

STRUGGLING FOR INTERNATIONAL PUBLICATION: The Potential Rhetorical Problems for Indonesian Scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities when Writing in English

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Abstract

Indonesian faculty members and postgraduate students are encouraged to publish their research results in reputable international journals such as those published in English. This is to boost the participation as well as prestige of Indonesian scholars in the eyes of international scholars. However, the majority of scholars in Social Sciences and Humanities find it very difficult to succeed in international journal publication. This paper is aimed to present several potential problems experienced by Indonesian scholars in preparing their research article (RA) manuscript in English before submitting it to a main-stream journal. The data in this paper were obtained from relevant discourse studies on RAs in Indonesian and English written by Indonesian scholars. The results of these studies suggest that the most serious problem for Indonesian writers in Social Sciences and Humanities is in writing argumentative abstract, introduction and discussion sections. Unlike international authors, Indonesian authors tend to write these sections descriptively although their research topic and findings are interesting and important. They also tend to justify their research projects only by practical problems and rarely discuss their research findings in relation to the results of previous studies found in the literature. It is believed that if they can write convincingly argumentative articles the possibility of their manuscripts to be accepted by a prominent international journal will increase.

Key words: research article, reputable international journal, rhetorical problems

Introduction

Writing for highly-indexed international journals such as those published in English is becoming more important for university students and faculty members all over the world including in Indonesia (Day, 2007; Dujsik, 2013; Coleman, 2014; Adnan, 2014 and Arsyad and Adila, 2018). This is because through publishing in the prominent journals, Indonesian scholars can actively participate in communication with scholars from other countries in order to share and exchange ideas and research results to develop knowledge on a particular topic. However, unlike those in hard sciences, engineering and medical, Indonesians researchers in social sciences and humanities seem to be unsuccessful in international publication for various academic and non-academic reasons such as poor English ability, lack of recent and relevant references and different style of academic writing in Indonesian and that of in English (Arsyad and Arono, 2016). Therefore, in order to be successful in publishing in international journals in English, Indonesian scholars especially from social sciences and humanities must learn and be familiar with the academic writing style in the same disciplines in English as the ones expected by international journal readers (Fazilatfar and Naseri, 2014 and Loi et al., 2015).

The problem of international publication by Indonesian scholars in social sciences and humanities has been recognized by the Indonesian government (Kemristekdikti, 2016). This is because, as the fifth biggest country in the world concerning the population Indonesia ranks below much smaller neighbouring countries such as Malaysia, Thailand and Singapore in terms of international journal publication (Wahid, 2011). Therefore, it is necessary to know the real reasons why the majority of Indonesian academics particularly in the fields of social sciences and humanities are unsuccessful in publishing their research articles in highly-indexed international journals and share the information with active representatives of the academic community such as lecturers or professors and postgraduate students.

Discourse analysts have examined the introduction section of English RAs published in international journals in English on their rhetorical styles and linguistic features using framework suggested by Swales (1984, 1990 and 2004) and other linguists such as by Bathia (2001), Holmes (1997), Hyland (1996, 1999, 2000, and 2002) and Samraj (2002 and 2005). Swales (1984, 1990 and 2004), for example, suggests a standard discourse pattern of RA introduction known as CARS (create a research space) in all fields of

discipline which has been used by many subsequent studies on different disciplines and languages and cultures such as in Arabic by Najjar (1989), in Malay by Ahmad (1997) and in Indonesian by Safnil (2001) and Adnan (2009). The majority of these studies found that Swales' CARS model is effective enough to capture the substantial units of information in RA introductions at macro level (moves) but found some differences at a micro level (steps). Therefore, some of these researchers suggest a revised model to CARS such as PJP (problem justifying project) model by Safnil (2001) and IPS (ideal problem solution) model by Adnan (2009).

Other sections of RAs have also been studied by genre analysts such as abstracts by Ren and Li (2011), Tseng (2011) and Zhang et al., (2012), methods by Peacock (2011), Lim (2006) and Swales and Feak (1994), results and discussion by Dudley-Evans (1994), Holmes (1997) and Parkinson (2011). A more specific analysis of RAs such as on literature review has also been conducted such as by Hyland (1999, 2000), Kwan (2009) and Kwan et al., (2012). These studies generally used a similar approach of genre-based analysis in their data analysis; that is looking at the familiar rhetorical moves and steps in the RA sections. The findings of these studies have been implemented in the teaching writing of scholarly papers to educate students and new writers in writing RAs especially for international journal publication in English.

In Indonesian context, several genre analysis studies on RAs written in Indonesian or English by Indonesian writers have also been examined such as by Safnil (2001), Mirahayuni (2002), Adnan (2009), Basthomi (2006), Arsyad and Wardhana (2014), Arsyad and Arono (2016) and Arsyad and Adila (2018). The important findings from these studies are that there are significant rhetorical differences in the rhetorical styles of RAs written in Indonesian or English by Indonesian authors and those written in English by international authors. This paper presents the findings of these studies especially on the different rhetorical styles between RAs in Indonesian or English authored by Indonesian scholars and those by international authors (first or other speakers of English) especially in social sciences and humanities.

The Rhetorical Style of Research Article Abstracts

The most important chunk of a research article (RA) is the abstract because it determines whether or not readers will keep reading the article. Although RA authors can write abstract the last, abstract is the first section of academic writing such as articles, theses, research reports, etc. to be read by readers after the title. If authors do not write a convincing, interesting and appropriate abstract, readers may not continue reading the article after reading the abstract (Belcher, 2009). In addition, for readers where academic literature available is limited, abstract can be the only part of RAs available to them (Cargill and O'Connor, 2009 and Fartousi and Dumanig, 2012). According to Thyer (2008), abstract is frequently republished by an indexing service organization associated with scientific work to tell readers what have been researched and published. In other words, abstract quality of scientific works such as RAs is very important and determines whether or not the article in which the abstract belongs to will be read by readers as a whole. However, studies found that the discourse style of RA abstracts written by Indonesian author differs from that of by international authors. The frequency and percentage of Moves of RA abstracts taken from Arsyad's study are presented in Table 1 below.

Table 1: The Rhetorical Moves in RA Abstracts (Arsyad, 2014)

Moves	Journal Disciplines				%
	HJ N=10	EMJ N=10	EJ N=10	Total N=30	
Move 1 (introduction)	4	3	1	8	26,6%
Move 2 (purpose)	10	8	9	27	90%
Move 3 (methods)	9	10	9	28	90%
Move 4 (results)	10	10	10	30	100%
Move 5 (conclusion)	4	1	4	9	30%

Notes:

HJ=Humanity Journal EMJ=Economics and Management EJ=Education Journal

Table 1 indicates that the majority of English abstracts written by Indonesian writers have only three moves (i.e., objectives, methods and results). This data confirms what Basthomi (2006) found that Indonesian authors still use the Indonesian rhetorical style of RA abstract although writing in English. This is probably because since the RAs examined in the study are published in Indonesian, the authors must comply with the format of abstract commonly found in Indonesian RAs. However, this style differs from the rhetorical style of English RA abstracts written by international authors as suggested by the guidelines of academic writing. English language abstracts published in international journals should have five moves: Move-1 (background/introduction/situation), Move-2 (research purposes), Move-3 (methods

/materials/subjects/research procedures, Move- 4 (results /findings of the study) and Move-5 (discussion/conclusions/significance of the findings of the study). Paltridge (2007) suggests that RA abstracts must have five moves (the main goal, specific objectives, rationale, process and outcomes) and Bhatia (1993) suggests that an RA abstract have four moves (destination, methods, findings and conclusions). Similarly, according to Belcher (2009), RA abstracts must have five stages (reason, topic, results, conclusions, and recommendations).

The Rhetorical style of research article introductions

The second most important section in an RA is the introduction; this is because if readers are not impressed by reading the introduction they may not continue reading the article (Swales and Najjar, 1987 and Safnil, 2001). In other words, because authors should motivate readers to read the entire article the introduction section, therefore must be written as argumentatively as possible. According to Belcher (2009), the main purpose of the introduction in an RA is to provide enough information for readers to understand the arguments developed in the article. Similar comment is also addressed by Swales and Feak (1994) that the primary goal of RA introduction is to give initial information for logical reason of the article and to stimulate readers to read it. Hence, authors' ability in presenting the information and arguments in their RA introduction determines whether or not readers are interested and persuaded and whether or not they will go on reading the article.

Study results show that the discourse style of RA introductions written in Indonesian by Indonesian writers is different from that of in English by international authors. Below are the data from Arsyad and Wardhana's study on RA introductions in Social Sciences and Humanities.

Table 2: The Rhetorical Moves in Indonesian RA Introductions
(Arsyad and Wardhana, 2014)

The Main Communicative Units	Journal Disciplines					%
	SS n=50	LitS n=50	LS n=50	LawS n=50	Total N=200	
Move 1 (establishing shared schemata)	40	44	46	48	178	89%
Move 2 (establishing the research field)	50	42	48	47	187	93.5%
Move 3 (justifying the research project)	16	23	20	25	87	43.5%
Move 4 (announcing the present research)	41	35	36	28	140	70%

Notes:

SS=Sosial Sciences LitS=Literature Studies LS=Language Studies LawS=Law Studies

Table 2 indicates that, Move 1 and Move 2 are the predominant moves found in the RA introductions in the corpus of the study; 178 or 89% of the RAs have a Move 1 and 187 or 93.5% have a Move 2 but only 87 (43.5%) have a Move 3. This implies that for Indonesian writers the rhetorical work of supporting the importance of a research project or Move 3 is considered less important than establishing the shared schemata (Move 1) and establishing the research field (Move 2). Also, as Table 2 indicates, Move 4 or the act of announcing the present research is also considered not very important and only 140 (70%) articles have this move.

How Authors Rhetorically Justify Their Research Topic

In the introduction, authors are expected to convince readers that the research which has been completed and reported in the article is interesting and necessary (Hunston, 1994). According to Hunston, there are two important reasons to carry out a study; first, there are still unanswered questions left out from previous relevant studies and second, the questions are on important topics. These two rhetorical works must be written in argumentative and persuasive styles and therefore, new authors and postgraduate students may find it difficult to write. Also, authors from different languages and/or fields of discipline may write this part of RAs in different ways. Below are the data taken from Arsyad and Wardhana (2014)'s study on how Indonesian authors in Social Sciences and Humanities justify their research topic.

Table 3: The Ways Indonesian Authors Justify Their Research Topic
(Arsyad and Wardhana, 2014)

The Writer's Ways of Justifying the Research Topic	Journal Disciplines				Total N=200	%
	Social Sciences n=50	Literature studies n=50	Language Studies n=50	Law sciences n=50		
A. Introducing the actual research topic	30	45	19	26	120	60%
B. Identifying the research problem	26	34	33	28	121	60.5%
C. Referring to the government policy	15	10	5	33	63	31.5%
D. Reviewing the current knowledge and practices	41	40	41	33	155	77.5%

Notes:

SS=Social Sciences LitS=Literature Studies LS=Language Studies LawS=Law Studies

As indicated in Table 3, there are three ways commonly used by Indonesian authors to support the importance of their research topic or „centrality claim“ to use Swales’ term (Swales, 1990, 144); these are by simply introducing the actual research topic (Step-A); by identifying the research problem (Step-B) and/or by reviewing the current knowledge and practices related to the research topic (Step-D). Justifying research using research problem is also acceptable in English academic writing convention as suggested by Day (1996: 30). Day claims “Any piece of research is built around a design, which begins with identifying a problem and then the issue that guides our understanding.” According to Day, the main purpose of conducting research is to find the answer to a particular question about an important topic. Similarly, Swales (1990) states “problems or research questions or unexplained phenomena are the life blood of many research undertakings” (p: 140). On the other hand, the ways international authors support the importance of their research topic are usually by citing already published studies on the same or similar topic; therefore, they often use many citations from the first paragraph in their RA introduction (Swales, 1990). Swales suggests that authors „can claim interests or importance“; refer to the classic, favourite or central character of the issue“ or „claim that there are many other investigation active in the area“ (p:144) in order to justify the importance of their research topic or title.

Another way of justifying the research topic uniquely used by Indonesian authors is by referring to the government policy or program (Step-C). This typical rhetorical work is not found in English RA introduction as in Swales’ CARS scheme (Swales, 1990). The possible reason is that research projects in Indonesia are mainly funded by the government and in order that such projects can be funded by the government they must deal with the problems related to the government programs and policy in order to help government solve them (Safnil, 2001). Thus, researchers must relate their research projects in some ways with the government programs or policy in order to win a research funding.

How Authors Rhetorically Justify their Research Project

A statement of supporting the importance a research activity or Move-2 in English RAs is mainly carried out with reference to the weaknesses or limitations of previous relevant studies, denying earlier statements made by other researchers, criticizing the research process or outcome of others or adding to the existing knowledge (Swales, 2004). International authors, as Swales claims further, use this writing style to generate a space to justify a piece of research. In other words, international authors base their research activities by showing weaknesses, limitations or flaws found in previous studies. Indonesian authors, on the other hand, have a different way of justifying their research project. Below are data from Arsyad and Wardhana (2014) on how Indonesian authors in Social Sciences and Humanities justify their research project in their RA introductions.

Table 4: The Ways Indonesian Authors Justify Their Research Project
(Arsyad and Wardhana, 2014)

The Writer's Ways of Justifying the Research Project	Journal Disciplines				Total N=200	%
	Social sciences n=50	Literature studies n=50	Language studies n=50	Law sciences n=50		
A. Indicating a gap in previous studies	4	5	6	4	19	9.5%
B. Claiming that the topic has never been or rarely investigated	3	4	4	-	11	5.5%
C. Claiming that the topic is necessary to investigate	6	8	4	10	28	14%
D. Claiming interest in investigating the topic	3	6	6	11	36	18%

Notes:

SS=Social Sciences LitS=Literature Studies LS=Language Studies LawS=Law Studies

Table 4 shows that there are two common reasons for Indonesian writers to conduct a piece of research found in their RA introductions; these are asserting that the topic is important to study (Step-C) or declaring interested in researching the topic (Step-D). However, different from writers in international journals Indonesian scholars rarely point at the shortcoming or fault in the previous studies or the literature to support the necessity or importance of their study. This is probably because in order to point at the flaws of previous studies in the literature, authors have to evaluate or critique other's work they cite in their work while, according to Keraf (1992), Indonesians are often hesitant to point at the defect of other authors' work in their academic writing. Keraf goes on to suggest that evaluating the work of other authors especially those who are older or having a higher social or economic status, can be perceived as culturally rude or ill-mannered. However, according to Keraf, authors should not be reluctant to evaluate other authors' work in academic writing because the main purpose of an academic work is to find and share the truth. For this purpose every ideas or data presented in published work must be evaluated to locate its strengths and weaknesses in order to advance science (Sternberg, 2017). Similar comment has been made by Saville-Troike (1982) and Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1988); according to them, unlike people in the Western countries such as in Europe and North America, Eastern people such as Chinese, Koreans, and Japanese and probably Indonesian consider group harmony and collective value very important. Therefore, they tend to avert criticizing other people because it may hurt their feeling and ruin the harmony.

Also, unlike in CARS framework of Swales (1990), Indonesian authors use Step-D (declaring interested in conducting a study on a topic) to justify their research project. This is probably because, for Indonesian authors problem is considered already acceptable to justify a piece of research and therefore no other rhetorical attempt is necessary to convince readers that the research project is important and necessary. Thus, a piece of research is already justifiable if there is a problem on an important topic; the purpose of the research is, therefore, to find out the causes or the best solution for the problem. However, the same or similar problems may have been investigated elsewhere by other researchers and therefore the results of the studies will be useless because they do not help advance readers' knowledge on the topic.

How Authors Write Literature Review

The introduction section is the main place where authors evaluate or review what have been investigated or discovered by other researchers in previous related studies (Feak and Swales, 2009). More specifically, according to Feak and Swales, RA authors need to provide an explanation and assessment or the story of the findings of previous studies related to the present work to create a „niche“ or opportunities for a research project. Swales (1990) suggests that, reviewing relevant previous studies is a compulsory element in the introduction section of an RA except in very new areas or topics of research, such as in the field of computer technology. In addition to being a new discipline area, research on computer technology is different from those in other disciplines; for example, research in this field is more intended for commercial purposes rather than to produce new knowledge. However, the data from Arsyad and Adila's study show that the way Indonesian authors write literature review or cite other people's work in their RA introduction is different from that of international authors. The data are shown in the following table.

Table 5: The Rhetorical Style of Citations in RA Introductions (Arsyad and Adila, 2018)

Functions of Citation	Citation Frequency in RA Introductions					
	IJC n=75	IJES n=77	Bio n=124	JICT n=80	Total N=356	%
F1(defining a key term)	1	3	10	5	19	5.34
F2(justifying the research problem)	6	5	15	4	30	8.43
F3(supporting the research topic)	21	17	30	25	93	26.12
F4(suggesting a solution to the research problem)	7	3	4	5	19	5.34
F5(negatively evaluating the cited literature)	2	1	2	6	11	3.09
F6(indicating a gap in previous studies)	10	11	19	9	49	13.65
F7(presenting positive justification)	28	37	44	26	135	37.92

Notes:

IJC=Indonesian Journal of Chemistry

IJES=Journal of Engineering and Technology Science

BIO=Journal of Biotropis:The South East Asian Journal of Tropical Biology

JICT=Journal of ICT Research and Application

As Table 5 indicates, presenting positive justification is the most frequent quotation function used by Indonesian authors in their RA introduction (135 out of 356 or 37.92%) and supporting the research topic (93 out of 359 or 26.12%) while only 11 out 359 or 3.09% references are used to critique the literature and 49 out of 359 or 13.65% citations are used to indicate a gap in previous studies. Samraj (2002) asserts that, citations can be used just to show that authors follow the development of research on a particular topic to the most recent ones but, according to Swales (2004), this is only an optional one. The main function of citation as Swales suggests, is to point at a gap in previous relevant studies found in the literature while the function of positive justification according to Swales is only an optional one because journal readers anticipate that writers reveal their own position in relation the cited literature and this demand writers to indicate their opinion about and not just to restate the work related to their research (Feak and Swales, 2009, p. 71).

The Rhetorical Style of RA Methods Section

Swales and Feak (1994) state that the method section is generally considered to be the easiest part of an RA and therefore, it is usually the first section to write. However, according to Belcher (2009), although the method section looks easy, the authors may also have difficulties in writing it especially when the RAs are written in a foreign or second language, such as English for Indonesian speakers; the difficulties among other things are in determining the choice of tenses, using preferred types of sentences (active or passive), giving enough information about the research processes, and following the wright format suggested by the journal editors in the targeted journal guidelines. In addition, as suggested by Branson (2004) that, the method section of an RA should be written well and clearly so that the study can be valid and replicated. Thus, Methods section has a communicative function to convince readers that the research project has been done well, the respondents represent the intended group of population and experimental methods have avoided any possible of distortion.

Table 6: The Rhetorical Moves in Indonesian RA Methods(Arsyad, 2013)

Moves	Journals						Total N=51	%
	RS	EJ	EM	LL	PJ	SS		
Move 1 (overview)	4	11	4	8	6	5	38	74.5
Move 2 (aims/question/hypothesis)	-	5	-	-	-	-	5	9.8
Move 3 (subject/materials)	2	12	5	7	8	4	38	74.5

Move 4 (location)	-	10	2	-	2	3	17	33.3
Move 5 (procedure)	3	9	3	6	7	6	34	66.6
Move 6 (limitation)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Move 7 (data analysis)	3	9	8	8	8	2	38	74.5

Notes:

RS=Religious Studies EJ=Education Journal EM=Economics and Management
LL=Language and Literature PJ=Psychology Journals SS=Social Sciences

Table 6 shows that, the dominant moves found in the texts are Move 1, Move 3, Move 5, and Move 7. It can be claimed that these four moves are the major moves in the methods section of Indonesian RAs in Social Sciences and Humanities while the other moves (Move 2 and Move 4) are only peripheral ones. This data also show that, the communicative units of limitation of the study or Move 6 is found in the data of this study; it is found at the end of the discussion section. Similar to RAs published in international journals, the appearance of Move 2 is also very rare in the corpus of this study. Thus, in terms of the use of moves and steps, it can be concluded that the Methods section in the Indonesian RAs is similar to that of English RAs although there is only an insignificant difference especially compared to the findings of Peacock (2011) and Lim (2006).

How Authors Rhetorically Write RA Discussion Sections

The discussion part is also considered an important and difficult chunk in an RA to write; this is because in this section authors are expected to state the contribution of their research results and convince readers that such new knowledge claim is important. In addition, according to Hess (2004) and Hagin (2009), writers must explain the causes and interpretation of their research results. Authors must summarize and interpret their research results in the discussion section and comment on every point as addressed in the research questions (Thyer, 2008 and Branson, 2004). Since this section must be written convincingly argumentative, new writers often find it very difficult to write (Parkinson, 2011). Table 7 below summarizes the study results by Arsyad (2013) who investigated the common communicative units in the discussion sections of Indonesian RAs written by Indonesian authors in Social Sciences and Humanities.

Table 7: The Rhetorical Moves in the Indonesian RA Discussion (Arsyad, 2013)

Moves	Journals						Total N=47	%
	SS n=7	PJ n=6	EJ n=14	RS n=4	EM n=10	LL n=6		
Move 1 (background information)	5	4	11	4	4	4	32	68
Move 2 (statement of results)	7	6	14	4	10	6	47	100
Move 3 (un/expected outcome)	-	-	-	1	-	-	1	2.1
Move 4 (reference to previous research)	2	4	3	2	4	3	18	38.3
Move 5 (explanation/ interpretation)	5	6	7	3	8	2	31	65.9
Move 6 (exemplification)	1	-	1	1	-	-	3	6.4
Move 7 (deduction)	3	1	9	1	5	1	20	42.5
Move 8 (recommendation)	3	3	3	1	4	-	14	29.8

Notes:

SS=Social Sciences PJ=Psychology Journals EJ=Education Journals
RS=Religious Studies EM=Economic and Management LL=Language and Literature

Table 7 shows that, the dominant moves found in the Indonesian RA discussion are Move-1 (background information of the research), Move-2 (the statement of the research results), and Move-5 (explanation of the research results). This typical rhetorical style is different from the one in English which has the dominant moves of Move-2; Move-4 and Move-5. The most significant difference between Indonesian and English RAs in terms of the rhetorical style of their discussion part is the frequent use of Move-4 (reference the relevant findings of previous studies). Unlike in Indonesian RAs, Move-4 in English RAs is a common

move; this is to indicate to the readers that the research findings present additional information to the available knowledge in the literature.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Research article is an academic writing which must be argumentative and persuasive and therefore authors should state their arguments clearly and support them with data or references convincingly. In an RA, there are at least three places which must be written convincingly argumentative using appropriate rhetorical style as they are expected by the journal readers; these are abstract, introduction and discussion.

The rhetorical style of RAs may vary from one field of discipline to the others and from one language and culture to the others and therefore, writers should study and comply with the rhetorical style commonly found in the examples of RAs in their own field especially those in RAs published in international journals to be targeted to publish their own RAs. By so doing, it is expected that the quality of the RA drafts will improve at least from the rhetorical style points of view and so does the possibility of the manuscripts to be accepted by prominent international journals.

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