

# A Comparative Study on Rhetorical Moves of IJAL's Abstracts Written by UPI's Lecturers and by UPI-Other Indonesian Universities' Lecturers

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## ABSTRACT

A well-written abstract is considered as the reflection of a qualified journal article which can be read by academic readers. It also serves as a determining point whether the reader decides to continue reading the text. Some of the previous studies examined abstracts based on the background of the writers as an expert-novice and a native- non-native. Meanwhile, this study presents research in progress on rhetorical moves of accepted research article (RA) abstracts, influenced by the different forms of collaboration which may have different realizations of abstract rhetorical patterns and linguistic features, i.e., voice and tense. Six abstracts of Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL) articles published in 2020 and 2021 were selected. The selected abstracts are compared based on Hyland's (2000) theory of rhetorical move analysis. The data are taken from those written by lecturers of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and those by UPI's lecturers and other Indonesian universities' lecturers. The results of this study revealed differences in rhetorical moves and steps. On the other hand, the linguistics features in selected abstracts showed similarities in terms of tense and voice. Implications of the present research findings to English for academic writing courses and journal writing workshops will be discussed.

**Keywords:** Accepted journal articles, collaboration forms, IJAL's abstracts, rhetorical moves analysis

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing has "a formal tone and style", specifically in the use of appropriate language, tenses, and voices (University of Leeds' Library, 2021). Formal language is usually discovered in academic writing, which is characterized by the absence of colloquial expressions, slang words, and shortening form. Present and past tenses are also found in academic writing; for instance, past tense is used when the author wants to describe the method of a study, while present tense is used to elaborate conclusion. In terms of voice, academic writing does not only use active form, but also passive one.

Among the various types of academic writing, journal articles can be easily found and commonly used as one of the references of a study. Based on Bailey (2014), the common types of academic writing are notes, report, project, essay, dissertation/thesis, journal article, and paper. One type of academic writing that will be explored

in this study is a journal article, which may have abstract, introduction, literature review, findings and discussion, conclusion, acknowledgements, and references.

Abstract is one of the most pivotal parts in a journal article. According to Salager-Mayer's work (1990), as cited in Hyland (2000), an abstract has to reproduce the structuring of the full paper, reflecting the moves which are fundamental and obligatory in the process of scientific inquiry and patterns of thought. From this statement, it can be seen that an abstract has its own moves in organizing the main idea of a journal article, which can be analyzed further.

In order to analyze an abstract, rhetorical moves analysis is applied. As cited in Kurniawan, Lubis Suhendri and Danuwijaya (2019, p. 186), Biber, Connor and Upton (2007) stated that move analysis is "a method in analyzing the rhetorical moves of a written or spoken discourse by examining the linguistic realizations of each move". The sentences in abstract are divided into some categories named moves, which represent the

communicative purposes of abstract through some strategies called steps.

This research in progress is novel due to these following reasons: (1) It will reveal the different patterns of rhetorical moves and linguistic features because of the different collaboration; and (2) It can fill in the gaps from previous studies by exploring authors' background from different forms of collaboration.

Different forms of collaboration in journal articles, specifically in constructing abstract, may affect different writing styles in terms of move-steps pattern and linguistics features of the abstract. Authors' different backgrounds may have different rules and habituation in expressing their ideas into writing.

Therefore, this study is intended to compare and contrast the rhetorical moves and some linguistic features of selected journal article abstracts from Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL) written by lecturers of Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and those by UPI's lecturers and other Indonesian universities' lecturers.

**1.1. Move - Step Structure in RA Abstracts**

Abstracts are not written in a freeform mode due to its prominent presence in academic fields. Hence, a rhetorical structure which is set to the organization and corresponds to the content of the text is utilized. Moves denote the defined and bounded communicative act that functions to define "one main communicative objective of the whole text" (Lorés, 2004, p.4). An existing model proposed by Hyland (2000) includes five moves (can be seen in Table 1): Introduction– establishes context of the paper, Purpose– indicates purpose, hypothesis, outlines the intention behind the paper, Method– provides information on design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc, Product– states the main findings, results, arguments or what was accomplished through the paper, and Conclusion– interprets or extends the results beyond the scope of the paper, draws inference, points to implications or any wider applications. Each move is identified by their characteristic of functions and the smaller elements it embodies.

Regarding the use of move structure into the abstracts, it is noted that one abstract does not necessarily include every move in the structure or strictly follow the sequence of the proposed model. To further deepen the rhetorical persuasion of RA abstract, variation to the move structures is used in a specific pattern sequence to underline the main outcomes of the paper to gain interest and acceptance of the reader (Hyland, 2000). In general, Purpose – Method – Product (P-M-Pr) and Introduction – Purpose – Product (I-P-Pr) are two of the most frequently used sequences, with the obvious pattern of

**Table 1.** Hyland's (2000) Model of Rhetorical Moves in Research Article

Move	Step
Introduction (I)	Step 1 – Arguing for topic significance Step 2 – Making topic generalization Step 3 – Defining the key term(s) Step 4 – Identifying gap
Purpose (P)	Stating the research purpose
Method (M)	Step 1 – Describing participants/data sources Step 2 – Describing instrument(s) Step 3 – Describing procedure and context
Product (Pr)	Describing the main results
Conclusion (C)	Step 1 – Deducing conclusion Step 2 – Evaluating the significance of the research Step 3 – Stating limitation Step 4 – Presenting recommendation or implication

Purpose and Product present on the RA abstract. In addition, the I-P-Pr model is the general preference among humanities and social science authors. The use of structures varies across disciplines and might be different from one institution's style of writing to another.

**1.2. Linguistic Realization of RA Abstracts**

Writing, in particular, is frequently perceived as 'autonomous,' different, and inconsequential to knowledge production (Aitchison & Lee, 2007). To put it another way, many people do not prioritize writing, which turns this into a pedagogical concern. Nonetheless, as the university sector expands, this concern is becoming more widely acknowledged. Many studies have been undertaken over the decades with the goal of assisting novice writers' academic literacy, one of which is looking at linguistic features related to rhetorical moves in RAs.

In a past study, Khany and Malmir (2019) discovered disciplinary tense variations in the moves of RA abstracts. Tankó (2017), for example, revealed that simple present and present perfect tense are usually employed in presenting the research gap of literary RA abstracts in a previous study. Meanwhile, Khany and Malmir's (2019) findings showed that in social sciences RA abstracts, simple present passive and present perfect passive were commonly employed in indicating the research gap.

**1.3. Previous Studies on RA Abstracts**

A large number of previous studies have explored rhetorical structures of abstracts (see Lubis & Kurniawan, 2020 for comprehensive literature review). A number of previous studies revealed that the realization

of rhetorical structure is discovered to be diverse across many factors, such as the obligatory moves used in particular fields of discipline. Stoller and Robinson (2013) explored full-length journal articles in the chemistry field, meanwhile Saboori and Hashemi (2013) sought to analyze the rhetorical structure across three disciplines: applied linguistics, applied economics, and mechanical engineering. However, their articles are based on a wide range of disciplines and did not focus on one discipline. Other previous studies discussed the background of the writers as an expert-novice and a native-non-native to the inclination of the moves chosen San and Tan (2012) and Xiao and Cao (2013) analyzed rhetorical moves in abstracts from the perspective of expert-novice and native-nonnative authors. Nevertheless, the data did not explore authors' affiliation; both articles only discussed authors in a perspective of expert-novice and native-nonnative. In addition to the linguistic realization, the use of voice and tenses are explored to enhance the knowledge on the characteristics of writing (e.g., Wang & Tu, 2014, Wahyu, 2016). Just recently, by way of the same analytical model, Putri, Kurniawan, Gunawan, and Lubis (2021) compared abstracts from lecturers contrasting those graduating from local versus overseas universities. They found that Move 4 (Findings) was the most occurring move in all abstracts.

## 2. METHOD

### 2.1. Research Design

In order to reveal the effects of different collaborations of authors to the rhetorical organizations and linguistic features of research articles abstracts, a descriptive comparative qualitative approach was employed. The results of this comparative analysis would be presented in the form of tables which would also incorporate further analysis for better understanding of the results.

### 2.2. Data Sources

Abstracts taken from six Scopus-indexed research articles were analyzed and compared in this study. The research articles were taken from the online database of Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL), a Q2-indexed journal published by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI). Each and every one of the research articles had fully undergone intensive assessment and were published between 2020 and 2021. The six chosen articles consist of two groups: group A were those whose authors consist entirely of UPI lecturers, while group B were those whose authors consist of UPI lecturers and in collaboration with those of other universities in Indonesia.

### 2.3. Instrument and Data Analysis Procedure

The overall analysis conducted in this study employed Hyland's (2000) model of abstract rhetorical organization as its guidelines. Throughout this study's process of data analysis, four steps were taken in the procedure. All four steps were taken immediately after all of the required data had been collected. The first procedural step of the analysis was to break apart all the collected abstracts into individual sentences. Then, all of those sentences were put into tables in Excel sheets to be labelled with the corresponding moves and steps based on the model proposed by Hyland (2000). The linguistic features, which consist of the voice and tense of the sentences, were then highlighted and recorded in the same table. Finally, the realization of the moves, steps and linguistic patterns in the two groups of abstracts were then analyzed and compared, especially in terms of their occurrences.

## 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### 3.1. General Findings

Six abstracts consisting of 52 sentences were analyzed in this study. There are three abstracts from UPI's lecturers with 26 sentences and three abstracts from the collaboration of UPI's lecturers with other Indonesian universities' lecturers with the same amount of 26 sentences. From six abstracts, one of the abstracts of the collaboration of UPI's lecturers and other universities has the highest number of sentences with 11 sentences. Regarding the rhetorical move of the abstracts, it is discovered from the data that not all abstracts use the five moves. There are four abstracts which use all moves, from Move 1 until Move 5, while one abstract only uses Move 1 until Move 4 and another one uses Move 2 until Move 5.

### 3.2. Move Occurrence

The result of the analysis revealed the use of moves in the six abstracts in which four out of six abstracts employed the five moves of Hyland's (2000) model.

Table 2 shows that Move 1 - Introduction takes up to 34.6% of the entire group A move occurrences and the

**Table 2.** Move Occurrence Percentage

Abstracts	Move Occurrence (%)				
	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5
A1, A2, A3 (UPI)	34.6	11.5	19.2	23.1	11.5
B1, B2, B3 (UPI and non-UPI)	23.1	19.2	23.1	26.9	7.7

highest percentage of all. This suggests that the authors are more concerned with establishing the context of the paper. Following that, move 4 - Product is the second highest occurrence in the group A abstracts. Move 3 - Method occupies a lower percentage with 19.2% of the move occurrence, while the lowest occurring moves of the group A are Move 2 - Purpose and Move 5 - Conclusion with 11.5%. On the other hand, move 4 - Product has the highest percentage of move occurrences in group B with 26.9%. The dominant use of Move 4 suggests that the authors prefer to put forward the main results of their study to their readers. Move 1 - Introduction and Move 3 - Method has the same amount of percentage as the second highest number of occurrences with 23.1%. Following closely behind is Move 2 - Purpose with 19.2% and the least used move with 7.7% is Move 5 - Conclusion.

The dominant use of Move 1 - Introduction in abstracts of Group A is consistent with Hyland's (2000) statement which claims that humanities and social sciences disciplines have to create a research space which acts to provide context of the topic that is being addressed. However, the dominant use of Move 4 - Product in Group B's abstracts contradicted his statement. Instead, this is in line with Suntara and Usaha's (2013) findings on the move occurrences of linguistics and applied linguistic disciplines' abstracts which found Move 4 as the most frequently used moves of the disciplines. On the other hand, the similarity that emerged from both groups is the least occurrence of Move 5 - Conclusion. The need to explicitly put forward the value or implication of the paper is dismissed and regarded as optional. This is in particular in line with Hyland's (2000) statement that conclusion is an optional move in all disciplines.

Therefore, it can be inferred that Group A puts their concern on introduction of the studies in their abstracts; thus, the significant percentage of M1. This indicates that the writing style of authors of group A emphasizes on establishing a territory of the study (Swales & Feak, 2009). On the other hand, Group B prefers to highlight the main results that they produce from the studies. The results of the paper are presented to garner readers' interest as they know what to expect from the paper (Hyland, 2000).

**3.3. Move Pattern**

Table 3 shows the percentage of move patterns occurring on the RA abstracts. There are four organization patterns employed in the six abstracts. The analysis results revealed there are two patterns that omit at least one move. The moves that are omitted from the patterns are Introduction and Conclusion. It is also noted that two out of four organization patterns have the same

**Table 3.** Move Occurrence Percentage

No	Organization pattern	A1, A2, A3	B1, B2, B3	Frequency
1	P-M-Pr-C	0%	100%	1
2	I-P-M-Pr	50%	50%	2
3	I-P-M-Pr-C	50%	50%	2
4	I-P-M-Pr-C-Pr-C	100%	0%	1

number of frequencies and occurred once in both groups: I-P-M-Pr and I-P-M-Pr-C. Furthermore, the other two patterns that occurred once in the abstracts are P-M-Pr-C and I-P-M-Pr-C-Pr-C. For their absence in one group and another, the two patterns are considered as the style of characteristics from the two groups. I-P-M-Pr-C-Pr-C is the characteristics of group A's abstract writing style, while P-M-Pr-C is of group B's abstract writing style.

From the analysis, it can be seen that the obligatory moves of the authors are Move 2 - Purpose, move 3 - Method, and Move 4 - Product. Even though this is consistent with Hyland's (2000) statement and Pho's (2008) finding that P-M-Pr is the most frequently used move structure, the finding is contrasted with Hyland's (2000) claim that humanities-social sciences disciplines tend to use the I-P-Pr model. This is due to the fact that the authors prefer to highlight the main objectives, methods, and outcomes of their study. Regarding the move manifestation of the abstracts, according to Annuai (2019), the high frequency of the moves implies that the authors are conscious of the importance of the three moves in their RA abstracts, in which they are identified as obligatory moves. Move 1 - Introduction and Move 5 - Conclusion, on the other hand, are assumed to be seen as optional moves due to their absence in two organization patterns.

**3.4. Step Pattern**

The manifestation of the steps was further analyzed. The steps are employed in order to provide different information to the corresponding moves; however, not every step is utilized in the six abstracts. Move 1 - Introduction, move 3 - Method, and Move 5 - Conclusion

**Table 4.** Step Pattern of Each Abstract

Move	Step Pattern					
	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3
M1	1 4	1(3)	1(3) 4	1(2)	-	2(2) 4 1
M3	3	3 2 3	2(2)	3 1,3,2 3	1, 3	1 2,3
M5	4(2)	-	4	-	2	4

employ a number of steps to realize the move itself, while Move 2 - Purpose and Move 4 - Product do not require such additional steps to deliver the information.

Table 4 shows the comparison of the steps utilized in each abstract. Step 1 of Move 1 - Arguing for topic significance appears in all abstract of group A which is identified as the most manifested step of group A, while Step 3 of Move 3 - Describing procedure and context is the most frequently used step in group B. On the other hand, Step 2 of Move 1 - Making topic generalization occurs only in the abstract of group B. Furthermore, there are embedded steps in each of every group B's abstracts in which one sentence embodies more than one step. This is due to the different communicative purposes that each phrase has. In the B1 abstract, there are Step 2 of Move 3 - Describing instrument(s) and Step 3 of Move 3 - Describing procedure and context embedded into Step 1 of Move 1 - Describing participants/data sources. B2 abstract has Step 3 embedded into Step 1. Finally, in the B3 abstract, Step 3 of Move 3 is embedded in Step 2 of Move 3. Lastly, Step 4 - Presenting recommendation or implication is the most used step of Move 5 of all abstract, while Step 2 - Evaluating the significance of the research occurs only in the abstract of group B.

The frequent use of Step 1 of Move 1 in group A's abstracts is in line with Gani, Kurniawan, Gunawan and Lubis' (2021) findings on soft and hard science abstracts. On the other hand, group B's step pattern is consistent with Kurniawan et al.'s (2019) findings that found Step 3 Move 3 as the most manifested step. This suggests that group A determines that the topic of their studies is pivotal due to the fact that it can convey the significant information that the readers should know first in the beginning part of their abstracts. Meanwhile, group B agrees that explaining the procedure and context that the data undergo is the significant information that needs to be shared more.

### 3.5. Linguistic Features

#### 3.5.1. Tense Occurrence

The data analysis in the table 5 clearly shows the comparison of tense occurrence between group A and group B. There are four tenses that occur in the sample data: simple present, present perfect, simple past, and past perfect tenses. In simple present tense occurrence, group B reaches 11.5% higher than group A. Meanwhile in simple past tense occurrence, group A is 15.4% higher than group B. From the perspective of present perfect tense occurrence, group B is 7.7% higher than group A. However, there is no occurrence of past perfect tense in group B. To summarize, what stands out in table 5 is that both group A and group B tend to use simple present tense in their abstracts, because simple present tense

occurrences reach the highest number among other tenses.

Referring to the result analysis of move occurrence, it appears that Move 1 - Introduction exhibits dominant percentage in group A, which contains simple present tense. On the other hand, group B is dominated by Move 4 - Product constructed by simple present tense. The findings in group B are in line with Wahyu's (2016) analysis which found that several moves such as purpose, product, and conclusion are usually dominated by the use of present tense. However, Kurniawan et al.'s (2019) findings intensify the common use of simple present tense in Move 1 - Introduction of group B. Based on their results, simple present occurred as the most frequently used verb tense in Move 1 - Introduction with more than or equal to 50% occurrences.

#### 3.5.2. Voice Occurrence

The table 6 compares the voice occurrence in group A and group B. There are two types of voices, which are active and passive voices. It is apparent from table 6 that the occurrence of active voice in group A is higher than group B. Group A reaches 73.1% occurrences, while group B reaches 69.2% occurrences. On the other hand, the occurrence of passive voice in group B is higher than group A. Group B reaches 30.8% occurrence, while group A reaches 26.9% occurrence. However, both groups are dominated by active voice occurrence in their abstracts.

This result has a similar issue with Gani et al.'s (2021) paper, which found that the selected abstracts are dominated by active voice. According to Liu and Zheng (2014), as cited in Gani et al. (2021), the international standard ISO 21421976 (E) suggested using more active voice in research articles, in order to make the articles readable.

**Table 5.** Tense Occurrence Percentage

Abstracts	Tense Occurrence (%)			
	Simple Present	Present Perfect	Simple Past	Past Perfect
A1, A2, A3	57.8	3.8	34.6	3.8
B1, B2, B3	69.3	11.5	19.2	0

**Table 6.** Voice Occurrence Percentage

Abstracts	Voice Occurrence (%)	
	Active	Passive
A1, A2, A3	73.1	26.9
B1, B2, B3	69.2	30.8

#### 4. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, authors from UPI's lecturers and the collaboration of UPI's lecturers and other Indonesian universities' lecturers clearly have different preferences in organizing the rhetorical moves for their abstracts. There are some similarities and differences shown between the rhetorical moves of selected abstracts of authors from UPI's lecturers and the collaboration of UPI's lecturers with other Indonesian universities' lecturers. The similarities occur in terms of the choice of linguistic features, in which both types of authors dominantly use simple present tense and active voice. The differences are found in move-step analysis. In terms of move occurrence, abstracts written by UPI's lecturers primarily use Move 1 - Introduction, while the collaborating authors primarily use Move 4 - Product. In correlation to this fact is Step 1 of Move 1 as the main focus of step manifestation of UPI's lecturers, whereas the collaborating authors heavily make use of Step 3 of Move 3. The move pattern I-P-M-Pr-C-Pr-C is characterized as UPI's lecturers' writing style, while P-M-Pr-C is of the collaborating authors' writing style.

The result of this study provides an insight into the way authors' affiliation affects their writing style and it is expected to be a useful source in providing references for future research on RA abstracts. Additionally, in order to provide a more comprehensive insight into this topic, future research is suggested to include more abstracts as the data source and to expand and enrich the scope of analysis. Therefore, a more significant result will be obtained. Implicationally, this study fortifies Kurniawan and Lubis' (2020) recommendation that data-driven genre-based pedagogy is a potential teaching approach in teaching English academic writing or journal writing workshops especially in higher education contexts.

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