



INTERACTIONAL META-DISCOURSE IN UNDERGRADUATE THESIS INTRODUCTIONS BY ENGLISH STUDENTS OF MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF BENGKULU

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ABSTRACT

The aims of this research are at investigating the interactional meta-discourse and the most dominant interactional meta-discourse category in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. This study involved thirty-three backgrounds of the undergraduate thesis introductions by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in 2019 academic year. This study followed the meta-discourse framework of Hyland (2009) in investigating the interactional meta-discourse in the corpus of the research. The results of this research show that five categories of interactional meta-discourse found in the in the backgrounds of the undergraduate thesis introductions written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in 2019 academic year, namely 216 or 37.3% hedges, 166 or 28.6% attitude markers, 104 or 18% self-mention, 77 or 13.2% boosters, and 16 or 2.9% engagement markers. In addition, the most dominant of interactional meta-discourse category found in the backgrounds of the undergraduate thesis introductions is hedges. The findings of this research give implications for the students in order to include more frequent and vary of interactional meta-discourse in writing the backgrounds of the undergraduate thesis introductions.

Keywords: *Interactional meta-discourse, Introduction of Undergraduate thesis, background of undergraduate thesis.*

I. Introduction

Meta-discourse could be a bridge for the reader to interpret the text that has been written by the authors. This bridge is reflected in the form of markers that proposed by **Hyland (2005)**. Hyland divided the meta-discourse into two categories, namely; interactive and interactional meta-discourse. According to Kopple (in **Jalilifar & Alipour, 2007**), these markers of meta-discourse help the reader organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react to fill in a proposition or the meaning of the sentence being uttered. The interactive meta-discourse consists of transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential, code glosses, while the interactional meta-discourse consists of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers.

Interactional meta-discourse is features of language used to create an interaction with the readers by intruding and commenting on their message. It means that the interactional meta-discourse is described as evaluative and engaging that aims at express solidarity of the constructed text with the reader (Sanford, 2012). These makersare signaled using a single word or phrases that engage the readers to take parts in the writers' argument in their text (Mohamed & Rashid, 2017).

Due to the important of the interactional meta-discourse, the author needs to use more appropriate discourse elements and writing tools in all academic genres as a means to increase the comprehension of writers work toward the readers in EFL context. One of those genres is undergraduate thesis. In the undergraduate thesis, EFL students must write introduction section as well as possible. It is the first section that the readers will read before continuing to other sections. Therefore, the EFL learners must be able to use the meta-discourse markers to attract their readers' attention. In contrast, Gholami et al (2014) informs that many studies have shown how EFL students often make mistakes in employing this linguistic device. It shows that the EFL learners' knowledge on meta-discourse is still problematic.

The problem in the preliminary findings is possibility caused by the students still have not familiar with other words in each category of interactional meta-disocurse. In addition, they might have difficulties how to use meta-discoursemarkers appropriately and accurately to express their ideas and opinions in English (Nugroho, 2019). Therefore, the investigations of meta-discourse usage in the background part of undergraduate thesis introductions by English students of UMB need to be done by the researcher.

As fore mentioned, the previous studies only focused on investigating the meta-discoursedevices in research papers in the field of mechanical and electrical engineering, communication, and British English academic corpus. However, there is no study as far as researcher is concerned investigating the interactional meta-discourse in the undergraduate thesis introduction written by English students in English education field. Thus, this is the rationale for the study; in particular, it aimed at investigating the interactional meta-discourse devices in the undergraduatethesis introduction section by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu.

II. Literature Review

Thesis is a long piece of scientific writing in particular subject in academic field. All university students or college students write it when they finished their study from their university or college. It is also as a part of pre-requirement of university degree. According to Oulu Business School (2012), the aims of writing a thesis is to attest the students' proficiency in academic research and appropriate academic communication in both written and oral, and also to attest the students mastery of a particular subject area and their ability to independently create new scientific knowledge. The students will explore their knowledge and aplicate the theory that they have gotten during the learning process. They will solve the problem scientifically, so that the results can be encountered for developing of the particular science.

Meta-discourse is the important element in writing instruction for academic purposes. It aims at helping EFL authors or speakers to convey their ideas and engage with their readers effectively. Meta-discourse is "discourse about discourse and rather than informs, intends to direct the readers" (Williams in Biria & Mirna, 2017:11). In other

words, writers use meta-discourse markers to connect themselves into their discourse to signal their opinions and commitments (Hyland, 2005).

The term of meta-discourse was firstly explored by Harris (in Hyland, 2005) to offer a way of understanding language in use, presenting a writer's or speakers attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text. The concept of meta-discourse based on the writers' view (and speakers) as social and communicative involment. The role of meta-discourse is as a bridge which connects and maintains the relationship between the author and reader. Metawacana focuses the reader's attention on the ways of the writer projecting itself in his or her writings for the participation of communicative relations between writer and reader. In fact, the reader can understand what the author's mean and the communication between writers and readers can be achieved optimally throuh the text.

Hyland (2005) divided meta-discourse into two categories, namely interactive meta-discourse and interactional meta-discourse. Each category has different function in texts. The following table shows the category and sub-category of meta-discourse that can be used in academic texts.

Table 2.1. Types of Meta-discourse in Academic Texts

Category	Function	Examples from the corpora
Interactive		
Transitions	Connection between steps in argument	Thus, although, and, however
Frame markers	Discourse acts, sequences or stages	The purpose of the study
Endophoric markers	Information on other parts the text	The first chapter
Evidential	Information from other texts	X's (1980) observation about
Code glosses	Additional information	Such as, including, e.g.
Interactional		
Hedges	Subjectivity of a position	Possible, may, seem
Boosters	Expressing certainty	Clear, somewhat, suggest
Attitude markers	Writer's attitude to proposition	Appropriate, bets, surprisingly
Self-mentions	Author's (s) presence	I
Engagement markers	Building relationship with reader	Note that

Source: Hyland (2005)

As shown in Table 2.1, there are two categories of meta-discourse in academic texts, namely interactive and interactional meta-discourse. Each of category of meta-discourse has five sub-catgeories, and those categories have different function in the academic text. The followings are detail explanation of interactive and interactional meta-discourse;

2.3.1. Interactive Meta-discourse

The interactive meta-discourse is the first category of meta-discourse. Suhono and Haikal (2018) state that interactive meta-discourse allows the writer to help the readers to

correctly interpret the text by managing information flow. The interactive meta-discourse could help the writers in organizing discourse to anticipate readers' knowledge and reflect the writers' assessment of what needs to be made explicit to constrain and guide what can be recovered from the text.

There are five sub-categories of interactive meta-discourse, namely transition, frame markers, endphoric markers, evidential, and code glosses. These markers help shape a coherent text that convinces the reader by connecting fellow individual propositions and individual propositions with other texts. The interpretation that occurs depends very much on the background knowledge owned by both the writer and the reader of the text. Those five markers represents the presence of the reader in the text intended as a form of awareness of the author that his writing intended for readers.

2.3.1.1. Transition

Transition is a link helps the reader to interpret the pragmatic relationship between ideas and the writer's mind. This marker will help the reader recognize how the text is organized and how the parts are different in the text are related to one another. These markers used to guide readers to understand the text and help them form an exact representation of the text in their memories (Hui & Na, 2008). The examples of transition used in text are;

in addition, ...
...but, ...
... and...,
... therefore,
... furthermore,
moreover, ...
however,
so,
Or ...
as a consequence, ...
finally, ...
in any case, ...
thus, ...

2.3.1.2. Frame Markers

Frame markers refer to text boundaries or elements schematic structure of text by marking topic changes in a discourse or prepare for the next stage in the argument. This marker includes the phrases that states:

- a) Steps, such as *first, second, then, after that, and next*
- b) Tiers in the text, such as *to conclude, in sum*
- c) Purpose, such as *I argue here, the purpose of this study is, the objective of this study is*
- d) Topic shifts, *such as well, now,*

2.3.1.3. Endphoric Markers

Endphoric markers are expressions that refer to other parts of a text. These markers play a role in giving additional information related to the text that can be helps the reader interpret the author's argumentative intent. The endphoric markers can be in term of words and phrases. The examples of endphoric are as follow;

in the first chapter, ...
as said before in previous chapter,

.... noted above,..
.see Fig. 1, ...
see table 1, ...
... below...
X's argument ...

2.3.1.4. Evidential

Evidential marker marks the source of textual information that comes from outside the text. This marker builds intertextuality that will help the writer the text influences the reader by connecting messages that are want to be conveyed with or created through this marker not just in form of words, such as;

according to X
, Z states that,

2.3.1.5. Code Glosses

Code glosses is one of the metawacana markers that refer in additional information provided by the text creator. This marker function in a discourse is to ensure that the reader can understand the intent of the author of the text, whether in the form of an explanation, comparison, or additional information from what has been given. Blagojevic (2004) called this code glosses with the term reformulators because of this marker serves to help the reader understand a statement better, one of them by paraphrasing the statement. The examples of code glosses in text are;

in other words,...
more precisely,...
in simple terms, ...
or example,...
such as,...
namely,...
that is,...
e.g, ...
for instances, ...
punctuation...
devices,...

2.3.2. Interactional Meta-discourse

The second category of meta-discourse is interactional meta-discourse. The interactional meta-discourse functions refer to “the ways authors express their attitudes towards the text and evaluate the propositional content of that text “ (Sorahi & Shabani, 2016:1175). Likewise, Kuhl and Mojood (2014:1048) mention that interactional meta-discourse are the “features that involve readers and create opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by informing them about writer’s perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves”. Those opinions can be inferred that interactional meta-discourse show the relationship between authors and readers, and focus on authors’ attitude on the information that will be delivered to the readers so that they can communicate effectively through the text. Hyland (2005) divides the interactional meta-discourse into five markers, those markers are as follows;

2.3.2.1. Hedges

Hedges is usually used in spoken language and writing as part of communication. The aims of the authors use hedge is to minimize errors in provide information whose level of truth is unknown entirely by the speaker or writer. Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001) states that hedge is used to to mark the writer's reluctance to attend or evaluate the contents propositions categorically. The examples of hedges in sentences are;

- a) Adverb (e.g. *approximately, generally, quite*).
- b) Epistemic verbs (e.g. *Seems, appear*),
- c) Modals (e.g. *May, would, could, can*),
- d) Hypothetical Constructions (e.g. *If, unless, possibly*),
- e) Anticipatory (e.g. *thereis a tendency, probably, it is propable, it is likely*).

2.3.2.2. Boosters

Booster markers are expressions used by the writer to confirm his statement. These phrases show the conviction and emphasis of a proposition. Hyland (2005) explains that booster is emphasise force or writer's certainty in proposition. The examples of booster used in texts are;

in fact, ...
definitely, ...
it is clear that ...
... clearly, ...
Decisivel...,
.... Obviously...
..., no doubt...,
... incredible...,
It implies that...

2.3.2.3. Attitude Markers

Attitude markers is the writer's attitude towards textual information provided. This marker of attitude is also related to the writer's attitude towards the reader. Dafouz-Milne (2008:99) states that this marker can be in term of;

- A) Deontic verb, which is a verbstates must. For examples,
Must, have to, and should.
- B) Attitudinal adverb, an adverb who states an attitude. For examples,
Unfortunately, remarkably, usually, hopefully, and really.
- C) Pathetically, it is attitudinal or adjective which states an attitude. For examples;
It is difficult ... it is surprising...And surprisingly.
- D) Cognitive verbs or verbs, it is related to level of speaker beliefs. For examples,
I think, I believe, honestly, and it implies that.

2.5.2.4. Engagement Markers

Engagement markers is a marker intended for the reader by focusing the reader's attention on the given text or involve the reader as a participant in the text situation. Relational Marker involving second person pronouns, imperatives, forms of questions, and comments on the text. Hyland (2005) states that engagement markers aims at showing writer's attitude to position/ or explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader. The examples of engagement markers are;

consider,
note that, ...
asyou can see that ...
allow, ...
by the way,

*you might be wondering that ...
and can we learn from...*

2.3.2.5. Self-Mentions

Self mentions show the level of the writer's presence as a tenor in a text. In a text, the presence of this persona marker shows the relationship between the writer and the reader. The examples of self-mentions are *I, we, my, me, our, us, she, he, and the researcher*.

III. Research Method

The design of this research was descriptive study that mixes with quantitative and qualitative method. The object of this research consisted of 33 undergraduate thesis introductions by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in 2019 academic year. The Instrument of this research was an observation sheet. The researcher built an instrument of this study based on the theory of meta-discourse by Hyland (2005). To know more detail about the instrument of this study, see the appendices.

This study focused on interactional meta-discourse. The interactional meta-discourse consisted of five devices, namely hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Therefore, the items of the instruments consisted of five items of interactional meta-discourse.

The researcher used documentation method in collecting the data. According to Arikunto (2009:19), "documentation method is a method where the researcher investigates the written things such as; books, magazines, documents, diaries, ect". In this study, the researcher collected 33 undergraduate thesis introductions from UMB's library. Then, the researcher copied the introductions of those selected undergraduate theses. The last, the researcher gave a code in each of those introductions.

IV. Discussion

This research investigated the interactional meta-discourse in the background of undergraduate thesis introductions written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The results of this research show that all markers of interactional meta-discourse, such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions found in the background of the undergraduate thesis introduction written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in academic year 2019. In addition, Hedges is the most dominant markers of all markers in the interactional meta-discourse found in the background of undergraduate thesis introduction written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in academic year 2019. Then, it is followed by attitude markers, self-mention, boosters, and engagement markers.

First, hedges is the most dominant markers in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions used by the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. It means that they have shown their solidarity in writing as means medium to create interpersonal solidarity with readers (Salichah et al, 2015). The examples of hedges found in this research were, *can, can not, would, will, would, and may*. Further, the use of hedges enables the authors to express a perspective on their statements, to present unproven claims with caution and to enter to a dialogue with their audience (Hyland, 2005). It means that the authors do not judge or claim their statement too harder. Also, the use of hedges is greater than boosters is a way is of reducing the risk of opposition, as a

mean of being polite and as a way to obscure their authorial identity while advancing their opinion (Salichah et al, 2015). So, the readers can read the authors' writing without doubt.

Second, attitude marker was the second dominant markers found in this research. It means that the English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu had aware on the usage of this marker in writing. Azar and Hashim (2019) point out that attitude markers are words (i.e. agree, surprisingly, significantly, only, important, issue) which assist writers to convey their evaluation, feeling, attitude, and inform the readers about the author's point of view and his position in the text. The English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu had shown their attitudes when they evaluated and pointed out their statement in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions.

Third, the use of boosters in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu was still low. However, booster is important component included by the authors to persuade and to convince the readers about the authors' argument in the text (Vázquez & Giner, 2009). Also, the words or phrases of boosters used by the English students of the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu is still not varied. They seem to tend using "*it means or mean*" to clarify and confirm their statements, whereas they can use another words of boosters, such as *obviously, it implies that, no doubt, definitely and it is clear that*. Therefore, boosters should include the boosters varied when making some confirmation or clarification in text. It makes the authors feel sure with their statements.

The fourth, the use of self-mentions in the data of this research is high by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. The authors used word "the researcher" as pronoun of themselves in the text. This research did not found the use of first pronoun in writing the background in the undergraduate thesis introductions, for example, *I*. As Karahan (2013) states that, the authors should conventionally avoid the use of first person pronouns in academic writing. It aims to keep the personal relationship between the authors and the readers. Therefore, students should be aware of using the variety of self-mentions, and suggested to reduce using of self-mentions in academic texts.

The last, the use of engagement markers in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions written by the English students of the Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu was very low. Meanwhile, the function of engagement marker in text is as components to build a relationship and communicate with the readers so that the possible objections from the readers can be avoided (Hyland, 2001; Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi, 2017). It is no doubt that the engagement marker has important functions in text, especially in the background of undergraduate thesis introductions.

There are similarities and differences of this this research findings with Kitjaroenpaiboon and Getkham's (2015), and Farahani's (2019). The similarities are hedges and attitude markers frequently found in the introduction and discussion sections of communication and arts research articles, and in British academic English texts. Then, the differences are boosters also frequently found in the introduction and discussion sections of communication and arts research articles, and in British academic English texts, while it's frequency was under self-mentions in the background of the undergraduate thesis introductions written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. Likewise, the findings of this research was a quite different from Estaji and Vafaeimehr's (2015) study who found that boosters is the highest frequency found in the introduction and conclusion sections of mechanical and electrical engineering research article. It is possibility caused by the object of the study was research article and it was written by professional authors.

The findings of this study have some implications for the students and lecturers at English department of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu. English students should include more frequent and vary of interactional meta-discourse. It aims at involving readers and creating the opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by informing them about writer's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves (Kuhi and Mojood, 2014). In addition, the lecturers at English department of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu who teach Academic writing course in order to give more attentions for the students on the importance of the interactional meta-discourse in text. Then, they may explain more detail the function of category markers in the interactional meta-discourse, and also the variation of examples of words or phrases used in each category of meta-discourse.

In addition, this study has limitation in terms of the number of samples, and object of the research, and the categories of meta-discourse. The object of this research consisted of 33 backgrounds in the undergraduate thesis introductions. This study investigated only interactional meta-discourse category. Therefore, it is suggested for further researcher to investigate all introductions part of undergraduate thesis written with greater samples written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu.

V. Conclusion

The findings of this research can be concluded that all categories of interactional meta-discourse found in the background of undergraduate thesis introductions written by English students of Muhammadiyah University of Bengkulu in academic year 2019. Besides, hedges was the most dominant of all categories of interactional meta-discourse.

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