Counter-claiming and indicating gaps in English RAIs in the Indonesian context

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	Genre of research article introductions (RAIs) have received increasing numbers of scholarly research worldwide, including in the Indonesian context, and establishing a niche has been previously addressed in the literature. However, studies to justify current research in Indonesian contexts are still limited, particularly those published in accredited Sinta journals, while understanding how to establish a niche is pivotal to provide understanding and awareness to students and novice authors. This study aims to address this need by analyzing counter-claiming and indicating a gap to establish a niche in 100 English RAIs written by Indonesian authors in the discipline of language education published in Sinta 2-accredited journals, and how authors linguistically realize these two communicative steps. It used genre-based analysis, more specifically, the Move 2 Establishing a niche of create research space (CARS) model as an analytical framework. The results revealed that an evolving genre has occurred in this study. Indonesian authors employed counter-claiming and indicated a gap for establishing a niche. However, while counter-claiming is optional, indicating a gap is conventional in this study. To realize these two steps, the authors employed linguistic strategies to justify their current research areas. These results imply that genre in English RAIs in the present study may become future examples and as a starting point for evolving genre. The reason behind these findings are discussed further in the discussion section.

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INTRODUCTION

Genre in research articles (RAs) is mostly to discover how successful authors write their academic works using language, and studies on this area have been receiving growing concerns in linguistic studies. For example, genre studies have been carried out to investigate rhetoric in promoting research in English research article introductions (RAIs) (Abdi & Sadeghi, 2018; Deng et al., 2024; Warsidi, 2023), for establishing a niche (Amnuai, 2021; Lim, 2012), for responding to literature (Warsidi, Halim, et al., 2025), and more specifically indicating a gap (Arianto & Basthomi, 2021; Arsyad & Zainil, 2023). These studies suggest that providing an understanding of the genre of RAs in the introduction section is pivotal in linguistics studies.

Some genre studies revealed that international authors who published in reputable journals have different rhetorical structures from those of Thai authors, (Amnuai, 2021; Wannaruk & Amnuai, 2016), Chinese authors (Loi, 2010; Loi & Evans, 2010; Xu & Nesi, 2019a, 2019b), Arabic local journals (Alharbi, 2021), Indonesian local journals (Warsidi et al., 2024; Warsidi, Adnan, et al., 2025), etc. Besides, disciplinary RAIs may also influence the ways authors set rhetorical conventions, such as syntactic variations in realizing communicative moves (Lu et al., 2021).

One of the important functional moves in the RAIs is establishing a territory. It is a description to targeted readers that the current research topics are significant. More than 88% RAIs employed it, and to do so, more than 65% authors used citations to convince readers (Suryani et al., 2017). In relation to establishing a territory, other findings also suggested the most favorable in the thesis introduction (Zainuddin & Shaari, 2021). These two reviews indicate that establishing a research territory is important to attract audiences' attention and to promote our current research (Abdi & Sadeghi, 2018; Wang & Yang, 2015; Warsidi, 2023).

Another important functional move in RAIs is establishing a niche. Some studies revealed that to establish a niche, authors prefer to indicate a gap (Amnuai, 2021; Lim, 2012). Then, indicating a research gap, received more analyses from various linguistic scholars (Arianto & Basthomi, 2021; Arianto et al., 2021; Arsyad & Zainil, 2023; Müller-Bloch & Kranz, 2015; Robinson et al., 2011; Suryani et al., 2015). One of the results showed five strategies, and of the five, stating insufficient related studies becomes the most dominant strategy in indicating a gap (Arianto & Basthomi, 2021), and international authors do it more than Indonesian academics and Indonesian students (Arianto et al., 2021). In this regard, indicating inadequate research becomes the most favorable in applied linguistics RAIs (Arsyad & Zainil, 2023).

However, non-native English authors underutilize this step (Suryani et al., 2015), and Indonesian authors sound similar to non-native English

authors in justifying their current research. These reviews imply that Indonesian authors in these studies may face difficulties when intending to publish in English reputable journals. The reasons are that they justify their research focus by addressing practical problems, and thus, their current research is intended to solve these problems. Then, their research justification is still based on problematic issues in the fields, and their research seems to provide a solution to the problems, which means that their writing convention is still different from those implemented in the CARS model (Arsyad, 2013a, 2013b; Arsyad & Adila, 2018; Arsyad & Arono, 2016; Arsyad et al., 2020; Miasari et al., 2018). Furthermore, their research justification is based on conflicting ideal expectations and real world situation, interestingness, problematic practices, and implementation, which their research may contribute to the practical problems, provide solutions to the problems, and recommendations for government policies (Rochma et al., 2020; Warsidi, 2021; Warsidi et al., 2024; Warsidi, Adnan, et al., 2025; Warsidi et al., 2023).

In summary, while RAIs in various language backgrounds and disciplines have received a wide range of scholarly research, the results suggest that these two factors may influence the ways authors rhetorically justify their current research, justifying current research seems the most important to be developed because this communicative function may influence how authors set their research contribution in their research areas. However, although it has been previously addressed in some scholarly academic works in establishing a niche (Amnuai, 2021; Lim, 2012) and indicating a gap (Arianto & Basthomi, 2021; Arianto et al., 2021; Arsyad & Zainil, 2023; Suryani et al., 2015), research focusing on this important issue in the Indonesian context is still limited and indicates further attention to provide more comprehension and awareness to Indonesian and novice authors. To address this need, this study intends to investigate English RAIs written by Indonesian authors, focusing on discovering how they justify their current research. However, this study focuses on analyzing counter-claiming and indicating a gap to justify current research because these two communicative steps are common in English writing tradition. To reach this intention, this study formulates three research questions as follows:

1. Do Indonesian authors in the English education discipline counter earlier literature to justify their current research? If so, or not, to what extent?
2. Do they indicate a gap to justify their current research? If so, or not, to what extent?
3. How do they linguistically apply these two communicative steps in justifying their current research?

Addressing these questions may expand genre knowledge in RAIs, particularly in Indonesian contexts where genres may change in specific communities due to time constraints. Besides, it may create awareness among students, novice authors, and non-native English authors, particularly Indonesian authors, about ways to justify current research in English RAIs. Thus, the results can be employed for designing teaching materials for a class of writing for academic purposes and academic literacy programs.

METHOD
Research Design
This study used a genre-based approach for data analysis. Then, it employed a mixed-method, combining simple qualitative and quantitative methods for reporting data analysis results. In this regard, a quantitative approach was employed to discover the number of counter-claiming and indicate a gap in the data, which the findings were then reported in the form of figures and tables. Then, a qualitative approach was employed to analyze the data in depth, justify it, exemplify the findings, and interpret the results. Combining these two approaches in this study may make the results more convincing and logical than those from either approach alone.

Data Sets
This study analyzed 100 English-language empirical RAIs in the English Education discipline, published in five Indonesian journals accredited by the Science and Technology Index (SINTA 2) because journals accepting this accreditation status are considered good in Indonesia and can be proposed for a promotion to be an associate professor in Indonesia. These corpus numbers were selected from journals presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Selected journals in English education accredited SINTA 2

Selected Journals' name	Numbers of selected articles	Accreditation status
Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities	20	SINTA 2
JEES (Journal of English Educators Society)	20	SINTA 2
JEFL (Journal of English Foreign Language)	20	SINTA 2
JEELS (Journal of English Education and Linguistics Studies)	20	SINTA 2
IJELTAL (Indonesian Journal of English Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics)	20	SINTA 2
Total numbers	100	

To meet 100 corpus numbers, this study used several criteria: accredited in Sinta 2, empirical research articles, explicit introduction, written in English,

and written by Indonesian academics. Then, 20 research articles published in each of these five journals that met these standard criteria were selected as data sets. To ensure that the articles are empirical studies, they include a method section that is separately and explicitly presented. Then, the articles were published from 2017-2022 because these years of publication are still considered new. Then, all articles meeting these criteria were randomly selected to yield 20 numbers from each journal, and thus, the total corpus numbers became 100 empirical English RAIs.

Data Analysis
This study employed a genre approach and used a typology presented in the Create a Research Space (CARS) model (Swales, 1990) because this model not only shows and exemplifies the ways of countering literature and indicating a gap, but it was also developed based on English corpora in reputable journals. In employing this approach, top-down and bottom-up reading approaches were employed to discover communicative events and identify their functions. The top-down approach means that the analyst reads the introduction section from top to bottom to discover counter-claims and indicate a gap. Then, the bottom-up approach means that the analyst ensures the communicative events found in the introduction section aim to establish a niche.

Table 2. Examples of Counter-claiming and Indicating a gap

Steps to establish a niche in Swale's CARS Model (1990)	Examples
Counter-claiming	- "However, the previously mentioned methods suffer from some limitations... - Nevertheless, this study is too narrow in... - The first group ... cannot treat ... and is limited to"... (Swales, 1990, p. 154)
Indicating a gap	- Although many scholars have.......this research area is still limited. - Some studies have explored...., but little is known about...

In response to the first research question regarding counter-claiming, this study identified something wrong with the literature that makes current authors disagree with the literature. It can be identified by discovering signals indicating disagreement with the current authors. For example, "however, the previously mentioned methods suffer from some limitations ..." (Swales, 1990, p. 154). Then, the number of appearances is presented in a figure, with exploration, exemplification, and interpretation.

For answering the second research question about indicating a gap, this study also employed a typology as shown in the CARS model (Swales, 1990). In this regard, authors may indicate something missing in the literature, and the purpose of their current research is to develop the study. For example, "Although many scholars have …….this research area is still limited". The results were also reported as likely in answering the first question, presented in figure form, and included exploration, exemplification, and interpretation.

However, for answering the third question regarding linguistic realization, any linguistic signals indicating counter-claiming and a gap were noted, and their communicative contexts were examined to ensure that their functions are to counter literature and indicate a gap. Lastly, the results were grouped by function and purpose. These serial steps are designed to discover how authors linguistically apply these two communicative steps to justify their current research.

FINDINGS

The analysis results revealed that Indonesian authors rarely counter earlier literature to justify their current research. In contrast, the next finding is that they often indicate a gap to justify their current research. More details about the data analysis results are presented in Figure 1.
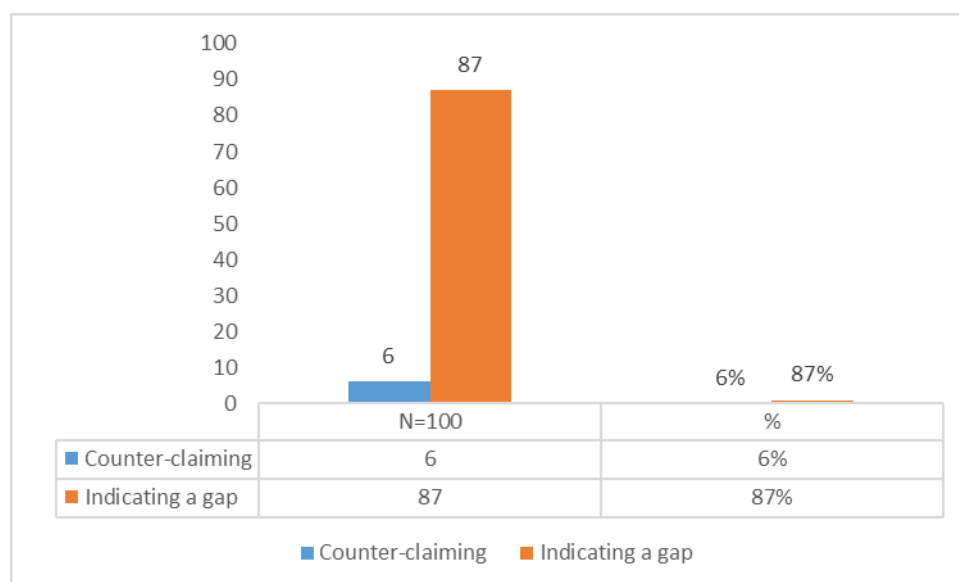

	N=100	%
■ Counter-claiming	6	6%
■ Indicating a gap	87	87%

Figure 1. The uses of counter-claiming and indicating a gap to justify current research

As shown in Figure 1, counter-claiming is rarely employed in English RAIs written by Indonesian authors. This implies that Indonesian authors hardly

ever counter earlier literature to justify their current research. In contrast, they prefer indicating a gap more to justify their current research. This finding is surprising: Indonesian authors are increasingly adopting the English writing tradition, as suggested by the CARS model, indicating a gap in establishing a niche. However, the other seven remain may employ other communicative steps, but this study only focused on these two communicative steps.

Linguistic strategies to counter literature
In employing these two communicative steps, authors linguistically used different linguistic strategies. In countering earlier literature, they tend to evaluate and contrast it using signal words, as presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Languages to counter earlier literature in English RAIs by Indonesian authors

Language Signals of *Counter-claiming*	Appearances	
	No.	%
Evaluating literature (Fails/ suffer/invalid/ incomplete/ inapt/ invalid/ inadequate/ disagree)	4	66.67%
However, limit/ not supported	2	33.33%
Total numbers	**6**	**100%**

As presented in Table 3, the literature review seems to evaluate the literature to look into the extent to which findings in the literature are elaborated logically and in detail. As a result, when earlier literature fails convincing them, current authors may disagree or contrast it. Thus, they may use possible language signals as presented in Table 2. Ways of countering literature are exemplified below:

Counter-claiming
  Example 1: "Although investigating political messages in social media has been extensively studied, most of **these studies are still using the constructivist** view (Eriyanto, 2001). Th**is may be inapt because it may not provide a holistic understanding** of the discourse being studied." IJoLLAJ019
  Example 2: "However, these studies only focused on the urgency of needs analysis in designing English teaching materials that fulfil the learners' needs and preferences (Adam, 2018; Padmadewi & Artini, 2017; Yahya, Said, & Masruddin, 2019). **They have not presented valid findings** related to the concept of developing English teaching materials for students majoring in primary education program, which should be integrated with a number of 21st -century educational skills." IJoLLAJ022

The two examples above indicate an evaluation conducted by the authors. In Example 1, the authors use the terms 'inapt' and 'not provide' that indicate a negative evaluation of the literature. Then, in Example 2, the authors used

the phrase 'not presented valid findings', which indicates a negative evaluation of the literature. However, negative evaluation or countering literature seems limited in the present study. The possible reasons are discussed in the discussion section.

Linguistic strategies to indicate a gap
Then, to indicate a gap, authors seem to discover something missing or limited in the literature. To do so, they may employ several language signals as presented in Table 4 as follows:

Table 4. Languages to indicate a gap in English RAIs by Indonesian authors

Language Signals *indicating a gap*	Appearances	
	No	**%**
However, unfortunately	17	16.34%
Incomplete, inadequate, insufficient, not enough, or unclear	3	2.88%
Discrepancy/ difference/ gap/ different from	2	1.92%
Only a few studies have been undertaken (either Limit/ limited understanding/ little/ few/ rarely/ yet	42	40.38%
Nevertheless, although	5	5.81%
No such studies earlier (No study/ never investigated/ never discussed, unexplored, underexplored, understudied, non-existent)	29	27.88%
Yet, remain ambiguous, remain unresolved, a glaring shortfall, does not extend, paucity	7	6.73%
Total numbers	105	100%

As presented in Table 4, several language signals to indicate a gap have been discovered, but the findings indicate that phrases indicating "only a few studies have been undertaken" receive more employment than the other signals. All the language signals indicate a missing or incomplete understanding of the findings presented in the literature, and thus the authors indicate a gap that needs further investigation. This step establishes a niche or justifies the current research. More descriptions of authors' ways indicating a gap are exemplified below:

Indicating a gap
Example 3: "**However**, the learning activities of English beyond classroom by means some available digital devices in social distancing measures as a result of global pandemic have yet to be empirically investigated. Also, the effectiveness of shifting from inside classroom learning to online learning outside classroom in response to the current phenomenon **still remains a mystery**, thus it needs an in-depth investigation. IJoLLAJ003

Example 4: "**Although** a number of studies on PBL as above have provided positive evidences on the students" learning, particularly on their creativity and critical scientific inquiry, studies on PBL centering around authentic narrative stories for PSETs **are still underrepresented. There is limited number of**

> **research** investigating learners' anxiety level in an online class…."
> IJoLLAJ006
>
> Example 5: "**Although** there have been several studies on learning approaches in the world, including Indonesia and Bali, investigations into learning approaches in the context of EOL **are still very few. There is limited number of research** investigating learners' anxiety level in an online class…." IJoLLAJ012

The three examples above explore something about a few and limited studies in the research area and indicate further investigation. This step indicates a need to improve knowledge in their current research topics. This is one of the most widely used strategies for creating research spaces and justifying current research.

In short, the present findings showed that Indonesian authors in the present study rarely counter earlier literature to justify their current research, and this step indicates conventional in the present study. However, they prefer indicating a gap to justify their current research, and this step is conventional. The languages used to counter literature are to critically evaluate something inappropriate or invalid, and then contrast the literature. Then, languages to indicate a gap are signaling by presenting something limited, few, and indicate further improvement in the current research. By employing these two possible steps, authors are then able to justify their current research.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the present study showed three important findings for discussion. The first finding is that Indonesian authors rarely or even hardly ever counter earlier literature in their RAIs. The reason is possibly logical that countering literature intends to find something problematic, inappropriate, or invalid within literature, and in this regard, not much earlier literature contains these issues. This reason makes it hard to find these issues in earlier research findings. This finding implies that Indonesian authors of English also still tend to avoid countering literature. Another reason is that countering literature is somewhat impolite in some cultural traditions, such as Indonesia, where debating or countering other scholars, more particularly more senior, is considered impolite (Adnan, 2010) and they felt unconfident in evaluating other scholars (Warsidi, 2021).

The above reason seems similar to other Asian countries, such as in Thai RAs, where countering other findings may be considered disrespectful (Amnuai, 2021). These reasons may make them tend to avoid countering literature. This finding may become common across diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds because this step may require critical thinking and evaluation of literature. It is consistent with what others' findings, such as Indonesian RAIs (Warsidi, 2024), French RAIs as they rarely establish a niche (Helal, 2014), and Spanish RAIs (Sheldon, 2011). Thus, this finding

seems logical and supports those found in the literature that countering literature is hardly discovered in RAIs and even in the discussion section (Warsidi & Maniam, 2024).

The second finding is surprising that the evolving genre of English RAIs in the language education discipline is currently happening in this study. It supports an earlier claim that evolving may continually happen in the genre of RAs (Lin & Evans, 2012). In this study, indicating a gap becomes conventional for justifying the current research, and authors mostly do so by citing a gap. Surprisingly, this second finding becomes similar to those in international journals that they justify research by establishing a niche, either employing one or more steps: counter-claiming, indicating a gap, adding to what is known, or question-risings (Swales, 1990), and indicating gaps appeared in the majority of RAIs in international journals (Arianto & Basthomi, 2021; Arianto et al., 2021; Arsyad & Zainil, 2023). In contrast, this finding seems to be in contrast with those found in earlier studies in Indonesian contexts (Arsyad, 2000; Arsyad & Adila, 2018; Arsyad & Arono, 2016; Arsyad et al., 2020; Warsidi, 2021, 2024; Warsidi et al., 2024) and in other non-native English authors, as they underutilize this way to justify research (Suryani et al., 2015). In the present finding, establishing and justifying current research is conventionally employed by indicating a gap, while earlier findings in Indonesian contexts revealed that authors justify research by addressing practical problems and problematic issues in the field (Adnan, 2010, 2011), and research interests (Warsidi, 2021; Warsidi et al., 2024; Warsidi, Adnan, et al., 2025). These issues may become the foundation of why Arsyad (2000) found a problem justifying projects (hereafter, called the PJP model) and Adnan (2010) designed an Ideal Problem Solutions (IPS model). In this regard, their research justification was based on identifying real problems in the field.

These contradictory findings may be that the selected articles in the present study are published in accredited journals with predicate Sinta 2. In this regard, journal editors of these journals may start adopting and applying selection criteria for accepting research articles that contain theoretical contributions and knowledge expansion in research. By employing these criteria, editors tend to identify gaps within RAIs and find research novelties for being accepted in their respective journals. As a result, research articles published in these journals adopted English writing conventions, indicating a gap to establish a niche and justify their current research to show research novelties and innovation for current research (Warsidi & Adnan, 2024; Warsidi, Halim, et al., 2025) as promotion for attracting audiences (Warsidi, 2023). This finding provides evidence that an evolving genre in English RAIs in the Indonesian context has occurred in this study. It implies that when one author intends to publish their academic

works in reputable journals, they must adopt the journals' conventions. Thus, sooner or later, authors will leave long writing traditions and follow the current writing convention. If so, then goodbye old genre.

The last finding revealed that the authors used linguistic strategies to counter literature and indicate a gap. For countering literature, they seem critically evaluate literature to discover something invalid and inappropriate. This finding suggests that although it is rarely in RAIs, linguistic strategies and steps for countering literature are necessary to avoid inappropriate justification of current research. Then, languages to indicate a gap may be employed by signaling something limited, few, and indicating further improvement in the current research. By employing these linguistic strategies, authors may start justifying their current research agenda that contain innovation (Warsidi & Adnan, 2024; Warsidi, Halim, et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The present findings have provided evidence that evolving genre in English RAIs in the Indonesian context has appeared in this study. This study has shown three important findings. First, authors in this study tend to avoid countering the literature; thus, counter-claiming is optional. Second, however, they mostly indicate a gap to justify their current research, and thus, indicating a gap becomes quasi-obligatory in the data set. Third, they employ linguistic strategies to set their current research agenda (see Table 3 for Counter-claiming and Table 4 for Indicating a gap).

The present findings have drawn theoretical and practical genre-based studies. Theoretically, these findings may provide some insights into genre theory that genre is not only influenced by the language backgrounds of authors and disciplinary conventions, but it is possibly also influenced by time periods and strict selection criteria of corpus selection. This suggests that determining selection criteria and time constraints for selecting data sets become a considerable attention in genre studies. Practically, these findings may guide students and novice authors that addressing the writing conventions of purposive journals as a venue for spreading knowledge findings needs to be adjusted in their manuscripts before submission. This guide may add the possibility of the manuscript becoming acceptable. Besides, the findings may also be used to consider teaching materials for research purposes.

Unfortunately, although an evolving genre of RAIs in the Indonesian context has happened, these data sets may have represented the study, it may only happen partially since it is limited to analyzing the introduction, but neglects other sections. Thus, to ensure whether evolving genres also happen completely, this study recommends further studies to investigate whether genres also evolve. The reason for recommending the discussion

section as data sets is that earlier studies indicate different rhetorical conventions from those of the English writing tradition.

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