AN ANALYSIS OF TEXTUAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTENT OF US ABSTRACT DISSERTATIONS

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ABSTRACT This study attempts to investigating the textual organization and content of US dissertations. The 30 dissertations written by native speaker in the area of teaching are chosen randomly. To come to the conclusion, three steps in analyzing the data are implemented: (1) completing the checklist to identify the content and the order of abstract, (2) calculating the percentage of each abstract element; (3) classifying the finding into three big categorizations, and (4) analyzing the finding. We discover the following findings: (1) the organization of US dissertation abstract follow the linear order of thinking though the content is varied, and (2) there is the essential, less essential, and the non essential components in US abstract dissertation.

Keywords: abstract, rhetorical structure, textual organization, and content

Abstract is considered as an important piece of writing in the academic research article, therefore we need to follow certain strategy in writing abstract in order to help reader to understand better our abstract. One surprising facts that lead us to come to this analysis is that the textual organization of Indonesian abstract dissertation is highly different from the textual organization of US abstract dissertation. The textual organization of Indonesian abstract, including abstract in dissertation, is rigidly, it follows the standard form that has been set by several Indonesian universities, e.g. Universitas Negeri Malang, in the Pedoman Penulisan Karya Ilmiah it is stated that abstract should content background, research problem, methodology, result, conclusion, and suggestion (PPKI, 2010:14). In contrast, US dissertation is really flexible, meaning that it seems there is no standard rule for its abstract organization. Different author may write differently from other author in terms of text organization.

Based on this issue, two research questions are addresses: (1) How is the US dissertations abstract organized, and (2) What is the essential and non essential element of US abstract dissertation?.

Several studies have been conducted to analyze the textual organization of written text and the most influential finding is a theory of cultural thought patterns in intercultural education by Kaplan (1966) that reveals the though patterns across different cultural background. Kaplan (1966:14) hypothesized that in expository writing "each language and each culture has a paragraph order unique to itself, and that part of the learning of the particular language is the mastering of its logical system" , to name, there are five cultural though patters: (1) Anglo-Saxon, (2) Semitic, (3) Oriental, (4) Romance, and (5) Russian. Firstly, the Anglo-Saxon is characterized by the linier though pattern as it exists in English composition in which the flow of the ideas occurs in a straight line from the opening sentence to the last sentence. Secondly, the Semitic rhetoric is characterized by the parallelism though pattern in which the coordinators are redundantly used in developing paragraph. Thirdly, the oriental cultural though pattern is frequently and basically employed by Asians including Indonesians whose characteristic is that "indirectness is typical in this sort of rhetoric" (Bashtomi, 2011:26). Fourthly, the Romance and Russian rhetorical characteristics is that it is full of the blow up words.

The textual organization US abstract dissertations, although from Kaplan theory we may assume that it follows the linear though pattern, it still interesting and worth conducting to study due to the fact that although the US dissertations abstract writers tends to elaborate the content freely, most of them still follow the linear though pattern. Therefore, in this research we would like to investigate it more.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is a descriptive qualitative study to describe the textual organization and the content of US dissertation

abstracts. We collect the data from US dissertation abstract from the year 2007 up to 2011, we take 30 abstract and we chose it randomly. To elaborate more about these issues, we design several steps in the data analysis. Firstly, we make a checklist to investigate the content of each article. Secondly, from the checklist, we calculate the proportion of every abstract component in percentage. Thirdly, after knowing the proportion of abstract component, we classify the component of abstract into two big categorizations, namely the essential element of abstract and the non essential element of abstract, and finally we will try to analyze the order or the text organization.

The checklist we developed is focused to investigate the content of the abstract. It consists of 30 rows and 15 columns. The rows derive from/contain the number of abstract we are going to analyze, while the columns derive from or contain all of the possible categorization of abstract element, such as background, purpose, data, etc. In addition, on the checklist we also give the number to show the order of content as it indicates text organization.

FINDINGS

The Textual Organization and The Order of Content of US Abstract Dissertation

From the checklist we discover that the organization and content of US abstract dissertations are varied. We find that 80% writers apply the straight flow ideas. They present the idea (the abstract components) in sequence, present one after another. However, there is variation in the 20% of abstract. 6 writers repeat some abstract components, for instance the abstract number 8, the purpose of the study is repeated three times, it exists in the first, forth, and seven number of order. Furthermore, we also notice that the abstract pattern of US dissertation is flexible in terms of order, as we can see in table 1.

Abstract Components	Appears in order number	Frequency	Percentage
1. Gap indication	1	5	45.5%
	2	2	18.2%
	3	2	18.2%
	5	1	1%
	6	1	1%
2. Background	1	7	70%
	2	2	20%
	3	1	10%
3. Positive justification	3	1	50%
	4	1	50%
4. Research purpose	1	11	30.5%
	2	9	25%
	3	4	11.2%
	4	6	16.7%
	5	1	2.8%
	7	3	8.3%
	8	2	5.5%
5. Research design	1	4	33.3%
	2	1	8.3%
	3	3	25%
	5	3	25%
	8	1	8.3%
6. Theoretical approach	2	11	55%
	3	5	25%
	4	1	5%
	5	1	5%
	6	2	1%
7. Data	5	2	33.3%
	6	3	50%
	7	1	1.7%
8. Result	3	3	11.5%
	4	4	15.4%
	5	8	30.1%
	6	5	19.3%
	7	3	11.5%
	8	3	11.5%

9. Achievement	4	1	14.3%
	5	1	14.3%
	7	3	42.8%
	9	2	28.6%
10. Implication	3	1	10%
	4	1	10%
	5	1	10%
	6	1	10%
	7	3	30%
	8	2	20%
	10	1	10%
11. Positioning	3	1	100%
12. Discussion	3	1	50%
	6	1	50%
13. Conceptual review	1	1	50%
	4	1	50%
14.Method	4	1	100%
15. Research question	4	1	100%

Table 1. The Order of US Abstract Components

From table above the variation is that, several writers may begin to write their abstract by elaborating the gap indication (45%), background (75%), research purpose (30.5%) , or research design (33.3%). Their different style in choosing the opening of the abstract indicates the same purpose. They want to write the most amusing abstract by using different strategy. However, theoretical approach, research purpose, and result are basically placed in the middle of the abstract. Moreover, data and achievement mostly be placed on the last part of the abstract.

The Categorization of Components of US Abstract Dissertation

From the components of US abstract dissertation that we derive from all abstract, we can make range of the top 15 of the most frequently components that exist. It can be seen on table 2

Components of U.S.A dissertation abstract	Frequency
1. Gap indication	6,9%
2. Background	6,2%
3. Positive justification	1,4%
4. Research purpose	19,2%
5. Research design	8,2%
6. Theoretical approach	15,8%
7. Data	8,9%
8. Result	16,4%
9. Achievement	4,8%
10. Implication	6,8%
11. Positioning	1,4%
12. Discussion	1,4%
13. Conceptual review	1,4%
14.Method	0,6%
15. Research question	0,6%

Table 2. The Frequency of US Dissertation Abstract Textual Organization

Gap Indication

Gap indication indicates that there is a space or gap between theory and practice. Among 30 U.S.A dissertation abstracts, there is 6,9 % of gap indication which written in the abstract. These following examples indicate gap indication

> Though University English textbooks are widely circulated and heavily critiqued (e.g., as didactic and hegemonic), we have little understanding of how and why they function the way they do. (abstract 1)

> While studies of urban teacher preparation highlight the need for teacher education programs to foster certain requisite knowledge, dispositions, attitudes, beliefs and skills, more studies are required to illuminate ways in which this need can be operationalized successfully. (abstract 9)

While theoreticians in the field of L2 learning offer a certain conception of what learner – centeredness is, in reality it is something very different. Learner-centeredness is a fluid and flexible approach that gets played out differently in different contexts in negotiation between teacher and students. Further, learners experience leanrner-centeredness in very different ways that may not always be apparent so that teachers need to find mechanisms for finding out about how their students are experiencing what they do. (abstract 15)

Background

In background, the writer should convince the reader that his/ her research is important to be done. In other words, the writer has to answer the question "why is the research important to be done?. Most of the background in U.S.A dissertation abstracts uses factive background. Factive background is commonly background that known by many people. There is 6,2% of background which written in the abstract.

These following examples indicate background

Critical literacy is one application of critical pedagogy that focuses on the cultural and ideological assumptions that underwrite texts and discourses. (Abstract 3)

One of the vexing questions facing bilingual education supporters in the United States since the 1990s has been how to explain bilingual education's lack of public support in the context of mounting evidence of its educational benefits. (Abstract 12)

High schools and colleges throughout the United States have been implementing Spanish courses especially designed for Spanish native speakers, widely known as SNS (Spanish for Native Speakers). The course content and organization have tended to be based in theories of foreign language teaching and learning, theories that are necessarily a good fit for the language needs of these students. For this reason research that can contribute to developing a theory that will guide SNS practitioners on more appropriate practices for suit their students is vital. (Abstract 21)

Positive justification

Positive justification is the researcher's positive opinion towards the theory. It is about 1,4% positive justification which is written in U.S.A dissertation abstract.

These following examples indicate positive justification

> Though under-studied, these genres offer a meta-narrative of their fields and pedagogical relationships, and examining them illuminates how textbooks re/enact particular institutional paradigms and positions. (Abstract 1)

> As such, educators, particularly those in elementary education, have a responsibility to acknowledge and explore the role(s) they play in (or write into) the hidden curriculum of gendering. (Abstract 17)

Research Purpose

There are 19,2% of research purpose which is included in U.S.A. abstract dissertation. It indicates that research purpose is the most important element that should be written in abstract. It is because research purpose describe the writer's aim why (s) he conducts the research. Most of research purpose indicated with the verb "examines", "attempt to", "the purpose is"

These following examples indicate research purpose

> This study examines the relationship between accent and identity in three Chinese graduate students attending a large research-one university in the northeastern United States. (Abstract 11)

> In this study, I attempt to shed light on this paradox by examining the role of language ideologies in the public debate surrounding Question 2 in Massachusetts. (Abstract 12)

> The purpose of this study is to understand how colleges and universities use language to represent themselves on their institutional websites (official websites of higher education institutions. (Abstract 18)

> This dissertation examines the messages undergraduate writers receive about what writing and language practices qualify as-academic. (Abstract 30)

Research Design

Research design in abstract indicates the writer's way to conduct his/her research. There is 8,2 % research design written in U.S.A abstract dissertation.

These following examples indicate research design.

This study uses "mixed methods" that include a combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches to examine participants' Chinese writing. (Abstract 26)

Eight sections of a fourth –semester ESL writing course were assigned randomly to the experimental or control groups. The experimental group ....(Abstract 25)

Theoretical Approach

The writers seem taking the theoretical approach to be significant in the abstract. The frequency of occurrence is 15.8%. It is relatively higher than the other categories (data, achievement, implication, and others). It indicates that it plays great role in showing the writers' interest. The following examples are indicating the category:

....rethorical genre theory alongside concept from social psycology positioning theory (article 1)
Theoritically, CDA provides the means to examine everyday language in an effort to raise awarness about issues of nin equality,......... (article 18)

From the example above the writers want to indicate the topic by using words: genre theory..and theoretically.............

Data

This category will represent the collection of information to the research. It is about 8.9%. This data tends to be realized as the source of the research. The writers include the data to complete the findings. However, it is not that much predominant comparing to the outcome (only 6.8%). Here are the examples that show this category:

Data analysis is conducted using both grounded theory..............
(article 11)
....Barbara's implementation and constructing data rich portarits of each.....(article 15)

The data represent how the data influence the research

Result

In this category the writers promote the outcome with the advantage of the research. The percentage is 16.4%. The lexical items that indicate this category are as follows:

> Analysis of these apparatus genres <u>reveals</u> that despite cirrular...... (article 1)
> The findings, in general,<u> indicate</u> that our three.......... (article 4)

Achievement

Achievement indicates that the research will be useful for the future needs. It is already represented with the similar idea of the result. Therefore the percentage is only about 4.8% , it is not that much more of the result. The lexical items showing this achievement are as follows:

> The study thus <u>enhance</u> rhetorical genre studies as well as prior textbook......(article 1)
> <u>The intent of this study</u> is to address the need for greater understanding....(article 3)

Implication

The writers do not mention the implication implicitly. The idea is that implication has similar function of giving

suggestion or recommendation to the readers. The percentage covers 6.7%. the lexical items that show the implication are:

> Overall, the project has <u>implications</u> for ITA preparation,...... (article 2)
> .....and the <u>discusses implications</u> collaboration has for moving toward......(article 19)

Positioning

Positioning is the way the writer takes position among the different controversial or issues. Among the 30 abstracts, only one writer who state her position, on the abstract number 3, to support her claiming position, she states the theory by quoting the expert opinion toward the issue, as can be seen in this example.

> <u>However</u>, many theorists believe that such teaching within predominantly white and affluent populations is not only relevant, but necessary <u>(Howard, 2003; Thandeka, 2002)</u>.(abstract 3).

Discussion

Two writers elaborate the discussion on their dissertation abstracts, yet they aim it to different thing. One writer, in abstract number 12 discusses his argument toward the finding.

However, the other writer, on the abstract number 14 elaborates more about his recommendation based on his finding.

> I argue that the wide margin by which Question 2 passed represents less a rise in what some authors have called English only ideology, and more a process by which the public, enabled by the ballot initiative process, adopted English immersion as the approach that promised the most efficient way to serve a previously established language ideological consensus. (abstract 12)

> We must find a way through public education to reach privileged children and help them understand their history and that of our country. To understand is to be empowered and that is true for everyone. The affuent must be brought to a place where they can understand, at a deep level of meaning, what has brought them to where they are, an accident of birthplace and status, if we are to have them as part of the struggle for equality. The twelve years they spend in school is an invaluable time to reach them. If we do not use this time to do so, it is a wasteful tragedy. (abstract 14)

Conceptual review

From the finding, two different writers use the conceptual review differently, Arnold, who writes the abstract no 16 reviewing the theory to be used as the basis of data analysis, specifically to analyze the element of effective face-to-face discussion.

> Elements of effective face-to-face discussions <u>include</u> features associated with dialogic interactions <u>(Nystrand, 1997),</u> conventions of envisionment-building <u>(Langer, 1995),</u> and curricular conversations <u>(Applebee, 1996)</u>. (abstract 16)

In this statement the writer tries to analyze the effective face-to-face interaction by classify it and he use the classification proposed by several experts. In contrast, the other writer on the abstract number 17 reviewing the concept of something, in this case feminism, to give introduction for abstract as it placed on the first sentence of the first paragraph.

> <u>Feminism </u>as a frame of reference (and feminist pedagogy in particular) attributes the socialization process of gendering primarily to cultural influences and media

representations along with attitudes and ideals taught/learned at home. (abstract 17)

Method

Method refers to the approach the researcher takes to conduct his study. On the abstract no 17, the writer implicitly state his method that is descriptive qualitative study by using the word "describes".

Drawing upon video technology, this study describes the pedagogical interactions (e.g., the language of instruction, teacher response, and class discussion) between and among students and their teacher as they negotiate gender-themed works of children's literature during classroom read-alouds. (abstract 17)

Research question

Only one writer who addresses explicitly the research problem into the research question in the form of imperative.

The research question is: ―What student perspectives about literacy learning and academic achievement further explain motivation and engagement and the call for high school literacy reform?. (abstract 20)

DISCUSSIONS
The Textual Organization of US Abstract Dissertation

From the finding we may infer that although the order of content of US dissertation abstract varied, the textual organization is still straight to the point. This is because if we refer to the Kaplan (1966) theory, the American way of thinking is almost straight to the point and flexible. We may say that, it is influenced by their "Liberal" ideology. For most liberal country, such as U.S, the people there are free to actualize their self especially in writing, in this case for writing abstract in educational field. There are no rigid rules that adjust their way in writing. They write down freely without focusing on certain rule. It is very different with Indonesia style in writing an abstract. They have to obey the rules in writing the abstract, such as in Pedoman Penulisan Karya Ilmiah (PPKI). The abstract based on PPKI involved research problem and

purpose, research design, result, conclusion and implementation, if it is needed. The most important elements in abstract based on PPKI is result element. The length of abstract has 50-75 words and one paragraph only. The abstract has to have key terms (3-5 key terms).

The categorization of US Abstract Components

From the frequency of each abstract components that appears in 30 abstracts (table 2), we classify the frequency into three broad categorization: (1) high frequency and (2) middle frequency, and (3) low frequency. Next, we decide the high frequency components as the essential components of abstract, the middle frequency as the less essential components, on the other hands, the low frequency is considered as the non essential components of abstract.

Percentage	Frequency category	Abstract components	Frequency	Components Category
0-6.1%	Low	Method (0.6%) Research question (0.6%) Conceptual review (1.4%) Discussion (1.4%) Positioning (1.4%) Positive judgment (1.4%) Achievement (4.8%)	7	Non essential element
6.2%-12	Middle	Background	5	Less

%				essential element
%		(6.2%) Gap indication (6.9%) Implication (6.8%) Research design (8.2%) Data (8.9%)		essential element
>12.1%	High	Research purpose (19.2%) Theoretical approach (15.8%) Result (16.4%)	3	Essential element
Total			15 components	

Table 3. The Categorization of the US Abstract Dissertation Components

From the table above, the percentage of the essential and the non essential components is almost equal, in which the frequency of non essential components is 7 (46.7%) while the frequency of essential components is 8 (53.4%). Here, we can infer that the 30 abstracts embrace all abstract components including the essential and the non essential abstract components.

The Essential Components of Abstract

From the highest rank of percentage, we can infer that US abstract dissertation at least should contain the three components, those are: (1) research purpose, (2) theoretical approach, and (3) result. Research purpose is considered an essential element because from the research purpose the reader can get the information about the topic of the

dissertation, the reason of why do the writer conduct the study, and the aim of the study. When we firstly read an abstract, we mostly try to find this information when we review the related literature. In addition, theoretical approach is considered the important element because in a research, regardless its field and research design, theory is important as the basis for data analysis, conceptual idea that explain the phenomena, and to support the researcher claim. Besides, result is classified as the essential elements of abstract because researches in general are expected to contribute the body knowledge in order to improve the quality life of human beings or environments. We can discover the significant of research from its finding that is derives from the result of the research.

The Less Essential Components of Abstract

The less essential components derive from the finding of analyzing the content of US abstract dissertation are: background (6.2%), gap indication (6.9%), implication (6.8%), research design (8.2%), and data (8.9%). Firstly, background is considered less essential because we can actually know the background of the research from the topic or title of the abstract that can also be found on the research purpose. From the purpose we can guess the reason why the researcher chose the topic. Secondly, gap indication is considered as the less essential components because we may assume that not all researcher aware of the importance filling the gap in conducting research. Thirdly, the implication actually is basically the same as other components such as achievement and outcome. It is considered the less essential elements because it can be replaced with those same other components. Fourthly, research design and data are less essential because from the purpose and the title of the abstract the reader can discover it.

The Non Essential Components of Abstracts

Several US abstract components such as method, research question, conceptual review, discussion, positioning,

positive judgment, and achievement, are considered non essential because they actually can be included in the essential component category, such as method and research question can be inserted in methodology and purpose, conceptual review can be included in the theoretical conceptual; positioning can be inferred from the gap indication. However, achievement is not essential because from the result the reader can understand the significant and the outcome of the research. Finally, the positive judgment is not essential because it shows the research view about the something, in this case the theory. The most important thing is that how the writers use the theory on their study.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Two important points can be concluded from the findings and discussions. The first point is that, the textual organization of US dissertation abstract, although the order of the components is varied, it still follows the liners order of thinking. The second point is that, the components of US dissertation abstract can be classified into three big categorizations, the essential elements, the less essential elements, and the non essential elements.

It is suggested that if we, as the Indonesian writer who would like to write English composition, we should follow the linear order of thinking by including the essential or the essential plus the less essential components of abstract in our English abstract later if we write thesis or dissertation.

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