
Rhetorical Functions of Articles in SINTA Accredited Journal

Hanandyo Dardjito¹, Nicola Rolls², Estri Oktarena Ikrarini³, Midia Puspita Sari⁴, Anugerah Sam⁵

Universitas Sarjanawiyata Tamansiswa, Indonesia^{1,3,4,5}

Charles Darwin University, Australia²

Email Correspondence: hanandyo@ustjogja.ac.id

Abstract

Background:

In the past ten years or so, the publication of research journal articles in the Indonesian academic context has been steadily increasing. The expectation of publication outputs has increased since the Indonesian Government's Higher Education department issued a Circular Letter (No.152 / E / T / 2012) requiring research article writing for students of all levels as one of the graduation requirements. However, the publication of articles, especially in English-language journals, is a challenge for Indonesian authors since the expectation is that they need to be able to produce scientific papers that meet not only scientific rules but also linguistic rules in English. This study aims to examine the function of rhetorical moves in English journal articles published in SINTA-accredited journals. The part of the article to be analysed is the Introduction section, which provides general information about the research and allows the readers to see the context of the research. The central role is conveyed effectively by having a series of sentences bearing the typical rhetoric function.

Methodology:

The data comprised the sentences that made up the introduction section and encompassed the typical rhetorical functions for an introduction. The data sample of this study was taken from articles in the SINTA-accredited journals Level 2 and written in English by authors from non-English-language disciplines. This study took twelve randomly selected journals in the SINTA-accredited journals Level 2 and then two articles were randomly selected from each journal with a total number of twelve articles. The articles were limited to publication in 2020 and 2021. The data were collected and analysed using an instrument identifying the rhetorical functions adapted from Swales and Feak (1994). The textuality of the data was examined using an instrument adapted from De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981). Two assessors analysed the articles and synchronized the rating scale.

Findings:

This study looks at what rhetorical functions were used, and the textuality of the rhetorical functions used in the Introduction to articles written and published in SINTA-accredited journals level 2. "Indicating the Structure of the Research Paper" and "Announcing Principal Findings" were the least two rhetorical functions stated by the authors in the Introduction section. Two articles in this study fulfilled the textuality components. By contrast, one article failed to fulfil this text type's most standard structural component (genre).

Conclusion:

Writing journal articles in English is a significant challenge for authors with an English as a foreign language (EFL) background. Limitations in writers' language proficiency, academic language mastery, academic writing convention, and mechanics awareness (which include rhetorical functions and textuality) might detract from their content writing competence and the important contributions their papers may make to the field.

Originality:

While a number of studies have analysed the rhetorical functions of postgraduate theses, journal articles, and thesis abstracts in English written by non-native English speakers, research on journal articles by Indonesian journal publishers is limited.

Keywords : Academic publications; English as a foreign language; journal articles; rhetoric functions, text-linguistics

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.24903/sj.v8i1.1185>

Received : January 2023

Accepted : April 2023

Published : April 2023

How to cite this article (APA)	: Dardjito, H., Rolls, N., Ikrarini, E.O., Sari, M.P., & Sam, A. (2023). Rhetorical Functions of Articles in SINTA Accredited Journal. <i>Script Journal: Journal of Linguistics and English Teaching</i> , 8(1), 16-29. https://doi.org/10.24903/sj.v8i1.1185
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1. INTRODUCTION

Research and publications of the Indonesian research society have increased in the past 10 years. The Higher Education Policy through Circular Letter No.152/E/T/2012 requires article writing to be one of the graduation requirements for students at all levels and further encourages the acceleration of the quantity of Indonesian scientific publications (*Surat Edaran Dirjen DIKTI No.152/E/T/2012 Tentang Publikasi Karya Ilmiah, 2012*). While government policies, such as this one, are likely to boost the growth in the quantity of these publications it is necessary to consider the quality of publications and ways to enhance this.

From the results of preliminary observations, it was found that the writing of the Introduction section of English-language articles by researchers and authors of journal articles has not effectively used the known rhetorical functions for an introduction in scientific writing (i.e. the inclusion of the following stages: background of previous research, show the position of authors research, present the research problems, and outline the structure of his writing). This study found that the use of these rhetorical functions is still very limited and consequently, the requirements of an Introduction section to ‘establish the purpose and foreground the discussion to follow’, was not achieved, thus, obscuring the logical flow of scientific writing. Improving writers’ ability to fulfil these requirements of the genre will assist them to convey ideas more effectively. These issues with journal writing were identified in certain journals indexed by the Science and Technology Index (SINTA) of the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology, Indonesia. The Science and Technology Index (SINTA) is a Web-based research information system which provides access to journals in Indonesia.

It is important to note that these issues are not only the case for Indonesian writers who write journal articles in English but also occur in other countries that recognize English as a foreign/additional language. The realization that part of the text has a certain function still needs to be developed because perhaps the authors are more fixated on language translation alone and pay less attention to other functions in writing (Alyousef & Ahmed Alzahrani, 2020; Arsyad et al., 2021; Tovar-Viera, 2019) especially the rhetorical functions. Hereafter, the

authors' challenges are not only on language proficiency but also on the structure of the text especially the rhetorical functions within each section of the text.

Research regarding the article writing of EFL academics indicates that many authors do not use the Introduction section to show the existence of gaps in knowledge to give the reader an idea of the stand or position of the research being carried out on the previous research. Consequently, ideas in the discussion/findings section have less contextual relevance, and their significance may be underrepresented. Additionally, failure to provide a summary in the Introduction of the points to be covered in the article impacts the clarity, coherence, and unity of ideas for the reader (Hong, 2019). The absence of gaps in the introduction section gives the readers no clue of the research contribution to the knowledge or novelty.

Additionally, explicit links between the introduction and the discussion section have also been found to be faulty in EFL writer's journal writing in Indonesia. Previous research on the challenge of Indonesian authors in writing English-language journal articles found that there was often no link between Introduction and Discussion because the references were not quite relevant and could not be used appropriately (Arsyad et al., 2020, 2021). The study looked at writing from international journals with Indonesian authors. However, research on English-language journals written by Indonesian authors in SINTA-accredited journals has not been widely studied, to the knowledge of the authors of this article.

Journal article writing as part of academic writing has a distinctive text writing structure as requested by each publishing journal. However, despite superficial differences in requirements across journals, there are key conventions of the genre that journal articles share regarding the type of text structure and pattern of writing journal articles that comply with scientific conventions. The acceptable writing structure generally consists of an Introduction, Methodology, Results/findings, and Discussion (Liso, 2020; Tabuena, 2020; Trinh et al., 2020). Although Swales and Feak (1994) present the order of the structure differently, the suggested structure's meaning remains the same. Furthermore, within each of these structures, rhetorical functions are recommended to be used because the text in those structures has a certain function (Fang, 2021; Swales & Feak, 1994) and aims to convey research ideas or ideas more effectively.

The author develops the writing of journal articles in such a way as to create a text so that it can be understood by the readers. How the authors communicate their ideas can be identified from their writing text. Some techniques are available in analysing the text data qualitatively, such as Discourse Analysis and Text Linguistics. Both look at communication systems in spoken or written form. Paltridge (2012) and Gee (2017) explain that discourse

analysis studies language and society and the cultural context in which the language is spoken or written. Text linguistics focuses more on the structure of the texts (De Beaugrande & Dressler, 1981; Giuffrè, 2017). Further, text linguistics highlights that text conveys the whole meaning to the readers (Karabacak, 2021). Our research applies Text linguistics because it looks at the authors' ways of structuring their ideas in their writing and the cohesion and coherence of the text to convey meaning.

Our research context considers that the journal authors in this study used language that did not come from their culture and language that may not be used in their daily environment. Additionally, the authors are in the same society as many of their readers, namely the academic community in Indonesia. This context generates obstacles in both the delivery by the authors and the receiving of ideas by the readers (Paltridge, 2018). Thus, how the authors communicate their ideas in this context may impact the production and contribution of knowledge in the academic field.

This study randomly selected articles from journals accredited SINTA as Level 2 and analysed the introduction section by applying a Rhetorical Approach, recognized as moves by Swales and Freaks (1994), and Text Linguistics, by applying the Textuality of De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981), to examine the use of the rhetorical functions and the textuality of the article, respectively. The data indicated that all selected articles provided the study's importance, but very few wrote the principal findings in their introduction section.

In the discussion of rhetoric function in the introductory part of a journal article, it is widely recognized that the function of rhetoric is to establish research areas (establishing a research territory), establish gaps in knowledge (establishing a niche), and close gaps of knowledge (occupying the niche) (Swales & Feak, 1994, pp. 173–179). Many studies on the writing of English-language manuscript indicates writing journal articles is a serious challenge for researchers, let alone novice researchers in the EFL context, to put this knowledge of required text structures into practice. (Ebadi et al., 2019; Hong, 2019; Solikhah, 2016; Tabuena, 2020; Ye, 2019).

Previous research has looked at variations in the way journal article authors report and disseminate their research through journals using English to reach international audiences. This is a challenge for authors with English as a foreign or additional language. They convey their text with diverse rhetorical functions, and there are rhetorical functions that are not used (Amnuai, 2019; Ebadi et al., 2019). Although previous studies suggest variation in composing rhetorical functions, the research focusing solely on the introduction section is limited. As

previously stated, the “Introduction session” has an important role in writing journal articles because in this section, the author sets up the readers' expectations of the key ideas and structure of these as well as the purpose and value of the text. In this way, the introduction is expected to attract readers' interest, explain the background of previous research, show the position of research that is being carried out among previous research, present research problems, and outline the structure of their writing. Thus, this study examined the use of rhetorical functions and textuality, especially in the introduction section, in SINTA Level 2 journals. The methods and findings will be described before discussing the significance of these findings for revealing specific issues with academic article writing proficiency amongst authors in Indonesia. The research questions of this study are:

1. How do the authors apply rhetorical functions in the introduction section of SINTA Level 2 journal articles?
2. How do the authors comply with the textuality of the sentences in the introduction section of SINTA Level 2 journal articles?

2. METHODOLOGY

This study comprises a rhetorical function stage and a textuality stage which answer the first and second research questions respectively. The data of this study are comprised of the introduction sections in the articles taken from English-language journal articles accredited SINTA (Science and Technology Index) Level 2 by the Directorate General of Higher Education, Research, and Technology, Indonesia. These were drawn from a range of fields including theology, pediatric, agriculture, math education, culture, and economics. The articles were selected randomly out of 974 journals. Six journals were randomly nominated, and twelve articles were intermittently selected from them. The journals are in the publication dates of 2020 and 2021, the most current years of the data collection date. Two articles were picked from each field not necessarily from the same years of publication as they were randomly selected out of the two years of publication.

Article, journal, and author anonymity was maintained by limiting access to the data set to research team members. The selected journal articles were then coded so that only the research team could recognize them. The sentences in the Introduction section were identified by the research team and sorted in regard with the rhetorical functions of [Swales and Freaks \(1994\)](#), and analysed by using an instrument of rhetorical functions developed adapting Swales and Freaks' rhetorical functions as described below.

2.1. Rhetorical Functions Stage

The rhetorical functions, recognized as moves by Swales and Freaks (1994), were applied. The data were categorized into these rhetorical functions, which comprised 3 moves (Move 1 Establishing a territory, Move 2 Establishing a niche, Move 3 Occupying the niche). These rhetoric functions/moves were applied to examine the use of rhetorical functions, especially in the introduction section, in the selected SINTA Level 2 journals. As illustrated in Table 1, the instrument of this research applied these rhetorical functions.

Table 1 The instrument of rhetorical functions (adapted from Swales and Freaks (1994))

Introduction - rhetoric function/moves	Number of articles applying the moves
1. Move 1 Establishing a territory	
a. Showing that the research is important/central/ interesting/relevant	
b. Reviewing previous research	
2. Move 2 Establishing a niche	
a. Indicating a gap in the previous research	
3. Move 3 Occupying the niche	
a. Outlining purposes of the research	
b. Announcing principal findings	
c. Indicating the structure of the research paper	
TOTAL SENTENCES/PERCENTAGES	

2.2. Textuality Stage

The textuality of the introduction sections was analysed by applying seven standards of textuality: cohesion; coherence; intentionality and acceptability; informativity; situationality; and intertextuality. These are defined by De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981) as:

- Cohesion: The function of syntax and how it connects to each other.
- Coherence: The linkage between the concepts
- Intentionality and Acceptability: Intentionality: The notion of intention across the disciplines. Acceptability. Relationships between acceptability and grammaticality.
- Informativity: Attention. Information theory. Statistical versus contextual probability.
- Situationality: Situation models. Mediation and evidence. Monitoring versus managing.

Intertextuality: Text types versus linguistic typology. Functional definitions: descriptive, narrative, and argumentative texts; literary and poetic texts; scientific and didactic texts. Using and referring to well-known texts.

The standard of textuality was adapted into an instrument as seen in Table 2.

Table 2 Rating scale of textuality (adapted from De Beaugrande and Dressler (1981))

No	Article Code	Textuality Item	Rating scale of textuality		
			Yes	Partially	No
		cohesion			
		coherence			
		intentionality			
		acceptability			
		informativity			
		situationality			
		intertextuality			
TOTAL			0	0	0

The journal articles were rated separately and individually by two members of this research using the rating instrument illustrated in Table 2. These two members then synchronized their rating by having a discussion as a result there was only one rating for one article.

3. FINDINGS

This section presents the findings of this research in response to the research questions. The overall rhetorical functions are displayed in Chart 1 while each rhetorical function is presented separately in Table 3 to 5, and the textuality of the articles is presented in Table 6.

3.1. Rhetorical Functions

The findings of rhetorical functions indicate that the authors used limited rhetorical functions from the Swales and Freaks (1994) suggested functions. Chart 1 illustrates the complete functions used by the authors.

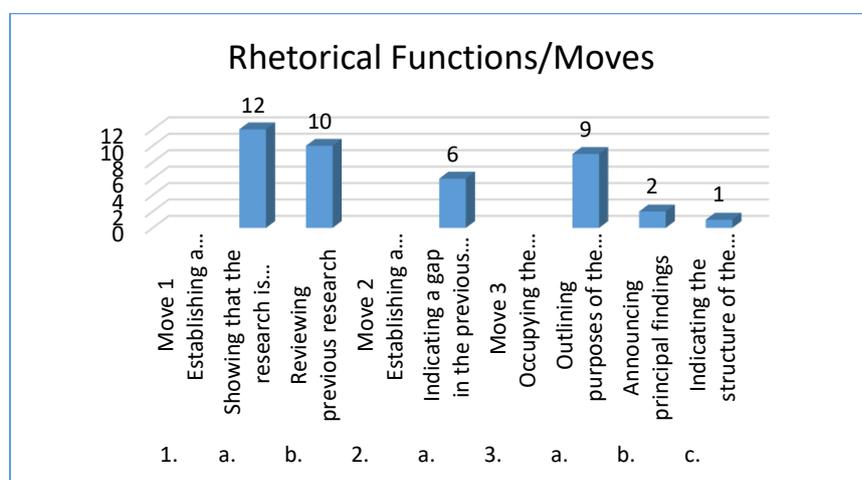


Chart 1 Overall Rhetorical Functions/Moves

As seen in Chart 1, Move 1a – “Showing that the research is important” was included in all twelve articles selected for this research. By contrast, Move 3c – “Indicating the structure of the research paper” was included in only one out of twelve articles.

The following section discusses more details of each rhetorical function and, for ease of reference, Table 3 displays the rhetorical function of “Establishing a territory” which suggests “the importance of the research” and “reviews the previous studies”. All articles (twelve articles) selected for this research indicated that they included “Showing that the research is important” but only ten articles included the “Reviewing previous research” function in their introduction sections. Authors are recommended to write their research importance in their introduction to inform the readers of the expected achievement of the research and why it is relevant. The authors need to convince readers that the research will contribute to the body of knowledge.

Table 3. Articles which apply establishing a territory

		Number of articles applying the moves
1.	Move 1 Establishing a territory	
a.	Showing that the research is important/central/ interesting/relevant	12
b.	Reviewing previous research	10

Table 3 shows Move 1 in establishing the research territory. This move comprises the rhetorical function of showing the research's importance and reviewing previous research which are identified twelve and ten articles respectively. As there were a total of twelve articles selected, it indicates that all the selected articles include the function of showing the research importance. This function is intended to inform the readers that the research topic has a currency context to be studied and potentially contribute to the body of knowledge.

Table 4 displays the rhetorical function of establishing a niche which claims the gap to be studied. Gap in the body of knowledge should be stated clearly because the research main purpose is to fill in the gap. The research novelty is identified in the gap filling of the ongoing research.

Table 4. Articles that apply establishing a niche

		Number of articles applying the moves
2.	Move 2 Establishing a niche	
a.	Indicating a gap in the previous research	6

The next move is occupying the niche (Move 3) which outlines the aim of the research, announces principal findings, and indicates the structure of the research paper. Table 5 shows the articles that comprise this function in their introduction.

Table 5. Articles that apply occupying the niche

		Number of articles applying the moves
3.	Move 3 Occupying the niche	
a.	Outlining purposes of the research	9
b.	Announcing principal findings	2
c.	Indicating the structure of the research paper	1

Table 5 shows that the majority selected articles outline their research purpose; however, very limited selected articles announce their main findings, or indicate the paper structure. The presence of these rhetorical functions provides explicit information about the research paper to assist the readers in following the logic and organisation of the paper and, in this way anticipate the ideas ahead reducing the readers' cognitive load. Without them, the readers need to take longer to glean the meanings conveyed implicitly through the way we organise ideas in a text (Rose, 2018; Rose & Martin, 2012). Further, the absence of these features is contrary to the accepted conventions for the academic journal article genre.

3.2. Textuality

The textuality of the articles suggests how the authors present their articles. Textuality comprises cohesion, coherence, intentionality, acceptability, informativity, situationally, intertextuality. Each item of the textuality scored one (1) when the article indicated the fulfilment of the textuality item. Two raters were involved in rating the textuality. It implies that the maximum rate of each article would be seven (7). Table 6 displays the rating of the articles as the synchronized rate from the two raters.

Table 6 Textuality of the Articles

No	Article Code	Rating scale of textuality		
		Yes	Partially	No
1	1466	0	3	4
2	1790	4	3	0
3	2420	4	3	0
4	2503	7	0	0
5	5265	1	2	4
6	11724	4	3	0
7	12083	6	1	0
8	12863	7	0	0
9	13690	4	3	0
10	37514	4	3	0
11	42831	4	3	0
12	44653	3	4	0

The synchronous rating of the article textuality indicates that two articles (2503 and 12863) were rated 7, meaning these articles fulfil the textuality components. On the other hand, one article (1466) failed to fulfil most of the textuality components.

4. DISCUSSION

Notably, Move 1 “Establishing a territory” was the Introduction component most consistently fulfilled by the articles analysed. This move comprises “Showing that the research is important” and “Reviewing previous research”. It requires the writer to review previous research in order to provide the readers with context and a map of the proposed research’s position in relation to previous research. As illustrated in Table 4, ten out of twelve articles included a review of the previous research. This function is also important because by orientating the readers need to the broader research topic assist the reader to align the new research with existing knowledge/schema they possess about the topic and thus more effectively comprehend new information presented (Rolls & Wignell, 2018). This function also leads into the establishment of the research gap which in turn signals the central purpose of the study being described. Further, when the article authors fail to show the literature review and the gap, the novelty and contribution of the research to knowledge development is not clearly conveyed thus, detracting from the credibility and value of the article. Given this function’s important role, it was reassuring to note that the large majority of the papers provided this component. The question is whether this positive inclusion is outweighed by the effect of the absence of other important rhetorical functions on the clarity of meaning conveyed in the articles.

Move 2, establishing a niche, informs the readers about the research gap of the previous research. It is an important part of the introduction section because readers expect to identify the knowledge gap which the recent research has filled. Among the twelve selected articles, only six articles established the niche. This suggests that half of the selected articles' authors were unaware of the pivotal function of establishing the niche in their introduction section. The absence of this function causes weak arguments throughout the paper because this central niche point is should provide a “backbone/reference point” for the rest of the paper’s arguments and, by implication its structure. This finding is in accordance with [Arsyad et al. \(2020, 2021\)](#) who found that only half of Indonesian authors wrote the rhetorical function of establishing the niche and limited use of typical moves in their introduction.

Move 3, occupying the niche, was found very limited in this study. Not many authors in the data sample declared their main findings in the introduction. The finding is matched with [Arsyad et al.\(2020\)](#) who found that only 10% of the articles announced the principle findings. This is different from the findings of [Badib and Sutopo \(2012\)](#) who found that most authors (17 out of 20) included Move 3 in their introduction section. The consequence of this omission for the clarity of meaning in an academic article relates to both the persuasiveness of the article – clarifying arguments and findings to justifying up front, as well as assisting readers comprehension by previewing the main ideas before they begin to tackle the detail within the body of the text.

The textuality of the articles indicates the flow of ideas which enhances comprehension and readability by making explicit the relationship of ideas with one another. The textuality rates in Table 6 shows only two articles reached the rate of seven, one article got the rate of six. It implies that the textuality was a tension for the authors of English as a foreign language. The language mastery challenged the textuality, which limited the authors’ academic language expressions and strategies. Some previous studies identified this phenomenon, for example [Mohamad et al. \(2022\)](#) and [Oraviṭan et al. \(2022\)](#). Textuality might be caused by the authors English proficiency and the awareness of academic writing convention ([Ahmad, 2022](#); [Amnuai, 2019](#); [Fang, 2021](#); [Solikhah, 2016](#)).

5. CONCLUSION

Journals apply a generic structure for each part of their manuscript. In this recent study, the typical generic features of the introduction were examined in recognition of the key role the Introduction plays in. conveying the organisation of ideas in the article and thus foregrounding important meanings in the text to follow while at the same time. Additionally,

the main arguments and outline of ideas to be discussed provided in the Introduction facilitates authors to organize their ideas logically and clearly in keeping with the structure ‘promised’ in the introduction.

According to Swales and Feak (1994) the introduction section of a journal article normally consists of Move 1 Establishing a territory, Move 2 Establishing a niche, and Move 3 Occupying the niche. Complying with this structure might be less challenging than managing the expectations of textuality in the article because the rhetorical functions as the elements of the structure are generic requirements. On the other hand, textuality of the rhetorical functions may be more challenging for some authors from English as a foreign language setting who may lack adequate Academic English literacy. This study analysed only a few articles from SINTA level 2 from the following disciplines: theology, paediatric, agriculture, math education, culture, and economics. Taking more articles from various levels of SINTA journals would be helpful to establish how consistently these patterns exist and whether there are differences according to disciplines. Additionally, it would be interesting to conduct a second-level analysis of the body text from this study’s samples to demonstrate the impact omissions in the Introductions have on the organisation, clarity, and logic of ideas in the text. The authors strategy to write this journal article in English will be a worthy contribution to the knowledge of academic writing, providing information on the learning and acquisition process of academic writing and (English) academic language.

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