CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents general information about this study, which covers the background of the study, the purpose, statement of problems, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

Students of higher institutions, be it undergraduate, graduate, or doctoral students, are confronted with a need to write various types of academic papers when pursuing their degrees. The form of writings may vary from essays, summaries, book reviews, research papers, and so on. Even to complete their degree, students are required to write a final thesis or dissertation as a learning outcome of their study. Their active involvement with research writing can improve their capacity to write final papers (Lubis & Kurniawan, 2020). Hence, understanding the structure of academic papers is considered crucial for students and scholars.

The generic structure of academic papers has piqued the interest of many researchers. The research genre, among others, represents scientific inquiry in which a systematic and rigorous process of acquiring accurate, objective, and comprehensive information is essential (Lubis & Kurniawan, 2020). One section of a research paper that has received a lot of attention is the abstract. Despite its short length, the abstract is regarded as the most important part of a research paper since it serves as the gate that illustrates the quality of the entire content (Lubis & Kurniawan, 2020). It delivers the first impression of the whole paper (Heng & Ebrahimi, 2012; Kafes, 2012; Pho, 2008). An abstract is a section of a research paper that is easily accessible on the internet, and since it is aimed at fulfilling the function of communicating information on an original piece of writing to a predominantly academic readership (Krajňáková, 2015), the abstract serves as a pivotal point for readers to decide whether or not to continue reading the entire paper.

Writing an abstract is considered difficult for students and novice researchers when they are required to produce research abstracts in a well-organized manner. Differences in academic writing styles between languages or between institutions may cause confusion and limit their ability to write an effective abstract. Kurniawan, Lubis, Suherdi, and Danuwijaya (2019) argued that abstract writing is more crucial to take into account when non-native English writers aim to publish their articles to the international scope as certain abilities must be demonstrated in order to meet the expected rhetorical organization and language standards. Writing an abstract appears more challenging for non-native speakers since different languages have different preferences for certain kinds of discourse patterns (Swales, 1990). Another challenge in writing an abstract, especially in final papers such as theses and dissertations, is to get the text down to a certain word limit despite the fact that theses and dissertations represent large amounts of research (Swales & Feak, 2009). This results in unequal space given to the parts of an abstract. As an effective way to help inexperienced writers cope with the challenges in academic writing, it has been suggested that the knowledge of writing be made explicit to students through genre analysis (Amnuai, 2019b; Ren & Li, 2011).

Genre analysis is widely used to analyze the rhetorical structure of abstracts. It was first introduced by John M. Swales in 1981 as the derivation of English for Special Purposes (ESP) which mainly focused on the use of English in professional and academic contexts (Behnam & Golpour, 2014). Genre analysis is primarily described in terms of rhetorical moves and steps. Swales described a move as "a discoursal or rhetorical unit that performs a coherent communicative function in a written or spoken discourse" (Swales, 2004, p.228-229), while steps are the smaller semantic units inside a move. Understanding rhetorical moves and steps may aid researchers in achieving the communicative function of a text.

Genre analysis is closely related to genre knowledge. Genre knowledge can be defined as the resources one has to utilize to respond appropriately to the recurrent demands of a particular discourse community (Uzun, 2017). Tardy (2009) proposes that genre knowledge can deepen and extend as it is applied in new situations and as writers combine various knowledge features to varying degrees. The underlying assumption in this notion is that a person's educational level and academic

experiences will influence their genre knowledge development, and this development will be performed in their writing especially in theses and dissertations as a final academic work in completing a master's or doctoral degree.

Previous studies on move analysis have investigated the rhetorical moves in abstracts of research articles across disciplines (Darabad, 2016; Gani, Kurniawan, Gunawan, & Lubis, 2021; Ramadhini et al., 2021), of research articles in local and international journals (Amnuai, 2019a; Saidi & Cheragi, 2020), and English abstracts produced by non-native English speakers (Al-Khasawneh, 2017; Kafes, 2012; Katic & Safranj, 2018; Pratiwi, Kurniawan, Gunawan, & Lubis, 2021; Ren & Li, 2011). Research studies conducted by Amnuai (2019b) and Ren and Li (2011) analyzed thesis and dissertation abstracts compared to research articles in journals. Amnuai compared and contrasted research article abstracts and thesis abstracts written by Thai writers, and the study resulted in differences in the frequency of occurrence of Introduction and Conclusion moves. Ren and Li compared the rhetorical structure of research articles and Chinese master's thesis abstracts, which resulted in the discovery of different tendencies in manifestations of moves between expert researchers and student writers.

Mauludini (2020), Kafes (2012), and Katic and Safranj (2018) conducted studies related to the manifestations of move in abstracts written by native and non-native speakers of English. Mauludini analyzed the rhetorical move realization and linguistic features of dissertation abstracts from universities in England and Indonesia, and the findings revealed a variety of move manifestations in the two data groups. However, while variations were found, no notable difference was found in the study. Kafes investigated cultural traces in the structure of research article abstracts written by American, Taiwanese, and Turkish writers, and it was found that although all data groups shared a similar move manifestation, Taiwanese and Turkish writers had different tendencies in the use of Introduction and Conclusion moves compared to American writers. Katic and Safranj examined dissertation abstracts written by Serbian writers, and the findings showed differences among various disciplines and some similarities that were influenced by cultural conventions.

Regarding genre knowledge development, a study by Suherdi, Kurniawan, and Lubis (2021) investigated the interplay between authors' cognition and the actual writing performance of Indonesian authors. The results revealed that the authors, for the most part, had the same understanding of research abstracts, however, the realization into writing showed some contrasts to their cognition particularly in the step level.

Among these studies, a few have explored abstracts in theses and dissertations, while most of them focused on abstracts in research articles published in journals. Some research studies have posited that cultural factors played a role in the rhetorical structure of the abstracts. It appears that other factors that could influence abstract writing outcomes such as the educational background and genre knowledge development of the author have not been considered much. Therefore, there is a need to further investigate the rhetorical patterns presented in the abstracts of master's theses and dissertations as well as the relationship between the abstract patterns and the author's genre knowledge development.

1.2 Purpose of the Study

The present study aimed to examine the rhetorical moves used in abstracts of master's theses and dissertations written by local and international graduate lecturers as well as the relationship between the rhetorical moves used in the abstracts and the author's genre knowledge trajectories.

1.3 Statement of Problems

Based on the background presented above, this study sought to address the following problems:

1. How are the rhetorical patterns (moves) manifested in the abstracts of master's theses and dissertations written by local and international graduate lecturers?

2. What is the relationship between the abstract patterns and the author's genre knowledge development?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study focused on identifying the manifestation of rhetorical moves in thesis and dissertation abstracts written by local and international graduates in the field of linguistics and literature. The data scope of this study covered abstracts of theses and dissertations. To do the analysis, Hyland's (2000) five-move model was employed. Furthermore, the study also examined the relationship between the move manifestations and the author's genre knowledge development.

1.5 Significance of the Study

The discovery of rhetorical move pattern in the abstracts and the link between rhetorical move realization and genre knowledge trajectories in the present study is expected to help in producing a standardized model for abstract writing to help non-native English speakers, especially graduate and doctoral students, to cope with academic writing challenges for international scope.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

1. Genre Analysis

   Genre analysis is the study of situated linguistic behavior in academic or professional settings (Bhatia, 2004). It consists of genre knowledge and genre performance.

2. Move Analysis

   Move analysis is a genre-based framework that analyzes structural patterns by classifying parts of a text into a series of communicative categories representing the realization of a specific overall communicative purpose (Hyland, 2004; Swales, 1990).

3. Genre Knowledge

   Genre knowledge can be understood as textual knowledge that entangles knowledge of discourse community, rhetoric, subject matter, and writing processes (Tardy, 2009).

1.7 Organization of Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters as follows:

1. Introduction

   This chapter covers an explanation of the background of the study, the purpose of the study, statement of problems, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

2. Literature Review

   This chapter provides elaborations of concepts, theories, and previous research related to the present study.

3. Research Methodology

   This chapter explains the research design, data collection, data analysis, and data presentation for this study.

4. Findings and Discussion

   This chapter presents the findings and discussion of the study.

5. Conclusions and Suggestions

   This chapter elaborates the conclusion of the study as well as some suggestions for future studies.