

Analysis of Move and Linguistic Features in Indonesian and English Humanities Dissertation Abstracts

A Comparative Study

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ABSTRACT

Move analysis investigates the rhetorical patterns of texts, mostly in academic writing. This approach focuses on the communicative purposes and rhetorical strategies referred to as moves and steps. The present study aims to disclose whether the authors' backgrounds affect the rhetorical organization of dissertation abstracts. Embracing the corpus-based approach, this study analyzed 120 humanities abstracts from a total of four universities in England and Indonesia. Hyland's (2000) model was adopted as the analysis guideline. The present study revealed that Introduction – Purpose – Method – Product are the most common patterns in both data groups. Further comparative research on this particular topic with different subjects of data is suggested.

Keywords: *Academic writing, dissertation abstract, move analysis*

1. INTRODUCTION

The field of humanities focuses on subjects that are associated with humans' behavior and ways of thinking in the social environment. Humanities students are exposed to the complex moral issue and are able to gain insights about what goes on in the mind of human beings (Strauss, 2017). Through studying within the humanities discipline, people can also be aware of different cultures which will introduce them to various ways of thinking and delivering ideas.

As an important tool in conveying knowledge, academic writing has become a notable genre and received considerable attention in genre analysis (Al-Khasawneh, 2017). It is believed to give a significant contribution to the development of various fields of study (Hyland, 2000) through various types of academic writings.

Student theses and dissertations as scientific sources are defined as pieces of writing that are described logically based on the results of certain scientific observations (Jeon & Eun, 2007). As a requirement for the highest academic degree, there are several key points that should be present in a dissertation – originality and good flow of ideas. Thus, the results of the observations in dissertation are usually organized into several parts. "The originality of the research work and the conformity

to the writing conventions of the academic community increase the likelihood that the authors' claims of new knowledge receive acceptance and recognition" (El-Dakhs, 2018, p. 1).

As part of any student theses, abstract is supposed to represent the whole paper in a brief but clear way. It acts as the 'selling-point' as it becomes readers' first encounter with the text and is often the point where "they decide whether to continue and give the accompanying article further attention or to ignore it" (Hyland, 2000, p. 63). As an attempt to reach a larger audience, many educational institutions also require their students and researchers to not only write the abstracts in their national or official language, but also in English. This might not be a problem for native English speakers, but it could be a challenge for those whose first language is not English.

However, in any languages, abstract is designed to serve the same purpose, which is to achieve a set of communicative purposes (Hyland, 2000; Swales & Feak, 2009). Thus, it needs to be well written and organized in either languages. With regard to this matter, one of the most proper tools to help students in the conveyance of ideas is known as move analysis.

Some comparative studies of this particular topic had their primary focus on specific genre and settings such

as Research Articles (RAs) of American and Iranian (Chalak & Norouzi, 2013) in the field of language studies, and in the writings of American and Chinese (Li, 2011). Some other studies also conducted the same topic of research by using different students' paper such as Loan & Pramoolsook (2016) from Vietnam, and Ebadi, Salman, Nguyen, & Weisi (2019) from Iraq, who both compared the abstracts of their local master students to International counterparts. These studies revealed that the *Product* move appears more frequently in international students' writings.

The fact that the cultural background of the authors may influence their writing, it also seems necessary to conduct this study in a different cultural context. Thus, this present study aimed to explore the rhetorical structure of the dissertation of high-ranked universities in England and Indonesia – which seems to be neglected in the area of move analysis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Move analysis is a framework derived from genre analysis which is used to examine the generic structure of writing. This analytical tool was proposed by Swales in 1980s who suggests that there are two elements in abstracts, namely moves and steps. Move is an element that has a specified target within the text and it is divided into some types based on the function of the text, and it may contain a combination of multiple smaller elements that will realize the move itself (Connor, Upton & Kanoksilapatham, 2007). These elements are known as steps. Several models were proposed by many researchers after Swales. One of the most used schema is from Hyland (2000) which is outlined in Table 1.

This schema suggests five moves and thirteen steps. The first move is Introduction (M1) which functions to establish the context of the paper as well as to motivate the discussion. The second move, which is Purpose (M2), indicates the objectives, thesis or hypothesis of the research, and outlines the intention behind the paper. Method (M3) as the third move provides information on the design, procedures, assumptions, and data of the study. The fourth move, Product (M4), states the main findings, arguments, and any other things that are accomplished through the study. The last move is Conclusion (M5) which where researchers interpret or extend the results beyond scope of paper, draw inferences, points to applications or wider implications (Hyland, 2000).

3. METHODS

Using Hyland's (2000) model as the main guideline, this study applied a descriptive comparative qualitative approach.

Table 1. Hyland's (2000) model of rhetorical moves

Move	Step	Label
Introduction (I)	1	Arguing for topic significance or prominences
	2	Making topic generalizations: what is currently known
	3	Defining the key term(s)
	4	Identifying the gap
Purpose (P)	5	Stating general and/or specific purpose of the research including the hypothesis
Method (M)	6	Describing participants
	7	Describing instrument(s)
	8	Describing procedure and context
Product (Pr)	9	Describing the main specific findings of the research
Conclusion (C)	10	Deducing conclusions from results by commenting on or interpreting the results, or deducing claims from the results
	11	Evaluating the significance or contribution of the research
	12	Stating limitation
	13	Presenting recommendations or implications

A collection of abstracts written in English were randomly selected from linguistics, literature, and law dissertation that were approved between 2014 and 2019 in highly ranked universities in Indonesia and England. The ranking published by Menristekdikti and QS World University in 2019 were used as the guideline in choosing the institutions. Four universities were chosen for this study: *Universitas Gadjah Mada*, *Universitas Indonesia*, University of Oxford, and the University of Cambridge.

There are 120 abstracts in total - 30 from each institution – collected by accessing the repository of each university. This number is considered enough to represent the general pattern of dissertation abstracts in the two cultural settings.

In the analysis process, *AntMover* was used as a tool for this study. The analysis started with saving all of the collected abstracts in plain text files by using notepad since it is the only eligible format for the software. By using *AntMover*, the files were then automatically segmented into sentences and were given a label according to the step number. However, since the accuracy level of this software is maximum, the results of the automatic analysis needed to be rechecked manually. After the revision, if the result of moves and steps are already considered as correct, the data were saved and compiled into one Microsoft Office Excel file to be tabulated in order to see the appearance of the steps.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis showed that Indonesian abstracts tend to manifest more sentences compared to the English counterparts. The frequency of the moves and steps of each group is influenced by the total number of sentences in the abstracts.

4.1. The Occurrence of Moves and Steps

All of the five moves were revealed to be exhibited with different level of occurrence. M4 – *Product* is revealed to dominate the other four moves in both data group while M5 – *Conclusion* was the least compared realized move. These findings are presented in Figure 1.

There is a very slight gap (0.60%) between the occurrence of M4 between the two groups of data. In other words, out of 1,487 sentences in total, this move was employed in 678 sentences or in more than 45% of data. This means that on average, each abstract has at least about 5 sentences to present the research products. This finding contrasts with Li (2011) who argued that the results of a study are only explained briefly in the abstract. In fact, as suggested by El-Dakhs (2018), a move that occupies more than two-fifths of the total data should not be described as “brief”. It leads to a conclusion that despite different cultural settings, dissertation authors seem to be aware of presenting their findings as clear as possible, even in the limited space of abstracts.

This study has also revealed that there is variation in the use of M4. In addition to conveying the results of a study, M4 was also used to give an outline of the whole research, especially in the English data group. The two functions of M4 are represented in these following examples.

1) Example 1

The findings show that classifications of dolanan songs and their underlying linguistic constructions reveal certain elements of knowledge in the Javanese community. (Abstract 3, Universitas Gadjah Mada)

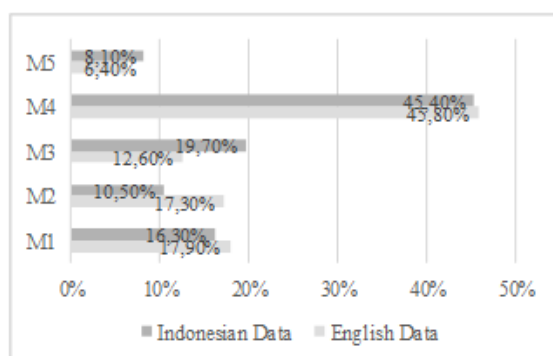


Figure 1 Move occurrences in dissertation abstracts.

2) Example 2

Chapter 3 discusses the Finnish second - position clitics - hAn and - pA as well as an array of Japanese sentence - final particles, showing that their pragmatic contribution is best understood through notions relating to discourse participants, and that this implies the presence of a speech act - related layer above the CP. (Abstract 7, University of Cambridge)

While Indonesian abstracts used this move to directly describe the results of as illustrated in Example 1, abstracts of the English group also use M4 – *Product* to inform the reader that the discussion of their research findings is divided into several parts, by using an expression such as “Chapter 3 discusses the Finnish second-position clitics ...” as portrayed in Example 2.

On the other hand, a significant contrast in the realization of M2 – *Purpose*, and M3 – *Method* were also found. M2 was revealed to be utilized more frequently in the English data. In contrast, Indonesian abstracts were exposed to employ more M3 compared to the English data group. This finding aligns with Pasavoravate (2011) from Thailand who also showed that local students tend to give more concern in presenting the Method move (M3) compared to the international students. Meanwhile, there was no considerable frequency gap found in the occurrence of M1 – *Introduction* between both groups of data. Examples 3, 4, and 5 show the examples of these moves.

3) Example 3

Regarding to this phenomenon, the research aims to reconstruct Indonesian educational concepts delivered by the six presidents of Indonesia in their presidential speeches. (Abstract 5, Universitas Indonesia, M2)

4) Example 4

This project uses corpus linguistics and geo-statistics to test the sociolinguistic typological theory put forward by Peter Trudgill on the history of Norwegian. (Abstract 4, University of Cambridge, M3).

5) Example 5

Voicing the Supernatural in Anglo-Saxon England' is a study of the representation of supernatural voices in Anglo-Saxon literature, with a special emphasis on Old English poetry. (Abstract 19, University of Oxford, M1)

The purpose move has an obvious signal word, which is ‘aim’ as presented in Example 3. Meanwhile, Examples 4 and 5 were classified as the method and introduction moves by interpreting the sense of the sentences first. Since example 4 presents information regarding the research frameworks used in the study (i.e. corpus linguistics and geo-statistics), thus it is classified as the *Method* move. As for Example 5, it is categorized as the *Introduction* move since it seems to define the key term of the research topic.

As a further analysis, the use of subsequent steps of each move were revealed to be varied across data. Figure 3 illustrates the summary of steps occurrences in both groups of abstracts.

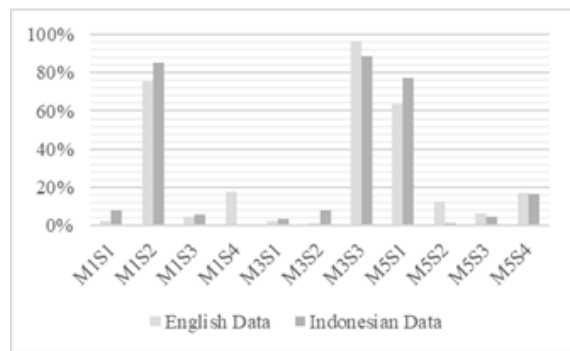


Figure 2 Steps occurrences in dissertation abstracts.

It is revealed that M1S2 – *Making topic generalization*, M3S3 – *Describing procedure and context*, and M5S1 – *Deducing conclusions* dominated the other steps in each of their respective moves for both Indonesian and English data.

M1S2 occupied the highest number of M1 – *Introduction* in all 120 abstracts. Referring to Figure 3, this step was realized 105 times in Indonesian data (85.4%) and 99 times in the English data group (76.2%). The use of M1S2 in dissertation abstracts is represented in the following example.

6) Example 6

It has been admitted that good translation is a translation effortlessly accessed and understood, nevertheless, good translation is not so easily achieved as this will depend on the translator and the objective of the translation. (Abstract 11, Universitas Gadjah Mada)

Example 6 shows how the author introduces the topic of their study. “It has been admitted that good translation is a translation effortlessly accessed and understood...” as portrayed in Example 6 contains information about the general idea of translation. This kind of sentence is classified as M1S2 – *Making topic generalization*.

Analysis also showed that M3S3 – *Describing procedure and context* dominated the other two subsequent steps of the *Method* move. This following excerpt demonstrates the realization of this particular step.

7) Example 7

For my analysis I employ Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), a non - derivational framework which is particularly well - suited to account for languages in which grammatical functions are not tied to specific phrase structural positions, due to its parallel architecture. (Abstract 2, University of Oxford)

As shown in Example 7, the analytical framework used for the study, i.e. Lexical Functional Grammar (LFG), is defined. Such sentence describes the method of the study, so it is categorized as the *Method* move, specifically as M3S3 – *Describing context and*

procedure. It appears that dissertation abstracts writers tend to prefer sparing spaces to give descriptions of the research contexts and procedures in the abstracts. This is pointed out by the appearance of M3S3 – *Describing procedure and context* which exceeds 80% in both data groups, so much more compared to M3S1 – *Describing participants* and M3S2 – *Describing instrument(s)*. This distinction is possibly due to how most of the research topics in the selected disciplines require neither participants nor research instruments.

The next dominating steps is M5S1. This step was revealed to be more common in the Indonesian data group. The example of M5S1 – *Deducing conclusions* is presented in the following example.

8) Example 8

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the frequency of nouns referring to women and the recurrent patterns of the noun co-occurring with other words are the way that language naturalizes the concept of women. (Abstract 9, Universitas Indonesia)

Example 8 shows an example of M5S1. This step is signaled by the word ‘conclude’ as illustrated in Example 8, and usually comes after general findings and toward the end of the abstract.

On the other hand, a vast gap were identified in the occurrence of M1S4 – *Identifying gap* between the two data groups. This step was identified to occur 23 times in the English data. The number varied across subjects with the highest number of use in the literature dissertation abstracts (9 times of occurrence). This step is not really common to occur in the Indonesian data. Out of all M1 identified, only one sentence could be classified as this specific step from 60 abstracts of the Indonesian group. The following are examples of *gap identification* in the dissertation abstracts.

9) Example 9

This study provides the first critical history of British developments in phonetic science from 1890 to the beginning of the Second World War. (Abstract 3, University of Oxford)

Example 9 shows how research gap is being described in the abstracts through the sentence written in bold. The lack of use of this particular step leads to the conclusion that Indonesian scholars may not be aware yet of the importance of identifying research gaps in their study.

4.2. The Salience of Moves and Steps

Following Kanoksilapatham (2005), the moves are considered optional if they appear in less than 66% of the abstracts, conventional if the appearances are 66%-99%, and obligatory only if reach 100% of appearances. Table II illustrates the nature of each move in the analyzed fields of study. Each subject in each data group consists of 20 abstracts.

Table 2. Move salience in dissertation abstracts

Move	English Data			Indonesian Data		
	Lit.	Ling.	Law	Lit.	Ling.	Law
1	85%	70%	85%	60%	60%	65%
2	95%	100%	85%	95%	90%	90%
3	90%	60%	30%	100%	75%	80%
4	100%	90%	85%	95%	100%	70%
5	65%	35%	35%	55%	20%	60%

This study found a variation in the status of each move, both across subjects and between the origin of affiliations as represented in Table II. M1 – Introduction was revealed to be a conventional move in the English data and optional in the Indonesian data group. Meanwhile, M5 – Conclusion was found as an optional move in both groups.

This finding contrast with Loan & Pramoolsook (2016) who found that M5 is a conventional move (occurrences between 66%-99%) in TESOL graduate thesis abstracts. However, the finding of the present study aligns with several previous studies which also claimed that M5 is an optional move in the abstract. The studies are from Ghasempour & Farnia (2017) who analyzed the research article (RA) abstracts of Law; Nasser & Nematollahi (2014) who studied magister thesis abstracts in the Applied Linguistics field; and Pasavoravate (2011) who examined the post-graduates students' – magister and doctoral – thesis abstracts in the Linguistics field. Thus, this study concludes that there might be different agreements between disciplines regarding the obligation to present conclusions in the abstracts.

In addition, the analysis has also found a variety in the patterns of moves realization in the studied abstracts. This study found there is an abstract that only used one move, but there are also abstracts that realize all of the five moves as proposed by Hyland (2000). This finding is summarized on Table 3.

This study shows that there is a similarity between the English and Indonesian data groups in terms of move-based configuration. The analysis revealed that the four-move configuration with Introduction – Purpose – Method – Product pattern was apparently the most occurring pattern in the dissertation abstracts of both groups. It is also evident that dissertation writers tend to be aware of the importance of presenting their research findings in the abstracts. This is pointed out by the number of abstracts that featured M4 – Product as presented in Table 3 and also its occurrences which occupied the highest frequency as presented in Figure 2.

Table 3. Results of the move-based configuration

Config.	English Data		Indonesian Data	
	Pattern	No. of Abstracts	Pattern	No. of Abstracts
1M	N/A		1(n)	1
2Ms	2(n)-4(n) other	5 3	2-4(n) other	3 2
3Ms	1(n)-2-1-4(n) 1(n)-2(n)-4(n) 2-3(n)-4(n) 2(n)-1-2(n)-4(n) 2(n)-3(n)-5(n) other	4 3 3 2 1 5	2(n)-3(n)-4(n) 2(n)-3(n)-5(n) Other	6 1 7
4Ms	1(n)-2-3-4(n) 2(n)-3-4(n)-5 2-1-3(n)-4(n) other	3 3 1 14	1(n)-2-3(n)-4(n) 2-3-4-5 2-1-3(n)-4(n) 2(n)-3-4(n)-5(n) 2-(3-4)n-5(n) 1(n)-2-3(n)-5(n) other	12 1 1 6 2 2 7
5Ms	2-1-3-4(n)-5 1(n)-2(n)-3(n)-4(n)-5(n) 2-1(n)-2(n)-3(n)-4(n)-5(n) other	1 1 2 8	1-2(n)-3-4(n)-5 2-1-3-4(n)-5(n) other	6 1 2

M=Move; Ms=Moves; (n)=repeated

5. CONCLUSION

Although many scholars suggested that different cultural settings might affects the way people write (Al-Ali & Sahawneh, 2011; Kaplan, 1966; Taylor & Chen as cited in Li, 2011), this study has shown that there are not much differences or contrasts between two groups of data belonging to two different cultural settings. However, the findings of the current study could be used as a reference or guide for academic writers in writing research abstracts, principally student thesis abstracts.

Having solved all of the research problems and achieved the objectives of the study, the present research has merely drawn the conclusions from a limited set of data. The claims and the conclusions made in this study cannot be applied in the general context of dissertation abstract writings. Thus, to be able to make a more comprehensive conclusion, it is suggested for further researchers to expand the analysis of rhetorical moves in dissertation abstracts by adding the data from more universities and more various disciplines or subjects.

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