

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Rhetorical moves play a crucial role in organizing and conveying meaning in academic writing. According to Mahardika et al. (2020) knowledge of systematic writing is an important factor in organizing academic texts effectively and helping writers communicate their arguments to readers. By using appropriate rhetorical moves, writers can fulfil specific communicative purposes such as introducing a topic, stating objectives, describing methods, presenting results, and drawing conclusions. A clear understanding of rhetorical moves is therefore essential for writers and researchers to produce academic writing that meets the expectations of the scholarly community. These rhetorical moves are realized through various academic text types that scholars must master.

Within academic contexts, rhetorical moves appear in various research genres, each with its own structural conventions and rhetorical expectations. Research genres such as thesis, research articles, conference papers, and book chapters require a logical organization of information that reflects disciplinary conventions and communicative purposes. Depry et al. (2023) argue that the rhetorical organization of academic writing is influenced by disciplinary conventions, as writers organize their texts in ways that reflect the expectations of their respective disciplines. Therefore, understanding rhetorical move structures is essential for examining how writers organize information and

fulfill the communicative purposes of academic texts, particularly in thesis abstracts as one of the most important genres of academic writing.

An undergraduate thesis generally consists of several main sections, including the abstract, introduction, literature review, methodology, findings and discussion, and conclusion. Each of these sections plays an important role in presenting the research clearly, systematically, and comprehensively. Among these parts, the abstract serves as the opening section that provides a concise yet complete overview of the entire study by summarizing the research background, objectives, methods, key findings, and conclusions in a single cohesive text. According to Liu & Hu (2022), the abstract plays a crucial role as a concise summary of a research paper or thesis by presenting the background, objectives, methods, key findings, and conclusions in a coherent text. Given its significance in communicating the core content of a thesis to potential readers, this research specifically selects the abstract section as the primary focus of analysis. Therefore, understanding how writers construct abstracts can reveal their mastery of rhetorical moves and genre awareness.

Abstracts are a vital component of academic writing, as they provide a concise yet comprehensive summary of the entire research. According to Mensh & Kording (2017), the abstract must effectively convey the entire message of a paper because it is often the only section read by many readers. In an era where rapid access to scholarly information is essential, abstracts serve as a crucial entry point for readers to evaluate the relevance of a study. This function becomes especially significant within online academic databases

such as Scopus, ProQuest, and Google Scholar, where abstracts often determine whether a paper is read in full. In the context of this research, abstracts are not merely summaries but function as rhetorical representations of the research focus whether in English education, English literature, or English linguistics therefore, understanding their structure becomes critical for academic engagement across research subfields.

Beyond their summarizing function, abstracts also carry rhetorical weight in communicating the significance and contribution of a study. An effectively structured abstract not only conveys information but also persuades readers about the value of the research. According to Malik & Setiawan (2025), an abstract serves as a concise summary that provides sufficient information to attract readers' interest in a research study. To achieve this purpose, scholars recommend using rhetorical models that guide writers in organizing information logically and strategically. This rhetorical aspect is directly relevant to the present study, which investigates how EFL students from different research subfields represent their disciplinary identity and research value through the rhetorical structure of their abstracts.

However, writing such rhetorically effective abstracts remains a significant challenge for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. These writers often struggle with the linguistic demands of academic English, including mastering formal language, technical vocabulary, and academic conventions. According to Aldabbus & Almansouri (2022), EFL students often encounter difficulties in developing thesis statements, organizing ideas,

and writing coherent paragraphs. As a result, the abstracts they produce may be vague, unstructured, or lack critical components. These challenges are particularly crucial to address in my study, which aims to identify how such limitations may impact the realization of rhetorical moves in thesis abstracts across the three research subfields in English studies.

Apart from language limitations, many EFL students are also unaware of the rhetorical functions behind each part of an abstract. Chen & Huang (2023), EFL writers experience difficulties in organizing information coherently, deciding what information should be included, and producing well-structured abstracts. Without a clear understanding of the five moves, writers tend to write intuitively, often omitting key information or presenting ideas out of logical order. This affects the clarity and effectiveness of their abstracts, particularly for international audiences who rely on rhetorical structures for comprehension. Recognizing this gap supports the rationale for my study, which explores the extent to which rhetorical awareness differs among EFL thesis writers in English education, literature, and linguistics.

Several studies have explored the rhetorical structures in students' abstracts. Herlyna et al. (2024), in their study *Rhetorical Moves in Students' Abstracts*, examined undergraduate students' thesis abstracts and found that the Introduction, Purpose, and Method moves were realized more consistently, whereas the Product and Conclusion move occurred less frequently. Their findings indicate that many students still experience difficulties in constructing complete rhetorical structures, particularly in presenting research findings and

concluding their abstracts. Similarly, Putri et al. (2021), through their research titled “*Rhetorical Move Analysis in Students’ Abstracts Across Degrees,*” analysed abstracts from undergraduate, master’s, and doctoral theses and found that while higher academic levels tend to show a more complete rhetorical structure, the realization of moves still varied across degrees.

Although these studies provide valuable insight into the use of rhetorical moves, they primarily focus on educational levels rather than disciplinary differences. Variations in rhetorical structures may exist across research subfields such as English education, English literature, and linguistics, where abstracts emphasize different aspects like pedagogical strategies, theoretical interpretations, or methodological rigor. As Samraj (2002) argues, rhetorical structures vary across disciplines, indicating that different academic fields may organize and present research in different ways. However, such disciplinary variation within English studies, particularly in EFL undergraduate thesis abstracts, remains underexplored. However, previous research has not sufficiently addressed how these variations appear across research subfields within English studies, especially in the EFL context, leaving a gap in understanding how disciplinary epistemologies shape writers’ abstracts.

To analyse rhetorical moves in thesis abstracts, this study draws on the concept of genre and move analysis proposed by Swales and Feak (2009) and the abstract model developed by Hyland (2004). Swales and Feak (2009) research article abstracts are typically organized into a sequence of rhetorical

moves, with each move serving a distinct communicative function in presenting the study. This perspective provides a foundation for examining how writers structure information to communicate their research effectively. Building on this genre-based approach, Hyland (2004) proposes a five-move model for research abstracts consisting of Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product, and Conclusion. These moves reflect the typical rhetorical organization of abstracts and help writers present the essential aspects of their studies in a concise and coherent manner. Therefore, Hyland's framework is adopted in the present study to investigate how rhetorical moves are realized in undergraduate thesis abstracts written by EFL students across the fields of English Education, Literature, and Linguistics.

Given the relevance and applicability of these theoretical frameworks, this study specifically adopts Hyland's (2004) five-move model as the primary analytical tool. Hyland's model is considered appropriate because it provides a clear yet flexible structure for identifying the main rhetorical moves introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion within abstracts. This model not only accommodates variations across disciplines but also aligns with the study's aim to explore how EFL students construct abstracts in English education, English literature, and English linguistics. By employing Hyland's framework, this study seeks to reveal the extent to which writers demonstrate rhetorical awareness and discipline-specific emphasis in their thesis abstracts.

B. Research Focus

This study focuses on analysing the rhetorical move structures in thesis abstracts written by EFL undergraduate students across three distinct fields within English studies: English education, English literature, and English linguistics. The research specifically investigates how these writers apply Hyland's (2004) five-move model Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product, and Conclusion in their abstracts. The emphasis is on identifying moves, variations, and challenges in the realization of these rhetorical moves within each disciplinary context.

C. Purpose of the Study

The study aims to:

1. to describe the rhetorical moves found in thesis abstracts in the field of English Education.
2. to examine the rhetorical moves found in thesis abstracts in the field of English Literature.
3. to analyse the rhetorical moves found in thesis abstracts in the field of English Linguistics.

D. Significance of the Study

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of research on genre analysis and rhetorical move studies in academic writing, especially within the EFL context. Practically, the findings can inform academic writing instruction by offering tailored strategies for teaching abstract composition based on students'

disciplinary orientation. This can help EFL learners develop greater genre awareness, improve their rhetorical competence, and enhance their ability to participate effectively in scholarly communication. Furthermore, the results may serve as a reference for curriculum developers, thesis supervisors, and writing instructors in English departments.

E. Definition of Key Terms

1. Abstract: A concise summary of a research thesis that presents the main objectives, methods, findings, and conclusions.
2. Rhetorical Moves: Functional components in a text that serve specific communicative purposes, as conceptualized in Hyland's (2004) five-move model: Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product, and Conclusion.
3. Hyland's Model: A genre-based framework developed by Ken Hyland that outlines the rhetorical structure of research abstracts.
4. EFL Students: Learners of English as a Foreign Language, in this context, undergraduate students writing academic theses in English.
5. Research subfields: The three academic subfields within English studies investigated in this research English Education, English Literature, and English Linguistics each with distinct disciplinary focuses and rhetorical conventions.