



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Patterns of Rhetorical Organization in *The Jakarta Post* Opinion Articles

Dwi Indarti*

Bina Sarana Informatika, Jakarta, INDONESIA

Abstract

Opinion articles are part of a professional discourse genre that can be found in newspapers. These articles are separated from news pages and written for the public, so they contain a variety of cultural backgrounds. This study looked at 151 opinion articles published in The Jakarta Post of the March 2016 editions. Shi and Kubota's (2007) four pattern of rhetorical organization was adapted as the theoretical framework for the present study. The results of this study showed that the overall rhetorical pattern of The Jakarta Post opinion articles is a three-part structure of introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs. In term of the placing of the thesis statement, 47% of non-native writers and 38% of native writers put the thesis statement in the introduction part with a single sentence paragraph or two short single-sentence paragraphs, and 38% of non-native writers and 40% of native writers wrote the introduction part with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs, and put the thesis statement at the end of them. Only 8% of non-native writers and 5% of native writers put the thesis statement in the body part, while 7% of non-native writers and 17% of native writers put the thesis statement in the conclusion. Generally, there was a slight difference between native and non-native writers in terms of the placement of thesis statement, where the non-native writers tended to use a single sentence paragraph as the thesis statement as well as to begin the essays, while native writers preferred to use two or more multi sentence paragraphs. This study proves that professional writings such as newspaper opinion articles follow the English rhetorical conventions; deductive, logical, and direct style as represented in the three-part structure.

Keywords: Rhetorical organization, professional discourse, newspaper opinion article, thesis statement.

*Corresponding author, email: dwi10650@gmail.com

1. INTRODUCTION

The opinion pages in a daily newspaper have articles and columns written by readers and others with various cultural backgrounds and points of view and may include an editorial; the latter has been described as “an article in a newspaper that gives the opinion of the editor or publisher on a topic or item of news” (Sinclair, 1995, as cited in Bonyadi, 2010). Masroor (2013, p. 35) said that an important movement in the newspaper industry has been the separation of the news pages from those expressing public opinions. Furthermore, Masroor (2013, p. 35) stated that, “the movement not only gave birth to the notion of impartial journalism, but also authorized newspapers to explicitly articulate opinions on contentious issues through opinion discourse”. There are several genre categories included in opinion pages based on the audience and the communicative purpose such as editorials, columns, opinion articles, reviews, commentaries, and letters to the editor. Masroor (2013, p. 35) also stated that, “opinion discourse is assuming growing interest for its powerful role in the public sphere”. Public opinion discourses are often published in newspapers since they are viewed as a medium to interpret the current reality of events from the point of view of readers and others and to deliver the opinions of readers, so that they reflect the cultural backgrounds of the writers (Jaworski & Galasinski, 2002, as cited in Bonyadi, 2010, p. 324). Since the opinion discourses are often used to criticize, to suggest and/or to gather the voices of society, the majority of their writings are in the style/genre of persuasive and argumentative essays (van Dijk, 1992, as cited in Masroor, 2013).

Moreover, Connor (1996, p. 144) said that “good editorials are considered some of the best examples of persuasive writing in all countries; they set standards for writing persuasively”. Hence, the patterns of rhetorical organization of opinion discourses have their own flexibility, as Ansary and Babaii (2009, p. 213) noted that, “the rhetorical patterns of one’s native culture-linguistic system are likely to be more pronounced in texts such as editorials than in research articles and theses”. Newspaper languages, particularly newspaper opinion articles, have a uniqueness of their own and investigation of these rhetorical patterns will reveal more about them. Patterns of rhetorical organization in texts have been extensively studied. Studies of rhetorical patterns in the framework of contrastive rhetoric have been widely developed since papers by Kaplan (1966, 1972, 1988) from merely focussing on the pedagogical field and concern with academic texts such as students’ essays, research articles, theses and dissertations (Ansary & Babaii, 2009), into various discourses, such as studying newspaper editorials.

The comparison of the appearance of the thesis statement in Russian and American students’ argumentative essays written before and after a short writing course conducted by Petric (2005) showed that the essays written after the course displayed a higher frequency of thesis statements. Shi and Kubota (2007) explored the pattern of rhetorical organization in Canadian and American language arts textbooks and produced six patterns of presentation opinion or main idea in Canadian text samples and four patterns of opinion presentation in the American samples. Meanwhile, Yang and Cahill (2008) studied Chinese and American students’ expository essays to try to find differences in the rhetorical organization made by native students and by ESL students. Based on 200 expository essays, the study found that there was a significant difference in paragraph directness where generally the American students tended to be more direct than their Chinese counterparts.

However, less attention has been paid to newspaper opinion articles. As there are few studies of patterns of rhetorical organization in newspaper opinion articles this remains as one of the research gaps that needs to be filled. This study adopts the model of investigation by [Shi and Kubota \(2007\)](#) and uses their four patterns for presentation of the main idea as a theoretical framework to identify the general patterns and to determine if the main idea or thesis statement occurs in the introduction, the body or the conclusion part of the newspaper opinion articles published in the March 2016 editions of *The Jakarta Post*. It also compares the patterns of rhetorical organization between native speakers and non-native speakers' written opinion articles in this publication, the major English newspaper published in Indonesia since differences in the cultural backgrounds could influence the style of writing.

This study aims to answer these two questions:

1. What are the overall rhetorical patterns of the opinion articles published in the March 2016 editions of the Indonesian English newspaper, *The Jakarta Post*?
2. Was there a difference in terms of the placement of the thesis-statements or main ideas in those newspaper opinion articles between those written by native speakers and those written by non-native i.e. EFL speakers?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 A Brief Understanding of Rhetoric, Rhetorical Organization and Genre Studies

The development of studies of rhetoric has flourished for some time and they are no longer viewed with negative connotations anymore. [Mauranen \(1993, p. 20, as cited in Connor, 1996, p. 63\)](#) stated, "the study of rhetoric has been re-discovered not only as a means of improving efficiency in verbal presentations, but as an analytical tool that can be used by different disciplines for uncovering certain aspects of discourse". These studies have revealed some "new theories of rhetoric" such as the model of [Toulmin \(1958\)](#) as cited in [Connor \(1996, p. 67\)](#) who designed the structure for arguments in the practice of law and his model is still relevant and widely adopted for writing research. It became the basis for contrastive rhetoric, as [Connor \(1996, p. 70\)](#) stated, "naturally, the effect of classical rhetoric on contrastive rhetoric has been significant". Meanwhile, rhetorical organization is how a paragraph is organized to support and to develop the main idea or thesis statement in order to deliver the message of the text. [Carrell and Eisterhold \(1983, p. 60\)](#) said that, "readers and writers should be aware of the differences in the rhetorical structures of different genres; be they fables, simple stories, scientific texts, newspaper articles, and many more". While [Ruiying and Allison \(2003, p. 375\)](#) proposed that rhetorical organization is essential not only to the overall structure of a text but also to the build-up of the results, the discussions and the conclusion sections of text. Therefore, text organization provides a relationship of ideas that are presented in the text. The organization of a text can be seen in a unit such as a paragraph where the sentences are not a random collection but have a unified orientation ([Hinds, 1979](#)). [Francis \(1958\)](#) proposed the organization of patterns for rhetorical writing, namely:

- (i) subject-development organization that is used in narrative writing,
- (ii) comparison-contrast that is used in informative writing,

- (iii) cause-effect that is used in informative writing,
- (iv) problem-solution that is used in persuasive writing.

Genre is defined as a text type which comprises obligatory and additional structural elements and is constructed by choosing language which depends on its social purpose and the context in which the text will be used (Butt, et al. (2000) and Christie (1992) as cited in Devira, 2017, p. 41). Organizational patterns vary based on the content, topic and purpose. Genre studies and rhetorical studies cannot be separated because they are closely tied together based on the former classifications for written discourse and conventions of rhetorical practice (Shi & Kubota, 2007, p. 181). Moreover, Shi and Kubota (2007, p. 181) stated that, “As a rhetorical construct, genres are indicated by factors including: textual products that manifest certain stylistic, cognitive, and organizational features, substance, rhetorical purposes or motives, and the social context of the composition”.

Thus, a conservative definition of genre as a form and type of text was made by Miller (1984, as cited in Shi & Kubota, 2007, p. 182) as social action, drawing attention away from “the substance or the form of discourse onto the action it is used to accomplish”. Rhetorical genre studies purpose to distinguish between traditional and current rhetorical genre as many teachers and researchers have followed a generic formula or pedagogic genre known as the five-paragraph theme pattern which consisted of one paragraph of introduction, three paragraphs of expansion and example, and one paragraph of conclusion (Emig, 1971, as cited in Shi & Kubota, 2007, p. 183). Connor (1996) divided genre into three categories of student writing, academic writing and professional writing with three domains of student writing namely the primary, secondary, and college levels. Academic writing has two genres: research articles and grant proposals, while professional writing is divided into business writing, editorials, resumes, and political discourse. Professional writings are written communications used in professional areas or workplaces and usually have a formal style. The general purposes of professional writings are to persuade, to inform, to instruct and to encourage action. According to Connor (1996, p. 137), professional writing is different from academic writing, including its purposes and readers, and it takes place in businesses, newspaper offices, governmental agencies, and other workplaces. Gunnarsson et al. (1997, p. 3) argue that, “professional genres are a reflection of the political ideologies and power structure within the society studied as well as of the actual knowledge level of the field and of the social patterns of the professional group studied”.

Genre-specific studies of professional writings have been conducted and have contributed significant findings that are used for the theoretical framework of research such as the research done by Swedish linguist Britt-Louise Gunnarson (1993), cited in Connor (1996). The result of her study proposed three layers in the construction of professional discourse, namely (Connor, 1996, p. 136):

- (i) the cognitive layer (deals with the knowledge base of the field related to language, discourse, attitudes, and norms),
- (ii) the social layer that focuses on the role of group identity,
- (iii) the societal layer that focuses on the roles of professionals within society.

Another remarkable genre-specific study of professional writing was the study done by Bhatia (1993) who looked at product and self-advertising through sales promotion letters and job application letters, and argued that those two types of writings have the same communicative purpose – to promote a particular product or service –

and both are persuasive (Connor, 1996, p. 136). Moreover, the analysis by Bhatia (1993, as cited in Connor, 1996, p. 136) showed that both sales promotion letters and job application letters employ the same general moves: opening politely, establishing credentials, offering incentives, enclosing documents, using pressure tactics, soliciting a response, and ending politely.

Connor (1996, p. 137) briefly discussed the findings from cross-cultural research of four genres in professional writing, via; business writing, editorials, resumes, and political writing. Those four types of professional writing genres cannot be detached from the influence of the writers' different L1 languages (or first language) and cultural backgrounds, as Connor (1996, p. 135) believes that, "... in these contexts, too, second language writers transfer patterns and styles from the first language to the second". Research in professional writing done by Thatcher (2000, as cited in Dita, 2009, p. 95) who studied second language professional writing in both the U.S.A and in a South American countries, and Collon (2000, also cited in Dita, 2009, p. 95) who explored the generic variability of texts in a Chinese newspaper and in its English counterpart. There was also a study by Gonzales (2002, as cited by Dita, 2009, p. 96) who focussed on the use of politeness in letters to the editor in Philippine English, American English, and Singaporean English.

Dita (2009) herself wrote about the analysis of physical and topical structure of professional writing in English using 39 one paragraph letters to the editor of an international magazine from inner, outer and expanding circles. She uses Kachru (1985, in Kachru, 1995, as cited in Dita, 2009, p. 96) who divides the English-using world into three concentric circles: the inner circle consists of the native wasp¹ English speaking countries, such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the U.K, and the U.S.A, the outer circle comprises the former British and American colonies, e.g. India, Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines and Singapore, amongst others, while the expanding circle consists of countries where English is fast becoming a dominant second language in domains of education, science, and technology, e.g. China, Japan, Taiwan, Thailand and Indonesia amongst others. Her studies showed that professional discourse is a potential area in which to investigate the textual differences between and among languages in term of contrastive rhetoric because they are influenced by the cultural backgrounds of the writers.

2.2 Newspaper Editorials and Opinion Discourse

An editorial has been described as "an article in a newspaper that gives the opinion of the editor or publisher on a topic or item of news" (Sinclair, 1995, as cited in Bonyadi, 2010), while an opinion piece in a newspaper is a column written by a reader or an outsider (i.e. not a reporter) that covers a particular cultural background and point of view. Masroor (2013, p. 35) expressed his belief that an important movement in the newspaper industry is the separation of the news pages from those expressing public opinions. Moreover, Masroor (2013, p. 35) stated that, "the movement not only gave birth to the notion of impartial journalism, but also authorized newspapers to explicitly articulate the opinions of others on contentious issues through opinion discourse". There are some genre categories based on the audience and the communicative purpose such as editorials, columns, opinion articles, reviews, commentaries and letters to the

¹wasp = white, Anglo-Saxon, protestant (countries)

editor. Masroor (2013, p. 35) also stated that, “opinion discourse is assuming growing interest for its powerful role in the public sphere”. Some studies use opinion discourse as the subject of research, such as Rodriguez (2008) who investigated the interpretation of ideology through opinion articles, Marin-Arrese (2008) who analysed commitment and subjectivity in the discourse of opinion columns, Wang (2008) who examined the intertextual aspects of Chinese newspaper commentaries on particular events, and Smirnova (2009) who used letters to the editor to conduct a study on reported speech as an element of argumentative newspaper articles.

Another scholar who used newspaper discourse as the subject of his research was Dafouz-Milne (2008) who did a cross-linguistic study about the pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion. Using a corpus of 40 opinion columns, 20 written in English, taken from a leading English newspaper, *The Times*, and 20 written in Spanish and taken from *El Pai*, the study sought to identify the categories of metadiscourse that predominated in the newspaper discourse and the study also looked at the distribution of metadiscourse categories based on cross-cultural or cross-linguistic preferences. In the Indonesian context, few Indonesian scholars have done studies related to the topic of opinion discourse. Pulungan et al. (2010) did a study into the types, functions and discursive practices of intertextuality in Indonesian newspaper opinion articles on education. Newspaper discourse such as opinion articles are viewed as a medium to deliver authors’ thoughts and represent both local cultures and ideological perspectives, thus the study of this genre of writing might explain certain similarities and differences and yield other interesting insights concerning rhetorical mode and textual patterns (Ansary & Babaii, 2009).

2.3 Thesis Statement and Main Idea

A thesis statement is a clear, specific and complete sentence that summarizes the whole topic of a study. According to Rahayuni (2015, p. 422), formulating a good thesis statement is important since a good thesis statement for an essay or a study must fulfil several requirements, namely: it must be a complete sentence, limited to one clear idea, expressing an attitude or an opinion and must be a statement that can be supported by arguments. There are several opinions by scholars about the best place for placement of the thesis statement. Liu (2007) categorized two types of placement of the thesis statement: deductive, putting the thesis statement at the beginning, and inductive, putting the thesis statement at the end. Oshima and Hogue (1999) argued that the thesis statement should appear at the beginning of a paper, either in the first sentence or in the last sentence of the introductory paragraph. A good thesis statement will give the readers information about why the topic is interesting as soon as they start to read the essay/study, which will help them to focus on the main idea or the central points, and it must be able to be defended and it must be supported by the body of the essay (Bonnell, 1994; Karper, 2002; Smith, 2009).

Specifically, Procter (2016) has written thus about the characteristics of a good thesis statement; it is a definite and limited assertion that needs to be explained and supported by further discussion, it shows the emphasis of the argument and indicates its methodology and it shows awareness of difficulties and disagreements. Raygor (1979, p. 1) proposed that the definition of the main idea is best answered through a question. He has said, “probably the easiest way to understand the meaning of “main idea” is to

think of this question: “If this author had to boil this passage down to a single, brief statement, what would it be?”. In other words, the main idea is the main point the author is trying to make. Meanwhile, Langan (2013, p. 360) argued that, “finding the main idea is the key to understanding a paragraph or short selection. Once you identify the main idea or general point that an author is making, everything else in the paragraph should click into place”.

3. METHOD

This study adopted the model of Shi and Kubota (2007) for investigation and used their four patterns for the presentation of the main idea as the theoretical framework to identify the general patterns and to determine the occurrence of the main idea or thesis statement in newspaper editorials published in the March 2016 editions of *The Jakarta Post*. Shi and Kubota (2007) have done research focusing on opinions and thesis-driven essays in North American language art textbooks for intermediate or middle grades.

Since *The Jakarta Post* opinion articles are argumentative and thesis-driven essays and they are fully written in formal English, this study refers to the pattern of opinion presentation in samples from the U.S.A as a native English-speaking country. The four patterns of thesis statement and opinion presentation are as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. The four patterns of thesis statement and opinion presentation.

Pattern 1 Thesis statement in the introduction with either a single-sentence paragraph or two short single-sentence paragraphs plus a restatement of the opinion in the concluding paragraph.
Pattern 2 Thesis statement stated at the end of an introduction with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs and then restated in a concluding paragraph.
Pattern 3 Thesis statement and implicit opinion in a body paragraph, which is restated in the concluding paragraph.
Pattern 4 Thesis statement and opinion stated in the concluding paragraph.

The source of data used in this study was the opinion articles in the March 2016 editions of *The Jakarta Post*, which covered various topics such as social affairs, politics, the economy, various sports e.g. football, plus technology, criminal cases including corruption, and also entertainment and gender issues. Of 151 texts found in the March 2016 editions of *The Jakarta Post*, 109 texts (72%) were written by non-native speakers and 42 (28%) were written by native speakers.

4. RESULTS

The overall rhetorical pattern of the Indonesian English newspaper opinion articles is a three-part structure of introduction, body and a conclusion. The separation of text structure attempted to seek the occurrence of the thesis statement and opinion, and then categorized it based on the pattern proposed by Shi and Kubota (2007). Shi and Kubota (2007) defined the “thesis statement or main idea” as the most important message in the text and “opinion” as the author’s point of view, belief, or bias. This study is quite different from Shi and Kubota’s (2007) in terms of the text type. While

Shi and Kubota (2007) categorized their texts into persuasive texts, expository texts, satirical texts, and descriptive texts, this study did not categorize the texts because the opinion discourses are often used to criticize, to suggest and/or to gather the voice of society, the majority of its writing styles are persuasive and argumentative texts (Van Dijk, 1992, as cited in Masroor, 2013). The researcher explicates a three part-structure of an introductory paragraph, usually several body paragraphs and a concluding paragraph found in this study.

4.1 The Introduction

The introductory paragraph is the “attention-grabber” to get the readers’ attention, so that if they are interested in the topic of the article they will continue to read it or they will stop (Rinehart & Winston, 2002). The introduction presents a clear statement of the overall point of the article and usually contains some background, a statement of the problem and possibly a proposed solution (Etalle, 2004). The writer often states his or her opinion in the introduction.

Table 2. Examples of Introductions.

<i>Introduction with one paragraph, containing one or two single sentences</i>	<i>Introduction with multiple paragraphs</i>
<p>Indonesia has emerged as a middle-income country and an important player in the global economy (G20) but faces three major problems: a slowing reduction of poverty rates, rising inequality and a high level of vulnerability for much of the population living in poverty. [Text-4]</p> <p>When it comes to Palestine, there was a time when geography didn’t matter, when the plight of the Palestinians was capable of mustering waves of both sympathy and fury even among those who lived thousands of miles away. However, with the current mayhem in the Middle East, the question of Palestine has increasingly been put on the backburner, against that backdrop, should resolving the issue of Palestine still be on our agenda? [Text-12]</p>	<p>World soccer may have a new boss, but it will take long-term sustained efforts by FIFA to convince fans around the globe that the organization has really changed and is serving their interests, rather than its own.</p> <p>After all, many mega-sporting events around the world today, including those arranged by FIFA of course, suffer from a severe deficiency: Money drives them to the point where what happens on the playing field is almost incidental.</p> <p>Just consider the number of arrest warrants, investigations and criminal allegations that are issued against the men (almost exclusively) who are running so many of the international sporting associations.</p> <p>Wherever there is big money in sport, there seems to be corruption. And the cash involved is huge. According to estimates by auditors Price Waterhouse Cooper, the total of 2015 global sporting revenues exceeded US\$ 145 billion. [Text-5]</p>

Table 2 shows two types of introduction found in this study. The first type is a one paragraph introduction with one or two sentences. The writer of Text-4 wrote a single sentence paragraph that included:

- The background** : Indonesia has emerged as a middle-income country and an important player in the global economy (G20) ...
- The problem** : ... but faces three major problems ...

The general points : ... a slowing reduction of poverty rates, rising inequality and a high level of vulnerability for much of the population living in poverty.

The introduction in Text-12 consists of only one paragraph with a long sentence with the opinion in it. This introduction includes:

- The background** : When it comes to Palestine, there was a time when geography didn't matter, when the plight of the Palestinians was capable of mustering waves of both sympathy and fury even among those who lived thousands of miles away...
- The problem** : ... however, with the current mayhem in the Middle East, the question of Palestine has increasingly been put on the backburner,...
- The opinion** : ... against that backdrop, should resolving the issue of Palestine still be on our agenda?

Meanwhile, Text-5 consisted of multi-sentence paragraphs that included:

- The background** : World soccer may have a new boss, but it will take long-term sustained efforts by FIFA to convince fans around the globe that the organization has really changed and is serving their interests, rather than its own.
- The problem** : After all, many mega-sporting events around the world today, including those arranged by FIFA of course, suffer from a severe deficiency: Money drives them to the point where what happens on the playing field is almost incidental.
- The general points** : Wherever there is big money in sport, there seems to be corruption. And the cash involved is huge. According to estimates by auditors Price Waterhouse Cooper, the total of 2015 global sporting revenues exceeded US\$ 145 billion).

Both a one paragraph and a multi-paragraphs introduction contain the three essential items, which are (i) the background, (ii) the problem and (iii) the general points of the topic that is to be discussed in the text. This shows that the writers of these opinion articles, both native and non-native, attempted to inform the reader about the topic as soon as they start to read the article. The introductory parts of these opinion articles in the newspaper *The Jakarta Post* are strong introductions that arouse the interest and stimulate the curiosity of the reader and encourage them to read on.

4.2 The Body

The body contains multiple paragraphs that follow the introduction and comes before the conclusion where the information, specific evidence, examples, supporting details, data, statistics and facts to support the main idea are presented (Irvin et al., 2009). The body is where the main idea is explained, described and/or argued and it should make a big impression on the reader by using the strongest reasons, evidence and facts. The body sections of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* have supporting sentences that include explanations, descriptions, observations, examples, and other related evidence. In these paragraphs, the writers have expanded their ideas and provided the readers with support for their chosen opinion. All these supporting sentences are composed of related sentences and develop the main idea. The writers of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* fulfil the requirements for effective body paragraphs, beginning with clear topic sentences that support their thesis statements, supporting their arguments by providing facts, examples, quotations, or statistics that develop the central claims of their texts, explaining the significance of each fact, then drawing clear conclusions that are relevant to their thesis statements (Gehring, 2014).

4.3 The Conclusion

The concluding paragraph(s) is where the reader will find the final opinion or a re-statement of the opinion and/or a reflection of the writer's point of view. This section usually wraps up the whole idea in a simple paragraph, because in most cases, the conclusion only consists of a single paragraph. Irvin et al. (2009) suggested that the conclusion should include a brief summary of the arguments and call for some action or spell out the consequences, or it could end with a provocative question or a warning. Below are two examples of the conclusion paragraph.

Table 3. Examples of Conclusion Paragraphs.

<p>Given the advantages of inclusive social protection, it is sensible for the government to explore the feasibility of piloting, if not implementing it across all areas of social policy, including inclusive old-age grants, child benefits and disability benefits. Our Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to social security, and it is time that that right is fulfilled. [Text-4]</p> <p>In general, I welcome this new approach, and thus do not recommend major interventions to change the direction of the yen exchange rate. I do, however, believe that sporadic interventions may be needed to punish speculators who are taking advantage of temporary market psychology to keep the yen far above its market value. [Text-6]</p>

From Table 3 we can see that the writer of Text-4 stated his opinion through this sentence:

Given the advantages of inclusive social protection, it is sensible for the government to explore the feasibility of piloting, if not implementing it across all areas of social policy, including inclusive old-age grants, child benefits and disability benefits.

Then, he ended his arguments with a call for action with this sentence:

Our Constitution guarantees the right of all citizens to social security, and it is time that that right is fulfilled.

While the writer of Text-6 stated his opinion and consequences with these sentences:

In general, I welcome this new approach, and thus do not recommend major interventions to change the direction of the yen exchange rate. I do, however, believe that sporadic interventions may be needed to punish speculators who are taking advantage of temporary market psychology to keep the yen far above its market value.

Generally, the conclusion paragraph in the opinion articles of *The Jakarta Post* wrapped up the main points into a tidy package, summarizes what has been stated in the thesis statement or just rephrases the thesis statement with deeper understanding, emphasizes the purpose, explains the significance of the topic and proposes a course of action, a solution to an issue or questions for further study. Since the opinion articles are argumentative writing, the writers often put their opinions and/or arguments in their conclusion. The conclusion of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* gives a good

final impression, helps the readers see things differently, clearly sets out the writers' point of view and can even enrich the readers' knowledge.

4.4 Non-Native English Writers' Texts

Table 4. The occurrence of thesis statements in non-native texts.

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>%</i>
(1) Thesis statements in the introduction in a single or two single sentence paragraphs.	51	47%
(2) Thesis statement in the introduction with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs.	41	38%
(3) Thesis statement in the body paragraphs.	9	8%
(4) Thesis statement in the conclusion paragraphs.	8	7%
Total	109	100%

Table 4 shows that among 109 non-native texts, 52 texts (47%) put the thesis statement in the introduction with a single or two short single sentence paragraphs, 41 texts (38%) put the thesis statement at the end of the introduction with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs, 9 texts (8%) put the thesis statement in the body paragraphs, and 8 texts (7%) put the thesis statement in the conclusion paragraphs.

The findings show that about half of the non-native writers put their thesis statement in the introduction with a single or two single sentence paragraphs. Thus, it can be said that Indonesian professional writers attempt to grab the reader's attention as soon as they start to read the text. From a single sentence thesis statement at the beginning of the article, the reader can capture the topic of the text, which will contain three essential items, via: the background, the problem and one or more supporting points, as can be seen in this sentence:

Recently, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Muhammad Ahmad Al Thayyib, visited Indonesia to, among other purposes; strengthen the relationship between Egypt's and Indonesia's Muslim communities. [Text-83]

4.5 Native English Writers Texts

Table 5. The occurrence of thesis statements in native writers' texts.

<i>Pattern</i>	<i>Text</i>	<i>%</i>
(1). Thesis statement in the introduction with single or two single sentence paragraphs.	16	38%
(2). Thesis statement in the introduction with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs.	17	40%
(3). Thesis statement in the body paragraphs.	2	5%
(4). Thesis statement in the conclusion paragraph(s).	7	17%
Total	42	100%

Table 5 shows that among 42 native writers' texts, 16 texts (38%) put the thesis statement in the introduction with a single or two short single sentence paragraphs, 17 texts (40%) put the thesis statement at the end of the introduction with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs, 2 texts (5%) put the thesis statement in the body paragraphs and 7 texts (17%) put the thesis statement in the conclusion paragraph(s). The findings of the natives' texts just have a slight difference compared with the non-natives' texts. The major occurrences of the thesis statement are in the introduction, with two or more multi-sentence paragraphs. Only 5% of the native writers put the thesis statement in the body text, after a long introduction, explanation and description. The interesting thing is

that 17% of native writers put the thesis statement in the conclusion. A good example can be seen in Text-17:

Ending the war requires adherence to six principles ... Finally, the Gulf States, Turkey, and Iran should be pressed to negotiate based on a regional framework that can ensure lasting peace. Arabs, Turks, and Iranians have all lived with each other for millennia. They, not the outside powers, should lead the way to a stable order in the region. [Text-17]

This concluding paragraph contains the thesis statement with three essential items: the background (Syrian war), the problem (the requirement to end the war) and the proposed solution (six principles to end the war). This shows that the writer tried to explore the flexibility and potential for contrast with patterns of rhetorical organization in this argumentative essay and revealed the uniqueness of the written text. It could be allowed as [Ansary and Babaii \(2009, p. 213\)](#) said that, “the rhetorical patterns of one’s native culture-linguistic system are likely to be more pronounced in texts such as editorials than in research articles and thesis”.

Table 6. The differences between natives’ and non-natives’ texts.

Pattern	NNS writers	Percentage	NS writers	Percentage
1	51 texts	47%	16 texts	38%
2	41 texts	38%	17 texts	40%
3	9 texts	8%	2 texts	5%
4	8 texts	7%	7 texts	17%
Total	109 texts (72%)	100%	42 texts (28%)	100%

Table 6 shows the difference between the native speaker (NS) writers’ texts and the non-native speaker (NNS) writers’ texts. It shows that the majority of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* were written by non-native writers. In term of placement of the thesis statement or main idea, generally, both native and non-native writers put the thesis statement in the introduction. But there was a slight difference between the native and the non-native writers. While a big majority of non-native writers (85%) put the thesis statement in the introduction with a single sentence paragraph (47%) or two short single-sentence paragraphs (38%) (Pattern 1), the majority of native writers (78%) also put the thesis statement in the introduction, with nearly the same number using Pattern 1 as used Pattern 2. There was almost the same usage of Pattern 3 by native and non-native writers, where 8% of non-natives’ texts and 5% of natives’ texts put the thesis statement in the body part. Then in Pattern 4, 17% of native writers put the thesis statement in the conclusion while only 7% of non-native writers did that.

5. DISCUSSION

The overall findings from 151 opinion articles published in the March 2016 editions of *The Jakarta Post* is that these articles follow a three-part structure of English argumentative essays. The point of view central to the essay and the most important message in the text could be identified as the main idea or the thesis statement. The results showed the location of the thesis statement according to the four patterns of [Shi and Kubota \(2007\)](#). The readers of the opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* could usually grab the main idea as soon as they started to read the introduction because about 80% of the opinion articles writers put their thesis statement at the beginning of their

essays. This shows that these experienced writers opted to lead their readers straight to the main point. This result is supported by some scholars' definitions of a good thesis statement saying that it should give the reader brief information about the topic as soon as he starts to read the essay, help him to focus on the main idea or central points, and it must be defensible and supported by the body of the essay (Bonnell, 1994; Karper, 2002; Smith, 2009). Most of the writers of these opinion articles attempted to present the main idea of the article right from the very beginning. After that they presented detailed explanations in the body, complete with data, statistics, facts and relevant information to support the main idea. Finally, the writers of these opinion articles in *The Jakarta Post* wrapped up their long, detailed, argumentative essays with a brief summary, concluding paragraph. They also put their personal point of view, beliefs, bias, and final statement into the conclusion to make it more impressive and to end their essays on a positive note. The observation in *The Jakarta Post's* opinion articles of a three-part structure with an opinion and the thesis statement presented either in the beginning, middle or the end shows the flexibility of this kind of professional discourse.

In terms of the writers' bias, opinion or argument in the articles, the readers of newspaper should be able to distinguish between the facts and the opinions in the article. The definition of 'opinion' is a belief or judgment, a personal view, attitude or favourable estimate, while a fact is something that exists, has happened and can be checked and supported by evidence. Newspapers often open the opportunity to other writers to express their individual opinions, to write factual news stories from their own personal views of events. The opinion in the newspaper articles reflected the writer's point of view of the current issues and they can be stated explicit or implicit. Ansary and Babaii (2009) said that newspaper discourse such as opinion articles are viewed as a medium to deliver the authors' thoughts and can represent both local cultures and ideological perspectives, thus the study of this type of writing genre might explain similarities and differences and yield other interesting insights about rhetorical mode and textual patterns. Examples of opinions found in *The Jakarta Post*:

Table 6. Examples of opinions.

<i>Explicit</i>	<i>Implicit</i>
Being the second largest economy in the world, China's economic performance has always drawn worldwide attention. In 2015, China's GDP growth rate stood at 6.9 percent, dropping below 7 percent for the first time in the last 25 years. Recent tumultuous fluctuations in global stock and foreign exchange markets gave rise to various worrying headlines in the international media such as "China encountering economic slowdown" or "China taking the lead in the tumble of the world economy". In my opinion, these views are, to some extent, lopsided and pessimistic. Introduction from Text-1	If KPI were to contribute to the building of Indonesia, towards a modern society based on universal human rights, then it should remind itself of its own original values. KPI needs to ensure decent and responsible TV programming and avoid acting impulsively; to the detriment of the values it is supposed to hold dear. Conclusion from Text-8

In Table 6, we can see examples of an explicit opinion and an implicit opinion. The explicit opinion is clearly stated using the words '*in my opinion*' as in the example above, "In my opinion, these views are, to some extent, lopsided and pessimistic". While implicit opinion is implied in the writer's point of view, as shown in the other example above: (*the writer thinks that*) "KPI needs to ensure decent and responsible TV

programming and avoid acting impulsively, to the detriment of the values it is supposed to hold dear”.

6. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study have shown that the three-part structure, namely introduction, body and conclusion is used in the opinion articles studied. For the introductions, there were two types of introduction: a one paragraph introduction and a multiple paragraph introduction. As Shi and Kubota (2007 p. 197) argued, “the non-conventional flexibility found in real-world writing or professional writing indicates that on a larger ideological dimension, the images of English rhetoric are discursively constructed rather than reflecting objective reality”. This study shows that professional writings such as newspaper opinion articles follow the English rhetorical conventions, for example deductive, logical and direct style as represented in the three-part structure. These rhetorical features are promoted as the ideal English rhetorical pattern in second language writing education and research into model characteristics (Shi & Kubota, 2007).

This study should serve as a reference for those who work in journalism, for those who are eager to become editorial writers and for the readers of editorials. Connor (1996, p. 143) stated “research on editorials cross-culturally is significant, even if ESL students do not become editorial writers, for, in most cases, they are readers of editorials”. For future studies, other newspaper sections, such as editorials, columns and letters to the editor could be used as the research subjects, since these professional writings are different from academic writings in particular their purposes and their readers (Connor, 1996). It is expected that research into the patterns of rhetorical organization, using other professional writings, especially L2 professional writings, could be explored and conducted more widely. The researcher strongly believes that the results of this study might at least make a contribution to contrastive rhetoric studies, specifically on professional discourse to guide those who are eager to write argumentative essays. The results of this study might also be used as a reference to produce a good opinion article in order to publish an essay in the mass media, such as in a newspaper or a magazine, because the published texts, used as data for this study, went through a tough, strict, rigid editing process by experienced publishing editors.

REFERENCES

- Ansary, H., & Babaii, E. (2009). A cross-cultural analysis of English newspaper editorials: A systemic-functional view of text for contrastive rhetoric research. *Regional Language Center Journal*, 40(2), 211-249.
- Bhatia, V. K. (1993). *Analysing genre: Language use in professional settings*. London: Longman.
- Bonnell, T. D. (1994). *Independent writing*. Boston, MA: Heinle and Heinle.
- Bonyadi, A. (2010). The rhetorical properties of the schematic structures of newspaper editorials: A comparative study of English and Persian editorials. *Discourse and Communication*, 4(4), 323-342.

- Carrell, P. L., & Eisterhold, J. C. (1983). Schema theory and ESL reading pedagogy. *TESOL Quarterly*, 17(4), 553-573.
- Connor, U. M. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second-language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Dafouz-Milne, E. (2008). The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: A cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(1), 95-113.
- Devira, M. (2017). Acquisition of academic literacy in an engineering communication of academic literacy of English for specific purposes (ESP) and systemic functional linguistics (SFL). *Studies in English Language and Education*, 4(1), 38-53.
- Dita, S. (2009). Physical and topical structure analysis of professional writing in inner, outer, and expanding circles of English. *TESOL*, 1(1), 95-118.
- Etalle, S. (2004). How to write an introduction: Some suggestions. Retrieved from <http://www.win.tue.nl/~setalle/introduction.html>
- Francis, W. N. (1958). *The structure of American English*. New York: Ronald Press.
- Gehring, M. (2014). Developing body paragraphs. Retrieved from <http://www.sjsu.edu/writingcenter/handouts/Body%20Paragraphs.pdf>
- Gunnarsson, B.-L. (1993). Pragmatic and macrothematic patterns in science and popular science: A diachronic study of articles from three fields. In M. Ghadessy (Ed.), *Register analysis: Theory and practice* (pp. 165-179). London: Pinter Publishers.
- Gunnarsson, B.-L., Linell, P., & Nordberg, B. (1997). *The construction of professional discourse*. Chicago, IL: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Hinds, J. (1979). Organizational patterns in discourse. In T. Givón (Ed.), *Discourse and syntax: Syntax and semantics* (pp. 135-157). New York: Academic Press.
- Irvin, J. L., Odell, L., Vacca, R., Warriner, J. E., & Hobbs, R. (2009). *Elements of language: First course*. Austin: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in inter-cultural education. *Language Learning*, 16, 10-16.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1972). *The anatomy of rhetoric: Prolegomena to a functional theory of rhetoric*. Philadelphia, PA: Center for Curriculum Development.
- Kaplan, R. B. (1988). Contrastive rhetoric and second language learning: Notes towards a theory of contrastive rhetoric. In A. C. Purves (Ed.), *Writing across languages and cultures* (pp. 275-304). Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.
- Karper, E. (2002). Writing a thesis statement. Retrieved from http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/print/general/gl_thesis.htm
- Langan, J. (2013). *Reading and study skills* (10th ed.). New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Liu, J. J. (2007). Placement of the thesis statement in English and Chinese argumentative essays: A study of contrastive rhetoric. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*, 4(1), 122-139.
- Marin-Arrese, J. I. (2008). Commitment and subjectivity in the discourse of opinion columns and leading articles. *RAEL: Revista Electrónica de Lingüística Aplicada*, 1(1), 82-98.
- Masroor, F. (2013). Argumentative strategies of newspaper editorials in English across cultures. *Asian ESP Journal*, 9(3), 35-72.
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (1999). *Writing academic English*. London: Longman.

- Petric, B. (2005). Contrastive rhetoric in the writing classroom: A case study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24(2), 213-228.
- Procter, M. (2016). Using thesis statements. Retrieved from <http://advice.writing.utoronto.ca/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/thesis-statements.pdf>
- Pulungan, A. H., Subroto, E. D., Tarjana, S. S., & Sumarlam, S. (2010). Intertextuality in Indonesian newspaper opinion articles on education: Its types, functions, and discursive practice. *TEFLIN*, 21(2), 137-152.
- Rahayuni, N. K. S. (2015). *Errors in writing a thesis statement made by students of English Department Udayana University*. Paper presented at the The 62nd TEFLIN International Conference: Teaching and Assessing L2 Learners in the 21st century (pp. 422-429). Denpasar: Udayana University.
- Raygor, A. L. (1979). *Reading for the main idea*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company.
- Rinehart, H., & Winston. (2002). *Elements of literature: Fourth course* (3rd ed.). Boston: Houghton Mifflin School.
- Rodriguez, M. J. G. (2008). On the interpretation of ideology through comment articles: Two views in opinion discourse. *RAEL: Revista Electrónica de Lingüística Aplicada*, 1(1), 49-68.
- Ruiying, Y., & Allison, D. (2003). Research articles in applied linguistics: Moving from results to conclusions. *English for Specific Purposes*, 22(4), 365-385.
- Shi, L., & Kubota, R. (2007). Patterns of rhetorical organization in Canadian and American language arts textbooks: An exploratory study. *English for Specific Purposes*, 26(2), 180-202.
- Smirnova, A. V. (2009). Reported speech as an element of argumentative newspaper discourse. *Discourse & Communication*, 3(1), 79-103.
- Smith, F. (2009). *Writing and the writer*. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann Publishing Company.
- Toulmin, S. E. (1958). *The uses of argument*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wang, W. (2008). Intertextual aspects of Chinese newspaper commentaries on the events of 9/11. *Discourse Studies*, 10(3), 361-381.
- Yang, L., & Cahill, D. (2008). The rhetorical organization of Chinese and American students' expository essays: A contrastive rhetoric study. *International Journal of English Studies*, 8(2), 113-132.

[Received 18 September 2017; revised 19 February 2018; accepted 20 February 2018]

THE AUTHOR

Dwi Indarti is an English lecturer at the English Academy of Bina Sarana Informatika (BSI), Jakarta. She completed her Master's degree in Applied English Linguistics from Atmajaya Catholic University. She can be reached at dwi10650@gmail.com