Analysis of Students' Understanding in Using Rhetorical Moves on Thesis Abstract

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Abstract

This paper presents the study of rhetorical moves on thesis abstracts of accounting students at the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The motive of this research is to examine how far students' understanding is in using rhetorical moves in their thesis abstracts. Under the qualitative descriptive method, 20 abstracts are taken randomly based on the thesis abstract, which was being proofread at Language Center Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, 2021. Data were further discussed in the light of rhetorical moves by Swales. Based on the results of the analysis, this study revealed different forms of rhetorical moves; the highest sequence and frequency on Move 3 (research method) and Move 4 (results) were 100% occurrences according to Jhon Swales' concept. Furthermore, move 2 (research aim) has a higher sequence and frequency, it was 80% occurrence. Unsimilar, move 1 (situating research) and Move 5 (conclusion) as the smallest sequence and are frequent due to the abstracts not correctly presenting some steps of rhetorical moves as proposed by Swales. To sum up, this study has set out the findings; mostly accounting students have followed the rhetorical moves in their thesis abstracts on Move 3 and Move 4. However, their understanding of Move 1 and 5 must be revised for generating better abstracts.

Keywords: abstracts, accounting, rhetorical move, students, thesis.

Introduction

In writing thesis abstracts, many cases found that writers have not fully understood the moves patterns as suggested by rhetorical moves scholars like Swales or Hyland. Even though, this aspect is very important in the academic world as the platform for disseminating new knowledge. Rhetorical moves functionally as the genre-based approaches used to identify the structure of research articles. According to Swales (1990, 2004), it is the discourse segment, which performs a particular communicative function. Similarly, Connor, Upton, and Kanoksilaptham (2007); a move represents text frames that have their meaning and function. This,

within its pedagogical implication, shortly conveys for classifying of chunks of text in terms of particular communicative intentions. By understanding this, the communicative form of thesis abstracts can deliver the components of thesis structure. Having a good understanding of rhetorical moves highly pushes students more effectively for producing the correct thesis abstracts. As the consequence, it conceptually and practically is not yet fully considered by many students (researchers) in the preparation of thesis abstracts organization leading the communication of research information is not well-communicated properly. As cited in Ahmed (2015), "thesis abstracts serve the important information of the whole contents of research activities".

Several scholars, the thesis abstract conceptually must involve the organization of the thesis, such as background, objectives, theories, methods, results, and conclusion; reveal the research information easily to be understood by readers under the frame of rhetorical moves. Purves (1988) points out that the function of rhetorical moves should give an effect on the readers, particularly regarding diction of language and writing structure. Moreover, he further explains the essential of rhetorical moves closely related to lexical and grammatical structures for producing certain effects for the readers. This pattern requires the writers' ability to organize the correct structure and linguistics as well; as a result, it provides clear information to the readers from research activities that have been carried out. As explained by Suryani, rhetorical moves are the ability to use language that produces a persuasive effect, forms communication, identifies, and responds to readers regarding situations in writing. She particularly elaborates that rhetorical move is very effective with varied ways of convincing or influencing an audience. Therefore, the rhetorical move has the function of empowering and convincing readers about points of view. Within its process, this provides insights into writers' skills in terms of words process and delivers some goals in academic writing.

Regarding this aspect, conceptually and practically, the notion of rhetorical moves was developed by Swales, which describes a segment of research articles. Within its practice, is intended to observe research articles in particular parts. Therefore, the move has the function to convey communicative purpose (Hopkins & Dudley-Evans, 1988; Swales, 1990, 2004). Similarly, Holmes (1998: 322) points out that move is understood to communicate linguistic strategies. While, Martín-Martín, 2003; the use of move for delivering communicative aspect.

Regarding the use of rhetorical moves, some researchers have studied it from different approaches and perspectives. The study of rhetorical moves and features

of linguistic aspects have been critically observed by Andika et. all (2018). This research used mixed methods toward 60 article abstracts of postgraduate students, which have been published in National and International journals. The results of the analysis, most moves are used by students on three moves, such as aim/purpose, method, and results. The features of linguistics are dominated by the use of past tense. This study conceptually sums up the postgraduate students' understanding of the rules of rhetorical moves should be adjusted. In the same vein, as investigated by Ajeng Setyorini (2017), her research attempted to analyze the students' abstracts and linguistic features in Academic Writing Class by using qualitative methods. Her research findings obtained only half of the abstracts complied with the rule of moves patterns. For linguistic features, all structures used the pronouns "the writers". Moreover, as conducted by Karmila and Malikatul Laila (2020), investigated rhetorical moves of abstracts toward the English Education Department in Surakarta by using Hyland's concept. Based on the results of the study obtained the use of moves was 100% for research, 97,5% for the research method, and 87,5% for the results of the analysis. Others were found 22,5% for the conclusion aspect, while for the introduction section; only a few of the students who used it, it was 5%. Furthermore, research by Luthfiyah, A Alek, and F Fahriany (2015) attempted to investigate rhetorical moves and language cohesion as employed in students' thesis abstracts. They investigated the use of language cohesion and rhetorical moves on 10 abstracts from English education students by using the qualitative method. In this research, the cohesion of language is discussed in the light of Halliday and Hasan, whilst for rhetorical moves used framework of Swales and Feak. The results of research obtained from the student's thesis abstracts were more dominated by the device of cohesion, not substitution. These are mostly dominated by the use of reference devices; which is followed by seven abstracts with medium category, while the high level of cohesion was 30%.

Some researchers above have tackled the abstracts from different angles. In this study, the researcher focuses on the rhetorical moves toward accounting students' abstracts underlying the concept of Swales' rhetorical moves. Thus, to produce abstract writing that is better under the generally accepted abstract writing framework, the author needs to understand the theories and conventions in the abstract writing system that has been formulated by experts like Swales and Hyland. The principles and characteristics of the ideas of these two experts are the most widely used theories in abstract writing in national and international journals (Noquera, 2012: 68). Swales uses the term 'moves', which is defined as a part of abstract. He describes each 'move' that is presented to function for text communication which is implemented in several moves; three moves, four moves, five moves, and six moves.

In this regard, accounting students are students' rhetoric study in thesis abstracts of in English has been carried out by several previous studies. Therefore, in this study, the researcher attempts to investigate the rhetorical moves as practiced in selected thesis abstracts at the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, in 2020.

To achieve the above goal, this study concerns to analyze the following research questions, as follows

1. What moves and steps are found in selected thesis abstracts of accounting students at the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu.
2. How do students realize the Hyland model in their thesis abstracts?

Method

Research Design

In this research, the researcher used a qualitative method with emphasis on rhetorical moves (texts analysis) from the selected abstracts of accounting students at Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, in 2020. This, according to the aim of the research, was adopted as the research guide for actualizing the objectives of the research. According to Bhatia (2002); "the method has a function as a form of systematic empirical inquiry into exploring meaning". Moreover, her thought is often used for utilizing genre analysis, for instance, linguistic behavior. This research practically delineates the varied moves of rhetorical as applied in the selected abstracts of accounting students. This was the source of research data.

Participants

Data of this research were thesis abstracts of accounting students, Faculty of Economics and Business, the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, which took up 20 abstracts randomly as research samples. Data were the written texts in the form of sentences to investigate the rhetorical moves used by students, under the research goal to observe whether the students' ability in writing thesis abstracts has followed the procedures of rhetorical moves patterns.

Instruments

In this research, the accounting students' thesis abstracts of the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu were analyzed in the light of the five moves pattern as proposed by Jhon Swales. This analytical framework is applied due to provide a very comprehensive and clear framework for exploring the use of moves as practiced in students' abstracts. Moreover, move are used functionally or as instructional guides for identifying moves more clearly. The thoughts of Swales (1996), as done by some researchers like Bhatia (1993) and Pho (2007), were adopted and considered as a framework model for thesis abstract analysis.

Data Analysis

All data collected were further analyzed based on Swales's (2000) five-move model. This model was conceptual for analysis of the use of moves patterns as employed in thesis abstracts from many disciplines. Moreover, realizing its functions and the communicative goal is elaborated according to Swales' model, which consists of moves. Firstly, the Introduction moves cover the research area (problem and gap) and the motivation for research. Secondly, the research purpose connects to the goal and explanation of the research. Thirdly, the research method elaborates the comprehensive information of research activities, such as design, participants, instruments, research procedures, and analysis technique. Fourth, results stress the results of analysis or ideas based on the discussion section. Finally, the conclusion provides some wider implications or interpretations, which can be practiced based on the scope of the research.

Therefore, for determining the results of analysis, the selected samples of thesis abstracts are conceptually guided to the notions of rhetorical moves as proposed by Swales; coded, identified, and analyzed on the surface format in thesis abstracts. The five moves of the pattern of Swales are practiced to analyze the structure of thesis abstracts, namely M1–the situating of research, M2–aim/purpose, M3–methods, M4–results, and M5–conclusion.

Results

This section elaborates on the results of the analysis in light of rhetorical moves by Jhon Swales toward the selected thesis abstracts of accounting students at the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu, which was published in 2020. The research findings; there were three forms of rhetorical moves in students' thesis abstracts, which complied with the concepts of Swales' rhetorical move, namely the sequence of the rhetorical move, frequency of each move, and move patterns. Vividly, all data above can be seen as illustrated by each of the following explanations;

The Sequences of Rhetorical Moves

In terms of students' ability for writing thesis abstracts. What exactly some components of the rhetorical move should be complied with for conceptually having good at writing a thesis abstract? This practically deals with the sequence forms of the rhetorical move as applied by accounting students when they arrange the sequence of each move through their thesis abstracts. Data, as seen from the following table, were the research findings of students' thesis abstracts underlying Swales' rhetorical move, which highlights 5 phases of the rhetorical move; situating the research (M1), aim/purpose (M2), methods (M3), results (M4), and conclusion (M5).

Table 1. The Sequence of Rhetorical Moves

Abstracts	Types of Rhetorical Moves					Patterns
	1	2	3	4	5	
01/AA/S1/AK	√	-	√	√	√	M1-M3-M4-M5
02/AP/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
03/AS/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5
04/ED/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	√	M2-M3-M4-M5
05/FK/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	-	M1-M2-M3-M4
06/FU/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	√	M2-M3-M4-M5
07/IS/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
08/WS/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5
09/MH/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	-	M1-M2-M3-M4
10/MP/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5
11/RF/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
12/AD/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
13/UN/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5
14/UM/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	√	M2-M3-M4-M5
15/WP/S1/AK	√	-	√	√	-	M1-M3-M4
16/ST/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	-	M1-M2-M3-M4
17/KG/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
18/SY/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5
19/NF/S1/AK	-	√	√	√	-	M2-M3-M4
20/YW/S1/AK	√	√	√	√	√	M1-M2-M3-M4-M5

M1: Situating the research, M2: Purposes, M3: Method, M4: Results, M5: Conclusion

Vividly, as provided in Table 1 above, the data analysis illustrated an overview of the move sequence toward accounting students' thesis abstracts. The research results showed the varied sequences based on the research samples, which took randomly from the students' abstracts. Most of the moves significantly occur (100%) on the M3 and M4, which is described as the highest sequence. It showed that those abstracts have complied with or adopted the five-move models as proposed by Jhon Swales. Furthermore, the M2 (Purposes) is considered the second highest sequence (80% of occurrence) due to only 20%of abstracts do not clearly state the purpose of the research. Unlike, M1 (Situating the research), was nearest 50% of students' abstracts were seemingly unclear to emphasize the issue of the problem or research gap–its move patterns less on target was presented quite general, and less effective

in the use of diction words, whilst the research results on M5 (Conclusion) was at the lowest level due to not exceed half of the thesis abstracts have followed 5 phases of moves according to Swales' concepts, outwardly "bias of understanding", –most of the abstracts did not strongly confirm on the conclusion of the research.

Distribution of Moves on students' thesis abstracts

Similarly, this section is almost similar to that described previously. The research results of the 20 samples for accounting students' thesis abstracts also showed different levels of frequency. Some abstracts on certain moves are conceptually compatible with Swales' rhetorical moves model. Others are distributed differently with varying analysis results, it is still roundly under the level of achievement where only a few of the students' abstracts have met with the moves pattern as proposed by Swales. The following data provide an overview of the frequency (comparison) of each move in the student's thesis abstracts.

Tabel. 2 Frequency of each move

No	RM Contents	Total	Percentages
1.	Background	9	45%
2.	Aim/Purpose	14	60%
3.	Method	20	100%
4.	Results	20	100%
5.	Conclusion	9	45%

RM: *Rhetorical Moves*

As described in table 2 above, the research results of the students' abstracts showed different levels of frequency for each Move. The *M3* and *M4* were at the highest frequency (with 100% occurrence) of using the rhetorical move. Conceptually, this, within the writing process, is an indicator that the abstracts have contained the rhetorical moves correctly, namely the presentation of research methods and results. The second highest frequency was on *Move 2* (Research aim), there where 14 of 20 abstracts orderly followed the rules as suggested by the structure of thesis abstracts. Unsimilar, as presented from *M1* and *M5*; less than half of the abstracts by Swales' rhetorical moves; both presented the important components of those Moves. Shortly, in this study, the level of student's ability to employ the rhetorical moves concept of Moves 1, 5, and 2 needs highly special attention for producing good abstract, as a result, the information of research activities can be communicated correctly to the readers.

Moves Pattern in Thesis Abstracts

Practically, under 20 cases of accounting students' thesis abstracts, the moves pattern closely regards students' ability to apply the rules of the rhetorical

moves as developed by Swales. Table 3 below illustrates an analysis of students' ability in terms of moves patterns of each abstract;

Tabel.3 Distribution of Moves Patterns

Moves	Total	Percentages	Patterns
3 Moves	7	35%	AMR=7
4 Moves	7	35%	AMRC=7
5 Moves	6	30%	BAMRC=6

In general, based on the table above; only a few students have met the milestone of using rhetorical moves on their thesis abstracts. These are only 30% or 6 of 20 abstracts have complied the moves of Swales (BAMRC); hereinafter 7 of 20 abstracts or 35% have reached for using 4 moves (AMRC), other on AMR, it is obtained 35% or 7 of 20 students who are only capable to implement three moves in their abstracts; purpose, methods, and results. The above results imply most of the students' thesis abstracts are still at an adequate level because not up to half of the students' thesis abstracts have complied based on the concept of Jhon Swales.

Discussion

As has been discussed previously, based on the research findings by taking up research samples 20 abstracts of accounting students; are found only 30% or 6 of 20 abstracts have met the five moves pattern as proposed by Jhon Swales. Meanwhile, most of the thesis abstracts tend to concern three and four moves (AMR and AMRC). This, fundamentally and conceptually, indicates that accounting students' thesis abstracts have not yet met the standard of an abstract by the demands of the academic world. This pattern can be categorized as the conventional structure, in which most abstracts are begun with the purpose or aim of the research (M2). This closely relates to previous research such as Tseng (2011), Saboori and Hashemi (2013), and Kang and Lee (2015). Moreover, the student's thesis abstracts can be grouped into three sections; obligatory, conventional, and optional. As found by Tseng and Kang Lee, some moves on obligatory are M2, M3, and M4 (AMR). According to the student's thesis abstracts, most of the thesis abstracts were not found in an optional move or background move, but 7 abstracts were categorized as conventional move, conclusion section. It is similar to the research finding by Suntara and Usaha (2013), "conclusion move was the greatest frequency, which was mostly occurrence from the linguistic and nature disciplines.

Furthermore, from the five moves pattern, in this study M2, M3 and M4 were the most abstracts of research samples, which provides information on Aim, Method, and Results. In this case, the finding of this study has some differences from the related studies previously; Tseng (2013) – most of the student's thesis abstracts content three moves (background, aim, and conclusion), Saboori and Hashemi (2013) –thesis abstracts are more dominated by Aim move, method move, and results move. These are due to some crucial problems within employing each move on thesis abstracts; misunderstanding of moves information between background and aim, results and conclusion. Regarding this case, students' understanding comprehensively in terms of rhetorical moves urgently necessitates being adjusted, especially M1 and M5. Through this, M1 can realize the communicative of research activity (situating of research, such as generalization of a topic, previous research, indicating a gap, and justification to the conducted research. In the same vein, M5 of the abstracts should present a word conclusion, suggestion, and recommendation for future research. As obtained from the results of the analysis, M5 has not yet been presented properly according to the steps in the conclusion section. Therefore, both moves conceptually and practically must be fully understood, not only for thesis abstracts but also for the wider implication to produce a successful publication, which is required in the academic community.

In academic communities, the abstracts of the thesis play significant roles in the organization of the thesis, which has the function to convey or communicate correctly in terms of research activities. This genre, in a different way, reveals ideas, and thoughts in research articles (Hyland, 2000). As investigated by Samraj (2002) and Swales (2004); scholars necessitate an understanding of moves variation of texts structure. They point out that abstracts should be a clear description for helping the readers to find out about the research activity. As stated by Swales (1990), the abstracts must reflect research articles, while Bhatia, it must be informative function "a faithful and accurate summary, which is representative of the whole article". In general, in the research abstracts, five aspects of thesis abstracts must be strongly emphasized, such as Background, Purpose, Methods, Results, and Conclusion. Shortly, these are considered able to lead to clear information of the conducted research.

However, most of the students already have adequate knowledge to employ particularly moves; M2–Purpose, M3–Methods, and M4–Results. On the contrary, they were not so prominent yet on the use of M1–Situating of Research and M5–Conclusion. These as elaborated from the sequence and frequency of moves, do not exceed 40% of abstract content communicative of situating and conclusion of the research. This strongly implies that the abstracts have not fully applied in accordance with Swales' rhetorical moves.

Conclusion

To sum up, this study has set out the research findings in terms of rhetorical moves as applied in research abstracts of accounting students. The majority of abstracts have fully applied some steps of moves by Swales' rhetorical moves, like on M3 and M4 as the highest occurrences (sequence, frequency, and patterns) with 100% of abstracts having applied the structure/steps on the Methods and Results section. Furthermore, the occurrence on the Purpose of research (M2) showed very satisfactory results; almost of abstracts convey the communicative research aim. This indicated that students have a good understanding of the use of M2. Unsimilarly, the M1 and M5 showed unexpected results were less than half of the abstracts, properly presented the steps around the situating of research and M3 as well. Because in these sections, abstracts do not show what it's supposed to on M1 dan M5. Regarding these results, it is very valuable for further research to re-investigate the caused factors of the lower understanding of the M1 and M5 sections. Moreover, by concerning the student's ability to use rhetorical moves for wider research articles in the accounting area. Through this, readers are very expected able to find out the communicative of research information more comprehensively.

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