EXAMINING VARIABILITY: A GENRE ANALYSIS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION STUDENTS' THESIS ABSTRACTS

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Abstract

The abstract of the thesis is the initial segment that researchers scrutinize to ascertain its pertinence to their interests. Researchers must possess an inherent comprehension of the section's rhetorical progression, structure, and arrangement. This study investigates the genre of thesis abstract sections produced by undergraduate students from Aceh who are majoring in English Education. The writers are interested in examining the writing style of Acehnese undergraduate students when composing their thesis abstracts. The dataset utilized in this study comprises 50 specifically chosen thesis abstracts from 5 universities in Aceh. The data analysis utilizes Hyland's five-move structural model of the abstract section, as well as the status of the motions as described by Huttner. The findings indicate that Hyland's five-move structure model is a useful tool for examining the move structure of the abstract section. Furthermore, there is no notable variation in the move structures across all datasets. The moves that occur most frequently are move 2, move 3, and move 4, making them the mandatory moves. The results could assist English as a Foreign Language (EFL) instructors in instructing and preparing their students to write the abstract section. Additionally, it could enhance the effectiveness of EFL students in composing well-organized abstract sections and improve researchers' understanding and sensitivity while crafting their thesis abstracts.

Keywords: *EFL; genre analysis; moves; thesis abstract*

1. Introduction

Writing a thesis is an obligation for undergraduate students to complete their studies and obtain a bachelor's degree. In this case, the abstract is part of the thesis which is considered very important. In writing abstracts, a writer must have sufficient understanding of rhetorical movements in order to produce a good abstract (Amnuai, 2019). Furthermore, when given to the reader, the abstract represents the heart of the research being reported and contains all of the information from the full study. According to Sidek, Matsaad, and Idris (2016), an excellent abstract will interest readers and persuade them to read the complete thesis. An abstract is also a representation of a paper. As a result, after reading the abstract, the reader should have a good understanding of the issues explored, the theme's objective, and the

research findings. Over the years, various researches have conducted studies on abstract section compared to other sections of academic texts (Amnuai 2019, Noorizadeh-Honami & Chalak, 2018, Majid & Omid 2018, and Alyousef 2021). The popularity of the abstract in academic writing might be attributed to the fact that the abstract has a significant impact on a study. As a result, unlike other passages that simply provide a few specifics about the passage, an abstract provides the audience with an idea of the essential ideas of the work.

Several challenges arise when considering the application and understanding of theory in academic texts, as well as how to effectively utilize these strategies to explain ideas in academic writings, specifically when writing abstracts. Similarly, several individuals encounter difficulties while attempting to articulate their ideas and thoughts proficiently within the context of academic writing. Consequently, the thesis abstracts written by the students are identical copies. In addition, they possess inadequate academic writing skills, and their supervisors fail to consider well-crafted thesis abstracts (Arono, 2019). Consequently, there is a significant demand for genre research, specifically focused on writing abstracts, to tackle students' inadequate comprehension of how to effectively and precisely compose abstracts that encompass all essential elements.

In recent years there has been much attention to genre-centered approaches such as written and spoken discourse analysis in the field of applied linguistics. The genre analysis carried out in this research only focuses on the analysis of written discourse, namely in writing thesis abstracts. Indeed, there are several studies investigating the construction of abstract schemas written by native and non-native authors. However, based on researchers' knowledge, most research only focuses on writing research articles; few focus on thesis writing, especially in the abstract section. Therefore, the researchers hope and believe that the findings from this research will really help ESP, EFL, and EAP teachers in instructing their novice students on schematic patterns for writing thesis abstracts and students can then utilize the models found in their abstract writing and make it easier for them to write abstracts.

Using the abstract writing model proposed by Hyland (2000), this study aims to disclose the writing structure or move patterns found in the thesis abstracts of students majoring in English Education at all universities in Aceh. In addition, using a model created by Huttner (2010), this study intends to determine the frequency of all move patterns contained in the thesis abstracts of students majoring in English Education at all universities in Aceh.

2. Literature Review

Since Swales (1990, 2004) pioneers a genre-based approach to evaluate the rhetorical structure (organization of moves) of research articles, a great deal of scholarship has focused on the structure of academic writing. The CARS (Create a Research Space) model (Swales, 1990, 2004) has provided a precise framework that illustrates the communicative objective of the introductory paragraphs of a research paper, prompting many researchers to do deeper research in this field of study.

Abstracts provide a concise overview of the objectives and findings of a research study and are considered a significant academic undertaking (Seidlhofer, 1995). Furthermore, it establishes the criterion by which manuscripts are evaluated by esteemed members of the academic community before publication (Marefat & Mohamadzadeh, 2013). Understanding the

fundamental framework would ostensibly assist novice members in grasping the criteria necessary to provide precise synopses of their academic publications (Ren & Li, 2011).

Various models have been proposed to elucidate the rhetorical structure of abstracts. The IMRD framework, which stands for Introduction-Method-Results-Discussion, was created by Swales in 1990. Bhatia (1993) proposes several processes, including introducing objectives, detailing methods, summarizing outcomes, and providing conclusions. In addition, Santos (1996) puts up a comprehensive five-step methodology comprising the following stages: contextualizing the study, presenting the research, elucidating the methodology, summarizing the findings, and discussing the implications. Hyland (2000) proposes a five-step framework that encompasses the introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion of these notions.

In investigating the introduction of research articles and other sections of research articles in various disciplines, this approach has been applied (Basturkmen, 2012). Although great emphasis has been placed on studying research papers in academic writing, little focus has been paid to thesis writing, particularly the thesis abstract part. According to Paltridge & Starfield (2019), dissertations and theses differ from research articles in terms of goal, audience, assessment, breadth, and requirements that students must meet. The genre analysis of abstract writing in Aceh is recently done by Nazar (2021), focusing solely on thesis abstract writing at Muhammadiyah University of Aceh.

Due to the study's constraints, the researchers contend that further investigation into approaches for producing thesis abstracts is necessary. Consequently, scholars will persist in investigating strategies for composing thesis abstracts across all institutions in Aceh. The objective is for each campus in Aceh to possess cutting-edge expertise in abstract writing, serve as a benchmark for crafting high-quality thesis abstracts, and establish standardized formats or schemes.

3. Research Method

To fulfill the goals of this study, a qualitative approach is used. Qualitative research is a means of exploring and comprehending the significance that individuals or groups place on social or human problems. Data acquired in the participant's environment, data analysis constructed inductively from specific topics to broad themes, and the author's interpretation of the data are all parts of the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2016). As a result, in this study, a qualitative technique is employed to match empirical findings with theory utilizing descriptive methods. In order to compute and demonstrate movement patterns, descriptive statistics is employed to gather the necessary database. Qualitative data also aid in providing an in-depth view of the general structure of the text under consideration.

3.1 Sites for research

The researchers look at the thesis abstracts of English majors at five Aceh universities: Ar-Raniry State Islamic University, Syiah Kuala University in Banda Aceh, Lhokseumawe State Islamic Institute in Lhokseumawe, Cot Kala State Islamic Institute, and Samudera University in Langsa.

3.2 Subjects and Objects of Study

The researchers select the research samples by random sampling. As a result, the sample for this study is 50 thesis abstracts from five public universities in Aceh. The researchers select ten abstracts from all universities. Meanwhile, the purpose of this study is to examine the writing structure employed by students when writing their thesis abstracts. To maintain research ethics, the researchers request permission from each university before using data for this study. As a result, the title and author of the thesis remain anonymous in this study.

3.3 Instrument for Research

The research instrument is a technique for collecting data from study participants on a certain topic. Document analysis is the approach used to obtain data. Additionally, in this study, the researchers examine written papers, specifically thesis abstracts of English Language Education Department students from all Aceh universities.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

Documentation is employed to collect data for this investigation. The following are the stages of the data collection process: first, the researchers create a calendar to schedule visits to each university/institution's library; second, the researchers visit Banda Aceh University libraries, including UIN Ar-Raniry and Syiah Kuala University. The researchers next go to IAIN Lhokseumawe's library, then to Langsa to gather samples from IAIN Cot Kala and Samudera University.

3.5 Data analysis technique

To analyze the data for this study, the qualitative analysis techniques outlined by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2013) are used. Three phases are taken in the data analysis for this study: data condensation, data visualization, and generating findings.

- **Condensation of Data**

The researchers attempt to concentrate and simplify the data derived from the sample, typically the thesis abstract, during the data condensation procedure. The researchers next start categorizing data from the condensed sample.

- **Data visualization**

Following the coding procedure, the data obtained are converted into text. The first analysis is the analysis of the moves. Moves and steps are analyzed using the "abstract" movement structure framework (Hyland, 2000). Furthermore, the sequence of movements created by students in writing their thesis abstracts are also analyzed.

Move	Function
Introduction	Establishing context of the paper and motivating the research or discussion
Purpose	Indicating purpose, thesis or hypothesis, outlining the intension behind the paper
Method	Providing information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc.
Product	Stating main findings or results, the argument, or what is accomplished.
Conclusion	Interpreting or extending results beyond scope of paper, draws inferences, pointing to applications or wider implications.

Figure 1. Hyland's Framework

Once the movements and steps have been discovered, their frequency is examined to determine the amount to which a given movement or step is used. The criteria are utilized to determine the frequency of moves and steps involved in creating a thesis abstract. (Huttner, 2010) classifies movements into four categories based on frequency of occurrence: (a) obligatory, (b) core, (c) ambiguous, and (d) optional. Both techniques are useful for examining a thesis' abstract part. The results of both analyses are then integrated to provide a solid research outcome. Finally, the conclusions of this study is disclosed.

Frequency of occurrence	Status	Comment
90%-100%	Obligatory	genre exemplar usually considered inappropriate or in some way "flawed" without this move
50%-89%	Core	typical of the genre, considered part of an appropriate and acceptable genre exemplar
30%-49%	Ambiguous	status can only be decided with further expert information – can be core or optional, acceptable or unacceptable (Phase 2 decisive)
1%-29%	Optional	not considered a typical feature of genre, can be considered an acceptable addition (=truly optional) move or inacceptable (-> Phase 2 decisive)

Figure 2. Guidelines for Determining the Status of Moves. (Huttner, 2010)

- **Creating Conclusions**

The data gathered in this step are utilized to present the verification. Then, by focusing on verification, study findings can be drawn. In summary, the researchers classify each of the two analytical models used in this study, namely generic structure analysis and similarity/frequency analysis.

4. Results and Discussion

The first analysis is the analysis of communicative units or moves in the abstract section of the these in the corpus of this study. In terms of moves structure, the researchers find that all abstracts' sections in all datasets have not completely followed Hyland's) model, and there is the absence of some moves in some abstract sections. The findings of the move structure are explained below.

Abstracts	Moves Structure	Number of moves	Average move
Dataset1 USK			
A1	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	4,1
A2	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A3	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A4	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A5	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A6	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A7	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A8	M2-M3-M5-M4	4	

A9	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A10	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
Dataset 2 UIN			
A11	M2-M3-M4	3	
A12	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A13	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A14	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A15	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	4
A16	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A17	M2-M3-M4	3	
A18	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A19	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A20	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
Datasets 3 IAIN Lhokseumawe			
A21	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A22	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A23	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A24	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A25	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	4,4
A26	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A27	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A28	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A29	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A30	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
Dataset 4 Samudera			
A31	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A32	M2-M3-M4	3	
A33	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A34	M2-M3-M4	3	
A35	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A36	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	3,8
A37	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A38	M2-M3-M4	3	
A39	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	
A40	M2-M3-M4	3	
Dataset 5 Cot Kala			
A41	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5	5	
A42	M2-M3-M4	3	
A43	M2-M3-M4-M5	4	3,8
A44	M2-M3-M4	3	
A45	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A46	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	

A47	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A48	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	
A49	M2-M3-M4	3	
A50	M1-M2-M3-M4	4	

Table 1. Move Structure in all datasets

The move structure, as seen in Table 1 above, is shown through the list of moves of the abstract section in all datasets of this study. It is obvious that the number of moves in each abstract is various ranging from 3 to 5 moves, including unusual ordering patterns. Additionally, there are several linear patterns; (M1-M2-M3-M4-M5) could be found in the collection of data above. All of the abstract are created in several different ways as well as not all of the abstract above occupy the move and step following Hyland's model. The starting point of all abstracts sections of all datasets are with the patterns of M1-M2-M3 (A1, A2, A10, A12, A13, A14, A16, A19, A20, A22, A23, A24, A25, A26, A27, A28, A29, A30, A31, A33, A35, A37, A41, A45, A46, A47, A48, A50) and M2-M3-M4 (A4, A5, A6, A7, A8, A9, A11, A15, A17, A18, A21, A32, A34, A36, A38, A39, A40, A42, A43, A44, A49) to organize their information, followed by M4 Later on in all datasets. Later, there are several abstracts (A3, A4, A5, A6, A7, A9, A10, A12, A15, A16, A18, A21, A23, A24, A26, A27, A31, A35, A36, A39, A41, A43) that end with M5 (conclusion).

The variation among the abstracts section of theses in different datasets in terms of the number of moves is not significant; the average number of moves ranges from 3,8 in datasets 4 and 5 to 4,4 in datasets 3. The variation is not significant in the internal of datasets; the moves is ranging from 3 – 5 moves in each dataset. It seems that the number of moves in the abstracts section of these depends on the supervisor of their theses. Thus, it seems that there is not yet any standard structure of move in the abstract section or the students and their supervisor of the theses are not knowledgeable on the structure of the theses abstract.

The moves and steps identified in the Discussion sections of undergraduate theses are described in the previous sections. The second analysis is the analysis of the frequency of the moves of the abstracts in all datasets.

Moves	Datasets (N= 50)
M1: Introduction	28 (56%)
M2: Purpose	50 (100%)
M3: Method	50 (100%)
M4: Product	50 (100%)
M5: Conclusion	22 (44%)

Table 2. Frequency of All Moves in All Datasets.

Table 2 above shows the overall frequency of the abstract section's moves across all datasets. Move 2 (Reporting Results), Move 3 (Method), and Move 4 (Product) are obligatory (100%), the most frequent move of all the moves identified in all datasets in all 50 abstracts. The second most frequent of all the moves identified is move 1, Introduction (28 occurrences, 56%) and it is classified as Core. The third or the least frequent move of all the moves is Move 5, Conclusion (22 occurrences, 44%) and it is categorized as Ambiguous.

This study investigates the Generic form of the Undergraduate thesis Abstract section in Aceh universities. The move-step analysis is carried out using Hyland's analytical framework, and all identified moves are characterized as obligatory, Core, ambiguous, or optional using Huttner's move-step categorization criteria. The movement analysis results offer light on the organization of abstract parts in undergraduate theses throughout Aceh's universities. Overall, it is revealed that certain abstract parts' move structure is linear with Hyland's analytical framework, while others are not. Instead, all the writers appear to have a lot of freedom in constructing their discussion sections, both in terms of personal tastes and the section's communication goal.

The move-step analysis reveals that Moves 2, 3, and 4 are classed as obligatory moves because they are included in all datasets. The current findings are consistent with those of Amnuai (2019) and Majid and Omid (2019) who find that those moves are categorized as obligatory moves. It can be interpreted that all students consider these moves as must-write moves when writing the abstract of their research. Nevertheless, other moves, Core, ambiguous, and optional classification, are also found meaningful in the thesis abstract. Introduction (M1) is discovered to be core in this study because it does not appear in every Abstract in all datasets.

5. Conclusion

From the results and discussion of this study as discussed above, several conclusions can be drawn. In terms of the move structure of abstract sections, the study discovers that several of them have a linear move pattern according to Hyland's model, and there is the absence of some moves in some abstract's sections. The most dominant moves found in the abstract section of the datasets are Move 2, Move 3, and move 4, making them as an obligatory move. and other two moves are classified as core (move 1) and ambiguous (Move 5).

The findings can lead to important conclusions. From a pedagogical aspect, incorporating the thesis genre into the curriculum would be a viable option for second-language teachers. To complete academic writing, for example, students must be made aware of the discourse community's standards and encouraged or instructed to detect structural complexities and links between functions and language usage. The findings are expected to help L2 non-native learners, particularly those under increasing pressure to complete their thesis, producing a successful thesis. Authors must relate their findings to a larger audience and cultural context when writing a thesis. Understanding the rhetorical form of the thesis, particularly the abstract section, which works primarily to emphasize and generalize research findings to the general audience, would help novice writers organize their work in a way that increases their chances of approval.

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