

# Generic Structure of an Important, but Neglected, Academic Genre, Undergraduate Thesis Defence Examination, and its Pedagogic Implications. A Collective Case Study at Four Universities in Aceh and North Sumatra Provinces, Indonesia

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## Abstract

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Thesis defence examination (TDE) is an important event for students to complete to pursue their degree in many countries. Following Swales (1990, 2004) TDE can be considered as a class of communicative events, which has its own genre that has elements (or parts). Understanding the genre of an event could help students to perform competently. One major element of the TDE genre is its generic structure. Mastering this structure is important as it can give a frame which can guide learners in preparing for and performing in the TDE. Although a few researchers have argued that the structure could limit the creativity of students, the authors of this article adopt the positive position of other researchers who found that the structure is beneficial at least for beginners because the structure gives them an idea of the overall form of the TDE, which can provide them with a direction to follow with some degree of creativity to exercise, and when they have acquired the common structure, they can exercise their creativity as they like. Without a common structure as a model, at least some, if not all, students would struggle as found in our interviews with our research participants. As in many other countries, in Indonesia, the TDE is an activity that university students have to pass in order to graduate in all degrees including undergraduate degrees. However, there is no research-based information on the genre has been found. This issue has been questioned by academic communities not only in the country but also overseas. This study, which is part of a broader study, is an attempt to fill the gap. The data for this research were collected using qualitative methods, which include direct and indirect observations, video recordings, note taking, and interviews with students and examiners. The field research was carried out in Aceh and North Sumatra provinces, Indonesia, for eight months. This article reports the results of the study.

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**Keywords:** Undergraduate students, poor performance, genre, genre-based approach, genre elements, thesis defense examination

## Introduction

Thesis defence examination (TDE) is an important event for students to complete their degree in many countries such as the UK, the USA and Indonesia. It is an opportunity for students to demonstrate their competence in their research project and in presenting its process and results orally before a team of examiners, for the team assess whether they have met the criteria to graduate. Specifically, performance in the TDE plays an important role in determining the grade point average (GPA) at universities in this country. Considering the importance of the TDE, students have to work seriously to understand their research project, including the thesis writing, and perform in a TDE competently. It means that they should have the ability to deliver and defend their arguments verbally. In order to perform competently in a TDE, students' understanding of the generic structure (GS) of TDE is crucial because it is one of the important elements in the TDE genre because all examinees have to perform competently in the activities outlined in this structure. Unfortunately, there is not much research-based information on the undergraduate-level of TDE to help the students.

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Although there are many general guides available when searched on the Internet since many universities have their own respective guides, but there is hardly an empirical research report on it. There has been some limited research on the subject, but so far, it has concentrated on TDE at doctoral levels. For example, the studies conducted by Grimshaw, Feld, and Jenness (1994), Burke (1994), Hasan (1994) and Swales (2004). Other studies investigated the purposes of conducting TDE. Kelly (2010) finds that the TDE held at doctorate level is aimed at testing the knowledge of the students regarding their research project and a chance for the examiners to ask questions and to give feedback to the students. Kiley (2009) argues that the TDE is an opportunity for the students to make arguments and to explain the unclear parts of their thesis verbally. Maniguenau (2002) says that the TDE is a time where the students show their competence in their research field. Tinker and Jackson (2000) add that the TDE is an opportunity to demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge. Accordingly, there is a clear gap of information on undergraduate TED, including its generic structure, awaiting to be filled. Pedagogically, such a research-based structure can help course designers to develop a preparatory course(s) which can adequately prepare their students with knowledge and skills to perform successfully in a TDE.

The research reported in this article is part of a broader research project, and this part of the project was intended to draw a common generic structure(s) (GS or GSs) of the TDE practiced at Indonesian universities, with a case study at four selected universities in Indonesia, pseudonymed Nanggroe University, Negeri Institute, Syiar University and Media University. Therefore, the main research question posed by this study was: What is the GS(s) of the TDE conducted at these universities, and what are their pedagogical implications?

It was hoped that the discovery of the TDE Generic structure(s) would be able not only to fill the information gap in the literature, but also to help lecturers to prepare their students for a TDE, for example, by improving the contents and effectiveness of the current TDE preparation units (courses) at their universities, so that the students can have a clearer understanding of the TDE and acquire the necessary skills to perform successfully in their own TDE. According to interviews with the informants of this research, such a clear understanding is not coherently presented in these units, and therefore, the necessary skills such as public speaking skills, thesis presentation skills, and the skill in answering examiners' questions are not adequately taught and practiced. Therefore, they were not adequately prepared for their TDE.

### Literature Review

In the literature, a variety of names are used for TDE in different countries. Hasan (1994) has reported that in the USA, the TDE is known as an institutionalized pedagogical activity. In the UK, the TDE is called *viva voce*, and in other European countries, it is called public defence. In Indonesia alone, the TDE is called differently too, according to its levels: *ujian skripsi* for undergraduate degree, *ujian tesis* for master degree, and *ujian disertasi* for doctorate degree. But its function and significance are the same. It is a vital requirement for the students to graduate. In other words, in order to graduate, the students have to present and defend their thesis in front of a team of examiners. The students are examined by their academic advisors and at least one external examiner to minimise possible biased result (Tinker & Jackson, 2000).

There are four well-known generic structures (GSs) found in the literature. The first three GSs were found by Grimshaw, Feld, and Jenness (1994), Burke (1994) and Hasan (1994). These researchers identified the GSs through analysing the performance of one female doctorate student, named Lee, at a TDE event held at Mid Western State University. The data that these researchers observe and analyse is a one-hour observation, a two-hour audio recording (it is not clear whether this was from presentations of two students), and one copy of the student's thesis examined at the TDE. Interestingly, from this one source, the three groups of researchers produce three different models. For the purpose of discussing the models, in this article, the three models drawn by these researchers are respectively called as Grimshaw's model, Burke's model, and Hasan's model. The models are described below.

The GSs that they identified consist of some segments and some activities under the segments. Grimshaw's model consists of four segments: the opening, defence proper, in-camera and closing. In the *opening segment*, the candidate was given an opportunity to inform the examiners about her personal background, which includes some details of her education. The examinee used this opportunity to present her personal details to the

examiners. These details may help the examiners to know about the examinee's identity and professional background. Then, it was followed by a summary of the examinee's thesis, including the design of the research project and the major findings. The examinee spent more time on this part to convince the examiners that she is highly competent in conducting research. The examinee being observed by Grimshaw et al. (1994) clearly informed the examiners of the procedures she followed during the process of data collection and analysis and results. Through this information, the examiners judged whether the result was valid and reliable or otherwise.

In the *defence proper segment*, the examiners were free to interrupt the examinee by asking questions. The questions were related to the theoretical conceptualisation, research design, data, analysis, findings, interpretations and implications. There were also questions related to the examinee's future plans upon the completion of the study. The examiners asked questions freely about any unclear information in the topic. In other words, each of the examiners was not restricted by a specific section(s) allocated to him/her by the department or the panel.

In the *in-camera segment*, the examinee was asked to leave the room for approximately ten minutes. During this time the examiners evaluated both the written and oral performances of the examinee. In this segment, the examiners decided the final outcome.

The last activity is the *closing segment*. In this segment, the chair announced the result and congratulated the examinee, who was declared successful in the examination, was congratulated by the committee members. The examinee also completed the necessary documentation such as signing the forms, and left the room.

The generic structure proposed by Burke (1994) has some similarities to and differences when compared with the Grimshaw's model. The similarities are found in some activities, for example, in the *introductory background (the opening segment)*, the examinee presented her personal information and conducted the thesis presentation. Then, in the *wrap-up (closing segment)*, the examinee signed the necessary documents. These activities can be found in both models. The differences are also found in relation to the number of and the terms used for the segments and the detail of activities. The Burke's model consists of five segments, while the Grimshaw's model has four segments. The terms used for an individual segment are different. In the Burke's model, for example, the first segment is called *introductory background*, while in the Grimshaw's model, it is called *the opening segment*. The *question and answer segment* in the Burke's model is called *defence proper* in the Grimshaw's model. The *interlude and assessment* in the Burke's model is called *in-camera segment* in the Grimshaw's model. The *wrap-up* segment in the Burke's model is the same as *closing segment* in the Grimshaw's model. In terms of activities in each segment, the Grimshaw's model provides the details of the activities of the examiners and the examinee, while the Burke's model focused on the number of questions asked by the examiners and the examinee, as can be seen in the *questions and answers segments*. The possible reason for these differences is that the researchers use their own interpretation based on their knowledge and experience when involved in TDE research.

The Hasan's model shows some similarities and differences when compared to the other two models previously discussed. The similarities concern the number of segments and activities, between the Grimshaw's and this model. The Hasan's model uses the same number and name of segments as the Grimshaw's model. The activities in the segment are also similar to the activities in the Grimshaw's model. However, the terms used for the activities are different. Hasan's model provides more detail information about the activities in each segment. In terms of activities, there are similarities amongst the three models. In the *opening segment*, for example, the three models have the examinee introduces her-self before the examiners. However, some differences among the models are also found, for example in the Hasan's model, the presentation occurs in the *defence segment*, while in the Grimshaw's and Burke's, this activity occurs in the *opening segment* and the *introductory background segment*, respectively. Then, 'asking the examinee to return to the room' occurs *in-camera segment* in the Hasan's model, but it occurs in the *closing segment* in the Grimshaw's model and in the *interlude segment* of the Burke's model.

The Hasan's model categorises the activities into 'obligatory' and 'optional'. However, it is unclear how she found the two categories since they must be based on many presentations, while her analysis was only based on an observation of one presentation, a two hour presentation recording. Although it is not clear whether she had two presentations in the recording or not, but even if it had two presentations, still she used a very small number

of instances to make such a category. Moreover, it was likely that the data was collected only from one university. Nevertheless, these categories are not found in the other two models, making this model different from the other two. ‘Obligatory’ is given when the activity must occur in every TDE event (100%). Meanwhile, the label ‘optional’ is given when an activity occurs but they do not present in every move or step, for example, the personal introduction (PI). According to this analyst, the PI is optional because this activity need not necessary to occur if the examinee is known to the examiners. The PI is only conducted when interaction between the examinee and the committee members has been minimal. The second optional activity is advice to the candidate (AC), this activity is also optional because this activity only happens to an examinee who is less competent in presenting and defending their respective thesis, so, there is room to give a further advice. In contrast, this activity does not occur with an examinee who performs excellently, and who needs no further advice. The third optional activity is the verdict affect (VA), congratulation from examiners. The VA is optional because this activity does not inherently belong to the TDE, which means that the TDE can still reach the end whether or not the examinee receives congratulation from his colleagues or committee members. Again, the question is how such a generalization could be made if the data source is so small.

Despite the differences discussed above, the above researchers (Grimshaw, Feld & Jenness, 1994; Burke, 1994; and Hasan, 1994) include very similar elements in their models. The Grimshaw’s and Hasan’s models have four segments in a TDE. Burke (1994) added one more segment called *interlude*, which appears between the *opening* and the *assessment* segments. The *interlude segment* in Burke’s model is included in closing segment of the Grimshaw’s model, and in *the in-camera segment* of Hasan’s model. Only the terms used for the segments and activities are different. Each researcher used their own terms for the segments and activities even though the meanings are basically the same.

The fourth model found in the literature is created by Swales (2004). For this study, this model is called the Swales’ model. The Swales’ model seems to be based on a wider spectrum of data than the other three models in that it is from several observations of four different fields of study at the University of Michigan, the USA; these are social psychology, musicology, electrical engineering and computer science, and biology. Similar to the previous three models discussed above, Swales’ model is also taken from doctoral students. Being different from the other three models, Swales (2004) uses the term *the preliminaries segment* for the *opening segments* found in Grimshaw’s and Hasan’s models or the *introductory background segment* of the Burke’s model. Like Grimshaw’s and Hasan’s models, Swales’ model, has four segments. In each of these four segments, there are some activities too. Like the Hasan’s Model, optional and obligatory are also used, but named differently.

The first segment is the *preliminaries*. Within this segment, four activities are included. First, the candidate was asked to introduce him/herself. The candidate might state his/her name and student number. In the second activity, the chair asked the candidate and the audience to leave the room. In the third activity, the committee reviewed the evaluation criteria and the TDE procedures, and agreed on each. In the fourth activity, a member (one of committee members) recalled the candidate and the audience. This means that all the parties are ready for the examination. In this segment, a personal introduction is considered optional. This activity is not necessary in this segment because it may not happen if the examiners or panel members know the examinee well.

The second segment is the *defence proper*. In this segment, there are several activities. Firstly, the chair summarised the agreed procedures. This optional activity was to ensure that the candidate knows what she/he had to do during the examination. Secondly, the candidate was invited to conduct his/her presentation. In the presentation, the candidate could provide a summary of the research project. The third activity was asking questions to the examinee in the round. This activity was conducted to provide an opportunity for the examiners to ask questions about aspects in the thesis, such as the introduction, literature reviews, methodology, and findings. The candidate was expected to answer the questions appropriately to obtain a good result in order to graduate. Lastly, the candidate and the audience were given an opportunity to ask questions of the examiners. This last activity is optional, because it was not commonly found in the TDEs of the four fields of study that Swales observed. After this segment was completed, the examinee was asked to leave the room, but this activity is not included in Swales’ model.

The third segment is the *in-camera session*. During this segment, the panel members discussed the result of the presentation and decided whether the candidate was to be given a pass or fail mark or pass mark with minor

revision. During this *in-camera* segment, the candidate remained outside until a committee member recalled the candidate for the next segment.

The last segment is the *closing segment*. In this segment, four activities were found. Firstly, the members announced their agreed result in front of the candidate and audience. The candidate with a good result was congratulated by the committee and audience. Secondly, for those who passed with minor revision, there was a discussion of what more needed to be done by the candidate. This activity is optional because most of candidates passed. The third one was the documentation, where the candidate signed the required forms. Then, the final activity was the leave-taking, including photos and other social activities.

Generally, these models can be categorized into two based on the authors' respective definitions of 'thesis defence'. On the one hand, Grimshaw et al. and Burke seems to define thesis defence strictly as the ability of the examinee to answer questions, so 'thesis summary presentation' is separated from 'the Defence proper segment' and included in the 'Opening segment'. On the other hand, Hasan and Swales consider it as part of the 'defence proper', so put it in Segment 2 (Defence Proper).

The four GSs of TDE discussed above are the result of the previous researchers' observations of students' examinations at Doctorate level only. So, there is still lack of investigation about the GSs of the TDE at undergraduate level, particularly in Indonesian universities. Moreover, Grimshaw et al. (1994), Burke (1994) and Hasan (1994) used only one source of information to propose their respective GS models i.e. from one university and one student, named Lee, and 2 hour of recording. It is unclear how many student presentations were in the recording and from how many universities. But, it is likely that it is from the same university as the data was obtained from there. Nevertheless, this number of sources is considered weak to make a generalisation because the sample is very small, since it could be the idiosyncretic features of that particular university or students. Swales' model use more varied data sources involving several different disciplines, but they all represent only one university. To address this deficiency of data source, this study used a much larger number universities (4 universities) and larger number of students in order to draw the data from and ensure a stronger validity.

For this study, the reason for discussing the four Doctorate level models is that these models were taken as a framework to analyse the data and identify TDE generic structure (GS) models practiced in these Indonesian universities. These four models are called in this article as the 'four well-known GSs'.

### **Theoretical framework**

The fact that the three researchers could propose the three different well-known models using the same data, indicates that human beings are creative. Their creativity may be influenced by their experiences, expertise, or the ways they look at the data. Some researchers have proposed the theory of discipline variation and cultural variation. Discipline variation assumes that each discipline has different models due to a variety of cultural elements such as daily practices, the environment, values, norms, emphases and the like (Yakonhova, 2006). The facts that the Swales' Model was developed based on a range of different disciplines, which gave rise to his model which differs from the other three models may suggest the influence of different disciplines. Cultures may also influence people's ideas, practices and thus produces variations (Adnan, 2010; Safnil 2001; Miller, 1984). People who live in a democratic society may come up with different creations when compared to people in an authoritarian society. It is interesting to find out whether the different cultural environments, where the TDEs examined in this study, would also produce variations. If so, it is also intriguing to find out what gives rise to the variations.

### **Methodology**

As mentioned earlier, the study reported in this article is a part of a broader study which employed a collective case study method (Stake 1995, cited in Zucker, 2009). Yin (2009) and Nunan (1992) define a case study as an investigation of a case or multiple cases to obtain in-depth information in the context in which the case occurs. A collective case study as defined by Stake (1995) is a "...study of a number of cases in order to inquire into a particular phenomenon." (cited in Zucker 2009, n.p.). The study reported in this article looked as cases at 4 universities, focusing on one phenomenon that is their 'thesis defence examinations' (TDEs), particularly their 'generic structure' (GS). Further, this study also had one main research design, one main purpose and one central

research question, namely what is the common generic structure of the TDEs practiced at those 4 universities? ‘Common’ is defined as ‘Occurring, found, or done often’ (<http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/common>). The word of ‘often’ is relative to the entire occurrences, the higher the percentage of occurrences, the more common it is. Since there are only 4 cases (4

universities), occurrences of a segment in 3 universities is considered common, and occurrence in 4 universities is considered more common. Conversely, the occurrences of a segment in two universities is considered as less common and in one university is considered the least common. Thus, the purpose is not to compare individual examinees’ performance.

Therefore, the number of individual examinees in each university is not considered as part of a determining factor because it is assumed that they would follow the same rule issued by the same department, perhaps with very minor variations. The researchers of this project observed a higher but unequal number of students for each university for pragmatic reason, i.e. the availability of examinees to observe and to ensure they do follow the same rule including the order or sequence of activities applied by their respective university.

The four universities consist of Islamic and secular universities from 2 different provinces. These universities were selected for 2 reasons. The first reason was they were the major public universities in the provinces. Secondly, two of them are Islamic tertiary education institutions, so it would be interesting to find out if they represent culturally distinctive generic structure compared to the two secular universities.

The investigation was conducted in the English Education Departments (EEDs) of the selected universities. The data for this study were collected through direct and indirect observations, interviews, note-taking, photo-taking, and video recording. Direct observation means the researchers sat in the TDE room to observe the TDE, and the indirect observation means observing the TDE sessions through video recordings.

**Table 1**  
Summary of data collection

| Research question   | Data collection   | Data analysis                           | Participants      | Sites   |
|---|---|---|-------------------|---|
| What is the common GS of the TDE of the four Indonesian universities? | Sixteen direct and indirect observations (videoing and taking pictures), in-depth interviews. | Based on four GSs of TDE in literature. | Sixteen examinees | 2 universities at the Provinces Aceh and North Sumatera |
| What are their pedagogical implications?                              |   |   |                   |   |

**Participants**

The participants of this research were sixteen examinees from four selected universities (Nanggroe University, Negeri Institute, Media University and Syiar University) in Indonesia. These examinees were students who were conducting the thesis defence examination (TDE) process as a final step to complete their degree. They were observed when presenting their thesis in the real TDE at their respective English Education Departments (EEDs) of the four selected universities.

Ten examinees are from Aceh and six are from North Sumatera. The fact that these numbers are not

equal was not an issue in this study because, as stated earlier, the number of examinees was not considered a determining factor influencing the finding of this study since the main purpose of the study was to find out the generic structure of TDE practiced at 4 universities, and the examinees of each university followed the same rule. In other words, the study did not compare individual students, but the TDE generic structure as practiced by the individual universities.

### Data Analysis

The data from observations were analysed using the four US generic structures, drawn by Grimshaw et al. (1994), Burke (1994), Hasan (1994) and Swales (2004) already discussed earlier as a starting point. These GSs are used as frameworks to draw a generic structure of the TDE at undergraduate level at each of the four universities, and a common structure of all of them. However, in our analysis and developing our models we adopt Hasan's and Swales' broader definition of 'thesis defence' to include the thesis summary presentation because it is part of the assessment. We also included another segment called 'Preliminary' before the 'Opening' segment to capture important different pieces of background information, especially the composition of the parties who were present in the TDE. Further analysis, to explain the multiple variations found at each of the institutions, was conducted using principles of cultural theory.

### Findings and Discussion

As shown in Table 2 four generic structures (GSs) were found at the four institutions.

**Table 2**

Summary of the generic structures found at the 4 institutions

| Segments/ Model                   | 1. Nanggroe University  | 2. Negeri Institute  | 3. Syiar University  | 4. Media University   |
|-----------------------------------|---|--|--|---|
| <i>1. The Preliminary segment</i> | <i>a. The examiners, examinees, a secretary, an official (Head of the English Education Department), and audience settled in.</i> | <i>a. The examiners, examinees, an official (Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs), and the audience settled in.</i> | <i>a. The examiners, examinees, an official (Head of the English Education Department) settled in.</i> | <i>a. The examiners, examinees, a secretary (called note taker), an official (Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs), a witness, settled in.</i> |
| <i>2. The Opening segment</i>     | <i>a. The Head of the English Education Department greeted and welcomed the audience.</i>   | <i>a. The Head of the English Education Department greeted and welcomed the audience.</i>                        | <i>a. The Head of the English Education Department greeted and welcomed the audience.</i>              | <i>a. The Head of the English Education Department</i>  |

|   |  |  |   |   |
|---|--|--|---|---|
|   | <p><i>b. The opening ceremony</i><br/> <i>c. The chair asked for the examinee's ID card.</i></p>   | <p><i>b. The opening ceremony.</i></p>   | <p><i>b. The opening ceremony.</i><br/> <i>c. All the examinees were asked to leave the room.</i></p>   | <p><i>nt greeted and welcomed the audience.</i><br/> <i>b. The opening ceremony</i><br/> <i>.</i></p>   |
| <p><i>3. The Defence Proper segment</i></p> | <p><i>a. The Panel Chair greeted everyone in the room, introduced him/herself and the other examiners and the examinee's thesis title.</i><br/> <i>b. The Panel Chair asked the examinee to read a number of verses from the holy book Al Quran</i><br/> <i>c. The Panel Chair asked the examinee to conduct a thesis presentation.</i><br/> <i>d. Each examiner asked questions about the sections already allocated to him/her for assessment.</i></p> | <p><i>a. The examiner greeted the examinee</i><br/> <br/> <i>b. Each examiner asked questions on the sections already allocated to him/her for assessment.</i></p>   | <p><i>a. The secretary called the examinees in, one by one</i><br/> <i>b. The examiner greeted the examinee;</i><br/> <i>c. The examiner asked the examinee to conduct a thesis presentation.</i><br/> <i>d. The examiners asked unrestricted questions.</i><br/> <i>e. The examiner ended the examination.</i></p> | <p><i>a. The Panel Chair greeted the examinee</i><br/> <i>b. The Panel Chair asked the examinee to conduct a thesis presentation</i><br/> <i>on</i><br/> <i>c. The examiner s asked unrestricted questions.</i></p> |
| <p><i>4. The In-camer a segment</i></p>     | <p><i>a. The examinee was asked to leave the room.</i><br/> <i>b. The secretary collected the scores from the examiners and calculated them.</i><br/> <i>c. The examinee was called back into the room after a ten-minute wait.</i></p>  | <p><i>a. The examinee was asked to leave the room;</i><br/> <i>b. The secretary collected and calculated the examinees' scores from the examiners.</i><br/> <i>c. The examinees were called back in.</i></p> |   | <p><i>a. The examinee was asked to leave the room</i><br/> <i>b. The secretary calculate d the examinee 's score from the examiner s</i></p>  |

|                               |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------|--|--|--|--|
|                               |  |  |  | <i>c. The examinees were called back in.</i>   |
| <i>5. The Closing segment</i> | <p><i>a. The examiners put on their formal gowns.</i></p> <p><i>b. The secretary announced the result of the examinee's performance.</i></p> <p><i>c. The Panel Chair knocked on the table three times as a closing signal.</i></p> <p><i>d. The Panel Chair thanked the examiners and the audience.</i></p> <p><i>e. The examinee was invited to make a short speech.</i></p> <p><i>f. The Panel Chair gave final advice and suggestions to the examinee.</i></p> <p><i>g. The examinee shook hands with the examiners.</i></p> <p><i>h. The examinee signed the examination documents.</i></p> | <p><i>a. The secretary announced the results of the examinees' performances.</i></p> <p><i>b. The Head of the English Education Department congratulated all the examinees, gave final advice, and closed the TDE.</i></p> |  | <p><i>a. The secretary announced the results of the examinees' performance.</i></p> <p><i>b. The Chair of the Panel congratulated all the examinees, gave final advice, thanks the examiners and closed the TDE.</i></p> |

### **5.1 The Generic Structure Found at Nanggroe University**

The TDE observed at this university was conducted by the English Education Department (EED). It was officially opened by the Head of the Department. The description of a GS of Nanggroe University is based on the observations of five examinees who are identified using the codes NUE1, NUE2, NUE3, NUE4 and NUE5 in order to keep the real names confidential. These students were examined on different days.

The generic structure of the TDE found at this university consists of five segments and several activities. The segments are 'the preliminary', 'the opening', 'the defence proper', 'the in-camera', and 'the closing'.

#### *The preliminary segment*

The preliminary segment was the first segment of the TDE at this university. This preliminary segment was a segment of preparation for the TDE, and it occurred prior to the opening segment. It had one obligatory activity,

that is:

*5.1.1.a. The examiners, examinees, a secretary, an official (Head of the English Education Department), and audience settled in.*

In this activity, the examiners, secretary, examinees and audience entered the classroom where the event was to be conducted and then they sat at their allocated chairs. Their attendances indicated that the TDE was about to commence.

*The Opening segment*

The second segment was the opening. In this segment, three activities were found, two of which are obligatory and the other one is optional.

*5.1.2.a. The Head of the English Education Department greeted and welcomed the audience.*

At the beginning of this segment, the Head of the English Education Department, who will also play a role as the Chair of the Examination Panel, greeted and welcomed the members of the Examination Panel, the secretary, the examinees and the audience. The secretary was the administration officer from the relevant department of this university who observed the TDE process, took notes and announced the results. The audience consisted of undergraduate students, who were in the process of writing their own theses and would undertake the TDE in the following semester or year, so they came to observe the real TDE, and guests e.g. parents and relatives of the examinee.

This greeting segment is also found in the Hasan's and Swales' models. However, in these two generic structures, the examinee greets the examiners, while at Nanggroe University, it was the reverse. This may be influenced by cultural issues. At this university, it is common for the examiners to greet the examinees first because, in a formal event, the people with superior status, in this case the examiners and other committee members, always greet the subordinate person, the examinee. However, on a less formal occasion, such as on the street, the person with inferior status should always greet the superior. This is the way these two groups show their politeness based on the culture where the TDE is conducted. Another possible reason is that in the TDE, the examinee is being evaluated by the examiners. Thus, if the examinee greets the examiners, there might be a presumption from the examiners that this examinee wishes to attract attention and favour, e.g. be given a high mark, by showing a 'special' gesture of politeness. On the other hand, if the examiners greet the examinee, this presumption will not occur.

*5.1.2.b. The opening ceremony*

After greetings and welcoming all the attendees, the Head of the Department officially opened the TDE by saying 'Bismillahirrahmanirrahim' (In the name of Allah the most merciful and the most beneficent'), a common saying a Muslim says when starting a good conduct.

*5.1.2.c. The chair asked for the examinee's ID*

Checking ID card is considered essential by this university because examinees are not allowed to undertake this final examination if they are unable to show a valid ID card, or if their ID is problematic. The ID is required to ensure that the examinee's identity matches the information in the university records. ID checking did not always occur in the opening segment but it might occur in the closing segment; however, it was always checked. This made this activity compulsory at this university. It is also unique to this university as it is not found in the rest of the institutions under investigation, nor in the 'Well-known Models'.

*5.1.2.d. The chair of the panel introduced him/herself and the other examiners and the examinee's thesis title.*

This activity was optional at this university. Only a few chairs in the TDE introduced themselves, introduced the other examiners, and introduced the examinee's thesis title. A possible reason was that the chair assumed that all of the audience in the room knew the examiners, since they were also lecturers at this university. In addition, the title of the thesis had also been written on the whiteboard in the TDE room. Hence, self-introduction and stating the thesis title was optional at this university, which is similar to Hasan's model, but it is in contrast to Swales' model.

*The Defence proper segment*

The defence proper segment is the segment where the examinee presented their thesis and answered questions, and the examiners evaluated the performance of the examinee. Three obligatory activities were found in this segment. These activities were:

*5.1.3.a. The Panel Chair asked the examinee to read a number of verses from the holy book Al Quran*

At the beginning of the defence proper segment, the examinee had to show his/her ability to read the Islamic holy book Al Qur'an. This activity seems to be unrelated to the TDE assessment, but it does because it affects the outcomes of the TDE. The examinee had to show that he/she is able to read any verses of the holy book selected by the examiners with a proper pronunciation, intonation and without making too many mistakes since reading the Al Qur'an is different from reading a book, because it should be read carefully with correct pronunciation and intonation. As in English, the pronunciation and intonation determine the meaning. If the examinee makes a mistake in pronouncing a letter, the meaning will change. Thus, the examinee had to read the Al Qur'an correctly. This

university obliged all examinees, including those in the English department, to be able to read the Qur'an perfectly, because it is an Islamic university. If the students cannot do this, they are automatically disqualified and cannot continue the TDE. This activity seems to be unique to this university since is not found in any of the other 3 universities, nor in the US generic structures.

*5.1.3.b. The Panel Chair asked the examinee to present his/her thesis summary.*

In the presentation, the examinees were required to state the title of their thesis, the research problems, the reasons for choosing a particular research topic and the questions or hypotheses that they decided to address. They were also asked to review previous research, a summary of the research methodology, as well as the research results. This activity is the same as those found by Swales (2004) and Hasan (1994) in the same segment (defence proper segment), but Grimshaw (1994) and Burke (1994) found it in the 'opening segment'. In other words, the activities in the defence proper segment of TDE at this university were in close alignment with only two models found in the literature.

*5.1.3.c. Each examiner asks questions on the sections already allocated to him/her for assessment*

Unlike the practice found in the 4 well-known models, at this university the Department allocated a few sections of the examinee's thesis to each examiner to be scrutinised. Thus, each examiner asked various questions to the examinees about the sections that had been allocated to him/her to examine. For example, the first examiner (The Chair) was required to ask questions about any unclear parts of the background of the research, such as the reason for conducting the research, definition of the research title, and any practical research results for the institution where the research was conducted. The second examiner had another role: he or she was given an opportunity to ask questions about the literature review; for example, whether a similar research topic had been studied in the literature, whether or not the topic was still debatable and current, etc. The third examiner was required to ask questions related to the research methodology, such as the data collection procedure, samples of the research and the results. This allocation of duties had been agreed by the examiners at this university for many years.

This practice is different from the 'Well-known generic structures', where the examiners did not ask questions based on allocated thesis sections, but they took turns in asking questions 'freely' to the examinees. There may be reasons for this different way of asking questions. Asking questions 'freely' may be used to test the examinees' knowledge of their research as a whole, while asking questions based on the allocated sections may be used to avoid overlapping questions, as each examiner was restricted to the allocated sections.

*5.1.4. The in-camera segment*

The in-camera segment was a segment where the examinees were asked to leave the room for approximately ten minutes, and then called back in. In this segment, three obligatory activities were found:

*5.1.4.a. The examinee was asked to leave the room*

After the examiners had completed the question and answer interaction, the examinee was asked to leave the room and wait to be recalled.

*5.1.4.b. The secretary collected the scores from the examiners and calculated them*

The secretary collected the assessment scores provided by each examiner and calculated them to form the overall result. Unlike in the four Well-known models, there was no overt discussion among the examiners regarding the scores; this means that each examiner assessed the examinees' performance independently. Calculation of the scores by the secretary while the examinees are outside is an obligatory activity at this university.

*5.1.4.c. The examinee was called back into the room after a ten-minute wait*

The examinees were called back into the TDE room where they were asked to sit and relax and to listen to the announcement to be made by the secretary in the next segment, which is the closing segment. This activity is also found in Hasan's generic structure.

#### *5.1.5. The closing segment*

Eight obligatory activities were found in this segment. These are outlined below.

##### *5.1.5.a. The examiners put on their formal gowns*

The three examiners and the secretary put on gowns to indicate that the TDE for that examinee has finished. The examiners sat in a relaxed manner, ready to hear the final results, which would be announced orally by the secretary.

##### *5.1.5.b. The secretary announced the result of the examinee's performance*

The secretary stood up and the examinee was also asked to do likewise by the chair. The examinee listened carefully to the announcement of the result, because this result determines whether the candidate passes with a high mark and without revision, passes with revision, or fails.

##### *5.1.5.c. The Panel Chair knocked on the table three times as a closing signal.*

After the announcement, the chair of the TDE knocked on the table three times to indicate that the process of the TDE was finished and the result of the examinee's performance was valid. Knocking on the table was conducted using their knuckles, not with a special gavel, as in a court. All members understood that this knocking was sufficient to indicate that the TDE had finished.

##### *5.1.5.d. The Panel Chair thanked the examiners and the audience*

The chair thanked all the examiners, the secretary and the audience for their presence at the TDE. This formed an expression of appreciation from the chair to the other members and the audience for their participation in the TDE.

##### *5.1.5.e. The examinee was invited to make a short speech*

The chair also gave the examinee an opportunity to make a short speech. In the speech, the examinee thanked all members of the panel, especially their two supervisors, for assisting them in developing their knowledge to complete their thesis and the TDE. The examinee appreciated all the contributions given by their supervisors, and both the supervisors and the examinee were glad because they had achieved the desired results of their previous intensive communication about their research. This process had brought them very close to each other. When this TDE is finished, it means the examinee has finished his/her university study and he/she will say farewell. This activity is similar to that of the Swales' model.

##### *5.1.5.f. The Panel Chair gave final advice and suggestions to the examinee*

As a farewell message, the examiners gave some advice and suggestions to the examinees. These included a range of topic; for example, some examiners gave advice about some improvements for the content of the thesis to make the meaning of the thesis clearer. Others gave advice regarding the examinee's future career, such as motivating the examinee to pursue further studies in English-speaking countries.

##### *5.1.5.g. The examinee shook hands with the examiners*

The examinees shook hands with all the examiners and as a courtesy to show their appreciation and gratitude for assessing their performance during the TDE. All members were smiling at each other as an indication that they were satisfied.

##### *5.1.5.h. The examinee signed the examination documents*

The examinees were asked to sign some examination documents provided by the English department. These were official documents to be archived as evidence that the examinees had been assessed by the examiners through the TDE.

## **5.2. The TDE of the Negeri Institute**

The GS of the TDE conducted at the Negeri Institute was identified from the observation of four examinees' performances. The examinees are coded as NIE1, NIE2, NIE3 and NIE4. Each of these examinees was tested by four examiners. The researchers observed their entire TDE, and found the following information.

The practice of TDE at this university is somewhat different from the practice at the Nanggroe

University, although there are similarities too. The first difference is that it is a faculty affair. Thus it was officially opened by an important person at the faculty level, it was the Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs. This suggests that this institute gave more weight to the TDE than at the Nanggroe University.

However, similar to the TDE practice at the Nanggroe University, the Department also allocated a few sections of the examinee's thesis to each examiner to be examined. The purpose was to prevent examiners from asking overlapping questions, and thus, save time. Nevertheless, there are more differences. First, at the Negeri Institute each of the examiners sat at a separate table. Thus, each of the examinees was requested to move from one examiner to the other to answer different questions. During the observation, four examiners were in the room, each examining an examinee at the same time. Thus, the room was noisy as four pairs were talking at the same time (See Appendix B for a picture of the seating).

The second difference is that, while at Nanggroe University only one student was examined in a day, at this institute, many examinees were examined on the day, and all of them were gathered in the same room. Only those who had completed their turn were asked to wait outside for the announcement of results until all the examinees have

completed their turns.

Similar to the TDE of the Nanggroe University, the GS of the TDE at this institute also consists of five segments. These segments are 'the preliminary', 'the opening', 'the defence proper', 'the in-camera' and 'the closing' segments.

#### *5.2.1. The preliminary segment*

In this preliminary segment, only one activity was found, that is an obligatory activity, that is:

*5.2.1.a. The examiners, examinees, a secretary, an official (Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs), and audience settled in.*

In this preliminary segment, all the attendees were seated in their respective seats. The examiners and a secretary were seated on a stage. The examinees and audience were seated on chairs facing the examiners.

This segment is similar to the GSs found by Grimshaw et al. (1994), Burke (1994), Hasan (1994), and Swales (2004), in which everyone is settled in the same room. But, in this Institute, the number of the attendees were much larger, consisting of the examiners, a secretary, the examinees, the Deputy Dean and the audience. Members of the audience included undergraduate students, guests including parents and relatives of the examinees.

#### *5.2.2. The opening segment*

Similar to the second segment at the Nanggroe University, three activities were found in this segment, two of which are obligatory and the other one is optional. They are as below.

*5.2.2.a. The Head of the Department greeted and welcomed the audience.*

As the host of the TDE, the Head of the Department greeted the audience, making special reference to the Deputy Dean, the examiners, the examinees, and the rest of the audience. He also gives a brief background regarding the TDEs, e.g. the number of examinees, and the like. Finally, he invited the Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs to officially open the TDE.

*5.2.2.b. The opening ceremony*

The Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs came to the stage. He also greeted and welcomed everyone. He also encouraged the examinees to perform competently, and wished them success. He, then, officially opened the TDE, and closed his speech.

#### *5.2.3. The defence proper segment*

This segment was significantly different from the corresponding segment at the Nanggroe University TDE as only two activities were found in this segment. They are as follows.

##### *5.2.3.a. The examiner greeted the examinee*

As mentioned earlier, each examinee had to move from one examiner to another as they sat at separate tables, so he/she was examined by one examiner at a time, not by a panel of examiners. In this segment, this study found that only a few examiners greeted their examinees, but the majority of them did not greet their examinees. Maybe, this is a way to maintain the power gap between the examiners and their examinees during this formal event.

Consequently, this activity is considered as optional for this segment.

An important difference between the TDE of this Institute and that of the Nanggroe University is that, at this Institute, the examinees were not required to make a research presentation. Ideally, such a presentation should be conducted in this segment to assess the examinees' competence in their research. According to the TDE secretary, the reason for this was that prior to having the TDEs, the examinees had already conducted their research presentations in front of their respective supervisors to see if they could pass. If they passed, then, the respective supervisors would grant an approval to undertake a TDE. With the approval of the supervisors, the examinees could sit a proper TDE.

This procedure is also different from the four 'well-known GSs' where thesis oral presentation is obligatory in the TDE, even though the activity is included in different segments, for example, one researcher includes it in the 'opening segment' and the others in the 'defence proper' segment.

#### *5.2.3.b. The examiners asked questions according to the thesis sections assigned to them*

Since no presentation was required in this defence proper segment, each examiner immediately asked questions to the examinees about the thesis sections already allocated to him/her. Examiner One asked about the discussion in the background of the study. Examiner Two asked about the literature review and commented on the grammar of the sentences and the quotation included in the writing. Examiner Three was asking about research methodology and results. An interesting phenomenon is Examiner Four tested the examinees about their understanding of their thesis content in relation to the Islamic teaching. For example, if the examinee states that education is important, then s/he has to find evidence in the Qur'an which supports or justifies this statement. This requirement to relate the subject matter with Al Quranic verses for support seems to be a unique feature of the TDE of this Institute. This feature is different from the other Islamic University, i.e. Nanggroe University, which requires its students to recite the Holy Al Quran as its unique feature.

#### *5.2.4. The In-camera segment*

Three obligatory activities were found in this segment.

##### *5.2.4.a. The examinee was asked to leave the room*

This activity is not exactly the same as the corresponding activity found in the Nanggroe University (NU) TDE since at the Negeri Institute the waiting time could be much longer than 10 minutes for many examinees, until all other students have completed their TDE, which could be in late afternoon depending on the total number of the examinees for the day.

##### *5.2.4.b. The secretary collected and calculated the examinees' scores from the examiners*

This activity is the same as the corresponding activity of the NU TDE, except that the secretary calculated the marks of all the examinees first, and announced them all at once after all of them completed their TDE (See the closing segment below). Another difference is that the secretary calculated the scores away from the TDE room, in her own office before calling the examinees back in.

##### *5.2.4.c. The examinees were called back in.*

This activity occurred after the last examinee completed the TDE and the secretary were ready to announce the results for the entire examinees. Thus, this activity is the same as the corresponding activity in the Nanggroe University TDE and in the TDE generic structures found in the literature, except that at the Negeri Institute, the waiting time is longer for most of the examinees as they have to wait until all the examinees to complete their TDE.

#### *5.2.5. Closing segment*

In this segment, two activities were found. They are as follows.

##### *5.2.5.a. The secretary announced the results of the examinees' performances.*

This activity is similar to the corresponding activity in the Nanggroe University TDE with an exception that the secretary announced the results of all the examinees at once.

##### *5.2.5.b. The Head of the English Education Department congratulated all the examinees, gave final advice, and closed the TDE.*

This activity is similar to the corresponding activity in the Nanggroe University TDE except that at this Institute it is much simpler with much less activities. This may be due to the much higher number of examinees taking the TDE on the day, while at Nanggroe University, only one examinee for the day.

### 5.3. *The TDE of Syiar University*

The GS of the TDE of this university is identified from the observations and analysis of five examinees' performances. The identities of these examinees are encoded as SUE1, SUE2, SUE3, SUE4 and SUE5. Similar to the TDE at the Negeri Institute (NI), each examinee was examined by 4 examiners, hence the examinee had to move from Examiner 1 to Examiner 4. Each examinee had been informed who their examiners would be prior to the TDE day.

In the TDE of this University, only three segments were found: the preliminary segment, the opening segment and the defence proper segment.

#### 5.3.1. *Preliminary segment*

The preliminary segment was the first segment of the TDE. In this segment, all members prepared themselves for the TDE. Only one activity was found in this segment and it was obligatory.

##### 5.3.1.a. *The examiners, examinees, an official (Head of the English Department) settled in.*

This activity is the same as the corresponding activity in the NI. The difference is that at Syiar University only the participants were present. They were the official, the examiners, and the examinees. There was no secretary nor non-participatory audience such as parents and relatives. So, it is a close TDE.

#### 5.3.2. *The Opening segment*

Unlike the other two TDEs discussed thus far, only three obligatory activities were found in this segment. They are as follows.

##### 5.3.2.a. *The opening ceremony*

This activity is similar with the corresponding opening ceremony in the other two institutions. It is the same in that it is the official opening of the event. It is the same as the one at Nanggroe University (NU) in terms of the level of the official who opened it, and the essence of their speeches. In both universities, it was opened by the Head of the English Education Department, and he began with greetings, motivational messages to the examinees, and the declaration that the event was officially opened, and finally he closed his speech.

But, there are four differences between the two TDE practices. The first is unlike the Nanggroe TDE, there is no ID check at Syiar University. The second difference is at Nanggroe University only one examinee was examined in one day, while at Syiar University, many students were examined in one day. In terms of the number of examinees examined at a time, this practice is the same as the corresponding activity in the Negeri Institute i.e. many students were examined at the same time by different examiners. But at this Institute all the examinees remained in the TDE room waiting for their turn, while at Syiar University all students were told to go out to wait for their turn, except the students who were being examined.

Another similarity between Syiar University and the Negeri Institute is that each examiner sat at a separate table, and he/she examined one student at the same time as the other examiners did, creating a very noisy situation (See Appendix D for a map of the seating).

##### 5.3.2.b. *The examinees were asked to leave the room.*

After the TDE is officially opened, all the examinees were asked to leave the room, and each examiner took their respective table, and waited for his/her examinee. This activity seems to be the same as the corresponding activity at the other two universities discussed so far, but there is a difference. It is different from the NU TDE in terms of the purpose; that is the purpose of leaving the room at Syiar University (SU) was to get the examinees to wait for their turn for the TDE, while at NU it was to wait for the result. Another difference was the waiting time. At NU was much shorter (about 10 minutes), at SU, it could be much longer for many students. But, this waiting time was similar to that of the TDE at the Negeri Institute since in both cases the examinees had to wait until all the other examinees have completed their turns.

##### 5.3.2.c. *The examinees were called back in one by one*

The examinees were called back in by an administrative assistant, one by one according to the availability of the examiners, for their respective turn to undertake the TDE. In terms of the purpose, this practice is different from the corresponding 'call-back in' in the TDEs of the other two institutions, and in 3 of the 4 'Well-known models', which is to listen to the announcement of the results.

#### 5.3.3. *The Defence proper segment*

Three obligatory activities were found in this segment.

### 5.3.3.a. *The examiner greeted the examinee*

This segment is the same as the corresponding segment in the NU TDE in that one examinee was examined by one examiner at a time (See Appendix D for the seating layout). In the majority of cases, the examiner greeted the examinee. In this greeting, he/she included some calming words to reduce anxiety in the examinee. For example, the examiners asked about the feelings of the examinees, whether or not they were happy having this examination. This is essentially the same as what the Panel Chair said to the examinees at NU. Similarly, the norm, that it was very rare for the examinees to greet the examiners, was also found at SU.

### 5.3.3.b. *The examiner asked the examinee to conduct a thesis presentation.*

This activity is similar to the corresponding presentation in the TDE of NU, in that the examinee was asked to give a thesis presentation, including to state the background of the research, the research problems, and the findings, but it was very rare for examinees to mention the procedures used in their research. The difference is at NU the presentation was conducted in front of a panel of examiners, while at SU it was in front of Examiner One only. The rest of the examiners only asked questions. This activity is also similar to the 'Well-known' models, except that at SU it was done in front of one examiner only.

### 5.3.3.c. *The examiners are free to ask about any part of the thesis.*

Unlike the corresponding activity in the TDE of NU and the NI discussed earlier, the examiners at SU were not restricted to any part of the thesis about which to ask questions. They were free to pick any part(s), which they wished to focus their question(s) on. The questions were commonly related to research problems, the research content/literature review and the research methodology. Basically, the examinee was tested on their knowledge of his/her research topic and research process. The significance of the research was rarely asked.

Since each of the examiners sat at a separate table, some questions asked by different examiners were overlapping. This issue is not found in any of the other three universities. It did not happen at NU and Media University (5.4 below) because the Panel of Examiners sat at the same table, and similarly, it did not happen at the Negeri Institute (NI) because each examiner was restricted to ask questions only about the thesis sections already allocated to him/her. It did not happen in the corresponding activity in the 'Well-known' models for the same reason.

### 5.3.3.d. *The fourth examiner ended the examination.*

One important difference between the TDE practiced at this university and the other two universities discussed earlier is that the result was not announced on the same day, but approximately one month later on the English Education Department's notice board. This was announced prior to the TDE day and repeated in the opening ceremony. Thus, the 'in-camera' and the 'closing segments' found in the other three universities and in the 'Well-known' model, did not exist at this university. Therefore, only the fourth examiner told the examinee that the examination was finished. The examinee then left the room and could go home. The reason given for this practice was the extremely large number of examinees undertaking the TDE, thus, they needed much more time to decide on the results of all the examinees before announcing them.

## 5.4. *The TDE of Media University*

There are also similarities and differences between the TDE practiced at this university and those of the other three institutions discussed earlier, and the four 'Well-known' models. One similarity concerns the practice of TDE at NI, but different from those of NU and SU, was this university also gave more weight to the status of TDE, evident by the presence of the Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs to officially open the event. More similarities and differences will be discussed below.

Due to limited opportunity available, only two examinees' performances in the TDEs could be observed. These examinees are coded as UME1 and UME2. Like the TDE practice at the other institutions, except SU, five segments were found at Media University (MU). They are the preliminary segment, the opening segment, the defence proper segment, the in-camera and, finally, the closing segments.

### 5.4.1. *The preliminary segment*

In this preliminary segment, one obligatory activity was found.

#### 5.4.1.a. *The examiners, vice dean for academic affairs, a witness, a secretary and examinees settled in.*

This activity was similar to the corresponding activity in the TDE of the other three universities. The difference

concerns only the composition of the people who were present. The composition is similar to that of the SU in that both had no non-participant audience (no guests). So, it is also a close TDE. The differences are at MU there were only two examiners, while at NU there were three; however, in the MU TDE there was a witness, who is absent in NU TDE Panel and at the other two institutions (See Appendix C for seating layout of the panel). The witness observed the process of the TDE from the beginning until the end of the event. The importance of this witness is to solve possible problems that may arise after the TDE, for example, if there are complaints among examinees or panel members about the final score.

#### *5.4.2. The opening segment*

This segment is generally the same as the corresponding segment in the Negeri Institute (NI), below are the activities.

##### *5.4.2.a. Introductory speech from the head of English Education Department*

This activity is the same as the corresponding activity in the NI in that the Head of the English Education Department began with a short speech with greetings, making special reference to the Deputy Dean, and motivation messages for the examinees, and ended his speech with an invitation for the Deputy Dean to officially open the TDE.

##### *5.4.2.b. The Opening ceremony*

The opening ceremony is in a form of a speech by the designated official; that is the Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs. In his speech, the Vice Dean greeted all members in the room and welcomed them. Then, he continued with reading the research thesis titles of the examinees. Finally, he officially opened the TDE for the day, wished them success, and closed his speech.

This ceremonial event is not found in the four well-known GSs. For Media University, this ceremony is very important and it is obligatory. This is similar to the corresponding activity in the TDE of the NI.

#### *5.4.3. The Defence proper segment*

There are two activities found in this segment, one was obligatory and the other was optional.

##### *5.4.3.a. The examinee is asked to conduct a research presentation*

In this defence proper, conducting a research presentation is optional. From the observation, this study found that between two examinees undertaking the TDE event, one of them was asked to do a research presentation, while the other one was not. This makes the difference between the MU TDE and the TDEs of NU and SU, and between it and the four well-known GSs.

##### *5.4.3.b. The examiners ask questions from any parts of the thesis*

Examiners at this university asked the examinee questions regarding any part of the thesis content. This rule of asking questions also occurs at the four well-known GSs, where the examiners can ask questions as they wish. The examiners were not given certain allocated thesis sections to ask the examinees as in the TDE of the Negeri Institute and Nanggroe University.

#### *5.4.4. The in-camera segment*

There were three obligatory activities found in this segment, while optional activities were not found.

##### *5.4.4. a. The examinee was asked to leave the room*

The first obligatory activity of this segment was asking the examinee to leave the TDE room after his/her TDE. When the examinee was outside, it does not mean that the examination has been completed, but he/she was waiting for the results of the TDE to be announced after all the examinees have completed their TDE.

##### *5.4.4. b. The secretary collected the examinee's score from the examiners and calculated them*

The second activity in this segment is calculating scores. The secretary/note taker collected the scores from examiners and calculated them. The total number of the scores is then determined as the examinees' final score. So, like in the NU and NI TDEs, there was not deliberation to decide the final score, which is different from the practice in the four 'Well-known models'.

##### *5.4.4.c. The examinees were called back in*

Like the practice in the NI TDE, all the examinees were called back in after all the examinees had completed their turns.

#### *5.4.5. Closing segment*

Closing segment was the last segment of the TDE at this university. In this segment, the examinees listened to

their results announced by The secretary. One obligatory activity was found in this segment.

*5.4.5. a. The secretary announced the results of the examinees' performances*

This activity is the same as the corresponding activity in the TDE of the Negeri Institute, where after the examinees had been called back in, the secretary announced the results of all the examinees.

*5.4.5.b. The TDE is closed by the Panel Chair.*

After the announcement of the results, the Chair congratulated the examinees dan closed the TDE.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

The research problem for this part of the research was to address the scarcity of empirically based information regarding an important academic genre, i.e. TDE at undergraduate level in the literature. To address the problem, this study explored TDE practices at 4 different tertiary institutions in Aceh and North Sumatera Provinces, Indonesia. The question was, "What was the common segments and activities conducted at these universities? Are there similarities and differences? If so, why? Is it possible to draw a common generic structure from the four institutions?"

The findings presented earlier suggest that there are some similarities but more variations are found within the segments. The five basic segments are shared by the three institutions-the Nanggroe University (NU), the Negeri Institute (NI), and the Media University (MU), while the fourth institution, the Syiar University (SU) only shares the first three of the segments. The similarities and variations are discussed in details below.

*6.1 The similarities and variation in Segment 1: The Preliminary*

There is one common feature shared by the four institutions. The first common segment was 'The preliminary segment'. All the TDEs of the four institutions had this segment. All the participants and audience are invited into a room designated for the TDE. But, there are many more variations, than similarity. The first variation concerns the nature of the TDE. Two of the institutions, the NI and SU, adopts a close TDE, which means that only the participants are allowed into the TDE room. The other two, the NU and the MU adopt an open TDE, which means non-participants are allowed into the room as an observing audience. They are lower level undergraduate students and parents or relatives of the examinees.

The second variation the structure and composition of the participants. Two institutions, NU and MU adopt a panel system, and the other two, the NI and the SU adopt non-panel system, where many examiners examine many students at the same times. Even, the institutions which adopt the panel system, have variations too, i.e. different composites of the panels. The NU has three examiners, and one secretary, while the MU has two examiners, one secretary or note taker, and one witness. Apparently they have different emphasis of needs. The NU emphasizes on the need to have three examiners to ensure moderation, while the MU emphasise on the need to have an independent witness in case of a dispute.

The overall purpose seems to be the same, that is to the presence of someone to act as an arbitrator, although the NU focuses on a possible dispute between two examiners, while the other on a possible dispute between the examinees and examiner(s). The other two institutions, the NI and the SU have four different examiners for each examinee, but each examines each examinee separately. Each gives a score, and the scores are calculated by a secretary. Perhaps, having more examiners and making them assess each examinee separately and independently is their way of avoiding a dispute, and ensuring objectivity. The last difference is the presence of a faculty-level official. Two of the institutions, the NI and MU invite Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs, while the other two do not.

*6.2 The similarities and variation in Segment 2: The Opening*

One common activity which all the institutions share is the opening ceremony. Each university has an official opening, but there are also more variations, than this similarity. The first variation is that in two of the institutions, the opening ceremony was conducted by the Deputy Dean for Academic Affairs, suggesting that these two institutions put more significance on the TDE compared to the other two, the NU and the SU, where it was opened only by the Head of the English Education Department.

The second variation is after the opening ceremony, two institutions, the NU and the SU TDEs have two different activities. The NU has the checking of ID cards, which is not shared by any of the other institutions. Similarly, the SU also has an activity not shared by any of the other three institutions; that is asking the entire

examinees to leave the room and wait for their turns outside. The other two institutions, the NI and the MU, have no activities after the opening ceremony (in this segment).

### 6.3 *The similarities and variation in Segment 3: The Defence Proper*

This segment has the highest number of variations, with only one almost complete similarity. The first variation concerns the number of activities. All of the institutions are different: the SU has the highest number of activities namely five, followed by the NU with four, the MU with three, and finally the NI with two activities. The second variation concerns the Islamic specific activity, that is each examinee has to do namely the reciting of some verses of the holy Al Quran, required by the NU, which is not practiced by any of the other institutions. The other Islamic institution, the NI, also has an Islamic specific activity, but it is also not shared by any of the other institutions, that is the requirement to support points of argument with verses of the Al Quran.

The third variation concerns the ways the examination is conducted. There are three variations. Firstly, two institutions, the NI and SU, require the examinees to move from one examiner to another until each of them is examined by four examiners already assigned to him/her, while the other two institutions do not. Secondly, three of the institutions, the NU, the SU, and the MU, require the examinee to present a summary of his/her thesis, while the NI does not. Thirdly, at two of the institutions, the NU and NI, each of the examiners ask questions restricted to part of the thesis already allocated to him/her, while at the other two, the SU and the MU, there is no such restriction.

The fourth variation concerns the ways the announcement of results are made. At the three institutions, the NU, NI, and the MU, the results are announced on the same day, while at the SU, it is made one month later and on the Department's notice board.

### 6.4 *The similarities and variation in Segment 4: The in-Camera*

The literature defines the in-camera segment as the segment when an examinee is asked to leave the examining room after his/her performance, while the team of examiners discuss and decide the outcome of his/her TDE. After a short period of time the examinee is called back in to listen to the outcome. In essence, the practice is found in the four university, but there many variations too. Firstly, two of the institutions, the NI and the MU, conduct this after calling the examinees back in only after all the examinees have been examined, so the waiting time varies depending on the number of examinees after a student performs. The student who performs at the beginning would have to wait much longer than the student who is examined last. Only one university, the NU, which conducts this segment in the same way as the in the four 'Well-known model', where the waiting time is only about 10 minutes.

One university, the SU, takes much longer time to announce the results, approximately one month, and there is no call back in as the announcement is posted on the department's notice board. Thus, there is actually no in-camera segment at this university.

### 6.5 *The similarities and variation in Segment 5: The Closure*

Every beginning has an ending, so does essentially the practice of TDE at all of the four institutions. However, there are many variations too. Firstly, the number of activities varies from zero to eight. The SU has no official closure as such since each examinee can go home after he/she being examined by his/her fourth examiner. The NI and the MU have only two activities each, the announcement of the results and the official closure. The NU, however, has eight activities. Secondly, the announcement of the results. At three of the institutions, the NU, NI and MU, the results were announced on the same day, while at the SU they were announced approximately one month later. Similarly, the method of closing the TDE also show variations.

### 6.6 *A common generic structure*

Due to the overwhelming number of variations, it is difficult to propose a common generic pattern of the four institutions. To address such difficulty, the level of common practice should be reduced to 75%, which means it is practiced by at least three of the English Education Department of the four institutions. Even so, some non-essential variations have to be excluded. The common generic pattern can be proposed as shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.**

The common generic structure of Thesis Defence Examination in Indonesian Tertiary Institutions

| Segments                             | Activities   |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| <i>1: The Preliminary Segment</i>    | <i>a. The examiners, examinees, an official settle in.</i>   |
| <i>2: The Opening Segment</i>        | <i>a. The Head of the English Education Department greets and welcomes the audience.<br/>b. The official opening ceremony</i>  |
| <i>3: The Defence proper segment</i> | <i>a. The examiner or Panel Chair greets the examinee.<br/>b. The examiner Panel Chair asks the examinee to conduct a thesis presentation.<br/>c. The examiners ask questions.</i>   |
| <i>4: The In-camera Segment</i>      | <i>a. The examinee(s) is asked to leave the room.<br/>b. The secretary collects the scores from the examiners and calculates them.<br/>c. The examinees are called back in.</i>  |
| <i>5: The Closing Segment</i>        | <i>a. The secretary announces the result of the examinee's performance.<br/>b. The Chair of the Panel or the Head of the Department congratulates all the examinees, gives final advice, thanks the examiners and closes the TDE</i> |

### 6.7 Explanation for the variations

Although the TDE practiced at all the institutions do what it is supposed to do according to its name, that is to defend one's thesis, and the overall segmentation of the activity is similar, there are overwhelming variations within the segments. This suggests the richness of interesting TDE practices in the four institutions. These variations can be explained with the theoretical framework stated earlier, that people of different culture create different formulations of generic patterns. This can be explained further with the definition of culture proposed by Lederach (1995), "... the shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people for perceiving, interpreting, expressing, and responding to the social realities around them" (p. 9). There are two key elements in this definition namely that 'shared knowledge and schemes created by a set of people', and these shared knowledge are the result of the people's perception, interpretation and in response to realities around them. This means that any set of people can create knowledge and schemes specific to themselves. The TDE pattern of practice at each institution can be seen as knowledge and schemes created by the 'set of people' at that particular university as a result of their perception, interpretation, expression and response to the idea of thesis defence found in the literature and other cultural elements found around them. For example, the NU people perceive and interpret a TDE like what is practiced at the Doctoral level reported in the 'Well-known models', therefore they practice the undergraduate TDE very similar to those models, although they still show their own specific local creative elements such as the opening ceremony, asking the examinee to give a speech. On the other hand, each of the other institutions shows more of local creative elements, which lead a TDE practice not only more different from those models, but also different from one another. For example, the two Islamic institutions' sets of people, interpret their Islamic component differently, one (the NU) by requiring the examinees to show their skills in reciting the Al Quran,

while the other (the NI) by requiring them to justify their points of argument with a verse or verses in the Islamic Holy Book. The secular institutions do not practice such activity.

### Pedagogical implications

The generic structure found at each institution can help its teachers and students understand how TDE is practiced at their respective universities. For its teachers, it can help them design their course contents and objectives so that they can develop the appropriate knowledge and skills necessary to adequately prepare their students to perform well in the TDE. The teachers can also learn from the practices at the other institutions to improve the TDE of their home institution. For students, they should concentrate on the GS of their home university to practice well accordingly, and adequately prepare for their TDE.

The common generic structure proposed above is useful for further research and as a guide for a course designer. For researchers, it gives them an essential framework to design their research project. For a course designer, it gives them the essential elements to develop their own TDE. However, it might not be a fully appropriate guide for students due to the variations found at each institution. This means that the students of each institution should look closely into the TDE practice of their own university.

### Conclusions

In conclusion, despite the basic similarities, the study shows the richness of variations of the same academic genre largely influenced by local culture. These variations have been unknown in the literature. This study, therefore, has filled the important knowledge and cultural gap. However, as TDE could be found in other universities in Indonesia which have different sets of people, there may be many other culturally influenced variations awaiting to be discovered before we could call an 'Indonesian' generic structure because culturally, Indonesia is one of the most diverse countries in the world. More broadly, there are many countries which also practice TDE around the world, each with a number of universities. Hence, there may be many more important and interesting variations of TDE practices awaiting to be discovered. Thus, undoubtedly more studies are recommended in other universities in Indonesia as well as around the world. Nevertheless, the findings of this study have offered a crucial direction for such a wide research gap. Pedagogically, the study has also provided a useful guide for teachers and students.

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