

Rhetorical Move and Linguistic Features Comparative Analysis of Research Article Abstracts by Authors of Different Organizational Backgrounds

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ABSTRACT

The readers' first impression of the articles' overall contents relies on what is presented and how they are presented in the abstract. Previous studies have quite extensively looked at the rhetorical structure of abstract, specifically comparing abstracts of different fields of study, languages, and authors' background. However, inquiries that especially examine the extent to which the authors' organizational affiliations may reflect the rhetorical organization and linguistic features of their research articles' abstracts have escaped attention. This study aims to compare the rhetorical moves and linguistic features of research article abstracts by authors with different organizational affiliations. The abstracts represented in this study were all published in Indonesian Journal of Science and Technology (IJoST) and were Scopus-indexed. A total of six abstracts were chosen to be analyzed in which the authors of three abstracts were affiliated with Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) while the other three were affiliated with other universities. Hyland's (2000) model was employed to analyze the rhetorical organization of the abstracts. The findings revealed that the rhetorical move with the highest number of occurrences is Move 1 - Introduction, and the move with the least number of occurrences is Move 5 - Conclusion. Furthermore, the use of present tense and active voice was dominant in all six abstracts. The final results and findings of this study is expected to carve an in-depth insight for related future studies within this scope of analysis and is meant to act as a guideline for novice academic writers in constructing RA abstracts.

Keywords: Authors affiliations, linguistic features, rhetorical move

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing is presented in formal style and tone. Oshima and Hogue (2007) stated that academic writing is considered to be different from creative and personal writing. Formal language is typically found in scholarly writings, which is portrayed by the shortfall of casual articulations, slang words, and shortening structure. Present and past tenses are likewise found in scholarly writings; for example, past tense is utilized when the author needs to portray the methodology of a study, while present tense is utilized to develop a conclusion. From the perspective of voice, the use of passive voice is a common thing besides the use of active voice.

One type of academic writing that is commonly found in academic fields is journal articles. Journal articles are

organized in a structural way, and some parts that have to appear in order to build a comprehensive article are abstract, introduction, methodology, results and discussion, and conclusion.

Abstract is the key of a journal article. Huckin (2001), as cited in Swales and Feak (2009), claimed that Research Article (RA) abstracts have four functions: (1) as a short summary for readers; (2) as a "screening device" for readers whether they will continue to read the article or not; (3) as a "preview" tool; and (4) as a tool to help professional abstract writers and editors in indexing the data.

The sentences that build an abstract should be divided into "a series of communicative categories" (moves) based on Hyland's theory (2000), in order to dismantle the structure and communicative purpose of an abstract. According to Kurniawan, Lubis, Suherdi, and

Danuwijaya (2019), an abstract can be delved into four aspects, which are “scope, source of the corpus, status of the authors, and discipline”.

Relying on those credible statements about abstract, it can be concluded that the importance of this research is to decipher the way authors organize their abstracts in terms of rhetorical moves and linguistic features due to the different affiliations. Six abstracts from Indonesian Journal of Science and Technology (IJoST) written by authors affiliated with Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia (UPI) and affiliated with other universities will be compared and contrasted in this study by using rhetorical moves analysis and from the perspective of linguistics features, such as tense and voice.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Move - Step Structure in RA Abstracts.

Due to the prominent presence of abstract in the academic field, a rhetorical move structure is utilized to set the organization and correspond to the content of the text. Moves represent defined and bounded communicative acts that aim to define the main communication objective of the whole text (Lorés, 2004). Several rhetorical structures move analysis models are proposed by many experts, including a model proposed by Hyland (2000). The model includes five moves: 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, Product– states main findings or results, arguments, and Conclusion– interprets results beyond scope of paper, draw inferences, points to applications. Each move is identified by its featured function and the smaller element it manifests. The elements realize the move, which is known as sub-movements or steps.

In connection with the use of the move structure of the abstract, it is pointed out that one abstract does not necessarily take in all the moves in the structure or stick to the sequence of the proposed model. Many variations to the pattern of the move structure are used to underline the main results of the research to gain interest and acceptance from the readers (Hyland, 2000). Typically, Purpose – Method – Product (P-M-Pr) and Introduction – Purpose – Product (I-P-Pr) are two of the most frequently used sequences. However, there are other variations which use Purpose and Method as the first pattern of the sequence and followed by the rest of the moves and the two-move abstract which only uses Purpose and Product. The use of the structure depends on the disciplines and may differ from the style of the author's writing from one university to another.

2.2. Linguistic Realization of RA Abstracts.

In the academic context, there is no denying that academic research holds paramount importance. As stated by Hyland, “academic publication is the central driving force of scholarly endeavor: it is central to the construction of knowledge and the measurement of an academic’s professional competence” (Hyland, 2016, 1). Besides acknowledging the importance of academic research, we should also consider the process that precedes the publication of academic research, which is knowledge production and writing. However, writing is commonly seen as ‘autonomous,’ separate, and subordinate to knowledge production (Aitchison & Lee, 2006). In other words, many consider writing not as significant, and this eventually becomes a persistent pedagogical problem.

Nevertheless, along with the growth of the university sector, this problem is increasingly brought to light. In recent years, many researchers have conducted studies specifically meant to assist novice writers’ lexicogrammatical repertoire, one of which is examining linguistic features associated with the rhetorical moves in RAs. However, considering that the focus of the paper is on RA abstracts, we will discuss only relevant past studies.

A recent study by Khany and Malmir (2019) revealed that there are disciplinary tense variations found in the moves of RA abstracts. For example, in a past study conducted by Tankó (2017), simple present and present perfect tense were used in stating the research gap of literary RA abstracts. Meanwhile, Khany and Malmir’s (2019) findings showed that simple present passive and present perfect passive were usually used in stating the gap in social sciences RA abstracts.

2.3. Previous Studies on RA Abstracts.

Over the years, studies focusing on the abstract section of an RA have gained considerable popularity. Hence, the significance of abstracts becomes more prominent. In particular, move-based analysis of RA abstracts has been extensively analyzed (e.g., Kaya & Yağiz, 2020; Rashidi & Meihami, 2018; Al-Khasawneh, 2017; Pho, 2008). Several past researches have also included linguistic realizations such as tense and voice, as they provide extensive insights into expressions commonly associated with the rhetorical moves of the abstracts (e.g., Gani et al., 2020; Khany & Malmir, 2019; Amnuai, 2019; Tankó, 2017; Wahyu, 2016). Essentially, there have been many approaches to the study of RA abstracts. However, the most prominent trends are cross-disciplinary, cross-linguistic, and author-dependent approaches to the study (El-Dakhs, 2018). While there are plenty of studies covering RA abstracts, there is a gap where there have not been any studies of RA abstracts conducted with reference to the author’s affiliation.

Therefore, this study aims to fill the gap in literature and discover whether or not an author’s organizational affiliations reflect different levels of genre understanding.

3. METHOD

3.1. Design

A descriptive comparative qualitative approach was employed in order to achieve the main purpose of this study which was to analyze and compare the rhetorical organization and the linguistic features of research article abstracts written by authors of different organizational affiliations. The comparative analysis results would be presented in the forms of tables. In addition to the presented tables, further explanation of the analysis would also be presented following the corresponding tables.

3.2. Data Source

A total of six Scopus-indexed research article abstracts were analyzed and compared in this study. Each and every one of those journals was retrieved from the Indonesian Journal of Science and Technology (IJoST), a Q1-indexed journal published by Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia and based in Indonesia. The six abstracts were classified into two groups. The first group of abstracts were taken from research articles written by multiple authors who were affiliated with Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, while the second ones were written by multiple authors who were affiliated with organizations or institutions in Indonesia other than Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia. All of the research articles whose abstracts were included in this study were published between 2020 and 2021. The most recent of published research articles abstracts were chosen in order to keep up with the dynamic trends in the rhetorical organizations of research articles abstracts.

3.3. Instrument and Data Analysis Procedure

Hyland’s (2000) model of abstract rhetorical organization, as presented in Table 1, was employed in the analysis. The model presents five moves which serve the writers as a guideline in constructing and organizing their abstracts. The first move proposed by Hyland, Introduction, establishes the context of the paper and motivates the research or discussion. The second move, Purpose, indicates the purpose, thesis or hypothesis and outlines the intention behind the paper. The third move, Method, provides information related to the design, procedures, assumptions, approach, data, etc. The fourth move, Product, states the main findings, results, arguments or what was accomplished through the paper. The last move, Conclusion, interprets or extends the

results beyond the paper’s scope, draws inferences, points to implications or wider applications.

In addition to employing Hyland’s (2000) framework of abstract construction, Kanoksilapatham’s (2005) framework of move classification was also employed as one of the instruments of analysis. The same study stated that a move is considered an obligatory move when its frequency of occurrence is at 100%. When its frequency is at 60% to 99%, then the said move is considered a conventional move. When its frequency is below 60%, then the move is considered as an optional move.

Four major steps were taken in the data analysis procedure of this study. The process of analysis was initiated when all of the data sources required had been acquired. The first step of the procedure was to break apart all of the abstracts into sentences before being analyzed any further. Those sentences were then put into tables in Excel sheets and labelled with the corresponding sets of moves and steps as proposed in Hyland’s (2000) model. The linguistic features, such as voice, tense and verbs, found in the labelled sentences were then highlighted and recorded in the same table. The occurrences of the moves, steps and the patterns of linguistic features found in the two groups of abstracts were then analyzed based on their comparison.

Table 1. Hyland’s (2000) Model of rhetorical moves in research articles

Move	Step
Move 1 Introduction	Step 1 – Arguing for topic significance Step 2 – Making topic generalization Step 3 – Defining the key term(s) Step 4 – Identifying gap
Move 2 Purpose	Stating the research purpose
Move 3 Method	Step 1 – Describing participants/data sources Step 2 – Describing instrument(s) Step 3 – Describing procedure and context
Move 4 Product	Describing the main results
Move 5 Conclusion	Step 1 – Deducing conclusion Step 2 – Evaluating the significance of the research Step 3 – Stating limitation Step 4 – Presenting recommendation or implication

Table 2. General findings

Abstract	General Findings	
	Number of sentences	Move/Pattern
Non-UPI affiliated-RA (A1)	11	1-1-2-3-3-4-4-4-4-4-5
Non-UPI affiliated-RA (A2)	13	1-2-3-3-3-4-3-4-4-3-3-4-5
Non-UPI affiliated-RA (A3)	9	2-1-3-3-3-3-4-5-5
UPI affiliated-RA (B1)	6	1-1-1-1-1-3
UPI affiliated-RA (B2)	5	2-2-4-4-5
UPI affiliated-RA (B3)	5	1-1-2-3-5

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. General Findings

Two groups of abstracts with a total of 49 sentences have been analyzed. Each group of abstracts is made up of three abstracts, respectively. The general analysis of the abstracts which consists of the number of sentences and the moves pattern of organization are presented in Table 2. Group A abstracts consist of 33 sentences, while Group B abstracts consist of 16 sentences. In other words, Group A abstracts had more sentences in comparison to Group B abstracts. In terms of the moves employed, only three out of six (50%) abstracts employed the conventional five move model. A number of embedded steps and moves were found across the two groups of abstracts. In regards to the move pattern, only two abstracts employed a linear move pattern. In addition, a number of differences and similarities in terms of the linguistic features were also found in the two groups of abstracts, namely the choice of tenses and voices.

4.2. Move Occurrence

Table 3 shows the move occurrence percentage of each abstract. The move analysis results revealed that only three out of six abstracts employed all five moves in Hyland's (2000) model. Furthermore, the analysis showed that the move with the highest number of occurrences is Move 1 - Introduction, and the move with the least number of occurrences is Move 5 - Conclusion. In Group A abstracts, we can see that the major pattern is the high occurrence of Move 3 - Method. In the A2 abstract, the Move 3 comprises up to 46,1% of the total moves, whereas in the A3 abstract, the Move 3 makes up 44,4% of the total moves. In Group B abstracts, the major pattern is the high occurrence of Move 1 - Introduction. Furthermore, we can see that each abstract in Group B does not include at least one move. However, the analysis revealed that both B1 and B3 abstracts implicitly employed Move 4 - Product by embedding it in another move, which are Move 3 and Move 2 respectively.

Table 3. Move occurrence percentage from each abstract

Move	Move Occurrence Percentage					
	A1	A2	A3	B1	B2	B3
Move 1	18,2%	7,7%	11,1%	83,3%	0%	40%
Move 2	9,1%	7,7%	11,1%	0%	40%	20%
Move 3	18,2%	46,1%	44,4%	16,7%	0%	20%
Move 4	45,4%	30,8%	11,1%	0%	40%	0%
Move 5	9,1%	7,7%	22,2%	0%	20%	20%

In addition, there is also an embedding of Move 3 (Methodology) found in the A1 abstract. This result is in accordance with Pho's (2008) study which stated that the *Describing the Methodology (DTM)* move is more likely to be embedded due to its relatively flexible realization.

Table 4 shows the move occurrence frequency of the two groups of abstracts. According to the frequency of each move in the abstracts, all five moves in Group A abstracts are considered obligatory (100%), there appears to be no conventional and optional moves. However, in Group B abstracts, there are only conventional and optional moves. The Introduction, Purpose, Method, and Conclusion moves are conventional (66,7%), whereas the Product move is optional (33,3%). From the results obtained, we can conclude that both groups have different viewpoints on what moves are considered obligatory, conventional, and optional. However, it can be concluded that Group A abstract's highest move occurrences result is in line with Rashidi and Meihami's (2018) findings, which claimed that abstracts particularly in the hard science discipline generally focus on explicitness, hence, researchers tend to provide more information on these two particular moves, which are Move 3 - Method and Move 4 - Product, as they believe that both Method and Product contain more explicit information than the other moves. On the other hand, the move with the highest occurrence in Group B's abstracts is Move 1 - Introduction. This finding, however, contrasted with that of Hyland's (2000) which was stated in his book. Generally, abstracts that focus on Move 1 - Introduction are those of soft science, whereas hard science abstracts tend to focus more on Move 3 - Method.

Table 4. Move occurrence frequency of the abstracts

Moves	Group A	Frequency	Group B	Frequency
M1	3	100%	2	66,70%
M2	3	100%	2	66,70%
M3	3	100%	2	66,70%
M4	3	100%	1	33,30%
M5	3	100%	2	66,70%

Table 5. Move patterns found in the two groups of abstracts.

Organization Pattern	Group A	Group B	Frequency
I-P-M-Pr-C	2 (100%)	0	2
P-I-M-Pr-C	1 (100%)	0	1
I-M	0	1 (100%)	1
P-Pr-C	0	1 (100%)	1
I-P-M-C	0	1 (100%)	1

4.3. Move Pattern

In addition to analyzing the moves' occurrence and frequency, their patterns of construction were also a subject of analysis in this study, which is presented in Table 5. The analysis revealed that there was a total of five patterns found from the data. Out of the five discovered patterns, there was only one that was linear, which employed all five of Hyland's (2000) proposed moves; I-P-M-Pr-C as seen in abstract A1 and A2. On the other hand, the least amount of moves' sequence can be found in abstract B1, which only employed two moves, I and M. Coincidentally, the same pattern was the most frequently employed pattern across the two groups of abstracts with two out of six abstracts employing the said pattern. Such discovery is not in accordance with Hyland's (2000) finding which stated that RA abstracts were typically arranged in these patterns: P-M-Pr or I-P-Pr. However, such discovery in the most frequently used pattern of move organization is in fact parallel with Amnuai's (2019) findings which stated that I-P-M-Pr-C is the most frequently used pattern. In other words, the two groups of abstracts did not strictly adhere to the conventional move patterns. In conclusion, 33,3% of the analyzed abstracts used a linear move pattern, whereas 66,7% of abstracts were composed using nonlinear patterns. Furthermore, the move pattern analysis in the present study indicated that non-UPI authors tend to use a linear pattern, while UPI authors prefer to use nonlinear patterns.

4.4. Step Analysis

The utilized steps are as much of an integral part of the abstract construction as the employed moves. In abstract construction, the steps are used to deliver different information within the different scope of each of the corresponding moves. The difference between the two groups of abstracts in utilizing the steps can be analyzed through a rather simple comparison based on the patterns as seen in Table 6.

Table 6. Step patterns found in the two groups of abstracts

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

The two groups showed several similarities in terms of the step's utilization. Both groups did not employ all of Hyland's (2000) proposed steps in all of the moves, only the first move in abstract B1 that employed all of the set of steps. In fact, in all of the abstracts, the first step of move 3, which states the data participants/data sources was not employed at all. In addition to that, the steps employed in both groups were not always in a sequential order. Implying that a sequential presentation of the steps in each move is not obligatory or optional.

Despite the similarities, a number of striking differences contrast the two groups. The first one is that group A abstracts employed more embedded steps in their construction compared to group B. Three cases of steps embedding were found in group A and all three were found in move 3, while only one was found in group B and was found in move 1. Thus, indicating that singular steps are more likely to be found in group B. The next one is that the employed steps in group A were more concentrated in move 3 as shown in abstract A2 and A3, while group B showed to have a denser concentration of steps in move 1 as shown in abstract B1. Furthermore, group A abstracts have the most continuous repetitions of steps with three continuous repetitions of step 3 of move 3 as seen in abstract A2. On the contrary, the highest number of continuous steps repetitions in group B was only as many as two repetitions as seen in abstract B1. The last difference between the two groups of abstracts can be seen in the steps employed in move 5. Group A abstracts tend to employ step 1 which deduces the conclusion, while group B abstracts all employed step 4 which presents recommendations or implications. Table 6 presents the step patterns of M1, M3, and M5 in all six of the analyzed abstracts. However, M2 and M4 are not presented due to the absence of steps as proposed in Hyland's (2000) model of abstracts' rhetorical organization.

Table 7. Tense occurrence in the abstracts

Abstract	Tense Occurrence			
	Present		Past	
	No. of Sentences	%	No. of Sentences	%
A1	6	54,50%	5	45,40%
A2	8	61,50%	5	38,50%
A3	9	100%	0	0%
B1	5	83,30%	1	16,70%
B2	5	100%	0	0%
B3	4	80%	1	20%

4.5. Language Features Analysis

4.5.1. Tenses Occurrences

Table 7 showed the percentage of tense occurrences in the abstracts. The analysis results revealed that the present tense occurrences in every abstract are higher than the past tense occurrences. In the A1 abstract, the gap between present and past tense occurrences is relatively smaller than the other abstract, with 54,5% present tense and 45,4% past tense. The A2 abstract had 61,5% present tense and 38,5% past tense. The A3 and B2 abstracts that belong to different groups have the most significant difference in present and past tense use, as both of the abstracts only used present tense and did not use any past tense. The B1 abstract, whose authors are affiliated with UPI, has 83,3% present tense and 16,7% past tense. The difference between present and past tense in this abstract is fairly big. Lastly, the percentage of present tense in the B3 abstract was 80%, which is considerably bigger than the percentage of past tense, 20%. In conclusion, both A and B groups used more than 50% of present tense in their abstracts. This finding is in accordance with Wahyu’s (2016) study which revealed that present tense is more dominantly used in all five moves.

4.5.2. Different Voice Types Occurrences

Another linguistic feature taken into account in this study is the authors’ choice of voice in the abstracts, which is presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Voice occurrences in the abstracts

Abstract	Voice Occurrences			
	Active Voice		Passive Voice	
	No. of Sentences	%	No. of Sentences	%
A1	8	72.7%	3	27.3%
A2	8	61.5%	5	38.5%
A3	6	66.6%	3	33.4%
B1	5	83%	1	17%
B2	5	100%	0	0%
B3	2	40%	3	60%

Table 9. Average voice occurrences in the two groups of abstracts

Abstract	Voice Occurrences	
	Average Active Voice Percentage	Average Passive Voice Percentage
A1, A2, A3	66.8%	33.2%
B1, B2, B3	74.3%	25.7%

The authors’ choice of voices is analyzed in terms of the frequency of occurrences of each voice type; active and passive. The results of the analysis showcase the frequency of occurrences in the forms of percentages. Based on the conducted analysis, several points of findings are rather significant and worth mentioning. One of which is that abstract B2 showed the highest percentage of active sentences in its composition at 100%, while abstract B3 showed a contrasting result with only less than half of B2. Despite having the lowest number of active sentences, abstract B3 has the highest percentage of passive voice in its composition at 60%. Percentages aside, abstract A1 and A2 have the highest number of active sentences with 8 in each of them. Furthermore, abstract A2 also has the highest number of passive sentences by having 5 in its composition. On average, the abstracts from group B have a higher percentage of active sentence occurrences, peaking at 74.3% in their compositions. On the other hand, the abstracts from group A have a higher percentage of passive sentences sitting at 33.2%. More on this matter can be seen in Table 9.

The voice occurrence found and analyzed in this study has a rather uncanny similarity with the one found in Gani et al.’s (2020) study. In the said study, Gani similarly found that active voice is dominantly employed in the sentence construction of abstracts. On average, they found that 78% of the four abstracts analyzed consisted of active voice, over three fourths of the entire analyzed sentences.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the findings show that only three abstracts implement all five moves in Hyland’s model. In terms of the move occurrence, Group A dominantly employs Move 3 - Method, whereas Group B dominantly employs Move 1 - Introduction. In regards to the move frequency, Group A considers all five moves as obligatory (100%), while Group B only classifies moves as conventional and optional. Pattern-wise, Group A favors linear arrangement of move patterns, while Group B prefers nonlinear arrangement of move patterns. Parallel with the occurrences of the moves, both groups of abstracts show a similar result in terms of the steps occurrences and frequency, Group A tends to focus its distribution of contents in the steps of Move 3, whereas

Group B tends to focus on the steps of move 1. According to the linguistic features analysis, the two groups of abstracts show similar results in terms of the choice of tenses and voice, due to the fact that both groups dominantly use present tense and active voice.

This study is expected to provide an in-depth insight for future studies within this scope of analysis, especially rhetorical move analysis of RA abstracts. In addition to that, this study is meant to act as a guideline for novice authors in constructing their future RA abstracts. However, to achieve such goals, future research in this field is advised to incorporate more abstracts as a part of the data source. Furthermore, a wider scope of analysis or a more in-depth analysis of different aspects is also advised to be employed for better comprehension of the matter at hand.

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