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A text analysis and gatekeepers' perspectives of a promotional genre: Understanding the rhetoric of Fulbright grant statements

Matt Kessler

Department of World Languages, University of South Florida, 4202 E. Fowler Ave., CPR 107, Tampa, FL, 33620, USA

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the rhetorical strategies of successful applicants to the Fulbright English Teaching Assistant (ETA) grants program. Using a move-step analysis, I analyzed 50 personal statements and 50 statements of grant purpose written by applicants between 2012 and 2016. Also incorporated are six Fulbright faculty-raters' views of these statements through think-alouds and semi-structured interviews. Findings suggest successful ETA applicants utilize four moves in their personal statements: (1) *competence claims,* (2) *motivation for pursuing ETA grant,* (3) *motivation for applying to target country,* and (4) *framing childhood and family history*. In applicants' statements of grant purpose, most writers again utilize three moves from the personal statements (1–3). Faculty-raters' perspectives are discussed in relation to the moves-steps the raters find influential, and also, raters' perspectives concerning the ideal rhetoric of/relationship between personal statements and statements of grant purpose. Implications are discussed for future grant applicants and related genres such as graduate school applications.

1. Introduction

Each year, the U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Student Program sends nearly 1,000 grantees abroad as part of their English Teaching Assistant (ETA) Program (J. Dudderar, personal communication, October 4, 2017). These ETAs—typically recent college graduates—serve as teachers of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in host countries where they act as classroom instructors for students ranging in ages from kindergarten through the university levels. With an applicant success rate of approximately 20%, ETA grants are highly competitive and sought after by both applicants and their undergraduate institutions. As part of the application process, there are two written documents that play an integral role in determining the awarding of a grant: a personal statement (PS) and a statement of grant purpose (SoGP).

Thousands of PSs and SoGPs are written by prospective grantees each year, yet their composition can pose difficulties for writers due to a host of issues such as problems in constructing a persona, and also, from what Samraj and Monk (2008) have characterized as the *semi-occluded* nature of the PS genre. Occluded texts, first explored by Swales (1996), can be problematic for novice writers because of their private nature. Due to a lack of exposure, when attempting to compose them, novice writers may struggle in meeting their audiences' expectations. As part of a parent genre called *promotional genres* in which writers attempt to sell themselves to the reader in exchange for a future benefit(s) (Bhatia, 1993), there has been some interest

E-mail address: mattjkess@gmail.com.

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in studying the rhetoric of PSs and SoGPs in academia (e.g., Brown, 2004; Chiu, 2015; Ding, 2007; López-Ferrero & Bach, 2016; Samraj & Monk, 2008). However, prior studies have largely viewed PSs and SoGPs synonymously as one-in-the-same document (e.g., Chiu, 2015; López-Ferrero & Bach, 2016; Samraj & Monk, 2008). In the case of Fulbright though, and as required by many U.S. graduate school programs, two separate statements are required of ETA applicants, where applicants must address different PS- and SoGP-prompts.

Because little is known about the rhetoric of PSs and SoGPs when separated for promotional-application purposes, the current study attempts to shed light on this semi-occluded genre and to help draw learners' attention to the rhetoric that goes into constructing winning grant statements. Specifically, this study contributes to the understanding of the PS- and SoGP-promotional genre by examining the rhetorical strategies of successful Fulbright grant recipients in their statements. In addition to investigating the texts, this study explores Fulbright faculty readers'/raters' views of those statements in an effort to better understand gatekeepers' perspectives of the distinctive features that constitute effective texts.

2. Literature review

2.1. Background of rhetorical move studies and promotional genres

Since Swales' (1990, 2004) influential works examining the genre of academic research articles, scholars have explored the rhetoric of a variety of written academic genres (e.g., Bhatia, 1993; Brown, 2004; Chiu, 2015; Nathan, 2013; Posteguillo, 1999; Sadeghi & Samuel, 2013; Samraj & Monk, 2008). Many of these studies, as Hyland (2008) indicates, have been conducted in hopes of drawing learners' attention to the rhetorical strategies and linguistic features utilized by expert members of different discourse communities. Likewise, Tardy (2016) has explained that this text deconstruction and examination is important for making the framing of discourse visible to novice writers, providing them with an entry point for participating in new genres. Central to many of these genre analyses has been Swales' (2004) concept of the rhetorical *move*, which is defined as a "discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (p. 228). This move concept has been applied to texts across numerous academic disciplines, including applied linguistics (e.g., Samar, Talebzadeh, Kiany, & Akbari, 2014), business (e.g., Nathan, 2013), computer science (e.g., Posteguillo, 1999), mathematics (e.g., Yakhontova, 2006), and more. However, there has also been substantial interest in applying move analyses to *promotional genres* (see Bhatia, 1993), or, texts that are characterized by their persuasive communicative function.

In terms of promotional genres, most prevalent have been investigations into research grant proposals (e.g., Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Feng & Shi, 2004; Flowerdew, 2016). An early study by Connor and Mauranen (1999) employed a move analysis of 34 grant proposals from engineering and technology. In examining successful proposals to the National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health (NIH), the researchers identified 10 moves, including: [establishing] *territory, reporting previous research*, [indicating/filling a] *gap, goals, means, achievements, benefits*, *competence claim*, *importance claim,* and an additional *competence claim.* Connor (2000) then followed up her study with a qualitative analysis, interviewing five of the original grant writers. Through interviews, Connor found that grant writers generally agreed with the analysis from Connor and Mauranen (1999), but the writers suggested a further subdivision of the *competence claim* move to consist of two components: a *competence claim of researchers' abilities* and one of *institutional commitment*. Connor's (2000) extension study highlights the importance of exploring different aspects of a genre's texts beyond elements of the rhetorical or linguistic level to include perspectives that may not be evident through text analyses alone. Without this inquiry, only a partial picture of the texts may have surfaced.

Related to grants, there also has been some interest in genre analyses of academic personal statements (PSs) (e.g., Brown, 2004; Chiu, 2015; Ding, 2007; López-Ferrero & Bach, 2016; Samraj & Monk, 2008). Like grant proposals, PSs are self-promotional in nature. In one of the first studies to analyze PS rhetorical moves, Brown (2004) examined successful and unsuccessful PSs from a doctoral program in psychology, finding both sets of texts contained the same three moves: *outlining research experience, outlining professed research interests,* and *outlining practical experience*. Brown also sought additional insights to supplement his move analysis, yet in the form of the faculty members who reviewed the program's PSs. The faculty corroborated Brown's analysis, and one professor provided further insights into the differences between successful and unsuccessful statements, stating faculty preferred PSs where applicants demonstrated "…the capacity to conceptualize a research project" (p. 251).

Other PS studies have incorporated readers' perspectives into their analyses (e.g., Chiu, 2015; Samraj & Monk, 2008). In Samraj and Monk (2008), the authors examined writers' move-use in successful statements of purpose to multiple graduate programs. In the text analysis, the authors found that writers used a combination of five rhetorical moves, including: [providing an] *introduction, background, reasons for applying,* [explaining] *extra-curricular activities,* and a *conclusion*. Relatedly, text analyses of PSs and statements of purpose from other postgraduate programs have shown that writers across disciplines use similar moves and steps. Studies by Ding (2007) and López-Ferrero and Bach (2016) have identified analogous versions of the *reasons for applying* move while López-Ferrero and Bach (2016) highlighted moves representative of the *introduction* and *conclusion* moves. These text analyses of the PS genre show a fairly consistent use of rhetoric by writers, but Samraj and Monk's (2008) study is noteworthy due to insights obtained through including raters' perspectives. Apart from collecting statements, the researchers interviewed faculty and elicited their reactions to different moves. The informants reacted positively to some moves yet reacted negatively to the inclusion of features they deemed unimportant. Interestingly,

beyond commenting on the moves, the faculty also stated when it came time for the statement review process, each rater approached the process with predefined expectations for what he/she wanted to see in applicants' statements.

2.2. Fulbright ETA statements and the current study

Regardless of scope, past explorations into PSs have tended to regard PSs and statements of purpose/SoGPs synonymously, often referring to them interchangeably (e.g., Chiu, 2015; López-Ferrero & Bach, 2016; Samraj & Monk, 2008). While some grant and graduate school programs require only one statement during the application process, in many graduate school programs—and, as is the case of the Fulbright ETA—two, separate statements are required in the application. Individually, PSs have been studied at-length, yet little is known about how these statements differ rhetorically when separated, and particularly, how they may work together to create a holistic representation of an applicant. In the case of the Fulbright ETA PS and SoGP, the statements are purported to be distinct texts with differing prompts. The Fulbright U.S. Student Program, 2020a,b guidelines state that the PS should introduce oneself on a "personal level" along with one's motivations and future goals. Conversely, the stated objectives of the SoGP are to discuss why applicants have targeted a host country, to explain qualifications, and to discuss how individuals will engage with students in/out of the host country's classroom (us.fulbrightonline.org/application-tips/eta). Fulbright also attempts to clarify that the content of the PS and SoGP should not overlap, with the explicit, bolded-typeface notice to applicants stating: "Do not repeat information from other parts of the application" (us.fulbrightonline.org/application-tips/eta).

In an effort to learn more about these two semi-occluded texts, how they may work together to represent an applicant, and how they fit within the promotional genre, this study explores the rhetoric of the Fulbright ETA PS and SoGP in the tradition of move analyses and previous research on PSs. Additionally, this study builds on this tradition by incorporating methods from previous studies that have investigated readers'/gatekeepers' views, which may provide insights not visible through text analysis alone. This research is guided by the following three questions:

1. What are the rhetorical moves-steps employed by successful writers of the Fulbright ETA Personal Statement (PS) and Statement of Grant Purpose (SoGP)?
2. When reviewing Fulbright ETA PSs and SoGPs, what moves-steps do evaluators react to and perceive as being effective and/or ineffective?
3. What are raters' expectations for the rhetorical connections and differences between PSs and SoGPs?

3. Method

3.1. Participants and data

Former successful Fulbright ETA applicants who received grants between 2012 and 2016 were identified using the U.S. Department of State's Fulbright Grantee Directory. These individuals were contacted via social networking sites or email (if available) to invite their voluntary participation in the study. In total, 50 former ETA grant recipients agreed to participate in the study first by reading an IRB-approved consent form, and then, by subsequently returning electronic copies of their PSs and SoGPs. Fifty of each statement type ($N = 100$) were collected. Fulbright requires grantees to be U.S. citizens at the time of their application. Despite this requirement, the applicants tend to be highly multilingual. For instance, in the current corpus, nearly all identified as multilingual, and approximately 20% of the applicants self-identified as L1 speakers of languages other than English, including: Chinese, Flemish, French, German, Hindi, Spanish, Thai, and Ukranian.

The 50 individuals in the study (females = 41, males = 9) received grants to teach EFL in 22 countries: Argentina (1), Armenia (1), Brazil (7), Bulgaria (1), Colombia (3), Ecuador (1), Germany (6), Greece (1), Jordan (1), Kazakhstan (1), Kosovo (1), Laos (1), Malaysia (7), Mexico (2), Russia (1), Serbia (2), South Africa (1), South Korea (2), Spain (2), Taiwan (2), Thailand (4), and Turkey (1). Although they received grants to different countries, the PS and SoGP prompts were identical for all applicants.[1] Likewise, applicants adhered to a one-page, single-spaced length guideline for each statement. In the Fulbright program, applications are considered at two levels: first at the U.S.-Fulbright level in general and second at the host-country-specific level. In this study, I chose to sample statements for breadth (i.e., multiple countries) rather than depth (only one specific country) since the goal was to uncover overarching trends in the submissions rather than country-specific practices. This sampling choice also enabled raters to comment on general trends.

3.2. Move-step coding and analysis

Because one goal of this study was to shed light on writers' rhetorical choices, the analysis of texts followed a move-step analysis (Swales, 1990, 2004). A *move* is operationalized using Swales' (2004) definition of a "discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function" (p. 228). *Steps* are further subdivisions of those moves, thus contributing to

[1] For a comprehensive listing of the guidelines and prompts provided to Fulbright English Teaching Assistant applicants, visit: us.fulbrightonline.org/applicants/application-tips/eta.

Table 1
Personal statements: Rhetorical moves-steps.

Moves - Steps	Example from writer-participant (P#)	Writers (%) using move-step
1. Competence claims		**1.00**
a. Study abroad/travel experience	[A]s an exchange student at the University XXX in Glasgow… [I] rediscovered my independence and ability to thrive in new environments. (P#8)	0.68
b. Knowledge of the target country	…according to a 2009 study by Sabanci Vakfi, only 37% of Turkish women have a diploma from elementary school, with the rates decreasing…(P#22)	0.62
c. Previous language study (non-target)	…I have used my fluency in Spanish to connect with my extended family in Argentina and it has been a vital tool in understanding the culture of the country. (P#13)	0.62
d. Relevant education experience	Even though history is only one of my three majors, I have been able to work it into my study…(P#19)	0.56
e. Importance of communication and cultural exchange	Valuing how we interact with others has been an important part of my development. (P#2)	0.52
f. Teaching experience	I assisted in two adult ESL classes, consisting primarily of recent immigrants from Latin America... (P#5)	0.42
g. Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	Last summer I interned at XXX, a nonprofit organization that works on international debt relief... During my internship, I learned an extensive amount…(P#24)	0.20
2. Motivation for pursuing ETA grant		**0.82**
Internal benefits		0.66
h. Grant supports future career goals	I would like to study Taiwan's language policy and practices to support my future studies in Applied Linguistics...(P#2)	0.60
i. Desire for education or to learn language	…the Spanish-speaking environment of Ecuador will allow me to improve my language skills... (P#30)	0.24
External benefits		0.58
j. Benefits to students	I also want to equip my students with the appropriate linguistic and cultural skills they need to navigate complex situations...(P#6)	0.48
k. Benefits to community	I want to begin these efforts while in Thailand by teaching basic health workshops as an ancillary project. (P#1)	0.18
3. Motivation for applying to target country		**0.66**
l. Relationship or cultural interest connection	My grandfather was born in a rural, impoverished region of Thailand... his story inspired me to set goals beyond what is expected...(P#1)	0.48
m. Target language knowledge/interest	…I learned to build substantive relationships with my Spanish… I loved using Spanish to build genuine friendships. (P#31)	0.42
n. Previous travel to target country	I earned a combination of four scholarships to fund an intensive Portuguese language and Brazilian culture program in Brazil… I returned with a desire to continue to explore…(P#15)	0.26
o. Idealized connection	I first became fascinated by South Africa after reading Nadine Gordimer's novel, *The Pickup*, and Zakes Mda's novel, *The Whale Caller*. I hope to immerse myself in the distinctive post-Apartheid spaces…(P#3)	0.14
4. Framing childhood and family history	I never cared for Risk. As an only child attending elementary school and living in suburban Chicago, I grew fond of things that I could do quietly by myself. (P#19)	**0.80**

achieving a move's communicative function. The use of a move-step analysis was important for this study since much prior research involving PSs has utilized the approach. When coding for moves and/or steps in this study, because a move-step analysis places the focus on the meaning of the specific rhetorical unit(s) being expressed, the texts were analyzed at both the sentence- and paragraph-levels. Additionally, during the coding process, the use of this move-step analysis enabled findings from previous studies involving promotional genres to be considered and referenced due to their overlapping communicative nature, including those studies of academic research grant proposals (e.g., Connor, 2000; Connor & Mauranen, 1999; Feng & Shi, 2004) and PSs (e.g., Brown, 2004; Ding, 2007; López-Ferrero & Bach, 2016; Samraj & Monk, 2008). For instance, promotional genre moves described in earlier studies such as *competence claims* (e.g., Connor & Mauranen, 1999), *outlining practical experience* (e.g., Brown, 2004), etc. were considered for their applicability; rhetoric with no corresponding move-step from previous literature was coded inductively based on its communicative function in the text.

In coding, first, moves-steps were identified and coded by the researcher through an initial reading of 20 statements of each type. Second, following the development and refinement of the moves-steps, an additional coder applied the researcher's codes to 10% of each statement type for evidence of the move-step's appearance in the statements. An inter-coder reliability of 0.87 was obtained for the PSs and 0.89 for the SoGPs (a total reliability of 0.88). Instances in which the two coders' assessments did not align could primarily be attributed to two types of discrepancies, the first being that one of the two coders simply overlooked a specific move-step while reading and coding a statement. The second discrepancy, though infrequent, occurred when the two coders labeled a specific passage as different move-steps. When this occurred, the researcher and second coder resolved the issue through discussion and by revisiting the passage and the surrounding context within the statement. After reliability was achieved, the researcher coded the remaining statements.

3.3. Rater interviews and analysis

Six ($N = 6$) U.S. university faculty members participated in think-aloud protocols and semi-structured interviews for this study. Through a colleague with knowledge of the ETA program (who had also previously served as an ETA evaluator), multiple faculty were recruited to participate who had ETA rating experiences during the 2012–2016 timeframe. At the time of this study, all six faculty (henceforth known as "raters") worked in applied linguistics, second language acquisition, or related fields. This is also fairly representative of the Fulbright ETA evaluator selection process, as the ETA program pulls raters from the same fields.

Individual video-call interviews of approximately 60 minutes were then conducted. Interviews began with the researcher and rater reviewing the ETA PS and SoGP prompts; then, each rater was presented with two sample PSs and two SoGPs for review. Raters were informed they would be reading ETA statements but were not informed the statements had been successful. All raters read the same four statements from two applicants. The specific two applicants' statements were chosen due to the representativeness of the moves-steps found in the text analysis. In total, all moves-steps found in the text analysis were accounted for between the four statements with the exception of one step—the most infrequently occurring step of *idealized connection*—utilized by 14% of ETA writers in the PS-only.

First, raters used think-alouds to read the ETA statements, which they had not viewed ahead of time, and were asked to comment on anything that came to mind while reading, including: commenting on strengths/weaknesses of the text; specific points of interest/confusion; information they wished had been included; and finally, how the statement compared to others they had read previously. After each think-aloud, raters were asked follow-up questions and to elaborate on comments they had made earlier.

Each interview was audio-recorded and transcribed. The subsequent transcriptions were analyzed through a combination of inductive and deductive coding (e.g., Polio & Friedman, 2017) to identify themes present in raters' statements. For example: For the think-aloud portion with raters, inductive coding was used to search for connections between different raters' comments since comments might be idiosyncratic to each rater. However, since specific questions were asked of raters during the semi-structured interview portion, deductive coding was used to examine raters' responses to specific concepts and to compare raters' responses to prior research (e.g., studies incorporating gatekeepers' perspectives such as Brown, 2004; Chiu, 2015). Themes identified during coding were then cross-referenced with the move-step data from the PS and SoGP text analysis.

4. Results

4.1. Personal statements: rhetorical moves-steps (RQ1)

The analysis of writers' PSs revealed applicants tended to utilize a combination of four moves, including: (1) *competence claims*, (2) *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*, (3) *motivation for applying to target country*, and (4) *framing childhood and family history*. These moves were often organized differently in writers' PSs. Within these categories, in total, writers employed 15 different steps for achieving the rhetorical moves. Table 1 outlines all of the PS moves and steps, including examples that were extracted from writers' texts.

As Table 1 shows, the first rhetorical move, *competence claims*, appeared in all 50 PSs. To showcase their qualifications, many applicants attempted to achieve this through the use of multiple *competence claims* steps with the average writer utilizing 3.62 *competence claims* steps per PS. In addition to making reference to numerous *competence claims* in their writing, the second move PS writers utilized was *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*. Forty-one of 50 writers explained how receiving a Fulbright grant either (a) benefitted them personally, or (b) how others stood to benefit as a result. Because of this, the distinction of *internal benefits* versus *external benefits* was created for the step-analysis. Like the *competence claims* move, writers often used multiple steps when expressing *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*, with an average of 1.5 steps appearing per PS. The third rhetorical move employed by writers was *motivation for applying to target country*. This was the least utilized of the four PS moves, as only 33 of 50 writers explained why a particular country interested them. The fourth and final move, which was characteristic of the PS-only, was *framing childhood and family history*. This move often appeared in the applicants' PS-introductions as writers provided general background information in what might be viewed as responding to Fulbright's prompt of introducing oneself on a personal level. In this move, 40 of 50 applicants described some aspect of their upbringing or information regarding their parents or family members' influence on them.

4.2. Statements of grant purpose: rhetorical moves-steps (RQ1)

Before presenting the SoGP moves-steps, it is worth briefly revisiting an earlier point. In Fulbright's directions, they state the PS and SoGP should not be similar, which is highlighted in their directions: "Do not repeat information from other parts of the application" (us.fulbrightonline.org/application-tips/eta). However, following the SoGP analysis, it appeared that many times, ETA applicants repeated much of the same information, and three of the same PS-moves were utilized by writers again in the SoGP, including: (1) *competence claims*, (2) *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*, and (3) *motivation for applying to target country*. These moves contained many of the same supporting steps. The PSs contained 15 steps, but there were a total of 17 steps utilized in the SoGPs.

Due to the strong similarities between the two statement types, Table 2 illustrates the PS and SoGP moves-steps side-by-side for comparison. In this table, the few moves-steps that do not appear in the other statement are listed in bold font. Additionally, a further illustration of this repetition can be seen in Table 3, which outlines all 50 writers and those writers who repeated the same *competence claims* steps across PSs and SoGPs. Since there is considerable repetition across the statements, only those steps specific to the SoGP are discussed further below.

As Table 2 shows, only three steps in writers' SoGPs did not appear in the PS. Two of these novel steps fell under the move of *competence claims*; one of these steps included demonstrating a *competent teacher* (used by 0.62 of the writers):

> During my three years working as a teaching assistant…I learned the importance of having a lesson plan to follow, but being able to adapt quickly…(P#8)

The other novel step was *outlining sample activity or lesson plan* (0.58 of writers):

> I will teach language and grammar in context to simulate realistic situations... These simulations will happen when students in small groups cooperatively research and discuss relevant topics...(P#9)

The third and final step to appear solely in the SoGP occurred under the move *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*, where writers expressed a desire to *serve as a U.S. cultural ambassador* (0.44 of writers):

> I see myself not only as a teaching assistant…but also as an ambassador of American culture. (P#5)

Like the PS, writers tended to utilize multiple moves-steps when writing SoGPs. For example, writers averaged 5.32 *competence claims* steps per SoGP. Under the move *motivation for pursuing ETA grant*, writers utilized an average of 2.68 steps.

As an additional illustration of how individual writers not only varied in their use of the moves-steps across the PSs and SoGPs, but also, as to how they often repeated much of the same rhetoric, Table 4 compares the moves-steps utilized by two participants, P#1 and P#50 (who were chosen at random for this illustration). This table also lists the order in which each writer used the moves-steps in their respective statements. As Table 4 shows, P#1 and P#50 were both similar and different in many respects when it came to adopting rhetorical strategies. Both writers engaged in repeating content across statement types. Interestingly as well, when the two writers did adopt the same moves-steps, they rarely appeared in the same order—(for instance, when using *framing childhood and family history* in their PSs, P#1 used this move to open the statement while P#50 did not employ the move until near the end of the statement).

4.3. Raters' perspectives: effective and ineffective moves-steps (RQ2)

During the think-alouds and semi-structured interviews, six raters discussed the rhetoric they felt was effective in determining a successful grant recipient, mentioning several moves-steps identified in the text analysis. Because of the high degree of rhetorical overlap in the PS and SoGP, it was not possible to clearly assign raters' positive/negative comments solely to the PS or the SoGP. For example, because *competence claims* appeared across both statement types, the raters often made remarks when encountering both instances in the PS and again in the SoGP. Despite this, raters were fairly uniform in

Table 2
Comparison of moves-steps in PS and SoGP.

Moves-steps in ETA personal statements		Moves-steps in ETA statements of grant purpose	
	Writers' use (%)		Writers' use (%)
(1) Competence claims	1.00	(1) Competence claims	1.00
a. Study abroad/travel experience	.68	a. Teaching experience	.84
b. Knowledge of the target country	.62	b. Knowledge of the target country	.74
c. Previous language study (non-target)	.62	**c. Competent teacher**	.62
d. Relevant education experience	.56	d. Study abroad/travel experience	.62
e. Importance of communication and cultural exchange	.52	e. Importance of communication and cultural exchange	.58
f. Teaching experience	.42	**f. Outlining sample activity or lesson plan**	.58
g. Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	.20	g. Previous language study (non-target)	.48
(2) Motivation for pursuing ETA grant	.82	h. Relevant education experience	.46
Internal benefits	.66	i. Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	.40
h. Grant supports future career goals	.60	(2) Motivation for pursuing ETA grant	.96
i. Desire for education or to learn language	.24	*External benefits*	.90
External benefits	.58	j. Benefits to students	.64
j. Benefits to students	.48	k. Benefits to community	.52
k. Benefits to community	.18	**l. Serve as a U.S. cultural ambassador**	.44
(3) Motivation for applying to target country	.66	*Internal benefits*	.72
l. Relationship or cultural interest connection	.48	m. Desire for education or to learn language	.56
m. Target language knowledge/interest	.42	n. Grant supports future career goals	.52
n. Previous travel to target country	.26	(3) Motivation for applying to target country	.60
o. Idealized connection	**.14**	o. Target language knowledge/interest	.42
(4) Framing childhood & family history	**.80**	p. Relationship or cultural interest connection	.30
		q. Previous travel to target country	.26

*Bold font indicates move-step not appearing in other statement.

Table 3
Number of writers repeating *competence claims* steps across statements.

Steps	SoGP: Writers using step	PS: Writers repeating step
Competence claims		
a. Teaching experience	42	17
b. Knowledge of the target country	37	24
c. Competent teacher[a]	31	0
d. Study abroad/travel experience	31	23
e. Importance of communication and cultural exchange	29	16
f. Outlining sample activity or lesson plan[a]	29	0
g. Previous language study (non-target)	24	17
h. Relevant education experience	23	12
i. Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	20	4

[a] Indicates step not appearing in PS.

expressing rhetoric they wished to see, yet also, features they did not want to see. For instance, all six raters desired to see applicants show evidence of the *competence claims* step of *teaching experience*, or, basic knowledge of teaching principles:

> As a reader, I like to see that they've had some kind of instructional experience, whether that's classroom teaching or tutoring. (Interviewee #4)

> The top [applicants] really do have both a clearly articulated understanding of TESOL…they have to be able to talk about teaching in a meaningful way. (Interviewee #5)

In the think-alouds, when raters encountered areas in either statement that highlighted *teaching experience*, they reacted positively:

> This is a nice description of tutoring. Some people just say "I tutored," but the student really goes into it. (Interviewee #1)

Likewise, when raters encountered areas where they felt not enough emphasis was placed on teaching, they responded negatively:

> There's very little about teaching English. Sometimes we have Fulbright people who have a certificate in TESOL. That's really helpful—that helps push them up to the top because you do have to teach English and that's the major part of your week… (Interviewee #1)

> I always think it would be nice if someone…included a few details about English language education. If we're gonna send people over to do some English, it's not enough to be a native speaker… (Interviewee #2)

Along with raters' desire to see *teaching experience*, four of six raters made positive comments when encountering the *competence claims* step of *competent teacher*:

> That is really effective because now I see that she has teaching experience…she's already learned something that can be applied… (Interviewee #2)

> I feel like this is someone who has thought about education and has thought about learning and has some vocabulary for talking about learning... (Interviewee #4)

Beyond expressing teaching-related competence, four of six raters desired to see an expression of the *importance of communication and cultural exchange*:

> I'm looking for people who are really open to [communication] who don't see, you know, the U.S. as the only way to do things…but rather, see this as an opportunity to learn... (Interviewee #4)

> [You need to] demonstrate that…our culture is complex; their culture is complex…I would not only bring my own opinion, but I would share the opinions of other people who are different from me. (Interviewee #2)

During a think-aloud, one rater reacted favorably when encountering rhetoric that showed evidence of cross-cultural understanding:

> She's respectful…not sort of like a, you know, missionary mindset where "I'll come and fix you," so I like that… (Interviewee #6)

The final move mentioned by half of the raters as effective was *motivation for applying to target country*. One rater acknowledged that selecting a country to apply to was difficult for applicants, but raters still wanted the information to appear:

> I also really want to know why do you want to go there—why *there*? (Interviewee #3)

Table 4
Comparison of two individual writers' move-step usage: P#1 and P#50.

P#1: (Moves) – Steps		P#50: (Moves) – Steps	
PS	SoGP	PS	SoGP
(4)	(1) – Relevant education experience	(2) – Desire for education or to learn language	**(1) – Importance of communication and cultural exchange[D]**
(1) – Study abroad/travel experience	(1) – Teaching experience	(1) – Study abroad/travel experience	**(2) – Serve as a U.S. cultural ambassador[E]**
(3) – Relationship or cultural interest connection[A]	(1) – Competent teacher	(1) – Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	(1) – Study abroad/travel experience
(1) – Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	(2) – Benefits to students	**(1) – Importance of communication and cultural exchange[D]**	(1) – Knowledge of the target country
(2) – Grant supports future career goals[B]	(1) – Teaching experience	(1) – Teaching experience	(2) – Desire for education or to learn language
(2) – Benefits to community[C]	(1) – Competent teacher	(1) – Previous language study (non-target)	**(1) – Importance of communication and cultural exchange[D]**
(1) – Relevant work experience (non-teaching)	**(2) – Benefits to community[C]**	(1) – Relevant education experience	(2) – Benefits to community
(2) – Desire for education or to learn language	(1) – Importance of communication and cultural exchange	(1) – Teaching experience	(1) – Outlining sample activity or lesson plan
(1) – Relevant education experience	**(3) – Relationship or cultural interest connection[A]**	(4)	(1) – Competent teacher
(1) – Study abroad/travel experience	(1) – Knowledge of the target country	(2) – Benefits to students	(1) – Relevant education experience
(2) – Benefits to students	(2) – Desire for education or to learn language	**(2) – Serve as a U.S. cultural ambassador[E]**	(2) – Benefits to students
	(2) – Grant supports future career goals[B]		**(2) – Serve as a U.S. cultural ambassador[E]**
Total # of moves-steps used		*Total # of moves-steps used*	
11	12	11	12

Rhetorical move key: (1) = competence claims, (2) = motivation for pursuing ETA grant, (3) = motivation for applying to target country, (4) = framing childhood and family history.
[A-E]Note: Bold font indicates writer repeated move-step using either similar or exact wording in corresponding statement.

> I wanted the evidence that the person was genuinely interested in the target host country. (Interviewee #6)

As shown, during these sessions, raters expressed clear preferences for what they felt was effective rhetoric. However, there were also specific things they did not want to see. One such item was related to the step of *grant supports future career goals*. Though raters generally wanted to see how an ETA-ship supported one's career goals, all six raters reacted negatively if the writer's goal was to become a doctor or lawyer, especially if the intent was perceived as related to bolstering one's resume:

> I thought this person was gonna say he or she wanted to be a teacher…darn it. A lot of people who want to go to medical school, they want to increase their chances of getting into medical school by applying to do programs like the Fulbright…you get kind of tired of it… (Interviewee #1)

> When I get something that says "this is going to improve my resume for going to law school or medical school," I'm not happy. (Interviewee #3)

Beyond this, no other moves-steps were mentioned negatively by multiple raters.

4.4. Raters' expectations: PS versus SoGP (RQ3)

As discussed in the previous section, writers' practices of repeating rhetoric across statements did not allow for a clear analysis of which moves-steps raters desired to see in each specific statement type. Therefore, RQ3 was included so that raters could clearly explicate this further as to how they hoped to see the two documents relate/differ rhetorically. Despite the writers successfully being awarded grants, all six raters were unanimous in stating they did not want to see repetition. When encountering such instances, raters reacted negatively:

> The word limit is so tight in both of these…I'm putting on my advisor hat—she's repeating herself in these two and giving the same examples... (Interviewee #3)

After expressing frustration regarding overlapping content, one rater elaborated further:

> These are really hard to write, but they remind me also of graduate student applications…there's always a personal statement and a research statement, and it's the same type of thing…You don't want the same information in both places—they have to be different—otherwise, why would we ask for two? (Interviewee #1)

The presence of overlap also led to a general criticism of the PSs that the raters had read in the current study, and, during their past Fulbright ratings. Three raters stated they found writers' PSs were typically not personal enough:

> I don't really get a sense of this person...to me, this reads more like, like a statement of grant purpose. (Interviewee #6)

> There's bits of information, like this happened my freshman year while I was in college; I taught; then I want to be a doctor. But…it doesn't describe the person stepwise in a more linear fashion that would explain why this person is who they are. (Interviewee #1)

Beyond critiquing overlapping rhetoric, multiple raters discussed the specific features they felt constituted an effective PS and what separates it rhetorically from a SoGP:

> A personal statement is supposed to be about your background and why you want to do this. (Interviewee #1)

> [*Referring to a resume-like PS*]: There's just sort of this sense of like "I did this. I did this. I did this." But there's not a lot of kind of meta-language that helps us see the connections… (Interviewee #5)

> What I want to know is…how did some of your personal experiences cohere to get you to this point where you want to do this next thing? (Interviewee #5)

Thus, in the PS, raters wanted rhetoric that illustrated a sense of the applicant's personality. Also, they wished to see rhetoric explaining how a person came to be who they are today and the events that drove them to this point. Interviewees #1 and #5, in particular, wanted this conveyed in a linear fashion.

In terms of how SoGPs should differ from PSs, one rater explained that writers should craft the statements in relation to one another:

> [The raters] read the personal statement first, so it should be written with that in mind—that the information will be knowledge retained that could be built upon in the second one [*i.e., the SoGP*]. (Interviewee #1).

Beyond recommending writers start with writing the PS, raters said they felt the SoGP should be more about the target country, individual qualifications, and demonstrating one's competence. Specifically, raters mentioned the move of *motivation for applying to target country*:

> When it gets to the country office, I think they want to see that "I've been interested in this [country/culture] a long time." (Interviewee #3)

Likewise, Interviewee #1 stated applicants not only need a "purpose for going there," but also, a legitimate reason rather than minor "cultural tidbits" that could be picked up from friends of the target country.

Three raters also stated SoGPs should contain information about one's *teaching experience*, and importantly, the step of illustrating a *competent teacher*:

> [I want to] see somewhere: Does this individual put something that indicates that they actually know how to teach some English? (Interviewee #2)

In the semi-structured interviews, despite being asked, the raters did not have a preferred order or sequencing as to how the rhetoric should appear in the statements. Instead, they simply suggested there should be clear differences between a PS and SoGP: a PS should be written first, detailing an individual's personality and internal motivations from past-to-present. Following the PS, the SoGP should build on the PS information, and specifically, SoGPs should include one's qualifications such as *teaching experience* and being a *competent teacher*, and the move of *motivation for applying to target country*.

5. Discussion

The text analysis of the Fulbright ETA PSs and SoGPs (RQ#1) revealed that when writers addressed the statement prompts, they tended to employ a variety of rhetorical moves and steps. Most writers utilized four moves in the PS: (1) *competence claims,* (2) *motivation for pursuing ETA grant,* (3) *motivation for applying to target country,* and (4) *framing childhood and family history*. Interestingly, despite being provided specific directions to avoid overlapping content, three PS moves were repeated by many of the writers again in the SoGP with only one exception of *framing childhood and family history*.

While there are some steps that are unique to the current Fulbright ETA corpus (e.g., *importance of communication and cultural exchange*), ETA writers' rhetorical choices are, for the most part, characteristic of other promotional genres. The most frequently employed move of making *competence claims* has appeared in other researchers' investigations. For example, in Connor and Mauranen's (1999) study of NSF and NIH grant proposals, the authors found grant writers tended to utilize *competence claims* to support their project bids. Likewise, in another promotional genre, Bhatia (1993) found writers of sales and job application letters demonstrated competency through what he called *establishing credentials*. This may be seen as analogous to the *competence claims* move in Connor and Mauranen (1999) and the current study, as writers attempted to prove their qualifications by showcasing various strengths and experiences.

Apart from *competence claims*, other steps occurring within this study's *motivation for pursing ETA grant* move have surfaced in promotional genres. In the same study reviewing NSF and NIH applications, Connor and Mauranen (1999) reported

writers' use of discussing grant *benefits*. These *benefits* are comparable to the *external benefits* step utilized by ETA applicants in describing how receiving a grant would benefit others, notably the host communities. In addition to *external benefits,* writers' use of *internal benefits* has been detailed. Ding (2007), in her analysis of applicants' PSs to medical and dental schools, found writers frequently *stating future career goals*, a step many ETA writers also relied on in their PSs and SoGPs.

The text analysis shed light on Fulbright writers' rhetorical practices in their statements, but the investigation into raters' perspectives provided additional information concerning what the raters reacted to, and importantly, what they deemed effective or ineffective when reviewing statements (RQ#2). In particular, during the think-alouds, most raters commented positively upon encountering the *competence claims* move, specifically the steps of *teaching experience, competent teacher,* and *importance of communication and cultural exchange.* Raters reacted favorably, too, upon reading evidence of the move *motivation for applying to target country*.

One interesting note is related to applicants' motivations for applying and their future career goals: despite the large number of aspiring medical and legal professionals who apply for ETA grants each year, it was surprising to find that all six raters expressed clear disappointment when encountering these applications, as they perceived the goal of becoming a medical professional to be in opposition to the grant itself, which is to serve as a teacher of English. Samraj and Monk (2008) found faculty reviewers of graduate program statements of purpose approached the rating process with pre-defined expectations in terms of what they hoped to see. However, it was surprising to find that all six raters in this study came in with the same set of expectations—and in this case—the same feelings of disappointment regarding a subset of the applicants, especially since aspiring doctors and lawyers make up such a large portion of ETA applicants.

As mentioned earlier, because writers often repeated the same rhetoric across statements, during the think-alouds, it was not possible to clearly ascribe raters' positive/negative comments solely to the PS or the SoGP. However, beyond gauging raters' reactions during these think-alouds, the follow-up semi-structured interviews enabled critical insights into writers' use of repetition, and importantly, what raters felt should be the rhetorical differences between PSs and SoGPs (RQ#3). Despite many successful grant applicants repeating the same moves and steps, the raters uniformly stated that such repetition is not desirable. Instead of being an effective strategy, one of the raters attributed repetition to writers' novice status and inexperience: "These are usually young people who are writing—so, seniors in college—so, they have a lack of experience in doing this type of writing" (Interviewee #1).

Based on the sample statements collected in this study, repeating content between the two statements was commonplace. Therefore, it is possible that, (as suggested by Interviewee #1), this repetition might be the result of novice writers' struggles to engage with the semi-occluded nature of the promotional genre (Samraj & Monk, 2008; Swales, 1996). ETA writers' struggles with this repetition and the genre are not unique though. Such difficulties with the related promotional genre of graduate school statements of purpose have also been highlighted by Tardy (2012), as she stated: "Most writers find the statement of grant purpose genre to be very challenging…fragmented knowledge seems to be common among novices because they have not yet built up their experience" (p. 169). Likewise, as Swales (1996) has suggested, this fragmented genre knowledge may be the root of disconnect between writers' practices and readers' expectations.

The current study, like those before it, attempted to highlight the rhetoric of a promotional genre and to incorporate gatekeepers' reactions to that rhetoric. However, the current research expanded on this by obtaining faculty-raters' opinions concerning the ideal rhetorical features of PSs and SoGPs, and importantly, the desired and distinctive differences between the two statement types. In terms of pedagogical implications for aspiring writers in promotional genres such as grant applications and/or graduate school statements of purpose, in their feedback for this study, the raters recommended that writers should make clear distinctions between their PSs and SoGPs (or, statements of purpose if one is applying to graduate school). In particular, one rater suggested writers should begin by drafting the PS first. This PS should contain information detailing an individual's personality and their personal motivations from past-to-present. It was suggested this information should provide the reader with a clear sense of who the writer is as a person. Following the crafting of the PS, raters suggested the SoGP (or again, a statement of purpose for graduate school purposes) should be written with the purpose of building on the information contained within the PS. Faculty commented SoGPs might include more details about one's qualifications such as *teaching experience* and being a *competent teacher*, but also, the move of *motivation for applying to target country.*

These are, currently, recommendations from evaluators from the Fulbright ETA program that cannot be substantiated since other studies (to this researcher's knowledge) have not explored gatekeepers' views on the ideal or expected distinctions between PSs and SoGPs/statements of purpose. However, this does not necessarily mean the insights from this study are limited only to the current ETA corpus. As mentioned, many graduate school programs across the U.S. now require both a PS and statement of purpose as part of the application process. Yet, additional research is needed on these types of related promotional genres including graduate school and grant applications to confirm this study's findings.

One limitation of this study is related to the disconnect between writers' practices and readers' expectations: no ETA writers were interviewed for inclusion in this study. Additional methods such as writer-interviews or the inclusion of stimulated recalls with writers and their texts (for an example, see Kessler, 2020) may have provided further insights into applicants' thought processes, move-step selection, and their repetition practice. However, since the statements were written between two-and-five years prior, the time-lapse between the writing itself and the data collection did not seem fruitful for obtaining insights as to why writers made certain choices. Additionally, another limitation concerns the sole use of successful ETA statements. Undeniably, it would have been valuable to compare the move-step usage between successful and unsuccessful statements, yet it was not feasible to identify and obtain samples from unsuccessful applicants. Therefore, to supplement this, the inclusion of raters' perspectives was added for additional insights into the text analysis.

6. Conclusion

For successful applicants to the Fulbright ETA grant, what is clear is that most writers tended to employ a variety of rhetorical moves-steps when addressing the PS and SoGP prompts. Frequently, these moves-steps overlapped between the two documents. What is unclear is whether writers engaged in repetition due to a lack of experience with the promotional genre, or, whether they repeated specific elements because they felt doing so was beneficial. Despite writers' actual intentions, the Fulbright faculty-raters did not desire to see this repetition, and there was an apparent gap between the readers' expectations and the writers' practices. Because of this, the raters made specific suggestions for future applicants to both Fulbright and related promotional genres (e.g., graduate school applications), and specifically, that writers should first begin with writing the PS by detailing their personality and internal motivations from past-to-present. Following this, applicants should write the SoGP to build on the PS. While future research might further explore related promotional genres such as graduate school applications, in the context of the current study, what was clear is that raters had certain expectations as to the rhetoric they wished to see during their review, and as to the differences they expected between PSs and SoGPs. Therefore, it is plausible to surmise if future writers address those specific moves-steps while avoiding overlapping content, they may be more likely to meet their readers' expectations, and perhaps, even increase their chances of successfully receiving a grant.

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Matt Kessler is an Assistant Professor in the Department of World Languages at the University of South Florida. His research focuses on issues related to L2 literacy and writing development, along with computer assisted language learning. Matt's research has appeared in titles such as *Computers and Composition, TESOL Journal,* and other media.