication and English language teaching*. Cambridge University Press.

Lee, Y., Jang, B. G., & Conradi Smith, K. (2021). A systematic review of reading engagement research: What do we mean, what do we know, and where do we need to go? *Reading Psychology*, *42*(5), 540–576. https://doi.org/10.1080/02702711.2021.1888359

Liu, Y. (2009). The impact of cultural factors on Chinese and American college students' rhetorical choices in argumentative discourse: A contrastive study. *Intercultural Communication Studies*, *18*(1), 128.

Mauranen, A. (1993). Cultural differences in academic rhetoric: A textlinguistic study. *Peter*. Lang.

Mauranen, A., Hynninen, N., & Ranta, E. (2016). English as the academic lingua franca. In *The Routledge handbook of English for academic purposes* (pp. 44–55). Routledge.

Mauranen, A., Pérez-Llantada, C., & Swales, J. M. (2020). Academic Englishes: A standardised knowledge? In *The Routledge handbook of world Englishes* (pp. 659–676). Routledge.

McNamara, D. S. (2021). If integration is the keystone of comprehension: Inferencing is the key. *Discourse Processes*, *58*(1), 86–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163853X.2020.1788323

Moreno, A. I. (2004). Retrospective labeling in premise-conclusion metatext: An English–Spanish contrastive study of research articles. *English for Specific Purposes*, *23*, 321–337.

Mur-Dueñas, P. (2007). An intercultural analysis of metadiscourse features in research articles written in English and in Spanish. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *39*, 1138–1151.

Nicholson, J. D., LaPlaca, P., Al-Abdin, A., Breese, R., & Khan, Z. (2018). What do introduction sections tell us about the intent of scholarly work: A contribution on contributions. *Industrial Marketing Management*, *73*, 206–219. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.indmarman.2018.02.014

Ozturk, I. (2007). The textual organisation of research article introductions in applied linguistics: Variability within a single discipline. *English for Specific Purposes*, *26*(1), 25–38. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.12.003

Sawaki, T. (2023). High use of direct questions and relative absence of promotional intention in Japanese peer-reviewed research article introductions compared to their English counterparts. *English for Specific Purposes*, *69*, 19–32. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2022.09.002

Sheldon, E. (2011). Rhetorical differences in RA introductions written by English L1 and L2 and Castilian Spanish L1 writers. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *10*(4), 238–251. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2011.08.004

Soltani, K., & Kuhi, D. (2022). Writer responsibility across sections of research articles: Recycling of directional determinants by English and Iranian academics. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *60*, 101191. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101191

Swales, J., & Feak, C. (2012). *Academic writing for graduate students: Essential skills and tasks*. University of Michigan Press.

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.

Tanskanen, S. K. (2006). *Collaborating towards coherence: Lexical cohesion in English discourse*. John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Thomas, D. (2017). Writing clearly, concisely and coherently. In *The PhD writing handbook* (pp. 116–127). Palgrave.

Thompson, G. (2011). *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*. Interaction and epistemic stance in the university seminar, *10*(3) (pp. 134–146).

Wang, W., & Yang, C. (2015). Claiming centrality as promotion in applied linguistics research article introductions. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *20*, 162–175. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2015.05.002

Wheeler, M. A., Vylomova, E., McGrath, M. J., & Haslam, N. (2021). More confident, less formal: Stylistic changes in academic psychology writing from 1970 to 2016. *Scientometrics*, *126*(12), 9603–9612. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11192-021-04166-9

Wu, X., Mauranen, A., & Lei, L. (2020). Syntactic complexity in English as a lingua franca academic writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *43*, 100798. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2019.100798