Situating Lexical Bundles in the Moves and Steps of Applied Linguistics Research Article Introductions

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Conventionalized linguistic exponents are frequently found in the discourse of experienced writers of a genre (Cheng, 2011). These linguistic patterns aid the effective communication of meaning, since they are readily recognized by readers who associate them with different moves or steps of the genre in question. The effective instruction of genre should preferably involve the introduction of these specific language features (Henry & Rosenberry, 2001). Doing so would help students better exploit the discourse structures of the register in which they are being initiated (Hyland, 2012). As a result, previous studies have attempted to link different lexico- grammatical features to the move scheme developed by Swales (1981, 1990, 2004). One study that has tried to establish this link is Cortes (2013), who established a connection between a particular linguistic features (i.e., lexical bundles) and Swales' move scheme in a multi-disciplinary corpus of research article introductions. Her findings are a considerable contribution to move-schema theory through providing a detailed description of the communicative function of moves. Cortes' (2013) study was based on a multidisciplinary corpus of RA introductions, and since lexical bundles have been found to be discipline-bound (see Cortes, 2004; Cortes, Jones, & Stoller, 2002; Hyland, 2008), a similar investigation into the connection between lexical bundles and move structure in a unified discipline would allow us to gain a more in- depth understanding of the linguistic means through which moves are realized in that specific discipline. It would also greatly contribute to the process of second language academic writing instruction within the scientific domain in question. Therefore, the aim of the present study is to provide readers with a list of the most frequently-recurring lexical bundles in a corpus of RA introductions from the field of applied linguistics. Following the methodology of Cortes (2013), we then sought to examine the relationship between these bundles and the moves and steps in which they were found. We believe that such a list can have great pedagogical applications for EAP instruction.

For this study, a corpus consisting of 1,009 RA introductions from the field of applied linguistics was compiled. The word count stood at one million word tokens. The articles were randomly selected from five high-ranking journals of the field, namely Applied Linguistics, English for Specific Purposes, Journal of English for Academic Purposes, Journal of Second Language Writing and TESOL Quarterly. Lexical bundles of four+- words were identified using WordSmith Tools 7.0 (Scott, 1996). The same cut- off points used by Cortes (2013, p. 36) were also adopted for this study. The final list (excluding bundles that formed parts of longer sequences and those that were discipline specific) included 6342 lexical bundle tokens and 229 types. All bundles in the final list were classified both in terms of their structure and function using the taxonomies introduced by Biber, et al. (1999) and Biber, Conrad and Cortes (2003, 2004).

The bundles were subsequently analyzed in their surrounding context with the aim of exploring the rhetorical moves and steps in which they occurred. The most number of bundles (i.e., types) were found in Move 1 (315 bundles), while the least number were identified in Move 2 (112 bundles); 170 bundle types were also observed in Move 3. Our corpus analysis also showed that some of the identified bundles in our corpus were exclusively used to fulfill the communicative aims of one move or step. These bundles are of particular interest since they are widely used by writers to fulfill the rhetorical aims of the move and step in which they occur. We also found that the longer bundles of our study mostly performed a trigger function in that they were used to initiate or 'trigger' a move/step.

In addition, the functional classification of the bundles showed that, in line with previous studies which have looked at the function of lexical bundles in research articles (e.g., Biber, et al., 1999; Biber, 2006), most of the bundles in this study, regardless of the move and step in which they were found, were referential in nature, while stance expressions were the least common functional type of bundle. A comparison between the moves and steps reveals that the most number of stance expressions were observed in Move 1 followed by Moves 2 and 3, respectively. According to Swales (1990), Move 1 aims to highlight the importance of the field of study for the discourse community. It suggests that the rhetorical aims in Move 1, especially Step 2 (i.e., making topic generalizations) and Step 3 (i.e., reviewing items of previous literature) may prompt writers to use more stance expressions.

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