

INTERACTION IN SOCIAL SCIENCE RESEARCH ARTICLE ABSTRACTS

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Abstract

Found at the beginning of most journal articles, abstract is an important part of the article. It tends to be used to promote the journal article. Therefore, establishing writer-reader interaction and expressing stance are important for the writers. Based on 78 social science research article abstracts, using Hyland's (2005) model, this corpus-based study aims at exploring how academic writers use language to express a stance and relate to their readers in writing research article abstracts. The result shows that the stance devices such as hedges, boosters are considered important in social science research article abstracts. However, self-mention marker is underused. It is also found that the research article abstract writers tend to make their texts less engaging their readers. The findings of the study have some pedagogical implications for academic writing courses, especially in Indonesia EFL setting.

Keywords – interaction, academic writing, social science, research article abstract

Introduction

Interaction in academic writing has received considerable attention in recent years. Most of the studies examined the interaction using Hyland's (2005) model of interaction in which stance and engagement are introduced as two discursive features which have an effective role in constructing writer-reader interactions (e.g., Eik-Nes, 2009; Dehkordi and Allami, 2012; McGrath and Kuteeva, 2012; Taki, 2012; Sayah and Hashemi, 2014; Emeksiz, 2015; Moini and Salami, 2015). To investigate interaction in academic written text, some researchers have analyzed writing logs (Eik-Nes, 2009), academic prose (Dehkordi and Allami, 2012), pure mathematics research articles (McGrath and Kuteeva, 2012), English and Persian research articles (Taki, 2012), discourse analysis papers (Sayah and Hashemi, 2014), Turkish academic discourse (Emeksiz, 2015), and journal author guidelines (Moini and Salami, 2015).

The concept of stance and engagement essentially derive from the definition of metadiscourse. The metadiscourse was distinguished into two types: interactive and interactional (Thompson, 2001). To Hyland and Tse (2004), interactive metadiscourse guides reader through the text by organizing discourse, while the interactional metadiscourse involves readers in argument by conveying writers' perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves. While interactive metadiscourse focuses on the organization of the text, interactional metadiscourse more focuses on writer-reader interaction. To manage the interaction, Hyland (2005), further, developed the categories of interactional discourse into two dimensions: stance and engagement. Stance is writer-oriented function and concerns the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. Meanwhile, Engagement is addressing the ways writers rhetorically recognize the presence of their readers to actively pull them along with the

argument, include them as discourse participants, and guide them to interpretations (Hyland, 2008: 5).

A number of studies dealing with interaction in academic writing, particularly stance and engagement features have been done. However, there are not many studies about stance and engagement features focused on research article abstracts (henceforth RAAs). Unlike articles or writing logs, RAAs have become an important genre in all knowledge fields, playing a crucial role in persuading readers, and reviewers, to take the time to go further into the paper itself (Jiang and Hyland, 2016). Therefore, in writing abstracts, writers need to offer credible representation of themselves and their work by claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material and acknowledging alternative views, so that controlling the level of personality in writing becomes central to building a convincing argument (Hyland, 2005). To the crucial role of research article abstracts, a number of studies on this genre have been done. The previous studies on research article abstracts have mainly focused on moves structures (e.g. Suntara and Usaha, 2013; Saeew and Tangkiengsirisin, 2014; Doró, 2013; Darabad, 2016). Other studies focused on generic analysis (e.g. Kanoksilapatham, 2013; Salager-Meyer et al, 2014), contrastive rhetorical patterns (Bellés-Fortuño and Querol-Julián, 2010; Alharbi and Swales, 2011; Perales-Escudero and Swales, 2011; Bellés-Fortuño and Querol-Julián, 2010), and persuasion (Breeze, 2009). Giving concern on interaction in research article abstracts, some studies have also attempted to investigate authorial voice and stance (Hyland and Tse, 2005; Pho, 2008, Wang and Chen, 2012; Bondi, 2014; Çakır, 2016). However, there seems no study that exclusively focuses on stance and engagement features. Furthermore, for the use of stance and engagement features in English for Specific Purposes writing, the existing literatures have argued that soft science articles use stance and engagement features more frequently compared to hard science articles (Hyland, 1998; Hyland, 1999; Hyland, 2001; Hyland 2002a; Hyland 2002b; Hyland and Tse, 2004). Further, the studies on stance and engagement features are still under researched in Indonesia especially Indonesian research articles. Based on this research gap, the present study explored the interaction of Indonesia social science research article abstracts using Hyland's (2005) stance and engagement model.

Methodology

This study was a corpus based research which investigated research article abstracts of research articles which are categorized as social science. The study only chose research articles from nationally accredited Journals written in English. From several journals, seven journals were randomly selected. Among those journals, 116 research article abstracts were finally collected.

The texts, then, were converted into corpus files and identified for stance and engagement based on Hyland's (2005) model, using concordance tool of AntConc. The classification was rechecked to ensure that the words or the sentences are really functioned as stance markers or engagement markers.

Finding and Discussion

As showed in table 1.1, it is found that stance features are used much more than engagement features in social science research article abstracts.

	Items per 10,000 words	%
Stance		
Hedges	46.8	35
Boosters	33.4	25
Attitude markers	22.9	17
Self-mention	29.1	21
total	132.2	
engagement		
Reader pronoun	-	-
Personal asides	-	-
Shared	-	-
knowledge		
Directives	2.9	2
questions	-	-
total	2.9	2
GRAND TOTAL	135.1	100

Stance

Stance refers to the way writers present their voices and deliver their opinions, and is comprised of four main element; hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention. In this study, it was found that hedges were the most frequent used feature with 35 % words occurrence. The second position was boosters with 25%. While self-mention was 21%, and attitude markers were 17%.

Hedges

The finding showed that hedges were the most frequent feature with 34.4 items per 10,000 words occurrence. The function of hedges is to withhold writer's full commitment to proposition (Hyland and Tse, 2004). The use of hedges indicates the degree of confidence the writer thinks it might be wise to attribute to a claim (Hyland, 2008). From total 98 words of hedges markers, there were 10 forms of hedges, and the most frequent form was the word '*suggest*'.

“Our findings suggest that the perceived negative effects of such mock opportunities results in employees' increasingly lowered participative behaviour....” (**Makara hubs-asia**)

The use of the word *suggest* implies that statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge.

Boosters

Boosters are in the second position of the frequency. Boosters function to emphasize writer's certainty in proposition. The following example shows the use of *found* and *obviously* as boosters in social science research article abstracts.

"Results of this study found that in developing mind mapping media through..." (**Journal of education and learning**)

"The decision to buy a particular product is obviously in accordance with the buyer's attitude..." (**Journal of Indonesian and economic business**)

Self-mention

Based on the frequency, actually the use of self-mention is still underuse. However, since the context is Indonesia and there were some writers that 'finally' use first person pronoun in their research article, it is some that should be considered. Some literatures argue that it is difficult for non-native writers to use first person pronoun. The use self-mention found in research article abstract in Indonesia showed that the writers are able to establish their own position in their writing.

"In this paper, I will draw on some sample analyses of Asian folktales..." (**TEFLIN**)

"We would like to find out the beneficiaries response..." (**economic journal of emerging markets**)

Attitude markers

Attitude markers are the lowest frequent used of stance features. The employment is merely 10.9 words per 10,000 words. Attitude markers function to express writer's attitude to proposition. The following example show how the writers use attitude markers in research article abstract.

"...and use some DMs inappropriately in 118 occurrences." (**TEFLIN**)

"Social participation is a very important skill in the context of socializing students" (**journal of education and learning**)

By using those attitude markers, the writers express their position to the proposition. The use of *inappropriately* shows writer's disagreement, while through the word important, the writer conveyed the importance of something.

Engagement

Since among all engagement devices, only a few of directives that are found, the result of this study suggested that in writing research article abstract, writers are relatively less involved in engaging their readers within their discourse. The following examples show how the writer engage their reader use directive in research article abstracts.

"...it's important to see characteristic of banks that do diversification..." (**Indonesian Capital Market Review**)

"It is important that we understand issues on NNS English teachers..." (**TEFLIN**)

Discussion

The finding of the use of stance and engagement markers in social science research article abstracts reflects to some reasons. The results of this study were exactly in line with Hyland's (2008)... That stance markers were several times more common than engagement, and hedges dominated the frequency

The result of this study strengthens Hyland's (1999) statement that social sciences use more stance expressions, with hedges particularly strongly represented. It is perhaps because the characteristic of the language of social science which, despite the use of technical terminology, is often accomplished in apparently everyday terms. This is principally because what is considered the appropriate rhetoric for a discipline is tied to the purposes of that discipline.

Engagement markers were far less frequent than stance items. The only engagement feature that occurred in research article abstracts is directives. Hyland (2008) suggested that generally, explicit engagement is a feature of the social science, but directives are a potentially risky tactic as they instruct readers to act or see things in a certain way. As a result, most directives in social science were textual, directing readers to a reference rather than informing them how they should interpret an argument.

Conclusion

These features, stance and engagement, are important ways in establishing social interaction in academic writing. Establishing interaction in academic writing, especially research article abstract, is important due to its crucial role in persuading readers and the promotional aspect of abstract itself.

The analysis on social science research article abstracts in Indonesia has revealed that establishing authorial stance in academic writing is getting common. Some writers do not hesitate to take clear position in their writing even they are English non-native speakers. However, acknowledgment of readers presence remains being avoided.

The findings of this study have pedagogical implications. Social interaction features in research article abstracts should be incorporated into academic writing course for postgraduate students to prepare them for participation in world of publication. In such course, the students should be aware of authorial stance and readers presence. Students should be introduced in to the newest view that academic writing is persuasive. For example, it is not sufficient to forbid them to use personal pronoun, or to ask them to use passive voice.

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