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“IT IS SCANTY, THEREFORE, RARELY HAVE SCHOLARS PAID ATTENTION TO...”: KNOWLEDGE CLAIM IN ARTICLES’ INTRODUCTIONS IN SCIENTIFIC JOURNALS

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Abstract

Academic research relies on previous studies to define the nature of knowledge claim. Knowledge claim is a proposition or a set of propositions advanced by the author to be added to the existing body of agreed-upon-knowledge in the discipline. Following the CARS (Create A Research Space) model of John Swales (1990), the knowledge claim would be articulated in move 2—establishing a niche—often backed by a prior definition of a general context in move 1, with citations. Based on a corpus of 100 research article introductions from the *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, this article explores the linguistic strategies authors use to claim knowledge. Findings reveal that 78% of the texts explicitly have move 2, and different strategies are used to realize them. However, the fact that knowledge claim can only be construed from the wider context of the paper in 22% of the texts is yet an evolving trend in the application of the model; but one that is taxing for the would-be reader. The paper concludes among other things that for junior scientists who are still finding a niche for themselves in the disciplines, and positioning for post-docs, explicit knowledge claim, strengthened by a prior critical literature review may contribute to the success of a research article than otherwise.

Key words

Knowledge claim; research article introductions; linguistic strategies; Nordic journal of African Studies

1. Introduction

The research paper is the most popular genre in academia; and as a “model of science”, ‘writers must consider how their research fits with prior work and contribute to that work’ (Hyland 2009: 33). Knowledge claim is what authors identify in the research article as a justification for their own present contribution, and which has to be articulated in a style and manner expected of the community (cf. Kuhn 1970; Richard 1987; Hyland 2009). When authors show a relationship between their present research and previous endeavours, they create a link that shows research as cumulative rather than an isolated process (Feldman 1971;

Cooper 1988). This requirement has long been the *raison d'être* of the research article, captured in the following remarks by an ancient philosopher, Aristotle (*De Anima*, Book 1 Ch. 2): '[i]t is necessary, while formulating the problems of which in our advance we are to find the solutions, to call into council the views of those of our predecessors who have declared an opinion on the subject, in order that we may profit by whatever is sound in their suggestions and avoid their errors'.

In a series of studies Swales (1981, 1990) shows that this knowledge claim activity and/or argument for relevance takes place in the introduction section of the research paper. According to his CARS (create a research space) model, the research article introduction basically follows three moves (and a number of steps within the moves). *Move 1 establishes a territory*. (1): by claiming centrality (i.e. bringing out the importance of the subject) and/or; (2): by making general statements about the topic and/or; (3): by reviewing items of previous literature (i.e. an overview of current research on the subject). Citations are obligatory to justify "niche" in move 2 (cf. Hyland 2004: 13). *Move 2 establishes a niche* in one of the following four steps. (1A): by counter-claiming or opposing an existing assumption or; (1B): by revealing a research gap in existing literature/theory/methodology or; (1C): by formulating a research question or problem or; (1D): by continuing a tradition (citations may be required, but not obligatory). *Move 3 occupies the niche* by engaging in the following steps. (1A): by outlining the purpose of the work or; (1B): by announcing the present research or (2): by announcing the principal findings, or (3): by indicating the structure of the research article.

Knowledge claim is made in move 2 because it is here that a break with the past may be signaled or a clear focus for the present investigation articulated. As a key move of the CARS model, it has been the subject of numerous studies across disciplines in the humanities (Jogthong 2001; Arvay and Tanko 2004; Ozturk 2007; Hirano 2009; Adika 2014), social sciences (Dahl 2008), engineering and computer sciences (Shehzad 2008), and finance, management and marketing (Lindeberg 1994). Although these studies have all established that writers across disciplines claim knowledge in various ways, move 2 was not always explicitly present in all of their data. Among those in the humanities disciplines, the highest occurrence of explicit move 2 is reported in Adika (2014) at 68%, and the lowest is reported in Jogthong (2001) at 55%. The former study uses a corpus 59 research article introductions (in the humanities) and the latter uses 40 (in education and medical field). In computer sciences Shehzad's (2005) investigation finds that up to 96% of the research article introductions she used had explicit move 2.

This present study follows this line of investigation, but extends the database to 100 article introductions in the humanities and social sciences disciplines, published online in the *Nordic Journal of African Studies (NJAS)*.¹ The *NJAS* has been publishing academic papers across disciplines in the humanities and social sciences from and about Africa for 27 years. The multidisciplinary scope of the journal and the broad spectrum of themes it publishes, therefore, present an interesting case for the study of variation in academic writing. It is hoped that this investigation will add to our understanding of the extent of variation, and how that may provide reference information for junior scientists who are finding their niche in the disciplines. The pedagogic relevance of this investigation is not

negligible, either. As a linguists engaged in teaching academic writing to graduate students, I am aware of the uncertainties of junior scientists who intend to present projects for post-doc fellowships; but are often worried about the quality of their publications. They may as well find in this kind of investigation pointers to academic best practices in the writing of research introductions.

2. Disciplines, methodologies, and knowledge claim

While methodologies differ across disciplines, writing remains a fundamental component of knowledge claim in all academic publications (cf. MacDonald 1994)—knowledge claim being ‘an item in a research article [introduction] which the writer puts forward to be added to the sum of knowledge agreed upon by the community of that discipline’ (Hunston 1993: 133). Ochsner et al. (2012: 4–5) for example list two important characteristics of humanities research: (1) they focus on theory, source, and text, and (2) on the process of introducing new perspectives and reflections. In the first category we can cite the example of literary studies which are usually qualitative, interpretative and text-driven and sometimes more speculative, whereas linguistics is mostly data-driven. According to Hemlin (1993:12), humanities scholars tend to ‘lay emphasis on stringency criteria and theory aspect of a research effort as well as on creative research than scholars in hard science’. In the second category humanities scholars have been concerned with general ability to think critically and confront world problems from a holistic perspective, including the ability to systematically imagine the predicament of the “other” (Nussbaum 2010: 7). At the same time the humanities have always been marked by controversy and competing visions of how things should be (Fisher et al. 2000). Humanities research does not follow a linear process of development; instead, the focus is on extending knowledge and on the coexistence of competing knowledge (Lack 2008: 14). Guetzkow et al. (2004: 201) observe that ‘the most important category of originality in the humanities is an “original approach”, understood as originality at a greater level of generality: [...] the project’s meta-theoretical positioning, or else the broader direction of the analysis rather than the specifics of method or research design. [...] ‘Whereas discussions of theories and methods started from a problem or issue or concept that has already been constructed, discussions of new approaches pertained to the construction of problems’ (199). It is therefore the nature of the research process in the humanities, namely to develop new, different and critical perspective, that accounts for the characteristic rigour and impact often associated with the peer-review process, and which has made the research paper a reputed genre where ‘independent creativity is disciplined by accountability to shared experience’ (Richard 1987). Social science, too, is not different from the humanities in the manner in which knowledge claim is argued for in a research article (Dahl 2008; Bloor and Bloor 1993). The social scientists, like their counterparts in the humanities (e.g. linguists) gather data, test hypotheses, and construct theories about the world or the nature of things. They believe that it is possible to construct a narrative that reflects reality (cf. Schmaus et al. 1992; Fuller 1988, 1993).

Looking across disciplines, what the research paper introduction advances as a knowledge claim is often backed by a prior definition of a general context within which the research problem is anchored (move 1 of CARS model). Finding the relevant literature and the right metadiscourse to frame this general context contributes to the strength of the claim, and justifies the claim. The importance of move 2 has been emphasized in the literature, using language that is often more concrete, what Lakoff and Johnson (1980) refer to as metaphor. For example, Swales (2004) sees the research article essentially as a “product” in its finished form which is the outcome of a complex process (= ‘writing is like creating a market space to sell the product’). The research paper can be likened to promotional genres, which according to Bhatia (1993) aims to “sell” a product: a service or product in sales letters, or a person’s abilities in letters of application. An introduction of a research paper is a ‘crafted rhetorical artifact’ and a ‘manifestation of rhetorical maneuver’ (Swales 1990: 155) (= ‘to write an introduction the author has to create room or space for maneuver’). This maneuvering also involves building up a convincing ‘niche’ (Swales 1990: 142) (= ‘the author need not be contented with creating only a bare space, s/he has to ornament the space to attract customers’). All research creates a gap: ‘essentially the gap represents an unresolved question that the current contribution seeks to solve’ (Lindeberg 2004:89) (= ‘writing an introduction is like solving a mathematical equation’).

3. Materials and methods

Data for this study is derived from a corpus of 100 research article introductions in the humanities (linguistics, literature, culture, performing arts etc.) and social sciences (e.g. government, politics, anthropology, communication studies etc.) published in the *NJAS* between 1992–2017. Despite the diversity of subjects in the humanities and social sciences, I have chosen to group the data into linguistic and non-linguistic categories. The reason is that CARS model is more popular among linguists and perhaps literary scholars—a sister discipline. It may be interesting to see to what extent this awareness may also translate to greater appropriation of the model, compared to other disciplines.² In the non-linguistic category, literary studies are dominant, and authors tend to write longer introductions than their linguistic counterparts. For example, the average word length for an introduction in linguistic is 544 words, and 611 words in the non-linguistic category. Since the papers selected have been published over a span of 25 years (1992–2017), I had to make a number of decisions on which to select and which to leave out. First, I was guided by the principle of 100 introductions (50 in linguistics and 50 non-linguistics). Second, I quickly skim through the texts online to ensure that there was a clearly marked introduction section for it to be considered for inclusion into the database. Third, I eliminated those introductions that had aspects of theory and/or concepts embedded in them. Lastly, I tried to select papers from a wide range of countries and university institutions as much as possible. In all the articles come from 14 countries and approximately the same number of university and institutions of higher education. While 98% of them are written by scholars

working in African universities and other institutions of higher education, a few are resident in foreign universities, writing about Africa-related issues. The selected texts were copied online from PDF into a Word Version (WV), which was then manually scanned through to determine the strategies authors use to state knowledge claim. The WV was converted into text files and run on AntConc³ to determine the linguistic resources authors use to create a “niche”. In doing so, I adopted the taxonomy proposed by Swales & Feak (2004) and empirically tested in subsequent studies (e.g. Arvay and Tanko 2004; Ozturk 2007; Shehzad 2008; Hirano 2009; Adika 2014).

4. Findings and discussion

4.1 Realization of knowledge claim in the introduction section

As already mentioned, the occurrence of move 2 is an essential requirement in an introduction to the research article. This justifies the claim by Swales & Feak (2004) that it is obligatory. Studies investigating the realization of move 2 across disciplines have reported different rates of such realization (cf. Section 2). My own data shows a similar trend (Table 1). Move 2 is explicitly present in 78% of the 100 introductions analyzed. This ranks among some of the highest figures reported in previous studies (e.g. Shehzad 2005 reported 96% in computer sciences; Ozturk 2007 reported 80% in linguistics). An interesting point of detail, however, lies in the different strategies authors use to state their claim. While it is evident that linguists tend to use a wide range of strategies, non-linguists show a relatively high degree of preference for some forms of strategies (e.g. “simple gap statements” and “research questions/rationale”).

Table 1. Realization of move 2 in research article introduction

Type	Linguistics	Non-linguistics	Total
explicit realization			
Simple gap statement (GS)	14	19	33
Research questions/rationale	5	12	17
Extension	6	4	10
Reported	4	3	7
Multiple act	1	3	4
Contrastive	4	–	4
Lengthy/Numbered GS	3	–	3
implicit realization			
Implicit (deduction)	13	9	22
Total	50	50	100

Example of “simple gap statements” as in 1–4 below are prototypical, corresponding to Swales & Feak’s (2004) recommendation that they should be fairly short. These examples constitute 33% of the data.

- (1) Notwithstanding such interest, it is relatively under [sic] researched by social scientists. (Khan/*NJAS* vol. 26(2)/2017/p. 89/-linguistics)
- (2) However, traditional analysis of migration have [sic] often been male centred with women perceived as and treated as adjuncts to men, because they came as part of family migration (Hiralal/*NJAS* vol. 26(2)/2017/p. 158/-non-linguistics)
- (3) A consistent approach to achieving this goal has, however, remained problematic. (Ngwa/*NJAS* vol. 12(2)/2003/p. 220/-non-linguistics)
- (4) Yet relatively little attention is paid to indigenous language publishing, and in many developing countries, in Africa and elsewhere, most books are published in foreign languages (Oyori Ogechi & Bosire-Ogechi/*NJAS* vol. 11(2)/2002/p. 168/Non-linguistics)

Far below the use of “simple gap statements” to make claims is the use of “research questions/rationale” (17%). This strategy is mostly used in non-linguistic studies (examples 5–6), where the discussion is more speculative than those concerned with hard data such as linguistics. While the frequent occurrence of the former category (exp. 1–4 above) may be explained by the fact that it is often the most popular in the literature, using “research questions/rationale” is not less popular. It is probably a transfer from methodology classes on writing a BA/MA thesis in undergraduate and graduate courses in the university.

- (5) Can decentralization contribute to closing the gap between Sub-Saharan Africa and the rest of developing countries on the one hand, and between CFA and non-CFA zones on the other hand? Are there any specific dysfunctions responsible for the African and the CFA backwardness that decentralization may help redressing? This article is concerned with these questions. (Ngaruko/*NJAS* vol. 12(2)/2003/p. 136/-Non-linguistics).
- (6) How serious is the problem of writing now? Indeed, this is the focus of the present study. (Msanjila/*NJAS* vol. 14(1) /2005/p. 15/-Linguistics).

In the categories: “extension”, “reported” and “contrastive”, we find more elaborated ways of making claims, than the simple gap statements. In these instances, the writers require more time to formulate them, and the reader needs more time to process them. They represent a broader understanding of what may constitute knowledge claim in a research paper: one can continue a previous line of research (exp. 7), or challenged what has previously been reported (exp. 8), or even draw a sharp contrast between one’s study and a previous one (exp. 9).

Example 8 represents an interesting case of a well-managed argument within the introduction, backed by previous citations. It is a direct quote from Kezilahabi (1985: 426); but which fits in the overall cognitive orientation of the introduction⁴ (cf. Bruce 2008). The other two have no previous citations (see Section 4.3).

- (7) The current paper is a contribution to linguistic anthropology and to the study of Akan and African anthroponomy and the general theory of onomasiology by scholars like Obeng (2001), Asante (1995), Crane (1982), Chuks-orji (1972), Suzman (1994), among others” (Agyekum/*NJAS* vol. 15(2)/2006/P.208/-Non-Linguistics).
- (8) There is need to point out to the reader that the word of Nietzsche “God is dead” is understood here in a Heideggerian way, that the destining of two millennia of Western history in which supersensory world made real by the Christian interpretation of philosophy (the ideas, God, the moral law, the authority of reason, progress, the happiness of the greatest number, culture, civilization) suffer the loss of their constructive force and become void. (Kezilahabi 1985: 426). (Gaudioso /*NJAS* vol. 24(1)/2015/p. 64/-Non-linguistics)
- (9) Since the term morphologically complex verbs as presented in this paper subsumes a group of syntactically classified Yoruba verbs of Awobuluyi (1979: 53ff), I need to make a clear distinction between my own notion of Yoruba complex verbs and those of the Awobuluyi from the outset. (Ogunwale/*NJA S* vol. 14(3)/2005/p. 318/Linguistics)

The categories: “lengthy/numbered”, “multiple acts”, and “implicit (deduction)” represent the other side of the spectrum. In the lengthy category (exp. 10), the authors state a gap in three different statements, but which fundamentally mean the same thing. The “multiple act” category (exp. 11, emphases are mine) is an extension of the Lengthy in the sense that move 2 is realized in many communicative acts (cf. Lewin et al. 2001: 44). To properly understand this interpretation, it is important to note that the authors are arguing for the relevance of using corpus data to support autonomous learning of Kiswahili Swahili amba- relative forms, by Italian speakers.

- (10) [S1] “The South African Bantu languages are not yet fully standardized with regard to orthography, terminology and spelling rules and compared to European languages, these languages cannot boast a wealth of linguistic resources. [S2] A limited number of grammar books and dictionaries is available for these languages, while computational resources are even scarcer. [S3] In terms of natural language processing, the Bantu languages in general undoubtedly belong to the lesser-studied languages of the world. (Tajard & Sonja/*NJAS* vol. 15(4)/2006/p. 429/Linguistics)
- (11) Looking at the available Swahili grammars and dictionaries, a (second) language learner of Swahili finds **only limited information** as to the proper use

of the amba- relative in Standard Swahili (Ashton 1944: 113, 309–311; Polomé 1967: 137; Bertocini 1987: 95–96). **The little** grammatical information that is available on the use of amba- locatives **only covers their general morphological characteristics**, while some of the available dictionary information **only characterizes the amba-** locatives as ambapo for “where-specific”, ambako for “where-general” and ambamo for “where-inside” (TUKI 2001: 9). [...] Being in such a division, and perhaps based on lexical sub characterisation, each subclass is supposed to have a distinctive usage environment in the language (Contini-Morava 1997: 698; Maho 1999: 63–64). **However, the available grammatical and lexical information provides the language learner only** with some morphological and semantic basics of the three amba- locative relatives; **this information is not enough** to enable the learner to produce a text or participate actively in producing acceptable utterances with amba- relatives used in their distinctive proper environment. Consequently, **learners have difficulties in deciding which amba-** locative relative to choose when they are using Swahili in both casual and academic communication, but especially in writing essays on literary subjects. **Even for some speakers of the language it is difficult to distinguish** at first sight between the usage environments of the three relatives. **In fact, native speakers do not always make a clear-cut distinction between po, ko and mo** particles in their speech and in writing as was done by traditional grammars, though the mo particle, more or less, still maintains its original meaning (Mohammed 2001: 194). (Toscano/Sewangi/NJAS/ vol. 14(3)2005/p. 274–275/Linguistics)

It is not far-fetched to conclude that such use of multiple gap-making acts is largely driven by apprehension of the authors that a proposed new methodology to study a language may be rejected by stakeholders. Consequently, their prolonged augmentative discourse here may be seen as a way to convince the target audience of the paper that a certain course of action (a new methodology in this case) is necessary.

The last and distinct category “implicit (deduction)” constitutes 22% of the database. This is a category in which knowledge claim is not explicitly. Example 12 is a typical case.⁵ However, a close look at the key words and phrases in the text (my emphasis in bold) leads to the interpretation that the author is arguing for the need to preserve the Argobba language which is facing extinction. The other interpretation is the need to extricate Argobba from the apparent consensus by other scholars that Argobba is a dialect of Amharic (see underlined sentence). This interpretation is only reached when one reads the conclusion of the article. Samraj (2002: 16) has remarked that ‘while [the CARS model] presents difficulties for many in other disciplines, it opens up possibilities for flexibility, at least in minor aspects of the model such as the sequence of steps within the main moves’. But whether this style of writing research introductions is to be seen as variation to the CARS model or simply a matter of writer’s idiosyncrasy, is something that we need more data to ascertain. But this is not to conclude that the CARS framework itself has not been well-received among scholars who published in the NJAS.

- (12) INTRODUCTION: This paper aims at describing and analyzing definiteness in **Argobba**. The analysis is framed in Head-Driven Phrase Structure Grammar (HPSG). The paper limits itself to the morphosyntactic analysis of definite NPs. Their pragmatic or semantic property is not the area under discussion. **Argobba is one of the seriously endangered languages** in Ethiopia. The data for this study are from Shonke and Telha where there are fluent Argobba speakers. In some works, Bender (1976), Bender and Hailu (1978), Zelealem (1994), Leslau (1997), Argobba is considered a dialect of Amharic. **The data collected from Shonke and Telha prove that Argobba and Amharic are not dialects rather independent sister languages** (Wetter 2006, Getahun 2009). Some scholars in their surveys and case **studies on endangered languages** and language death in Africa refer to Argobba with different levels of **endangerment**. Batibo (2005: 147), for instance, identifies it as extinct or nearly extinct language together with other Ethiopian languages like, Ge'ez and Gafat among others. The language situation in Shonke and Telha however does not substantiate this proposition. It rather asserts that Argobba is an **endangered language**. (Agegnehu/NJAS vol. 23(4)/2014/p. 201/Linguistics).
- (13) 1. INTRODUCTION: Code-switching and code-mixing are well-known traits in the speech pattern of the average bilingual in any human society the world over. The implication of the prevalence of the phenomena in the Ikale speech community for the English language teacher there is what this article sets out to indicate. Nobody seems to have hitherto done this. The main body of the paper is divided into four sections [...]
(Ayeomoni/NJAS vol. 15(1)/2006/p. 90/Linguistics).

In many of the examples of this nature (12 above), a broader view of the internal and external context of the paper is needed to understand the contribution it intends to make. Some introductions in which no prior description of the larger context of the academic issue (cf. move 1, Section 1) was indicated to back up a knowledge claim was included in this “implicit (deduction)” category (exp. 13). The knowledge claim sentence (underlined) is only understood as we read the literature review in section 3 of the article, which is not part of the introduction.

4.2 Linguistic resources and strategies of knowledge claim

In previous investigations such as Shahzad (2008) and Swales & Feak (2004), linguistic resources for knowledge claim in the introduction section of the research paper are basically into three main groups: “contrastive statements”, “quantifiers/quasi-negatives”, and “negatives”. The *contrastives* can be realized by the following words and expressions: ‘however’, ‘while’, ‘but’, ‘few’, ‘although’, ‘nevertheless’, ‘as opposed to’, ‘rather than’, ‘with a few exceptions’ etc. *Quantifiers/quasi-negatives* are realized by ‘limited’, ‘little’, etc. and *Negatives* are realized by ‘none of’, ‘not been’, ‘no’ etc. Figure 1 presents the total frequency of these words and expressions as they occur in the database (No. of hits), and as they are used to

make a knowledge claim. What is gained by first indicating total frequency is to get a sense of the value that these words represent for writers, since they are also very productive in academic writing.

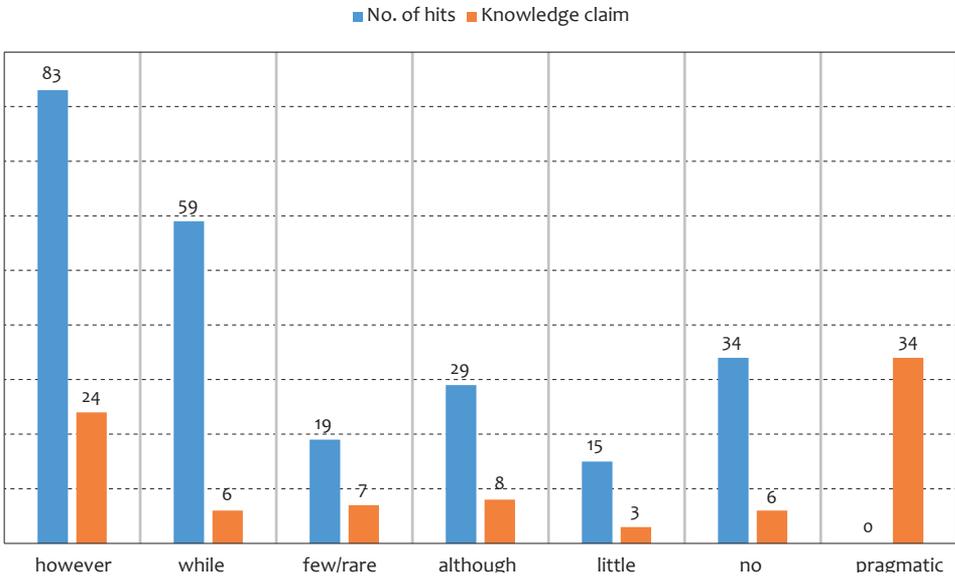


Figure 1. Linguistic resources for knowledge claim

My data reveals that up to 34% of the knowledge claim (move 2) were realized in other ways, which I have characterized as “pragmatic” for want of a better term (examples 14–16).

- (14) But what these studies present is just a tip of the iceberg of the different levels of perceptions and attitudes that prevail in a complex postcolonial multilingual context such as Cameroon, a country blessed with a multiplicity of languages with different statuses and functions. (Ngefacs/NJAS vol. 19(3)/2010/p. 150/Linguistics).

(Pragmatic interpretation = ‘very little has been done, I will do more’)

- (15) These particles include na, eihn, ya. Among them, two, namely, na and ein have been mentioned in passing in the literature on Cameroon English as typical features of this non-native variety of English and are generally characterized as tag questions

(Ouafefu/NJAS vol. 15(4)/2006/p. 536/Linguistics)

(Pragmatic interpretation = ‘I will explore the phenomenon in greater depth’).

- (16) In fact, “the military intervened only after the civilian institutions collapsed” (Laitin 1977: 7). So, why has Somalia’s brief liberal democracy ended in such a failure? Using social contract theory, this article explores why the post-colonial civilian regimes in Somalia not only failed to achieve the main social, political and economic goals of the new republic but also decayed the liberal state institutions. In this article, I will consider the first decade of Somalia’s post-colonial. (Ismail/NJAS vol. 25(1)/2016/p. 1/Non-linguistics)

(Pragmatic interpretation = ‘I want to explore reason for failure for corrective purposes’).

In quantitative terms, adversarial and argumentative discourse would seem to be used less often as revealed by the total frequency of contrastive words, such as *however*, *while* and *although*. But the few that are used to make knowledge claims are also used in many diverse ways, including in a combination in a single discourse move as underlined in examples 17–19.

- (17) [...] it is scanty [i.e. few], therefore, rarely have scholars paid attention to the syntax of the noun and its dependents (Rugemalira 2007: 135). This alone calls for the study of the NP in Nyakyusa. (Lusekelo/NJAS vol. 18(4)/2009/p. 306/Linguistics)
- (18) Unfortunately, however, no context-driven (i.e. pragmatic) attention has been paid to the study of language as a tool for character presentation, thematic hint, and ultimately, meaning recovery in Adichie’s works
(Osunbade/NJAS vol. 18(2)/2009/p. 138/Linguistics)
- (19) Although it is widely recognized that IPV is a gender-based violence, few studies investigate the link between socio-cultural definitions of gender and IPV in Nigeria. (Nelson, Ediom-Ubong/NJAS vol. 26(1)/2017/p. 16/Linguistics)

It is not clear why the frequency of these contrastive/adversarial words are relatively low in the texts written by advanced professional writers in this case. Similar studies by Shahzad (2005, 2008) and Swales and Feak (2004) indicate that *however*, *while*, and *although* are used most often to make claims. For example, Shahzad’s (2008: 35ff) figures put *however* at 62%, followed by *while* at 34%, and *although* at 23.91%. In fact, the quasi-negative form: *little* has 66.66%. Surprisingly, the overall frequency of these forms (cf. Fig. 1), excluding the form ‘no’, in linguistics texts is 93 compared to 116 in non-linguistics texts.

4.3 Deployment of knowledge claim in the introduction section

As we have already stated, the CARS model move 2—knowledge claim—occurs after a general context of the research paper is discussed, with citations required. However, the possibility that it can also occur in different places in longer

introductions emphasises its cyclicity (cf. Lindeberg 2004; Shehzad 2006; Nkemeleke 2016). My hypothesis is that the earlier the knowledge claim is made in the research article introduction, the likely the possibility that the general context of the paper would be less persuasive or even absent (as in exp. 13 above); because there would be less space left for such a contextual elaboration. Fig. 2 shows that 17% (13) of the introductions claim knowledge at the initial position, as illustrated by example (9) above. In line with the stated hypothesis, this leaves the question of context elaboration unresolved. On the other hand, if knowledge claim is stated in the medial- and end-positions, it is an indication that enough context has been elaborated. On the other hand, while most authors claim knowledge in the middle and end of the introductions, there are many instances of cyclicity (Posteguillo 1995), especially in longer introductions. In cyclicity ‘niche-establishment [...] may follow reviews of individual items so that cycles of move 1 and move 2 recur’ (Swales 1990: 158).

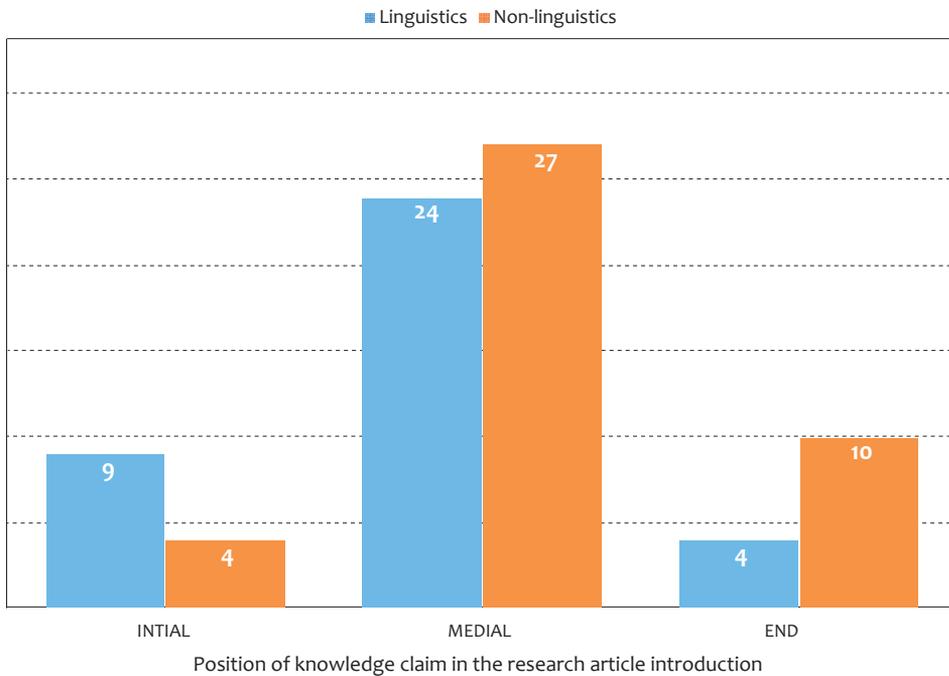


Figure 2. Deployment of knowledge claim in the introduction (light arrows indicate the contiguous nature of claims in longer texts)

An interesting feature in some of my data with respect to “cyclicity” is that some authors recycle not just the knowledge claim, but authors: i.e. one author or group of authors are used to illustrate similar ideas in the initial-, medial- and end-positions of the introduction. Example 9 (above) directly ends one of such long introductions.⁶ It is a typical case of an introduction in which a claim is made at the end of an introduction, after a long list of about 17 citations, among

which one (“Heise Ellsberg and Gottomoeller 1999”) is recycled 6 times. Figs. 3 and 4 below provide a broad view of the highest and lowest figures of citations in individual papers. Author recycling here may be construed as a coping strategy for scholars who live and work in institutions with paucity of relevant literature; but it also raises the question of meaningful academic attribution (cf. Jordan 1990; Hunston 1993; Pickard 1995; Hyland 1999). For example, as Figs. 3 and 4 show, 15% (15) of the introductions (9 linguistics and 6 non-linguistics) have more than 10 citations. Two cases have 29 citations⁷ and 31 citations.⁸ A close look at these papers shows that the distribution of citations is not necessarily a function of text progression (cf. Bertin et al. 2016; Bavelas 1978), not least carrying a marker of the authors’ stance to the source text (Hunston 1994; Myers 1990). The value of the knowledge obtained from previous citations in the social sciences and humanities (SSH) contributes to one’s on-going work only when it is craftily integrated ‘into a new intellectual statement, one that explicitly recognizes the contribution of other writers, but that, through consideration places it in a new framework of agreement and disagreement’.⁹

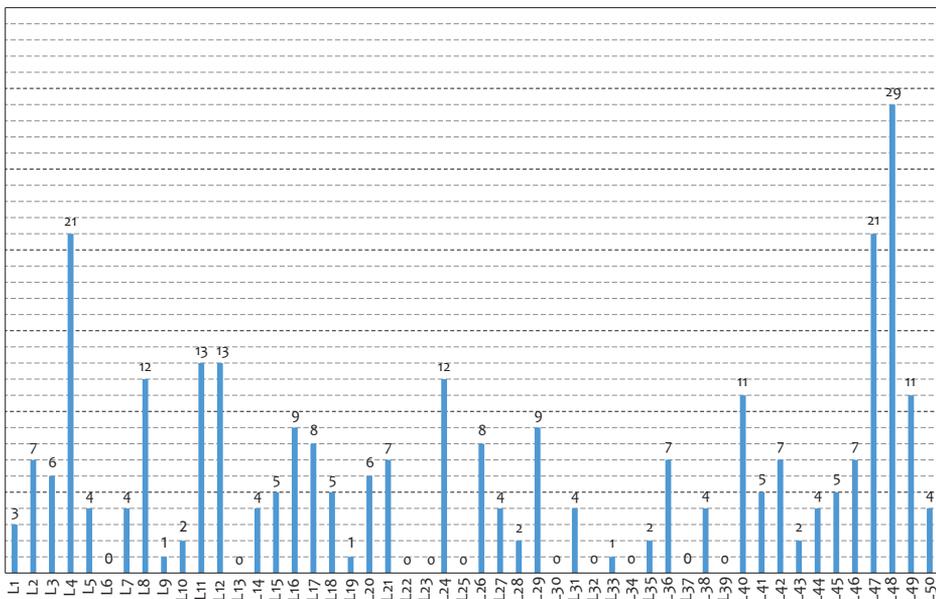


Figure 3. Citations in 50 research article introductions in linguistic papers

The other dimension of knowledge claim illustrated by Figs. 3 and 4 is the non-citation phenomenon. Can a research paper make a contribution without citations? An important difference between articles in the hard sciences and those in the SSH is that the former are more field-oriented than the latter. While few citations may often not constitute a major issue in the former, in the latter it may do a disservice to the research paper. Knowledge production/contribution in the SSH relies more on previous research.¹⁰ There are no citations in 21 % of the

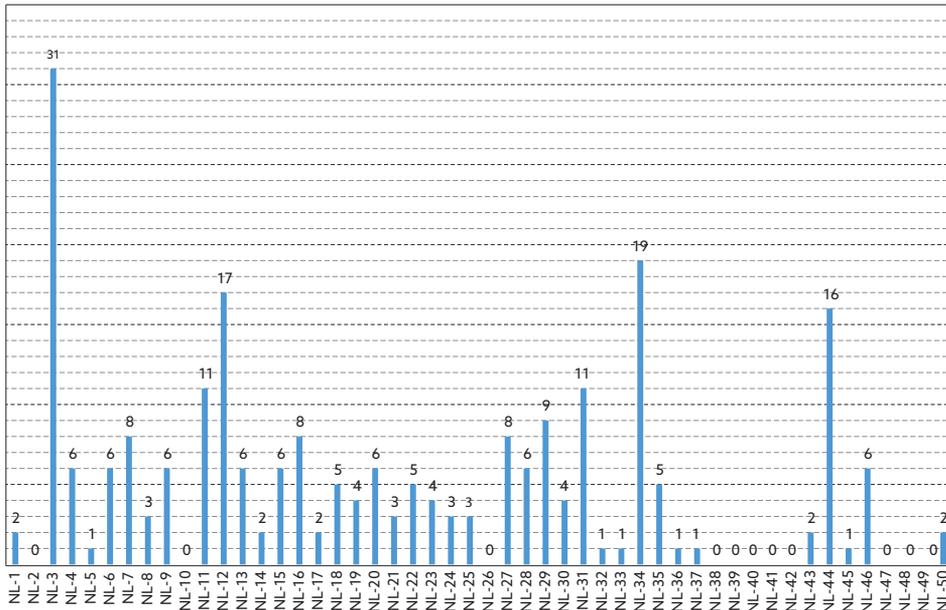


Figure 4. Citations in 50 research article introductions in non-linguistic papers

introductions examined. Although there are no hard and fast rules on the number of citations a paper should have, no style guide envisages the possibility of a paper with no-citation (cf. Alonso 2012). For one thing, citations have an essential rhetorical purpose, especially in the introduction and literature review sections, where they are most needed (Jacoby 1987; Swales 1990; Borg 2000). In fact, Jacoby analyzes how citations in the introduction section contribute to the ‘rhetorical “tilt” of a research article as a whole’ (34). My findings here reflect those by Adika (2014), who works on 59 articles’ introductions by Ghanaian scholars using an exclusively Ghanaian database. Although his data reveals that scholars make claims on scant literature, he is too cautious to make any value judgement, arguing partly that knowledge creation is also author-dependent notwithstanding community requirements (72). I would argue forcefully that author-perception of what constitutes knowledge claim has to derive from community conventions. While scant literature may only be frowned at because it does not make a knowledge claim forceful enough, to write an introduction with no citation provides limited possibility to assess the strength of the paper.

5. Concluding remarks and outlook

The analysis suggests that the CARS model appears to be relevant for structuring research article introductions, particularly move 2 - knowledge claim - which signals the relevance of the present study. However, the analysis also reveals that knowledge claim may be realized in different ways across disciplines, and there

is a tendency for some authors to pile up literature rather than selecting what is necessary. While disciplinary differences and authors' perception of what constitutes knowledge claim may not be strong enough to validate a research article introduction without citation, the decision ultimately lies with journal gate-keepers. There were no major differences between linguistic and non-linguistic research article's introductions in the data, except that non-linguistic introductions were longer and more cyclical. These findings provide an opportunity for reflection by junior scientists, who are still finding a niche for themselves in the disciplines. From personal experience, funding bodies for post-doc research often place a high premium on strong empirical papers which makes an explicit knowledge claim. Critical literature review is key to proof this. For as Myers (1990: 49) puts it, 'the meek shall not inherit the grants'.

Notes

- ¹ www.njas.helsinki.fi/
- ² This type of comparison is not unusual. For example, Dahl (2008) and Lindeberg (1994) compare knowledge claims in economics and linguistics; finance, management and marketing.
- ³ <https://www.laurenceanthony.net/software/antconc/>
- ⁴ Cognitive orientation relates to an internal organization of a segment of writing that realizes a single, more general rhetorical purpose such as to present an argument (Bruce 2008: 39).
- ⁵ This text is the whole introduction itself, one of the shortest in the database.
- ⁶ "Intimate Partner Violence against Women and the Social Construction of Masculinity in Oron, South-Coastal Nigeria". (*Nordic Journal of African Studies* 26(1): 14–33 (2017)
- ⁷ "Hybridized Lexical Innovations in Ghanaian English". *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 23(3): 180–200 (2014)
- ⁸ "Women and Migration-Challenges and Constraints – A South African Perspective". *Nordic Journal of African Studies* 26(2): 158–175 (2017)
- ⁹ Borg (2000) writes that these requirements were outlined in the University of Leeds Master's of Education Handbook [MEd. Handbook] (1997).
- ¹⁰ For more discussion on the role of citations in the SSH, see Kevin et al. (2018); Abramo et.al. (2012)

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