

Critical Genre Analysis of Thesis Hearing Invitations at the University of Sumatera Utara

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ABSTRACT

Thesis hearing invitations are formal academic documents that follow a specific structure and language that reflect institutional norms and adhere to academic communication standards. This study analyzes the rhetorical structure and interpersonal meta-functions in thesis hearing invitations at the University of Sumatera Utara (USU) and how the invitation reflects the professional culture of academic communication. This research uses Critical Genre Analysis (CGA) to explore the structural components and language choices in the invitation, as well as investigate how academic norms are communicated through formal documents. The findings reveal that all thesis hearing invitations consist of four main moves: opening, purpose, content, and closing. However, the number of steps in each move is different. In the invitations, the dominant use of declarative mood emphasizes precise and formal information delivery, typical of academic communication. In addition, the uniformity of the template and the use of formal language according to Indonesian rules emphasize the importance of administrative consistency and professional culture at USU. These practices also reflect a professional culture where clarity, formality, and uniformity are prioritized. Ultimately, this study underscores the value of genre analysis in understanding how genre-specific structures contribute to the effectiveness of academic communication and how they embody institutional values.

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INTRODUCTION

An invitation is an act of commemoration and honor. The function of an invitation is to inform guests and request their attendance or participation in a gathering, event, place, or meeting (Amjad & Riaz, 2020). In an academic context, a thesis hearing invitation is included in the category of formal invitation letters. This letter is used to invite examiners, supervisors, or other audiences to a series of thesis defense activities. Because it is formal, the thesis hearing invitation letter must be written in polite language, standard grammar, and a format that is in accordance with academic rules. This letter aims to provide complete information about the examination process, location, and names of students and supervisors. In research related to thesis hearing invitations, it is essential to examine how the language and format used in the letter can reflect professionalism and facilitate effective communication between students and related parties. With in-depth analysis, research can identify essential elements that must be included in the invitation

letter to achieve its formal function optimally.

Academic research on thesis hearing invitations should look at how the language and format of the letters reflect professionalism and help students, lecturers, and other stakeholders communicate well. According to Xiao (2019), understanding these elements can help standardize and improve academic communication practices because it can help identify essential elements that ensure the letter's purpose is achieved effectively. Although the invitation of thesis hearing, like other formal academic letters, has the purpose of communicating, the structure and language of the invitation are influenced by broader social, cultural, and institutional norms. These norms can differ between study programs, reflecting the different interests and communication habits. In each program, the formal relationships between students, faculty, and staff shape the format and content of the thesis hearing invitations.

At the University of Sumatera Utara, thesis hearing invitations from all faculties usually follow a standard academic style, but subtle cultural influences also shape communication. These cultural norms emphasize academic values such as respect and adherence to formal standards. Culture is vital in shaping how people think, understand, and communicate. Even if people speak the same language, specific sentences or expressions may have different meanings depending on their cultural background. This can lead to misunderstandings, especially when there are translation issues or language differences (Bhatia, 2014). The critical genre analysis (CGA) approach is relevant to the analysis of thesis invitations because it combines linguistic analysis with social, cultural, and institutional contexts. This study aims to provide a deeper understanding of how thesis hearing invitations are constructed and communicated at the University of Sumatera Utara.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Genre analysis investigates texts within communicative events, providing a framework for understanding how language is used differently across cultures and contexts (Amaliah et al., 2024). According to Bhatia (1993), genre analysis examines how texts are conventionally structured and how these texts are confirmed and used in specific contexts to achieve certain goals. Typically, a genre analysis encompasses two primary approaches: move analysis and multi-dimensional analysis. Researchers can understand the rhetorical structure of the text (move and step) and how these elements shape academic relationships and norms. This approach also allows for the analysis of interpersonal meta-functions based on the theory of Halliday (2004), thus providing a thorough understanding of language use in formal academic contexts.

The interpersonal meta-function focuses on how speakers and listeners interact through language. In the context of public audience invitations, this analysis helps reveal how invitations shape the relationship between sender and receiver. Analyzing interpersonal meta-function allows researchers to examine the different linguistic features used in invitations. For example, statements (declarative), commands (imperative), and questions (interrogative) can be analyzed to understand the purpose of communication. Thesis hearing invitations usually include elements that encourage participation, such as invitations and clear instructions. By using Critical Genre Analysis, this research analyzes the text structurally and reveals the social aspects that shape and influence the text.

Several previous studies analyze invitations, such as Sawalmeh (2018), which conducted researched invitations for Jordanian weddings. This study analyzed 200 wedding invitation cards using Bhatia's genre analysis with the aim of increasing cultural awareness and providing insight into the practices surrounding wedding invitations in Jordan, which reflect the socio-cultural values and beliefs of Jordanian society. The results of the study showed that wedding invitations are not only about announcing marriage but also conveying emotions and social status while overcoming financial constraints.

Also and Kaigama (2019) conducted research on genre-based discourse analysis of wedding invitation cards in Nigeria. The purpose of this study was to compare Hausa and Igbo

wedding invitations in Nigeria, using Swales' Genre Move Analysis. The results showed that there are differences in moves. Hausa invitations usually contain seven moves (four mandatory), while Igbo invitations have eight moves (three mandatory). There are also significant non-linguistic differences between the two types of invitations, which emphasize the need for further research on genres across Nigerian cultures. Ali et al. (2020) conducted research on genre analysis of Invitation to Tender (ITT). The purpose of this study is to analyze the structure and development of tender documentation (ITT) in Malaysia. The results of this study indicate that ITT performs informational and promotional roles while complying with legal conventions. The analysis identifies nine moves in the tender notice, with six mandatory steps. It underlines the importance of a well-structured ITT in facilitating fair competition among suppliers for construction and procurement projects.

This study differs from previous studies because the object studied in this study is a thesis hearing invitation from 5 different study programs at the University of Sumatera Utara, a formal text in an academic context. The purpose of this study is to analyze the rhetorical structure (move and step) based on Bhatia (1993) model of move analysis, the interpersonal meta-function using Halliday (2004) and also Interview with the professional expert to investigate the professional culture in thesis hearing invitation at the University of Sumatera Utara.

METHOD

This study used a descriptive qualitative method, as it utilized non-numerical data to analyze the content and social context of thesis hearing invitations from five study programs at the Universitas Sumatera Utara (USU). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative research is conducted to understand and explore the meaning of individuals or groups towards human or social problems. This research applied Bhatia's theory by analyzing the rhetorical features of the thesis, including hearing invitations and interviews to investigate the professional culture. The primary data for this research were the text of thesis hearing invitations issued by five study programs at USU, namely Japanese Literature, Chinese Language, Development Economics, Computer Science, and Secretarial. The decision to focus on five specific study programs was based on their representation of different academic fields within the university, which ensured diversity and richness of the data while keeping it manageable for analysis. Secondary data included information obtained through interviews with the administrative staff responsible for issuing the invitations. The researchers used document analysis and interviews to collect data. This involved compiling thesis hearing invitations from five study programs at USU, reading and analyzing them to identify their structure, and conducting interviews with administrative staff to understand the process, reasons, and professional culture that supported the creation and issuance of the invitations. Triangulation was used to cross-verify the results of the document analysis with interview data to strengthen the credibility of the research. The data analysis followed the steps from Miles et al. (2014). First, the researcher collected invitations and interviewed administrative staff to compile and organize the data. Then, the thesis hearing invitations were analyzed to determine the rhetorical structures and interpersonal functions, and the interview data were examined to understand the context and professional practices. Finally, the findings from both analyses were combined to draw conclusions that answered the research objectives.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. Move- Step Structure

From the analysis of five thesis examination invitations from various study programs at the University of North Sumatra (USU), namely Japanese Literature, Chinese Language, Development Economics, Computer Science, and Secretarial, it can be seen that the general structure of the invitation letters follows a fairly consistent and standard pattern. The text consists of four main moves with detailed steps in each section. Each move and step plays an important role in conveying information in a clear and structured manner.

Table 1. Results of Move and Step Analysis on Thesis Hearing Invitation

Study Program	Move 1 (opening)	Move 2 (purpose)	Move 3 (content)	Move 4 (closing)
Japanese literature	3 steps	2 steps	3 steps	2 steps
Chinese language	3 steps	2 steps	3 steps	2 steps
Development Economics	3 steps	1 step	2 steps	2 steps
Communication Science	3 steps	2 steps	2 steps	2 steps
Secretarial	3 steps	2 steps	2 steps	2 steps

All invitations to thesis examinations have four moves that are consistent and structured. This shows that although the letters come from different study programs, the basic format of the USU final exam invitation letter is relatively uniform. The four moves are as follows.

Move 1: Opening

The first move in each invitation letter includes the letter number, attachment, and subject matter to ensure that the recipient is aware of the purpose of the letter. The inclusion of this information adds to the formal impression. The second step describes the list of recipients of the letter, which explains who is involved in the event, either as an examiner or supervisor. The third step mentions the course and university, which explains the institutional context.

Move 2: Purpose

The first step is a respectful greeting that contains the formal and polite nuances of official communication. Then, the second step, explains the purpose of the letter, which is an invitation to take the final exam or thesis seminar.

Move 3: Content

The first step in this section mentions student information such as name, nim, and research title. The second step is to mention the name of the student's academic advisor. The third step is information about the location and time to make sure the recipient knows when and where the exam is held.

Move 4: Closing

The first step is to thank the recipient of the invitation. Then, the second step ends with a signature or official authority that confirms the validity of the letter.

Although thesis hearing invitations from various study programs follow a similar four-move structure, there are differences in the number of steps in each move. The Japanese Literature, Chinese Language, and Secretarial programs generally show a consistent pattern, with three steps in Move 1, two steps in Move 2, three steps in Move 3, and two steps in Move 4. However, the invitation letters from the Development Economics and Communication Science programs are slightly different, with only two steps in Move 3 conveying more concise information about the student and the exam schedule and one step in Move 2 directly stating the purpose of the invitation without a lengthy introduction. In addition, Move 3 in the Japanese Literature and Chinese Language programs contains more detailed information, such as the name of the supervisor, the thesis title, and the time and place of the exam. This reflects the variation in communication styles and needs among the various study programs. The findings show that a consistent rhetorical structure in thesis hearing invitations leads to effective and professional communication despite differences in the number of steps. A structured approach to thesis hearing invitations not only ensures clarity but also reflects the conventions of academic communication. According to Swales (1990), effective communication in academic settings often relies on well-established rhetorical structures to guide the reader through the text. This is especially important for formal invitations where clarity is paramount.

Analysis of Interpersonal Meta-function in Thesis Hearing Invitation

In this section, the results of analyzing the thesis hearing invitation with the systematic functional linguistics (SFL) approach are presented, especially the interpersonal meta-function research. This approach is used to analyze the thesis hearing invitation because it focuses on how language builds relationships between senders and recipients. In an academic context, this invitation is not just about providing information, but also showing respect and formality. This analysis shows how word choice contributes to creating communication that is polite, clear, and follows formal rules in an academic environment.

Table 2. Analysis of Mood Structure

No	Study Program	Dominant Interpersonal Function	Frequency	Percentages
1.	Japanese Literature	Declarative	3	20%
2.	Chinese Language	Declarative	3	20%
3.	Development Economics	Declarative	3	20%
4.	Communication Science	Declarative	3	20%
5.	Secretarial	Declarative	3	20%
Total			12	100%

Thesis hearing invitations from the five study programs is dominated by the use of declarative mood. This indicates that the main purpose of the text is to convey clear, direct, and formal information to the recipient of the invitation. The use of declarative mood also reflects the role of the sender as an authority figure, who is authorized to convey the invitation without appearing to command or force. Therefore, the use of a declarative mood is chosen to maintain professionalism and ensure the message is conveyed effectively.

1. *Dengan hormat, berdasarkan SK Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya USU No/UN5.2.1.7/SK/SSA/2024, tanggal ... September 2024, dengan ini kami mengundang Saudari untuk menguji Ujian Skripsi yang akan disampaikan oleh:*

Dengan hormat, berdasarkan SK Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Budaya USU No/UN5.2.1.7/SK/SSA/2024, tanggal ... September 2024,	kami	mengundang		Saudari	untuk menguji Ujian Skripsi yang akan disampaikan oleh
Adjunct	Subject	Finite	predicator	Complement	Adjunct
Re-	Mood		sidue		
Declarative					

2. *Dengan hormat, dengan ini kami mengharapkan kesediaan Saudara/i untuk menguji mahasiswa*

Dengan hormat, dengan ini	Kami	mengharapkan		kesediaan Saudara/i untuk menguji mahasiswa	
Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement	
Re-	Mood		sidue		
Declarative					

3. *Demikian surat ini kami sampaikan,*

Demikian	surat ini	kami	sampaikan	
Adjunct	Complement	Subject	Finite	Predicator
Resi-	Mood		due	
Declarative				

4. *atas perhatian dan kerjasamanya diucapkan terima kasih*

atas perhatian dan kerjasamanya	(kami)	-	diucapkan	terima kasih
Adjunct	Subject	Finite	Predicator	Complement
Re-	Mood		sidue	
Declarative				

This interpersonal meta-functional analysis shows that the solicitation sentences analyzed show a consistent usage pattern in their sentence structure. Each sentence has structures such as Adjunct, Subject, Finite, Predicator, and Complement, which form declarative sentences. Phrases such as *“kami mengundang saudari untuk menguji ujian skripsi”* are intended to provide clear information, while phrases such as *“Dengan hormat”* and *“Demikian surat ini kami sampaikan”* refer to established academic norms. The dominance of declarative mood in these sentences has important implications for professional communication in the academic world. According to Halliday (2014), using declarative sentences creates clarity and assertiveness in conveying information, which is crucial in an academic context where accuracy and proper understanding are essential. Furthermore, Bhatia (2014) suggests that this structure helps build good professional relationships by conveying the respect and formality expected of academic communication. Therefore, using the declarative mood not only conveys information but also reinforces the norms of practical and professional communication in an academic environment. Overall, the sentence structure used in the thesis hearing invitations allows for effective communication, maintains professional relationships, and ensures that the message is delivered in the format expected in an academic environment so that the recipient understands it clearly.

2. Interview with a Professional Expert (Administrative Staff)

2.1 Template Uniformity as a Representation of Professional Culture

All study programs, namely Development Economics, Secretariat, Japanese Literature, Mandarin, Communication Studies use the same template that has been determined by the faculty. The following is a statement from the study program administrators

Development Economics Admin:

“Untuk template sendiri itu sudah disediakan dari Fakultas dan untuk semua Prodi yang ada di Fakultas ekonomi dan bisnis memakai template tersebut”

(The template itself has been provided by the Faculty and all study programs in the Faculty of Economics and Business use the template.)

Secretarial Admin:

“Semua template-nya sama kok seperti dengan Prodi yang lain. Memang sudah ditentukan dari Fakultas”

(All the templates are the same as the other study programs. It has been determined from the Faculty.)

Japanese Literature Admin:

“Kalau template khusus nggak ada karena itu diseragamkan untuk semua program studi dari Fakultas. Memang udah ditentukan dari Fakultas jadi Prodi hanya mengikuti”

(If there is no special template because it is the same for all study programs from the Faculty. It has been determined from the Faculty so the Study Program only follows.)

Chinese Language admin:

“Semua template sama sih, karena ini sudah ketentuan dari Fakultas.”

(All templates are the same because this is a requirement from the Faculty.)

Communication Science Admin:

"Kami templatanya sama sih sama juga seperti prodi lain di Fakultas ini ya karena Fakultas yang menyediakan."

(We have the same template as other study programs in this Faculty because the Faculty provides it.)

The results of interviews with study program administrators revealed that all study programs, such as Development Economics, Secretarial, Japanese Literature, Mandarin Language, and Communication Science, are policies set by the faculty. All study programs follow the same template that has been determined by the faculty. This reflects a professional culture that emphasizes the importance of consistent standards and strengthens the overall identity of the institution.

2.2 Consistency of thesis hearing invitation template

Based on interviews with admins from various study programs, the majority stated that there were no significant changes to the thesis hearing invitation letter template in recent years. Here are their statements:

Development Economics Admin:

"Untuk berapa tahun terakhir untuk perubahan tidak ada."

(For the last few years there has been no change.)

Secretarial Admin:

"Selama beberapa tahun terakhir kita nggak ada nggak ada perubahan masih sama seperti tahun-tahun sebelumnya."

(For the last few years we have had no changes, still the same as in previous years.)

Japanese Literature Admin:

"Sejauh ini belum ada perubahan."

(So far there has been no change)

Chinese Language admin:

"Kalau dia dilihat dari tahun kemarin memang perubahan template itu kop surat itu ada yang dulunya kita berlogo dan di situ ada Kementerian sekarang kita pakai logo USU dan di situ di kop surat itu menyatakan USU maksudnya USU yang mengeluarkan semua template-nya itu kita mengikuti pedoman itu."

(If it is seen from last year, there is indeed a change in the template, the letterhead, which used to have a logo and there is a Ministry, now uses the USU logo and on the letterhead it states USU, meaning that USU issued all the templates, we follow the guidelines.)

Admin of Communication Science:

"Nggak belum ada."

(No, not yet.)

Most study programs continue using the thesis hearing invitation letter template without significant changes, focusing on uniformity and administrative efficiency. This template shows uniformity, including important elements such as letterhead, university logo, letter number, lecturer's name, and degree. In addition, the visual elements are consistent, and the structure and sentence structure follow the same pattern. For example, each letter begins with an official greeting such as *"Dengan hormat,"* followed by an explanation of the letter's purpose, schedule details, and names of students and instructors, and ends with a thank you and an official signature.

This standard ensures that invitation letters have a uniform format, both in appearance and delivery. This reinforces institutional identity, creates a professional impression, and reduces the likelihood of clerical errors. By following the faculty guidelines, each study program can support effective communication in the academic environment so that these letters are recognized as official documents.

2.3 The Role of Language in Reflecting Professional Culture and Academic Ethics

The language used in the thesis hearing invitation plays an important role in reflecting the professional culture and ethics that apply in the academic environment. The following are statements from several study program admins.

Development Economics Admin:

“Yang pertama mungkin adanya kop surat yang mencerminkan berasal dari mana undangan itu bisa dari Fakultas ataupun program studi kemudian juga di dalam surat itu harus menggunakan kalimat yang sesuai dengan kaidah penggunaan bahasa Indonesia.”

(The first thing is that there may be a letterhead that reflects where the invitation comes from, it can be from the Faculty or the study program, then also in the letter it must use sentences that are in accordance with the rules of using the Indonesian language.)

Communication Science Admin:

“Ya susunannya kalau kami biasanya sih yang formal sih ada kop suratnya ada logo usunya kayak gitu terus ada nama nama dosennya dan nama nama dosennya itu ya harus benar-benar dicek check and recheck kan karena kan ada gelar dan lain-lain nah itu memang harus seperti itu benar-benar harus dipikirkan.”

(Yes, the composition, if we are usually formal, there is a letterhead with the logo of the usunya like that and then there is the name of the lecturer's name and the name of the lecturer's name, it must be really checked and rechecked right because there are degrees and others, well it really has to be like that, it really has to be thought out.)

Based on the results of interviews with several study program administrators, the language used in the thesis hearing invitation is essential in reflecting professional culture and academic ethics. This letter's choice of words and phrases is formally intended to show respect and courtesy to recipients, such as examiners and supervisors. The Development Economics admin emphasizes the importance of using letterhead that clearly shows the origin of the invitation from both the faculty and the study program and using language that is by the rules of Indonesian. In contrast, the communication science admin emphasized the importance of a formal letter structure with letterhead and logo, as well as including the name and title of the lecturer. This shows that it is essential to be careful in language and letter format to maintain a professional impression and comply with established academic ethics.

CONCLUSIONS

From the analysis, it is concluded that thesis invitations at the University of Sumatera Utara (USU) show a high level of uniformity in structure, format, and language. All study programs follow faculty guidelines to use a uniform letter template, even though the programs are from different disciplines. This reflects a professional culture that emphasizes the importance of administrative consistency and efficiency. Then, the structure of the thesis hearing invitation consists of four moves, namely opening, purpose, content, and closing, although there are slight variations in the number of steps in each move. According to interpersonal meta-function analysis, the declarative mood was most frequently used, highlighting the letter's objective of conveying information clearly and formally while remaining polite and professional. In addition, the

language used in this letter also plays an important role in reflecting academic culture. Using language that adheres to Indonesian language rules and formal rules, such as including letterhead, university logos, and lecturer titles, will help maintain an official and professional impression. Overall, the consistency of the template and the use of appropriate language can strengthen the university's image as a professional institution. Future research might be done on cultural differences in invitation styles across universities in different areas, providing comparative insights into academic communication practices.

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