

**STUDENTS' WRITING BACKGROUND OF PROBLEM OF THESIS
PROPOSAL AT ENGLISH DEPARTMENT OF UNIVERSITAS MUSLIM
NUSANTARA AL - WASHLIYAH MEDAN: An Analysis of Rhetorical
Structure and Students' Ability**

THESIS

*Submitted as a partial fulfillment of the requirements
to obtain a degree in Master of Education*



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ABSTRAK

Yulina Oktaviani Harahap. 2022. Penulisan Latar Belakang Mahasiswa Pada Proposal Skripsi di Jurusan Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah Medan: Menganalisis Rhetorical Structure dan Kemampuan Mahasiswa. Thesis. Program Studi Magister Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Negeri Padang.

Menulis merupakan salah satu keterampilan yang harus dipelajari oleh mahasiswa. Namun, menulis latar belakang masalah menjadi tugas yang berat bagi mahasiswa, terutama di tingkat perguruan tinggi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui move yang digunakan, fungsi metadiscourse dalam hubungan move, dan kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menulis latar belakang proposal skripsi di Jurusan Bahasa Inggris Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah Medan Tahun Ajaran 2017/2018. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif. Data yang digunakan adalah dua puluh satu latar belakang proposal skripsi. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Move 1 (Establishing a research territory), Move 2 (Establishing a niche), dan Move 3 (Occupying a niche) ditemukan dalam latar belakang proposal skripsi mahasiswa. Namun, mahasiswa tidak melengkapi semua langkah-langkah pada struktur retorik sementara langkah pilihan lebih dominan daripada langkah wajib. Jenis metadiscourse terkait dengan move yang digunakan adalah attitude markers, transition, evidentials, boosters, hedges, frame markers, dan Engagement markers. Terkait dengan fungsi metadiscourse yang berhubungan dengan Move, sub jenis attitude markers, transition, evidential, boosters, hedges, frame markers, code glosses menjadi ciri khas Move 1. Kemudian, code glosses, booster, endophoric markers, dan hedges menjadi ciri khas Move 2 sedangkan metadiscourse pada self mention, frame markers, endophoric markers, dan engagement markers menjadi ciri khas Move 3. Terakhir, penelitian ini menemukan bahwa kemampuan mahasiswa dalam menyusun latar belakang proposal skripsi termasuk kategori cukup dengan nilai rata-rata 58.

Kata Kunci: *Menulis, Moves, Metadiscourse, dan Kemampuan*

ABSTRACT

Yulina Oktaviani Harahap. 2022. Students' Writing Background of Problem of Thesis Proposal at English Department of Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah Medan: An Analysis of Rhetorical Structure and Students' Ability. Thesis Master of English Education of Faculty of Languages and Arts of Universitas Negeri Padang.

Writing is one of the skills that have to be learned by students. However, writing the background of the problems becomes a strenuous task for the students, especially at the tertiary level. Studies found that students had difficulties in writing the background of the thesis proposal. This research aims to find out the moves, metadiscourse function in relation moves, and the students' ability in writing the background of a thesis proposal at the English Department of Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah Medan in the academic year 2017/2018. This research is descriptive method. The data were twenty-one backgrounds of the thesis proposal. The results show that Move 1 (establishing a research territory), Move 2 (establishing a niche), and Move 3 (occupying a niche) were found in the background of the problems of the students' thesis proposal. However, students did not complete all steps of rhetorical structure while the optional steps dominantly found compared to obligatory steps. Metadiscourse types related to the moves used are transition, attitude markers, evidentials, boosters, hedges, frame markers, code glosses and engagement markers. In terms of functions of metadiscourse in relation to moves, the resources of attitude markers, boosters, evidential, code glosses, and hedges characterized Move 1. Then, the resources code glosses, boosters, endophoric markers, and hedges characterized Move 2 while metadiscourse of self-mention, frame markers, endhoporic markers and engagement markers characterized Move 3. Lastly, this research found that the students' ability to compose the background of the thesis proposal was fair category with mean score 58.

Keywords: *Writing, Moves, Metadiscourse, and Ability*

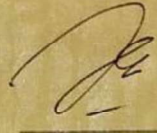
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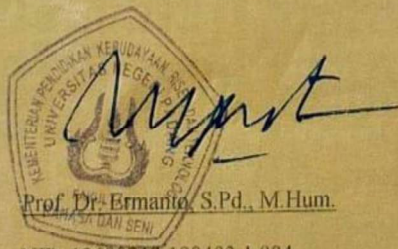
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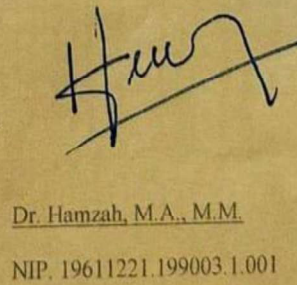
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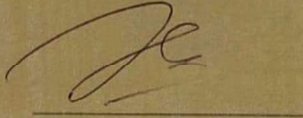
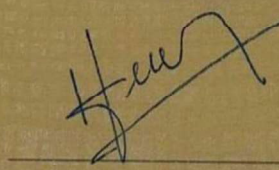
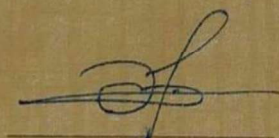


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Saya yang menyatakan

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The researcher

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Research Problem

Academic writing is one of the important language skills that students have to learn to communicate in English. It is a way for students to express an idea and interpret their knowledge. The primary goal of academic writing is used to assess students' ability of writing skill at tertiary level. According to Nguyen (2014), academic writing is the most important language skill to English tertiary students whose values are largely established by their performance in written tasks, academic reports, term examinations, and graduation theses. As the students, they are expected to write a thesis as a requirement in completing studies. Before accomplishing the thesis, the students are asked to indicate their thesis proposal through seminar to be assessed whether the project proposed is researchable or not.

A thesis proposal is the primary of a thesis writing. A good thesis proposal has become a requirement for ensuring the quality of research. It always starts with an introduction section. Flowerdew (2002) states that introduction section plays a vital role in providing the connection of the research as it provides an orientation for the readers, the perspective that they need to comprehend. It also helps the readers to understand the detailed information coming in the following sections. The introduction of a thesis proposal includes several aspects. One of them is the background of the problems.

The background of the problem is one of the important parts in thesis proposal introduction. According to Glatthorn and Joyner (2005), the background of the problems contain a review of the area being researched, current information surrounding the issue, prior studies on the issue, and interrelated history on the issue. This description provides several main aspects in constructing a background of research problems; research topic, current information, previous studies, and relevant histories. These aspects should be included in a background of research problems, as a foundation for a proper thesis writing. Thus, a background of problems is considered as an essential part of a thesis proposal. Therefore, students who aim to conduct and write a research need to comprehend these aspects of writing the background of problems.

However, writing the background of problems is considered a difficult task for research students because of several reasons. Husin and Nurbayani (2017) and Yanto and Sulistiyo (2019) state that students have difficulties in writing the background possibly due to their limited knowledge. Specifically, Swales and Feak (2008) state that writing the background of problems or introduction is difficult and troublesome for both native speakers and non-native speakers. Several factors might cause difficulties in writing background of research problems. Thus, the background of problems need to be written carefully. As stated by Swales and Feak (2012), the length of a text, the language used, and the purposes of writing could influence the students' capability to make a well-written background of the problems. Besides, they believe that the requirement for the organization or structure of an introduction might burden the writer. The

writer might have difficulties in determining what to write at the beginning, and the next section of the background of problems. They also believe that the writer should apply an organized pattern and linguistic features.

An organized pattern which is called rhetorical structure. It is used to write a well-written background of problems and to obtain acceptance from the readers. According to Swales and Feak (1994) and Bunton (2002), the rhetorical structure consists of three-steps structure, they are establishing a research territory, establishing a niche, and occupying the niche. Establishing a research territory is the first move in rhetorical structure. There are four steps in this move, such as showing that the general research area is important, providing the background information about a topic, reviewing items of prior study, and defining term. This move should be followed by establishing a niche. In this move, there are two steps, namely indicating a gap and identifying the problem. The last move is occupying the niche. There are three steps in this move, namely showing the purposes of the research area, stating the value of the research area, and describing the methods.

The steps of rhetorical structure are described practically and apparently. Thus, the writer may follow these steps easily. However, among all steps, there is obligatory step mentioned, such as reviewing the previous study, showing that general research area, and stating the purpose of the research area. The other steps remain optional. Even though the other steps are considered optional, it seems that they will have a proper background problems of thesis proposal if they implement all of the steps completely.

Besides, the writers should consider how the background of problems convinces the readers. It means that the linguistic realization and presents communicative intentions of the writer. This is because writing contains social and communicative engagement between the writer and the reader. One of the linguistic features used in the background of problem of thesis proposal is metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse is used by the writer to mark the purposes of the text and to interact with the readers. As stated by Hyland (2005) that metadiscourse can be seen as facilitator for social interaction that enhances knowledge production within academic disciplines. He also mentions that there are two types of metadiscourses, they are interactive (transition, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential, and code glosses) and interactional metadiscourse (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers).

Furthermore, several researchers investigated the rhetorical structure and metadiscourse scientifically Yatmikasari (2017) and Sahib and Maulidil (2020). Yatmikasari (2017) investigated the rhetorical structure of a thesis employed by two institutions at the English Literature Department (UIN Sunan Gunung Djati Bandung and Universitas Negeri Medan). She found that basically the background of research problems written by the students fulfilled the elements of the move, but they were rarely showed complete moves in one writing. The pattern of three steps structure found in the students' writing were often not sequential; the writer explained move 3 before explaining move 1 and move 2. Afterward, Sahib and Maulidil et al. (2020) analyzed two backgrounds of research proposals that

represented the quality of the students' achievement based on the GPA score. They focused on establishing a research territory and establishing a niche. They found that the students were lacking of understanding in addressing the research area and establishing a niche.

After that, Susanti, et. al. (2015) investigated the interactional metadiscourse markers in introduction section written by more and less proficient writers from doctorate programs. They found that the more proficient writers used engagement markers and the lesser ones used self-mention as the most frequent marker in introducing the research.

Moreover, Ozdemir and Longo (2014), Hadi, et. al. (2020), and Pandey (2020) investigated the abstract of students' thesis. Ozdemir and Longo (2014) found that there were many cultural differences in the amounts and kinds of metadiscourse. The incidence of evidential, endophorics, code glosses, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions were fewer in Turkish students' master thesis abstracts. However, Turkish students applied metadiscourse, such as transitions, frame markers and hedges more than USA students.

In other studies, Hadi, et. al. (2020) and Pandey (2020) found that interactive metadiscourse features were considerably higher than interactional metadiscourse. In addition, Hadi, et. al. (2020) also analyzed rhetorical moves and metadiscourse function in relation to moves of abstract. They found that metadiscourse function had a relationship with the moves, such as evidential, hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions.

Andarwedeen, et. al. (2013) investigated the usage of metadiscourse in argumentative essay by Malaysian tertiary level of students. They found that the students were comfortable in repeating the same words of the particular discourse in their writing. This was evident in the writers' lack of vocabulary in writing effective argumentative essay. Then, Hyeuh and Lee (2016) investigated metadiscourse of persuasive text in EFL Undergraduate students. They found that students faced difficulties in applying metadiscourse.

The previous studies above show that the students had different problems writing the background of research problems. The background of problems written by the students often contain unclear patterns. In addition, the students were challenged to develop their ideas and indicate a gap in writing the background of problems of a thesis proposal. In fact, the students faced difficulties in the process of writing of background of problems. These research findings are logic. These findings prove that constructing a well written background of problems is still challenging and problematic for the students. Then, the research findings indicate that the use of metadiscourse in students' writings are various. The types of metadiscourse used also differ dependings on the students' proficiency in writing. One of these previous researches also indicates the relationship between metadiscourse and the moves of rhetorical structure. In addition, the students faced difficulties in applying metadiscourse of argumentative essay and persuasive text.

Usually, the students of English language Education are taught academic writing subject in order that have good writing ability. This good ability is

prominent to be achieved by them since they have to prepare a thesis proposal to conduct research. Thus, research on the ability of students in writing the background of thesis were conducted by Abbas (2015), Dasril, et. al. (2019), and Napitupulu (2021). Abbas (2015) and Napitupulu (2021) found that the students were in fair level in writing abilities. Their research focused on the content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. These researchers analyzed the students' writing based on general aspects of writing. Meanwhile, Dasril, et. al. (2019) found that the students' ability in writing background of problems was good category. However, a number of problems still faced by students in writing coherent and unity which are caused a number of factors. Their research focused on coherence and unity. The other parts of academic writing are also need to be observed, such as rhetorical structures and metadiscourse.

Commonly, the use of rhetorical structure and metadiscourse are related to students' writing ability. The students have to write a thesis proposal which is understandable. In other words, the ability to produce a quality of rhetorical structure and metadiscourse is the most important needed. The rhetorical structure is a way to organize the writing, to communicate ideas, and to form the progression of the idea of background of problems. Meanwhile, metadiscourse is used by the writer to mark the purposes of the text and to interact with the readers. Metadiscourse is defined by Nugroho (2019) as resources that writers apply to organize and shape the structure of the background of problems. The rhetorical structure and metadiscourse of the text are considered as one of the factors causing the difficulties in writing. This is the reason why writing, especially thesis

is assumed as the most difficult skill to be mastered by most of foreign language learners.

Even though there have been some studies on rhetorical structure and metadiscourse, research on how the metadiscourses functions of three moves (establish a research territory, establish a niche, and occupy a niche) used in the background of problems is never investigated yet. The researcher could not find the research that investigated metadiscourse function in relation to move of background of problems of thesis proposal in the process of searching for previous research.

Besides, there is a difference between previous research to measure the students' ability. The previous researches used general aspects of writing as indicators. Meanwhile, this research used several different indicators; establishing a research territory, establishing a niche and occupying a niche, tenses (present tense, present perfect, and future tense) and metadiscourses. These indicators are investigated because there are problems in their use, and explained earlier, these aspects of writing are rarely investigated.

Based on the observation conducted by researcher, students of Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah Medan had different obstacles in writing the background of thesis proposal. Many students found that it is challenging for them to write or to start the opening paragraphs in writing the background of problems, lacked consistency in using tenses, and forget to add comma after using transition or inappropriate use of transition, it occurred because there was missing link ideas in the background of problems

Considering the above phenomenon, there are various problems found in students' writing related to rhetorical structures and linguistic features. Commonly, the researcher concludes that these problems are related to students' writing ability. Due to the importance in play constructing background of problems, the researcher is interested to know the background of problems of thesis proposal written by students at Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al Washliyah Medan. The purpose of this reasearch is to investigate rhetorical structure and metadiscourse. Moreover, the results of this research are expected to improve the students' writing skills, especially in writing background of the problems of thesis proposal.

Above all, the design of this research is descriptive research. The data are moves of background of problems, metadiscourse function in relation to moves, and students' ability in writing the background of the problems of thesis proposals. There are 21 background of problems of the thesis proposal written by undergraduate students of English Educations of Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al- Washliyah Medan. The data were taken from revised proposal after they finished proposal seminar.

B. Identification of the Research Problem

Based on the background of problem, the problems of research are identified. The first is the students had low ability in completing moves or step of background of problems of thesis proposal. The student may have difficulties in writing background of problems. The difficulties in writing might be caused by some factors, such as lack of knowledge of steps in writing background of problems, lack of vocabulary, grammar, tenses, mechanics, coherent, unity, lack of

knowledge appropriate metadiscourse, and the purpose of writing can affect the students' ability in writing the background of problems. The second is metadiscourse have a relationship with the moves. The last is the students' ability in applying rhetorical structure and linguistic features of background of problems.

C. Limitation of the Research Problem

Based on the identification of the research problems above, this research focused on the moves and metadiscourses function in relation to moves which is found in the students' thesis proposal written by Eight semester students of English Department at UMN Al-Washliyah Medan. Then, this research is also to examine the ability of moves, metadiscourse, and tenses used by students.

D. Formulation of the Research Problem

The problem was formulated as follows "How do the English Language Education Department students at Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al_washliyah Medan write the background of the problem of thesis proposal?"

E. Research Questions

There were three research questions in this research as follows:

1. What are the moves found in the background of problems of thesis proposals written by English Language Education Department students?
2. How are metadiscourse functions in relation to the moves found in the background of the problem of thesis proposal of English Language Education Department students?
3. How is the ability of English Language Education Department students in writing the background of problem of thesis proposal?

F. Purpose of the Research

The purposes of this research can be stated as follows:

1. To find out the moves used by English Language Education Department students.
2. To find out metadiscourse function in relation to moves found in the background of problem of thesis proposal by English Language Education Department students.
3. To find out the ability of English Language Education Department students in writing the background of problem of thesis proposal.

G. Significance of the Research

The findings of this study are expected to give a valuable contribution as follow:

Theoretically, the results of this research are expected to bolster and strengthen the theory of moves/elements in the background of problems and metadiscourses. Furthermore, the results of this research would enrich the teaching materials in academic writing, especially in writing a background of the problem in the thesis proposal. Thus, these research findings could improve students' and lecturers' knowledge of writing the problems section's background.

Practically, it is hoped that the research findings bestowed a contribution as an element and reference to develop teaching materials following the learning objectives. Furthermore, for the lecturers, the results of this research are expected to help them better understand the problems experienced by the students in writing a thesis proposal. Then, the results of this research are expected to

improve the students' writing skills, particularly in applying the steps and metadiscourse in the background of the problems section.

H. Definition of the Key Terms

Some key terminologies applied in this research can be defined as follow:

1. Writing is an activity to state one's thought, ideas, feeling in the written form.
2. Background of the problem is a part of students' thesis proposal which reviews the area being researched containing the basic information .
3. Rhetorical structure is the organized movement of the ideas or features written by English Language Education Department students at Universitas Muslim Nusantara Al-Washliyah Medan.
4. Metadiscourse is a term for words used by students to mark the direction of background of thesis proposal.
5. Ability is the capability of English Education Undergraduate Students in writing background of problems of thesis proposal.