



Rhetorical Structures and Linguistics Features of Abstracts: A Comparative Analysis Between Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies in Scopus-Indexed Indonesian Journals

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Abstract

Abstracts of research articles (RAs) are an integral component of academic research. The abstracts assist potential readers in determining whether or not the information is relevant to their work. Authors who want their works noticed by potential readers must provide a well-structured abstract. Previous studies have extensively investigated abstract rhetorical trends, particularly when comparing abstracts from different authors and countries. However, barely any studies have been conducted to compare abstracts in applied linguistics articles and legal studies, particularly abstracts published in Scopus-indexed Indonesian journals. Using rhetorical structures and linguistics features analysis, ten abstracts from Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL) and Hasanuddin Law Review (HLR) were compared and contrasted in this study. The result indicated only six out of ten abstracts follow the full structure suggested by Hyland. IJAL considers 5- moves to be absolutely important in terms of move frequency, but HLR simply categorizes moves as obligatory, conventional, or optional. The two groups of abstracts also show distinct results in the selection of tenses and active/passive sentences based on linguistic features analysis. Whereas IJAL primarily employs the past tense, HLR primarily uses the present tense. However, both IJAL and HLR have a strong presence in the usage of active sentences. The findings might have pedagogical implications for novice authors, particularly those in applied linguistics and legal studies when constructing their abstracts for Scopus-indexed publications.

Keywords: comparative analysis; linguistics features; research article abstracts; rhetorical structure

Introduction

An abstract in a scientific journal article is essential because it gives a concise synopsis of the research and serves to promote the publication to readers. In other words, an abstract is a concise

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overview of the content of a scientific work that communicates the research's aims and findings. The abstract, according to Lorés (2004), is the beginning point for readers to judge the quality of a research article. People will be interested in reading the work and may cite it if the abstract is strong (Belcher, 2009). Furthermore, high-quality abstracts have the potential to be published in reputable journals.

Because the abstract is so significant in academic research, rhetorical move structures are used to organize the language and suit the content. Many scholars, notably Hyland (2000), have developed many models of rhetorical structural move analysis. This model is comprised of five steps: (1) the introduction establishes the context for the paper; (2) the objectives state the purpose, hypothesis, and intent of the paper; (3) the methods describe the designs, procedures, assumptions, approaches, and data; (4) the results show the main findings or results; and (5) the conclusion interprets the results beyond the scope of the paper, draws conclusions, and demonstrates applicability. Each move is classified according to its primary function and secondary components.

It should be noted that the use of abstract moves structures does not always cover all of the moves in the structure or follow the model's recommended order. Several various move structure patterns are used to highlight the key findings of the study in order to pique the reader's interest and acceptance (Hyland, 2000). Objectives-Methods-Results and Introduction-Objectives-Results are the two most typical sequences. Other variations, on the other hand, begin with Method-Objectives and are followed by other moves, as well as two abstract moves that solely employ Objectives-Results. Structures are utilized in accordance with the discipline.

Previous research explored the rhetorical structure of abstracts from a variety of domains (e.g., Doró, 2013; Sidek et al., 2016; Abdollahpour & Gholami, 2018; Viera, 2019). In addition to rhetorical structure, aspects of linguistic realization or linguistic features have been explored (e.g., Wang & Tu, 2014; Suntara, 2018; Amnuai, 2019; Arsyad et al., 2021). This implies that previous researchers paid particular consideration to rhetorical structures and linguistic features in research articles' abstracts. However, barely any study has been conducted to compare abstracts in applied linguistics articles and legal studies, particularly abstracts published in Scopus-indexed Indonesian publications.

Research Methodology

The primary goal of this study is to compare and contrast the rhetorical structure and linguistic features of RA abstracts from two distinct disciplines using comparative descriptive qualitative approaches. The results of the comparison study were presented in the form of tables and charts. Ten RAs abstracts from two fields, Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies, were analyzed and compared in this study; Table 1 displays ten RA abstracts from two Indonesian publications that are Scopus-indexed.

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The ten abstracts were divided into two groups. The first five abstracts were from research publications published in the Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics (IJAL), while the following five were from the Hasanuddin Law Review (HLR).

Table 1

The corpus of the study

Journal	Code	Current Issue	Impact Factor	Quartile	Abstract
Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics	IJAL	Vol. 13, No.2, September 2023	0.27	Q2	5
Hasanuddin Law Review	HLR	Volume 9 Issue 2, August 2023	0.27	Q2	5

All RA abstracts included in this study are published in the current issue, which is released in August-September 2023. Hyland's (2000) model of abstract rhetorical structure is employed in this study; Table 2 displays five processes that authors used as guidance in writing and arranging their abstracts.

Table 2

The rhetorical move checklist

No	Move	Explanation
1	Introduction	Statements about the research topic or what do we do know about the topic? Or why is the topic important?
2	Objectives	Statements about the objective of the research or what is this study about?
3	Methods	Statements about how a study has been conducted or how was it done.
4	Results	Statements about what have been found in the research or what was discovered?
5	Conclusion	Statement about the conclusion, implication or recommendation of the research findings or what do the findings mean?

Findings and Discussion

Findings

Using rhetorical structures and linguistics features analysis such as tense and voice perspective, ten abstracts from Journals of Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies published in Indonesian journals indexed by Scopus were compared and contrasted in this study. The two groups of abstracts, IJAL and HLR were reviewed, totalling 87 sentences. Each group, IJAL and HLR, was made up of five abstracts. Table 3 provided an overview of the abstract based on the number of sentences and their constructional move patterns.

Tabel 3

The overall findings of rhetorical moves

Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics		
	Number of Sentences	Move Pattern
RA Abstract-1	8	M1-M1-M1-M2-M3-M4-M4-M5
RA Abstract-2	14	M1-M1-M2-M3-M3-M3-M3-M3-M3-M4-M4-M5-M5-M5
RA Abstract-3	7	M2-M2-M3-M4-M4-M5-M5
RA Abstract-4	10	M1-M1-M2-M3-M4-M4-M4-M4-M4-M5
RA Abstract-5	7	M1-M2-M3-M3-M4-M5-M5
Hasanuddin Law Review		
	Number of Sentences	Move Pattern
RA Abstract-1	5	M1-M1-M1-M1-M2
RA Abstract-2	8	M1-M1-M2-M2-M2-M2-M3-M5
RA Abstract-3	10	M1-M1-M1-M1-M2-M3-M3-M3-M4-M5
RA Abstract-4	10	M1-M1-M1-M1-M1-M2-M2-M4-M3-M5
RA Abstract-5	8	M1-M1-M1-M1-M2-M2-M2-M5

Table 3 shows that the IJAL group had the most sentences in the abstract, with 46 sentences, whereas the HLR group had just 41 sentences. Aside from that, the most prevalent move frequencies identified in the two groups were markedly different, with the HLR group preferring Move-1. In terms of move patterns, the majority of the abstracts in the IJAL group employed the 4-move pattern, but the move patterns in the HLR group varied. This suggests that variations in discipline, Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies, may have an impact on the distribution of move and move patterns in the abstracts of the two groups, namely IJAL and HLR.

The Rhetorical Moves in IJAL and HLR Abstracts

The primary goal of this research is to identify the various types of moves seen in the IJAL and HLR publications. It also tries to establish whether each move is obligatory, conventional, or optional. The results of the identification are shown in Table 4 below.

Table 4

The distribution of moves

Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics			
Move	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Introduction	4	80%	Conventional
Objectives	5	100%	Obligatory

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Method	5	100%	Obligatory
Results	5	100%	Obligatory
Conclusion	5	100%	Obligatory

Hasanuddin Law Review

Move	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Introduction	5	100%	Obligatory
Objectives	5	100%	Obligatory
Method	3	60%	Conventional
Results	2	40%	Optional
Conclusion	4	80%	Conventional

This study discovered five rhetorical moves in both abstract groups, as indicated in Table 4. Moves 2-3-4-5 are regarded as obligatory in the IJAL group, but step 1 is conventional. Meanwhile, in the HLR group, moves 1-2 are obligatory, moves 3-5 are conventional, and move 2 is optional.

Move 1 is known as the Introduction. It provides background information regarding the study context. It also emphasizes the significance of the current study. It also highlights gaps in previous research. Based on the data in Table 4, we can infer that the HLR abstracts group, which uses Move 1, appears to emphasize the background to the reader so that the reader understands why the research topic described is crucial. It additionally applies to Move 2 in the HLR abstract group, where it outlines the present investigation's purpose or what it accomplishes.

Meanwhile, according to the perspective of the IJAL group, the five Moves proposed by Hyland (2000) should be considered as important aspects in constructing RA abstracts, especially for authors who want to publish their RAs in Applied Linguistics journals.

The Overall Move Pattern in IJAL and HLR Abstracts

Rhetorical segments in RA abstracts that display certain signs of function are often called moves. One of the most common moves is Introduction, Objectives, Method, Results, and Conclusion. In this section, the pattern of move in each abstract of IJAL and HLR were presented in Tabel 5.

Tabel 5

Move occurrences

Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics				
No	Move Pattern	Type of Move Structure	Frequency	Percentage
1	Background-Objectives-Method-Result-Conclusion	5- Move	4	80%
2	Objectives-Method-Results-Conclusion	4- Move	1	20%

Hasanuddin Law Review

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No	Move Pattern	Type of Move Structure	Frequency	Percentage
1	Background-Objectives-Method-Result-Conclusion	5- Move	1	20%
2	Background-Objectives-Result-Method-Conclusion		1	20%
3	Background-Objectives-Method-Conclusion	4- Move	1	20%
4	Background-Objectives-Conclusion	3- Move	1	20%
5	Background-Objectives	2- Move	1	20%

Table 5 presents the frequency of the occurrences of move patterns found across the abstracts in IJAL and HLR groups. The results show 5-move models (80%), 4-move models (20%), 3-move models (20%), and 2-move models (20%). From the data, move 2-3-4-5 (Objectives-Method-Result-Conclusion) is the pattern that appeared most frequently in the IJAL group. From Table 5, it can be revealed that there 7 different move patterns and those patterns fall into four different types of move models that are 5-move, 4-move, 3-move, and 2-move models. Below are given examples of abstract with two moves, three moves, four moves, and five moves.

Extract 1

In recent years, the Indonesian government has suffered a huge loss of state assets due to the misbehaviour of corporations in financial management because the Indonesian legal system does not have a specific regulation to address corporate financial crime. When a corporate financial crime case arises, Indonesian law enforcement approaches this crime using the Anti-Corruption Act. However, the aim to retrieve the stolen government assets purloined by a corporation using the Anti-Corruption Act is still insufficient, therefore, other related regulations such as the Money Laundering Act have to apply as an additional instrument to realize optimal recovery from the misbehaving corporation. Because the long process involved in criminal and civil courts it is sometimes a waste of the law enforcement effort and the funds expended to get paid back from offenders and/or corporations because the money received is much lower than the money lost or even zero (M1). To bridge the gap between the money lost initially and the repayment money, because of the lack of special legal regulation concerning corporate financial crime, this research intends to study the possibility of using a “disgorgement of profits” approach as a faster way to get the maximum repayment of stolen money/assets from instances of corporate financial crime in out-of-court settlements (M2) (HLR)

Extract 2

The guarantee of ensuring the right to access public information is an important condition and criterion for functioning in a legal democratic state. In addition, realizing the right to access public information is essential for preventing and detecting corruption (M1). The purpose of this work is to analyze international legal rules and standards, as well as to provide some examples of the practice of the European Court of Human Rights in the context of the implementation of the right to access public information. It has been established that the right to access public information is a component of the human right to information and is a fundamental constitutional human right. The existing practice of the European Court of Human Rights confirms the importance of protecting the right of access to public information. It indicates to states that it is mandatory to comply with it, the expediency of applying an effective

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system of control measures to implement the right under study (M2). The paper analyzes theoretical and legal approaches to understanding the human right to access public information and determines its place in human rights. An analysis of the practice of the European Court of Human Rights regarding the right to access public information made it possible to identify existing shortcomings in the legislation of the Member States and Ukraine and to find ways and methods for solving such problems and prospects for preventing such violations in the future, as well as the possibility of applying the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights to improve the current domestic legislation in this area (M3). (HLR)

Extract 3

This study investigated the pragmatic aspects of verbal attacks within Indonesian courtrooms, specifically examining speech acts and their alignment with Grice's maxims. While previous research has explored verbal attacks in legal contexts, this study is expected to fill a gap in the literature by focusing on the pragmatic analysis of speech acts and Grice's maxims in Indonesian settings (M2). Using a qualitative research approach and court transcripts, the speech acts contained in this research were systematically analyzed and categorized based on the type and illocutionary force while scrutinizing their adherence to Grice's maxims (M3). The findings reveal a diverse range of speech acts deployed during verbal attacks, including assertive challenges and veiled accusations, often involving deliberate violations of Grice's maxims. Participants strategically flout maxims, utilizing implicatures to contribute to the confrontational nature of verbal attacks (M4). This study is also expected to advance our understanding of the pragmatic dimensions of verbal attacks in Indonesian courtrooms and to describe the strategic use of language in the legal context. It has the potential to inform legal practice, enhancing comprehension of courtroom communication and promoting more effective and respectful exchanges within the Indonesian legal system (M5). (IJAL)

Extract 4

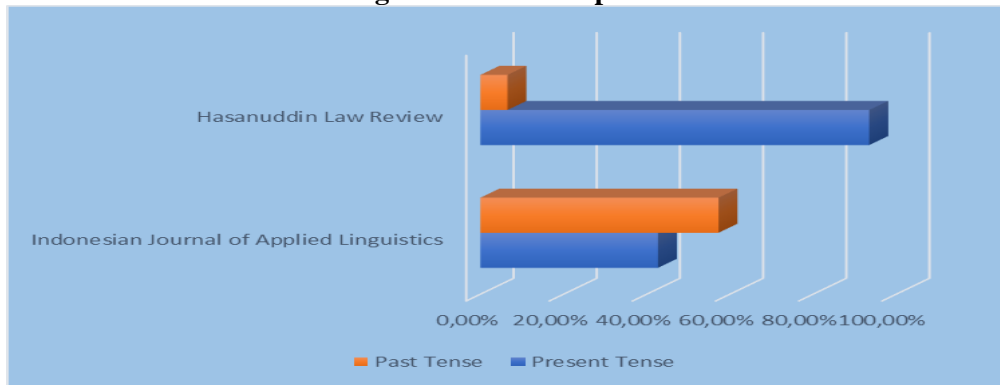
Social media users come from various circles with different social and cultural statuses which will bring up diverse language variations. Additionally, language variations in speech events on social media certainly have characteristics that are distinctive and different from speech events in general (M1). This study aimed at investigating types and forms of Indonesian language varieties occurred in speech events on social media (M2). A quantitative and qualitative approaches was applied to accomplish the research objective. The quantitative approach was carried out using content analysis. The qualitative approach used was based on sociolinguistic theory. The research data were collected using the listening method (uninvolved conversation observation technique, recording technique, note-taking technique) and questionnaire method. The data were analyzed using the content analysis method to determine the form and percentage of language variety used in speech events on social media. In addition, Miles and Huberman's model was also used for data reduction, verification, conclusion drawing (M3). The research found that language varieties in speech events on social media was not dominated by non-standard varieties, and inter-language mixture (code switching and code mixing). The characteristics of speech events on social media use, among others, informal language, daily-conversation language, unnatural context, and shortened writing (M4). The results implied that the variety of language use on social media has increased since the COVID-19 pandemic. Therefore, it is necessary to research the use of codes, politeness, or hate speech on social media. Moreover, opportunities are also open to research the use of social media for language learning (M5). (IJAL)

The Use of Tense in RA Abstracts of IJAL and HLR

The second analysis in this study was on the use of tenses in the groups of abstracts, IJAL and HLR. The analysis results are summarized in the following chart.

Chart 1

The occurrences of Tense



The percentage of tense occurrences in each abstract was seen in Chart 1. The analytical results showed that the past tense occurred more frequently than the present tense in each abstract, IJAL group. Meanwhile, in each abstract in the HLR group, the frequency of the present tense was greater than the frequency of the past tense. Below are given examples of present tense and past tense taken from RA abstracts of IJAL and HLR.

Extract 5

The results show that tourism undeniably benefits the economic sector, and resulted in legal infringements concerning land ownership, leading to the marginalization and displacement of local communities (M4). (HLR)

Extract 6

The study indicated the proverb meaning analysis starting from the knowledge of the meaning from the dictionary, followed by the meaning of the proverbs in the context of sentences, and the exploration into the philosophy and common sense underlying the formation of the proverbs (M4). (IJAL)

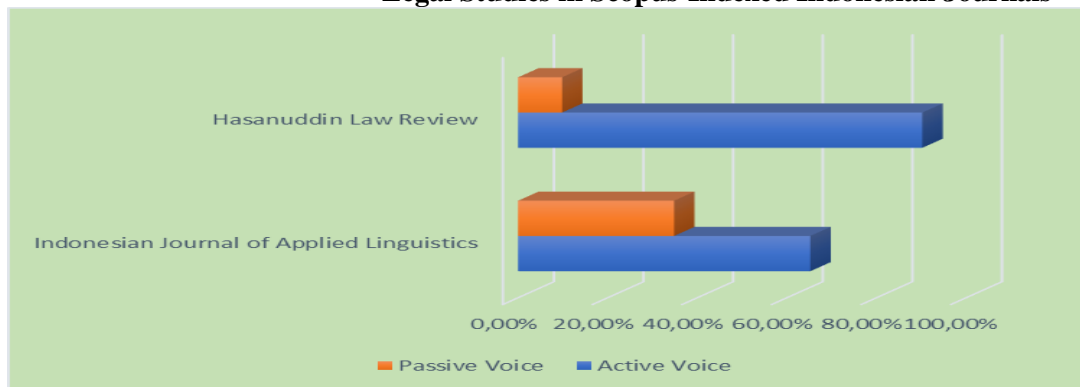
Extracts 5 and 6 are both classified as Move- 4 in the two abstracts, and both employ the complement clause at the beginning of their Move- 4 to address the findings. Thus, the authors of the two abstracts utilize different tenses in the same moves.

Active and Passive Sentences in RA Abstracts of IJAL and HLR

The author's choice of passive and active sentence was examined using the frequency of occurrence of each type of sentence, active and passive. The analysis findings provided the percentage frequency of occurrence. Some conclusions from the analysis were particularly significant and should be highlighted.

Chart 2

The occurrences of Voice



In both abstract groups, IJAL and HLR, active sentence was more typically utilized than passive voice, as seen in Chart 2. The appearance of active voice in HLR group was extraordinarily high rate (90.2%). Meanwhile, in the IJAL abstract group, the percentage of active sentences was 65.2% and passive sentences was 34.8%. Below are given two examples of active and passive sentences taken from the abstracts in the two groups, IJAL and HLR.

Extract 1

The study involves interviews with relevant departments and an examination of Malaysia's current adoption laws. Additionally, the study analyses the international legal framework, including the Hague Convention 1993 and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 (UNCRC) to provide a comprehensive understanding of the context surrounding intercountry adoption. Furthermore, this paper offers a comparative analysis of Morocco's intercountry kafalah system, which recognises kafalah as an alternative to legal adoption based on Islamic law (M3). (HLR)

Extract 2

The quantitative approach was carried out using content analysis. The qualitative approach used was based on sociolinguistic theory. The research data were collected using the listening method (uninvolved conversation observation technique, recording technique, note-taking technique) and questionnaire method. The data were analyzed using the content analysis method to determine the form and percentage of language variety used in speech events on social media. In addition, Miles and Huberman's model was also used for data reduction, verification, conclusion drawing (M3). (IJAL).

Discussion

The first research finding is that most abstracts in the IJAL publication have five Moves, but most abstracts in the HLR journal vary. This indicates that the majority of IJAL journal authors recognize the importance of Move-1 (Introduction) in an abstract. The objective of Move-1 in the abstract, according to Swales (2009), is to address queries regarding what the author understands about the study issue; hence, by discussing Move-1 in the abstract, the authors indicate that they are well-versed in their research topic. Arsyad (2014) observed that the majority of abstracts of Social Sciences and Humanities journal papers submitted by Indonesian writers included three needed Moves (Move-2, Move-3, and Move-4).

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The second finding shows the frequency of usage of the present and past tense appearances in each group of IJAL abstracts is not substantially different. Meanwhile, the frequency of present tense was more than the frequency of past tense in each abstract in the HLR group. It means that HLR authors, like the IJAL group of abstract authors, prefer to utilize the present tense in RA abstracts. The use of the present tense in the abstract, according to Swales (2009), is necessary to show that the study provided reflects a deeper understanding of the issue.

The third finding indicates in both groups of RA abstracts, IJAL and HLR, active sentences dominate passive ones. This finding is also similar to Arsyad (2014), who observed that active sentences outnumbered passive ones in all abstract moves of Social Sciences and Humanities articles except Move-5 (conclusion), where active and passive sentences were equally abundant. According to Banks (2017), the main reason for employing passive sentences in scientific writing is because they are impersonal, and using passive phrases helps authors portray impersonality in their content.

Conclusion and Suggestion

This study examined ten RA abstracts from Journals of Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies published in Indonesian journals indexed by Scopus. The analysis of the rhetorical structure and linguistics features showed that six out of ten abstracts follow the full structure suggested by Hyland. IJAL considers 5- moves to be absolutely important in terms of moves frequency, but HLR simply categorizes moves as obligatory, conventional, or optional. The two groups of abstracts also show distinct results in the selection of tenses and voices based on linguistic features analysis. Whereas IJAL primarily employs the past tense, HLR primarily uses the present tense. However, both IJAL and HLR have a strong presence in the usage of active voice.

Although this study highlighted some tendencies in the rhetoric structures and linguistics features of Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies RA abstracts, it is not without limitations. A closer investigation is needed into the linguistic realization of the moves to better understand the differences found between Applied Linguistics and Legal Studies RA abstracts. Future research could also focus on journals other than the two used in the present study (IJAL and HLR) to see how universal the differences and the similarities are between the two investigated disciplines.

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