

THE FREQUENCY OF THE RHETORICAL PATTERN OF UNDERGRADUATE THESIS BACKGROUND SECTION IN ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS OF TWO UNIVERSITIES IN ACEH

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ABSTRACT

This research examined the rhetorical pattern of thesis background, particularly the undergraduate scripts of English education department students. The study aims to find out the frequency of the rhetorical patterns in writing thesis background. The approach used in this study is a qualitative method based on content analysis. The sample consisted of 20 English education undergraduate theses from two universities in Indonesia. The data were analyzed based on Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification by following the framework of Swales's CARS model (2004). The results show that the undergraduate students of English departments have a similar frequency of the rhetorical pattern with the framework guidance. Although some students have reached an adequate standard in writing research background using their own way, they also should improve the language style in academic writing.

Keywords: *frequency, rhetorical pattern, thesis background*

INTRODUCTION

The background analysis of undergraduate students is one of the interesting fields to be conducted. As beginner researchers, they have different ways to present their ideas, particularly in academic writing. The thesis background cannot randomly be placed in the introduction, but it should provide a relation of the idea as a bridge between the

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author's background information and the existing knowledge of the topic research. Undergraduate students should have complex skills to collect information from published journals related to their study to produce an excellent research background (Librero, 2012).

Furthermore, the background information, which is in the first section of their thesis, elaborates the students' understanding of their own research. Technically, there is standardization or guidance to establish a proper thesis background that can create abstract ideas structurally to explore the research concept. For instance, the background of the study should contain the situation and significance of the research problem, the researcher's approach, the previous research, the gap of the research, and the research's new different point of knowledge (Silverman & Marvasti, 2008).

On the other hand, in reality, students are confused and have obstacles in properly generating the concept of thesis background because they lack knowledge and experience in doing research. Students have a big problem exploring their ideas in academic languages. Particularly, based on the researcher's experience, it is hard to start writing research structurally with a scholastic language style as a novice writer. Students must learn to transform their usual English writing into an academic way. Moreover, during the study period, students do not have enough time to focus on learning how to research because the students still have many courses to attend. Therefore, when they begin their research in the last semester, the undergraduate students are not familiar with writing a thesis background to begin their research. As a result, many students, as beginners, start to write the background with a broad or general explanation. Sometimes, they only write the thesis based on their previous senior theses in college. They only have a course in the introduction of writing academic research in the sixth semester, and it is not sufficient to cover all aspects of writing a thesis (Maznun, Monsefi, & Nimehchisalem, 2017).

In this case, the terminologies about the rhetorical fields have been examined with different discussions and results. According to Briones (2012), the analysis of rhetorical patterns can involve some aspects, including the move analysis of philosophy in the University of Santo Tomas. The research focused on examining the identity pattern of the local community discourse by using the Swales CARS Model. It can guide the author to find the current characteristics of the community's concepts in writing research article introductions (RAIs), for instance,

the intention of content, writing style, structure preference, and the expression of language communication.

Based on previous studies, writing skills and rhetorical knowledge are necessary for students who want to write an excellent research background. Students should learn about rhetorical knowledge and the standard framework as a guide in writing research to formulate good academic writing. In this study, the researcher intends to determine the frequency of the rhetorical pattern in writing thesis background that undergraduate students apply using Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification in which Swales CARS model (2004) is used the standard framework to write the research background.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Creating an introduction that plays an essential role in a thesis is reflected by the students' academic writing skills. Academic writing is a complex skill at an advanced level that needs high-order thinking to be practiced. It involved many elements of writing skills which the writer has to implement in good rhetorical language. The factor includes how the author expressed the knowledge in academic writing, critical thinking, and apprehending the analysis of information. Those mentioned skills will interpret how the author is professional in establishing the idea (Suryani et al., 2014).

The skill influences a considerable part in writing every type of research paper, such as academic essay, journal, article, and thesis. In this case, writing an introduction with an academic writing style is challenging and confusing, particularly for a novice writer (Maznun, Monsefi, & Nimehchisalem, 2017).

A good research paper starts with an interesting introduction because the appearance of the introduction can impress half of the whole part (Swales, 2004). The researcher has to explain the vision of why the research is necessary to be conducted. It shows a clear direction of the author's view about the research topic discussion. The idea in the introduction section is a window or display that connects the knowledge to the readers. This condition demands the researcher to write a good relation in the background story, the idea, and the research problems (Wuttisisiriporn, 2017; Öztürk, 2018).

In this section, one interesting part is discussing the research problem that should be mostly provided in the introduction. Putting the

problem or the phenomena in a research paper is mandatory. The problem of research could bring a piece of new information or perspective for people to recognize the unique value from the paper. Establishing a problem could be inspired by different backgrounds such as the environment issue, personal experience, previous research, etc. It means that the sources of the problem affect the original of the study and offer the objective to conduct the research (Creswell, 2014).

Moreover, the first discussion that is equally significant is the background of the study. Students should start writing to deliver their complex idea into an academic language. They examine the research to present the reason why the study is important to be conducted and explain the problem of the research topic. The way students express the phenomena of the research should be coherent in each paragraph, and thus rhetorical knowledge needs to be applied. It is a balanced way to create good background of study by employing students' concepts and rhetorical patterns. Therefore, students can have a better result for their research by having proficient writing skills (Bhatia, 2017).

One of the reputable frameworks to make good background of the study is Creating a Research Space (CARS) proposed by John Swales, which is specialized to analyze the rhetorical pattern in the introduction of a research paper. The framework is outlined in the following.

Move 1: Establishing a territory

- S1 : Topic Generalization of increasing specificity
- (i) : Reporting conclusion of previous studies
- (ii) : Narrowing the field
- (iii) : Writer's evaluation of existing research
- (iv) : Time-frame of relevance
- (v) : Research objective/process of previous studies
- (vi) : Terminology/definition
- (vii) : Generalizing
- (viii) : Furthering or advancing knowledge

Move 2: Establishing the niche

- S1A : Indicating a gap
- S1B : Adding to what is known
- S2 : Presenting positive justification

Move 3 : Presenting the present work

- S1 : Announcing present work descriptively and/or purposively

- S2 : Presenting research questions or hypothesis
- S3 : Definitional clarification
- S4 : Summarizing method
- S5 : Announcing principal outcome (PISF)
- S6 : Stating the value of the present paper (PISF)
- S7 : Outlining the structure of the paper (PISF)

First, move 1, establishing a territory, was mentioned as the phase that claims the purpose, the interest, the importance, and the main point in an academic research paper. Second, move 2, establishing a niche, has two steps to construct the specialty of a study. The steps deal with identifying the gap between the research and the previous studies (Swales, 2004). Third, move 3, presenting the present work, focuses on describing the outline of the present research and categorizing other points as optional classification or probably in some fields in steps 5, 6, and 7 to indicate the framework as the flexible guidance for different fields.

In this case, the thesis background could also prove the research quality or value by showing the issue from their actual situation, which is worthy of being explored (Sirijanchuen & Gampper, 2018). However, Arsyad and Arono (2016) pointed out that rhetorical knowledge in writing the introduction could become a profound problem for students. In addition, studies related to the rhetorical pattern in thesis background are limited. Therefore, this study is intended to elaborate more discussion, especially on the research background used by undergraduate students.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher analyzed the data by applying the qualitative method to understand the data comprehensively and take in-depth information to have better results. As a practical design of the study, qualitative research is intended to explore the phenomenon that happened in people's environment or examine the problems of social issues. It is also essential to organize the data so that the researcher can elaborate the data clearly, whether in oral or written form (Creswell, 2014).

Research Participants

Since the study uses descriptive analysis on the undergraduate student thesis background in Aceh, the researcher collected the data from theses submitted by the students at English Language Education Department of UIN Ar-Raniry and Universitas Syiah Kuala. Both universities are the top and the most famous universities in Aceh. It focuses on the recent undergraduate theses that have been published in the library repository of the university. Ten undergraduate theses were selected from each university, and thus there were 20 documents in total. The sample size was considered adequate to represent the background section of the students from each batch in the university and to see the current way or framework that students used in writing their thesis background. Therefore, the data consisted of the frequency of rhetorical patterns from thesis backgrounds.

Research Instrument

One of the necessary elements in conducting research is the instrument of the study. It is the tool to help researchers organize the data clearly and to keep filtering the appropriate data in the analysis process (Birmingham & Wilkinson, 2003). This research tends to process the information of the data through documentation as the instrument. It could assist the researcher in recognizing the evidence of the frequency of the rhetorical pattern.

Furthermore, the target of the research examines the undergraduate thesis background both from UIN Ar-Raniry and Universitas Syiah Kuala. The researcher used Kanoksilapatham's (2005) classification as the primary guide to determine the frequency of the case.

Technique of Data Collection and Analysis

In collecting the data, the researcher focused on the information presented in the theses (Griffie, 2012). There are some following steps that the researcher followed in collecting the data. First, the researcher opens the served online website platform of repository UIN Ar-Raniry and search for "*Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan*". Afterward, the researcher chose "*Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris*", since the samples of undergraduate scripts are English department students in order to see the list of some theses. Second, the source data of Syiah Kuala Universities were taken from the Electronic Thesis and Dissertation or directly asked permission from the undergraduate students. Third, twenty students' theses are selected, and they only consisted of the

currently published theses. Finally, the downloaded data were analyzed with the guidance framework.

The researcher started the analysis by simplifying the data, assigning codes to each token through the coding process based on the Swales CARS model (2004) framework to determine the frequency of the rhetorical patterns using Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification. The data are analyzed using the Swales CARS model (2004) to show the application of rhetorical patterns. Then, the researcher focused on classifying occurrences of the rhetorical pattern in the thesis background. In order to see the commonalities, the frequency of rhetorical patterns in the research background was categorized into obligatory and optional moves. The pattern that shows 60 percent or above was regarded as an “obligatory” move. Meanwhile, the “optional” move was assigned to the data with the frequency of less than 60 percent. Henceforth, the investigated document is proved to verify the data based on the guidance framework in which the result of the movements shows a conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

The following discussion explores the frequency of rhetorical patterns on the students’ undergraduate theses of UIN Ar-Raniry and Universitas Syiah Kuala according to the Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification. The classification was significant to assist students in writing thesis background in proper academic style. Subsequently, the researcher presents the table of the occurrences in each pattern of thesis background. It is organized to help the researcher accumulate and gather the whole data classification. The entire data is presented as below:

Table 1. Rhetorical pattern in students’ thesis background

<i>Moves</i>	<i>UIN TB</i>	<i>USK TB</i>	<i>Total</i>
M1: Establishing a territory			
S1 : Topic Generalization of increasing specificity	10 (100%)**	10 (100%)**	20 (100%)**
(i) : Reporting conclusion of previous studies	9 (90%)**	8 (80%)**	17 (85%)**
(ii) : Narrowing the field	10 (100%)**	10 (100%)**	20 (100%)**
(iii) : Writer’s evaluation of existing research	10 (100%)**	7 (70%)**	17 (85%)**
(iv) : Time-frame of relevance	10 (100%)**	10 (100%)**	20 (100%)**

(v) : Research objective/process of previous studies	4 (40%)*	5 (50%)*	9 (45%)*
(vi) : Terminology/definition	6 (60%)**	8 (80%)**	14 (70%)**
(vii) : Generalizing	2 (20%)*	1 (10%)*	3 (15%)*
(viii) : Furthering or advancing knowledge	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*
M2: Establishing the niche			
S1A : Indicating a gap	10 (100%)**	10 (100%)**	20 (100%)**
S1B : Adding to what is known	9 (90%)**	10 (100%)**	19 (95%)**
S2 : Presenting positive justification	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*
M3: Presenting the present work			
S1 : Announcing present work descriptively and/or purposively	10 (100%)**	10 (100%)**	20 (100%)**
S2 : Presenting research questions or hypothesis	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*
S3 : Definitional clarification	0 (0%)*	0 (0%)*	0(0%)*
S4 : Summarizing method	2 (20%)*	1(10%)*	3 (15%)*
S5 : Announcing principal outcome (PISF)	4 (40%)*	3 (30%)*	7 (35%)*
S6 : Stating the value of the present paper (PISF)	3 (30%)*	3 (30%)*	6 (30%)*
S7 : Outlining the structure of the paper (PISF)	0(0%)*	0(0%)*	0(0%)*

TB= Thesis Background, UIN= UIN Ar-Raniry, USK= Syiah Kuala University

**= obligatory, *= optional

Based on the table above, the frequencies were identified by classifying the result of the data adapted from Kanoksilapatham (2005). It categorized the rhetorical pattern in research background into two categories; obligatory (60% or above) and optional (under 60%). Based on the framework, the researcher would like to point out the pattern of data in detail.

The first move is divided into one step and eight sub-steps. The result has shown that the undergraduate students dominantly present the obligatory data from all 20 theses. Based on the results of the study, most students begin the research background by explaining the common knowledge of their thesis topic to attract readers, which is categorized into Move 1.

Afterward, they report the conclusion of previous studies (85%), narrowing the field (100%), writer's evaluation of existing research (85%), time-frame of relevance (100%), and terminology/definition (70%), which are categorized as the mandatory sub-steps in move 1. The

undergraduate theses of both universities exhibit the high presentation of the data. The results of the data analysis have shown steady changes and have asserted that students have an adequate skill to elaborate the idea in academic writing with an appropriate rhetorical pattern.

Moreover, the subsequent accumulation of the data is the frequency of sub-steps in the first move that include optional classification. Those are research objectives/processes of previous studies (45%), generalizing (15%), and furthering or advancing knowledge (0%). The data show that they occurred less than 60%, suggesting that undergraduate students of both universities did not consider them the main section to be explored. The frequency of occurrence indicates zero percent or low percentage, yet the sub-steps are important to put in the research background to enrich the content and support the present research of students.

The second move is the least frequent pattern in the thesis background framework that consists of two steps. The first step is indicating a gap (100%) and adding what is known (95%), and the last step is presenting positive justification (0%). According to the data, almost all first steps of interpreted data are classified as the obligatory section. Meanwhile, none of the data are identified in the second step of move 2. Therefore, the last step is categorized as optional in writing the thesis background. Accordingly, the documents from both universities have already reflected the pattern that is in line with the Swales CARS model.

The third move presents the present work that is divided into seven steps. The analyzed data has shown that only step 1 was considered as obligatory. Meanwhile, the rest of the steps are found less than 60%, and thus considered optional in the last move of rhetorical pattern in thesis background. The first step is announcing the present work (100%) from both universities as the most frequent pattern.

Furthermore, the following steps include presenting research questions or hypotheses, providing definitional clarification, and outlining the structure of the paper where the data show a different finding result on the documents. The data indicate that none of the undergraduate thesis applied these steps in the background of the study. Thus, it is categorized as an optional pattern. Likewise, the students have displayed different results in steps of summarizing method (15%), announcing principal outcome (35%), and stating the value of the present paper (30%). The undergraduate theses from both universities provide

limited data on these steps. Therefore, the steps are considered optional since they occurred less than 60%.

The last, most of the data indicate the same frequency of rhetorical pattern based on Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification by following the framework of Swales CARS model. Even though the undergraduate student did not implement the same pattern structurally in expressing the rhetorical pattern in the thesis background, the commonalities of the occurrence include the same points as the theory in terms of the classification.

Discussions

The research analyzed 20 theses, particularly the background of study in the introduction section, from two universities by adapting the framework of Kanoksilapatham (2005) to determine the frequency of the rhetorical pattern proposed by Swales (2004). The research focuses on identifying the frequency in each move and step of the thesis background.

First, the rhetorical pattern based on the Swales CARS model is divided into three moves, i.e. Move 1 (establishing the territory), Move 2 (establishing the niche), and Move 3 (presenting the present work). The twenty background studies were examined to seek the academic thesis background of Acehnese students from both universities.

The researcher found that the undergraduate students consist of the complete mandatory or obligatory steps in each move according to the data. The data has shown that steps in Move 1 include generalizing topic, narrowing the field, time or relevance, reporting the conclusion of the previous study, evaluating the existing research, and defining terminology. Moreover, Move 2 deals with indicating a gap and adding to what has already been known. Meanwhile, Move 3 announces present work descriptively inserted as the obligatory section. The data analysis results are in line with a previous study conducted by Arsyad & Arono (2016), who stated that Indonesian students have the same pattern or similarities to examine the research introduction.

In addition, the data show that students are capable of exploring the research topic deeply in the thesis background, which is consistent with some relevant previous studies (Abdesslem & Costello, 2018). It is proven that the results are in line with the framework category that has shown the pattern more than 60% of the data (Kanoksilapatham, 2005).

Moreover, the comparison of both universities in the obligatory moves showed the frequency of occurrence that sometimes gives

different percentages in each university. In some sections, Universitas Syiah Kuala had a higher percentage than UIN Ar-Raniry regarding terminology/definition and novelty. Otherwise, UIN Ar-Raniry has shown a better result in the steps of reporting the conclusion of previous studies, writer's evaluation of existing research, and generalization. Nevertheless, the data did not provide any significant differences between students from the two universities.

Likewise, Kanoksilapatham (2005) stated that the rhetorical pattern that occurs under 60% should be classified into the optional move. In this study, Move 1 involves the research objective/process of the previous study, topic generalization, and furthering or advancing knowledge. Move 2 has presented positive justification. Move 3 has been recorded as the steps that include the presenting research question or hypothesis, definitional clarification, summarizing the method, announcing the principal outcome, stating the value of the present research, and outlining the structure of the thesis. Indeed, the data has been integrated into the CARS model that shows that the Acehnese students from both universities exhibit the same rhetorical pattern of thesis background (Swales, 2004).

Furthermore, in the different perspective, the steps of presenting research question (Move 3), and definitional clarification (Move 3) were used as the obligatory sections since they had their own division in the introduction section and function as the standard procedure that should be applied by Acehnese students in both universities. Therefore, the undergraduate theses declare none of the data in the analysis of rhetorical patterns in the thesis background.

Particularly, the optional steps did not just assert the lower percentage from the rhetorical pattern. In this case, some steps such as "furthering or advancing knowledge, presenting positive justification, and outlining the structure of the paper" had a different circumstance in research background analysis because the preceding steps did not utilize any result due to unfamiliarity with the topics. Therefore, the rhetorical pattern frequency in certain steps has zero percentage. However, this result did not differ in the rhetorical pattern of thesis background since it only incorporates as the optional move.

Finally, the frequency of the rhetorical pattern of thesis background has been confirmed with Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification, but students need to improve their rhetorical knowledge suitable to the Swales (2004) framework. This will increase the quality

of research background because the students present more steps that are not yet implemented by students in the previously completed theses.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The researcher has obtained some results related to the frequency of the rhetorical pattern. First, the functions of the rhetorical pattern were to assist undergraduate students as novice researchers to write a better background of the study. Many significant elements in rhetorical pattern could help students to produce a piece of good academic writing, which consists of obligatory or optional moves to create a proper research background. According to the result of the study, the data have shown appropriate frequency in the Kanoksilapatham (2005) classification by adapting the Swales CARS model. Students presented consistent frequency with the framework that has been modified to adjust with their own academic writing style.

In the first move, the frequency has reached above 60% of the data, and even some steps were found in all data (100%). These steps consisted of classifying the topic generalization, reporting conclusion of previous studies, narrowing the field, evaluating the existing research, presenting time-frame of relevance, and defining terminology. Meanwhile, the other sub-steps are categorized as the optional classification. Next, in the second move, the frequency was also in line with the framework, in which almost all first steps (indicating the gap and adding what is known) were classified as the obligatory sections. Meanwhile, none of the data was a part of the second step of Move 2. Finally, the frequency in the third move indicated the same classification to the framework. Step 1 announcing the present work (100%) was categorized into the obligatory, and the rest steps were found under 60% of the data. Hence, the results can provide some advantages to students. Although they have the same frequency, they can express them through different ways.

Based on the results of the study, it is suggested students enhance their rhetorical knowledge in some different aspects. Raising the awareness to use high or advanced language in English writing is also equally important for students rather than just transforming the first language into English. The earlier students learn about rhetorical patterns, the better result students can increase their capacity to comprehend complex skill.

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