



## The discourse organization of Philippine university newspaper opinion columns

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### Abstract

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Recent studies on text organization have focused mostly on business documents, academic texts, and certain newspaper articles such as editorials and news stories. However, the organization of opinion articles found in university-level newspapers has not been formally investigated. Therefore, this study attempts to determine whether these articles are written in accordance to journalistic writing principles. A total of 45 opinion articles were taken and served as the study corpus. These articles were analyzed based on Ho's (2001) framework, as supported by the principles of macrostructure and the features of editorials in journalistic writing. The findings indicate that the discourse structure of Philippine newspaper opinion articles employs the two-move pattern in the orientation, exposition, and summation blocks, where two frequently used specific steps are found in each block. The findings suggest that university students adhere to a prescribed journalistic text organization, although there is also a tendency to deviate from it. Furthermore, it is possible that their judicious choices in using a particular step may have been influenced by the writers' objective of effectively communicating their opinion to a wide variety of readers.

**Keywords:** Written discourse, opinion articles, macrostructures, move analysis, campus journalism

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Argumentation and Opinion Columns

It is believed that argumentation actively occurs in all available avenues of expressing one's thoughts (I. de Leon, personal communication, February 2, 2015). Freely and Steinberg (2000) define it as an act of reasoning in communication, where individuals explain and justify their actions, beliefs, and perceptions. In liberal and democratic societies such as the Philippines, argumentation is important because various societal groups, such as the

government, create laws that affect every citizen (Duque, 2013). These policies are informed through argumentative discourse, where persons supporting or opposing a given policy are engaged in discussions that may improve a proposed law or abandon the bill and later propose a more favorable policy. While it is important in democratic nations, Myers (2004), believing that argumentation is a democratic activity in itself, stresses that people must be willing and responsible in expressing their propositions and claims. Hence, argumentation is an effective means of expressing sentiments, provided that these are supported by substantial evidence (Miller, 1989).

One of the ways in which argumentation may take place is through newspaper opinion columns, which, unlike lead editorials, are a reflection of the stand of an individual columnist and not of the entire editorial board (Cruz, 2003). Cruz (2010) cites different types of editorial columns based on their content, and among these include the opinion or signed editorial column, which “carries the personal stamp of the writer’s own ideas” (p. 116), although he also adds that its structure is akin to that of editorials. Hence, opinion columns are considerably similar to editorials of interpretation, argument, and criticism because the beliefs of individual writers are expressed through well-thought-out arguments (Ramirez, 1989). Therefore, these columns are indeed suitable avenues for exercising freedom of speech and contending for or against anything worthy of discussion, such as relevant events and current affairs (Malinao, 2008). However, columnists are expected to observe resourcefulness, fairness, truthfulness, and a good understanding of facts (Anker, 2005; Cruz, 2010) because these articles contend with different crucial topics that serve and reinforce the knowledge and beliefs of readers (Le, 2004).

Indeed, argumentation is a socially relevant type of discourse, for it is chiefly used in different aspects and levels of society. In general, discourse satisfies communicative functions such as greeting, arguing, and requesting (Orillos, 2008); it is also a socially natural phenomenon, where individuals communicate meaning through discourse in activities of different situations (Blommaert, 2005). Hence, it follows that various types of discourse may tend to observe certain structures and contain features dependent on the purposes of the interlocutor (Malden, 2003). However, the organization of texts is also dependent on other factors such as social and cultural practices influencing acts of communication (Kelley & Tomic, 2001; Kramsch, 1998), exposure to any particular language (Magistro, 2007), and the manner of language instruction (Smith, 2005).

The discourse organization of different texts has been the focus of various studies. Academic texts such as medical research articles (Li & Ge, 2009, Nwogu, 1997), cross-disciplinary empirical research articles (Lin & Evans, 2012), student-written persuasive essays (Crismore, Markannen, & Steffensen, 1993), textbooks (Hyland, 2000, 2005), philosophy research article introductions (Briones, 2012), and even argumentative speeches for debates (Duque, 2013) have been intensively investigated, as well as professional texts such sales promotion letters (Bhatia, 1993), research grant proposals (Connor & Mauranen, 1999), and commercial negotiation letters (Pinto dos Santos, 2002).

Research investigations have also dealt with the discourse organization and features of journalistic texts such as persuasive articles from a leading Spanish and a British newspaper

(Dafouz-Milne, 2008), news leads from online American and Philippine newspapers (Gustilo, 2002), Philippine newspaper editorials (Dayag, 2005; Tarrayo & Duque, 2011), Asian newspaper editorials (Dayag, 2009), and regional Philippine newspaper editorials (Barrios, 2013).

While there have been numerous studies on the structures of argumentative discourses and newspaper stories and editorials, there is a dearth of research dealing with the discourse organization of local campus newspaper articles such as opinion columns. In addition, while existing literature on L2 writing presents that undergraduate writing has been investigated much, exploring other forms of writing such as opinion columns is still necessary (Juzwik et al., 2006). Moreover, previous studies on discourse organization mostly involved news stories and editorials of nationwide newspapers, academic texts, and professional texts.

## **1.2 Theoretical Framework**

### **1.2.1 Macrostructures**

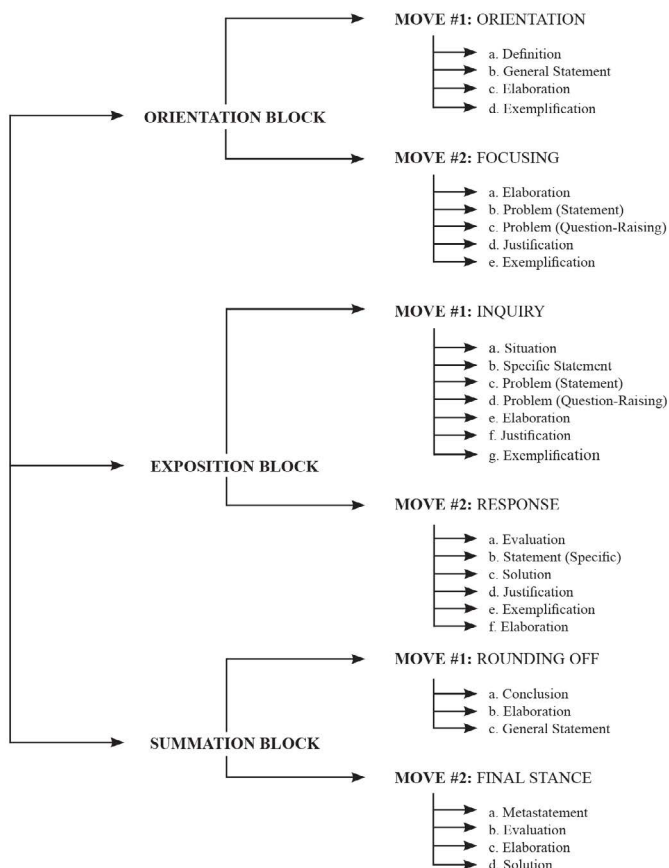
Macrostructures (or superstructures) are important in examining the linguistic structure of texts (Connor, 1996) because these refer to the primary organization of texts (van Dijk, 1977). In addition, van Dijk (1977) contends for the need for discourse structures to be semantically characterized on the global level, for “at the semantic level, the coherence of discourse is determined also by macro-structures” (p. 149). This means that in order for texts to be understood, strategies, such as the use of topical sentences and connectives, are needed to weave related local propositions together to form the global structure or macrostructure (van Dijk, 1977). Therefore, discourse is viewed as a whole unit carrying an overall meaning stemming from the meanings found in sentences.

This can be applied to campus newspaper opinion columns, where the characterization of the text as a discourse unit is done using the model of a General Paper Essay of Ho (2004).

### **1.2.2 Model of a General Paper Essay**

This research also considers the General Paper (GP) Essay Model purported by Ho (2004). Upon examining the discourse features of the GP essays, a requisite for all student examinees taking the General Certificate of Education “A” level test, she categorized the common features and patterns that characterize these essays as a distinct category. She proposed three blocks, namely, Orientation, Exposition, and Summation Blocks. Each block is composed of an obligatory two-move pattern that consists of specific steps as shown in Figure 1.

First, Ho purports that the Orientation Block contains the main idea or thesis of the essay, the plans of the author, and the expected essay layout. This block also consists of the “Orientation” and the “Focusing” moves, whereby the former provides the background and the context of the topic, while the latter is a means of providing a general discussion of the main idea. The Orientation move may consist of definitions, statements presenting the topic or issue in general terms (general statement), further explanations (elaboration), and concrete examples or statistics (exemplification).



**Figure 1. The model of a general paper essay by Ho (2004)**

Second, the Exposition Block consists also of two moves used to construct the specific ideas of the essay, namely, “Inquiry” and “Response” moves. On the one hand, the Inquiry move presents specific details supporting the main argument, which may consist of a particular argument (specific statement), supporting facts and circumstances (situation), a statement of the problem (either as a question or a declarative statement), supporting reasons (justification), as well as providing elaboration and exemplification. On the other hand, the Response move primarily contains the writer’s input on the topic, which may contain assessments of the worthiness of a stand or a solution (evaluation), solutions to issues, more specific statements, exemplifications, and elaborations. According to Ho, it is possible to present the two-move pattern in different means, such as by stating the claim, raising a problem, and exposing or filling a gap. However, Ho emphasizes a caveat that this block is less predictable as compared to the other blocks, particularly when sentence length and frequency of moves and steps are considered.

Lastly, the Summation Block consists of two moves that complete or synthesize the ideas raised by the writer. In this block, writers are found to either restate the thesis or to conclude based on the main ideas pointing to the main thesis; this is called the “Rounding Off” move, which may include a previously justified assertion or consequence (conclusion), elaboration, and a general statement about the issue. Ho also explains that the “Final Stance” move may be used as a means of restating the ideas found in the Orientation Block, primarily through providing an evaluation, a solution, further elaboration, or an explicit statement of a stand (Metastatement).

Each of these blocks in the model is presented as a composition of moves. These moves are considered sequences predictably occurring (Dudley-Evans, as cited in Ho, 2004), which is directly correlated to the writer’s purpose. Ho also elaborates that these moves are characterized and driven by specific purposes, and each move would have certain pragmatic functions in the whole discourse structure.

### 1.2.3 Features of Editorials in Journalistic Writing

Table 1 presents the description of editorial writing based on the 12 points of comparison forwarded by Cruz (2010), which are also used to distinguish news and feature articles.

**Table 1**  
*Features of editorial columns as journalistic texts*

Characteristics	Editorials
Definition	Interpretation of an event or issue
Purpose	To interpret
Timelessness	Timely
Length	Around 300 words
Use of words	Simple, forceful, direct
Use of sentences	May be longer
Paragraph	With topic sentence, longer
Use of literary device	Journalistic, direct to the point, may use idioms and figures of speech if properly handled
Use of adjectives and opinions	Adjectives used freely; primarily opinion
Parts	Introduction (news peg, reaction), body, conclusion
Style	Follows style-sheet newspaper style
Structure	Hypothesis, arguments, stand on issue, conclusion

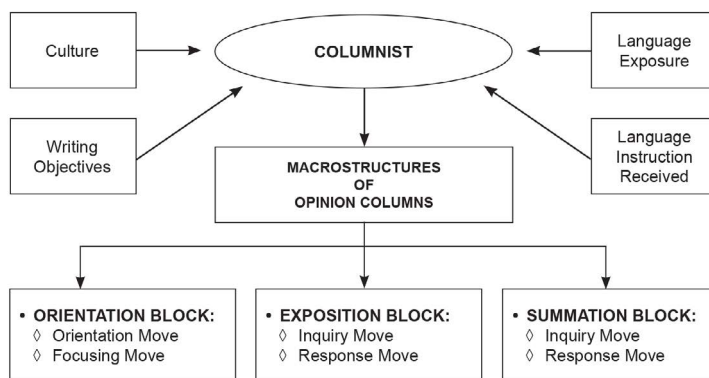
Cruz (2010) emphasizes that editorials present commentaries representative of all the members of the editorial board and not of an individual writer. He also purports that editorials must discuss recent events and issues of public interest and significance. Furthermore, he

enumerates editorials to have three important parts which together present a single idea founded upon factual information, namely, introduction, body, and clincher or punch line, where the introduction consists of a brief statement about the recent event followed by a reaction; the body is comprised of paragraphs that further elaborate or justify the reaction. Lastly, the clincher serves as a conclusion that synthesizes the ideas and concepts previously indicated in an editorial.

The description of editorial parts and structure is used in determining whether opinion editorial columns observe or deviate from it, based on the employed moves and steps. Furthermore, this investigation also considers the distinction between editorials and opinion columns, where the latter is written by a single writer and has the tendency of using a rather personal tone (Cruz, 2010).

### 1.3 Conceptual Framework

Figure 2 presents the conceptual framework of the present study, which assumes that four independent factors influence the macrostructure of opinion columns, namely, the columnists' culture, their writing objectives, language exposure, and the approaches to language instruction they have received in formal classes.



**Figure 2. Conceptual framework**

It is believed that as columnists construct the macrostructure of their articles in writing, they implicitly express their cultures, objectives, and knowledge about the language in the opinion columns.

Since those concepts may influence the writer in constructing the macrostructure of the columns, it may probably affect the three general components of the macrostructure – orientation, exposition, and summation blocks – and each block is specifically influenced by these four factors through the two moves belonging to each block. Thus, the moves present in each block forms the macrostructure, and these are manifestations of the four factors influencing columnists.

## 1.4 Research Objectives

The objective of this paper is to examine the discourse organization of Filipino university student-written opinion articles in selected campus newspaper publications. Specifically, it seeks answers to the following questions:

- a. What are the rhetorical moves in the orientation, exposition, and summation blocks of Filipino university-student written opinion columns?
- b. For each move employed, what are the specific steps in the structure of the orientation, exposition, and summation blocks of these articles?
- c. How do these articles observe or deviate from the purported journalistic style of writing articles?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed methods design, where qualitative and quantitative approaches were used to address the research questions. Whereas the qualitative approach was done by analyzing the organization of opinion columns in terms of the moves and steps purported in the GP Essay Model (Ho, 2004), the quantitative approach was adopted by determining the frequency and percentage distributions of the observance of the two-move pattern and the steps characterizing each move.

### 2.2 Study Corpus

This research is a corpus-driven one in which a considerable number of opinion articles in university campus newspapers were used in analyzing the moves and steps characterizing the organization of these texts. A total of 45 published opinion articles written in English were collected through purposive sampling, where 15 articles were gathered from three campus organizations of universities within the National Capital Region (NCR). In addition, these opinion columns consisted of 250 to 950 words and were published in campus newspaper volumes from 2012 until 2014. While a majority of the articles were written by student-writers, some of these texts were also written by professionals, who may have been previously or currently affiliated with either the campus organization or the institution represented by the publication.

The opinion articles were selected from three official campus newspapers from three private universities in NCR: *The Guidon* of the Ateneo de Manila University (ADMU), *The La Sallian* of the De La Salle University-Manila (DLSU), and *The Varsitarian* of the University of Santo Tomas (UST). These newspapers were chosen based on their longstanding

histories and legacies, as well as the reputation of these schools where these newspapers are published. Furthermore, a number of academic programs in these universities have been given recognition by the Philippines' Commission on Higher Education.

The online version of these opinion articles were also considered in cases where the school publication operates an official website, for it is assumed that the online and the print versions are similar in many important respects and that the online source is more accessible than the printed version.

### **2.3 Unit of Analysis**

The unit of analysis was the organizational moves, which pertain to the semantic units dependent on their functions in the text. These moves may be an independent clause, a series of sentences, or a dependent clause. Since text coherence and cohesion is established in macrostructures (van Dijk, 1977) such as the columns under study, the semantic meanings conveyed in each move are related to the meanings of the other moves in the text.

The semantic meaning in each move was identified through the cohesive markers that may have been employed in each move, as well as the relationship of each move with respect to the thesis of the text.

### **2.4 Research Procedure**

The 45 opinion articles collected were reformatted using word-processing software such as Microsoft Word in a tabular form to ease data analysis. Each article was first analyzed, divided, and classified according to the three blocks presented in the GP Essay Model. After which, macro data analyses were conducted, where the discourse moves and the particular steps used in the formation of the macrostructures were analyzed in light of the GP Essay Model. The moves and steps are not entirely analyzed on a sentential level, since all of the moves and steps utilized by the writers are pragmatic units contributing to the overall structure of the text, rather than syntactic units (Ho, 2004; van Dijk, 1977). Therefore, these articles were divided into parts, where each portion of the opinion articles was classified on the basis of these blocks, moves, and steps, primarily based on the cohesive or transitional devices used by the authors.

The occurrences of the rhetorical moves and steps in each block were counted, tallied, and tabulated on a frequency table. Whereas the moves were counted based on whether the two-move pattern was employed in each block for every article, the steps were counted based on the occurrence of organizational moves. For instance, a series of sentences was considered as an organizational move or a step as long as it conveyed the same function. These steps were also observed to reoccur in a block; in this case, each occurrence was considered a step if it did not come in succession. Furthermore, a phrase or clause was counted as a step despite occurring only once or twice in some instances.

Three independent coders, all of whom with relevant educational attainment in applied linguistics, assisted in coding and analyzing all the opinion columns. They were



thoroughly oriented about the concepts in the study and the coding process, which required providing exercises on the organizational moves in Ho's model. Moreover, while the independent coders agreed to the findings in most cases, there were instances of differences in opinion, especially in identifying the steps found in the exposition blocks. In resolving these conflicts in their analyses, a thorough discussion was held with the coders and was later resolved by arriving at a consensus.

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 Moves Employed in Philippine University Opinion Columns

The data in the following tables present the discourse features characterizing the organization of opinion columns in university campus newspapers in the Philippines. Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the moves used in these columns.

The findings in Table 2 indicate that the organization of Philippine university newspaper opinion columns generally observe the two-move pattern in the orientation, exposition, and summation blocks purported by Ho (2004). This result indicates that opinion articles written by university students may be organized in a similar manner as typical argumentative essays. Specifically, the articles were structured as follows: the orientation block provides an overview or a background, which may often include the columnists' general position on the topic; the exposition block provides an in-depth discussion extending from the general claim; and the summation block includes a synthesis of the ideas discussed, which is often supplemented with general evaluations, and in some instances, recommendations to the issues.

**Table 2**  
*Moves utilized in the Philippine university opinion columns*

Move	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Two-move pattern</i> (i.e., Orientation Block: Orientation/Focusing; Exposition Block: Inquiry/Response; Summation Block: Rounding Off/Final Stance)	37	82.22
<i>Non-two-move pattern</i>	8	17.78
<b>Total</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>100.00</b>

### 3.2 The Orientation Block

Table 3 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the steps used in the orientation block.

**Table 3**  
*Steps employed in the orientation block*

Step	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elaboration	37	82.22
General Statement	8	17.78
Exemplification	17	11.41
Problem (Statement)	13	8.72
Problem (Question-Raising)	7	4.70
Justification	5	3.36
Definition	2	1.34
<b>Total</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>100.00</b>

These findings suggest that columnists use the elaboration and general statement steps more frequently than the other steps. Tan (2003) posits that introductions must supply the general background of the argument because effective backgrounds can sustain the attention of the readers. The need to attract the readers' attention seems likely to account for the use of general statements in this block. Baker, Brizee, and Angeli (2013) also emphasize that the introductions must contain the thesis statement or the main argument the author wishes to convey to the readers. In addition, as general statements, thesis statements may consist of propositions, points of views, interpretations, and cause-and-effect statements (Brizee & Tardiff, 2014).

To illustrate the organization of the orientation block, the following extracts from each campus newspaper show how specific steps are employed. The first extract is taken from *The Guidon*, where the author focused on the topic through examples and reasons why individuals freely opine on social issues.

Extract	Step	Move
<p><i>Controversial and timely issues such as the RH bill, the cybercrime law, and the US presidential elections have given students the chance to express their sentiments about their particular concerns.</i></p> <p><i>These issues have allowed them to engage in intelligent discussions about the realities that surround them.</i></p> <p><i>One of the reasons why they express these opinions is because these issues may affect their lives.</i></p> <p><i>These issues may either go against their personal beliefs and principles or heavily influence their way of living.</i></p> <p><i>Having said these, one's opinion can be a way of protecting oneself.</i></p>	General Statement	<b>ORIENTATION</b>
	Elaboration	
	Exemplification	<b>FOCUSING</b>
	Justification	
	Elaboration	

Meanwhile, the following extract from *The La Sallian* presents that a single rhetorical step can be employed for each move in the Orientation Block.

Extract	Step	Move
<p><i>In 2005, I wrote an opinion column for The La Sallian and made the case that Filipinos should stay with Filipinos.</i></p> <p><i>Living (in my case, teaching) in another country was heresy. The case was to give back to the community that gave to me. Almost ten years later, I'm teaching in the United States. I have also recently made the case to my recently married friends that they should move out of the country. The old wrestling match between the idealistic college student and practical working adult is raging and it's pretty obvious who won.</i></p>	General Statement	<b>ORIENTATION</b>
	Elaboration	<b>FOCUSING</b>

In the following extract from *The Varsitarian*, it can be noticed that after additional details related to general information on death penalty was provided, a problem, posed as a question, is stated.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>Death penalty in the Philippines dates back to the time of Spanish colonizers and the American occupation where executions were conducted by firing squads, decapitation and drowning, among others.</i>	General Statement	<b>ORIENTATION</b>
<i>It was not until President Corazon Aquino's term that the death penalty was first abolished. However, President Fidel Ramos reinstated capital punishment, but it was later removed by President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. Eight years later, with the spate of heinous crimes, come calls to revive death penalty.</i>	Elaboration	<b>FOCUSING</b>
<i>Is the Philippines just letting history repeat itself once more?</i>	Problem (Question-Raising)	

### 3.3 The Exposition Block

Table 4 presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the steps used in the exposition block.

**Table 4**  
*Steps employed in the exposition block*

Step	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Specific Statement	84	21.43
Elaboration	66	16.84
Exemplification	59	15.05
Justification	50	12.76
Problem (Question-Raising)	38	9.69
Evaluation	23	5.87
Problem (Statement)	17	4.34
Solution	13	3.32
<b>Total</b>	<b>392</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Upon examining the data further, it can be inferred that the total frequency may be attributed to the unpredictability of this particular block. This block seems to include the more detailed parts of opinion columns, which may involve the multiple uses of a certain step (or steps) more than once to establish the specific details of the writers' arguments. Moreover, another potential factor that may have contributed to the unpredictability of the block is the lack of cohesive or transitional devices in the articles, which, at times, made the analysis difficult.

From these findings, it can be gleaned that the specific statement step is frequently employed by writers, in which these are used to construct specific arguments in support of the main argument (Tan, 2003). These arguments were stated through specific statements, which were explained further through the use of the elaboration step and were supported through justifying and providing concrete examples or statistics. Hence, in this block, arguments are developed and strengthened through these steps to maintain credibility and validity of thoughts and ideas (University Writing Center, 2012).

To illustrate how exposition blocks are constructed, the following extract from *The Guidon* illustrates how the author first examines an argument by providing a specific claim about how product brands have upheld women’s equality, which is supported by an illustrative example and a further explanation of it. It can also be noted that a statement of the problem is employed as an Inquiry move.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>Recently, different brands have also pushed for women’s equality.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>INQUIRY</b>
<i>For example, Dove commercials focus on women’s “inner beauty” and also deal with most women’s self-depreciating tendencies. Another is Pantene’s advertising campaign #WhipIt, which hopes to put an end to women’s labels.</i>	Exemplification	
<i>The Pantene commercial shows the positive labels given to men, and negative ones given to women in the same position – a male CEO is called boss, a female, bossy; a working mother called selfish.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>These may sound like trifles as compared to other national issues, but the fact that they are perceived as trifles is indicative of a problem.</i>	Problem (Statement)	
<i>Despite what the statistics say, the Philippines is not one of the best places for women.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>RESPONSE</b>
<i>There is a disjunction in the supposed gender equality we have achieved.</i>	Elaboration	

Meanwhile, the following extract from *The La Sallian* begins the exposition block by presenting a specific claim through a popular idiomatic expression, followed by a contextualized explanation. Then a response is provided by stating another claim supported by a reason why the claim holds true, and it is followed by one of the infrequent occurrences of the solution step.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>There's a popular idiom that goes, "You can't teach an old dog new tricks," in reference to how hard it is to change older people.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>INQUIRY</b>
<i>It might be impossible to change those in power now and these politicians accursed of corruption won't instantly turn over a new leaf. However, every young person who enters the 'real world' after graduation is a glimmer of hope and a chance for things in this country to change.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>As students of one of the top universities in the country, we are all looked at as potential leaders.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>RESPONSE</b>
<i>All eyes are on us and many will follow the lead that our actions depict.</i>	Justification	
<i>So it is essential to think before we act.</i>	Solution	

Lastly, the following extract from *The Varsitarian* starts its exposition block with a specific claim, stating the danger posed by black-sand mining to the environment. The danger it poses is explained further by providing additional details, i.e., a law and reasons supporting the previous statements; after which, a response is provided through another claim related to the previous one, with further explanation about the current claim.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>But more than my fondness for our beaches, my love for my culture and land, black-sand mining is a threat to the environment.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>INQUIRY</b>
<i>The Philippine Mining Act of 1995 specifically stated that beaches are "no-go" areas in black-sand mining.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>According to the geohazard mapping of MGB, sand mining makes coastal areas of Ilocos prone to erosion, making them vulnerable in case of sea-level rise and high tidal waves. Thus, the extraction of black sand is not allowed in the region.</i>	Justification	
<i>ISCAPE claims local officials are playing deaf to the people's complaints.</i>	Specific Statement	<b>RESPONSE</b>
<i>The group further alleges that the local governments are conniving with the foreign mining companies.</i>	Elaboration	

### 3.4 The Summation Block

The next table presents the frequency and percentage distributions of the steps used in the summation block. Based on the data, the general statement and the evaluation steps were also used, but there were more instances of further elaboration.

**Table 5**  
*Steps employed in the summation block*

Step	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Elaboration	48	36.36
General Statement	27	20.45
Evaluation	22	16.67
Solution	19	14.39
Conclusion	16	12.12
Metastatement	0	0.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Surprisingly, not many writers opted to provide a direct conclusion as expected. From this, it can be inferred that the act of drawing conclusions might be left to the readers, in which readers may be encouraged to determine the implicit conclusion based on the arguments, evaluations, and solutions provided by the columnists.

These findings support the idea that summation statements in argumentative essays must involve a summary of the ideas and a reassertion of the main argument (Tan, 2003), thus, explaining the use of the general statements and elaboration steps, where the former provides the reassertion of the thesis statement; while the latter elaborates through a general review of the specific arguments. However, it is also purported that closing paragraphs must leave a strong impression upon the readers (Hacker, 1999; Tan, 2003) by providing evaluations, possible solutions, and judgments; and this assertion manifests in the articles through the use of the evaluation, solution, and elaboration steps.

To show how summation blocks are constructed in the corpus, the following extract taken from *The Varsitarian* presents two steps employed for each move, whereby the general claim on art pedagogy is supported by rhetorical questions. After which, the final stance is indicated through a solution, as indicated by the modal verb “should.”

Extract	Step	Move
<i>Artists in UST have a lot of potentials compared to other colleges but unlike in UP, they can express their art forms freely because they are liberal.</i>	General Statement	<b>ROUNDING OFF</b>
<i>But the question is: Are we also liberal? Or is freedom just a state of mind?</i>	Elaboration	
<i>Art should be applied in everyday life.</i>	Solution	<b>FINAL STANCE</b>
<i>What we see, what we hear, who we talk to, where we are right now should spur our passion for the arts, it is without boundaries. Art is for everyone, you just need to appreciate it. You never know when the next Picasso comes running out the Arch of the Centuries.</i>	Elaboration	

Meanwhile, the following extract from *The Guidon* contains a synthesis in the form of a general statement, where the present circumstance is cited. The circumstance is supported by an explanation, which may have been used as a means of transitioning to the conclusion and the solution to the issue.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>Trust is something that the government needs in order to work.</i>	General Statement	<b>ROUNDING OFF</b>
<i>It's hard for a government to operate when the very same people that elected these officials don't trust them.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>I do believe that there were better ways for the government to have handled the situation of Typhoon Yolanda, but I also think they did the best they could.</i>	Evaluation	
<i>There are some government officials who may be corrupt, but that does not necessarily mean that the entire government was not acting on the situation, or that the government is the one causing the people's suffering.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>Visayas is now starting its plans to rehabilitate the region.</i>	General Statement	
<i>This is going to be an extremely difficult task for the government.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>And there is a need for us citizens to realize that the rebuilding period is the perfect time to work hand and hand with the government.</i>	Conclusion	
<i>Now more than ever, the people must trust the government.</i>	Solution	<b>FINAL STANCE</b>



Lastly, this extract from *The La Sallian* illustrates a different manner of summation, in which a general statement related to the issue is used to initiate the closing. After which, in support to the general statement, a solution (in the form of call-to-change attitudes) is provided, which is supplemented with an explanation and a more concrete solution.

Extract	Step	Move
<i>Whether it is due to government neglect or whatever else, in situations like these, the whole is worth more than the sum of its components.</i>	General Statement	<b>ROUNDING OFF</b>
<i>We need to stop looking for people to blame, to condemn, to shame; what matters now is giving as much as we can to help our fellow Filipinos.</i>	Solution	<b>FINAL STANCE</b>
<i>Many private institutions have already begun their own drive to aid the devastated areas. De La Salle Philippines for one has a donation drive-operating right now in DLSU.</i>	Elaboration	
<i>If you still don't know what to do to help the Yolanda victims, just walk on over to the North Conservatory; helping out there is better than winning over some comment war online.</i>	Solution	

### 3.5 Adherence to Journalistic Standards

Cruz (2010), in the context of journalistic writing, indicates that editorial sections must introduce the topic with a news peg and the reaction, whereby the former introduces and briefly provides the nature of the topic at hand, while the latter is the presentation of the author's stand. It is on this basis that the orientation block of the opinion columns under study may be likened to the introduction section of editorials. Whereas the orientation move in the corpus consisted mainly of general information and additional details about the topic, the focusing move contains the central proposition of the text – that is, the main, overarching argument accompanied with a few explanations behind it. Therefore, with respect to the introduction section of editorials, opinion columns tend to observe the format prescribed in journalistic writing.

The same claim may be held true for the exposition blocks of the opinion texts. Since the body of editorials is reported to generally consist of paragraphs with enough details supporting the reaction (Cruz, 2010), the exposition blocks of the opinion columns adhere to these assertions, because the texts tend to employ inquiry and response moves such as providing specific claims, further explanations, and reasons that support the author's general claim.

While there seems to be an adherence to the journalistic format in the orientation and exposition blocks, it seems that deviation from the format is present in the summation block of

the opinion columns. Cruz (2010) purports that the closing paragraph of editorials (the clincher statement) must provide a sound conclusion to the ideas. In the corpus, most of the articles are found to use other steps in place of conclusions. The steps employed in these articles contain more essential steps than merely conclusions; these steps include solutions, evaluations, and additional related information, all of which are further elaborated. These steps are more critical possibly because of the potential for reader involvement that these steps carry.

From these observations, it may be gleaned that the opinion columns have a tendency to observe the format of editorials. However, this is not to indicate that opinion columns are also editorials. Both types of journalistic texts serve relatively the same purpose of sharing views on a topic, but the distinction is marked by the article's ownership.

### **3.6 Influential Factors to the Organization of Opinions**

Previous studies found that different factors affect the rhetorical organization of texts. Among these factors are language exposure and language-instruction approaches. However, previous studies proved that culture is central (Fernandez, 2011) and is a highly influential factor (Kelly & Tomic, 2001; Kramsch, 1998;) in text organization because it is truly embodied and encountered in any form of discourse. Because of the multicultural nature of the Philippines, as well as the diversity of university students, other factors, such as exposure to the language and the employed approaches to language teaching, will have to be considered.

The exposure of writers to the language is also reported to influence the organization of ideas in a text (Magistro, 2007). For instance, these writers may have been exposed to a wide array of literary masterpieces written by renowned and budding Filipino writers in English; nationwide newspapers are also published in English, and there is also an influx of users with internet access. Considering these instances, it is possible that their exposure to these examples of real-time language use provides an understanding of how ideas are organized in written and even spoken discourses. In addition, these provide them with insights on their own writing strategies. For instance, Tarrayo and Duque (2011) claim that editorials found in nationwide broadsheet newspapers frequently employ organizational moves such as providing specific arguments, elaborations, and examples. When university-student columnists read these editorials, they may be able to get ideas as to how they may effectively construct and organize their own arguments. Thus, they may be inspired to adapt the same rhetorical moves and strategies, for such are viewed to be effectively employed. Additionally, since English functions as a second language in the Philippines, the language is widely encountered in daily activities despite not being the mother tongue (Magno, 2011). Therefore, exposure to English is inevitable, particularly in countries striving to satisfy the demands of globalization (Arriola, 2002).

Lastly, language instruction is believed to influence written discourse organization (Smith, 2005). In the Philippines, English was first introduced as a second language by the Thomasites during the earlier phases of the American Occupation, where structural approaches are employed such as the audio-lingual method (Arriola, 2002). However, in time, a paradigm shift from structural approaches to communicative approaches occurred,

where authentic communication and a more comprehensive context are considered (Strevens, 1977). This also entailed the emergence of the process-approach to writing, where writing is perceived as a creative process (Perfecto, 2011), complemented by other student-centered approaches (Manlapaz, 2011). Since these approaches are employed in teaching writing, students are given enough freedom in exploring their topics of interest and in carefully shaping their arguments in writing. Thus, the texts they produce are not merely imitations of those they frequently encounter.

#### 4. Conclusion

This study examined how opinion columns are organized in Philippine university-level campus newspaper publications and whether these articles observe or deviate from the purported style of editorial writing. The findings of this investigation indicate that Ho's model of a possible text structure for general paper essays is applicable to the opinion columns. In addition, its observance of the journalistic principles of editorial writing is evident; but it is apparent to a certain extent, for some columns either do not follow the two-move pattern or does not provide a conclusion for the clincher statement. Moreover, the study suggests that discourse structures serve as language tools available for writers to use, whereby it can affect the way columnists present themselves, argue for or against a standpoint, and appraise the need for reader involvement. In addition, it seems that their respective objectives influence which rhetorical steps to employ in the articles. Hence, it is possible that the way columnists organize the content of their columns may ensure the effective communication of their opinion to different readers.

Certain pedagogical implications arise from this research. First, providing L2 learners of English with a background regarding the organization of opinion columns may be helpful in improving argumentation and perhaps the persuasion skills of learners. Although students are not tasked to write opinion columns very often, it may be important for them to study these articles as these serve as concrete examples of customs used in written argumentation (Connor, 1996). Moreover, the findings concerning the organization of opinion columns can be helpful for students in analyzing the structure of different written argumentative discourses, such as debate speeches delivered in public fora (Duque, 2013), reviews, and other academic-writing forms. However, while these articles may be used as authentic examples of argumentative texts, it may also be important for the learners to understand and undergo the writing process and develop their own style of writing (Murray, 1972). Second, opinion columns published in campus newspapers may also be considered as authentic texts which can be used in pedagogy that enhances reading, writing, and critical thinking skills, for these articles are considered timely (Cruz, 2010) and present arguments concerning relevant news and current events occurring within and beyond the walls of the educational institutions the columnists represent. Through the use of opinion columns as instructional materials, language teachers may uphold a more contextualized and meaningful language instruction.

Given the limitations of this investigation, further research is necessary to contribute to the increasing number of research on discourse analysis. First, investigations on opinion columns with a larger corpus or sample size (i.e., five university newspapers) can be done to arrive at more conclusive results. In addition, it is encouraged to compare the discourse organization of opinion columns and editorials written in university newspapers with those found in national broadsheets. In the same way, a comparison of campus newspapers from two separate writing milieus (i.e., newspapers of public and private universities) may be done to identify other factors that may influence organization such as socioeconomic status. Lastly, investigations on move analysis may be done on opinion columns and editorials written in elementary and secondary school newspapers to explore primary- and secondary-school student writing, which has not been extensively investigated (Juzwik et al., 2006).

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