

Move 2: Establishing a Niche

In many ways, Move 2 is the key move in Introductions to longer research papers. (However, this move may not be needed in shorter communications.) It is the hinge that connects Move 1 (what has been done) to Move 3 (what the present research is about). Move 2 thus establishes the motivation for the study. By the end of Move 2, the reader should have a good idea of what is coming in Move 3.

Most Move 2s establish a niche by indicating a gap—by showing that the research story so far is not yet complete. Move 2s then function as a *mini-critique* (see Unit Six). Usually Move 2s are quite short, often consisting of no more than a sentence or two. Let us examine the Move 2s in the first three Introductions we have seen so far.

Thomas Eakins

Apart from a chapter in Foster (1997), this series *has been little discussed by critics or art historians*. For example, these pictures *were ignored by Johns* in her

Durability Monitoring (bridges)

The widespread deterioration and recent collapses of highway bridges . . . *have highlighted the importance of developing effective bridge inspection and maintenance strategies*.

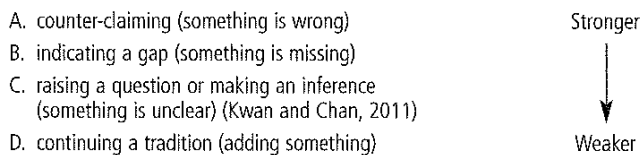
University-Community Agency Collaboration

Little is, however, known about participants' views of university-community collaborations.

As you can see, the first and third are straightforward gap indications. The second is rather more subtle. It implies, but does not directly state, that current bridge inspection strategies need to be improved.

A fuller range of options for Move 2 is presented in Figure 17.

FIGURE 17. Options for Establishing a Niche



TASK TWELVE

Here are eight Move 2 statements regarding the self-citation research. Would you characterize them as A, B, C, or D from Figure 17? There are two of each.

- ___ 1. These findings suggest that the number of co-authors might affect the self-citation rate.
- ___ 2. However, in all three cases, the methodologies used for analyzing self-citations are flawed.
- ___ 3. One discipline that has been neglected in self-citation studies is history.
- ___ 4. Studies so far lead to a question that has as yet no clear answer: Do self-citations pay?
- ___ 5. It would therefore be interesting to have further information about the citation practices of Norwegian scientists.
- ___ 6. That said, little is known about how many times individual authors cite their earlier publications.
- ___ 7. Recent arguments (e.g., Fowler and Aksnes, 2007) for excluding self-citations from performance assessments rest on a number of false assumptions.
- ___ 8. There is obviously value in extending these studies to cover more disciplines.

Of the four Move 2 options, gap-indications are very common in many fields. Option D, however, is typically chosen by research groups in sciences and Engineering as they offer refinements and extensions of their previous work. This is a case of the common “adding another brick to the wall of knowledge” metaphor. At the other pole, regular employment of *counter-claiming* is only likely in contested areas such as Philosophy and Law. Since Option B is widely used, we now explore it a little further.

Language Focus: Negative Openings in Move 2

Probably the most common way to indicate a gap is to use a “quasi-negative” subject. Presumably, such subjects are chosen because they signal immediately to the reader that Move 1 has come to an end. Note the uses of *little* and *few*.

Non-count However, little information . . .
 Little attention . . .
 Little work . . .
 Little data . . .
 Little research . . .

Count However, few studies . . .
 Few investigations . . .
 Few researchers . . .
 Few attempts . . .

Note the differences in the following pairs.

There is little research. (negative, i.e., not enough)
 There is a little research. (neutral, i.e., maybe enough)
 The department has few computers. (negative, i.e., not enough)
 The department has a few computers. (neutral, i.e., maybe enough)

Note also the use of *no/none of*.

No studies/data/calculations to date have
 None of these studies/findings/calculations have

Use *no* when your conclusion is based on (but does not directly refer to) the cited literature. If you want to refer directly to the previous research, use *none of*.

However, you may want to avoid using a full negative like *no studies*; chances are that somebody will find an exception to your strong statement. Alternatively, you could add *To the best of our knowledge, . . .*

TASK THIRTEEN

Here are some “negative” verbs and adjectives that tend to cluster in Move 2. Work with a partner and decide how “negative” they are. Mark them as seeming definitely or strongly negative (- -) or only slightly negative (-).

Verbs

However, previous research on deforestation has _____

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|
| ___ a. concentrated on | ___ g. neglected to consider |
| ___ b. disregarded | ___ h. overestimated |
| ___ c. failed to consider | ___ i. overlooked |
| ___ d. ignored | ___ j. been restricted to |
| ___ e. been limited to | ___ k. suffered from |
| ___ f. misinterpreted | ___ l. underestimated |

Adjectives

Nevertheless, these attempts to establish a link between dental fillings and disease are at present _____.

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| ___ a. controversial | ___ e. questionable |
| ___ b. incomplete | ___ f. unconvincing |
| ___ c. inconclusive | ___ g. unsatisfactory |
| ___ d. misguided | ___ h. ambivalent |