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## Rhetorical Structures, Strategies, and Linguistic Features of Problem Statement to Promote a Teaching Writing Model

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### Abstract

*Studies about rhetorical moves in the introduction section have been widely conducted. However, the studies focusing on the research problem statement is still limited. This current study investigated the rhetorical structures, strategies, and linguistic features of the problem statement written by undergraduate students, which aimed to contribute to the teaching model in teaching academic writing. This research was a qualitative case study belonging to genre analysis, using Swale's CARS model. Thirty undergraduate students' problem statement texts were explored, and interviews were further conducted to collect the data. The results indicated that nine types of rhetorical structures were employed, most of which were characterized as incomplete. The rhetorical strategies employed by the students were making a centrality claim, making topic generalizations, reviewing previous research, indicating a gap, establishing need and problem, continuing a tradition, outlining purposes, and announcing the state of the present research. Specific linguistic features were used in each move and step although the students admitted that they had lack of knowledge with linguistic features. Based on the research finding, a Critical Genre-Based model for teaching problem statements in writing is proposed because this model has facilitative effect on consciousness-raising of the genre's rhetorical structure.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

The important role of English in research publications has encouraged English teachers in tertiary education to seek appropriate methods to teach academic writing (Yusuf et al., 2019). Based on the researchers' observation and decades of teaching experience, most EFL undergraduate students found it difficult to perform academic writing. Likewise, in the learning evaluation conducted at the end of every semester, the majority of students mentioned academic writing as one of the most difficult subjects to learn. Therefore, research on undergraduate students' academic writing is crucial to be conducted, especially to contribute to the teaching of academic writing.

In Indonesia, tertiary education is the institution where students formally learn to write academic writing (Ministry of Education and Culture of Republic of Indonesia, 2020). The students majoring in English need to write a research paper in English as a final project. Teaching academic writing to undergraduate students helps build a foundation that will impact their future education level. Strengthening the foundation is crucial since writing competence facilitates academic and professional success (Rao, 2019). Studies on graduate and postgraduate students' research papers revealed the problems of the papers' rhetorical moves (Amnuai, 2019; Fazilatfar & Naseri, 2016; Lu, Yoon, et al., 2021; Nimehchisalem et al., 2016; Tankó, 2017; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021). It is possible that, to some extent, the teaching of academic writing in undergraduate education contributes to the problems. This phenomenon is one of the reasons that inspire the researchers to investigate the undergraduate students' research papers.

Studies on parts of research papers (RP), especially in the introduction section analyzing the rhetorical or communicative moves, have been widely conducted (Lu et al., 2020; Lu, Casal, et al., 2021; Lu, Yoon, et al., 2021). The underlying rationale to conduct this current research is the important role of introduction to win the readership. To the best knowledge of the researchers, the study of the introduction section focusing to reveal the rhetorical strategies of the research problem statement is rare despite the vital role of a research problem statement for the research implementation (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Nimehchisalem et al., 2016; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021). This current research aims to fill the gap on the studies of problem statement. Examining the rhetorical strategies of the research problem statement found in the undergraduate students' research papers were considered essential since the researchers' teaching experience showed that EFL students, as novice writers, were often ignorant and less aware of the rhetorical moves when writing their research problems. Their less awareness automatically reduced the quality of their research papers.

Tarvirdizdeh and Nimehchisalem (2021) state that the systematic presentation enables the authors to communicate the research problem. EFL undergraduate college students must be aware of the rhetorical moves and strategies of the research problem statement. The skill in writing problem statements (PS) will become an important foundation for academic writing such as to write a research article, a thesis, and a dissertation.

In academic writing, PS is the crystallization of the academic issue as to what a researcher wants to prove. A study is generally conducted in response to a PS which contains problem, justification, shortcoming of previous studies or practical knowledge, and significance (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). PS section is, therefore, a key entry to a scientific community in order to achieve readership, and it acts as the most important part in the research paper introduction (Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017). It is also argued that a well-structured PS section makes research meaningful (Ankomah & Afful, 2019). Thus, good research starts with a clear flow of ideas to state the issue of the research problem. However, it is problematic for many undergraduate, graduate, and even post-graduate students because academic writing is culture bound in which every culture has its own writing convention (Ankomah & Afful, 2019).

Theoretically speaking, RP is an academic genre, and PS as a part of the RP is also a genre. Genre is defined as a staged, goal-oriented, and purposeful communicative event which moves through stages to achieve its communicative purpose for which each stage employs different linguistic features (Van Dijk, 2017). Therefore, writing proficiency covers rhetorical structure and linguistic competence. EFL writers are required to master a complete rhetorical structure to compete for their RP to be published. This is particularly because the rhetorical structure that reflects the logical argument varies across cultures and languages.

The communicative purpose of a PS genre is to identify, reveal, communicate, and explain the issue(s) intended to be solved. It is achieved through moves, namely rhetorical movements with specific intentions. Each move is realized in steps which are strategies to achieve the move's function; therefore, the steps are termed as rhetorical strategies (Jalilifar et al., 2011).

Several previous studies on PS explored the students' academic writings which had been edited by the supervisors and editors. For example, studies investigated undergraduate, graduate, and postgraduate students' works with the supervisor's assistance (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Obeso, 2019; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021), and a study investigated journal articles with an editor's intervention (Afshar & Ranjbar, 2017). A study by Tarvirdizdeh and Nimehchisalem (2021) investigated the rhetorical structures and linguistic features, the study by Ankomah and Afful (2019) focused on 'establishing a niche', the study by Obeso (2019) focused on 'presenting the present work', and the study by Afshar and Ranjbar (2017) investigated the rhetorical structures and strategies. All of these studies analyzed the students' writing with the 'editing' help by supervisors and editors. Thus, the corpora were not the original texts produced by the students themselves. This indicates that the research results did not truly reflect the writers' real writing competence. The current study blended the issues of the previous studies, namely investigating the rhetorical structures, strategies, and linguistic features. Besides it also extended the previous studies by offering a teaching model designed based on the research findings.

Referring to the background, research questions are proposed, as follows:

1. What rhetorical structures are displayed in PS of EFL undergraduate students' research papers?
2. What rhetorical strategies are employed to achieve the communicative purpose of each move?
3. What linguistic features are employed in each move?
4. What teaching model can be designed?

Therefore, this study aimed at explaining the rhetorical structures of PS, examining strategies used in each move of the PS, analyzing the linguistic features in each move, and designing a teaching model based on the research findings. This study applied a modified Create-a-Research-Space (CARS) model. The CARS model is the metaphor of competition principle. The model, usually used to analyze the rhetorical structure of introduction section, is modified based on the PS elements, namely (1) presenting academic issues as a problem, (2) indicating deficiency, and (3) presenting the goal or solution.

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Problem Statement (PS)**

PS is the most crucial part in RP because the research purpose(s), hypotheses, and method are formulated based on it (Jalilifar et al., 2011; Nimehchisalem et al., 2016; Parsa & Tahririan, 2017). It communicates the issue to be solved and is argumentatively written based on knowledge and research gap. Students' awareness of the research gap and the knowledge of PS rhetorical structure will help them write a higher-quality RP (Nimehchisalem et al., 2016; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021).

PS aims at introducing a topic as an academic (central) issue by supporting it with literature. Undergraduate students as novice writers are required to practice presenting and communicating the research problem. A well-structured PS arises the readers' interest of the RP. Additionally, research that addresses new and relevant problem statements could even potentially contribute to develop the body of knowledge (Swales & Feak, 2012). In writing PS, a research topic is presented as a problem. Then, justification is made, and finally, the achievement of the research goal is presented (Nimehchisalem et al., 2016).

### **2.2 CARS (Create-a-Research-sSpace) Model**

Research paper's introduction section or RPI, in which PS is located, aims at winning for research space and publication. To win the research publication, RPI should be organized using the create-a-research-space model (Swales & Feak, 2012). Based on the model, an author needs to write several moves and several steps for each move.

CARS comprises three moves, each of which has steps. Some steps are optional while some others are obligatory (Swales & Feak, 2012). CARS model is an influential work to analyze genre because a lot of genre studies employed the model. Moves refer to macrostructure, while steps refer to microstructure, namely strategies to realize the move's goal (Jalilifar et al., 2011).

### **2.3 Rhetorical Structure and Strategies**

Rhetorical structure refers to the overall text structure. A text passes through stages to a point of closure. Each stage contributes to the overall meaning that a text will achieve (Van Dijk, 2017). Each stage has its rhetorical function or move.

Therefore, stage is also termed as move. According to Swales and Feak (2012), RPI typically follows CARS' rhetorical structure or pattern, consisting of three moves. The CARS' three moves include 'establishing a research territory' (M1), 'establishing a niche' (M2), and 'occupying a niche' (M3) (Swales & Feak, 2012).

To realize a move's function, strategies are employed. M1 presents the background to the research topic, supported by previous studies. M2 provides the researcher's motivation and the main issues, leading to the need for new research to give a solution to unresolved issues. M3 presents the focus of the current study (Ankomah & Afful, 2019). In this case, M2 specifically presents the strategies used in PS. The strategies utilized in M2 are generally indicating a gap, counter-claiming, establishing need and problem, question-raising, and continuing tradition (Suryani et al., 2018; Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017) Following CARS, PS should have three sections (Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021) as presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Problem statement (PS) sections.

CARS model	Sections of PS
M1: Establishing a research territory	Section 1: Presenting academic issues as a problem
M2: Establishing a niche	Section 2: Indicating deficiency
M3: Occupying a niche	Section 3: Presenting the goal, solution

## 2.4 Move's Linguistic Features

Each move has specific linguistic features. Words like 'important', 'central', 'interesting', and 'relevant' indicate M1. In addition, the most usual way to show a gap in M2 is to use 'quasi-negative' and 'full-negative' vocabularies like 'few', 'little', 'no', 'none', 'although', and 'however'. Furthermore, purpose statements such as 'purpose', 'aim', and 'intend' are used to indicate M3 (Swales & Feak, 2012).

The linguistic features in M1 in the background section is to show that the research topic is worthy and deserves more exploration. The linguistic features in M2 in the problem statement are employed to signal the need for a new study and to persuade readers to accept the motivation of the studies. The linguistic features in M3 in the outlining purposes section is to show that the objective of the study has been established (Ankomah & Afful, 2019).

## 2.5 Genre-Based Approach

A genre is characterized by communicative purpose (goal-oriented), generic structure (staged), and linguistic features (Agustien, 2020). Genre theory explains how language works in a social context. It has become the object of much research contributing to teaching practice termed a genre-based approach (GBA). Van Dijk (2017) argues that learning a language is learning to communicate. Communicating is producing genre, meaning that studies on genre contributes to language teaching practice.

GBA derives from Systemic Functional Language (SFL) theory that language is a social semiotic (Hasan, 2014). GBA promotes teachers' intervention in the learning process and teachers' teaching of how genres are typically constructed. An example of the GBA model is by Feez and Joyce (1998) with the following teaching steps: (1) building the context, (2) modeling and deconstructing the text, (3) making joint



construction of the text, (4) making independent construction of the text, (5) linking related texts (Agustien, 2020; Feez & Joyce, 1998).

## **2.6 Previous Studies on PS**

A study on undergraduate students' monographs and master students' theses employing CARS model revealed that the majority of the samples missed the moves and their steps, especially the research gap step (Lu, Casal, et al., 2021; Lu, Yoon, et al., 2021; Obeso, 2019; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021). The incomplete rhetorical structure and the imbalanced frequency of moves and steps resulted in failing to communicate the problem. This is particularly because the students did not know the research gap to be filled and thus failed to propose a solution. The student's lack of knowledge of rhetorical aspects negatively affected PS writing ability.

A study on PS move 2 'establishing a niche' and its rhetorical strategies of 26 theses and dissertations employing modified CARS found that doctorate students employed more strategies than master students. Doctorate students employed four strategies (indicating a gap, counter-claiming, establishing problem and need, and continuing tradition), while master students employed only three strategies (indicating a gap, establishing problem and need, and continuing tradition) (Ankomah & Afful, 2019). Counter-claiming was only found in dissertations (19%) because it was the most difficult strategy as stated by Swales and Feak (2012). Only advanced students, who usually had bravery to criticize that the previous studies were erroneous, employed counter-claiming. The most common strategy to establish a niche is by gap indications. Additionally, the frequency of research questions (RQ) as one strategy of move 3 of research articles was relatively high (Afshar & Ranjbar, 2017; Rahayu et al., 2022). This step was not problematic for student writers because most of them were familiar with this strategy.

Furthermore, a study on rhetorical structures of social sciences article introductions using CARS model revealed the distribution of rhetorical moves and steps. Rhetorical and phraseological features or linguistic expression choices varied among five social science disciplines of anthropology, applied linguistics, political science, psychology, and sociology. These findings revealed the disciplinary variation in the rhetorical and linguistic features of research article writing had useful implications for academic writing pedagogy (Lu, Casal, et al., 2021; Lu, Yoon, et al., 2021).

## **3. METHODS**

### **3.1 Design of Research**

This research was a qualitative case study, exploring a small scale and focusing on one or more individuals (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Gerring, 2017; Yazan, 2015). It analysed academic writing genre; thus, it is a discourse or genre analysis. Discourse analysis studies the corpus, focusing on discourse units (Flowerdew, 2013). This current research explored the rhetorical structures, rhetorical strategies, and linguistic features of the unpublished undergraduate students' PS genre. The rhetorical structure in this study was related to the rhetorical functions of the text segments. Rhetorical

strategies were steps or strategies to realize each move's goal or function; meanwhile, linguistic features were specific linguistic expressions used in each move and step.

### 3.2 Participants

The objects or corpora of this study were 30 unpublished undergraduate students' RAIs, produced as a final project of an academic writing class in 2022. The researchers decided this number based on their consideration of what had been done in the PS previous studies' corpus, which was around 20 up to 30 corpora. The 30 corpora were taken from the academic writing lecturer, with the students' permission. They were RAIs of undergraduate students who were in the 7<sup>th</sup>-semester majoring in the English language, studying at Stikubank University (UNISBANK), Semarang, in Indonesia.

### 3.3 Research Procedure

As for qualitative research, researchers were the main data collectors and data analysts to achieve the research goals (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). Documentation and interview were used as data collection instruments. Documentation of 30 unpublished undergraduate students' RAIs were analysed to reveal the moves, steps, and the linguistic features. Meanwhile, the interview was conducted with some students who faced writing problems aiming to reveal why the problems occurred.

A text consists of layers, each of which has a function to contribute to achieving the text's communicative purpose. To know each layer's function, content analysis was carried out. The data collection procedure for documentation included (1) reading RP to know the research topic, (2) reading RPI to fully comprehend each layer's function as content analysis was done by grasping the content, meaning, and idea of the layers, and (3) grasping the specific linguistic features to show the function of move and step. Afterward, the data were analysed using the modified CARS (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Swales, 1990; Swales & Feak, 2012; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021) to reveal the rhetorical structures and strategies of the PS. The move number and names of rhetorical structures and strategies (steps) of Swale's (2011) CARS were adapted in the current study findings, by considering the nature and communicative purpose of PS as well as by adding and omitting some steps. The step of 'establishing problem and need' identified in the data was added. Meanwhile, the steps of 'announcing principal findings' and 'indicating RA structure' that were not necessary for PS were omitted. Besides, steps of 'counter-claiming' and 'question-raising' which were not found in the data were also omitted.

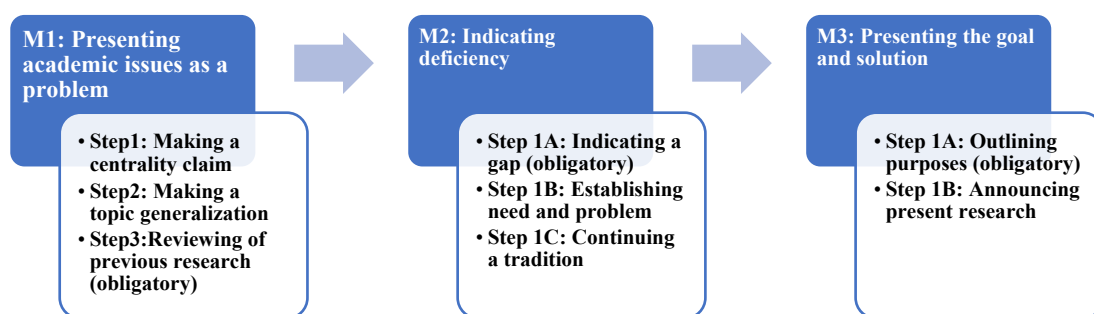


Figure 1. The modified CARS model.

Figure 1 shows the modified CARS. This is based on the literature review that revealed that PS is a problem-solution text, aiming to introduce a problem as the main reason to conduct the research (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Swales & Feak, 2012). The structure of PS is as follows: M1 focuses on the current capacity; M2 focuses on the problem; and M3 focuses on the solution (Swales & Feak, 2012).

The researchers analysed the documentation data manually. Afterward, an expert in applied linguistics (not a researcher member), as an independent analyst, validated the findings in data analysis. The moves and the steps found were then coded and tabulated. Additionally, the typical linguistic expressions in each move were bolded. The coding used in the moves and steps found in this current study was as the following: M1 (S1, S2, S3), M2 (S1A, S1B, S1C), and M3 (S1A, S1B). For example, M1S3 signifies 'reviewing previous research'. Besides, some additional abbreviations were also used in coding the findings, for example, PSs stands for problem statement sample, and Obl. stands for obligatory. Some steps were obligatory while some others were optional. The rhetorical structure was characterized as complete (C) when it had all the obligatory steps (M1S3, M2S1A, M3S1A), while it was categorized as incomplete (IC) when it lacked one or more of the obligatory moves.

The interview used as the instrument in this current study consisted of six open-ended questions related to rhetorical strategies and language features. Three questions were addressed to the students who faced problems with M1S2, M1S3, M2S1A strategies, aiming to reveal why the problems occurred. One question was addressed to the students who preferred to use M2S1B 'establishing problem and need' strategy that was identified in the research finding, but did not exist in Swales' (2011) CARS. One question was addressed to the students who preferred to use M2S1C 'continuing a tradition' strategy, which according to Swales and Feak (2012) was a weaker option for 'establishing a niche'. One question was addressed to the students to check their awareness of the linguistic features in each move and step.

The interview data was analysed by content analysis. The way to analyse the interview were (1) coding the interview results, (2) reading the excerpt, (3) grasping what were conveyed by the interviewees. With this way, the students' problems, and reasons for employing certain strategy were revealed.

Furthermore, in analysing the overall data, the procedure included: (1) identifying the border of each move; (2) analysing the strategies to achieve each move's function; (3) analysing the specific linguistic expressions of each strategy; (4) concluding the rhetorical structures and strategies of each problem statement sample; (5) interpreting the students' problems in writing PS; (6) interviewing some respondents who faced the problems concerning why the problems occurred in order to validate the researchers' interpretation; and (7) designing a genre-based teaching model based on the research findings.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### **4.1 Rhetorical Structures Displayed in Problem Statement of EFL Undergraduate Students' Research Problem**

After identifying the moves based on its function, the M1, M2, M3 occurrences are displayed in Table 2.



**Table 2.** Move occurrences in PSs.

PSs	Rhetorical occurrence			Total of Move	Frequency
	Move 1	Move 2	Move 3		
10,15,29	-	v	v	2	3
1,4,7,11,12, 16,19, 20,23, 26	v	-	v	2	10
24,25, 2, 9, 14, 2, 9, 14	v	v		2	8
5,8,13,18, 22,27,30, 3,6,17, 21,28	v	v	v	3	12
	23(77%)	20(67%)	22(73%)		

The findings indicated that the moves structures can be classified into: (1) M2, M3, (2) M1, M3, (3) M1, M2, and (4) M1, M2, M3. This means that most students did not include complete macro structure in writing their PSs because only 40% of the texts included three moves. The detailed rhetorical structures consisting of moves and steps are presented in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Rhetorical structures of PSs.

PSs	Rhetorical structures								Total of Move	Total of Steps	C	IC	F
	Move 1			Move 2			Move 3						
	S1	S2	S3 obl	S 1A obl	S 1B	S 1C	S 1A obl	S 1B					
10,15,29	-	-	-	-	v	-	v	-	2	2		v	3 (10%)
1,4,7,11,12,16,19	v		v	-	-	-	v	-	2	3		v	7 (23%)
20,23,26	v	-	-	-	-	-	v	v	2	3		v	3 (10%)
24,25	v		v			v	-	-	2	3		v	2 (6%)
2,9,14	v	-	-	-	v	-	-	-	2	2		v	3 (10%)
5,8,13,18	v	v	v	v			v	v	3	6	v		4 (13%)
22,27,30	v		v	v		v	v	v	3	6	v		3 (10%)
3,6,17	v	v			v		v	v	3	5		v	3 (10%)
21,28	v				v		v		3	3		v	2 (6%)
	22	7	16	7	11	5	25	13			7	23	30
	73%	23%	53%	23%	37%	17%	83%	43%			23%	77%	

Table 3 shows that the rhetorical structures and strategies displayed in PS of EFL undergraduate students' RP can be grouped into nine types:

- 10% of the total PS employed 'establishing need and problem' (M2S1B) and 'outlining purposes' (M3S1A).
- 23% of the total PS employed 'making a centrality claim' (M1S1), 'reviewing previous research' (M1S3), and 'outlining purposes' (M3S1A).
- 10% of the total PS employed 'making a centrality claim' (M1S1), 'reviewing previous research' (M1S3), and 'outlining purposes' (M3S1A).

4. 6% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘reviewing previous research’ (M1S3), and ‘continuing a tradition’ (M2S1C).
5. 10% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1) and ‘establishing need and problem’ (M2S1B).
6. 13% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘making topic generalizations’ (M1S2), ‘reviewing previous research’ (M1S3), ‘indicating a gap’ (M2S1A), ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A), and ‘announcing present research’ (M3S1B).
7. 10% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘reviewing previous research’ (M1S3), ‘indicating a gap’ (M2S1A), ‘continuing a tradition’ (M2S1C), ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A), and ‘announcing present research’ (M3S1B).
8. 10% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘making topic generalizations’ (M1S2), ‘establishing need and problem’ (M2S1B), and ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A).
9. 6% of the total PS employed ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘establishing need and problem’ (M2S1B), and ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A).

These findings showed that the rhetorical structures of ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘reviewing of previous research’ (M1S3), and ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A) were mostly used by the EFL students. Although they reviewed related previous studies, they failed to indicate the research gap to be filled, as one of the obligatory steps in PS (Swales & Feak, 2012).

The findings also indicated that only 23% (i.e., type 6 and 7 (13% and 10%)) of the PSs had complete rhetorical structures, namely ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘making topic generalizations’ (M1S2), ‘reviewing of previous research’ (M1S3), ‘indicating a gap’ (M2S1A), ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A), ‘announcing present research’ (M3S1B); and ‘making a centrality claim’ (M1S1), ‘reviewing of previous research’ (M1S3), ‘indicating a gap’ (M2S1A), ‘continuing a tradition’ (M2S1C), ‘outlining purposes’ (M3S1A), ‘announcing present research’ (M3S1B). About 77% of the PSs had incomplete rhetorical structures that may result in failing to communicate the problem. This finding was similar to the previous study (Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021) in which the most common rhetorical pattern found was the incomplete pattern. A rhetorical structure is characterized as complete when it has all the obligatory steps (M1S3, M2S1A, M3S1A) (Swales & Feak, 2012).

Obligatory steps are the key elements in recognizing a genre, and they are obliged to occur since the appearance of these elements characterizes whether the text is complete or incomplete (Paltridge, 2007). The research findings implied that the students were not aware of the importance of obligatory steps. Their lack of rhetorical structure knowledge was the possible source of the problem. Genre-based teaching was one alternative solution to the problem as the previous researchers suggested that the students needed to employ genre analysis in order to increase their awareness and deeper understanding of the genre’s schematic structure (Arsyad & Arono, 2019; Thongchalerms & Jarunthawatchai, 2020). Each move’s occurrences are discussed in this section, while the steps of each move are discussed in the ‘rhetorical strategies’ section.

#### 4.1.1 Move 1

M1 presents the ‘establishing a research territory’ intention, providing background to the researched topic by mentioning the research area at the current situation (Swales & Feak, 2012). M1 usually starts with a general topic. The research findings of this current study showed that M1 had a high occurrence (77%), meaning that most EFL students were aware of ‘presenting current issue as a problem’. This finding was parallel with the previous studies’ findings (Samad et al., 2018; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021) that M1 was not problematic for native and non-native student writers. Moreover, the findings also revealed that three PSs directly jumped to M2 and did not include M1, meaning that the authors did not orient the readers with the researched topic.

- (1) PSs5: Indonesians know that their nation conducts a national event called National Election ... To deal with this national event, some presidential candidates are competing to promote ... Promoting language is **crucial** to be able to promote the candidates. Billboard becomes one of many **efficient** media to ... It is like **advertising, attracting** people, **catching their attention**, ... The language of advertising campaign aims to ... (M1)

The M1 in (1) presented background for the research by reminding the readers of the national election event, which was related to the research topic. This background presentation was to attract the readers’ attention. Additionally, the way to attract the readers was strengthened by showing that the topic was crucial.

#### 4.1.2 Move 2

M2 is the most crucial move in PS because it is the point that connects M1 and M3, connecting what has been done previously and what the current research is doing (Swales, 2011). It presents the ‘gap’ that is not completed yet by the previous research and it is the motivation to conduct the current study. M2 was the most difficult move as seen from the data of the current study that 33% of PSs did not include M2. The students jumped from M1 to M3. They failed to formulate the underlying reasons that encouraged them to do the research. This finding was contradictory to the previous study’s finding (Samad et al., 2018) in which 100% of the data (20 RPs) included M2. The difference result was because the data were the students’ writing produced with the supervisor’s help, and not the original students’ writing.

- (2) PSs5: ... **However**, appraisal researches on billboard for presidential campaign are still **rare**. (M2)

The M2 in (2) indicated that the space was still available for the study. The insufficient studies on the topic had motivated the researcher to conduct this current study. Thus, the study was done aiming to complete the previous studies.

#### 4.1.3 Move 3

M3 describes what the RP will accomplish concerning M2 (Yasin & Qamariah, 2014). It presents the research purpose and offers a solution. The research findings revealed that M3 occurred relatively high in the PSs (73%). This means that the students thought that M3 was necessary to be presented in RAIs. This finding was

different from the previous study's finding (Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021), which showed the lowest occurrence of M3. This indicates that for most research participants, M3 was not necessary to be presented in RAIs. But it was similar to the findings of another previous study (Samad et al., 2018) in which 100% of the data included M3.

- (3) PSs5: **This research aims at** finding out what appraisal of judgment represented in the billboard of the 2024 presidential election campaign. This study is qualitative in nature, describing the data qualitatively using appraisal theory. (M3)

The M3 in (3) stated the objective and nature of the study. The objective of the study was to find out the appraisal system. Meanwhile, the nature of the study was qualitative and descriptive.

## **4.2 Rhetorical Strategies Employed to Achieve the Communicative Purpose of Each Move**

The frequency of steps from each move's displayed in Table 2 is discussed in this section to know the EFL students' rhetorical strategies. As aforementioned, each move's communicative purpose can be achieved through step(s) or strategies. Each move has a range of options for strategies (Swales & Feak, 2012).

### *4.2.1 Making a centrality claim (M1S1)*

Claiming centrality is achieved by describing the current growing problems, particularly to indicate that the research topic is important, useful, and deserves investigation. Most students (73%) included M1S1 in their texts. This was a good start to attract the readers' attention, especially to remind them that the research topic was essential. This finding was parallel with that of the previous study on Indonesian student authors' research article introduction (RAI) (Rochma et al., 2020), and with that of Iranian students' RAI (Farnia & Barati, 2017). Those studies reported that M1S1 was not problematic for both native and non-native students.

- (4) PSs20: Entertainment is ... that **captures the attention and interest** ... An entertainment ... **enjoy** is the film industry. Films **have a huge impact** ... that **grabs the attention**. ... that is **hugely popular** all over the world. Films with ... are **interesting** for young people, ... One of the **famous** ... **best** action film ... In Kung Fu Hustle, ... plays a young man named 'Sing'. ...The **important** politeness value showed by Sing can be learned ... This research will focus on the politeness strategies of the character Sing. ... (M1S1)

The M1S1 above started from a more general issue of entertainment, film, and Kungfu film commonly enjoyed by the youth. This general issue aimed at capturing the readers' interest. Then, it is gradually more focused on the research topic, the politeness strategies of character 'Sing' in the movie 'Kung Fu Hustle'.

### *4.2.2 Making topic generalizations (M1S2)*

M1S2 functions to show a given research topic generalization, which can be operationalized by describing the related research practices or phenomena. This current study findings revealed that few PSs (23%) included M1S2, which was

contradictory to the previous study's finding revealing that M1S2 occurred in more than 60% of the data (Rochma et al., 2020). This different finding was possible because of the reviewer's intervention for the previous study's research objects, published articles in ELT journals. The low M1S2 occurrence found in this current study may indicate the undergraduate students' narrow view or knowledge of the research topic so that they failed to generalize the particular research topics.

- (5) PSs3: ...Spoken English was chosen ..., ... the **most important** ... in an **increasingly globalized** ... ..focused on interlanguage syntax ... (M1S1)  
 ... In a **more broad way**, ... syntax also governs the use of punctuation. ..., the expert agrees that syntax is one of the fundamental things in language, ... Due to this fact, ... (M1S2)

In PSs3, the EFL student started with M1S1 by describing the narrow research topic of 'interlanguage syntax in spoken English'. Then, she related the topic with the research practice or phenomena in general by using the words 'in a more broad way'. This topic generalization indicated the students' mastery of the research topic.

#### 4.2.3 Reviewing of previous research (M1S3)

M1S3 is an obligatory move in PS since it is a way to know what has been done to create a research space for the new research (Swales & Feak, 2012). It is also a way to show that the new research contributes to developing the body of knowledge, and ensuring intertextuality (Jalilifar et al., 2011). A number of 16 PSs (53%) in this current study findings contained M1S3. This occurrence was similar to a previous study on 20 undergraduate RAI in Indonesia, in which 50% of the data contained M1S3 (Samad et al., 2018).

- (6) PSs1: ..., ... some **previous studies** have been conducted ... The first study **reported** ... The next study by ... **investigated** ... A similar study ... **revealed**... (M1S3)

M1S3 above employed reported verbs. The writer reported the previous research by mentioning the researchers and the sources. This was a way to give credit to the previous researchers.

Due to the importance of M1S3, a follow-up interview with 14 students was carried out to reveal their problems. Overall, the interview revealed that they were not aware of the importance of previous studies' citations to find a research gap to be filled.

- (7) Q2-S6: I do not realize that reviewing the previous studies is needed to see the gap to be filled.

#### 4.2.4 Indicating a gap (M2S1A)

M2S1A is an obligatory key move in PS since it is a way to criticize that the previous studies are not complete, yet (Swales & Feak, 2012). This step was problematic for the students since the current study found that M2S1A was only employed in seven PSs (23%). Some PSs presented M1S3 but did not follow it up with M2S1A. This finding worried the teacher-researchers since the students tended to ignore writing M2S1A in their RPI. Furthermore, an interview with seven students revealed that during writing they never thought of this step because they were unaware



that M2S1A was a key point and must exist in their RPI. The sample perception retrieved from the interview is as follows.

(8) Q3-S24: I think by presenting the previous research, the readers can find the research gap.

The findings of this current study contrasted several previous studies revealing that M2S1A was mostly found in non-native and native speakers' RPI (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Farnia & Barati, 2017; Samad et al., 2018). However, this finding was similar to some findings reported from previous studies (Parsa & Tahririan, 2017; Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017) that M2S1A was the least frequent strategy. The problem might be due to the students' lack of writing experience and lack of rhetorical structure knowledge as stated by some students in the interview.

(9) Q3-S17: The **rare** writing practice and the lack of knowledge about genre are the main cause of my writing problem.

(10) PSs22: The previous studies are mostly about the analysis of conversational structure in a television talk show. Studies about the conversational structure and adjacency pairs in television talk shows are still **rare**. (M2S1A)

The extracts in (9) and (10) showed that the gap that was going to be filled was the rareness of the research about the problem. It indicates that the previous studies were not complete, yet. Thus, the student' motivation was to enrich the previous studies on conversational structure and adjacency pairs.

#### *4.2.5 Establishing need and problem (M2S1B)*

M2S1B refers to real-world problems, based on real-life observations (Ankomah & Afful, 2019). Based on the observation, a problem is identified; then, the need statement is justified. Thus, based on the need strategy, the problem statement of the research is written (Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017).

Based on the findings of the current study, M2S1B was a more preferred strategy used by the students, namely 11 frequencies (37%). An interview with five students revealed that M2S1B was easier than M2S1A because reading literature to find a gap was a challenging task. Observing real-life situations was much easier for them. This is as found in the interview data:

(11) Q4-S10: My research problem and my research gap are often based on my observation and my experience; it is easier and more useful.

Furthermore, the use of M2S1B rhetorical strategy was also reported by previous studies (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Jalilifar et al., 2011; Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017) that 'indicating problem and need' was highly preferred choice. The use of M2S1B without being supported with M1S3 and M2S1A should be minimized because it was not in line with the principle of academic writing 'intertextuality', in which a study should be related to other previous studies. Thus, together with other studies, the proposed study developed the body of knowledge. The possible reason of preferring the use of M2S1B strategy was the lack of skill, experience, and knowledge of the undergraduate students.

- (12) PSs21: For English learners, carrying out a conversation in English is **not easy**. One **problem** is the exchange of turns in the conversation. The **problem** of taking turns in a conversation using signs in turn-taking is faced by many students. So, the turn-taking strategy **needs** attention. This research will analyse ... (M2S1B)

The sample in (12) indicated that the research was carried out based on the real problem and need felt by the writer, without considering the previous studies. The research problem ‘turn-taking strategy’ was decided based on the student’s observation. Then, research was carried out to solve the problem.

#### 4.2.6 *Continuing a tradition (M2S1C)*

M2S1C is the replication, the continuation, or the addition of something to the previous study’s practices (Swales & Feak, 2012). In this current study findings, M2S1C strategy was found in five PSs (17%). Additionally, M2S1C occurrence found in this study was higher than in the previous studies (Ankomah & Afful, 2019; Farnia & Barati, 2017; Zainuddin & Shaari, 2017). This relatively high use of M2S1C means that the undergraduate students preferred to replicate the previous study’s strategies. However, Swales and Feak (2012) stated that ‘continuing a tradition’ was a weaker option for ‘establishing a niche’.

- (13) PSs24: ... Turn-taking is ... ... One of the most popular talk shows is ..., the writer is interested in analyzing the turn-taking mechanism ... in the “Kick Andy” talk show.
- (14) This study is **similar to** and **replicates** the previous study of the turn-taking mechanism by Candrika ..., analyzed using theory by Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schegloff, and Gail Jefferson. (M2S1C)

Continuing a tradition in (13) and (14) was imitating the previous study’s research strategy. It was common for novice writers, who in this case were undergraduate EFL students. This replication was generally done because of their insufficient knowledge of the research method.

#### 4.2.7 *Outlining purposes (M3S1A)*

M3S1A is an obligatory move in which the researcher offers a solution by presenting the research purpose or research question. M3S1A occurrence found in this current study was relatively high, about 25 PSs (83%). It means that M3S1A was not problematic for the students. This finding was similar to previous studies (Afshar & Ranjbar, 2017; Rahayu et al., 2022) reporting that 100% of the data included M3S1A. But it contradicted other study’s findings (Nimehchisalem et al., 2016) reporting that only 22% of the data included M3S1A.

- (15) PSs10: ... the learner’s mother tongue influences the pronunciation of the target language. ... The **objective** of this research is to find ... (M3S1A)

The sample in (15) indicated that the research purpose was directly and clearly presented. It was preceded by a hook ‘mother tongue influence’ to grab the readers’ attention. This research purpose was the thesis statement of the RAI.

#### 4.2.8 Announcing present research (M3S1B)

M3S1B describes the features of the study (Swales & Feak, 2012). It explains the strategy to achieve the objectives, and how the problem might be solved. Based on the current study findings, 13 PSs (43%) employed M3S1B. However, the occurrence of M3S1B was lower than the previous studies (Jalilifar et al., 2011; Tarvirdizdeh & Nimehchisalem, 2021).

- (16) PSs13: ..., the writer **described the phenomena** of code-switching produced in a conversation between Najwa Shihab and Agnes Mo, obtained from YouTube on Feb. 7, 2020, and **analysed** using code-switching theory. (M3S1B)

In sample (16), the student shortly presented the nature and the research strategy as the method of collecting and analysing the data. The data started with the phenomena of code switching happened in a conversation between the Indonesian celebrities, Najwa Shihab and Agnes Mo, collected from YouTube. They were analysed using code-switching theory.

### 4.3 Linguistic Expressions Employed in PS to Indicate Moves and Steps

PSs were further analysed to find out the specific linguistic expressions used in each move and step. This was because linguistic features had a crucial role to distinguish moves and steps (Pho, 2013). The linguistic expressions used in each move and step found in this current study are presented in this section.

M1S1 attempted to attract the readers to agree that the research was significant, and the keywords used by the students in this step included: 'important', 'necessary', 'relevant', 'interesting', 'crucial', 'efficient', 'catching attention', 'attracting', 'famous', and 'popular' (PSs5, PSs20). In M1S2, the words like 'widely', 'often', 'broadly', and 'always' (PSs8, PSs6) were mostly used. For M1S3, reporting verbs such as 'reported', 'investigated', and 'revealed' (PSs4, PSs27) were used since the students referred to the previous studies.

M2S1A was indicated by quasi-negative vocabularies such as 'few', 'little', 'although', 'however', 'rare' (PSs18, PSs30). M2S1B was indicated by words like 'problem', 'need a solution', 'need attention', and 'handle' (PSs2, PSs15). In M2S1C the words like 'similar', 'compared', 'like', and 'replicate' (PSs25, PSs30) were used to indicate that the writer will replicate the previous studies.

Then M3S1A was indicated by the words like 'goal', 'purpose', 'aim', and 'objective' (PSs7, PSs11). Lastly, M3S1B was indicated by the words like 'describing', 'the phenomena', 'analyze', 'attempt', 'try', and 'set out' (PSs23, PSs26).

An interview with five students revealed that they were not aware of the linguistic features in each move and step since they lacked knowledge of this matter. This was probably because they were rarely taught by their academic writing teacher about the specific linguistic features in each move and step.

- (17) Q6-S11: While writing, I was rarely aware of the linguistic expressions I should use in each stage of my text. (Student 11)

The current study's finding was parallel to the previous study (Ankomah & Afful, 2019) reporting that each move has specific linguistic features. The specific linguistic expressions used in M1S1 were to attract the readers, those used in M2S1A were to indicate a research gap, and those used in M3S1A were to indicate research purpose. Thus, specific linguistic features signalled the different moves.

#### **4.4 An Alternative Critical Genre-Based Model to Teaching Academic Writing: Problem Statement**

Research findings on a certain genre can be applied in teaching practice to the genre, termed genre-based teaching which will lead to genre awareness. Thus, the research findings on the problem statement genre can be applied to the teaching of problem statement, as part of the introduction to academic writing.

There is a leading notion that genre-based approach (GBA) contributed to the development of teaching writing to non-native speaker learners. GBA promotes teachers' intervention in the learning process and teachers' teaching of how genres are typically constructed (Rofiqoh et al., 2022). According to Millar (2011), genre analysis can lead to consciousness-raising of the genre's rhetorical structure. There is empirical evidence for the facilitative effect of genre consciousness-raising tasks on EFL learners' performance since the tasks impact on the students' deeper knowledge about genre (Atai & Khatibi, 2010). The students can be exposed to various tasks such as analysing texts, searching for the target text genres, deconstructing texts, and giving feedbacks (Nagao, 2019). GBA also promotes the students' creativity and critical thinking (Agustien, 2020; Devitt, 2004). Thus, it is not mistaken if the genre-based teaching model is also termed as critical genre-based teaching model. Based on the research findings of previous studies and this current study, an alternative 'critical genre-based model for teaching problem statements' is proposed.

##### *4.4.1 Characteristics of Critical Genre-Based Model for teaching problem statements*

The teaching model has certain characteristics that cover (1) syntax, (2) instructional and nurturant effects, (3) support system, (4) social system, and (5) principles of reaction (Agustien, 2020; Joyce & Weil, 1986).

##### 1. Syntax

###### a. Building the context

This stage is more like preparation activities, functioning to activate the students' previous knowledge and to build the students' self-confidence. Explicit teaching is also done in this stage. The research findings of this current study revealed that the undergraduate students had problems with PS rhetorical structures and linguistic features due to their lack of rhetorical structure and linguistic feature knowledge. The genre-based teaching proposed needs to compensate for the students' weaknesses. Thus, the explanation of PS rhetorical structures and linguistic features needed to be emphasized by providing more time allotment.

###### b. Modelling

Modelling means exposing the students to PS texts. The texts, later, will be imitated by the students since writing is imitating. The modelling texts will become the objects for analysis. The practice of genre analysis is done in this

step to strengthen the knowledge of PS genre that they have learned in the step of ‘building the context’. The students’ critical thinking will develop while doing genre analysis since they do critical reading, interpreting, evaluating, and inferencing.

c. Joint construction

In this step, the students start constructing their texts in groups with the teacher’s assistance. This stage focuses on the process of creating a text collaboratively, based on the scaffolding principle that the learners need to be involved in various scaffolding activities. While working together, they will develop their creativity, cooperative skills, and other soft skills.

d. Independent construction

Having passed the three stages, the students are ready to create texts independently with minimum help from the teacher; thus, they are getting more autonomous.

2. Instructional and nurturant effects

The instructional effect acquired from the critical genre-based teaching model is the students’ competence and skill to create PS text, while the nurturant effects achieved by the students include critical thinking, creativity, autonomy, and cooperation skills.

3. Support system

Genre analysis is the key activity in GBA. Thus, authentic academic texts for analysis tasks need to be prepared.

4. Social system

The social system is democratic. The teacher plays the role of a facilitator, employing student-centre learning.

5. Principles of reaction

The teachers offer assistance to the students, whenever needed.

#### *4.4.2 Outcomes of Critical Genre-Based Model for teaching problem statements*

Language learning using GBA should result in three outcomes: (1) students learn about language, (2) students learn through language, and (3) students learn language (Agustien, 2020). In the step of ‘building the context’, knowledge about language is taught explicitly. PS rhetorical structures and linguistic features are taught by the teacher. Thus, in this step, a teacher has a role as an expert.

In the ‘modelling stage’, the students work with the texts of various contents such as education, politics, economy, and technology. It is parallel to Systemic Functional Linguistics notion that emphasizes teaching and learning at the text level because communication happens at the text level (Agustien, 2020). They read and analyse the texts’ structure and linguistic features, to grasp the texts’ messages and simultaneously to deepen the knowledge about language. Thus, they also enhance their literacy by learning about various fields of knowledge through the language. It is related to GBA principle that GBA has pedagogical and political aims. It is a pedagogical project motivated by a political project, i.e., to teach and facilitate the students to have skill and knowledge enabling them to participate effectively in a literate, technologically developed society, particularly to be successful in school and beyond (Derewianka, 2015; Emilia, 2005).



In ‘joint construction’ stage, the students learn the language to interact with others in a discussion during the process of writing a text. The students, in groups, start constructing a text with the teacher’s guide. Then, in the independent construction stage, the students create their own text with minimum help of the teacher. It is relevant to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory in which learning firstly takes place at the social or interpersonal level, and then at the individual or at the intrapersonal level (Agustien, 2020).

The previous studies on GBA revealed the effective impact of the approach on foreign language teaching and learning (Albino, 2017; Iftanti, 2017; Nagao, 2019). The first study found that GBA stimulated a joyful learning environment, activated the students’ participation, and improved the students’ language skills (Albino, 2017). The second study revealed that GBA improved the students’ choices of lexicogrammatical features in a discussion text (Iftanti, 2017). Meanwhile, the third study concluded that GBA improved the structure and linguistic choices (Nagao, 2019).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study found nine types of rhetorical structures employed in the problem statement texts produced by undergraduate students. However, only two of them were characterized as complete rhetorical structures, produced by 23% of participants.

Undergraduate students employed three rhetorical strategies to present an academic issue as a problem, namely ‘making a centrality claim’, ‘making topic generalizations’, and ‘reviewing previous research’. The most frequently used strategy was ‘making a centrality claim’, while the least frequently used strategy was ‘making topic generalizations’. Most students used more than one strategy to present an academic issue as a problem. In indicating deficiency, the students employed three strategies, including ‘indicating a gap’, ‘establishing a need and problem’, and ‘continuing a tradition’. ‘Establishing needs and problem’ was the most preferred choice. In presenting the goal and solution, two strategies were employed, namely ‘outlining purposes’ and ‘announcing the present research’. The more frequently used strategy was ‘outlining purposes’. Most students only used a single strategy either for indicating deficiency or for presenting the goal and solution, namely 20 students (67%) and 27 students (90%). Furthermore, an interview to the students having problems with rhetorical strategies revealed their unawareness of the importance of a research gap to be filled; their preference to use ‘establishing need and problem’ and ‘continuing a tradition’ strategies because those strategies are easier.

In terms of specific linguistic expressions, it was found that they were employed in most samples to indicate moves and steps. However, an interview revealed that they were not aware of the linguistic features in each move and step. It seems that this less awareness has become the root of the problems. A critical genre-based model for teaching problem statements is recommended as an alternative teaching strategy to compensate for this research findings. This is because this model has facilitative effect on consciousness-raising of the genre’s rhetorical structures.

The limitation of the study was in terms of the limited number of samples that were only taken from one university. The analysis of the linguistic features was not thorough. For future research, it is suggested that the samples be enriched from more than one university, and the linguistic features should be analysed more deeply.

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