

THE RESEARCH GAP IN THE INTRODUCTIONS OF ARABIC RESEARCH ARTICLES

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Abstract

Previous studies that used Swales' CARS model (1990, 2004) found that Move 2 (Establishing a niche) is insignificant in Arabic RA introductions, and most of its instances addressed the needs instead of creating the gap from the research world. This study examines 60 RA introductions in the field of education to further examine this phenomenon. The findings indicated that Move 2 was present in less than 50% in the introductory sections. However, the analysis was extended to all the subsections of the introductions and it was found that all introductions included a subheading entitled the *Problem of the Study* where Move 2 was employed 100%. The analysis of the strategies of Move 2 in the introductory sections and the *Problem of the Study* subsections reflected some similarities and differences. In both sections, expressing the need and showing the paucity of research were very common. However, making a comparison between the study and previous ones was common in the introductory sections while problem-raising was frequent in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings. The study concludes with suggestions and recommendations for future studies.

1. Introduction

In the world of research writing, locating a research gap in previous studies is considered to be a central cornerstone in any research article. Swales (1990, 2004) considered it a central move in the introduction in his famous CARS model which includes three moves: establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche. According to Swales, the major steps or ways of establishing a niche include: counter-claiming, identifying a gap, asking a question, continuing a tradition, and presenting positive justifications. The "continuing a tradition" category represents minor ways of establishing a niche such as expressing needs/desires/interests, logical conclusions, contrastive comment, and problem-raising (Swales 1990: 156).

Researchers who used the CARS model found that non-English articles overlook Move 2, and when it was present it was used via a weaker version such as expressing the need rather than a strong version such as criticizing past studies. For example, Najjar (1990) found that only seven RA introductions out of 48 in the field of agriculture used Move 2. Interestingly, he found that these instances attempted to locate a gap in previous research but without offering any evaluation or challenge. In particular, the cases of Move 2 found in Najjar's study were mostly indications of the dearth or

absence of local research and some were assertions of the need for the study. Likewise, Arabic RAs were found reluctant to employ Move 2 in Fakhri (2004) who found that “the discussion of previous research in the introductions is qualitatively and quantitatively limited” (*ibid.*: 1124). According to Fakhri, the citations offered in the introductions did not challenge claims in the previous studies in order to create a research gap.

As is the case in Arabic papers, Hirano (2009) found that 70% of the RA introductions in Portuguese lacked Move 2 compared to 90% in English texts. Also, Ahmad (1997) found that 43% of Malay scientific introductions lacked Move 2, and among those that used it, the strategy of expressing the need was the most dominate. Ahmad (*ibid.*: 112) offered a very important interpretation of this phenomenon, which seems to be applicable to other languages, as she stated that “Malaysian writers do not face any fierce competition for a research space; rather they simply need to create a need to do a research within the topic of their interest”. Shim (2005) agreed on this interpretation as she found similar results when Korean texts focused on establishing the niche by expressing the need for the research in Korea. Additionally, Move 2 in Thai introductions, as reported in Jogthong (2001), was absent in almost half of the corpus, and there was a preference for using the problem-raising strategy and a complete avoidance of the step counter-claiming. Similar to Thai introductions, Chinese texts in Loi and Evans (2010) preferred to ask questions as a strategy to locate a research gap.

While the findings above provided firm conclusions on the use of Move 2 in non-English papers, it is surprising that the issue of the boundary of the introduction and whether it includes subsections has not attracted the researchers’ attention. Shim (2005) and Hirano (2009), however, clearly alluded to the issue and showed that they restricted their analyses to the introductory sections without examining the subheadings of the introductions. In other studies, it was unclear whether the examined introductions included subheadings or not. The issue of the applicability of the CARS model to the introductions with subheadings was cogently discussed by Ozturk (2007), who used the CARS model to compare two subfields of applied linguistics. He stated, referring to his methodology, that “the analysis focused on the section between the abstract and the first subheading in the introduction of each article. This decision was motivated by the characteristics of the model of analysis. As discussed in Section 1, Swales (1990) does not mention the possibility that RA introductions might contain subheadings” (*ibid.*: 28).

With Ozturk’s point in mind, the present study does not limit the analysis to the introductory sections of the RA introductions (that follow the abstracts and precede the first subheadings) as was done in Shim (2005), Hirano (2009), and Ozturk (2007). It, rather, examines the whole introduction sections including the subheadings. The aim of the study, however, is not to examine the applicability of the CARS model nor to discuss the organization of the Arabic RA introduction, but rather to focus on the employment of Move 2 throughout the RA introduction and to address the phenomenon of the lack of Move 2 in non-English RAs, and Arabic in particular.

2. Method

Sixty Arabic RAs in the field of education were collected from two refereed journals: *Journal of Educational & Psychological Sciences* (JEPS) (n=30), published by the University of Bahrain in Bahrain and *The Journal of Educational Studies* (JES) (n=30),

published by King Saud University in Saudi Arabia. I believe the two journals are good representatives of research writing in the Arab world because of their popularity and inclusion of publications from writers across the Arab world. The reason behind drawing the articles from more than one journal was to ensure that the paper organization in particular and writing in general are not influenced by one journal's guidelines. The articles were published in 2014 and 2015 and only experimental types were selected. The number of authors is as follows: one author (32 RAs), two authors (22 RAs), three authors (3 RAs), four authors (1 RA), and five authors (2 RAs).

Using the strategies of Move 2 (establishing a niche) described in the CARS model, in both versions of 1990 and 2004, I first examined the introductory part (that follows the abstract and precedes the first subheading) in each introduction. Then I examined all the remaining subsections in the introductions focusing on the employment of Move 2. In all of the RAs, Move 2 was found in a subsection entitled the *Problem of the Study*. A closer analysis of Move 2 in this subsection was conducted.

3. Results

The first sections in the introductions that appear immediately after the abstract and before any subheading have been examined and it was found that Move 2 existed in less than 50% of the texts. However, when the whole introductions were examined, it was found that Move 2 existed in 100% of the introductions in a subheading entitled the *Problem of the Study*. The following sections present in detail the results of the analysis.

3.1. *Move 2 in the introductory sections in the 60 introductions*

The analysis of the introductory sections shows that Move 2 was employed in less than half of the texts (28 out of 60 texts) with a total of 32 instances, as some sections used the move more than once. Specifically, there were 12 cases that referred to the absence or dearth of studies, 11 cases that expressed the need for the study, eight that made a comparison between the current research and previous ones, and one case that used the problem-raising strategy.

3.2. *Comparison of Move 2 in both sections (the introductory and Problem of the Study subheadings) of the 28 RAs*

Focusing on these 28 introductions, the investigation of Move 2 proceeded to their subheadings entitled the *Problem of the Study* in order to see whether Move 2 was employed differently (quantitatively and qualitatively) in these latter subheadings compared to its use in the introductory sections. As mentioned above, Move 2 was employed in all of the *Problem of the Study* subheadings. There were 34 cases of Move 2 in these subheadings, as some subsections used the move more than once. Similar to their importance in the preceding sections, strategies showing the paucity of research and expressing the need were used nine and ten times, respectively. It is surprising to find that making a comparison between the current study and the previous ones was used eight times in the preceding sections while it was absent in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings. The opposite was true with the problem-raising technique that was used ten times in these subheadings while it was used only once in the introductory

sections. The *Problem of the Study* subheadings also included strategies that were not seen in the introductory sections: criticism, positive justifications, the purpose of the study, and question raising. Table 1 shows all the results of Move 2 in the introductory sections and in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings.

Move 2 Strategy	The introductory section (# 28 RAs)	The problem of the study (# 28 RAs)
The comparison	8	-
Rare studies	12	9
The need	11	10
Logical conclusion	-	-
Problem raising	1	10
Criticism	-	1
Positive justifications	-	1
The purpose of the study	-	1
Question raising	-	2
Total	32	34

Table 1. Move 2 in the introductory sections and in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings

3.3. Move 2 in the RAs ($n=32$) that do not include it in their introductory sections

The analysis also covered the remaining 32 introductions that did not include Move 2 in their introductory sections (but included it in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings). There were 35 instances distributed as follows: 15 cases expressed the need for the study, nine cases indicated the paucity of research, five cases raised a problem, four cases asked questions, one case indicated the purpose of the study, and finally one case provided criticism. Table 2 shows the results of Move 2 strategies in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings in the introductions that did not include Move 2 in their introductory sections.

Move 2 Strategy	The problem of the study in RAs without Move 2 in their introductory section. (# 32 RAs)
The comparison	-
Rare studies	9
The need	15
Logical conclusion	-
Problem raising	5
Criticism	1
Positive justifications	-
The purpose of the study	1
Question raising	4
Total	35

Table 2. Move 2 in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings in the RAs without Move 2 in their introductory sections

From the above, it can be shown that whether Move 2 appeared in the introductory section or not, the most common strategies in the *Problem of the Study* subheading are expressing the need and showing the paucity of research. The strategy of problem raising, however, was used more in the *Problem of Study* subheadings in the RAs that included Move 2 in their introductory sections, while the opposite is true with the strategy of question-raising which was used more in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings in the RAs that did not include Move 2 in their introductory sections.

3.4. Juxtaposing Move 2 strategies in both sections (the introductory and *Problem of the Study* subheadings) (n=28 RAs)

Focusing on the 28 RAs that included Move 2 in both of their introductory sections and the *Problem of the Study* subheadings, the employment of Move 2 in these two sections was juxtaposed to see whether it was used in the same way or differently in the same RA. The analysis shows that writers appeared to prefer to employ different strategies in each section. For example, in the eight RAs that made comparisons in their introductory sections, four of them raised a problem in the *Problem of the Study* sections. Also, in the seven RAs that expressed the need in their introductory sections, three of them raised a problem in their *Problem of the Study* subheadings. Furthermore, in the eight RAs that indicated the paucity of research in their introductory sections, there were four RAs that expressed the need for the study. Table 3 indicates all the results of the strategies of Move 2 in both sections in the same article.

No. of RAs based on Move 2 in the Introductory Sections	Introductory Section	The <i>Problem of the Study</i> section	No. of RAs
8 RAs	Comparison	Problem raising	4
	Comparison	Rare	2
	Comparison	Problem raising + Rare	1
	Comparison	Need + Rare	1
7 RAs	Need	Problem raising	3
	Need	Problem raising + Rare	1
	Need	Question raising	1
	Need	Positive justifications	1
	Need	Need	1
3 RAs	Need + Rare	Problem raising + Criticism	1
	Need + Rare	Rare	1

	Need + Rare	Need	1
1 RA	Rare + Need	Question raising	1
1 RA	Problem-raising	Need	1
8 RAs	Rare	Need	4
	Rare	Rare	1
	Rare	Rare + Need	2
	Rare	Purpose of the study	1

Table 3. Move 2 in both sections in the same article

3.5. Detailed analysis of strategies in the *Problem of the Study* subheading

As indicated earlier, all RAs in the corpus included the *Problem of the Study* subheading which included instances of Move 2. The average number of words in this subheading was 244 words and those in Move 2 was 85. As indicated in Chart 1, the space that Move 2 occupied in this subheading was only 35%, and the remaining space (65%) was dedicated to providing a specific introduction on the topic. Most RAs (44 out of 60) made reference to previous studies in their *Problem of the Study* subheadings. The analysis also showed that there were 25 RAs that concluded this subheading with questions. Among those 25 RAs, there were 12 RAs that asked only one question. These findings indicate that the *Problem of the Study* subheadings somewhat mirror the introductory sections, i.e. by including steps from Move 1, in the CARS model, (introducing the topic and literature review) and Move 3 (announcing the study by asking research questions).

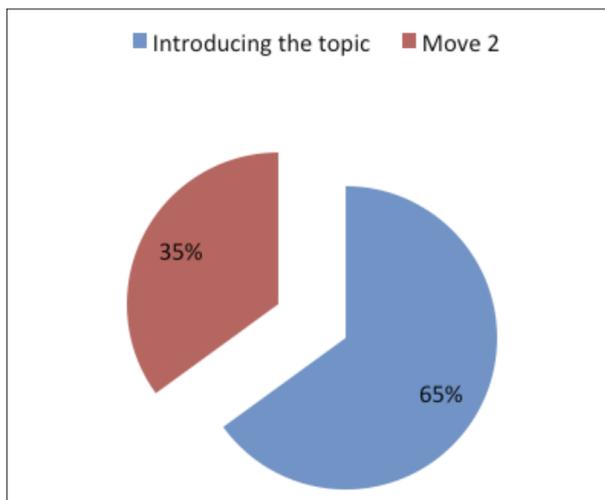


Figure 1. The average number of words in the *Problem of the Study* subheading

The analysis also revealed that Move 2 instances in the *Problem of the Study* subheadings were generated mainly through three strategies: expressing the need for the study, referring to problematic conditions, and indicating the dearth of studies. Strong versions such as criticizing previous research were almost absent. The typical construction of the move was to start with what the researchers had noticed or experienced. The reference to the researchers' experience and exploration was indicated usually when Move 2 expressed the need for the study, as exemplified in 1 and 2, and more significantly when it referred to problematic situations, as exemplified in 3, 4, 5.

ومن خلال عمل الباحثين في مجال تدريس العلوم، فقد أدركا أن هناك حاجة لتدريب الطلبة على الرسومات العلمية، وذلك بسبب غياب الأهداف النفس حركية اللازمة لتنمية هذه المهارات في دفاتر تحضير المعلمين. وبناء على ذلك جاءت هذه الدراسة للإجابة عن سؤال الدراسة.....

(1) Based on researchers' work experience in teaching science, they both realized that there is a need to train students on scientific graphics, due to the absence of the psychomotor goals that are necessary for the development of these skills in the teachers' preparation note-books. Therefore, this study was conducted to answer the question of the study:....

إن شعور الباحثين بالمشكلات التي تواجه المعلمين والطلبة على حد سواء في تعليم وتعلم الرياضيات، وشعورهم بأهمية تنمية التفكير الرياضي لدى الطلبة في معالجة تلك المشكلات وذلك من خلال تعريف معلمي الرياضيات بمظاهر التفكير الرياضي، واقتراح طرائق لمعالجة المواقف الرياضية المتعلقة بمظاهر التفكير الرياضي دفعهم إلى إجراء هذه الدراسة التي استهدفت بشكل أساسي تطوير اختبار يقيس مظاهر التفكير الرياضي لدى طلبة المرحلة الأساسية العليا في الأردن.

(2) The researchers have awareness of the problems that face teachers and students alike in teaching and learning mathematics. Also, they are aware of the importance of mathematical thinking among students in addressing these problems. They gain this experience when they discuss with teachers the nature of mathematical thinking, and when they listened to their proposals of how to deal with certain situations related to mathematical thinking. All these factors inspired the researchers to conduct this study, which mainly aimed at developing a mathematical thinking test for high basic stage students in Jordan.

وقد لاحظ الباحث من خلال خبرته كعضو هيئة تدريس في جامعة البلقاء التطبيقية أن توظيف التقنيات الحديثة في العملية التعليمية - رغم اهتمام الجامعة بتوفير متطلباته- لا زال دون المستوى المطلوب...

(3) The researcher noted through his experience as a faculty member at Al- Balqa Applied University that employing modern technologies in the educational process – despite the interest of the university to provide the basic needs – is still below the accepted level...

ويرى الباحثان من خلال عملهما كمدرسين في جامعة اليرموك وخبرتهما في الإشراف على طالبات التدريب الميداني في مدارس إربد؛ فقد لاحظا تدهور واستياء معلمات التربية الرياضية من الضعف الواضح للطلبات في اللياقة البدنية وخاصة أثناء تنفيذهن لكثير من الأعمال والأنشطة المطلوبة منهن، وعدم استغلال مواصفتهن الجسمية في تحسين لياقتهن البدنية، مما دفع الباحثان للتحقق من علاقة القياسات الأنتروبومترية باختبارات اللياقة البدنية لدى طالبات المرحلة الأساسية الوسطى في مدارس إربد.

(4) From their work as teachers at Yarmouk University and their experience as supervisors of female students who are taking field training in Irbid schools, the two researchers saw and noticed how teachers of physical education grumble about and resent the obvious weakness of the students' physical fitness, especially when they do tasks and carry out activities. In addition, teachers find that students do not exploit the physical abilities in improving their physical fitness. These observations urged the two researchers to

investigate the relationship of anthropometric measurements with physical fitness tests for students at central elementary female students in Irbid schools.

إلا أن الباحثين- كل من موقعه- فالباحث من خلال قيامه بتدريب المعلمين والمعلمات، والباحثة من خلال عملها كمشرفة تربوية لمادة التربية الإسلامية لسنوات طويلة- لاحظ وجود ضعف في تزويد المعلمات الأعمال الكتابية للطالبات بالتغذية الراجعة المكتوبة، وقد تأكد هذا الضعف من خلال تحليل عينة من الأعمال الكتابية (أنشطة كتابية صفية، وواجبات منزلية، وتقارير، واختبارات) لمعلمات من مختلف المدارس التي يزورها الباحث أو تشرف عليها الباحثة. ولهذا رأى الباحثين أنه من المجدي محاولة تعرف مستوى معرفة معلمات التربية الإسلامية بالتغذية الراجعة المكتوبة، وأثره في استخدامهن لها في الأعمال الكتابية المختلفة، وهو ما تحاول هذه الدراسة أن تبحثه، حيث تحاول أن تعالج مشكلة تربوية واقعية أوصت عدد من الدراسات.. بضرورة البحث فيها من جوانبها المختلفة.

(5) Both researchers, with each from his and her workplace – the male researcher through his training of teachers, and the female researcher through her supervision of the Islamic education course for many years – noticed weakness in providing students with written feedback concerning their written homework. This weakness was confirmed through a sample analysis of written homework (classroom written activities, homework, reports, and tests) for teachers from various schools visited by the male researcher or supervised by the female researcher. Thus, both researchers felt it would be imperative to try to know the level of knowledge of Islamic education teachers of the written feedback, and its impact on their usage of it in the different written works. This is exactly what the study is trying to figure out, as it addresses a real educational problem that was already recommended to be researched in past studies.

The single case where the criticism technique was employed as a strategy of Move 2 is shown in (6). While the researcher criticized past studies, he mitigated the statement by showing that the current study would use a different strategy.

وعلى الرغم من أهمية استخدام استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة، إلا أن معظم الدراسات السابقة في هذا المجال قد أجريت في غرفة الصف التقليدية. وسيكون من المفيد جداً معرفة ما إذا كانت النتائج الإيجابية لاستخدام تلك الاستراتيجيات يمكن الحصول عليها في بيئة التعلم الإلكتروني، حيث قامت الدراسة الحالية بتحري أثر دمج استراتيجيات ما وراء المعرفة في أحد المقررات الإلكترونية.

(6) Despite the importance of the use of metacognitive strategies, most of the previous studies in this area were carried out in traditional classrooms. It would be very useful to know whether the positive results of the use of these strategies can be found in the e-learning environment. Therefore, the present study investigated the effect of integrating metacognitive strategies in one online course.

Showing the paucity of research was a prominent strategy used in the corpus. This step was either used alone, as in (7) and (8), or merged with expressing the need strategy, as in (9) and (10). The reference to the researcher(s) was mentioned in both cases but more significantly when there was a need indicated. More importantly, examples (9) and (10) show the complexity and richness of this section as it identifies the gap between the research world and the real world.

وقد لوحظ من خلال مراجعة الأدبيات المتعلقة بالمتغيرات السابقة، أن هناك عدداً كبيراً من الدراسات التي بحثت مهارات الحياة للطالب الجامعي ونوعية الحياة للطالب الجامعي وعلاقة كل منهما على حدة بارتفاع مستوى التحصيل للطالب الجامعي؛ وقد تمت هذه الدراسات لهذه المتغيرات بشكل مستقل. ولكن عدداً محدوداً من الدراسات بحثت التفاعل والعلاقة بين هذه المتغيرات ألا وهي مهارات الحياة ونوعية الحياة والتحصيل الدراسي في منظومة واحدة.

(7) It has been observed when reviewing the literature on the previous variables that there is a large body of studies on the life skills and the nature of life of university students and the relationship between each with the high academic achievement of students. These studies, however, examined these variables independently, but a limited number of studies have examined the interaction and the relationship between these variables, namely, life skills, the nature of life, and academic achievement as a single system.

ومع ندرة الدراسات التي تتناول الاختبارات العامة لمنهج اللغة العربية في دولة الكويت، وبالأخص اختبارات اللغة العربية لشهادة إتمام الثانوية العامة، والتي تعد من أهم الاختبارات على المستوى المحلي، حيث تستحوذ على اهتمام المربين والطلبة وأولياء الأمور، ومختلف أجهزة الدولة التعليمية، فإن الدراسة الحالية تستهدف تحليل أسئلة اختبارات اللغة العربية للمرحلة الثانوية في ضوء مهارات التفكير والإبداع اللغوي، وهو ما حفز الباحث على صياغة المشكلة في الأسئلة الآتية:....

(8) Few studies have addressed the general exams of the Arabic course in Kuwait, and in particular the final exams at the last year of high school, which are considered to be very important locally, as they attract the attention of educators, students, and parents, along with various educational state agencies. The current study thus aims to analyze the test questions for the Arabic language course at the high school levels in the light of thinking skills and linguistic creativity. This urged the researcher to formulate the problem in the following questions:....

كما لاحظ الباحثان قلة البحوث التي تناولت التصور البصري المكاني، وعدم وجود بحوث تناولت لغة اللوغو باعتبارها وسيلة يمكن أن تعمل على تنمية قدرة التصور البصري المكاني..... فقد رأى الباحثان الحاجة إلى البحث عن وسيلة تنمي قدرة التصور البصري المكاني...

(9) The two researchers noticed the lack of research on spatial visualization and the absence of research on the effect of LOGO programming language, which is considered to be a vehicle that enhances the development of the spatial visualization ability... Thus, both researchers felt the need to search for a way to develop the spatial visualization ability.

ورغم ما أكدته نتائج الدراسات عن العلاقة الإيجابية بين الذكاء الوجداني وأساليب مواجهة الضغوط، فإن الباحثان من مراجعتهم للدراسات التي اهتمت ببحث علاقة الذكاء الوجداني بمواجهة أحداث الحياة الضاغطة لدى طلبة الجامعة في البيئة المحلية بدولة الكويت؛ تبين عدم وجود دراسات تدعم هذه العلاقة على حد علمهما، وهو ما يقدم مبررا لدراسة وجود العلاقة بين المتغيرين، كما لوحظ قلة الدراسات التي تناولت بالبحث الذكاء الوجداني اعتمادا على نموذج مايرو سالوفي خاصة بالبيئة الخليجية، لذا سعت الدراسة الحالية لاستخدام أداة بحثية قائمة على هذا النموذج بالدراسة الحالية واستكشاف علاقتها بأساليب مواجهة أحداث الحياة الضاغطة، كما نشأت مشكلة الدراسة من حاجة ملحة لتطبيقات الذكاء الوجداني في مختلف صور الحياة الشخصية والاجتماعية، ويمكن تلخيص مشكلة الدراسة في الإجابة على التساؤلات التالية:

(10) Despite what was confirmed by the results of studies on the positive relationship between emotional intelligence and strategies of "stress facing," the two researchers found no studies support this relationship from their reviewing of the studies on this topic as it concerns with university students in Kuwait. This is a justification to examine the relationship between the two variables. In addition, a lack of studies has been noticed that examined the emotional intelligence depending on the model used by Salovey & Mayer, especially in the Gulf environment. Thus, the current study sought to use a research tool based on this model to explore the relationship pertinent to facing the stressful life events. Also, the study was initiated based on the urgent need for the application of emotional intelligence in the various forms of personal and social life. The problem of the study can be summarized in answering the following questions:...

As indicated earlier, many sections concluded with a number of research questions or only with one. Often the *Problem of the Study* took the form of a question, as exemplified in (11) and (12), in addition to (13) which also included sub-questions.

وعليه تبلورت مشكلة الدراسة في التساؤل الرئيس التالي....

(11) Based on this, the problem of the study has been formulated in the following main question

وعليه يمكن صياغة سؤال الدراسة كالتالي...

(12) Thus, the question of the study can be formed as the following...

وفي ضوء ما سبق يمكن بلورة مشكلة البحث في السؤال الرئيس الآتي:.... ويتفرغ من هذا السؤال الأسئلة الفرعية الآتية:

(13) In the light of what has been mentioned, the research problem can be formulated in the following main question.... From this question, we ask the following sub-questions:

The summary of the problem of the study in the form of a question may lead it to be classified as questioning-raising, but the analysis shows that it was formed in another strategy and the question was made specifically to summarize the problem and state it clearly.

4. Conclusion

This study aimed at investigating how Move 2 was employed in Arabic RA introductions. Instead of restricting the investigation to the introductory section as past studies did, the investigation in this study covered all of the subheadings. The analysis showed that all introductions included Move 2 in a subheading entitled the *Problem of the Study*, a result that contradicts the findings in past studies where the paucity of Move 2 was common in non-English RAs, and in Arabic ones in particular. In fact, this study problematizes the methodologies in the past studies that restricted the investigations to the first introductory sections.

The analysis of the *Problem of the Study* subheading has shown that its main function was to underscore the rationale of the study. The subheading included some features of the introductory section (as described in the CARS model and supported in the studies that used it) such as establishing a territory and literature review. The most remarkable finding in this section was its abundant reference to the researchers' observations and experiences. The self-reference here seems to be conducted for a rhetorical purpose, i.e. to convince the readers that the problem is fundamental and thus requires investigation. This rhetorical orientation clearly stresses the importance of creating a gap in the examined sections, which again contrasts with the findings in previous studies which have shown that the move of establishing a niche is overlooked in Arabic papers. The results here, however, correlate with the previous findings regarding the inclination towards establishing the niche through minor ways such as asserting the need for the study based on problematic conditions and avoiding engagement with previous research through evaluation and criticism.

Concerning the use of the steps in the CARS model, the findings indicated that many of the *Problem of the Study* subheadings employed more than one strategy of

Move 2, which clearly illustrates the complexity and richness of this subheading. It may also indicate that the distinction between the steps in Move 2 is not fixed as they can overlap and maintain a hybrid nature. In addition, it was found that several of the examined sections concluded with asking questions with a preceding phrase such as: *the problem of the study can be summarized in the following question*. This phrasing does not necessarily indicate that the step was that of question-raising but the question was used presumably to summarize the problem of the study and to give a clear statement at the end of the section. These findings may suggest some areas of improvement of the CARS model in terms of the relationship between the steps. More importantly, the analysis here showed a strategy that was not described in the model, namely, the comparison between the study under investigation and past studies.

This study has some limitations that need to be addressed. First, it focused on one move in the CARS model, namely Move 2, and on one subheading, namely the *Problem of the Study*. It would be more informative if the analysis applied all moves in the CARS model to all subheadings in the introduction section. Second, the focus was on one academic discipline, namely education, and it would be interesting to examine other disciplines in order to be able to give firm conclusions. In addition to RAs in Arabic, future studies are recommended to further examine the phenomenon of Move 2 in RAs written in other languages.

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