



***A GENRE ANALYSIS OF ACADEMIC ORAL PRESENTATIONS OF ESL
UNDERGRADUATES AT A PUBLIC UNIVERSITY IN MALAYSIA***

KULDIP KAUR A/P MAKTIAR SINGH

FBMK 2019 14



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By

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**Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in
Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy**

April 2019

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Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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April 2019

Chairman : Afida bte Mohamad Ali, PhD
Faculty : Modern Languages and Communication

This study examined the rhetorical moves of academic oral presentations in both English language proficiency and discipline-based courses as a basis for investigating to what extent undergraduates transfer their genre knowledge from one course to another. The similarities and differences in rhetorical moves of oral presentations in both English language and discipline-based courses were identified. This is a descriptive study which employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. Using Swales' CARS model (1990), the rhetorical moves of academic oral presentations were analysed. The sample comprised 20 group academic oral presentations from the English language and 20 group academic oral presentations from the discipline-based courses. The visuals in the AOPs were also investigated to compare the differences between the written and spoken modes.

The findings of the study revealed that the undergraduates used same moves of the genre for the introduction, conclusion and question and answer sections. The moves and steps in the body section were different in the both English and discipline based courses as these were determined by the nature of the task and content or the subject matter. However, there were some differences in the move pattern and steps. The results also indicate that knowing the rhetorical structure of the AOP had helped undergraduates transfer genre knowledge of the AOPs from the English language course to the discipline-based courses. The linguistic analysis showed the use of formulaic expressions and metadiscourse markers in the AOPs. Findings indicate similarities and differences of the linguistic features linked to the moves. Additionally, the study also found that content in the visuals and delivery mode was relatively different in both contexts. Undergraduates wrote chunks on their visuals (powerpoint slides) in discipline-based AOPs unlike the English language AOPs which displayed short notes. Despite being trained to avoid reading from the visuals in the English language proficiency classes, the study found that the undergraduates read a lot from the visuals. The use of the rhetorical moves and steps as well as the linguistic features reflected their generic understanding of the AOP. In conclusion, the study

demonstrated that knowing the rhetorical structure of the AOPs can help transfer the generic knowledge from one course to other courses in their discipline.

The pedagogical implications of this study are that the results obtained may assist English language lecturers in preparing appropriate materials and activities to foster genre awareness that can guide undergraduates to equip themselves with generic knowledge that can be transferred from one context to another. Moreover, lecturers may prepare for the areas of weaknesses such as making short notes. By knowing the generic structure of academic oral presentations, undergraduates can perform better as presenters and acquire effective communication skills. The findings of the similarities and differences of the academic oral presentations in English language and discipline-based classes also suggest that faculties work together to make academic oral presentations more meaningful and relevant for the benefit of the undergraduates.

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia sebagai memenuhi keperluan untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

**ANALISIS GENRE PEMBENTANGAN LISAN AKADEMIK
PELAJAR PRASISWAZAH UNIVERSITI AWAM DI MALAYSIA**

Oleh

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Penyelidikan ini mengkaji pergerakan retorik dalam pembentangan lisan akademik (PLA) atau *academic oral presentation* (AOP) pelajar prasiswazah dalam penguasaan bahasa Inggeris dan kursus berasaskan disiplin. Kedua-duanya ini dijadikan sebagai asas untuk melihat sejauh mana mereka memindahkan pengetahuan genre dari satu kursus ke kursus yang lain. Persamaan dan perbezaan dalam pergerakan retorik pembentangan lisan akademik (PLA) dalam kursus bahasa Inggeris dan kursus disiplin akan dikenal pasti. Kajian yang berdasarkan kaedah kuantitatif dan kualitatif ini mengguna pakai model Swales CARS (1990). Sampel kajian merangkumi 20 kumpulan yang mengikuti kursus bahasa Inggeris, manakala 20 kumpulan lagi dari kursus disiplin. Aspek visual dalam PLA turut diteliti untuk membandingkan perbezaan yang wujud dalam kemahiran bertutur dan menulis.

Dapatan kajian mendedahkan bahawa pelajar prasiswazah menggunakan corak pergerakan genre yang sama dalam bahagian pengenalan, kesimpulan dan soalan serta jawapan mereka. Manakala, pergerakan dan langkah-langkah dalam bahagian isi menunjukkan wujudnya perbezaan yang ditentukan oleh jenis tugas dan isi atau kandungan subjek. Walau bagaimanapun, wujud perbezaan dalam bentuk gerakan dan langkah. Dapatan kajian turut menunjukkan bahawa dengan mengetahui struktur retorik PLA telah membantu pelajar memindahkan pengetahuan genre PLA kursus bahasa Inggeris ke kursus disiplin yang lain. Analisis linguistik menunjukkan bahawa wujudnya penggunaan formula ekspresi dan penanda metawacana dalam PLA. Persamaan dan perbezaan ciri linguistik yang dikaitkan dengan pergerakan turut dikenal pasti. Kajian turut mendapati bahawa kandungan visual dan kaedah penyampaian adalah berbeza dalam kedua-dua konteks. Pelajar prasiswazah cenderung memaparkan nota panjang pada slaid visual dalam PLA kursus berasaskan disiplin mereka, akan tetapi sekadar memaparkan nota ringkas dalam PLA bahasa Inggeris. Walaupun telah dilatih untuk mengelakkan membaca dari visual dalam kelas kemahiran bahasa Inggeris, namun mendapati pelajar prasiswazah banyak membaca dari visual. Penggunaan pergerakan retorik dan ciri linguistic membuktikan pemahaman

pengetahuan generic PLA. Sebagai kesimpulan, kajian menunjukkan bahawa mengetahui struktur retorik PLA sebenarnya dilihat dapat membantu memindahkan pengetahuan generik dari satu kursus ke kursus yang lain.

Implikasi pedagogi kajian ini dilihat dapat membantu pensyarah bahasa Inggeris menyediakan bahan dan aktiviti yang sesuai untuk mencambah kesedaran pelajar mengenai genre yang mampu membimbing dan membekalkan diri mereka dengan pengetahuan generik yang dapat dipindahkan dari satu konteks ke konteks yang lain. Malah, pensyarah juga boleh mempersiapkan diri dengan kelemahan-kelemahan pelajar, antaranya seperti kecenderungan membuat nota pendek. Dengan mengetahui struktur generik PLA, sebenarnya pelajar mampu terampil sebagai pembentang yang baik melalui kemahiran komunikasi yang efektif. Dapatan mengenai persamaan dan perbezaan di antara PLA kelas bahasa Inggeris dan kursus berasaskan disiplin turut mencadangkan bahawa sewajarnya diwujudkan kerjasama fakulti untuk menjadikan AOP lebih bermakna dan relevan untuk faedah pelajar khususnya.

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I certify that a Thesis Examination Committee has met on 16 April 2019 to conduct the final examination of Kuldip Kaur a/p Maktiar Singh on her thesis entitled “A Genre Analysis of Academic Oral Presentations of ESL Undergraduates at a Public University in Malaysia” in accordance with the Universities and University College Act 1971 and the Constitution of the Universiti Putra Malaysia [P.U.(A) 106] 15 March 1998. The Committee recommends that the student be awarded the Doctor of Philosophy.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AOP	Academic Oral Presentation
EL	English language
DB	Discipline-based
ELAOP	English language Academic Oral Presentation
DBAOP	Discipline-based Academic Oral Presentation
EAP	English for Academic Purposes
ESP	English for Specific Purposes
NNS	Non-native speakers
CARS	Create a Research Space
IM	Introductory Move
BM	Body Move
CM	Concluding Move
QAM	Questioning and Answering Move
INS	Inviting Next Speaker
TPS	Thanking Previous Speaker



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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

It is widely recognised that oral communication skills, especially in the English language, are essential in the university context. Oral communication skills include one main academic discourse - Academic Oral Presentation (henceforth AOP) which has been the most neglected area in academic discourse studies (Hu & Liu, 2018; Barrett & Liu, 2016; Zareva, 2016; Yang, 2014, Bu 2014; Hyland, 2009; Morita, 2004; Carter-Thomas & Rowley-Jolivet, 2003; Ventola, Shalom & Thompson, 2002; Zappa-Hollman, 2001). Undergraduates are expected to perform oral presentations in most courses and their performances in academic oral presentations reflect their English language competence. ESL learners face greater challenges in keeping abreast with the demands placed upon them by the universities as well as employers. In line with this, the higher education institutions have to vigorously prepare their students to be versatile and marketable employees. Thus, undergraduates have to be trained to acquire oral presentation skills and knowledge in order to be successful in the academic and professional discourse community.

However, the need to participate in academic discourse such as oral presentations in English language has created challenges for ESL learners as they need to know the norms and conventions of the discourse community. At the tertiary level, the emergence of courses in English for Academic Purposes (EAP), English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) aims to produce undergraduates who are skillful and communicatively competent. The Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 highlights the importance of producing students with a good command of English and effective social networking skills to fulfil the needs of a high income economy. Hence, AOP is an important genre for undergraduates in the English Language course as well as in their discipline-based courses to prepare themselves to be more successful at the academic and workplace situations. As Fallows and Stevens (2000) aptly state, globalization and the economic scenario require undergraduates to not only have knowledge on academic subjects, but skills that help them secure employment. Having good oral communication skills will give the undergraduates a competitive advantage over other job seekers. Therefore, making the AOP as a pervasive task in EAP language course is essential.

Universities are training grounds that provide undergraduates opportunities to participate in various academic discourses such as oral presentations. AOPs play an important role in the life of undergraduates as it gives them practice to acquire and enhance various skills such as time management skills, language skills, interpersonal skills, problem solving skills and critical thinking skills. Moreover, when participating in this discourse, undergraduates have to follow academic discourse practices norms, conventions, rules and values of the institution (Bartholomae, 1985). In the university setting, conducting AOPs in English involves the language courses and discipline

based core courses as well. However, a search of the literature revealed that very few studies have been carried out on comparing the AOPs in English language and discipline based course. This could be attributed to the fact that focus has been on written academic genres which have proliferated and flooded the scene of research on academic discourses. We can see that not all research genres have equal value based on Swales' (2004) notion of genre hierarchy. There are commonly perceived and accepted hierarchies in both spoken and written context. In the university, the focus seems to be on written academic genres whereby the end product is written work such as, research article, project proposal, theses and dissertation. Although there are spoken genres such as, conference presentations, viva, defenses or seminars, based on the notion of genre hierarchy, the AOPs of undergraduates seem to be considered as a less prestigious genre and are placed on a very low level. This indicates a need to examine the AOPs of undergraduates.

Moreover, past studies show that there are differences between disciplines for genres in terms of the rhetorical structure and linguistic features (Samraj, 2005; Hyland, 2009; Yang, 2014, Kuteeva, 2013) as variation is expected in the spoken genre (Dubois, 1981). Even though the AOP tasks in the present study are different between the English language and discipline based courses, the researcher was interested to investigate if undergraduates can adapt or apply what they have learnt in the English Language course to other discipline-based courses. This indicates a need to investigate if the AOPs in the English Language (henceforth EL) course and discipline based (henceforth DB) courses are similar or different. In short, as AOPs are conducted in both EL course and DB courses, the researcher wanted to investigate how undergraduates perform in the DB courses.

AOP is a key academic discourse for English language courses as well as discipline based courses. The ability to present effectively does not only depend on linguistic competence but also on genre competence or awareness of the rhetorical structure. The genre knowledge acquired in the English language class may be similar or different from discipline based classes. In such a scenario, it is essential to know how undergraduates transfer genre knowledge from one course to another. Hence there is a need to investigate the rhetorical structure of the EL AOP and DB AOP. In view of this, the present study investigated the rhetorical moves and linguistic features to realise the moves of the AOP genre in both English language and discipline based courses in the local context. By analysing the rhetorical structure of the AOP, how undergraduates display their knowledge of the genre in different courses is examined. Thus, this can shed light on their generic awareness and how they utilise their genre knowledge to different settings and requirements. If the undergraduates are unable to transfer their genre knowledge, this means that they have failed to acquire presentation skills as all rhetorical skills must be context dependent.

Even though there could be differences, the English language course supports the discipline-based courses. Knowledge of AOP in the EL course can be applied in the DB core courses. The genre knowledge of AOP acquired in the EL course can be transferred to the DB AOPs. It has been taken for granted that students apply the AOP genre knowledge acquired from one context to other contexts. Regardless of the communicative functions, the EL course plays a supporting role to the DB courses.

One of the course outcomes as accentuated in the EL course is to enable learners to deliver an effective oral presentation of report (Refer Appendix 3B-1). Thus, the undergraduates have received explicit instruction on the rhetorical structure of an oral presentation for a report. In regard to AOPs in the EL course, the undergraduates are taught to use appropriate and effective language expressions, elements of effective delivery as well as use appropriate and effective visual aids. In the DB courses, the undergraduates are required to present on various topics taught in class such as, implementation of policies, reviewing or providing solutions in public organizations (Refer Appendix 3B-2). As the AOP tasks may be similar or different between the EL and DB courses, the researcher hoped to investigate how undergraduates are able to adapt or apply the generic knowledge of AOPs or what they know, to AOPs in other contexts. In the present study, the term generic knowledge refers to genre knowledge of the AOPs. In short, it is important to examine AOPs in both the EL course and DB courses as it has implications for students, lecturers and curriculum developers.

As the AOP is a key academic discourse and the focus of the present study, a description of AOP is necessary. Academic oral presentation is an academic discourse which is conducted in the university to show undergraduates' understanding of a subject to the audience. Within the English language course (EAP, EOP or ESP) and discipline-based courses offered at universities, the AOP is used as part of the assessment, or to present research projects, and socialize students into the academic discourse community (Zareva, 2011; Duff, 2010; Zappa-Hollman, 2007; Morita, 2000). AOPs can be conducted individually, in pairs or groups, but for the purpose of this study, the researcher focussed on group presentations as they appear to be the most common in the university. Hence, the AOPs in the present study refer to group AOPs which comprise of three to four members.

Studies on academic discourse have mainly focused on writing which warrants investigation on the generic structure of AOP and genre awareness of undergraduates. There is a need to know if undergraduates are able to transfer their genre knowledge from the EL course to other courses in the discipline. Studies have been conducted on the influence of genre awareness (Tardy, 2009; Artemeva & Fox, 2010). Recently studies have reported that genre awareness does not transfer to other courses. (Carroll, 2002; Beaufort, 2007 ; Wardle, 2007). Yet, there are studies that indicate genre awareness helps learners where transferability of genre knowledge had been successful (Devitt, 2004). Genre awareness is important in developing undergraduates' ability to perform oral presentations successfully. Making a successful AOP is challenging for undergraduates as they are expected to present in front of the audience coherently, and participate in question and answer sessions as well as respond within the time imposed (Aguilar, 2004). In other words, AOP though considered difficult, is a very important academic discourse that needs attention.

The English language courses (EAP, EOP, ESP) fulfil the needs of the academic disciplines. Most of the discipline-based courses include the AOP as a component in their assessment to socialize the undergraduates into the academic genre (Zareva, 2011; Duff, 2010; Morita, 2000). The AOP discourse is reported to be the most stressful communicative event as studies have indicated (Vitasari et al., 2010; Radzuan & Kaur, 2011; Sabri & Teah, 2014). The AOP genre is taught in the English language course

and discipline courses to undergraduates, but how are they similar or different? Teaching undergraduates to do good oral presentations means training them with strategies that are effective. One such means is introducing undergraduates to the genre of oral presentation. Knowing the target audience, the communicative purpose and rules stipulated by the discourse community is pertinent (Swales, 1990). The importance of genre knowledge has been widely acknowledged as it helps learners to understand and master academic as well as professional discourse (Swales, 2004). Previous studies on genre analysis have revealed how this can be an effective method in transitioning undergraduates to workplace oral situations (Gray, 2010; Mariana & Siti Akmar, 2013; Hafizoah Kassim & Fatimah Ali, 2010).

When students acquire genre awareness, they are not only learning how to write or speak in a particular genre but they also gain insights into how a genre fulfils a rhetorical purpose (Devitt, 2004). Thus, based on this premise the rationale for the genre-based approach in the present study is that through genre analysis, the rhetorical structure and linguistic features of the AOP genre can be identified and it may reveal the similarities and differences in the English language and discipline based AOPs.

A preliminary study was conducted at the beginning of the study to investigate the challenges faced by undergraduates in their AOPs and ways they addressed them. Based on the findings of a survey questionnaire involving 245 students in the third year of the Bachelor of Administrative Science degree programme, it was revealed that AOPs were considered very important yet the most difficult discourse. The students lack confidence in performing AOPs as indicated in the findings of the preliminary studies. Their anxiety perhaps could be related to their knowledge of the genre which they are not familiar with. Preference of group presentations over individual presentations was also reported as the students claimed they learnt from their peers. As AOP is prevalent in university, this preliminary study established the need to further investigate how students conduct group AOPs in English language and discipline based courses.

Studies on AOPs have been conducted involving undergraduates, graduates and doctoral students (Morita, 2000; Zappa-Hollman, 2001, 2007; Kobayashi, 2005; Chen, 2009; Woodrow, 2006). These studies mainly addressed native speakers but little attention has been given to ESL or NNS in the local context. Studies on Academic Oral Presentation in Malaysia emerged in recent years. These previous studies focussed on challenges in giving oral presentations (Mariana & Siti Akmar, 2013; Noor Hashimah Abd Aziz, 2007), Question & Answer sessions of AOP (Seliman & Noor Izzati, 2010), genre analysis of engineering oral presentations (Seliman, 1996) and communication apprehension (Sabri & Teah, 2014; Mohd Azrizal, 2014; Radzuan & Kaur, 2011; Mustapha et al., 2010). These studies mainly focused on the challenges, anxiety levels, needs analysis from the perspective of students or employers and some genre analysis of the AOPs. Thus it would be useful to study the AOP genre to help undergraduates with their oral presentation skills. The paucity of research in AOPs among undergraduates in local context therefore motivated this study.

In short, as AOP is an important academic discourse, it is vital to understand how undergraduates acquire skills and knowledge of AOPs. In view of this, the present study investigated undergraduates' AOPs in English language and discipline based courses in a local context.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Previous research on academic oral presentations include conference presentations (Wulff et al., 2009; Hood and Forey, 2005; Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005; Dubois, 1980) technical oral presentations (Seliman, 1996), student presentations (Zareva, 2016; Morton, 2009), poster presentations, seminars (Weissberg, 1993; Aguilar, 2004), academic lectures (Lee, 2016, 2009; Yaakob, 2013; Cheng, 2012; Thompson, 1994), three minutes thesis or 3MT presentation (Hu & Liu, 2018) and dissertation defences (Swales, 2004). However, classroom academic oral presentation seems to have not received much attention especially at the tertiary level. Some of the few studies that have focused on student academic presentations at tertiary level (e.g. Zareva, 2009, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2016; Chan et al., 2014; Yu & Cadman, 2009) seems to focus on linguistic features in spoken genres. In order to communicate effectively and make successful oral presentations, undergraduates need to be aware of the rhetorical structure of the AOP genre.

The purpose of teaching AOPs in the English language course is for undergraduates to learn about presentations so that they can perform AOPs in other discipline based courses. This is the rationale why the present study attempts to investigate the rhetorical structure, linguistic features and visuals in the AOP genre. Thus, by analysing the AOP genre, we will know if undergraduates can subjugate from one context to other contexts. This means that if undergraduates have learnt the AOP genre in the EL course, can they apply the same moves in AOPs in other DB courses? As Bhatia (2004) aptly states, learners build their generic competence in this way. More important is the focus on transfer of the generic competence from one AOP genre to another AOP genre. The notion of 'genre prototype' (Swales, 1990) shows that there are common structures and components in academic texts and genres can grow from one main type to another. As genres have dynamic nature, this also gives rise to genre mixing, which develops into hybrid genres, depending on the context (Bhatia, 2004). Even though we conform to the standard rhetorical structure, there is room for rhetorical variation (Flowerdew, 2002; Swales, 1990). Researchers agree that genres could vary between disciplines and within disciplines (e.g. Kuteeva, 2013; Hyland, 2009; Samraj, 2005). There are obligatory or prototype elements in academic texts, but some are optional which enables flexible classification. However, in recent years it has been argued that it is not easy to determine communicative purposes of a genre because there are multiple layers of communicative purposes. Different courses may or may not imply different genre as it is the communicative purpose that determines the identification of a genre.

In addition, although the two types of AOPs in the present study vary, their communicative purpose on a general level appears similar, namely to review organizations and propose new solutions or initiatives. So do these two types of AOPs

belong to the same genre? There is no simple answer to that as Samraj (2005) and Askehave and Swales (2001) argue it is not always clear what the communicative purpose of a set of texts is as it can be general or specific. Therefore, a gap in the literature shows that there is a rationale to further research the rhetorical structure of AOPs in different courses (Yang, 2014) as there are limited studies on AOPs of undergraduates in the English language and discipline based classes especially in Malaysia.

Genre based studies have been conducted on the rhetorical structure of oral presentations but most of the studies investigated only focused on one section of the oral presentation. The sections of the oral presentations include the introduction, the body, conclusion and Question and Answer sections. However, to the researcher's knowledge, studies on the whole rhetorical structure of the AOP are very limited with the exception of Seliman (1996) and Mariana (2010), who also excluded the Question and Answer section in their analysis. In a later study, Seliman & Noor Izzati (2010) investigated only the Question and Answer section of AOP. The examination of the AOPs in totality involving all sections has not received much attention. Therefore, an important gap in the literature is the rhetorical structure of AOP in totality, which the present study attempts to address by including all sections of the genre – introduction, body, conclusion and question and answer or discussion. Investigating all the sections of the AOP is significant as genre based studies on individual sections of AOP result in fragmented knowledge of how this genre is constructed in its entirety. Furthermore, when spoken genre is spontaneous, in reality, we tend to perform the whole or complete genre. Likewise, when AOP is executed, we present the whole or complete AOP which includes all sections, unlike written genre where we may write for instance, the introduction or conclusion sections only. As Swales (1990) and Bhatia (1993) state the communicative purpose is the main criterion to identify genres, thus analysing the AOP genre as a whole is necessary in order to find the intentional pragmatic meaning. This study thus, attempts to describe all the rhetorical moves, involving all sections of the AOP between the English language course and discipline-based courses. People may be very fluent in English but lack the knowledge of generic forms used by the discourse community (Bakhtin, 1986, p.80). Additionally, there are also disciplinary differences in how AOPs are conducted (Shalom, 1993; Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005). The terms 'discipline', 'sub-discipline', 'English and Non English' are used by scholars when comparing genre in two different contexts. In the present study, the terms used are English language (henceforth EL) and discipline based (henceforth DB), which refers to other courses within the same discipline.

In addition to rhetorical structure, there are also specific linguistic features which are pertinent for effective oral presentations. Linguistic features in conference presentations that have been analysed include the use of active voice, discourse markers, boundary markers and self-mentions (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002; Webber, 2005, Lee, 2009). The linguistic elements examined in previous oral genre studies include metadiscourse markers in lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015), text structuring (Thompson, 2003), signalling transitions in OPs (Anthony et al., 2007; Kibler et al., 2014), interpersonal features in lectures (Lee, 2009; Morell, 2007) and academic conference (Thompson, 2003), as well as stance in academic speech (Yang, 2014). The presence of such linguistic features typifies a more interactive spoken genre which involves managing information and engaging with a live audience. In order to present

effectively, knowing the linguistic features that will realize the rhetorical moves of the AOP is very crucial. The information or content of AOPs is mainly from written academic sources (Zareva, 2016) and delivered orally, thus, we can expect the AOPs to share certain linguistic features with the written prose. Previous studies of linguistic features in academic spoken genre include multi-word verbs, (Zareva, 2016), adverbials (Zareva, 2009; 2011), self-mentions (Zareva, 2013; Fernandez-Polo, 2017), metadiscourse markers (Yang, 2014; Lee, 2009; Thompson, 2003), and formulaic expressions or lexical bundles (Kashiha & Chan, 2014; Yaakob, 2013; Qi & Ding, 2011) to name a few. In relation to this, previous studies on written genre has shown that there are variations in the use of linguistic features across disciplines such as, the use of metadiscourse markers in research articles (Hyland & Tze, 2004; Khedri et al., 2015), lexical bundles in student writing (Cortes, 2004), hedges in research abstracts (Hyland, 2004). In spoken genre, there are few studies that have examined the variations in the use of linguistic features for instance, the use of hedges between Malaysian and American doctorate defences (Damiano-Nittoli, 2016), metadiscourse markers between EAP classrooms and content-area lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015), adverbials in students presentations (Zareva, 2009, 2011, 2012), formulaic expressions in monologues (Qi & Ding, 2011), and formulaic sequences in academic speech (Kashiha & Chan, 2014).

Moreover, past studies on AOPs have been restricted to linguistic features in individual sections of the genre such as lexical bundles in lecture introductions (e.g. Yaakob, 2013, Lee & Subtirelu, 2015), personal pronouns in lecture closings (Cheng, 2012) or certain linguistic features in the whole genre such as interpersonal features in lectures (Morell, 2007), adverbials (e.g. Zareva, 2009, 2011) and self-mentions (Zareva, 2013) in student academic presentations. It is noticed that when undergraduates enter university, they have to undergo English language proficiency classes where they are taught oral presentation skills. The researcher observed that the undergraduates also have to perform oral presentations in their discipline based courses. In this regard, the researcher was interested to investigate how the novice undergraduates perform in DB AOPs for instance, do they use more discipline specific vocabulary or specific grammatical structures in the discipline based AOPs, as different types of courses may affect the linguistic features used in AOPs. It is important to compare both the linguistic features in both the EL and DB AOPs as language instructors can raise students' awareness of the linguistic features they may be expected to employ in their discipline. There is lack of studies on AOP variations across or within disciplines among ESL undergraduates in the Malaysian context. To be able to present effectively, undergraduates also need to know about the linguistic features used to realize the rhetorical moves. Therefore, the present study addressed this gap by investigating the linguistic features that realise the moves that are prevalent in the AOP genre in both the English language and discipline based courses.

Apart from the rhetorical structure and linguistic analysis of AOPs, the use of visuals has also attracted researchers. Lately, studies have been conducted on visuals in oral presentations, such as in conference presentations (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002; 2012; 2015, Wecker, 2012), student presentations (Zareva, 2013; Mestre-Mestre, 2015) and lectures (Forey & Feng, 2016). Visuals such as, PPT slides and texts on oral presentations should be seen as part of the generic structure of oral presentations just like the Question and Answer section. Hyland (2009) notes that interaction between the verbal

and visual mode has not received much attention as focus is on speech in oral genre. Although powerpoint presentations are widely used, there is very little research done on this area especially from a linguistic point of view (Degano, 2012). Likewise, very few studies that compare visual and verbal mode in AOPs have been conducted in the local context (Puvaneswary, 2016). The researcher is of the opinion that AOPs must be in tandem with their slides. To what extent should the spoken and visual mode be in tandem? It is necessary to see it hand in hand if the presenter is concurrent with what he or she is saying as well as, to see if the presenter talks more or less than what is displayed on the slides.

Moreover, based on observations we have seen how examiners or instructors detest large chunks displayed on the slides and students reading wholly from the slides. The researcher's own personal experience is testament that students read chunks or refer to notes most of the time in AOPs. This is not good as it is contradictory of oral presentation skills that allow only short notes. We often see in oral presentations what is spoken and displayed on the slides, for example spelling or typo errors are ignored. Even professional speakers take it for granted that it's the norm. Are we condoning to such practices? We seem to be condoning as we consider spelling, typo or grammatical errors to be so minute that we do not comment on it. Nobody bothers and errors in typo appear to be acceptable and have become habitual nowadays, for example, in social media such as, Facebook. Likewise, for AOPs, the researcher feels its high time to be serious about the errors on visuals, be it technical or non-technical, as it is taken for granted that it's the norm everywhere. Why then are workshops or courses on effective oral presentations being conducted and the business is so lucrative? We have fallen into the internet age and this thing is spontaneously learnt but shouldn't there be some way to correct this? This notion should be investigated as it can affect the grades or marks of students. Hence, it is necessary to examine the juxtaposition of visuals and verbal mode of the AOPs as little has been done on this area.

Additionally, most previous studies on spoken genre are based on available spoken corpora such as, the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and the British Academic Spoken English Corpus (BASE) which has its limitations as only transcripts were analysed. The researchers of the studies did not consider the role of non-verbal communication and multimodality. As such, researchers have no opportunity to interview the presenters or view their slides. Therefore this study will address these gaps by investigating the rhetorical structure, linguistic features and visuals in English Language and discipline-based AOPs.

Given that AOPs are conducted in both the EL and DB courses, can the AOP skill that is taught in the EL course help undergraduates in the DB courses? The term 'transfer' means the extent the AOP in the EL course help undergraduates perform AOP in DB classes. Genre awareness is a means of facilitating transfer from one context to another (Clark & Hernandez, 2011) and if undergraduates have the genre awareness of the AOPs, it will help them in developing the rhetorical flexibility necessary for adapting their social-cognitive genre knowledge to ever-evolving context (Johns, 2008). Explicit teaching of a particular genre may make students produce a text that imitates its form and style but without genre awareness, they will not understand how

the text 'works' to fulfil its purpose and thus, when they come across a new genre in another course, they may lack the tools to engage with it effectively. Students need genre knowledge as one of the domains or mental schema that writers invoke as they analyse new writing tasks in new contexts (Beaufort, 2009). Similarly, Devitt (2004) asserts the need for students to acquire genre awareness. In the context of AOPs, if undergraduates have the generic knowledge, it means the overall communicative competence. In the present study, the researcher uses the term 'generic knowledge' to refer to overall genre knowledge of AOP. This genre knowledge is attained in the second year of degree course and it is taught to undergraduates in the EL course. When undergraduates have genre awareness of the AOP, this means that they are able to use the appropriate language features such as, grammar, linguistic expressions, vocabulary and rhetorical moves in other AOP contexts or in other words, transfer the genre knowledge. By analysing the occurrences and moves, it is an attempt to see if undergraduates have the generic understanding of AOPs.

1.3 Purpose and Scope of Study

In light of the importance of studies in AOPs based on the research problem outlined above, the purpose of the study is to investigate whether undergraduates are able to transfer genre knowledge of the AOP genre from one context to other contexts. Analysing the generic structure is a means by which information such as how undergraduates' transfer their generic knowledge of the AOP which includes how they execute the genre in EL and DB classes. A further justification of examining the rhetorical structure of AOPs in the two different classes (EL and DB courses) is to extend the analysis of the rhetorical structure of AOPs in totality, not just looking at certain sections of the genre. In view of limited studies undertaken on this oral discourse from a genre perspective, this study will focus on all the sections of the AOP. Therefore, an important purpose is to define the rhetorical structure of the AOP by analysing the moves and steps in the genre, the linguistic features used to realize the moves, and the visuals that support and link the moves.

In attempting the above, the study sought to examine the linguistic production of the undergraduates' AOP from a genre perspective. Through move analysis, the study explores the linguistic features used to realize the moves found in the AOPs which can be useful for novice undergraduates. In addition, the purpose of conducting the present study has been motivated by the increasing attention given to multimodality in spoken discourse. The scope of this study was confined to data obtained from undergraduates in Year 2 and Year 3 for two semesters in certain subjects. The non-linguistic features such as body language and gestures also are known to affect AOPs but these were not given prominence in the present study.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

To examine the language and structure in AOPs by undergraduate students in the English language and discipline based classes, the following objectives were formulated:

1. To determine the rhetorical move structure of various sections in Academic Oral Presentations (AOPs) in the English language class and discipline-based class
2. To examine the linguistic features that realize the moves in AOPs in the English language class and discipline-based class
3. To compare the visuals and verbal mode of AOPs in English language class and discipline-based class
4. To examine the extent the use of rhetorical and linguistic structure reflects students' generic understanding of AOPs

1.5 Research Questions

The study addressed the following research questions.

1. What are the rhetorical moves in all sections of AOPs in the English language class and discipline-based class?
2. What are the linguistic features used to realize the moves of the AOPs?
3. What are the similarities and differences in visuals and verbal mode that realize the moves of AOPs in the English language class and discipline-based class?
4. In what ways do the similarities and differences in the use of rhetorical and linguistic structures reflect students' generic understanding of AOPs?

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for this study was drawn primarily from the genre theory. Genre analysis has been applied in some studies of spoken academic discourse (Thompson, 1994; Weissberg, 1993; Swales, 2004; Aguilar, 2004; Rowley-Jolivet & Carter-Thomas, 2005). These studies investigated the rhetorical structure or moves such as introductions, body of presentations, closing, and question and answer sessions based on the genre theory.

A genre-based approach to AOP is necessary as the undergraduates will acquire knowledge of the generic structure as well as grasp the linguistic structures that identify with this discourse. There are three schools of thought on genre theory namely the North American New Rhetoric Studies, Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics and ESP. The differences in these three schools are elaborated in the literature review in the next chapter. To identify the rhetorical structure of the AOPs in the present study, the ESP approach to genre is applied.

Based on the genre theory, genres are defined by their communicative purpose. In this study the investigation of the rhetorical structure and linguistic features will shed light on the communicative purpose of the AOP as a genre. According to Bhatia (1993), a genre is "a successful achievement of a specific communicative purpose using the

conventional knowledge of linguistic and discoursal resources” (p.16). Genre is a communicative event and identified and mutually understood by members of the professional or academic community. Bhatia further states, from the viewpoint of applied genre analysis, the purpose of genre analysis is two-fold: “first, to characterise typical or conventional textual features of any genre specific text in an attempt to identify pedagogically utilizable form-function correlations; and second, to explain such a characterization in the context of socio-cultural as well as the cognitive constraints operating in the relevant area of specialization, whether professional or academic” (1993, p.16). In order to realize the AOP genre in this study, the macro-level analysis or generic structure or moves of AOPs were focussed. For the description of the rhetorical structure of the AOPs, the researcher used ‘move’ as a unit of analysis, following other scholars such as Swales (1990), Bhatia (1993), Nwogu (1997) and many others.

The micro level analysis of genre involves the linguistic realization of the moves. When undergraduates conduct AOPs, they also employ a variety of linguistic features to realise the rhetorical moves. The linguistic features analysed in this study involved the formulaic expressions and metadiscourse markers. Formulaic expressions are important as students will know the words or phrases associated with the moves in the AOPs, and this will help them communicate fluently. This is consistent with Pho’s (2009) claim that it is necessary to look at a string of words which co-occur frequently rather just single linguistic features.

The formulaic expressions in the present study were analysed based on the genre-functional formulaic sequences classified by Hüttner (2005). The formulaic expressions are used to express communicative function of move boundaries (Refer Chapter 2). The metadiscourse markers, which is, the interactive and interactional discourse markers such as, frame markers, hedges, personal pronouns, transitions, and boosters, were analysed based on Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy for metadiscourse markers (Refer Chapter 2). When undergraduates present, they need to use the correct linguistic features or expressions. The linguistic features help undergraduates in organising their discourse, engaging the audience and signalling the speaker’s attitude. Therefore, the undergraduates need to be equipped with these linguistic features in order to present AOPs effectively.

Closely connected to genre theory is schema theory as when undergraduates conduct AOPs, they are expected to use the rhetorical moves that they have been taught. The link between genre and schema has been recognised by scholars (Swales, 1990: Bhatia, 1993) because there are moves in the AOP genre and if undergraduates possess this schema, they can understand how to conduct effective AOPs. Swales (1990), observes that schemata guide the production and comprehension of both content and forms of text. Thus, appropriate schemata must exist and should be activated to enable efficient production and comprehension. Acquiring genre skills is dependent on the schemata which give rise to content schemata and formal schemata (Swales, 1990, p.9). Undergraduates need to know the move-structure of the AOP discourse as Bhatia (1993) states having ‘genre schema’ of the genre is crucial as it will determine success in academia. Novice undergraduates are provided training in AOPs in the English language course in order to help them perform AOPs in their discipline based courses.

However to what extent they transfer this knowledge to other AOPs in the discipline courses is not known. Undergraduates' prior genre knowledge or schema and experiences of AOPs may have an effect on the production of AOPs in new contexts.

Another theory related to the present study is multimodality theory which postulates the importance of various verbal and non-verbal modes in oral presentations (Kress & van Leeuwen (1996; 2006). Non-verbal mode includes the paralinguistic features, body language and visuals. However, the focus of the present study is on the visuals or powerpoint slides of AOPs. Visuals are part of a generic structure of AOPs, especially so in the digital era where rarely are their AOPs performed without the use of visuals. Visuals can convey messages and fulfil communicative purposes, therefore it is important to examine how the visuals are integrated in the AOPs. Undergraduates are encouraged to use powerpoint slides in their AOPs as part of their lifelong learning skills. Based on the multimodality theory, language and visual communication both play a fundamental role in communication and can be independent of each other. The analysis of the visuals or PPT slides in the AOPs is based on Rowley-Jolivet's (2002) established typology of visuals. For each slide, the semiotic type is identified based on this typology. The visuals are classified into four types, namely scriptural, graphical, numerical and figurative (refer Chapter 3).

In short, the theories that drive the present study are the genre theory, schema theory and multimodality theory. In order to understand AOP, the researcher looked at the genre theory which states that there are rhetorical moves in the AOP. In order to realise the moves, undergraduates must have knowledge of the linguistic features involved. Multimodality theory says people communicate through various verbal and non-verbal modes. Finally, the schema theory explains how prior knowledge (formal schema, content schema, language schema) can help in discourse processing and production. The figure 1.1 is a graphic representation of the theoretical framework of undergraduates discourse practice (AOP).

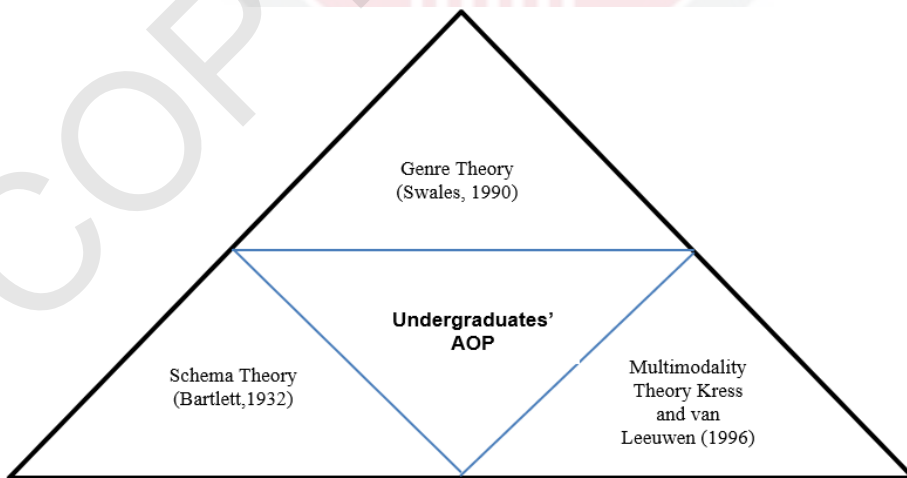


Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework

Discourse practices such as the AOPs lead to acquisition of rhetorical structures. Knowing the rhetorical structure of the AOP is crucial as it can affect the undergraduates' AOP and reflect on their genre competence. Through participation in the AOPs, the undergraduates will acquire the genre knowledge by applying the prescribed moves or rhetorical structure in their AOPs. Having generic competence means the students are able to adapt or transfer the genre knowledge from one context to another context. The linguistic features also play a crucial role in the AOPs. Hence, the employment of the correct linguistic features helps to realise the moves, organize speech and show speaker's stance and audience engagement in the AOPs.

1.7 Definition of Key Terms

Academic Discourse

Academic discourse refers to the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy (Hyland, 2009).

Academic Oral Presentation

Academic oral presentation (AOP) is an academic discourse conducted in university where undergraduates have to present on a given topic to display understanding of a subject and development of certain skills. AOP is established as a formal oral assessment and has informal and conversational expressions of seminars, are usually informal and audience friendly (Hyland, 2009).

Genre

Genre is defined as a distinctive kind of text. It is a recognised communicative event with a purpose that is understood by people belonging to the professional or academic discourse community in which it is intended for (Swales, 1990). Examples of genres are business reports, research articles, text books, conference presentations, seminars, lectures, e-mails, blog-writing discussion group postings.

Moves

A genre represents a set of moves or conventions that are familiar to the professional or academic community that share a communicative purpose. A move is a unit of language made by the writer and is realized by its function or purpose for which it is used in the discourse (Swales, 1990).

Genre Knowledge

Genre knowledge is an individual's repertoire of situationally appropriate responses to recurrent situations. It is the type of knowledge that is required to communicate within a discourse community (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995).

Genre Competence

Genre competence refers to the genre knowledge that one can apply across genres in other contexts. The ability to identify, construct, interpret and successfully exploit a specific repertoire of professional, disciplinary or workplace genres to participate in daily activities and achieve the goals of a specific professional community (Bhatia, 2004).

Genre Awareness

Ability to produce a discourse that is appropriate to the situation or context (Swales, 1990). It is also referred as 'consciousness raising' (Tardy, 2009).

Schema

Schema or schemata refers to unconscious mental structures or frameworks that represent an individual's generic knowledge about the world. It is through schemata that old knowledge influences new information (Bartlett, 1932). Three types of schema are content schema (prior knowledge about the topic of the text), formal schema (awareness of the structure of the text), and language schema (knowledge of the vocabulary and relationships of the words in text). In this study, the formal and language schema will be investigated.

Discourse Community

Discourse community refers to a group of people who share a set of discourses, understood as basic values and assumptions, and ways of communicating about those goals. Swales (1990) defines discourse communities as "groups that have goals or purposes, and use communication to achieve these goals."

Formulaic Expressions

Formulaic expressions refer to a sequence of words, stored in the brain as a prefabricated chunk and retrieved holistically from the memory at the time of use (Wray and Perkins, 2000). Various terms are used to refer to formulaic expressions such as, formulaic sequences, lexical bundles, multi-word verbs, and prefabricated chunks.

Metadiscourse Markers

Metadiscourse markers are linguistic devices to organise texts, engage readers and signal attitudes to the spoken or written text and audiences. Metadiscourse markers can be categorized as interactive metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse markers which have different functions in the discourse (Hyland, 2005)

1.8 Significance of the Study

Undergraduates in university participate in various academic discourse practices to build their expertise and be accepted into the discourse community. In order to be accepted as a member into the discourse community, they need to learn the rules of the academic world. Although previous research on undergraduates discourse practices has been conducted, it still lacks in-depth study on classroom presentations and how students handle them. This study attempts to investigate the complete rhetorical structure of AOPs in two different courses. As there are very limited studies conducted that focused on the whole macro-structure of AOP, this study will look into the various sections of AOP in English Language class and discipline-based class. The overall purpose is to present an analysis of rhetorical structure of AOP and the linguistic features selected for the study and can be used by researchers in other disciplines.

This study is significant in a number of ways. Firstly, it contributes to genre theory by adding local ESL undergraduates as a participant population. Through such a study, the ways undergraduates build their expertise in their discipline can be examined. The analysis of AOP of the study is particularly significant because the findings will shed some light on whether AOPs prepare students adequately for the academic and professional discourse community. Thus, it will add knowledge to a growing body of literature that views AOP. In addition, there have been few local studies investigating the generic structure of AOPs at the tertiary level. Therefore, the significance of this study lies primarily as to how they handle AOPs in different classes. Hence, the results of this study will have positive effects on the undergraduates, faculties and institution.

Besides the contribution to genre theory, the findings will create awareness among academics by providing some insights in relation to AOP. It can assist academics to provide the necessary materials and skills for their disciplines. Undergraduates are required to present based on the conventions and norms set up by their discourse community in this case their faculty or institution. Discovering the problems faced by undergraduates can help all stakeholders to improve their AOP performance. Thus, this study informs academics, policy makers and curriculum designers to play a more significant role in undergraduates AOP. The results can help in the teaching of oral presentation skills as the rhetorical moves and linguistic analysis can be highlighted to undergraduates. Moreover, curriculum designers will be able to see whether there is link between what undergraduates are taught in English classes and other courses of their discipline. By making it known to undergraduates on the rhetorical structure of AOPs, the academics help prepares the undergraduates to be knowledge creators rather than knowledge consumers. In other words, experts could help novices in this case the undergraduates, to adapt to academic practices. Similarly, the management of the

institution too may help prepare undergraduates to keep abreast with technology and current changes. The findings of linguistic features and visuals used will alert academics who take it for granted and assume undergraduates know how to prepare visuals. Since similar studies are lacking in Malaysian context, it is the aim of the current study to help undergraduates and academics in preparing for AOP.

1.9 Overview of the Dissertation

This dissertation is organised in five chapters. The first chapter provides the background of the problem, followed by the objectives of the study as well as research questions. The chapter also discusses the theoretical framework of the study, the definition of key terms, the significance and limitations. Chapter two reviews the literature on genre theory, schema theory, linguistic elements such as formulaic expressions and metadiscourse markers, and multimodality theory. Besides, it also describes the link between academic oral presentations, genre analysis and previous research on academic oral presentations. The third chapter presents the research methodology. The fourth chapter presents the research findings and analysis. The last chapter provides discussion, the limitations, conclusion and recommendations for future research.

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