

EFL Students' Writing Style in the Script Introduction Section

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This study investigated the rhetorical pattern (RP) of the introduction section of the scripts written by Acehese undergraduate students studying in four different universities in Aceh. The focus of this study is on three elements: placement of the thesis, patterns of idea, and metadiscourse markers of the introduction section. Literature has reported a number of findings regarding the RP; however, information about this in undergraduate level, particularly in state universities in Aceh, is still limited. This study was conducted qualitatively by employing content analysis to identify the RP. A number of introduction sections of students' scripts from four selected universities in Aceh were collected and analysed. The result shows the dominance of the three elements in the introduction section.

Keywords: writing style, introduction section, Acehese undergraduate students

Penelitian ini menginvestigasi langkah retorik bab pendahuluan pada skripsi mahasiswa strata satu pada empat universitas berbeda di Aceh. Fokus penelitian ini adalah pada tiga elemen yang terdapat pada bab pendahuluan ini yaitu penempatan kalimat thesis, bentuk-bentuk penyampaian ide, dan marka metadiscourse. Literatur telah banyak membahas hasil penemuan tentang langkah retorik ini; namun demikian pada tingkat strata satu khususnya di universitas negeri di Aceh, masih sangat terbatas. Penelitian ini dilakukan secara kualitatif dengan menganalisa isi dari bab pendahuluan skripsi untuk mengidentifikasi langkah retorik. Sejumlah bab pendahuluan mahasiswa strata satu dari empat universitas berbeda di Aceh di kumpulkan dan dianalisa. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan tiga elemen dominan yang terdapat pada bab pendahuluan ini.

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INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia, English is considered as a foreign language. Undergraduate students who are studying in an English education study program are required to master both written and oral English (Samad & Fitriani, 2016). At the end of the study, they are required to write *skripsi* (a research paper written by students in Indonesian higher education to get the Bachelor's degree) in English and defend it orally. This is an opportunity for the students to show their competence in understanding their research world in the form of writing and oral performance (Samad & Adnan, 2017). In this article, the term *skripsi* is translated to 'script,' and the term 'script' is used throughout the article.

In script writing, there are some sections that students have to complete. One of the sections is the introduction section. To write successfully in this section, they are required to include appropriate RP (rhetorical pattern). According to Bennui (2008), many non-native writers do not meet the expectations of the academic readers of the target language. Native speakers find it strange when they are reading non-native writers' writing due to the influence of the writers' first language and the RP of the writing. This means, implementing appropriate RP to meet target audience expectation is important (Hamadouche, 2013).

A number of researchers have conducted research about the RP. Yang and Cahill (2008) and Xing, Wang, and Spencer (2008) have proposed similar study about the rhetorical organization of Chinese and English native speaker. The results of their studies indicate that Chinese have a problem in organising their writing with appropriate rhetorical pattern. According to these researchers, the problem arose due to students' lack of understanding in organizing a paragraph in Chinese writing. Other researchers, Crawford et al. (2013) have conducted a contrastive rhetoric towards perception of identity which is written in the form of academic English in central Mexico. The result shows that the students have a strong identity with English; however, the writing is more influenced by the Spanish.

Another researcher, Marcellino (2004), finds that Indonesian writers tend to write with a sense of indirectness and non-linear. Arsyad (2000) also finds that the Indonesian students' way of writing is not similar to the native speakers of English. These differences could be influenced by the RP of their first language.

Building from the previous studies, our study specifically analysed the rhetorical pattern of the introduction section written by Acehnese undergraduate students in their scripts by looking at the rhetorical pattern of thesis statement. Thus, this study posed a research question: What is the rhetorical pattern used by the Acehnese undergraduate students in the introduction section of their script? The result of this study is expected to enrich information in the literature about the RP used by Indonesian students in undergraduate level.

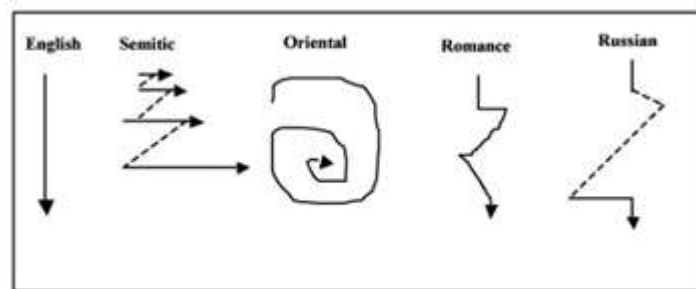
Rhetorical Pattern across Culture

Cross cultural understanding is important. Writers are commonly influenced by their culture when they write. When the writing is intended to particular readers, the writers are required to present information based on the culture of the readers, including the RP of this community. By understanding others' culture, writers are encouraged to learn the target language meaningfully (Genc & Bada, 2005).

The influence of culture in writing has been reported by researchers. Cahyono (2001) states that students who speak English as their foreign or second language tend to translate their L2 based on L1 form. This includes phrases and RP. Similar research has been done by Helal (2013) showing that cultural differences impact on how texts are organized. The differences of RP in writing cause difficulties for readers. Nunan (1999) argues that the variety of RP in writing could establish a sense of awareness of the students about the differences.

Kroll (2011) shows Kaplan's original study to draw five major language families: English, Semitic, Oriental, Romance, and Russian. To draw the RPs of these languages, 600 paragraphs in English were collected and analysed. The five RPs could be seen in the following figure.

Figure 1: Kaplan's rhetorical structure



Source: Kaplan (1966, p. 19)

English is described as linear, straight and vertical line to represent the linearity of the organizational pattern. It usually begins with a topic statement and is followed by evidence to develop and relate it to other ideas. Alternatively, it may state examples and then relate them to a statement at the end of the paragraph (Ghanbari, 2013). Importantly, English writing is conceptualized by the arrangement of propositional content and the management of the systems of cohesion and coherence.

Following Kaplan's pioneering study, wide-scale investigations comparing writing in several languages with English have been carried out. Yang and Cahill (2008) found the rhetorical organization of expository essay between Chinese and America. Li (2011) conducted a study about the analysis of internship cover letters written by Taiwanese and Canadian. Those studies have their own limitation, but they yield similar results that non-native users of English maintain their first language style in writing English. The unfamiliarity and unawareness of the writing style becomes the major obstacles in dealing with a new culture. Likewise, previous investigations also indicate some new ways in analysing written text, and this can be used as a framework to do document analysis. The followings are three document analyses based on previous research on contrastive rhetoric between English and Chinese writing written by Xing, et al. (2008) and Incecay (2015).

Inductive vs. Deductive (Placement of Thesis Statement)

Texts written by Native English Speaker (NES) is commonly found in the form of deductive style where the main idea or thesis statement is stated first and the supporting detail is placed

after the thesis statement. However, most texts written by Chinese students are in the form of inductive style, in which the background material is given first to lead readers to the main point (Liu, 2007). This kind of writing pattern occurs because the students have learned the technique of beginning a paper with a broad topic and gradually narrowing it down to the focus of the paper (Xing, et al., 2008). A written text is judged inductively or deductively by looking at the placement of its thesis statement. Thesis statement is a sentence summarizing the fundamental argument of an essay (Magginson, 2007).

Circular vs. Linear (Topic Sentences and Topic Changes)

An essay written by NES situates the theme at the beginning of essay because of their linear style of writing. Linearity can be indicated by a low frequency of topic changes or a low average number of topic sentences in a paragraph. Similarly, Cameron (2007) proves that the use of a top-down and linear style is poured in the English expository writing. The main thesis statement is stated up front and supported with details. However, linear organization is poorly done by Asian students in their essay, which is incoherent. There is no topic sentence in a paragraph or there are too many things mentioned within one paragraph. As a result, their essay is irrelevant, illogical and unclear. Circularity can be measured by looking at the frequency of topic changes in paragraphs where topic sentences are used. This is proved by Rustipa (2010) in her research that English discourse by the Indonesians reflects the circular organization. She recommends that students should be taught the linear organization so that they can follow English rules in developing ideas.

The Use of Metadiscourse Markers (Marks of Coherence and Unity)

Providing appropriate transition statements when moving from one idea to the next is of paramount to do. Writers have to regularly place signals in the text so readers can see how the writers intend the text to hold together (Hyland, 2012). Specifically, English readers expect and require landmark of coherence and unity as they read. Then, it shows the readers how the parts of paragraph are connected. A study about the use of metadiscourse markers was conducted by Mirshami and Allami (2008). They agree on the use of metadiscourse markers as a determining indicator in the quality of the writers' theses. Equally, Estaji and Vafaeimehr (2015) also state that more proficient learners make more use of metadiscourse in their writing. Having familiarity with writing may improve the way of using metadiscourse markers in the writing.

Undergraduate Script

Undergraduate script poses a challenge to most students, because as noted, Asian EFL students often find it difficult to produce academic papers (Newfields, 2003). Numerous publications have also emerged to highlight that non-native English students experience a great deal of difficulty in their studies at the demand of academic writing in English. Particularly, this study only focuses on the introduction section of undergraduate scripts. Introduction section is considered as the important part of the thesis since it has a function to attract readers' attention. Similarly, Swales (2001) states that "introduction section provides the rationale for the paper, moving from general discussion of the topic to the particular question or hypothesis being investigated..." (p.156).

It is the reason for students to situate their research idea in some paragraphs clearly. Introduction section is like a window toward the research. It serves the relevant idea related to the topic in the research so that readers understand the topic in the research and how it links to the research questions. In fact, writing introduction section becomes a challenge for EFL learners because it is considered as a chapter that has to be done as clearly as possible

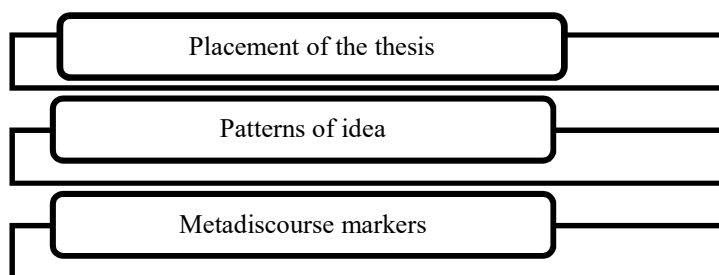
METHOD

This study described the condition of the rhetoric reflected in the introduction section (IS) of undergraduate scripts. Content analysis was used in this research. The subject of this study was the Acehnese students' undergraduate scripts, while the research object was the rhetorical pattern used by the students. The researchers collected 20 undergraduate scripts from 20 English department students from four state universities/institutes in Aceh: Samudra Langsa University, IAIN (State Islamic Institute) Zawiyah Cotkala Langsa, Syiah Kuala University and UIN (State Islamic University) Ar-Raniry.

The researchers chose those higher institutions because they offered good English education curriculum and had good accreditation. The procedures were selecting the IS of the English undergraduate scripts completed in 2014 – 2016 and drawing inferences of rhetoric reflected in the IS. The analysis of the IS RP was only on the first chapter of the script. Finally, the result of this research indicated the rhetorical pattern in IS.

To investigate the rhetorical pattern in the IS of twenty Acehnese students' undergraduate scripts, this study used Incecay's framework (2015) to look at the rhetorical pattern, which included placement of the thesis, the pattern of idea, and the use of metadiscourse markers. These aspects suggest the coherence and the unity of a paragraph. The researchers focused on three categories as suggested by Incecay's framework (2015) to look at the IS of the students' scripts, as shown in the figure below:

Figure 2: Categories for analysis



FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Placement of the Thesis

Based on the corpus data in the research, the Acehnese undergraduate scripts used three placements of the thesis statement: thesis at the beginning (deductive), thesis in the middle (quasi-inductive), and thesis at the end (inductive). Those placements are also found in the

study by Xing, et al. (2008) which analysed the English writing by Chinese, as can be seen in the table below:

Table 1: Students' placement of the thesis

Placement of Thesis Statement	Number of Script N = 20
Thesis at the beginning (Deductive)	1
Thesis in the middle (Quasi-Inductive)	13
Thesis at the end (Inductive)	6

The Table 1 above has shown a number of placement of thesis statement from the students' undergraduate scripts. The thesis statement in one script was written at the beginning (deductive). In thirteen scripts, the thesis statement was located in the middle (quasi-inductive), while in six scripts, it was found at the end (inductive). Samples of the three categories are explained in details below.

Sample 1: Thesis at the beginning (Deductive)

Title: Analysis of Bitter Experience of The Protagonist in Mary Higgins Clark's Novel "Where are the children?"

In the novel, we can get information, story, ideas, and many else. Novel is one of media to learn English well, because by using novel we can get four skills of English easier.

Sometimes, novel has similar characteristic of human in the real life. So, we can learn from the story in the novel, such as learning about experiences that happened in the story of novel, learning how to solve problem in our life and so on.

This thesis talks about bitter experience. Bitter is having a sharp unpleasant taste or not sweet. Based on the explanation above, we can conclude bitter experience is the great unhappiness or sad event in people's life. Such bitter experience may implicate a great trauma to the people, which means people might not have great mental strength to cope with those problems.

The text illustrated on Sample 1 above is actually not an ideal example for the deductive type because the thesis statement is not exactly at the beginning. However, this is the only script with the thesis statement written very close to the beginning of the writing. Sample 2 below is the example of Quasi-Inductive.

Sample 2: Thesis in the middle (Quasi-Inductive)

Title: Grammatical Error Analysis on Students' Speaking Performance

The mastery of speaking becomes the most important aspect of learning a second or foreign language. By developing this skill, the students are supposed to communicate, express idea, thought, and opinion using English. According to Hotltgraves, speaking is producing the utterances to make the listener understand what is meant by the speaker...

The writer interviewed some students of English education. As there are differences between two languages: Indonesia and English, it was found that the students committed the unsuitable language rules during communication, especially in grammatical aspect.

Since they produce many errors, their speaking was hard to understand. It is important to help the students reduce their error. Therefore, we need to know the source of error to overcome this problem by using error analysis. The expert mentioned two main sources of errors, namely inter-lingual and intra-lingual...

From the Sample 2 above, it can be seen that five Acehnese students put the thesis statement in the middle of their research introduction. They put the idea in the middle of the background of the study. In the first paragraph, it states the general knowledge, the preliminary study and then the thesis statement, which is put in the middle followed by some supporting details. The next sample is the excerpt of thesis statement which is located inductively.

Sample 3: Thesis at the end (Inductive)

Title: The Moral Value in Ten Aesop's Fables

Literature is a permanent expression in words of some thought or feeling or idea about life and the world. Literature is the result of works of human that contains the experience of life which often made in the form of literary works such as drama, novel, poetry, story, and others...

Fable is one of the literary works that is well-known in the world. Fable is a short prose fiction formulated to express and exemplify a useful truth or moral precept, often employing animals as representations of human characteristic traits...The moral values found in literary works by Aesop inspired human to be an intelligent and never give up. It can be seen in his fable "The Crow and The Pitcher". In this fable Aesop wants to emphasize that in a pinch a good use of our wits may help us out.

Finally, the writer interested in it and she also impressed by the way of the writer (Aesop) puts the moral values in the fable. That is why the main focus of this analysis is about "The moral Values in Ten's Aesop Fable".

As shown in Sample 3 above, the students have the tendency to write their English thesis statement inductively. This was in accordance with their L1 which is the preferred rhetorical pattern among the Acehnese in which it is written inductively. After the analysis of the placement of thesis statement, the next criterion is pattern of idea which is discussed below.

Pattern of Idea

In Xing, et al. (2008), it was revealed that there were two typical characteristics of English rhetoric: linear and circular. Within these two, the circularity of the idea tends to be commonly used by the students. The table below shows the number of patterns of ideas among the twenty IS of the scripts.

Table 2: Pattern of idea

Patterns of Idea	N = 20
Linear	1
Circular	19

From the twenty scripts analysed in this study, only one script that has the linearity of the idea. Below is the example of the linearity of the idea.

Sample 4: Linearity

Title: Analysis of Bitter Experience of The Protagonist in Mary Higgins Clark's Novel "Where are the children?"

Our world is rotating fast. We are living in the revolution century that change our traditional way into modern way. It makes us easily getting information about something. We can find it in the television, radio, internet, magazines, and some types of literature. An example of literature is a novel. In the novel, we can get information, story, ideas, and many else. Novel is one of media to learn English well, because by using novel we can get four skills of English easier. Sometimes, novel has similar characteristic of human in the real life. So, we can learn from the story in the novel, such as learning about experiences that happened in the story of novel, learning how to solve problem I our life and so on.

This thesis talks about bitter experience. Bitter is having a sharp unpleasant taste or not sweet. Based on the explanation above, we can conclude bitter experience is the great unhappiness or sad event in people's life. Such bitter experience may implicate a great trauma to the people, which means people might not have great mental strength to cope with those problems...

The Sample 4 above shows the linearity of the idea. Even though it states general statement at the beginning, the pattern of idea is clear enough. The topic sentence and the topic change are placed and run smoothly. Surely, the placement of the thesis is written deductively in this script and it shows the linearity. Conversely, the other nineteen scripts share the circularity of the idea in the IS. Moreover, most students place the thesis statement in the middle of the text and at the end of the text. Below is the example of the circular pattern.

Sample 5: Circular

Title: An Analysis of Grammatical Errors in Students' Writing Report Text.

People are more aware of how important the language is. Language is the integral part that cannot be separated from human being, because of its function as communication. Communication is mainly divided into two, there are verbal and non-verbal...Human language has changed by the time. Harmer says that communication between human as an extremely complex and ever-changing phenomenon. Undoubtedly, language is needed to interact one to another which helps people to interact, express, and communicate their ideas.

By using language, we can ask other people to do something, exchange our ideas and communicate each other about our plan in the

future or experience. Furthermore, English is an international language and it has an important role for communication in the world.

Based on the 2006 curriculum KTSP, the students must master the four language skills; listening, reading, speaking, and writing. Where grammar is one of language aspects which is taught in order to support those four skills for proper understanding of a language...

From the above sample, there are many ideas within one paragraph, and the paragraph seems lack of supporting details. It creates incoherency between one paragraph and another. To give more insights about the coherence, the next section will discuss the finding about metadiscourse markers.

Metadiscourse Markers

The use of metadiscourse marker becomes the main concern in academic writing. It serves the coherence of the written text. The table below shows the metadiscourse markers that are found in the undergraduate scripts of the Acehese students.

Table 3: Metadiscourse markers used by Acehese students

Scripts	Discourse Marker										
	Addition	Cause Effect	Compariso	Contrast	Sequencin	Illustration	Persuasion	Emphasis	Opinion	Summary	TOTAL
US1	4	2	-	1	2	1	-	-	-	-	10
US2	8	1	1	4	-	-	-	1	-	1	16
US3	2	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	1	6
US4	2	3	-	2	-	-	1	-	-	3	11
US5	3	4	-	3	-	3	-	-	-	4	17
US6	3	-	-	-	4	2	-	-	-	3	12
US7	2	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	3	8
US8	1	1	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	3
US9	2	-	-	1	-	1	-	3	-	1	8
US10	3	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	6
US11	4	3	1	2	2	-	-	-	-	2	14
US12	1	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1	4
US13	-	2	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	-	3
US14	4	1	-	2	2	-	-	-	-	1	10
US15	1	1	1	6	-	-	1	-	-	3	13
US16	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0

US17	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	2	5
US18	2	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3
US19	-	2	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	5
US20	-	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

Table 3 above presents the frequency of each aspect of discourse markers found in the introduction section of each script written by the students. Based on this table, the researchers found that eight scripts are complete enough in the use of metadiscourse markers, while twelve scripts only include a maximum of eight metadiscourse markers. There is one script which does not include any of the discourse markers. Furthermore, the researchers found that four discourse markers are rarely used by the Acehnese students, namely comparison, persuasion, emphasis and opinion. From this finding, the researchers assume that there should be some reasons for them avoiding using those markers. For example, they perhaps rarely use comparison and opinion markers because of their inability to compare the previous studies and put it based on their opinion. Equally, persuasion and emphasis markers are also never used by the Acehnese students in their writing because of their unfamiliarity of those conventions.

To sum up, undergraduate script is actually bound to have the IS. Yet, the IS is considered to be the most important, but complicated, part for some writers. The Acehnese students lay the placement of the thesis statement inductively. Consequently, the pattern of idea that is shared in the introduction is indirect. As stated by Xing, et al. (2008), many western teachers find Asian students' essays confusing, either because there is no topic sentence in the paragraph or because too many things are mentioned within one paragraph. Thus, they claim that the EFL written text is commonly known as irrelevant and unclear paragraphs. For metadiscourse markers, although not all of the Acehnese students were aware of the use the metadiscourse markers, they have applied them in their writing. The result has arrived at noteworthy insights that Acehnese students mostly employed the inductive type of logic and circular thought of pattern. They started the discussion in the general area to the specific one. Similarly, the pattern of their IS is different to English cultural writing convention which is dominantly deductive and followed by the linearity of the thought patterns.

CONCLUSIONS

The analysis of the IS has demonstrated cultural uniqueness, which strengthens the significance of the study by contributing to cross-cultural rhetoric. This research has drawn that most Acehnese undergraduate students write the IS with inductive style and circular pattern. They tend to follow oriental style in which the message is delivered indirectly. This happens because the Acehnese students are commonly influenced by the pattern of their first language when they write in English.

Based on the results of this research, the researchers would suggest that both teachers and students of a foreign language be required to understand cultural differences. Language teachers cannot avoid conveying the impression of another culture because language cannot be separated from the culture. In other words, they should be aware of cross-cultural

understanding in writing the structure, style, patterns and so forth. When students are aware of the cross-cultural understanding, they would be able to construct and arrange the idea into sentences in an appropriate way, based on the target language/culture. Above all, the students would be able to reach the target discourse community.

Furthermore, since this research has its own limitation and has a small portion of the data corpus, it is expected that other researchers conduct similar studies to cover wider subjects. Hence, the result of future studies may enrich the knowledge in this area of research.

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