

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter I present the main conclusions on the Framework for Undergraduate Thesis Conclusions (FUTC), voice analysis and gender distinction on voice expression in order to highlight the main findings, and conclude with my claims regarding my three main purposes. Thus, the first section will briefly review the FUTC including an example to show how it works and provide a comprehensive and more unified approach to data analysis of undergraduate thesis conclusions. The second section summarizes my main claims regarding voice expression and how it contributes to studies in the field. In the third section, I include an account on the implications from this research; these are suggestions for teaching to express *voice* in academic writing and to write conclusions that fulfill the requirement of the genre and the institution conventions. Finally, I close my chapter and research by suggesting a follow up and further studies. These are suggestions that consider how my research could be continued at a PhD level, and recommendations for areas discussed in the research yet not considered due to the focus of the study was specific and limited to studies on conclusions as genre and voice studies.

5.1 The Framework for Undergraduate Thesis Conclusions (FUTC)

My first aim was to propose a framework for the analysis of BA thesis conclusions and thus, have it as a basis to foster continuity in research in the area of genre studies. The FUTC is shown in Table 12 and reviewed, and an exemplified for a comprehensible application follows.

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- 1) Introductory move to the chapter
 - 2) Background information
 - 3) SOR (related to context)
 - 4) {Reference to previous research (support, compare and/or contrast)}
 - 5) {Exemplification/explanation}
 - 6) Implications
 - 7) Recommendations for further research
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Table 12: The Framework for Undergraduate Thesis Conclusions (FUTC)

As detailed in section 4.1, the framework starts with 1) an *introductory move* to the chapter that presents the reader the organization that the conclusions chapter follows; it is followed by the 2) *background information move* which summarizes the main research considerations, methodology used, research purpose(s), research questions and/or hypothesis in order to provide the reader a recount of the research context and prepare him/her a better understanding of the claims that are about to be made. Move 3) *SOR* is an obligatory move since it is where the writer does their main claims based on the research they did. I specified in parentheses *related to context* since the writer builds their conclusions on the theory reviewed but applied to the context of their research. Consequently, move 4) *reference to previous research (support, compare and/or contrast)*, and move 5) *exemplification/explanation* are elective to the writer and the nature of their research. That is, the writer chooses based on their research type whether they consider pertinent or not to refer to literature and include examples of the findings. These two moves do not follow an order in presentation; they can be

integrated in the *SOR* and *implications* moves. Move 6), *implications* of the research is an obligatory move in which the writer gives suggestions based on their research of what can be done in the area, and finally, in move 7, the writer includes an account on possible *follow up* of their research. This is an obligatory move.

In conclusion, the FUTC aims to serve as a template to analyze BA thesis conclusions. The advantage for using this FUTC is twofold. It first serves as a tool for researchers and any other potential individual interested in genre studies to analyze conclusions at a bachelor level in the humanity sciences. Researchers can use this framework as a basis to develop further studies, in a larger scale and in this way; they can consolidate the FUTC. However, researchers can also refer to my framework with other different objectives relating to the study of genre.

Secondly, since the FUTC includes a clear and detailed explanation of each of its components (section 4.1); it is helpful for teachers and students when writing a thesis conclusion. This scaffold provides students with a clear explanation of the main function of a thesis conclusion and the moves it includes. In this way, as Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006) suggest that if writers are aware of what they are writing, it is easier for them to carry out the task. Knowing the function and purpose of the genre, writers only need to adapt their own writing to socialize with the academic community in which this type of discourse takes place. Hence, the FUTC is helpful to achieve these goals. It is then useful for researchers, linguists, teachers, students as well as for people interested in genre studies and academic writing.

In order to show how the FUTC can be applied for the analysis of conclusions, I provide an example of analysis of the moves included in one of the conclusions of my four case studies. I am including just fragments of Billy's conclusion to exemplify the moves, yet the whole conclusion is shown in Appendix C. I also consider pertinent to include only the

example and the explanation of why it is part of such move, yet I will detain myself from a repeating a whole explanation of the move since it was just reviewed in previous lines, and detailed in section 4.1. Thus, the analysis is in order.

According to the FUTC, the conclusions chapter of a BA thesis should start with an introductory move. In Billy's conclusion, this 1) *introductory move* is:

In this section, final conclusions of the paper are presented. This chapter shows the research results obtained from the adapted instruments administered to some high school students and their parents. Moreover, implications, limitations of the study, and some suggestions for further research that can be practical for future research are also provided.

This move is present in the first paragraph of Billy's conclusions chapter. It presents the reader the organization and the contents of his chapter, and it does fulfill the communicative purpose of such move. The second move 2) *background information* is present in Billy's second paragraph:

The aim of this present study was to find and determine if migration of parents who have gone to a foreign country plays an important role in their children education to learn English.[...] For this reason, this process was carried out using survey research, [...] The core for the questionnaires examination was the answers given by high school students and their parents. It is worth mentioning that reliable data was obtained since the questions were made in Spanish. Those responses then were analyzed and displayed by using graphs and tables with their respective explanations.

As seen, Billy summarizes the main purpose highlighted in his research, the methodology he used and comments on participants and data collection and analysis. Therefore, it can be said that the communicative purpose of this move is achieved by Billy's conclusion. The SOR is also present in the following paragraphs of his conclusion.

[...] It was found that parents play an important role in their children education. That is, high school students are motivated by their parents to learn English. Their parents help them in several good manners, especially in a financial way. This suggests that parents worry about their children education, and in a general way, they worry about their children's future. For those parents who have gone to a foreign country, the results show that they are also concerned on their sons and daughters education, and motivate them to learn English. This also can imply that these parents have a good view about education and believe that this issue is a good way to help their children to have better expectations in life.

In this extract of the *SOR* move (move 3), it is seen how Billy presents his main claims. He first refers to a general statement in this case, relevance of parents, migrants or not, in children education (blue); then, he explains (green) and/or supports (black) that statement with results probably detail discussed in the results section, and he finally does his claims (red). Billy's conclusion has three main paragraphs. In which the SOR is concentrated, and he follows similar constructions to do his claims. It is also seen that Billy relates his conclusions to the context of his research when building his claims (blue, black, and green), and finally stating them (red) considering his research purpose. Regarding move 4 (reference to previous

research, orange), Billy includes some reference to previous research to support his choice in limiting his research to particular contexts:

This study was limited to three towns in the Mixteca Poblana (Tlancualpicán, Huehuetlán el Chico, and Chiautla de Tapia), where according to López (cited in Binford and D'Aubeterre, 2000) there is a high number of people who migrate to the USA.[...]

There is no exemplification (move 5) which according to the FUTC it is open to the writer. Move 6 (implications) has a whole section in Billy's conclusion which is actually called *implications*. In this section, it is observed how Billy gives suggestions to the teaching field since his research topic brings direct implications to this area.

[...] Taking into account this point, it would be good for English teachers in high school to improve their English classes, taking as a basis that students are interested in learning English and they are supported and motivated by their parents. On the other hand, students must participate more actively in English classes so that they can get more knowledge of this language. [...] In addition, teachers of English should be prepared for giving classes [...]

Finally, Billy also includes a section where he gives directions to continue research in the area, and with this he is fulfilling move 7 (recommendations for further research). An extract of this section is in order.

[...] For further researches in these issues there are some important suggestions. [...] A replica of this study is also suggested with a larger sample, in different school levels such as junior high school, in technical schools, or college. [...] a different context such as a city or even to focus the study in more than three towns could give different data. This study was based on a survey research, a different suggestion for a further research is to carry out this research using a descriptive research [...].

As noticed, Billy provides some ways to follow up his research, in some of them he advises and some others he suggests how to continue it. He then includes the last move I am proposing in the FUTC.

In sum, Billy's conclusion sample analysis presents how the FUTC can be used and hopefully the examples have illustrated and clarified how a BA thesis conclusion analysis can be carried out using the FUTC.

5.2 Voice Expression

My second main research purpose sought for the voice expression of my four participants in order to analyze how they socialize in the academic community and express and represent themselves in academic writing. This purpose was achieved by adapting the framework proposed by Ivanic and Camps (2001) and following some principles of voice analysis suggested by Ivanic (1998) which I discussed in section 3.3.2. In addition, I am considering the analysis of *self as author*, and *discoursal self* since these are the ones which permit the analysis of voice and they both allow me to achieve my purpose of writer's own voice and how they place themselves into the academic discourse. This voice analysis was

developed taken an extract from the *SOR* conclusions section of each participant's thesis. The process of selecting and analyzing data is detailed in section 3.3. Later in Chapter 4, I discussed in detail the theory and methodology in the light of my participants' data, so I could analyze their *authorial* and *discoursal* voices.

After developing the self as author voice analysis, I noticed that all the participants used similar linguistic realizations to express themselves into the three meta-functions of language: ideational, interpersonal and textual. The analyses of their writing show a high complexity in structures. This suggests that students elaborate their writing and such complexity was noticed by the high lexical density average of the 4 participants' extracts, the NP length and the clause structure (see Table 11 in section 4.3). Besides, most of the students use connectors, conjunctions and deictic expressions to link ideas. In some cases an overuse of these was noticed. Considering Kaplan's (1966) study, this complexity and overuse of connectors are common features of Romance languages, and these are noticeable when writing in a foreign language which is the case of my participants writing (EFL with Spanish as their mother tongue). Taking into account this view and relating it to studies on identity I can say that students reflect their identity in their writing, and this is then part of their authorial voice.

Another characteristic of my participants' voice as authors is pointed out in the way all of them placed the reader in the research field and used the declarative mood along their writing. This, as commented in section 2.6.1.1 is a feature of self as author voice expression, and it indicates the writer's wants to socialize with the academic community. Similarly, the strategies the writers used to express modality and evaluative devices are in mid level which possibly points out to a careful integration of their authorship into the whole academic discourse. In addition, the participants' extracts have different tenses and process types in the *SOR* section; this places them as knowers of the academic writing conventions at the grammar

level and therefore shows variety in their use. As seen, writers represent their *authorial voice* by making use of these features. Conversely, no single participant used ‘I’ to express their view, which according to Ivanic (1994, 1998) and Stapleton (2002), is a representative writing feature to the expression of *self as author*. It is worthy, however, to consider Bitchener and Basturkmen (2006), who claim that thesis writers are influenced by their supervisors.

In sum, my participants’ expression of *self as author* in the *ideational positioning* places the reader in the research context, follows a variety of tenses and verb processes among the extracts, and has no ‘I’ use for taking fully responsibility and expression of the self. Regarding the *interpersonal positioning*, it was noticed that all of the extracts use declarative mood to make the final claims, mid modality to give suggestions and mid level devices to evaluate the outcomes. Finally, in the *textual positioning*, the complexity of my participants’ writing was common in all the extracts and this probably suggests individual writing patterns reflecting their identity in the text.

Regarding the *discoursal self* voice analysis, I consider intertextuality and the way Fairclough (1992, cited in Ivanic, 1998) conceptualizes and classifies it into *manifest intertextuality* and *interdiscursivity*. Considering the same extracts as for the self as author, it was found that none of the participants developed *manifest intertextuality*. In my view, this is probably because of the difficulty to integrate the writers’ own voice, the authors’, the findings and main claims into the whole discourse and genre type, for which I point out some implications in the following section. This difficulty is also noticed in the *interdiscursivity* expression shown in the extracts. As summarized in Table 9, two of the participants fulfill the communicative purpose of a conclusion and only one contributes to the discourse in his ELT research context. The discoursal voice is indeed challenging to develop due to the aforementioned reasons. In sum, I would recommend teachers and writers to work more on the

development of the discorsal self and in this way integrate their voice as authors into the whole academic discourse community.

Finally, my last research purpose deals with a gender comparison on voice expression. After analyzing, comparing and contrasting each case I found that participants have indeed a voice as author, yet it is very hard and uncommon to evidence the discorsal self. These findings were present in my writers extracts, but there seems not to be apparent gender distinction among them. I was expecting though to find gender differences, but after doing my research I would actually suggest other identity features stronger than gender to evidence voice difference. I would say that voice expression depends on individual characteristics such as age, cultural background, area of study, and life experiences, among other features. Yet, I also want to emphasize that, as discussed all along my thesis, voice is an identity feature and therefore unique of every person.

5.3 Implications of the Study

Along my research I have been developing the claim of the need of having a framework for the analysis of thesis conclusions at the bachelor level. In the first chapter of my thesis I discussed the importance of having such framework and this was later supported in the theoretical review in chapter 2. Later, in Chapter 3, I reviewed the agendas for the study of conclusions, and as I pointed out, it is a genre mostly developed in research articles and MA and PhD dissertations; thus, in chapter 4, I constructed and justified the Framework for Undergraduate Thesis Conclusions (FUTC) specifically in the area of humanities. The FUTC was then just presented in previous section (5.1) as a response to my research purpose. This was indeed one of my main research purposes and it carries important implications in genre

analysis and ESP as an approach to writing research fields, and to the teaching and learning of these.

The FUTC will serve teachers to make students conscious of the functions of a conclusion. It will clarify the purpose of a conclusion and the functions of its different parts, making writers integrate and socialize with their writing into the academic community. It is now the turn of the teachers to expose students to such framework and the analysis of thesis conclusions previously done in order to criticize them and analyze if those fulfill or not the function of a conclusion. This activity will help students to be more critical of the components of a conclusion, evaluate the pertinence of having such structure, facilitate the writing of their BA thesis conclusion and make the writing practice of this genre as an acknowledgeable chapter to close students' main professional research project.

Analyzing conclusions also has some implications for the academic institution. With such analysis, the institution can evaluate how academic writing conventions regarding thesis as genre in the humanities field have been made and analyze if their communicative purposes correspond to those proposed in the larger community of conclusions as genre.

Along this research I have also placed identity as an important and essential aspect of writing that needs to be considered for the teaching and development of writing. My claim is supported by Ivanic's (1998, p.327) assertion "the writer's identity is an important and under-theorized dimension of the act of writing". The main findings regarding voice analyses were summarized in section 5.1, and it is now convenient to draw attention to the implications of this research at this regards.

A typical view of institutions of higher education on student academic writing problems is that of blaming student's literacy deficit (Ivanic, 1998). However, as I have been claiming along this research, writing is a social act that fulfills the particular purpose of the

community where it is developed and considers then the genre conventions as well as writer's voice. Thus, the improvement of writing (teaching and learning) requires the work of all the academic community. To achieve this, teachers and/or writing tutors can first provide students with tools for developing critical evaluation of the genre to write and the context they are in. In this way students will develop understanding on what to write and express easily their voice. That is, if teachers expose students with samples and analyses of the genre to write, students will be aware of how conventions work within that genre and it will be easy for them to write for real communicative purposes (Ivanic, 1998; Johns, 2008b). In other words, the text should be socially situated, with practical social-academic purposes such as writing a report, a summary, an abstract, a thesis, and other genres; teachers and students need to be aware of what they are writing, why and for whom they write. In this way they will have a feeling of belonging and empowering their writing, and thus develop their self as author voices and contribute to the academic community in which they develop their discursal voice.

Another important implication for tutors and/or teachers of writing is that they should view student's writing as the product of students' experience, the way the writer identifies or chooses to be identified as a member of the academic community, and how they place themselves in that community. I refer to the way the writer chooses his identity including naïve as well as experienced writers. Thus, teachers and/or tutors should develop an understanding of the individual process of writing, and if the writer needs help in developing awareness of the genre and writing process, teachers and tutors should guide students in understanding such process.

Regarding the implications for the academic institution, it is necessary to consider the conventions of the genre per se, and the institutions requirements and expectations. At this point I want to highlight what was noticed in chapter 4, in the thesis supervisor interview "we

as tutors influence in one way or another, the students' writing, we make them to include or not what we think should be or not included". Indeed, Ivanic (1998, p. 344) affirms "the values and practices which need to be demonstrated in academic writing differ from department to department, even from tutor to tutor". The implication of this is then to consider writing from an identity perspective and not merely as a literacy matter. Thus, the institution expectations should consider the individual identity in the process and products of the students' writing. However, to fulfill the requirements of the genres and the institutions, the academic community should integrate the development of intellectual critical abilities across the curriculum within the writers' values, beliefs and practices of the students. For these last points I suggest that students do their own introspection as writers and write their own autobiography as writers in which they include who they were as writers, how they have developed/grown as writers, and how they consider themselves now as writers. This task will help students to be aware of who they are and find themselves in the community. As seen, these are implications for the academic institution, for the teachers and/or writing tutors as well as for the students. I did my study at a bachelor level, yet these implications cover all levels of education whose concern is also in promoting writing as a social academic view.

Personally, I also consider other implications in the relationship of writing and identity for one self as a writer and literate person. In my own experience and development as a writer I have seen different stages that have contribute to the refinement of my writing. Diverse experiences, exposure to different genres, readings, personal relations the academic community, success and failures have made me identify myself into the academic community as somebody who can contribute to the area and now, with my research I feel the need to contribute with my findings and support that writing, as part of our being, defines ourselves in society (Ivanic, 1998). Identity on writing is then essential for a social view of writing.

5.4 Directions for Further Research

As was previously stated, this research is a first step which provides the basis of a larger project on genre analysis focusing on BA thesis conclusions and fosters the need to study voice as a writer's expression to socialize with the academic community as an implication in teaching and researching. However, further work is necessary that could be continued at a doctoral level. First of all, a wider analysis on BA thesis conclusions is needed to consolidate the FUTC that I propose. That is, it would be essential to use this framework and analyze the conclusions of theses in previous years in the university where my participants studied. This analysis will allow a comparison with the present research, and make further conclusions about the considerations in this context for writing a BA thesis conclusion. However, it will also serve to do a more quantitative study were the numbers of moves and their order are included or not, and thus, do generalizations about thesis conclusions considering if the genre has changed or not according to the social moments the institution has faced and the academic demands. This research could be also complemented by interviewing all the thesis directors. In this way, their views will be considered when guiding students in the process of writing the conclusions chapter.

Regarding further study on voice expression, a similar analysis performed with a larger sample of participants' writings will probably contribute with much more information to make generalizations about voice. For instance, a study on identity including its four ways to analyze it: *autobiographical self*, *discoursal self*, *self as author*, and *possibilities for self-hood* (Ivanic, 1997, cited in Matsuda, 2001) could be developed to analyze the four ways to approach the writer's identity. In addition, the analysis as self author could take place and analyze the strengths/weaknesses students have to express their voice in their writings and

propose with this, writing techniques and activities that allow students to develop strategies to develop voice. This research will also serve to do a deeper study only on authorial identity analysis, that is, the use of 'I' in the academic tasks that students do (Ivanic, 1994) and the functions it serves. This last study will allow exploring how students place themselves in the text, and take responsibility when contributing to the paper. Besides, a study on intertextuality will help to analyze how students socialize with the academic context, if so, and if does not, propose strategies to develop voice as discursal self. These analyses will allow a comparison with the present research, and make further conclusions about voice expression on writing.

An ethnographic and longitudinal study will also contribute significantly to the development of writer's voice. Tracing the development of voice in students' papers from basic to advanced level will be a relevant study which permits the analysis of how the growing and socializing process of individuals writing was done. This research can be done on one side, by collecting previous papers from the research participants and applying the same framework analysis; and secondly interviewing them regarding their own perception as writers and the development they have gone through. The study can be actually complemented by a study on the students' writing in the mother tongue, and see if their written voice expression is similar/different to the one in the foreign language, in this case English. This will contribute to the area of contrastive rhetoric, as mentioned by Kaplan (1966) different languages follow different written patterns.

Another interesting research related to this area could be worked in a study on a cultural reading-writing task in the mother tongue. As it was discussed, reading and writing play an important role for writing development of intertextuality to integrate author's and writer's into the discourse, but as it was also observed, students' writing showed a poor

development of the discorsal self. Thus, this would be a very much needed research that will probably permit a deeper analysis of why it is difficult for students to integrate their own voice into the written discourse in academic writing tasks.

The results obtained from these future studies, will provide the solidification of the FUTC to analyze and write BA thesis conclusions and, I hope, this serves not only in my research context of TESOL, but also in international contexts considering other languages and areas in humanities. Future studies will also contribute with a more comprehensible understanding of writer's identity regarding both *authorial* and *discursive* voice expression, as well as on the *autobiographical self* and *self-hood* as writer's identity components (see Ivanic's 1998 study). The tracing of the writer's identity can actually contribute to voice and writing studies. Institutions, researchers, social scientists, writing teachers and tutors, students and writers in general can analyze themselves and others' voice and development as writers. Although writing follows discursive and genre conventions, it is socially constructed and unique of every individual. As Ivanic claims (1998, p. 345) "writing goes tight to the heart of our being, defining our social selves".