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ADVANCED SCIENCE LETTERS

Volume 22, Number 12 (December 2016) pp.3981-4701

A SPECIAL SECTION
Selected Peer-Reviewed Articles from the 2016 Advancement on Informatics, Business and Management International Conference (AIBMIC2016), Bandung, Indonesia, 31 May–2 June 2016
Guest Editors: Fairol Halim, Rohana Abdul Rahman, Mohd Fairuz Iskandar Bin Othman, Hamzah Asyran Bin Sulaiman,
and Mohd Azlishah Bin Othman

REVIEWS
Do Allied Health Professionals Exercise Evidence-Based Practice in Services?
Noor Hidayah Abu Bakar, Norhayati Mohd Zain, Khairiah Abdul Hamid, and Mary M. Dore Lim

The Language of Mass Street Protests in Indonesia
Riyadi Santosa, Agus Dwi Priyanto, Ardianna Nuraeni, and Hisham Dzakiria

Lexical Choices as the Representation of Convenience Shifting from Mother Tongue to Second Language
Djatmika, Wibowo Agus Hari, Dewi Ida Kusuma, and Bahtiar Mohamad

The Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity of Rhetoric in Indonesian Promotional and Media Relations Texts
Diah Kristina and Azilah Kasim

Indigenous Life Cycle of Samin Women Living
Waskito Widi Wardojo, Ratna Devi, and Azilah Kasim

The Transmission of Islamic Political Movements from the Middle East to Indonesia
Istadiyantha and Siti Mut’ah Setiawati

Comparative Study of Gender Ideology Construction Between Indonesian and Western Children’s Folktales
Endang Sri Astuti, Sri Kusumo Habsari, Susilorini, and Hisham Dzakaria

The Ideology of Islamic State of Iraq and the Syria and Al-Qaeda After the Arab Spring and Its Impacts in Southeast Asia
Istadiyantha

Students’ Perception of Inquiry-Based Instruction, Active Learning and Formative Assessment in Higher Education
Chan Yuen Fook, Siti Fairuz Dalim, Suthagar Narasuman, Gumam Kaur Sidhu, and Lee Lai Fong

The Relationship Between Jipang and Pajang in the Oral Tradition: Between History and Memory
Warto and Bahtiar Mohamad

Examining the Writing Genre in Journal Articles of Natural Science and Social Science
Tri Wiratno and Hisham Dzakiria
The Role of Board of Directors in Risk Reporting Practices
Rina Fadhilah Ismail, Emmarelda Maswesi Ahmad, and Nor Syafinaz Shaffee

Oral Communication Apprehension in EFL Learners: An Overview
Abdalnaser Alamaria, Abdul Rahim, and Tina Binti Abdullah

Eliciting Genre-Based Translation Model from Indonesian Into English
Mangatur Nababan, Riyadi Santosa, Bayu Budiharjo, and Hisham Dzakiria

Storytelling and Brand Attitude: The Role of Consumers’ Level of Involvement and Available Time
Marina Simanjuntak, Lita Napitupulu, and Frederik Situmeang

Features of Gulf Cooperation Council Banks Investment in Malaysia
Ng Kim-Soon, Ali Abusalah Elmabrok Mohammed, and Abd Rahman Ahmad

The Proposed New Integrated of Performance Measurements (M Score) for Islamic Banks
Abdul Rahim Memiyanty, Abdul Rahim Abdul Rahman, and Syed Musa Al-Habshi Syed Jaafar

The Role of Arab Culture and Its Elements from the Context of Official Military Tasks
Najjah Salwa Abd Razak and Shamsul Akmar Ab Aziz

Family Firms, Audit Committees and Audit Fees: Evidence from an Emerging Economy
Noor Marini Haji-Abdullah, Rohana Othman, and Keshab Shrestha

High Impact Entrepreneurship and Sustainability-As-Flourishing from Our Deep Seas: Malaysia’s OTEC Entrepreneurial Blueprint
Rahayu Tasnim, Mas Bambang Baroto, Harcharanjit Singh, Roselina Ahmad Sufi, Maizatulaidawati Md Husin, and Sukhdev Singh Jogindar Singh

Passive in Javanese Pivot
F. X. Sawardi, Sumarlam Warsitadipura, and Dwi Purnanto

A Conceptual Study on the Role of Waqf in Developing Successful Young Entrepreneurs
Aqilah Nadiah Md Sahiq, Nur Hayati Abd. Rahman, Shafina Ismail, Mohammed Hariri Bakri, Azrizal Husin, and Rosalan Ali

Appraisal Analysis on the Main Character of Novel the Old Man and the Sea and Its Three Indonesian-Translated Versions Lelaki Tua dan Laut
Dyah Ayu Nila Khrisna, Mangatur Nababan, Djatmika, and Riyadi Santosa

Antecedents of a Successful Business Venture for Young Entrepreneurs
Nur Hayati Abd Rahman, Aqilah Nadiah Md Sahiq, Shafina Ismail, Mohammed Hariri Bakri, and Azrizal Husin

Sende Land and the Dynamics of Economy Culture in Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta
Tiwuk Kusuma Hastuti, Umi Yuliatni, and Retno Kusumawiranti
The Influence of Religiosity in Credit Card Selection
Nazimah Hussin, Farzana Quoquab, Jihad Mohammad, Harcharanjit Singh, Maizaitulaidawati Md. Husin, Rossilah Jamil, and Zarina Abdul Salam

Developing Future Talent: Impact of Case Learning Experience on Knowledge Acquisition
Rossilah Jamil, Zarina Abdul Salam, Zukarnain Zakaria, Nazimah Hussin, Farzana Quoquab, and Nomahaza Mahadi

Intersection Between Tradition and Islam: Female Viewers’ Perspective of Ideal Masculinity on Watching Sinetron Religi
Sri Kusumo Habsari and Mugijatna

Does Liquidity Affects Profitability?
Zarina Abdul Salam, Farzana Quoquab, Rosillah Jamil, Adriana Mohd Rizal, Nomahaza Mahadi, and Nazimah Hussin

Halal Compliance Decisions by Food Suppliers Based on Analytic Hierarchy Process
Hadiljah Iberahim, Nurol’ain Mustapha, Rohana Kamaruddin, Norlida Abdul Hamid, and Mohd Armi Abu Samah

The Development of the Teachers’ Researcher Network to Create Instructional Innovation for Raising Students’ Learning Achievement in Science and Mathematics, Thailand
Kaewurai Wareerat, Kaewurai Rujroad, Chanunan Skonchai, Supap Wanintorn, and Sawangmek Sureeporn

The Local Wisdom Summarized in the Javanese Proverbs: A Case Study of the Javanese Community in Ex-Residency of Surakarta (An Ethnolinguistic Study)
Wakit Abdullah

The Implementation of Abdurrahman Wahid’s Vision in Leadership to Create a Pluralistic Muslim Society in Indonesia: A Sufism Perspective and Discourse Analysis
Muhammad Yunus Anis and Monika Sri Yuliarti
Examining the Writing Genre in Journal Articles of Natural Science and Social Science

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This paper examines the genre relations of 40 scholarly journal articles written in Indonesian language in the fields of Natural Science and Social Science. The articles as macro genres were analysed to see whether they were arranged in a good text structure, and whether the sections or stages within the text structure contained appropriate micro genres. The results of the analysis show that most of the articles studied are not organized in a good text structure, and only a very few sections in the articles’ text structure are written using the appropriate micro genres. Based on the results, this paper proposes a model of text structure with its micro genres that may be applied in writing journal articles.

Keywords: journal article, genre, text structure.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scholarly articles published in journals should display a high level of scientific characteristics, as reflected in the employment of lingual forms (lexicogrammar), the language style (register), and the writing organization (text structure and genre relations)¹,²,³. However, recent studies inform that scholarly articles written in Indonesian and published in a number of journals do not meet the requirements. A study by Wiratno⁴ shows that the scholarly journal articles studied fail to make use of the proper lexicogrammar that they should contain. Safnili⁵ proves that the research articles found in journals are not compiled properly according to the rhetorically based conventions (i.e. Introduction^Method^Results^Discussion). Similarly, Arsyad argues that Indonesian writers find it rhetorically difficult to formulate the article sections⁶, particularly the introduction⁷ and discussion ones⁸.

Another study by Wiratno, Subroto, and Sudaryanto⁹ suggests that most of the studied scholarly journal articles as macro genres are not ideal due to their unscientific characteristics and due to their improper placement of micro genres used to support the rhetorical function of each article section. Furthermore, scholarly texts investigated by Wiratno¹⁰,¹¹ do not better express their textual meaning through appropriate cohesive devices; they do not show grammatically scientific characteristics¹²; and they do not display connected thematic relationship among their sentences which causes the information presented in the texts to appear incomplete¹³.

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To fill in some of the gaps in the studies above, a study on the text structure and genre relations of scholarly journal articles written in Indonesian language was carried out. The aim of it was to explain the arrangement of the text structure in the articles, by referring to how the article sections were formulated to build the overall text structure and how micro genres were used to fulfil the rhetorical function of each section. The results of the analysis were then compared with theories about writing scholarly articles and the genres that should be found in scholarly...
out of 19 articles in the first category and only 1 out of 18 articles in the second use appropriate micro genre, i.e. discussion and or explanation. The D section in the articles mentioned use description, instead. As stated earlier, because discussion micro genre is not used in the section, the rhetorical function to discuss or explain the research findings, the applicability of the chosen theory, things left as gaps in previous research (for RAs), and the solution of the presented problem (for NRAs) is not fulfilled.

Neglecting to include a particular micro genre in a particular article section in the text structure means that the section fails to satisfy the rhetorical function in itself. If most of the sections of an article do not employ the appropriate micro genres, it can be stated that the total rhetorical functions of the article is not achieved either. In fact, this is the case in most of the journal articles studied.

An RA is really a research report that is presented in a summarized version. Therefore, the sections in this kind of article should be designed to match the sections that are used in the longer research report. In addition, the micro genres contained in each article section should also be made to suit the characteristics of the section because the micro genres there have the rhetorical function to represent the overall content of the text. What is found in the examined articles is that they tend to be descriptive form the beginning to the end. Actually, argumentation and explanation with the use of discussion micro genre, especially in the discussion section, would have been essential. Hamphrey and Economou even propose a spiral model in published research articles where description is only a foundation step to further lead to analysis, persuasion (or argumentation), and critique.

Based on the findings, a model that can be used for writing scholarly journal articles is proposed with reference to the text structure internationally accepted, as convention, namely: “Abstract‘Introduction‘Literature Review‘Method‘Results‘Discussion‘Conclusions” for RAs. The proposed text structure of RAs is a combination of the text structure of Cargill & O’Connor and that of Lin and Evans. Meanwhile, the text structure for NRAs is “Abstract‘Introduction‘Literature Review‘Discussion‘Conclusions”. The proposed text structure for RAs, including the micro genres and their rhetorical function is displayed in Table 3.

Table 3. Proposed model for writing scholarly RAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text structure</th>
<th>Expected micro genre</th>
<th>Rhetorical function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Presents a summary representing the whole article.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>Exposition (including description)</td>
<td>Presents the background to the problem, including stating the problem, the importance of the problem, and information about the method or strategies used to address the problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Review (including explanation)</td>
<td>Presents a theoretical review about the basic ideas used to solve the problem of the research.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Discussion (including explanation)</td>
<td>Discusses (and or explains) the problem and its solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Exposition</td>
<td>Presents an account of how the problem has been treated in a particular way with the</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Proposed model for writing scholarly NRAs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Text structure</th>
<th>Expected micro genre</th>
<th>Rhetorical function</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>Presents a summary representing the whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4. CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, a number of conclusions can be drawn as follows. Most of the RA and NRAs examined (72.5%) are not organized according to the ideal text structure, which is “Abstract’Introduction’Literature Review’Method’Results’Discussion’Conclusions” for RAs and “Abstract’Introduction’Literature Review’Discussion’Conclusions” for NRAs. In addition, both the RAs and the NRAs examined rarely contain the appropriate micro genres that should have been present in the relevant sections. Furthermore, most of the articles examined are only descriptive in character, not argumentative or explanatory such as is required for the discussion of the subjects presented in each of the articles.

REFERENCES