

## Rhetorical Moves in the Application Letters of Indigenous People and Cebuano Job Applicants

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### ABSTRACT

This study analyzed the rhetorical moves present in the application letters of Indigenous People (IP) and Cebuano job applicants applying to a state university in a province in Mindanao, Philippines. Using Upton and Connor's (2001) Coding Scheme, this study revealed that there are 7 common moves employed in the IP writers' application letters which amounts to a general rhetorical order, while 5 common moves were employed in the Cebuano writers' which also amounts to a general rhetorical order. This study also observed the interplay of cultural traits as they surface in the writing styles of the IP and Cebuano writers. IPs in Bukidnon are exposed to different cultures but they still practice and integrate their own culture, to which accounts that though exposed to an English writing convention, they would still cling to their own way of writing. They exhibit a proclivity for employing indirect communication strategies, demonstrating a preference for the expression of their thoughts in a manner that is both highly personal and characterized by a cyclical nature. Cebuanos, on the other hand, possess a sense of 'Garbo' which displays their strong pursuit to dignify their social identities by striving hard for status through education or hard work which also regulates their public behavior to conform with the standard set of behavior, to which assumes that Cebuano writers tend to display their strong pursuit to be better, say, in writing classes, to dignify their status in the academe by way of following a standard set of conventions in which they are expected to follow.

**Keywords:** Contrastive rhetoric, rhetorical moves, Indigenous community, Cebuano community, job application letters

### Introduction

Drawing inspirations from the historic work of Kaplan (1966) on writing cultures and cultural thought patterns, writers have the tendency to employ a multitude of ways when translating their thoughts in writing where attributing factors surface, such as culture, beliefs, values, especially language for it shapes or controls the thinking of an individual having a distinct or unique view of the world. Bhatia (1993), as cited in Thumngong and Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2017) elaborated that those writers with different languages other than English have the tendency

to translate their ideas differently when writing texts, that, for example, when writing in English, the structure of their written outputs would rather be similar to the structure of their first language to which accounts genre-based studies to explain the background premise of this cultural phenomenon. The primary objective of this research paper is to analyze the rhetorical moves and the order of these moves as employed in the application letters of Indigenous People and Cebuano job applicants applying to a state university of a province in Mindanao, Philippines. This study seeks to address two central inquiries: firstly, it aims to identify the distinct rhetorical

patterns present in application letters from Indigenous and Cebuano applicants, with a focus on discerning any significant variations between the two groups. Secondly, it endeavors to uncover and analyze the cultural attributes embedded within these application letters to shed light on the intersection of cultural elements with written communication in the context of job applications. In other words, the problem in this study pertains to the analysis of application letters submitted by Indigenous People and Cebuano job applicants applying to a state university in Mindanao, Philippines.

Accordingly, a genre is dependent on the socio-cultural environment in which it is used, and different cultures use genres differently as they warrant a unique structure, style, content, and intended audience used by a specific discourse community to achieve a certain purpose (Swales, 1990, as cited in Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017; Pena, 2019; Kadhim & Al-Amrani 2022; Bekbossinova et al. 2023). In congruence, a job application letter offers an applicant an opportunity not only to clarify the information enclosed in the résumé but also to exhibit an association between such information and the required qualifications in the job advertisement which accounted as a part of promotional genres in business settings (Bhatia, 1993, as cited in Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017). A job application letter endorses the enclosed resume (Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017) and is pivotal to be written effectively so that a writer will succeed in convincing a potential employer (Pena, 2019). To convince means requiring writers' self-representation to convey information about themselves. Jones and Pittman (1982), as cited in Pena (2019) explained that the term "self-presentation" leads others to believe in something that a person possesses, such as experience, talents, and/or skills. In congruence, Baumeister et al. (1989) posited that self-presentation behavior is rooted in an individual's motivation. This motivation is elicited depending on situational factors such as the evaluative presence of other people and knowledge of one's behavior.

When writing job application letters, writers must adhere to certain rules and conventions. Observing the necessary elements of a cover letter links their readiness for the job and their chance to be called for an interview. Likewise, writing an effective cover letter is not a simple task. It requires thought, knowledge, and understanding, suggesting that a cover letter needs as much attention and skill in the preparation as the resume. Such a skill includes knowing how to maneuver the letter using some linguistic features and rhetorical elements (Dela Rosa et al., 2015). To investigate these rhetorical elements, several studies

on contrastive rhetoric were conducted in the past to reveal and explain the rhetorical patterns employed in English writing such as application letters, academic essays, and research articles (Torres & Medriano, 2020; Pena, 2019; Thumnong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017; Dela Rosa et al., 2015; Fazilatfara & Naseri, 2014).

Torres and Medriano (2020) sought to reveal the rhetorical organization, specifically the placement of the thesis statement in the argumentative essays of the Ilocano, Tagalog, and Tagalog-Ilocano pre-service teachers by following Liu's (2005) framework on the location of a thesis statement. It was reported that the Tagalog pre-service teachers preferred the deductive pattern or placing their thesis statements at the beginning of their essays. Given the prevalent characterization of Tagalog individuals as generally displaying a proclivity towards conservatism, it is observed that this cultural attribute is mirrored in their writing style. This observation suggests a preference for a discourse organization that aligns with their established comfort zone, thereby yielding a diminished inclination to deviate from it. In contrast, the Ilocano pre-service teachers preferred to write their essays in different styles, so they placed their thesis statements not just in the middle, but also towards the end of their essays (inductive pattern), both directly and implicitly stated. The multiplicity in the rhetorical styles of the Ilocano writers is informed by their cultural background as people who are known to be adventurous, that they go beyond what is taught to them, and rather explore by imploring different styles in writing. On the other hand, because the Tagalog-Ilocano pre-service teachers were already a combination of the two discourse communities, the two different patterns were almost shared, yet the inductive pattern was preferred over the deductive.

Pena (2019) examined the linguistic resources and moves of the writers' self-presentation in writing their job application letters. Interestingly, it was premised that L2 writing is cultural, believing that the thought pattern used is manifested in these letters. Guided by Swale's (1990) notion of moves, rhetorical moves were determined, hand-tagged, and analyzed. The study revealed six (6) common moves in job application letters among the 10 moves identified, such as greetings, intention, educational or academic qualification, work experience, skills, and gratitude. It was reported that the overt emphasis on qualification and a lasting impression on the reader from a brief introduction of self might cause misunderstanding, leading the reader to doubt the intention of the writer. The study concluded that effective communication in business writing, say, in job application letters demands

that essential components, such as details of qualification, work experience, skills and training, contact details, and other important professional advancement are present to edify one's application.

Thumngong and Tongpoon-Patanasorn (2017) analyzed the generic structure or rhetorical moves used in the job application letters written by ASEAN applicants. To analyze the rhetorical moves employed in each letter, the study employed a coding scheme synthesized from previous studies. The study revealed a marginal difference in that ASEAN applicants almost shared a pattern in writing their job application letters. However, it was reported that the repetition or reversal of moves suggests rhetorical freedom in terms of writing a job application letter. The study also informed that most of its findings are by way at par and consistent with the findings reported from related studies previously conducted in different contexts. However, a certain interesting amount of difference involves especially the rhetorical moves employed by the ASEAN applicants, suggesting that they do not entirely follow these moves as suggested in the writing conventions of other discourse communities.

Dela Rosa et al. (2015) investigated a multitude of rhetoric features employed in job application letters written by Filipino and American teacher applicants. One of these features involved the rhetorical moves identified and categorized following Upton and Connor's (2001) Coding Scheme. Dela Rosa et al. reported that contrary to the American writers who employed the pertinent elements in a job application letter religiously, Filipino writers rather suspended strict observation of these needed elements. They would rather follow a more personalized and unconventional way of presenting details in their application letters. American writers on the other hand are more structured when writing their application letters to represent each move in their letters. The study therefore concluded that teachers be taught about the basic premise of effective job application letter writing because students' employability is prepared by way of learning how to write effectively to promote themselves. Knowing the prescribed conventions may warrant their applications to be considered by their prospective employers.

Fazilatfara and Naseri (2014) aimed to investigate the possible relationship between generic organizations of research articles in applied linguistics Iranian journals and the negotiation of researchers' identities. By applying Pho's (2008) model of move analysis, the results were associated with the instances of writer identity using Hyland's framework (2002). The results demonstrated

different percentages of writer identity categories across different moves of articles suggesting that rhetorical moves performing various functions in articles need to be carried out by specific categories of authorial identity to better satisfy the expectations of their respective applied linguistics communities. This study therefore fostered implications for those interested in teaching reading and writing to introduce the identified rhetorical structure to native and non-native English speakers as a way of informing them of specific reading skills, such as expecting what is expected while reading, identifying what purpose the authors have while writing, and getting a foundation to write according to the conventions expected in a discourse community. As cited, a considerable number of studies were conducted previously involving the identification and analysis of rhetorical moves in written discourses (Torres & Medriano, 2020; Pena, 2019; Thumngong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017; Dela Rosa et al., 2015; Fazilatfara & Naseri, 2014). However, it is observed that some of these studies also measured data quantitatively in addition to qualitative measures to reveal the frequencies of the rhetorical moves employed in the target written discourses according to English rhetorical conventions. These studies also failed to explore any background premise that resulted to the modification of standard rhetorical conventions committed by Filipino writers in writing English texts like application letters. Regrettably, previous studies also failed to explore the rhetorical analysis of the English texts written by two (2) different discourse communities belonging to one province to consider contrastive studies in a smaller context.

It is, therefore, significant that this study analyzed and categorized the rhetorical moves in the application letters of the IP and Cebuano job applicants belonging to a province in Mindanao, Philippines to contribute to intercultural rhetoric studies in a smaller context. In contrast with previous studies, this study did not reveal the frequency of the rhetorical moves employed based on the English rhetorical convention but rather revealed the moves and their rhetorical orders and whether they followed the order of the English rhetorical moves. Moreover, this study sought to surface cultural features that explain the background premise which resulted in modifications of the English conventions committed by IP and Cebuano writers in writing their application letters.

## Research Questions

1. What rhetorical moves can be found in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants?

2. What cultural features are present in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants?

### Framework of the Study

This study is underpinned by an examination of the Cebuano personality, an exploration of the cultural domains of seven indigenous cultural communities (ICCs) in Bukidnon, and an analysis of the typical elements found in job application letters. By involving the glimpse of Cebuano personality informs this study on its role in the writing style of the Cebuano writers in writing their application letters. Lagahid and Puyo (2016) associated Cebuanos with possessing a sense of 'Garbo' which displays their strong pursuit to dignify their social identities by striving hard for status through education or hard work. Attainment of education to edify one's profession is a prize and becomes a marker to earn the right to be 'mapasigarbohon' (proud of oneself). 'Garbo' is also seen to regulate their public behavior to conform with the standard set of behavior in which people, especially educated ones are expected to act. In preserving social hierarchies, 'garbo' sets some of the Cebuanos' conduct over those lesser in status. It has been said that a Cebuano seldom backs down when it is a matter of pride, but too much 'garbo' could be counterproductive to one's self-presentation. Others consider one who has too much 'garbo' as 'garboso' to describe someone negatively as grandiose or a show-off.

In this study, the theoretical framework draws primarily from John Dewey's Rhetorical Theory. According to Burks (1968), Dewey's work emphasizes the dynamic interplay between language, experience, and communication, providing a foundational perspective on how individuals use rhetoric to engage in meaningful dialogue and problem-solving. By applying Dewey's theories, this research aims to illuminate the intricate connections between rhetorical strategies and the expression of experience, as seen in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants.

This study is also informed with the cultural areas of the seven tribes or indigenous communities in Bukidnon to surface any cultural traits reflected in the application letters of IP writers. Improgo (2012) reported that although the seven tribes are in different areas of the province, their ways of life are similar. In the area of religion, although they have already been exposed to different religious denominations, they still believe in the existence of spirits that affect their daily activities,

say, continue to engage in rituals. The "duay" practice is no longer widely practiced except for a few tribal leaders who still adhere to it. Giving birth with the help of a "manguguyamo" will continue as the IPs adhere to it as a safe and economical practice. The use of herbal medicines to cure certain illnesses will remain a tradition even with the presence of health centers. The IPs practice burying their dead within the day because they highly respect the dead. The dreams and aspirations of the IPs are socio-economic in nature. They long for government support to help them uplift their social and economic status. They do not want to be rich, what they want is just to survive. They want to continue the legacy that their forefathers have started.

Another framework that informs this study in analyzing and assigning moves in the sample letters is the description of the identified common moves in the job application letters, such as greetings, intention, educational qualification, work experience, skills, and gratitude (Pena, 2019). Firstly, greetings are found in the first paragraph of an application letter that establishes rapport. Like spoken discourse, greetings set the tone of a conversation by being refined, formal, and pleasant, as well as setting a positive vibe initially when infused with spiritual details that may warrant a good favor from readers. Also, writers extend their pleasantries to begin their purpose and to promote themselves as potential employees.

Secondly, the intention is a move found in the second paragraph of an application letter. The writers introduce themselves and state their intentions before enumerating their educational achievements. Some of the strategies used by the writers to convey their thoughts include the use of typical expressions that invoke emotional appeal, praising the institution or employer, and direct expression of intent. In terms of the strategy in the language used, writers may employ unnecessary words that are assumed as a form of indirectness, say, praising a prospective employer.

Thirdly, educational, or academic qualification is a staple in any application letter. It usually contains the degree attained by the applicant and other information relative to professional growth such as a master's degree or career service eligibility. Application letters contain the writers' personal and professional details which primarily aim to sell or promote themselves. The writers introduce themselves and state their intentions before citing their academic qualifications. Like spoken discourse, interlocutors usually start with pleasantries, then the main purpose of communication.

Finally, the work experience or employment history of an applicant is important to a potential employer. It narrates the past and current responsibilities of an applicant to an agency either briefly or implicitly. Skills in an application letter, as the fifth, refer to the writers' capabilities to excellently or positively execute the responsibilities of the work applied for in the application letter. Noteworthy of the writers' ways of promoting their skills involves mentioning their commitment and financial consequence once hired, stating their willingness to subject themselves to training, and expressing words of honor to the agency. And lastly, gratitude is expressed using spiritual items, such as, "God bless" and "Godspeed" to extend their gratitude to the potential employer, as well as thanking the readers or recipients for their time and consideration, followed by words of expectations in the same paragraph.

## Methodology

The identification and categorization of the rhetorical moves employed in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants was purely qualitative based on semantic and pragmatic rather than on linguistic clues because accordingly, moves may vary in size that can be realized with a single sentence or more or even a short phrase or a clause (Thumngong & Tongpoon-Patanasorn, 2017). The qualitative method was chosen to analyze the rhetorical moves in application letters because it allows for a nuanced examination of the diverse linguistic strategies used by Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants. This approach aligns with the study's focus on semantic and pragmatic cues, enabling the identification of moves that may vary in length and complexity, as linguistic clues alone may not capture the full spectrum of rhetorical elements present in the letters. The qualitative analysis permits a more in-depth exploration of the content and context of these moves, enhancing the study's ability to uncover subtle cultural and linguistic nuances.

## Corpus

This study analyzed two (2) sets of job application letters written by Indigenous People and Cebuano job applicants applying to a state university in the province of Mindanao, Philippines. These application letters were submitted to the Human Resource Development Unit (HRDU) of this university from June 2022 to July 2022 either for a teaching or non-teaching position. These samples were purposely selected, and the staff was asked to categorize them according to the target discourse communities based on the ethnicity specified in the applicants'

Personal Data Sheet (PDS). In this study, due to time restraints in the collection of samples and because most of the applicants did not specify their ethnicity in the PDS, the researchers analyzed only 10 samples from each discourse community.

## Data Collection Procedure

To comply with the set ethical standard, the researchers first secured consent from the president of the institution where the application letters were submitted by forwarding a letter to request the release of the said documents. The letter specified the number of sample letters needed from each discourse community and guaranteed that these letters were treated with utmost confidentiality. When the request letter was approved, the researchers forwarded it to HRDU and then coordinated with the staff assigned to control the application letters to go through procedures such as signing a Data Privacy Protection Form before the release of the needed samples. After the release of the needed samples, the researchers analyzed them based on Upton and Connor's (2001) Coding Scheme as used in Dela Rosa et al. (2015). The researchers analyzed each application letter and tagged each paragraph with move or moves when it warrants more than one (1) move.

## Coding Scheme

To identify the rhetorical moves employed in each letter, this study followed a coding scheme (Upton & Connor, 2001), as used in Dela Rosa et al. (2015). Table 1 shows this scheme with seven (7) moves that involve 1) identifying the source of information, 2) applying for the position, 3) providing argument including supporting information for the job application, 4) indicating desire for an interview or a desire for further contact or specify means of further communication/how to be contacted, 5) expressing politeness (pleasantries) or appreciation at the end of the letter, 6) offering to provide more information, and 7) attaching of reference resume. Accordingly, coding schemes allow a coder to identify and to categorize, as well as to observe how often a certain pattern or feature occurs, say, in a job application letter (Dela Rosa et al., 2015).

## Data Analysis

To analyze and categorize the rhetorical moves employed in the application letters written by Indigenous and

**Table 1.** Upton and Connor's Coding Scheme

Move	Description
1	Identify the source of information (Explain how and where you learned of the position)
2	Apply for the position (State desire for consideration)
3	Provide argument, including supporting information, for the job application. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Implicit argument based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience</li> <li>b. Argument based on what would be good for the hiring company</li> <li>c. Argument based on what would be good for the applicant.</li> </ul>
4	Indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact or specify means of further communication/how to be contacted.
5	Express politeness (pleasantries) or appreciation at the end of the letter.
6	Offer to provide more information
7	Reference attached resume

Cebuano job applicants, this study adapted Upton and Connor's (2001) Coding Scheme used in Dela Rosa et al. (2015). In the analysis, the researchers analyzed each paragraph of a letter and assigned it with a specific move or moves when a paragraph suggested more than 1 move. In the presentation of these moves, the researchers assigned each move to its equivalent move based on Upton and Connor's (2001) whether they are of the same number or not to see if this assignment follows the prescribed order.

## Results and Discussion

To identify and analyze the rhetorical moves in the application letters of the IP and Cebuano job applicants, the coding scheme for application letters developed by Upton and Connor (2001) was adapted. Generally, Table 2 and Table 3 present the rhetorical moves and the order of these moves as employed in the sample letters. Specifically, Table 2 shows the rhetorical moves and the order of these moves as employed in the sample letters written by IP writers, while Table 3 shows the rhetorical moves and the order of these moves as employed by Cebuano writers.

Table 2 reveals the rhetorical moves common to all IP writers based on the moves espoused by Upton and Connor such as apply for the position, explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience-what would be good for the hiring company and what would be good for the applicant, indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact or specify means of further communication or how to be contacted, and express pleasantries such as politeness or appreciation at the end of the letter. Interestingly, the results also revealed that IP writers employed other

moves that include greetings, demographic information, and anticipation of response which are not present in Upton and Connor's.

As ascertained in Table 2, the IP writers were able to employ some of the rhetorical moves based on Upton and Connor's (2001). However, the application of these moves did not follow the order of the prescribed rhetorical moves. The IP writers were also able to employ other moves, such as, expression of greetings, provision of demographic information, and anticipation of response in addition to Upton and Connor's which generally warrants the 7 common moves present in the application letters written by IP writers in the following order: M1-greetings, M2-apply for the position, M3-provide demographic information, M4-explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience, what would be good for the hiring company and what would be good for the applicant, M5-anticipate response, M6-indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact, and M7-express pleasantries.

To consider the background premise which may have influenced this significant modification, Improgo (2012) reported that although Indigenous Peoples (IPs) in Bukidnon have already been exposed to cultures of different communities, they would still practice and integrate their own culture to protect and preserve them. They even long for government support to help them uplift their social and economic status, including the protection of their rights. Interestingly, IPs do not even want to be rich but are striving and adapting to survive. Given the cultural inclination about IPs, this result suggests that although IP writers are exposed to an English convention in writing to promote themselves such as writing an application letter, indigenous people would still cling to their own way of writing to protect and promote their

**Table 2.** The Summary of Rhetorical Moves and the Order of these Moves in the Application Letters of Indigenous Job Applicants

ALs by IPs	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	Other Moves
AL1	-	M2	M4	M7	M5	-	-	M1-Greetings; M3-Provide demographic info; M6-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL1</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M6</b> (anticipate response), <b>M7</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL2	-	M2	M3	M5	M4	-	-	M1-Greetings with salutation; M6-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL2</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M5</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M6</b> (anticipate response)							
AL3	-	M3	M4	M7	M2	-	-	M1-Greetings; M5-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL3</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M3</b> (apply for the position), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (anticipate response), <b>M6</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M7</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL4	M1	M2	M4	M5	M6	-	-	M3-Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL4</i>	<b>M1</b> (identify the source of information), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M6</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL5	-	M2	M3	M7	M4	-	M8	M1-Greetings; M6-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL5</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M5</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M6</b> (anticipate response), <b>M7</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M8</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M9</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL6	-	M1	M2	M6	M7	M5	-	M3- Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL6</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (offer to provide more information), <b>M6</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M7</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL7	-	M4	M3	M7	M8	-	M6	M1-Greetings; M2- Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL7</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (apply for the position), <b>M5</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M6</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M7</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M8</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL8	-	M2	M4	M7	M5	-	-	M1-Greetings; M3-Provide demographic info; M6-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL8</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M6</b> (anticipate response), <b>M7</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL9	-	M1	M4	M6	M5	M3	M2	-
<i>Order of Moves in AL9</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M3</b> (offer to provide more information), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries), <b>M6</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL10	-	M2	M4	M5	M8	-	M6	M1-Greetings; M3-Provide demographic info; M7-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL10</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic info), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M6</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M7</b> (anticipate response), <b>M8</b> (express pleasantries)							

freedom on how to express themselves. Though freedom may be at hand, they may also seek assistance from, say, a teacher of writing to help themselves up in pursuit of survival in the academe, but never to be better than

anyone else. On the other hand, though Improgo failed to associate IPs as indirect kinds of people, the result also revealed a considerable number of moves committed by IP writers. This result may establish a connection

between IPs and a communication style characterized by indirectness, a preference for personal expression, and a cyclical nature.

Table 3 reveals the rhetorical moves common to all Cebuano writers based also on Upton and Connor's (2001) that include applying for the position, explaining qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience would be good for the hiring company and what would be good for the applicant, indicating the desire for an interview or a desire for further contact or specify means of further communication or how to be

contacted, and express pleasantries such as politeness or appreciation at the end of the letter. Another interesting result revealed that like the IP writers, Cebuano writers also employed other moves that are not present in Upton and Connor's (2001). However, in contrast to the other writers, Cebuanos only employed a single additional move to include demographic information in their application letters which amounts to the 5 common moves employed by Cebuano writers in the following order: M1-apply for the position), M2-explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application based on neutral evidence or information about background and experience, what would be good for the hiring company, and what would be good for

**Table 3.** The Summary of Rhetorical Moves and the Order of these Moves in the Application Letters of Cebuano Job Applicants

ALs by Cebuanos	M1	M2	M3	M4	M5	M6	M7	Other Moves
AL1	-	M1	M2	M4	M5	-	M3	-
<i>Order of Moves in AL1</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M3</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M4</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL2	-	M1	M3	M4	-	-	-	M2-Provide demographic info; M5-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL2</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (provide demographic information), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M5</b> (anticipate response)							
AL3	-	M2	M3	M4	M5	-	-	M1-Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL3</i>	<b>M1</b> (provide demographic information), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL4	-	M1	M2	M3	M4	-	-	-
<i>Order of Moves in AL4</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M3</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M4</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL5	-	M2	M3	M4	M5	-	-	M1-Greetings
<i>Order of Moves in AL5</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL6	-	M1	M3	M5	-	-	M4	M2- Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL6</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (provide demographic information), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M5</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL7	-	M1	M2	M3	-	-	-	-
<i>Order of Moves in AL7</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M3</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact)							
AL8	-	M2	M4	-	M7	-	M5	M1-Greetings; M3- Provide demographic info; M6-Anticipate response
<i>Order of Moves in AL8</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (provide demographic information), <b>M4</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M5</b> (reference attached resume), <b>M6</b> (anticipate response), <b>M7</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL9	-	M2	M3	-	M4	-	-	M1-Greetings
<i>Order of Moves in AL9</i>	<b>M1</b> (greetings), <b>M2</b> (apply for the position), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (express pleasantries)							
AL10	-	M1	M3	M4	M5	-	-	M2-Provide demographic info
<i>Order of Moves in AL10</i>	<b>M1</b> (apply for the position), <b>M2</b> (provide demographic information), <b>M3</b> (explain qualifications by providing argument including supporting information for the job application), <b>M4</b> (indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact), <b>M5</b> (express pleasantries)							

the applicant, M3-include demographic information, M4-indicate desire for an interview or a desire for further contact, or specify means of further communication or how to be contacted, and M5-express pleasantries such as politeness or appreciation at the end of the letter.

As presented in Table 3, the result revealed that in contrast with IP writers who have shown indirectness and circularity in writing their application letters, Cebuano writers tend to be direct or linear in writing their application letters. The sample letters are well-structured in a way that they religiously assumed the English rhetorical convention present in Upton and Connor's (2001). To consider the background premise which may have influenced this significant linearity, Lagahid and Puyo (2016) associated Cebuanos to possess a sense of 'Garbo' which display their strong pursuit to dignify their social identities by striving hard for a status through education or hard work. Attainment of education to edify one's profession is a prize and becomes a marker to earn the right to be 'mapasigarbohon' (proud of oneself). 'Garbo' is also seen to regulate their public behavior to conform with the standard set of behavior in which people, especially educated ones are expected to act. This cultural trait can then be assumed to have played a role in the application letters written by Cebuano writers. Because Cebuanos possess a sense of 'Garbo', they tend to display their strong pursuit to be better, say, in writing classes, to dignify their status in the academ by way of following a standard set of conventions which students are expected to follow.

Answer to the first research question ("What rhetorical moves can be found in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants?"):

Table 2 provides an overview of the rhetorical moves employed in the application letters of Indigenous People (IP) job applicants. It specifies the following rhetorical moves used by IP applicants:

- M1: Greetings
- M2: Apply for the position
- M3: Provide demographic information
- M4: Explain qualifications by providing an argument with supporting information
- M5: Anticipate response
- M6: Indicate a desire for an interview or further contact
- M7: Express pleasantries

It also notes that IP writers included additional moves such as greetings, demographic information, and anticipation of a response, which were not present in the conventional application letter format outlined by Upton and Connor.

Additionally, it highlights that the order of these moves was not strictly aligned with the standard convention.

Answer to the second research question ("What cultural features are present in the application letters of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants?"):

Table 2 and the associated discussion touch upon the cultural features found in the application letters of Indigenous job applicants. It suggests that the cultural inclination of Indigenous People to preserve their own writing style and express themselves freely, despite being exposed to English conventions, may have influenced the modification of rhetorical moves in their application letters. For Cebuano applicants, Table 3 highlights that they tend to adhere to a more linear and direct writing style, aligning closely with the English rhetorical convention present in Upton and Connor. This is attributed to the cultural trait of 'Garbo,' associated with Cebuanos, which emphasizes pursuing education and striving for a higher status in society.

To summarize, the answers to the first research question are mainly found in the analysis of Table 2, while the answers to the second research question are embedded within the discussions surrounding the cultural influences on the writing styles of both Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants.

## Conclusion

The study analyzed the rhetorical moves present in the application letters of the Indigenous People and Cebuano job applicants in a state university located in the province of Mindanao, Philippines. The analysis of the corpus revealed that the two discourse communities significantly differ in the employment of rhetorical moves in writing their letters. IP writers employed additional moves that are not present in Upton and Connor's (2001) Coding Scheme such as expression of greetings, provision of demographic information, and anticipation of response which warranted the 7 common moves present in the application letters written by IP writers, while Cebuano writers, in contrast with the IP writers, only employed a single additional move to include demographic information in their application letters to which amount the 5 common moves employed in their application letters. IPs in Bukidnon, although exposed to cultures of different communities, would still practice, and integrate their own culture which means that although IP writers are exposed to an English convention in writing, they would still cling to their own way of writing and tend to

be indirect in their dealings and rather have themselves expressed too personal and cyclical. While Cebuanos possess a sense of 'Garbo' which displays their strong pursuit to dignify their social identities by striving hard for a status through education or hard work which also regulates their public behavior to conform with the standard set of behavior. This explains that Cebuanos tend to display their strong pursuit to be better, say, in writing classes, to dignify their status in the academe by way of following a standard set of conventions that they are expected to follow.

Moreover, the study underscores the enduring impact of culture on individuals' communication styles, as observed in the Indigenous People's inclination towards indirect and personal expression, and the Cebuanos' adherence to standardized conventions. These insights extend beyond the scope of job application letters, highlighting broader implications for intercultural communication and language practices in diverse contexts. As we navigate an increasingly globalized world, understanding how culture and rhetoric intersect in written communication becomes essential. This research not only sheds light on the specific practices of Indigenous and Cebuano job applicants but also contributes to the broader conversation on cultural and rhetorical diversity in communication.

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The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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