

Textual and linguistic characteristics in ELT research article abstracts: Insights from Indonesian novice writers

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ABSTRACT

In academic writing, particularly in research article abstracts, rhetorical moves and linguistic features are pivotal for effectively communicating findings to a broad audience. This study explores the rhetorical moves employed by Indonesian novice writers in their research article abstracts and their linguistic realization. Using a descriptive qualitative design, we analyzed 25 English Language Teaching (ELT) abstracts written by Indonesian novice writers, employing a checklist instrument for data collection. The results indicate that purpose and product moves are obligatory, method and conclusion moves are conventional, and introduction moves are optional. Rhetorical patterns predominantly follow a linear structure, with embedded and less frequent moves occurring less often. Linguistically, active voice prevails across all moves, surpassing passive voice usage. Present tense is the most common, followed by past, perfect, and future tenses. Key interactional metadiscourse devices, including hedges, boosters, and attitude markers, are evident, while engagement markers and self-mentions are notably absent. This study underscores variations in rhetorical structures and linguistic features among Indonesian novice writers, offering insights to enhance their academic writing practices.

Keywords: *Abstract; Applied linguistics; Linguistics features; Rhetorical move*

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1. Introduction

The abstract section has been widely recognized as a crucial component of research articles and academic writing because it is designed to convey the core ideas of the entire article (Amnuai et al., 2020; Khatri, 2022). Serving as a concise summary, an abstract provides enough information to spark the reader's interest in the research. The abstract is pivotal in helping readers decide whether an article is worth exploring further (Lövei, 2021). An unclear and irrelevant abstract can make readers lose interest in the rest of the paper. Conversely, a well-crafted abstract significantly influences how readers perceive the value of the article and their subsequent decision to delve deeper into the study (Kumar, 2018). Given its importance, it is unsurprising that much research has focused on understanding the elements of effective and well-structured abstract writing.

Writing an abstract research article involves following specific stages to ensure a logical flow and a clear framework. According to Arsyad (2014), crafting an abstract is not easy, requiring authors to effectively translate their ideas into written form and arrange words precisely. Moreover, these challenges are often compounded by a lack of familiarity with academic conventions and the rhetorical strategies expected in English-language abstracts. This task becomes even more challenging for less experienced authors, particularly non-native English speakers, including Indonesian novice writers, who often struggle to produce well-structured and coherent abstracts (Amnuai et al., 2020; Arsyad, 2014).

Novice writers are new to the field of research and have little to no experience with previous publications (Rahmasari et al., 2024; Refnaldi et al., 2024). Once they complete their research, they are expected to write research articles, including an abstract that summarizes their study's essence, as highlighted by Noortyani (2018). As they are still in the early stages of their academic writing journey, novice writers may not always follow the expected structure or academic conventions when writing their abstracts. Therefore, it is essential to analyze the structure of abstracts written by Indonesian novice writers to acknowledge how they organize and present the key elements of their research.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the structure of abstracts, analyzing the rhetorical structures and their linguistic realization in research article abstracts is a practical approach (Amnuai et al., 2020; Astria et al., 2023). This analysis helps uncover how key elements, such as the introduction, purpose, methods, results, and conclusion, are organized and conveyed in academic abstracts. In terms of rhetorical moves, this analysis examines how authors strategically structure their abstracts to navigate the reader through the main aspects of the research, ensuring clarity and coherence (Hakim et al., 2021). On the other hand, linguistic features focus on the language used to express these rhetorical moves, such as sentence structure, vocabulary, and tense, which contribute to the overall effectiveness of the abstract in conveying the intended message (Indrian & Ardi, 2019; Suntara, 2018). By exploring rhetorical moves and linguistic features, researchers can better understand how abstracts function within the broader context of academic writing.

There has been many previous research in the area of rhetorical move and linguistics features in Research article abstracts, such as by Kaya and Yağız (2023), who compared research article abstracts written by two groups of scholars in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), comparing Turkish and non-Turkish scholars. Similarly, Soy et al. (2023) looked at the rhetorical structure and linguistic features of review article abstracts in applied linguistics, focusing on those published in high-impact international journals. Hakim et al. (2021) analyzed the rhetorical moves and linguistic features of abstracts in local, national, and international journals authored by Indonesians in English language teaching, identifying similarities and differences. Additionally, Astria et al. (2023) investigated the rhetorical moves, patterns, and linguistic features, including tenses, voice forms, and that-complement clauses, in research article abstracts written by Indonesian authors in *Applied Linguistics* published in national journals.

While previous studies have explored rhetorical moves and linguistic features in research article abstracts, there remains a gap in understanding how these elements are applied by Indonesian novice writers, particularly in the context of English language abstracts. Consequently, this study aims to address this gap by examining the rhetorical moves used by Indonesian novice writers when composing their ELT research article abstracts and investigating how these moves are linguistically realized. The findings will provide insights into Indonesian novice researchers' rhetorical structures and linguistic features, offering practical guidelines to help them align their abstracts with academic conventions and improve their abstract writing skills.

2. Literature review

2.1. Rhetorical moves

Textual characteristics refer to how a text is structured, organized, and patterned to convey meaning effectively in line with its communicative purpose. These characteristics include the overall organization of content, coherence, cohesion, genre conventions, and rhetorical structuring that allow the text to function within its academic or disciplinary context (Annuaei et al., 2020; Crossley, 2020; Khamkhien, 2015).

In academic writing, particularly in research article abstracts, these textual elements help guide the reader through the central ideas of the study concisely and logically. One crucial textual element in abstracts is the rhetorical move structure, a patterned organization of communicative functions designed to fulfill specific discourse purposes. A rhetorical move, as defined by Nikpei (2016), is a portion of text aligned with the writer's objective and how the intended idea is conveyed. This study elucidates the emergence of distinct discourse patterns in the examined writing (Pratiwi & Kurniawan, 2021). Similarly, rhetorical move analysis looks into the communication goals and the steps that make them up in a piece of writing, and it shows how language structures are used in writing (Ebadi & Zamani, 2016). Therefore, the concept of rhetorical moves provides an essential framework for understanding how writers organize their texts to achieve specific communicative objectives.

Given the significant role of abstracts in academic writing, a rhetorical move structure is commonly used to organize and align the content. Rhetorical moves are defined as communicative acts that convey the text's primary objective (Lorés-Sanz, 2004). Several rhetorical move analysis models have been proposed, including Hyland's (2004) framework, which figures out five key moves: introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion, as detailed in Table 1.

Table 1

A categorization of rhetorical moves in article abstracts (Hyland, 2004).

Move	Function
Introduction	Highlighting the significance of the research topic and demonstrating the writer's understanding.
Purpose	Providing a clear statement of the purpose, thesis, or hypothesis and the intention behind the paper.
Method	Indicating the design, participants/data sources, instruments, and procedures or context involved in the study.
Product	Presenting the significant findings, which represent the product of the research.
Conclusion	Capturing the significance of the research, any limitations, and the implications or recommendations for future research.

Acknowledging that not all abstracts adhere rigidly to the required structure or sequence of moves is essential. Variations in the move structure are frequently observed, mainly when the aim is to highlight significant research results and capture the reader's attention (Hyland, 2004). The structure chosen may vary depending on the discipline and reflect the author's writing style or the conventions of the academic institution (Gani & Kurniawan, 2021).

However, novice writers often struggle to organize their abstracts according to these textual and rhetorical conventions. According to Hongwei and Yuying (2011), novice academic writers may lack awareness of rhetorical moves and fail to fulfil the communicative purposes expected in each section. In addition to this struggle, Guo (2019) who states that novice researchers' writing tends to follow model-imitation, which contradicts the lowly formulaic style of qualitative research writing. This leads to vague, disorganized abstracts that may not clearly convey the key points of the research. To address this challenge, researchers recommend the use of explicit genre-based instruction, analysis of model abstracts, and writing scaffolds that expose students to rhetorical structures and common textual patterns (Chen & Su, 2011; Yasuda, 2011). These pedagogical strategies can significantly improve students' abstract writing by enhancing their understanding of textual characteristics and how to apply them effectively.

2.1. Linguistic features

Rhetorical moves are closely tied to specific lexical and grammatical features that help convey the writer's intended message. These linguistic features play a crucial role in

move-based analysis, reflecting how each rhetorical move is realized in the text (Amnuai et al., 2020). Understanding the linguistic characteristics is essential for identifying and analyzing rhetorical structures in the context of abstracts.

Broadly, linguistic features in writing can be categorized into three primary constructs: lexical, syntactic, and cohesion. Mcnamara and Mccarthy (2010) emphasized the importance of these elements in analyzing academic writing. Lexical features involve word choices that influence the text's tone, clarity, and persuasiveness. Syntactic features refer to sentence structures and how they organize information. Cohesion, on the other hand, refers to how different parts of the text are connected, both within sentences and across paragraphs. These linguistic aspects work together to establish a coherent and cohesive argument or presentation of research.

To analyze rhetorical moves in this study, particular attention was paid to tenses and voice forms, as outlined by Hopkins and Cullen (2007). Tenses are used to reflect the temporal nature of the research, such as past tense to describe completed actions, present tense for generalizations or facts, and future tense to discuss implications or forthcoming research. The use of voice forms, whether active or passive, can signal the focus of the sentence, with active voice emphasizing the actor and passive voice highlighting the action or the object. Additionally, the metadiscoursal devices identified in the analysis were based on Hyland's (2018) framework. These interactional metadiscourses help establish the writer's relationship with the reader and guide the reader's interpretation of the text. The study identified five key types of interactional metadiscourse: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions (see Table 2).

Table 2

Hyland's (2018) interactional metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse	Function	Examples
Hedges	To keep a writer from fully committing to an idea	might, perhaps, possible, about
Boosters	To stress, force, or show that the writer is sure of a statement	in fact, definitely, it is clear that
Attitude Markers	To convey the author's opinions about a proposition	in fact, definitely, it is clear that
Engagement Markers	To make a direct reference to something or to establish a rapport with the reader	consider, note that, you can see that
Self-mentions	To specifically mention the author or authors	I, we, our, my, etc.

3. Method

3.1. Research design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design, focusing on the analysis of the academic writing genre through discourse or genre analysis. Discourse analysis examines the corpus, concentrating on discourse units (Flowerdew, 2013). This

research design explored the rhetorical organization and linguistic features (tense, voice, and metadiscourse) in research article abstracts written by Indonesian novice writers.

3.2. Data collection

Twenty-five research article abstracts taken from published papers in international conference proceedings made up the corpus for the current research. Conference proceeding articles were selected because they often serve as a platform for novice writers, such as final-year students, graduate students, and early-career lecturers, to disseminate their research in the field of English Language Teaching. Moreover, novice researchers are not confident enough to submit their work to academic journals due to limited experience, unfamiliarity with rigorous peer-review processes, or concerns about language proficiency and academic writing conventions. Therefore, abstracts written by novice writers in conference proceedings are particularly suitable for analyzing the textual and linguistic challenges faced by emerging scholars in academic writing.

The data for this study were drawn from the 3rd and 4th International Conference on English Language Teaching (ICONELT). The selected abstracts focused on topics within the field of English Language Teaching (ELT) and were written by Indonesian novice writers with limited experience in academic publishing. These writers were primarily final-year undergraduate students and graduate students, as identified through contributor information and university staff directories. To confirm their novice status, additional verification was conducted through simple searches on Google Scholar and institutional profiles to ensure that the authors had minimal prior publication records. The abstracts were selected from conference proceedings published in 2020 and 2024, ensuring a recent and relevant sample for the rhetorical and linguistic analysis undertaken in this study.

The main instrument used in this research was a checklist. It included a checklist for identifying five rhetorical moves: introduction, purpose, method, product, and conclusion, based on Hyland's (2004) model. The linguistic features were also assessed using a checklist, covering elements such as voice (active and passive voice), tenses (present, past, future, and perfect tense), and interactional metadiscourse devices (hedges, attitudinal stance, and self-reference words), drawing from Hopkins and Cullen (2007) and Hyland (2018). Each abstract was assigned a separate sheet for identifying, classifying, and analyzing the components.

3.3. Data analysis

The data analysis in this research involved several stages. To begin with, the rhetorical moves in twenty-five abstracts were identified using the Hyland (2018) model and recorded on a checklist to analyze the textual organization. The moves were aggregated and enumerated to illustrate the standard pattern employed in each data set. After that, the data were presented in tables and categorized as obligatory (100%),

conventional (60-99%), or optional (less than 60%) based on Kanoksilpatham's (2007) classification.

In the linguistic features, the tenses used (present, past, future, and perfect tense) and the voice forms (active or passive) in each move were identified and classified according to Hopkins and Cullen's (2007) framework. The use of interaction metadiscourse, including hedges, stance markers, and self-reference terms, was also analyzed according to Hyland's (2018) theory. All identified data were systematically recorded on the checklist to ensure accurate documentation. Finally, the results were presented in tables for easy comparison and interpretation.

3.4. Reliability

Since a single researcher conducted the data analysis, there was a potential for subjective judgment that could affect the reliability of the results. To ensure validity and reduce bias, an independent co-rater was involved to compare and assess the degree of agreement between the researcher's analysis and the co-rater's assessment.

4. Findings

4.1. Rhetorical textual organization

The rhetorical textual organization of the abstracts is analyzed to understand the structure and patterns of academic writing employed by novice Indonesian researchers. The results for the frequency of moves and their corresponding percentages are presented in Table 3. These findings also reveal how often each rhetorical move occurs in the abstracts, offering a clear picture of which moves are considered obligatory, conventional, or optional by the authors.

Table 3

The rhetorical moves in research article abstracts.

Move	Frequency	Percentage	Category
Introduction (I)	14	56%	Optional
Purpose (P)	25	100%	Obligatory
Method (M)	22	88%	Conventional
Product (Pr)	25	100%	Obligatory
Conclusion (C)	20	80%	Conventional

Analyzing the rhetorical moves in the abstracts reveals the varying importance of each move in abstract construction. The Purpose (P) and Product (Pr) moves are present in all 25 abstracts, marking them as obligatory. These moves are crucial for setting the research objectives and presenting the main findings, making them indispensable in the structure of an abstract. Following this, the Method (M) move occurs in 88% of the abstracts, categorizing it as conventional. While not universally included, it remains a standard feature, providing essential details about the research design, procedures, and data sources. The Conclusion (C) appears in 80% of the abstracts and is also considered

conventional. While not included in every abstract, the conclusion is still a frequent component, offering insights into the implications of the research or summarizing key points. The Introduction (I) move is the least common, appearing in just 56% of the abstracts, so it is considered optional. This suggests that while the introduction is a valuable element, novice writers do not always need to include it in their abstracts, as some may prefer to focus directly on the purpose, method, and findings.

In addition to analyzing the occurrence and frequency of rhetorical moves, their construction patterns are also examined in this study, as shown in Table 4. The analysis reveals that the linear structure dominates the abstracts, with the most common pattern being P-M-Pr-C (Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion), occurring in 11 instances. Other linear patterns include I-P-M-Pr-C (Introduction-Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion), which appears in 5 abstracts, showcasing a slightly more elaborate structure by including an introduction to set the context. More straightforward variations, such as I-P-M-Pr and I-P-Pr, are less frequent, each occurring twice. At the same time, I-P-Pr-C appears only once, indicating that authors occasionally omit certain moves depending on their emphasis.

Table 4

Distribution of rhetorical patterns in research article abstracts.

Structure	Rhetorical Patterns	Frequency
Linear	P-M-Pr-C	11
	I-P-M-Pr-C	5
	I-P-M-Pr	2
	I-P-Pr	2
	I-P-Pr-C	1
Embedded	I-P-M+Pr-C	2
New Moves	P-I-M-Pr-C	1
	P-I-M-Pr	1

Notes: I: Introduction P: Purpose M: Method Pr: Product C: Conclusion

Interestingly, the study identifies embedded structures where moves merge or overlap, as seen in I-P-M+Pr-C (Introduction-Purpose-Method combined with Product-Conclusion). This pattern is observed twice, suggesting a creative integration of moves, as reflected in Excerpt 1. This creative approach highlights the authors' adaptability in presenting their research while maintaining coherence and achieving the communicative goals of the abstract.

Excerpt 1

(Method Move) Through a literature study approach and case analysis in several schools that have implemented Merdeka Curriculum (Product Move), it was found that assessment strategies tailored to students' learning styles can improve their motivation, participation, and learning achievement. (Abstract 22)

The analysis also highlights newly identified patterns or non-frequent move patterns, such as P-I-M-Pr-C (Purpose-Introduction-Method-Product-Conclusion) and P-I-M-Pr (Purpose-Introduction-Method-Product), each occurring once. These patterns deviate from traditional sequences, perhaps reflecting an experimental or unconventional approach by some novice writers.

4.2. Linguistics characteristics analysis

The linguistic characteristics of the abstracts were examined to uncover the patterns and choices in language use that contribute to their rhetorical moves in research article abstracts. To begin with, the analysis of voice forms in the 25 research abstracts written by Indonesian novice writers reveals varied frequencies of active and passive voice across different rhetorical moves. These findings highlight the strategic use of voice forms to align with the communicative goals of each rhetorical move, showcasing the linguistic adaptability of Indonesian novice writers in presenting their research article abstracts. Table 5 presents the detailed active and passive voice distribution across the rhetorical moves.

Table 5.

The distribution of voice forms in the research article abstracts.

Move	Active	Passive
Introduction	22	5
Purpose	28	2
Method	19	16
Product	50	3
Conclusion	23	2
Total	142	28

The analysis of voice forms in the research article abstracts highlights a clear preference for active voice across all rhetorical moves, with 142 instances compared to 28 for passive voice. This distribution underscores the tendency of novice Indonesian writers to employ active voice as the primary means of conveying their research ideas through abstracts. The Product move exhibits the highest use of active voice, with 50 occurrences, indicating the Indonesian novice writers' emphasis on directly presenting their findings in a clear and impactful manner. On the other hand, the Introduction move shows the lowest use of active voice, with 22 instances, reflecting a more concise and less elaborate introduction of the research context in some abstracts. For passive voice, the Method move records the highest frequency, with 16 instances, aligning with its role in describing research procedures and maintaining objectivity, such as when data were collected and the instruments were distributed. Conversely, the Purpose and Conclusion moves show the lowest use of passive voice, each with only two instances, highlighting

the Indonesian novice writers' preference for a more direct and engaging tone when stating objectives and summarizing findings.

The following analysis focuses on the use of grammatical tenses in the corpus of this study, which provides valuable insights into the linguistic strategies employed by novice Indonesian writers when constructing research article abstracts. The use of tenses (present, past, future, and perfect) varies across the rhetorical moves, reflecting distinct tendencies aligned with the communicative functions of each move. The results of the inquiry are encapsulated in Table 6 below.

Table 6

Distribution of tenses in research article abstracts.

Move	Present Tense	Past Tense	Future Tense	Perfect Tense
Introduction	27	-	-	2
Purpose	27	4	-	
Method	11	21	-	1
Product	35	15	1	-
Conclusion	26	-	-	-
Total	126	40	1	3

The analysis of tense distribution in research article abstracts highlights distinct patterns in using grammatical tenses across different rhetorical moves. The present tense is the most frequently used, appearing 126 times across all moves. This reflects its primary role in establishing the research context, stating objectives, and emphasizing findings. The Product move demonstrates the highest use of the present tense, with 35 instances. Similarly, the Purpose and Introduction moves also show a high reliance on the present tense, with 27 instances each, aligning with their function of defining the study's objectives and setting the context for the research. Next, the past tense is used 40 times and is primarily concentrated in the Method move, which accounts for 21 instances. The Product and Purpose moves also utilize the past tense, with 15 and 4 instances, respectively. Whereas, the perfect tense is used sparingly, with only two occurrences in the Introduction move and one instance in the Method move. Last, the future tense is rarely employed, with just a single instance observed in the Product move.

Another linguistic feature examined in this study is the choice of interactional metadiscourse markers by Indonesian novice writers in their research article abstracts. The distribution of these markers across the abstracts is summarized in Table 7, providing insights into the preferences and tendencies of novice writers in constructing their abstracts.

Table 7

Distribution of interactional metadiscourse in research article abstracts.

Metadiscourse	Hedges	Boosters	Attitude	Engagement	Self-Mention
Introduction	1	1	1	-	-

Purpose	-	1	-	-	-
Method	-	-	-	-	-
Product	1	8	-	-	-
Conclusion	-	7	-	-	-
Total	2	17	1	-	-

The distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in the research article abstracts reveals notable trends in how Indonesian novice writers employ these devices across different rhetorical moves. Hedges, intended to avoid complete commitment to an idea, were present twice: once in the Introduction and once in the Product move. This suggests that novice writers may use hedges to soften claims and express a degree of uncertainty, as reflected in excerpt 2. Boosters, which emphasize the writer's certainty or strength of a proposition, are the corpus's most frequently used metadiscourse device. A total of 17 instances were observed, with the highest concentration in the Product move (8 instances) and the Conclusion move (7 instances). This highlights the novice writers' tendency to confidently assert their findings and the significance of the research results, as demonstrated in excerpt 3. Attitude markers denote the writer's sentiments or emotions regarding the idea conveyed, appeared only once in the Introduction move, as shown in excerpt 4. This suggests a limited use of attitude markers in the abstracts, with novice writers likely focusing more on presenting factual information rather than expressing personal attitudes or emotions.

Excerpt 2

EFL teachers might face challenges in teaching English language skills to students of different proficiency, and employ new strategies to learn English effectively. (Abstract 9)

Excerpt 3

The findings revealed that teachers' scaffolding techniques used like translation, modeling, feedback, group work, and visual aids significantly contribute to improving students' linguistic competence, confidence, and engagement. (Abstract 1)

Excerpt 4

But apparently, many educators still do not realize the benefits of using technology-based media in the classroom. (Abstract 10)

Among these findings, no engagement markers or self-mentions were observed in the abstracts. This indicates that the novice writers did not explicitly address the reader or refer to themselves within the text. Novice writers did not often use self-mention devices or engagement markers to interact directly with their readers, even though these could refer to the authors or address the readers.

5. Discussion

The discussion section emphasizes the importance of the findings, compares them with previous studies, and explains any unexpected results. It addresses the research objectives, including examining the rhetorical moves used by novice Indonesian writers when composing their abstracts and investigating how they are linguistically realized.

The analysis of rhetorical moves reveals varying levels of significance for each component in abstract construction: Introduction, Purpose, Method, Product, and Conclusion, as discussed by Hyland (2004). The Purpose and Product moves are found in all 25 abstracts, making them obligatory elements. This aligns with Belcher's (2019) view that an abstract typically includes three key components: purpose, method, and results, to provide readers with clear and convincing information. On the other hand, the Introduction move is the least frequent, appearing in only 56% of the abstracts, and is therefore considered optional. This finding contrasts with the studies of Amnuai (2019) and Tamela (2020), which reported that the Introduction move was the most commonly used component in abstracts.

In addition to analyzing the occurrence and frequency of rhetorical moves, analyzing rhetorical move patterns reveals various abstract structures, with the linear structure being the most dominant. The most common pattern observed is P-M-Pr-C (Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion), which aligns with the findings of Astria et al. (2023), who suggest that the frequent use of this four-move model may be influenced by its inclusion in manuscript templates. Additionally, embedded patterns, where two moves are combined within a single sentence, were also identified in this study. This finding is consistent with previous research by Amalia et al. (2018) and Gani and Kurniawan (2021), who similarly reported the presence of embedded structures. Furthermore, the study also uncovered instances of new or less common move patterns, which align with the observations of Amnuai et al. (2020), who noted the emergence of innovative move sequences in research article abstracts.

The presence of embedded move patterns (e.g., I-P-M+Pr-C), where multiple rhetorical moves are combined into a single sentence or clause, raises questions about whether these patterns are used intentionally or are the result of inexperience. Their occurrence in abstracts written by novice writers may reflect both strategic and unintentional choices. On one hand, novice writers might embed moves to meet abstract word limits, aiming for conciseness. On the other hand, these patterns may result from limited awareness of distinct rhetorical functions, signalling a developmental stage in genre learning. As Hyland (2004) notes, genre mastery involves not just recognizing moves but understanding their communicative purposes. Thus, embedded structures may represent a transitional phase in academic writing proficiency.

The findings indicate that the Indonesian novice writers employ a variety of move models in their abstracts, suggesting a possibility that some authors may overlook the standardized rhetorical structure proposed by Arsyad (2014), who states that an abstract should consist of five distinct moves: introduction, purpose, method, findings/results, and

conclusion/suggestion. The variation in the results could be attributed to differences in academic disciplines, individual writing styles, or the conventions followed by specific academic institutions, as noted by Gani & Kurniawan (2021) and Herlyna et al. (2024).

In analyzing active and passive voice usage, active voice was significantly more prevalent, appearing in nearly all rhetorical moves. This aligns with findings from previous studies, which identified active voice as the preferred choice in research articles (Hakim et al., 2021; Kanafani et al., 2021; Muangsamai, 2018). However, the passive voice was notably frequent in the Method move, a trend consistent with observations by Tu and Wang (2013) and Hanidar (2016), who reported that passive voice is often favored for describing research methods across various fields. Banks (2017) explains that the primary rationale for using passive voice in scientific writing is its impersonal nature, allowing authors to emphasize the processes or procedures rather than the agents involved. Similarly, in this study, Indonesian novice writers avoided emphasizing the agent, focusing instead on detailing the methodology, how treatments were implemented, and how instruments were utilized.

In line with previous studies (e.g., Amnuai, 2019; Kurniawan & Sabila, 2021), the present tense was predominantly used across all rhetorical moves in the abstracts, contributing to a dynamic and active tone. This shift could be attributed to the authors' intention to make their research appear fresh and engaging to their readers (Amnuai et al., 2020). The past tense, on the other hand, was the second most frequently used, particularly in the Method move. Arsyad and Arono (2018) suggest that the Simple Past Tense is ideal for describing research procedures, as it conveys actions completed in the past. The perfect tense was also employed, mainly to establish the context, provide background information, and highlight the significance of the research (Amnuai et al., 2020). Conversely, the future tense appeared only once in the Product move, indicating that it is typically used to express expectations or predictions within the abstract (Irmawan, 2017). The rare use of future tense may stem from the function of abstracts themselves, which primarily summarize what has been done rather than what will be done. As Rohmiyati and Fatoni (2024) and Praminatih (2023) argue, future tense is not commonly found in abstracts because this section is designed to report completed research activities, not future intentions. Therefore, novice writers may naturally avoid using the future tense unless the study specifically discusses implications or directions for future work.

The variation in the use of tenses across the different rhetorical moves in the abstracts can be attributed to multiple factors. One significant contributing factor is the absence of grammatical tenses in the Indonesian language, which likely results in novice writers struggling to recognize the importance of tense usage in abstract writing (Astria et al., 2023). As a result, tenses in their writing may be inconsistent and dependent on their understanding of the language's structure. According to Tu and Wang (2013), the choice of tense in academic writing is often influenced by the specific functions tied to the sub-genre, which can differ across rhetorical moves. Furthermore, there is a lack of

comprehensive theoretical knowledge, a limited understanding of academic writing conventions, and insufficient English proficiency among novice writers (Hidayatullah & Hati, 2017). Thus, it can lead to confusion and inconsistent use of tenses, further complicating their ability to convey their research in English abstracts effectively.

Another key finding from this study is the distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers in the research article abstracts, which reveals important patterns in how Indonesian novice writers use these devices across different rhetorical moves. The study identified three of the five interactional resources proposed by Hyland (2018): hedges, boosters, and attitude markers. This finding aligns with the work of Amnuai et al. (2020), who also identified these three resources in their study across various rhetorical moves. However, engagement markers and self-mentions were not found in the present study.

The absence of engagement markers and self-mentions in the abstracts deserves further attention. While this may reflect adherence to guidelines that encourage objective and impersonal tone in academic writing (Gillaerts & Velde, 2010), it is also likely shaped by broader cultural and linguistic factors. The Indonesian academic writing style promotes objectivity and emphasizes that no personal pronouns should be involved, especially in formal writing such as research articles for publication (Firdaus et al., 2021). Cui (2021) also argued that the lack of self-mention markers is influenced by the author's culture and their proficiency and competitiveness to publish in international journals. Academic identity is expressed through the way writers position themselves in their texts, and since academic writing is socially and culturally situated, authors from different backgrounds write article abstract in distinct ways (Arinal Rahman et al., 2024). Another possible explanation is that the writers may lack the linguistic tools to express their viewpoints and establish a relationship with the readers (Zhang et al., 2012). Given these findings, it is important to incorporate instruction on using interactional metadiscourse devices in writing courses, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, to help students or novice writers enhance their academic writing skills.

6. Conclusion

Research article abstracts rely on rhetorical moves and linguistic features to effectively communicate findings to a wide audience. This study examined the rhetorical moves and linguistic choices in 25 English Language Teaching (ELT) abstracts by Indonesian novice writers, highlighting their writing practices and areas for improvement. The analysis revealed that Purpose and Product moves are mandatory, appearing in all abstracts, while Method (88%) and Conclusion (80%) moves are conventional, and Introduction (56%) moves are optional. The most common rhetorical pattern is the linear P-M-Pr-C (Purpose-Method-Product-Conclusion) structure, though some abstracts feature embedded moves (combining two moves in one sentence) or less common sequences, reflecting flexibility. However, deviations from standard structures suggest influences from individual styles or disciplinary norms.

Linguistically, active voice dominates across moves, conveying a direct tone, while passive voice is more frequent in Method moves to emphasize procedures. Present tense is prevalent, lending immediacy, whereas past tense is typical in Method moves to describe completed actions. Future and perfect tenses are rarely used. Interactional metadiscourse devices like hedges, boosters, and attitude markers are common, but engagement markers and self-mentions are absent, aligning with the objective style of academic abstracts. These findings illuminate the rhetorical and linguistic practices of Indonesian novice writers, offering insights to enhance their academic writing skills.

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