



Original Research

Rhetorical moves and metadiscourse in English–Vietnamese literature reviews: Variations in niche construction and authorial positioning

Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh^{1*}

¹Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam

The study examines how literature reviews in English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles construct research positioning through rhetorical move structure and interactional metadiscourse. Although literature reviews play a central role in establishing research territory and justifying new studies, comparatively little work has investigated how rhetorical organisation and interpersonal resources interact in this section across different academic writing traditions. The study analyses a corpus of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles using Kwan's model of literature review moves and Hyland's taxonomy of interactional metadiscourse. Move analysis identifies how authors establish the research territory, create a research niche, and present their own studies, while corpus analysis examines the distribution of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions across moves. The findings show systematic differences in both rhetorical organisation and interactional resources. English literature reviews contain a higher density of rhetorical strategies in the niche-construction stage and more frequent use of interactional markers associated with author positioning and reader engagement. Vietnamese literature reviews devote more space to definitional exposition and consolidation of prior knowledge, and they introduce research gaps more cautiously. These differences correspond with contrasting conventions of knowledge negotiation and authorial positioning in the two academic writing traditions. The study shows that rhetorical move structure and interactional metadiscourse jointly organise the literature review and regulate how authors position their research in relation to prior scholarship and readers. The findings advance cross-cultural genre analysis and establish systematic differences in rhetorical niche construction and authorial positioning across English and Vietnamese literature reviews.

Keywords: *rhetorical move structure, interactional metadiscourse, literature review, academic writing, research article genre, genre, research article*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The dissemination of knowledge constitutes an essential activity within academic communities. Scholars engage in knowledge dissemination to inform peers, strengthen professional networks, support collaboration

for future progress, and attain recognition as intellectual contributors within the scholarly community (Chaisiri et al., 2025; Swales, 1990). Such communication also contributes to the establishment of a shared professional environment in which assertions of expertise become plausible

* Corresponding author

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and credible (Zhou & Jiang, 2025). One of the principal means of disseminating scientific knowledge is the research article, sometimes referred to as a scientific, academic, or scholarly paper, and defined as a form of academic writing used for public intellectual communication (Aghdam et al., 2025). The research article is widely treated as an established academic genre that can be analysed in terms of rhetorical structure and linguistic features (Ash'ari et al., 2023; Zhou et al., 2023). The principal sections of a research article (abstract, introduction, literature review, methods, results, discussion, or conclusion) fulfil distinct communicative tasks (Nawawi & Ting, 2025) that require adherence to the academic conventions associated with the genre. Effective research writing depends on appropriate linguistic expression that conveys the message clearly (Chaisiri et al., 2025; Swales, 1990), together with rhetorical strategies for presenting research findings and propositions (Hyland, 2005; Jiang & Hyland, 2025). Rhetorical choices reflect writers' attempts to adapt their work to the expectations of disciplinary audiences and communicative purposes (Liu & Jiang, 2024), and the effective use of such strategies contributes to the clarity, persuasiveness, and impact of research writing (Lim, 2023).

Within genre-based research, considerable attention has therefore been devoted to the ways in which authors organise texts and interact with readers through rhetorical and interactional features (Hyland, 2005; Swales, 1990). Studies have shown that the different sections of a research article fulfil distinct communicative functions and rhetorical demands (Lu et al., 2021), which has led academic writing research to examine how rhetorical and linguistic characteristics combine to realise communicative purposes (Bruce, 2019). Such research has also considered cultural variation in these features across article sections, together with the distribution and rhetorical role of markers within sections of the research article (Nawawi & Ting, 2025).

Among these sections, the literature review plays a particularly important role in delineating the research territory and situating a study within existing scholarship. The rhetorical organisation of literature reviews and the metadiscursive resources used within them vary across cultural and linguistic settings. English and Vietnamese academic writers, for example, may differ in the ways they organise prior research, engage with earlier studies, and interact with readers.

At the same time, the presence of Vietnamese publications in international journals remains limited (Hong & Pham, 2024), and Vietnamese novice writers encounter difficulties in constructing effective arguments in the literature review section. A clearer understanding of how literature reviews are organised and supported by metadiscursive markers may therefore contribute to the development of English academic writing among Vietnamese scholars

seeking publication in international journals. Comparative analysis of English and Vietnamese academic writing may also reveal areas in which local authors require further development in their academic writing practices.

Against this background, the present study investigates rhetorical moves and strategies in the literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles and identifies the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers within individual moves. The comparison between the two corpora addresses how rhetorical organisation and authorial stance vary in English and Vietnamese literature reviews and considers how such variation reflects differences in academic writing traditions.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1. Literature review and rhetorical moves

The literature review is a central component of the research article and is widely recognised as one of the most demanding sections to write (Rabie & Boraie, 2021). Declining acceptance rates in peer-reviewed journals and the increasing pressure to publish further intensify the challenges writers face when constructing literature reviews. In addition to offering a summary of previous studies, the section demonstrates the researcher's ability to show a comprehensive understanding of the field, critically engage with existing knowledge relevant to the research problem (Bastola & Ho, 2023; Wongsu et al., 2024), synthesise prior findings into a coherent argument that identifies the research gap and justifies the need for the study (Rabie & Boraie, 2021; Valizadeh & Sisiyan, 2021), and present the conceptual framework on which the analysis is based (Kwan, 2006).

A literature review combines the author's critical evaluation with reference to shared disciplinary norms and values (Kwan et al., 2012) to organise and present previous research systematically (Bastola & Ho, 2023). Structuring a literature review therefore requires the use of advanced cognitive skills (Gao et al., 2023), including the ability to collect, classify, summarise, analyse, relate, evaluate, and synthesise the literature (Rabie & Boraie, 2021).

Early genre-analytic descriptions of research articles located the functions of literature review within the Introduction and did not treat them as an independent section. Several rhetorical models therefore treat the review of previous research as part of the introductory structure (Fazilatfar & Naseri, 2016; Hong & Pham, 2024). In contemporary research articles, however, literature reviews appear as distinct sections positioned after the Introduction and before the Methods section, which permits their rhetorical organisation to be examined independently.

The Create a Research Space (CARS) model (Swales, 1990, 2004), associated with the English for Specific Purposes tradition of genre analysis, remains one of the most

influential frameworks for describing rhetorical move structure in research articles. The model proposes a three-move organisation consisting of establishing a territory, establishing a niche, and presenting the current work (Swales, 2004). Although originally developed for research article introductions, the model has informed subsequent analyses of literature review organisation. In applied linguistics, Kwan’s (2006) model is widely regarded as one of the most detailed descriptions of rhetorical structure in literature review sections, even though originally developed for doctoral theses.

A move is defined as a rhetorical unit that performs a specific communicative function in written or spoken discourse (Swales, 2004, p. 229). Move identification relies on the functional content of a text segment and does not

depend on specific lexical or syntactic patterns. A move may be realised in a single clause, a sentence, a sequence of sentences, a paragraph, or a longer textual segment. The ways in which a move is realised may vary; these realisations can be classified functionally as steps or strategies, which constitute subcomponents of a move (Tseng, 2018).

In move analysis, the analyst examines how sequences of moves contribute to the communicative purpose of a genre. In research articles, the literature review section serves to establish the research context, identify gaps in existing knowledge, and justify the relevance of the study (Kwan, 2006). Because Kwan’s (2006) model provides a detailed description of the rhetorical organisation of literature review sections, it was adopted as the analytical framework for the present study (Table 1).

Table 1

Rhetorical move structure of a Literature Review section introduced by Kwan (2006)

MOVE 1: ESTABLISHING THE TERRITORY	
Strategy A	Surveying non-research-related phenomena or knowledge claims
Strategy B	Claiming centrality
Strategy C	Surveying research-related phenomena
MOVE 2: CREATING A RESEARCH NICHE	
Strategy A	Counter-claiming
Strategy B	Gap-indicating
Strategy C	Making confirmatory claims about previous research
Strategy D	Asserting the relevance of the surveyed claims to the present study
Strategy E	Abstracting or synthesising knowledge claims to establish a theoretical position
MOVE 3: OCCUPYING THE RESEARCH NICHE (optional)	
Strategy A	Stating research aims, questions, or hypotheses
Strategy B	Presenting theoretical positions or frameworks
Strategy C	Outlining research design or procedures
Strategy D	Defining key terminology

2.2. Interactional metadiscourse markers in academic writing and writer–reader interaction

Metadiscourse reflects the view that academic writing constitutes a form of social interaction and is not limited to a purely objective presentation of knowledge (Hyland, 2005; Takač et al., 2026). It is generally defined as a set of linguistic resources through which writers organise discourse, facilitate readers’ processing of propositional content, and express their stance toward both the material and the audience (Hyland, 2005; Vranješ & Varga, 2025; Lin et al., 2026). Through these resources, writers also engage readers by indicating evaluative perspectives and anticipating potential responses to the text (Takač et al., 2026; Xiao & Li, 2026). Metadiscourse therefore contrib-

utes to the organisation of arguments, the communication of authorial stance, and the management of writer–reader interaction in academic discourse (Jiang & Hyland, 2025; Chen & Lin, 2026; Appel & McKay, 2025). Research indicates that metadiscourse utilisation differs based on the rhetorical objectives of various genres, specific target audiences, and the way interactions are established and limited by genre characteristics (Hyland, 2005). Linguistic choices in the use of metadiscourse may vary across cultures and reflect differences in sociocultural background (Vranješ & Varga, 2025).

The interpersonal model proposed by Hyland (2005) is widely used in applied linguistics to describe the interpersonal organisation of academic discourse. The

model distinguishes between interactive and interactional resources. Interactive resources concern the organisation of discourse so that readers can follow the development of ideas and interpret propositional content coherently. Interactional resources, which constitute the focus of the present study, indicate how writers express their stance toward the content and engage readers in the unfolding

argument. These resources foreground the writer–reader relationship and reflect the writer’s presence in the text. According to Hyland (2005), interactional metadiscourse includes hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions. Table 2 summarises these interactional markers together with their functions and examples.

Table 2
Interactional metadiscourse markers (adapted from Hyland, 2005)

CATEGORY	FUNCTION
Hedges	Withhold the writer’s full commitment to a proposition
Boosters	Emphasise the force or certainty of a proposition
Attitude markers	Express the writer’s affective or evaluative stance toward a proposition
Engagement markers	Explicitly refer to engage the reader
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to the author(s)

This study adopts Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy of interactional metadiscourse markers to examine variation in their use in the literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles.

2.3. Previous research on rhetorical moves and metadiscourse

A growing body of research has addressed rhetorical functions and linguistic features in academic writing, particularly in research articles across disciplines. Previous studies have investigated rhetorical organisation in several sections of research articles, including the Abstract (Chaisiri et al., 2025; Li & Zhou, 2026; Nawawi & Ting, 2025; Zhang & Zhang, 2025), Introduction (Lu et al., 2021; Sawaki, 2023; Tikhonova & Kosycheva, 2025; Zhou et al., 2023), Methods (Lim, 2019), Discussion (Ash’ari et al., 2023), and Conclusion (Deng et al., 2025).

Within the IMRD framework (Swales, 1990), literature review functions are incorporated into the Introduction (Tseng, 2018), a convention that has restricted scholarly attention to literature review sections, particularly in research on rhetorical move structure (Lu et al., 2021; Rabie & Boraie, 2021) and metadiscursive features (Valizadeh & Sisiyan, 2021; Wongsa et al., 2024). Each section of a research article presents distinct rhetorical challenges for novice writers, which makes it important for scholars of academic writing to consider disciplinary variation in rhetorical and linguistic features across research article sections (Wongsa et al., 2024).

Although research on metadiscourse has primarily focused on academic writing, existing scholarship has also examined its use in spoken academic communication, including English-medium instruction lectures (Lasagabaster

& Bier, 2025) and presentation slides (Ma & Jiang, 2025). In addition, metadiscourse markers have been investigated in non-academic discourse, such as promotional videos (Liu & Cheng, 2025), talk shows (Mensah et al., 2025), company websites (Xu & Shi, 2025), and social media posts (Shi & Hou, 2025).

While some studies focus on specific disciplinary fields, a large proportion of research adopts a comparative perspective. Contrastive studies examine differences across genres, styles, languages, first-language backgrounds, levels of student proficiency, and time periods. One important line of research concerns diachronic analysis of metadiscourse, in which texts from the same journals are examined across different time periods to compare contemporary usage with earlier practices (Park & Lee, 2022; Xu, 2025). Such diachronic analysis contributes to understanding current writing practices and their development in relation to changes in sociocultural environments.

Recent research has examined cross-linguistic variation in rhetorical features and the use of metadiscourse in research articles written in different languages (Ahmed et al., 2023; Alghazo et al., 2021; Sawaki, 2023), as well as differences between ChatGPT-generated and human-written articles (Jiang & Hyland, 2025; Zhang & Zhang, 2025) and between different groups of writers, such as experts and students (Qiu et al., 2024). Hong and Pham (2024), for example, conduct a contrastive analysis of rhetorical structures in several sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. In their study, however, the literature review is not treated as a separate section but is incorporated into the Introduction. In addition, their analysis focuses on general moves and does not examine individual steps or strategies within each move.

Recent studies have also examined rhetorical structures together with linguistic resources, treating metadiscourse not only as a set of markers but also in relation to the communicative functions they perform. This perspective involves the identification of metadiscourse items according to their rhetorical functions in research article sections such as Abstracts (Chaisiri et al., 2025), Discussions (Ash'ari et al., 2023), and Conclusions (Deng et al., 2025), as well as in science podcasting (Liu & Jiang, 2024). These studies analyse rhetorical organisation together with linguistic expressions to determine how they operate in accomplishing specific communicative functions.

Thus, prior research has examined rhetorical move structures and the use of metadiscourse in research articles across sections, languages, and disciplines. However, the distribution of metadiscourse markers across moves and steps in literature review sections in different languages remains insufficiently studied. In addition, relatively few studies have investigated how writers' cultural backgrounds influence the use of interactional markers expressing stance and reader engagement. To date, no study has examined rhetorical structure together with interactional metadiscourse markers in literature review sections of English and Vietnamese research articles. As a result, there is limited evidence on how Vietnamese writers construct literature reviews in comparison with writers publishing in English, particularly with respect to discourse organisation, authorial stance, and reader engagement.

This study addresses these gaps and contributes to existing research in two ways. First, it presents a cross-cultural comparison of rhetorical move structures in literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. Second, the study adds to the small body of cross-cultural research on the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Vietnamese literature reviews and is grounded in Hyland's (2005) five-category framework of interactional metadiscourse (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers), which permits a comprehensive examination of interactional markers. To achieve this objective, the study addresses the following research questions:

1. What similarities and differences exist in the rhetorical move structure of literature review sections in English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles?
2. What variations occur in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research design

The study adopts a corpus-based genre-analytic approach to investigate literature review sections in a corpus of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. A

combination of qualitative coding and quantitative analysis is used to investigate similarities and differences in rhetorical moves and metadiscourse features across the two groups of texts. The analysis of rhetorical moves is based on Kwan's (2006) model, which provides a detailed account of the communicative functions of literature review sections in linguistics.

This model serves as the analytical framework for examining rhetorical organisation in the English and Vietnamese corpora. Metadiscourse features are analysed using Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model, which allows systematic identification and comparison of interactional markers across both sets of texts.

3.2. Corpus compilation

The corpus was compiled using purposive sampling. The dataset comprises two corpora consisting of literature review sections extracted from English and Vietnamese research articles in linguistics. The English corpus contains 59 research articles published in Q1 journals indexed in the SCImago Journal & Country Rank, including *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, *System*, *Language Sciences*, *Assessing Writing*, *English for Specific Purposes*, *Journal of Second Language Writing*, and *Linguistics and Education*. Articles were selected from international journals that represent established publication standards in English-language academic writing.

The Vietnamese corpus consists of 59 linguistics research articles written by Vietnamese authors and published in reputable Vietnamese journals in the field of linguistics, including *VNU Journal of Foreign Studies*, *Journal of Language and Life*, *Journal of Language*, *Vietnam Social Sciences*, *Journal of Lexicography and Encyclopedia*, and *VNU Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities*.

All articles were selected from a three-year publication period (2023–2025) to ensure temporal comparability. In both datasets, the literature review appeared as a separate section following the Introduction. Articles in which the literature review was integrated into the Introduction were excluded.

Word count served as an additional selection criterion to ensure comparable length across texts and reduce variation in metadiscourse frequency caused by differences in section size.

For each article in the two corpora, only the literature review section was included in the analysis. The selected sections ranged from 1,339 to 2,635 words, excluding tables and figures.

Each text was assigned an identification code. English literature reviews were labelled ELR.1–ELR.59, and Vietnamese literature reviews were correspondingly coded as VLR.1–VLR.59.

Descriptive statistics for the two corpora are presented in Table 3 below.

Table 3
Corpus characteristics

CORPUS	ENGLISH LR SECTIONS	VIETNAMESE LR SECTIONS
Number of texts	59	59
Publication year	2023-2025	2023-2025
Subject areas	Applied linguistics (n=25) Discourse analysis (n=18) Semantics (n=10) Pragmatics (n=6)	Applied linguistics (n=26) Discourse analysis (n=17) Semantics (n=9) Pragmatics (n=7)
Word count	116,879	99,776
Average words per LR	1,981	1,691
Length range (words)	1,566–2,635	1,339–2,458
SD	392	459

Note: LR – Literature Review

3.3. Data analysis

This study distinguishes four analytical categories: move, strategy, linguistic features, and metadiscourse markers. At the highest level, moves refer to functional discourse units that fulfil specific communicative purposes within a section of the research article (Swales, 1990, 2004). Each move may be realised through several strategies, which constitute rhetorical choices for achieving the move's communicative goal. These strategies are expressed through linguistic features, including lexical-grammatical forms and discourse organisation. Within these linguistic features, interactional markers function as micro-level resources indicating authorial stance and reader engagement. This hierarchical model supports the analysis of rhetorical organisation while maintaining clear distinctions between analytical categories.

Recent studies have developed computational methods for the automatic identification of rhetorical moves, lexical bundles and discourse structures in academic texts (Al Fajri & Oktavianti, 2024; Farhang-Ju et al., 2024; Grishechko & Tomalin, 2025; Grishechko, 2026; Khedri & Kritsis, 2018). However, since the interpretation of communicative functions in genre analysis requires contextual judgement for certain analytical tasks, the present study adopts manual coding. The rhetorical structure of the literature review sections in the two corpora was analysed using a top-down approach (Biber et al., 2007), in which the functional components of the genre are first defined, and the texts are subsequently analysed in relation to these components. Moves and strategies were categorised according to their rhetorical functions. A rhetorical function may be realised in a single clause or across several sentences, while a single sentence may express more than one communicative function.

Consequently, the basic unit used to identify and code moves and strategies in this study was the segment. Moves and strategies were therefore not constrained by the grammatical boundaries of sentences or paragraphs. A move or strategy may occur within a clause or extend across a sequence of sentences, consistent with established genre-analytic practice.

Initially, the author and a colleague independently analysed six literature review sections to identify potential moves and strategies and to conduct pilot coding based on Kwan's (2006) model (e.g., <M1>, <M1-S1A>). Coding discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus. Based on this pilot stage, coding guidelines were developed that included definitions and examples for each move and strategy. These guidelines were subsequently used to code the corpus and to compare the types, frequency, and sequencing of moves and strategies across the two language datasets.

To assess reliability, two coders independently annotated an additional set of six English and six Vietnamese literature review sections using the finalised coding scheme. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen's kappa, yielding a value of 0.8516, which indicates a high level of agreement between the two coders. Instances of disagreement were documented and resolved through discussion, which also led to minor refinements of the coding scheme prior to the full corpus analysis.

To examine the distribution of moves and strategies, descriptive statistics were applied. Raw frequencies were calculated for each corpus, and normalised frequencies were computed on a per-research-article basis by dividing the total number of move occurrences by the number of texts in each subcorpus. When reference is made to a particular move, this denotes the complete functional unit

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including all strategies associated with that move. For example, *Move 1* was treated analytically as a higher-level rhetorical category encompassing its three constituent strategies.

For the metadiscourse analysis, interactional markers were identified and coded at the level of lexical items and multi-word expressions (e.g., *it is evident that*, *it is noteworthy that*). To ensure that the retrieved items functioned as metadiscourse, each concordance line containing these items was manually examined. Both coders independently assessed each occurrence and excluded items that did not function as interactional markers. Inter-coder reliability was calculated using Cohen’s kappa ($\kappa > 0.84$), indicating substantial agreement between the coders. Remaining disagreements were resolved through discussion.

For example, the adverb *clearly* in *‘Clearly, this is a topic that numerous researchers have been engaged in ...’* (ELR21) was coded as a booster because it signals authorial certainty. Conversely, in *‘The mapping between these two domains is clearly illustrated in Table 1...’* (ELR52), *clearly* was not coded as an interactional marker because it functions as a descriptive evaluation of the reported information and does not express authorial stance.

The analysis of interactional metadiscourse markers was conducted using AntConc (version 4.3.1), a freeware concordance programme that generates word and phrase frequency lists and displays concordance lines showing the context in which items occur. The software was used to identify and count instances of interactional markers defined according to Hyland’s (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse is not limited to individual lexical items and may also be expressed through textual features such as clause or sentence structure, punctuation, and shared disciplinary knowledge. For this reason, frequency counts cannot fully account for all manifestations of metadiscourse in a corpus. They nevertheless allow systematic comparison of distribution across language datasets. Frequencies function as comparative indicators and do not constitute direct measures of metadiscourse use (Jiang & Hyland, 2025).

After confirming that the retrieved items performed metadiscourse functions, the results were normalised to 1,000 words to allow comparison across corpora of different sizes. Interactional markers were normalised in two ways: (i) frequency per 1,000 words, which controls for variation in text length, and (ii) frequency per move, calculated by dividing the total number of metadiscourse tokens occurring within each move by the total number of move units (i.e., all strategies constituting that move). The dual normalisation allows comparison across both corpora and rhetorical moves while controlling for differences in corpus size and rhetorical structure.

Log-likelihood tests were applied using Rayson’s (2016) calculator to examine differences in move strategies across the two corpora and to test the statistical significance of differences in the frequency and types of interactional markers between the English and Vietnamese datasets. In addition to frequency-based analysis, qualitative examination of selected excerpts was conducted to investigate rhetorical organisation and the ways in which metadiscourse functions to engage readers, express authorial stance, and organise the literature review sections in both corpora.

The analytical procedure for the literature review sections consisted of the following steps:

- (i) Identify and describe rhetorical moves and strategies.
- (ii) Compare the rhetorical move structure in English and Vietnamese articles.
- (iii) Identify and describe interactional metadiscourse markers.
- (iv) Compare interactional metadiscourse markers across English and Vietnamese articles.
- (v) Examine the frequency of interactional markers within specific moves in both corpora.

4. STUDY RESULTS

4.1. The distributions of moves and strategies

The first research question examines similarities and differences in the rhetorical move structure of literature review sections in English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. To address this question, the study analyses the frequencies and distributions of moves and their associated strategies in the two datasets. Moves and strategies were classified according to their rhetorical functions based on Kwan’s (2006) framework. The results are presented in Table 4.

The log-likelihood test results presented in Table 4 indicate a statistically significant difference in the use of the three moves in literature review sections between the English and Vietnamese corpora (log-likelihood = 7.16, $p = 0.0279$). Overall, literature reviews in both corpora follow the three-move structure proposed by Kwan (2006), although differences appear in the distribution of moves.

Table 4
Rhetorical move structure of a Literature Review

MOVE	ENGLISH		VIETNAMESE		LOG-LIKELIHOOD	P
	RAW	PER RA	RAW	PER RA		
M1_ Establishing the territory	174	2.95	161	2.73	7.16	0.0279
M2_ Creating a research niche	225	3.81	140	2.38		
M3_ Occupying the research niche	164	2.78	134	2.27		
Total	563	9.54	435	7.38		

English authors produce a higher total number of moves than Vietnamese authors, with cumulative frequencies of 563 and 435 respectively, corresponding to normalised frequencies of 9.54 and 7.38 moves per research article.

In English literature reviews, *Move 2* (Creating a research niche) is the most prominent move (3.81 strategies per research article), followed by *Move 1* (Establishing the territory) (approximately 2.95 strategies per research article). *Move 1* (Establishing the territory) is more prominent in Vietnamese literature reviews (an average of 2.73 strategies per research article), where it takes the form of

extended definitional and theoretical explanations. *Move 3* (Occupying the research niche) occurs least frequently in both corpora. The frequencies and distributions of strategies in the three moves are presented in Table 5.

The log-likelihood test results presented in Table 5 indicate a statistically significant difference in the distribution of strategies within *Move 2* across the two corpora under investigation (LL = 10.32, $p = 0.0354$). The most notable differences occur in *Strategy M2–S2A*, which involves explicitly contrasting previous research coverage with what remains unaddressed in the existing literature

Table 5
Distributions of strategies in English and Vietnamese RA literature review

STRATEGIES	ENGLISH		VIETNAMESE		LOG-LIKELIHOOD	P
	RAW	%	RAW	%		
M1-S1A	59	33.91	59	36.65	0.39	0.8228
M1-S1B	56	32.18	52	32.30		
M1-S1C	59	33.91	50	31.06		
M2-S2A	43	19.11	16	11.43	10.32	0.0354
M2-S2B	56	24.89	26	18.57		
M2-S2C	53	23.56	50	35.71		
M2-S2D	21	9.33	12	8.57		
M2-S2E	52	23.11	36	25.71		
M3-S3A	53	32.32	46	34.33	0.23	0.9726
M3-S3B	51	31.10	39	29.10		
M3-S3C	21	12.80	16	11.94		
M3-S3D	39	23.78	33	24.63		

or identifying specific limitations in earlier studies, such as weaknesses in theoretical frameworks or methodological constraints (see Examples 1–2).

A further statistically observable difference appears in *Strategy M2–S2B*, which explicitly indicates a gap in existing knowledge or literature. This strategy occurs comparatively more frequently in English literature reviews than in Vietnamese literature reviews (see Examples 3–4).

(1) *While these studies undoubtedly [booster] enhance the comprehension of ..., they are constrained by their data size and scope (ELR.6).*

(2) *It is worth noting [attitude marker] that this study did not report whether the data met the assumptions for a t-test and presented only the mean ..., leaving out key details required for inferential statistics (ELR.21).*

(3) *It is likely [hedge] that no empirical study has explored whether topic effects exist on... (ELR.15).*

(4) *Kết quả tổng quan các nghiên cứu trước cho thấy rõ ràng* [booster], nghiên cứu về hiện tượng đồng nghĩa của thuật ngữ hay biến thể thuật ngữ còn hạn chế cả về số lượng lẫn quy mô ... [The review of previous studies has clearly revealed that research on term variants remains limited in both number and scope...](VLR.11).

Table 5 also shows that no statistically significant differences occur in the distribution of strategies within *Move 1* (LL = 0.39, $p = 0.8228$) or *Move 3* (LL = 0.23, $p = 0.9726$) between the English and Vietnamese literature review corpora.

Despite the absence of statistically significant differences, English literature reviews contain a slightly higher overall number of strategy occurrences than Vietnamese literature reviews. An exception is *Strategy MI-SIA*, which introduces the research area by providing general background information not directly tied to specific research phenomena (see Example 5). This strategy occurs in 100% of literature reviews in both corpora.

Strategies *MI-SIB*, which refer to the importance or influence of the research topic (see Example 6), and *MI-SIC*, which review previous empirical or theoretical studies or signal continuation of the literature review (see Example 7), are also frequently employed in both datasets, occurring in 59 English research articles and 50 Vietnamese research articles.

(5) *Note that* [engagement marker] the concept of metacognition denotes humans' unique ability... (ELR.6).

(6) *The focus on readability is perhaps* [hedge] *unsurprising* [booster] *in view of the crucial role of...* (ELR.39).

(7) *Trên thực tế* [booster], nhiều công trình đã tiến hành nghiên cứu ẩn dụ ý niệm trên diễn ngôn báo chí... [In fact, several studies have focused on conceptual metaphors in journalistic discourse](VLR.26).

Strategies associated with *Move 3* occur least frequently in both corpora, although their frequency is higher in English literature reviews than in Vietnamese ones. This difference is reflected in the distribution of several strategies across the 59 articles in each corpus. *Strategy M3-S3B*, which explicitly declares the theoretical orientation or framework adopted in the study (see Example 8), occurs in 51 English articles compared with 39 Vietnamese articles. *Strategy M3-S3C*, which previews the research design, context, or procedures (see Example 9), appears in 21 English articles and 16 Vietnamese articles. *Strategy M3-S3D*, which defines or clarifies key terms (see Example 10), occurs in 39 English articles and 33 Vietnamese articles.

The relatively low frequency of *Move 3* strategies compared with *Moves 1* and *2* may be related to their placement in other sections of research articles. For instance, *Strategy M3-S3A*, which introduces research aims, focuses, or research questions (see Example 11), typically occurs in the Introduction section. Similarly, information

concerning research design (*M3-S3C*) is commonly presented in the Methodology section. As a result, this strategy remains the least frequent within *Move 3* in both corpora.

(8) *Trong nghiên cứu này, chúng tôi* [self-mention] *sử dụng cách phân loại của...* [In this study, we use the framework proposed by...](VLR.56).

(9) *Important* [attitude marker] *detailed information on the move analysis of distinct sections will be provided later in Section 4.2 of the qualitative analysis...* (ELR.16).

(10) *Syntactic complexity can be understood as* [hedge] *the variation, elaboration, and sophistication of syntactic structures in a text* (ELR.39).

(11) *Để đạt được mục tiêu trên, nghiên cứu của chúng tôi* [self-mention] *được thực hiện nhằm mục đích* [Hedge] *trả lời các câu hỏi sau...* [To achieve these objectives, our study seeks to address the following questions...](VLR.29).

4.2. The distribution of interactional markers

The second research question examines differences in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in the literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. The overall distribution of markers across the two corpora is presented in Table 6 that suggests a statistically significant overall difference in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers between the two corpora (LL = 244.11, $p < .0001$). Interactional markers occur more frequently in the English literature review corpus, with 6,079 tokens and a normalised frequency of 51.14 per 1,000 words, compared with 3,682 tokens and 36.90 per 1,000 words in the Vietnamese corpus.

Across categories, hedges constitute the most frequent interactional marker in English literature reviews, whereas boosters occur most frequently in Vietnamese literature reviews. The largest difference between the two corpora appears in the category of hedges (LL = 306.23, $p < .0001$). English literature reviews contain 18.57 hedges per 1,000 words, compared with 9.65 per 1,000 words in Vietnamese literature reviews. This distribution indicates a greater tendency toward cautious qualification of claims in the English corpus.

Although boosters are common in both corpora, they occur more frequently in the English corpus (14.79 vs. 12.60 per 1,000 words), and the difference is statistically significant (LL = 19.31, $p < .0001$). A significant difference also appears in engagement markers (LL = 50.55, $p < .0001$), with English literature reviews displaying a higher frequency (4.90 vs. 2.98 per 1,000 words).

A smaller but statistically significant difference is observed in attitude markers (LL = 5.71, $p = .0169$), which occur slightly more frequently in the English corpus. By contrast, self-mentions do not differ significantly between the two corpora (LL = 1.02, $p = .3126$).

Table 6
Distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Vietnamese research article literature reviews

CATEGORY	ENGLISH CORPUS			VIETNAMESE CORPUS			LOG-LIKELIHOOD	P
	RAW	%	PER 1000	RAW	%	PER 1000		
Hedges	2,207	36.31	18.57	963	26.15	9.65	306.23	< 0.0001*
Boosters	1,758	28.92	14.79	1,257	34.14	12.60	19.31	< 0.0001*
Attitude markers	1,133	18.64	9.53	855	23.22	8.57	5.71	0.0168*
Self-mentions	398	6.55	3.35	310	8.42	3.11	1.02	0.3126**
Engagement markers	583	9.59	4.90	297	8.07	2.98	50.55	< 0.0001*
Total	6,079	100	51.14	3,682	100	36.90	244.11	< 0.0001*

Note: * statistically significant ($p < 0.05$); ** not statistically significant ($p \geq 0.05$)

These results indicate systematic differences in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse across the two corpora, particularly in the use of hedging and reader engagement.

The distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers across rhetorical moves was also examined in the English and Vietnamese literature review corpora. The results are presented in Table 7.

Table 7
Distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers across rhetorical moves in English and Vietnamese corpora

MOVES	HEDGES		BOOSTERS		ATTITUDE MARKERS		SELF-MENTIONS		ENGAGEMENT MARKERS		TOTAL	AVG.*	
	RAW	%	RAW	%	RAW	%	RAW	%	RAW	%			
EN	Move 1	1,162	52.6	836	47.55	302	26.65	89	22.36	99	16.98	2,488	14.30
	Move 2	735	5	562	31.97	531	46.87	121	30.40	229	39.28	2,178	9.68
	Move 3	310	33.3	360	20.48	300	26.48	188	47.24	255	43.74	1,413	8.62
	Total	2,207	0	1,75	100	1,133	100	398	100	583	100	6,079	10.80
VN	Move 1	491	50.9	842	66.98	215	25.15	79	25.48	63	21.21	1,690	10.50
	Move 2	373	9	190	15.12	367	42.92	98	31.61	115	38.72	1,143	8.16
	Move 3	99	38.7	225	17.90	273	31.93	133	42.90	119	40.07	849	6.34
	Total	963	3	1,25	100	855	100	310	100	297	100	3,682	8.46

Note: * average markers per Move

As shown in Table 7, interactional metadiscourse markers occur across all three rhetorical moves in both corpora, although their distribution varies across moves. The total frequency of markers differs considerably between moves. In both English and Vietnamese literature reviews, *Move 1* contains the highest density of interactional markers, with an average of 14.30 markers per move in the English corpus and 10.50 in the Vietnamese corpus. The frequency of markers decreases in subsequent moves, reaching 8.62 markers per move in *Move 3* in the English corpus and 6.34 in the Vietnamese corpus.

A clearer pattern also emerges across marker categories. In both corpora, hedges and boosters occur most frequently in *Move 1*, accounting for 47.55–66.98% of

markers within that move. Attitude markers are most prominent in *Move 2*, representing 46.87% of markers in the English corpus and 42.92% in the Vietnamese corpus. By contrast, self-mentions and engagement markers occur most frequently in *Move 3*, accounting for 47.24% and 43.74% in the English corpus and 42.90% and 40.07% in the Vietnamese corpus, respectively. These markers show lower frequencies in *Move 1* in both corpora.

Table 7 also indicates differences in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers across moves in the two corpora.

Overall, English literature reviews contain a higher average number of interactional markers per move (10.80) than Vietnamese literature reviews (8.46).

In terms of marker categories, hedges represent the most frequent interactional marker in the English corpus, whereas boosters constitute the most frequent category in the Vietnamese corpus.

In *Move 1*, English literature reviews display a relatively balanced distribution of persuasive resources, with both hedges (52.65%) and boosters (47.55%) occurring frequently, together with a notable proportion of attitude markers (26.65%). In the Vietnamese corpus, however, boosters constitute the dominant interactional category (66.98%), whereas engagement markers occur least frequently (21.21%).

In *Move 2*, Vietnamese literature reviews contain a higher proportion of hedges (38.73%) and a lower proportion of boosters (15.12%), suggesting a stronger tendency to qualify or acknowledge previous research. In the English corpus, by contrast, engagement markers (39.28%) occur most frequently, followed by hedges (33.30%) and boosters (31.97%).

Move 3 shows a further difference in distribution. English literature reviews contain 8.62 interactional markers per move, whereas the Vietnamese corpus shows a lower density (6.34 per move). In addition, English literature reviews include slightly higher proportions of engagement markers (43.74%) and self-mentions (47.24%) than Vietnamese literature reviews (40.07% and 42.90%, respectively).

The data thus suggests a somewhat stronger tendency toward explicit author presence in the English corpus. Vietnamese writers more frequently rely on collective or impersonal formulations such as *nghiên cứu này xem xét* ('this study examines'), which reduces the visibility of the author in the text.

5. DISCUSSION

Drawing on the analytical frameworks proposed by Kwan (2006) and Hyland (2005), the present study examined the rhetorical move structure and the use of interactional metadiscourse in literature review sections written by English and Vietnamese authors. With regard to the first research question, the findings reveal both similarities and differences in the rhetorical organisation of English and Vietnamese literature reviews. Although the two corpora contain the same number of research articles, English literature reviews display a higher overall number of rhetorical strategies, suggesting a tendency in international publications to reinforce arguments through multiple recursive rhetorical patterns that strengthen persuasive force.

Several similarities between the two corpora in the present study appear to derive from the communicative function of the literature review section. Literature reviews are expected to demonstrate the author's knowledge of the research field and the relevance of the topic under

investigation. In applied linguistics, this frequently involves reference to theoretical frameworks, such as cognitive linguistics or systemic functional linguistics, together with discussion of their key constructs. This shared communicative function is reflected in the relatively high occurrence of strategies associated with *Move 1* in both corpora. In addition, both corpora contain elements that emphasise theoretical or pedagogical contribution, which appear in *Move 3*.

The absence of significant differences in *Move 1* and *Move 3* suggests that Vietnamese writers broadly follow internationally established conventions when establishing the research territory and presenting the relevance of the study. By contrast, the main rhetorical differences between the two corpora appear in *Move 2*, particularly in strategies associated with counterclaiming and gap-indicating.

When reviewing prior scholarship, authors must clarify what remains unresolved or problematic in the existing literature, including research gaps, controversies, methodological limitations, or underexplored areas. In applied linguistics, such gaps concern issues such as linguistic complexity or methodological constraints. This rhetorical requirement explains the relatively frequent occurrence of *Move 2*, particularly *Strategy M2–S2B*, which explicitly indicates gaps in existing knowledge.

At the same time, the analysis reveals significant differences in the use of *Strategies M2–S2A* and *M2–S2B* across the two corpora. These differences may partly reflect cultural variation in academic writing practices, since scholarly writing develops within specific cultural and institutional traditions (Bruce, 2019; Deng et al., 2025). English literature reviews foreground knowledge gaps, question established claims, and introduce counterarguments, which frames the research space as a site of explicit knowledge contestation. Similar tendencies have been noted in previous studies of research article discourse (Deng et al., 2024; Deng et al., 2025; Rabie & Boraie, 2021).

By contrast, Vietnamese literature reviews adopt a definition- and tradition-oriented orientation that emphasises consolidation of existing knowledge. Vietnamese authors devote considerable attention to definitions, theoretical frameworks, and historical background before cautiously identifying research gaps. When such gaps are introduced, they tend to be framed diplomatically as opportunities for further investigation and avoid explicit criticism of previous studies.

These tendencies may be influenced by local academic writing conventions that have been discussed in relation to cultural characteristics such as collectivism and uncertainty avoidance (Nguyen et al., 2025). At the same time, rhetorical practices may also be affected by the publication ecology of English-medium international journals. Editorial policies and reviewers' expectations encourage

authors to foreground novelty, articulate research gaps explicitly, and adopt a more assertive authorial stance that emphasises originality and contribution. Differences in journal prestige, editorial policies, and audience expectations may therefore shape rhetorical practices in addition to cultural conventions, as noted by Hyland (2015).

For this reason, the contrast observed between the two corpora should be interpreted primarily in relation to rhetorical preferences and institutional conditions. These differences are likely related to variation in academic training, disciplinary expectations, and local traditions of research writing across scholarly communities.

With regard to the second research question, the analysis reveals differences in the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Vietnamese literature reviews. These differences correspond to the communicative purposes associated with rhetorical moves and to the pragmatic meanings conveyed in those segments of the text. Overall, the higher frequency of interactional markers in English literature reviews suggests a somewhat stronger tendency to negotiate claims with readers and to signal authorial stance and engagement.

The results also show that hedges constitute the most frequent interactional markers in English literature reviews. This finding is consistent with previous research reporting that hedges represent the dominant interactional resource in English linguistics research articles (Abdollahzadeh, 2011; Chaisiri et al., 2025; Hu & Cao, 2015). The frequent use of hedges such as *relatively*, *somewhat*, *suggest that*, *appear to*, and *could indicate* reflects a tendency to qualify claims and present interpretations cautiously, as illustrated in Examples 3, 6, and 10.

By contrast, Vietnamese literature reviews contain a higher proportion of boosters. Authors rely on emphatic expressions such as *rõ ràng ràng* ('it is clear that'), *trên thực tế* ('as a matter of fact'), *chắc chắn, khẳng định* ('definitely'), *hoàn toàn* ('completely'), and *vô cùng* ('extremely'), as shown in Examples 4 and 7. Such expressions strengthen the authorial stance and reduce epistemic uncertainty, which explains the higher frequency of boosters observed in the quantitative analysis.

Self-mentions and engagement markers occur least frequently in both corpora. This finding is consistent with the generally formal and impersonal style of academic writing, although English literature reviews contain slightly higher frequencies of these markers than Vietnamese literature reviews.

In *Move 1*, which establishes the research territory, both groups employ interactional markers to emphasise the importance of the research area and to persuade readers of its relevance. Vietnamese authors tend to rely on more assertive and definitive language and occasionally use collective forms such as *chúng ta* ('we') to characterise the field, while employing fewer hedges. English literature

reviews, by contrast, show a more balanced distribution of hedges and boosters. This combination allows authors to emphasise the significance of the research area while maintaining caution in general claims.

Move 2 typically involves identifying a gap in prior research and therefore requires evaluative language to indicate limitations or unresolved issues in the existing literature. In this move, Vietnamese literature reviews tend to acknowledge previous studies by employing more hedges and fewer boosters, which suggests a cautious presentation of research gaps. English literature reviews, in contrast, maintain greater critical distance. Authors employ a combination of boosters, hedges, explicit stance markers, and engagement markers when presenting counterclaims or identifying gaps in previous work. This rhetorical practice contributes to a more direct evaluative tone in the discussion of prior research. More broadly, English literature reviews tend to emphasise novelty and authorial presence, whereas Vietnamese literature reviews refer to commonly recognised gaps presented in a respectful manner within the academic community.

The decreasing frequency of interactional markers in *Move 3* in both corpora suggests that, as authors move from reviewing prior research to describing their own study, the need for persuasive interpersonal marking becomes less prominent. At the same time, self-mentions and engagement markers occur most frequently in *Move 3* in both corpora. This distribution is expected, since *Move 3* introduces the author's own research and addresses readers' expectations regarding the study that follows. Nevertheless, the research niche is presented more explicitly in the English corpus than in the Vietnamese corpus. English literature reviews display slightly higher frequencies of self-mentions and engagement markers, which indicates more explicit author positioning. Vietnamese literature reviews, by contrast, rely on collective or impersonal formulations when referring to the study.

The findings of this study have several implications for research on academic discourse. First, the study contributes to cross-cultural research on rhetorical move structure and metadiscourse in the literature review sections of research articles. The comparison of English and Vietnamese literature reviews clarifies how rhetorical moves and interactional metadiscourse function in different academic writing traditions. Such comparisons may assist novice scholars in developing rhetorical strategies for establishing a research niche and participating in international academic communication.

The results reveal a clear contrast in the distribution of interactional markers across the two corpora. The prominence of hedges in English literature reviews and boosters in Vietnamese literature reviews suggests differences in the ways authors construct and present knowledge claims. In addition, the significant differences observed in *Move 2*,

particularly in strategies related to counterclaiming and gap-indicating, indicate that scholarly identity in international publication contexts is closely connected to the ability to critically evaluate previous research and position new studies within the existing literature. These rhetorical practices present difficulties for novice researchers.

From an applied perspective, the findings also clarify the rhetorical organisation of literature reviews in linguistics research articles. In particular, the analysis demonstrates the role of interactional metadiscourse in expressing authorial stance, engaging readers, and responding to disciplinary expectations. The study therefore offers a descriptive account of rhetorical practices that contribute to persuasive and coherent academic writing in international publication contexts.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examined rhetorical move structures and interactional metadiscourse markers in the literature review sections of English and Vietnamese linguistics research articles. The analysis shows that English literature reviews contain a higher density of rhetorical moves and strategies, particularly in the stage of niche construction, where authors emphasise gap-indication and counterclaiming. Vietnamese literature reviews devote more space to definitional exposition and consolidation of prior knowledge and introduce research gaps more cautiously. These differences correspond with contrasting conventions of knowledge negotiation and authorial positioning in the two academic writing traditions.

The analysis of interactional metadiscourse reveals systematic differences between the corpora. Hedges and boosters constitute the most frequent interactional markers in linguistics research articles, yet their distribution differs

across the two writing traditions. English literature reviews display a more explicit authorial presence, reflected in higher frequencies of hedges, boosters, and self-mentions. Vietnamese literature reviews reduce direct author visibility and favour formulations that attribute evaluation to the research area or to the literature under discussion. These tendencies reflect differences in rhetorical conventions: English academic writing foregrounds explicit author positioning and critical engagement with previous research, whereas Vietnamese academic discourse places greater emphasis on impersonality and restraint in authorial expression.

The findings demonstrate that rhetorical move structure and interactional metadiscourse jointly organise literature reviews and regulate how authors position their research in relation to prior scholarship and readers. The results establish systematic differences in rhetorical niche construction and authorial positioning across English and Vietnamese literature reviews and contribute to cross-cultural research on the organisation of academic discourse.

Several limitations should nevertheless be acknowledged. The corpus analysed in this study remains relatively small, and future research may expand the dataset to strengthen the reliability of the findings. The analysis is also limited to linguistics research articles, which restricts the generalisation of the results to other disciplines. Further studies in genre analysis may therefore examine literature review sections in fields such as sociology, business, or management.

In addition, the present research focuses exclusively on literature review sections. Future scholarly endeavour may analyse multiple sections of research articles to study rhetorical organisation and metadiscourse in their rhetorical structure.

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Appendix

Examples of interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Vietnamese literature reviews

CATEGORY	EXAMPLES IN ELRs AND VLRs
Hedges	có lẽ [perhaps], dường như [apparently / seemingly], có thể [may / might / possibly], có thể thấy rằng [it can be observed that], ở một mức độ nhất định [to a certain extent], một số / một vài [some], tương đối [relatively]
Boosters	thực tế là [in fact], trên thực tế [as a matter of fact], rõ ràng rằng [it is clear that], chắc chắn [certainly], khẳng định [definitely / assert], hiển nhiên [obviously], không nghi ngờ gì nữa [undoubtedly]
Attitude markers	ngạc nhiên thay [surprisingly], thú vị [interestingly], may mắn thay [fortunately], đáng chú ý [remarkably], điều đáng chú ý là [it is worth noting that], điều quan trọng cần lưu ý là [it is important to note that]
Engagement markers	lưu ý rằng [note that], cần lưu ý rằng [it should be noted that], hãy xem xét [consider], như chúng ta thấy [as we can see], hãy xem xét [let us examine]
Self-mentions	tôi [I], chúng tôi [we], của tôi [my], của chúng tôi [our], theo quan điểm của chúng tôi [from our perspective]

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Nguyen Thi Thuy Hanh

DSc in Linguistics, Senior Lecturer

Department of English Linguistics, Faculty of English

Thuongmai University, Hanoi, Vietnam

Postal address: 79 Ho Tung Mau, Hanoi, Vietnam

Email: nguyenthuyhanh79@tmu.edu.vn

ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-7039-9970>