

CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Study

Writing is an important part of the academic journey, especially for students who are required to prepare a thesis as a graduation requirement.¹ Undergraduate students' theses is the final product of the learning process that shows students' ability to conduct research, apply theory, and make scientific contributions.² Among the various chapters in the undergraduate theses, the introductory chapter holds a crucial role because it shapes the reader's initial understanding of the topic and the direction of the research.³ However, many students face difficulties in writing the introduction section of their undergraduate students' theses, especially in organizing ideas, presenting background information, and justifying the significance of their topic. These challenges often lead to unclear research direction and weak argumentation.

In Islam, seeking and preserving knowledge are highly emphasized. As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, *قَيِّدُوا الْعِلْمَ بِالْكِتَابِ* “*Tie knowledge by writing it down*” – HR. Al-Khatib Al-Baghdadi. This hadith underscores the importance of writing as a means to preserve and convey knowledge. Furthermore, the Qur'an states:

ن وَالْقَلَمِ وَمَا يَسْطُرُونَ

“*Nun. By the pen and what theywrite.*” (QS. Al-Qalam: 1).

¹ K Alostath, “Graduate Students’ Challenges in Academic Writing,” *A Thesis Proposal*, no. November (2021).

² Joanna Gilmore et al., “The Relationship between Undergraduate Research Participation and Subsequent Research Performance of Early Career STEM Graduate Students,” *Journal of Higher Education* 86, no. 6 (2015): 834–863.

³ European Commission, “Coaching and Online LET Refresher Course for LET Takers: Responding to the Challenges of the Normal” 4, no. 1 (2016): 1–23.

This verse affirms the sacredness of writing, highlighting that the act of writing is not merely a practical tool, but a divine means of preserving and spreading knowledge. According to Tafsir Ibn Kathir, this verse shows the high position of writing in the sight of Allah SWT, because through writing, knowledge can be maintained and disseminated.⁴ In the academic context, writing is not only a scientific task, but also part of worship and scientific da'wah that aligns with Islamic values. Therefore, mastering academic writing, particularly in constructing a coherent and persuasive introduction, becomes a crucial step for students in completing their undergraduate thesis effectively.⁵

Academic writing also requires a structured approach. One of the most widely recognized frameworks is the rhetorical model proposed by Swales (1990). The introductory chapter in the undergraduate students' theses must be composed clearly, logically, and convincingly to explain the background, identify the research gaps (gaps), and state objectives.⁶ But in reality, many students have difficulty composing a good introduction because they lack a good understanding of the rhetorical structure in academic writing. Swales (1990) offers a rhetorical model known as *Create a Research Space (CARS)* which consists of three steps: (1) establishing a research territory, (2) identifying a niche, and (3) occupying the niche.⁷ Swales' model offers a

⁴ Muzakkir Fuad et al., "Charismatic Ulama in the Perspective of the Qur ' an : An Analysis of Surah Fatir (Verse 28) and Surah Al-Anbiya (Verse 7) Based on Tafsir Al-Misbah" 6, no. 1 (2025): 15–21.

⁵ Ruth Dewi Indrian and Priyatno Ardi, "Rhetorical Structures of English-Major Undergraduate Thesis Introduction Chapters," *Indonesian Journal of EFL and Linguistics* 4, no. 2 (2019): 195.

⁶ Ulil Fitriyah, "Rhetorical Moves in Thesis Introduction Written By English Major Students," *Paradigm: Journal of Language and Literary Studies* 3, no. 2 (2020): 119–132.

⁷ J. M. (1990). *Create a Research Space (CARS) Model of Research*. Swales, "Scholar (2)," n.d.

structured way to help students develop a logical and meaningful introduction by guiding them through a sequence of rhetorical moves.⁸

Although much research has been conducted on rhetorical moves in academic writing, especially in journal articles, little attention has been given to the structure of introduction in undergraduate theses at Islamic universities. Most previous studies have focused on international journals or general public universities. Therefore, there is a gap in understanding how rhetorical structures are applied in the context of Islamic academic writing.

Based on the results of pre-observation conducted on 15 undergraduate thesis students of the English Education Study Program of UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten (from 2021 to 2023), several issues were found in the way students write their introductions. The analysis revealed that students often include general background statements (*Move 1*), but fail to explicitly identify a research gap (*Move 2*), or do so only implicitly. Some even state the research objective (*Move 3*) too early, before providing sufficient context or rationale. Furthermore, academic references are rarely used, and the paragraph structure tends to lack logical flow, making it difficult for readers to follow the argument.

In some undergraduate thesis, the research objective is written directly at the beginning of the paragraph without an introductory narrative explaining the context and background first. The use of academic references and previous research is very minimal. Students rarely include previous studies to build the background of the problem, even though these references are important in strengthening the foundation of the problem and showing the existence of a research gap. Paragraph structure is illogical and tends to jump around. Some undergraduate students' theses arrange paragraphs randomly

⁸ Hui Geng et al., "Rhetorical Moves of Introduction Sections in English Linguistics Research Articles From Two Non-Scopus and Two Scopus Journals," *Theory and Practice in Language Studies* 13, no. 8 (2023): 2087–2096.

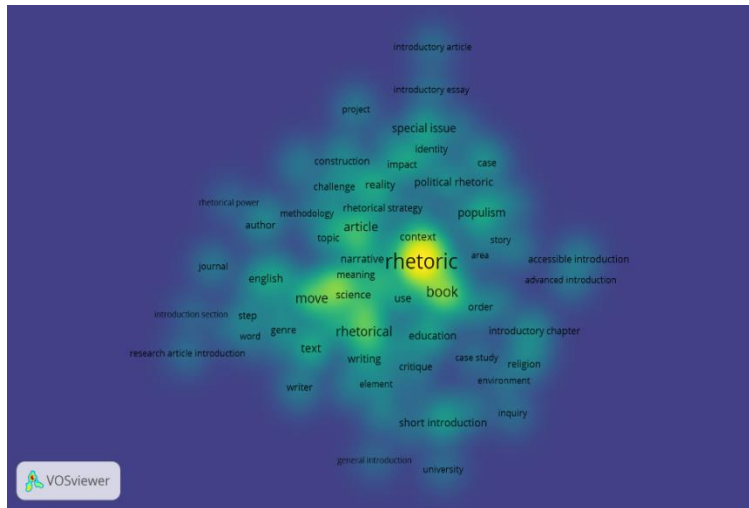


Figure 1. 2Vos viewers (Density Visualization)

To support this study, a bibliometric analysis was conducted using VOS viewer to map the research trends related to rhetorical moves in academic writing. The visualization revealed that the term such as *rhetoric*, *move*, *genre*, *rhetorical*, *text*, *writing*, and *introduction section* are highly interconnected, emphasizing the continued importance of rhetorical moves studies in academic discourse. However, the application of these concepts to undergraduate theses, particularly in Islamic institutions, remains underexplored – underscoring the relevance and urgency of this research.

This research is unique in that it specifically focuses on the rhetorical moves found in the introduction section of undergraduate theses written by students in the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. While previous studies have often analysed academic writing more broadly or focused on journal articles, this study narrows its scope to undergraduate thesis introductions, applying Swales' CARS model to uncover the rhetorical strategies students use to construct academic introductions. This focused approach aims to provide

deeper insights into the actual writing practices and potential gaps in students' understanding of genre conventions at the undergraduate level

B. Identification of problems

Students of English Education Department face challenges in composing the introduction sections of their undergraduate students' theses systematically and effectively. Their primary difficulties include a limited understanding of rhetorical move structures, difficulty in articulating research gaps, and insufficient use of appropriate academic language. These issues lead to poorly structured introductions that lack clarity, coherence, and academic rigor, which affects the overall quality of their theses. Consequently, the credibility and coherence of the theses may be compromised.

Despite a growing body of research on rhetorical moves in academic writing, students still struggle to effectively structure the introduction sections of their theses. Previous studies (Indrian & Ardi, 2019; Rochma, Triastuti, & Ashadi, 2020) have indicated that students frequently omit or misapply key rhetorical moves, particularly *Move 2 (Establishing a Niche)*, which is essential for articulating the research gap.

Observations at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten reveal that students often fail to construct well-structured introductions. Common problems include a lack of coherence, failure to explicitly define the niche, and inadequate justification of the research objectives. These issues are particularly significant in Islamic universities, where students are expected to integrate academic writing with Islamic perspectives, which adds a layer of complexity to the writing process.

Given these challenges, this study aims to analyse how students in the English Education Department apply rhetorical moves in their undergraduate thesis introductions. Specifically, the study seeks to identify common

patterns, assess adherence to the Create a Research Space (CARS) model, and propose strategies for improving academic writing instruction at Islamic higher education institutions.

C. Focus of Study

The focus of this study is to analyse the rhetorical move structures used in the introduction sections of undergraduate theses written by students in the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. The study specifically investigates the extent to which students apply Swales' Create a Research Space (CARS) model, and identifies the common rhetorical patterns, challenges, and mistakes they encounter in organizing their introduction chapters

D. Statement of the Problem

1. What are the common rhetorical moves employed in the introduction section of undergraduate students' theses written by students in the English Education Department at UIN Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten?
2. What challenges do students face in applying rhetorical moves in writing the introduction sections of their undergraduate students' theses?
3. What kinds of mistakes are made by the students of the English Education Department in implementing rhetorical move in writing the introduction sections of their undergraduate students' theses?

E. Objective of the Problem

1. To analyse the common rhetorical moves employed in the introduction sections of undergraduate students' thesis written by students in the English Education Department.
2. To identify the challenges faced by students in applying rhetorical moves when writing the introduction sections of their undergraduate students' theses.

3. To examine the types of errors made by students in implementing rhetorical moves in the introduction sections of their undergraduate students' theses

F. Significance of the Research

This study holds both theoretical and practical significance, as outlined below:

1. Theoretical Significance

- Contributes to the body of knowledge on rhetorical move analysis, especially in the context of undergraduate thesis writing.
- Identifies structural patterns, strengths, and recurring challenges in students' academic introductions.
- Enhances the understanding of how rhetorical structures (such as Swales' CARS model) are applied in undergraduate theses.
- Provides empirical evidence that may inform further research in discourse analysis and applied linguistics.

2. Practical Significance

For Students:

- Helps students understand and apply rhetorical moves in structuring a coherent and academically sound thesis introduction.
- Encourages critical awareness of academic writing conventions and improves overall writing proficiency.

For Educators:

- Offers insights into common student difficulties in introduction writing.
- Supports the development of targeted instructional strategies to address specific rhetorical and organizational issues.

For Curriculum Developers:

- Provides a basis for integrating rhetorical move analysis into academic writing courses.

- Encourages systematic guidance in composing thesis introductions that align with academic standards and expectations.

For Islamic Higher Education Institutions:

- Bridges the gap between students' actual writing practices and established academic norms.
- Enhances the quality of academic writing that reflects both scholarly rigor and Islamic values.

G. Previous Studies

There are many articles discussing on rhetorical moves; some of them are as follow: *First*, an article written by Geng, H., Lee, G. I., Jalaluddin, I., & Tan, H. (2023) entitle, "*Rhetorical Moves of Introduction Sections in English Linguistics Research Articles: A Comparative Study between Scopus and Non-Scopus Journals.*" This study analyses the rhetorical patterns in the introduction of linguistic research articles published in Scopus and non-Scopus indexed journals. The results show differences in the use of rhetorical steps between the two types of journals⁹.

Second, an article written by Rochma, A. F., Triastuti, A., & Ashadi. (2020) entitle, "*Rhetorical Styles of Introduction in English Language Teaching (ELT) Research Articles.*" This study examines the style of rhetoric in the introduction of research articles written by English language education students. The findings suggest that some of the steps in the CARS model are not fully used by student authors, which may affect the quality of their introductions¹⁰.

Third, an article written by Indrian, R. D., & Ardi, P. (2019) entitle, "*Rhetorical Structures of English-Major Undergraduate Thesis Introduction*

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Anis Firdatul Rochma, Triastuti Anita, and Ashadi, "Rhetorical Styles of Introduction in English Language Teaching (ELT) Research Articles," *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics* 10, no. 2 (2020): 304–314.

Chapters." This study explores the structure of rhetoric in the introductory chapter of the thesis of English majoring students. The results indicate that students often experience difficulties in implementing effective rhetorical measures, especially in establishing research gaps and clearly stating research objectives¹¹.

Fourth, an article written by Arsyad, S., et al. (2023) entitle, "*The Rhetorical Structure and Research Gap Strategies in Journal Article Abstracts in Language-Related Fields Published in High-Impact International Journals.*" Despite the focus on abstracts, the study provides insight into how the authors identify and state research gaps, which are an important component of the article's introduction¹².

Fifth, an article written by Karmila, & Laila, M. (2020) entitle, "*Rhetorical Moves of Abstracts: Investigating Abstracts Thesis of English Education Department Students in Surakarta.*" This study examined the structure of rhetoric in the thesis abstract of English education students, finding that some rhetorical steps are not used consistently, which can affect the clarity and effectiveness of the abstract¹³.

In Indonesia, several studies have been conducted to analyse rhetorical moves in various academic contexts. For example, a study by Rochma, Triastuti, & Ashadi (2020) examined the use of rhetorical moves in student journal articles at public universities, and found that Move 2 is often overlooked by novice authors¹⁴. Meanwhile, research by Arsyad et al. (2023)

¹¹ Indrian and Ardi, "Rhetorical Structures of English-Major Undergraduate Thesis Introduction Chapters."

¹² Safnil Arsyad et al., "The Rhetorical Structure and Research Gap Strategies of Journal Article Abstracts in Language-Related Fields Published in High-Impact International Journals," *learn Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network* 16, no. 1 (2023): 703–725.

¹³ Karmila Karmila and Malikatul Laila, "Rhetorical Moves of Abstracts: Investigating Abstracts Thesis of English Education Department Students in Surakarta," *Jurnal Penelitian Humaniora* 21, no. 2 (2020): 120–127.

¹⁴ Rochma, Anita, and Ashadi, "Rhetorical Styles of Introduction in English Language Teaching (ELT) Research Articles."

found that many student journal articles have not met academic standards in the structure of *the Introduction*, especially in strengthening research arguments¹⁵. This study continues previous studies with a focus on Islamic universities, which are still rarely the object of study in rhetorical moves analysis."

Previous studies on rhetorical moves in academic writing have demonstrated variations in the application of rhetorical structures across different disciplines and contexts. Hyland (2004) and Swales (1990) have emphasized the importance of structuring introductions using well-defined rhetorical moves to enhance clarity and persuasiveness. Studies by Adnan and Amnuai & Wannaruk (2019) have shown that academic fields such as engineering and applied sciences exhibit distinct rhetorical patterns compared to humanities and social sciences.

Research in Indonesia, such as that by Rochma, Triastuti, & Ashadi (2020), has indicated that student-authored research articles often lack a complete application of the Create a Research Space (CARS) model, with Move 2 (Establishing a Niche) being frequently omitted. Similarly, Indrian & Ardi (2019) found that undergraduate students struggle with articulating research gaps, leading to weakly structured introductions. Arsyad et al. (2023) further reinforced this by analysing the rhetorical structures in Indonesian journal article abstracts, revealing inconsistencies in research gap identification strategies.

Despite these findings, limited research has specifically investigated rhetorical moves in research journal articles produced by students at Islamic universities in Indonesia. Most prior studies have focused on research articles from general universities or international journals, overlooking how students in religious-based institutions structure their introductions.

¹⁵ Arsyad et al., "The Rhetorical Structure and Research Gap Strategies of Journal Article Abstracts in Language-Related Fields Published in High-Impact International Journals."

Therefore, this study aims to bridge this gap by analysing the rhetorical moves in the introduction sections of undergraduate theses written by students in the English Education Department at the State Islamic University of Sultan Maulana Hasanuddin Banten. By comparing student writing with established rhetorical frameworks, this research seeks to identify common challenges and propose pedagogical strategies to improve academic writing instruction in Indonesian Islamic higher education.

H. The Organization of Writing

Chapter I : Introduction; This chapter Presents the background of the study, identification of the problems, research questions, objectives, scope and limitations, significance of the study, and definition of key terms.

Chapter II :Theoretical Framework; This chapter discusses the underlying theories of the research, including the concept of rhetorical moves, Swales' (1990) Create A Research Space (CARS) model, academic writing principles, rhetorical flow and organization, and previous related studies.

Chapter III :Research Methodology; This chapter explains the research design, data and data sources, research instruments, data collection procedures, data analysis procedures, and data validity applied in this study.

Chapter IV :Findings and Discussion; This chapter presents the findings of the analysis based on the data collected from undergraduate theses. It discusses the realization of rhetorical moves, the challenges faced by students, and the types of mistakes made in writing the introduction section, followed by detailed discussion supported by relevant theories

Chapter V: Conclusion and Suggestion; This chapter provides the conclusions drawn from the findings of the study, as well as suggestions for students, lecturers, and future researchers regarding the improvement of academic writing, particularly in applying rhetorical moves in thesis introductions.