WRITING TO ‘NEGOTIATE’ VERSUS FOR WRITING TO ‘REPORT’

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Abstract: This paper compares the linguistic features found in undergraduate theses written by students coming from different linguistic backgrounds and contexts, a native-English (Honours) and an Indonesian student. It reports a part of a study investigating ways students construct and negotiate interpersonal meanings to establish and maintain interpersonally oriented argumentation throughout the various stages in their theses. The study is underpinned by theories of APPRAISAL and of genre pedagogy of Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL). However, this paper merely explains the ways students employ linguistic choices to establish discipline-related meanings, engage with others and assume authority. The data involve resources in the level of discourse semantic and are analyzed through ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION systems. The Honours student tends to employ the resources in developed ways. Complex negotiations with external sources overlay her text in “bringing in”, evaluating, and integrating them in developing her arguments. In contrast, the Indonesian student seems to pay little attention to the resources and merely report what she did in her research. External sources tend simply to support her argument without evaluating them critically. Accordingly, Indonesian students need to be explicitly exposed to and taught the ways to engage with external sources and deploy them appropriately.

Introduction
This paper forms a part of a larger research project. The project itself aims to understand how students coming from different linguistic backgrounds and contexts diversely establish and maintain interpersonally oriented argumentation throughout the various stages of their thesis. It denotes a more pedagogical motivation as it has been based on a concern that students in the Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context experience difficulties in bringing in and negotiating with others in their academic texts. The project is generally divided into two parts: seeing writing as negotiation—the application of the interpersonal language for negotiating meanings and as stage goal-oriented argumentation—adoption of the academic genre. The data were taken from two theses written by an Honours student from an Australian university and a high-graded student from an Indonesian university (English department). These texts were analyzed to see how they differ in developing argumentation throughout the stages of the theses genre. The analysis has been shaped by the theory of APPRAISAL (Martin, 2000; Martin & White, 2005; White, 2003) and of genre-pedagogy (Martin, 1992, 2009; Martin & Rose, 2007; Rose, 2006).

However, this paper discusses merely a half of the project. It compares the use of interpersonal language in negotiating stance towards the material they write, the readers whom they communicate, and other writers who hold those positions (Martin & White, 2005; White, 2003) throughout the texts. It aims particularly at explaining how the two students differ in making use of the resources to establish discipline-related meanings, engage with others and assume authority. It deals with how students as prospective members of an academic community negotiate meanings to generate new knowledge. This means that they begin to join a new discourse community—a group of people observing and sharing certain conventions and expectations, and negotiating meanings within these conventions and expectations to pursue the same goals (Borg, 2003; Lee, 2006; Swales, 1990). Here, each student has to take on new roles and to engage with knowledge in new ways (Hood, 2004, 2010; Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). This negotiation—the ‘dialogue’, requires students to observe the norms of the community. So, in the context of the current study, writing theses is essentially responding to what others have previously written (Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998), within certain academic norms and expectations. However, in the context of novice writers, the case often becomes a real problem, as they sometimes do not observe the contextually specific requirements the academic community has established (Lee, 2006). In the Indonesian context, the problem becomes even worse. Entering higher education often means adopting and adapting a new way of learning. Writing subject has even become nightmare, for both students and tutors. These indicate how demanding English academic writing for non-native speaker of English are.

Academic writing: reporting or (and) negotiating
There has been a change in the view of academic writing. It was often portrayed as a compilation of clauses and clause-complexes, which are usually impersonal. They represented none but the truth and/or facts found in research. Student writers were commonly trained to detach themselves from what they wrote. Many academic references suggested students to write academically unbiased, informational and impersonal (Hyland, 1994). However, during the last three decades or so, there have been general considerations on how academic
writing has been portrayed as embodying negotiation between the writer and the readers (e.g. Hyland, 2004a, 2004b, 2005; Martin & White, 2005; Thompson, 2001; White, 2003). Writing is considered as social engagement, that is, the interaction between the writer and the reader and the writer and other sources (e.g. Hyland, 2004b; Thompson, 2001). The interaction in the academic text can draw on interactive recourses (guiding the readers through the text) and interactional resources (involving readers in the development of the texts) (Thompson, 2001). Drawing on Volosinov’s (1973, p. 95) dialogic perspective, White (2003) offers a framework for analysing the linguistic resources of intersubjective positioning. He suggests that all the resources "provide the means for speakers/writers to take a stance towards the various points-of-view or social positioning being referenced by the text and thereby to position themselves with respect to the other social subjects who hold those positions" (2003, p. 259). In the Indonesian context, there has been a problem. Research has shown that Indonesian students, even in postgraduate degrees, have been confronted with difficulties in becoming academic researchers and in presenting their research in an acceptable academic discourse (e.g. Cahyono, 2000; Holliday, 2001). Student writers often face problems such as take on new roles and to engage with knowledge in new ways, constructing texts which constitute unfamiliar and unlearnt language (Hood, 2004). However, the Indonesian 2004 genre-based pedagogy has attempted to cope with such problems. Since then, schools and universities have attempted to adopt Australian Genre-based pedagogy. Students are trained to write following the stages and purpose of each text and engage with the readers and other texts. Emilia (2005) claims that genre-based pedagogy has enhanced the written academic discourse practices especially in students’ performance in their argumentative skills.

Negotiation meanings: APPRAISAL System

APPRAISAL theory deals with the roles of interpersonal language in texts. It lies under SFL that view language as resource for meaning making. It provides a comprehensive account of the linguistic resources in which writer may use to take intersubjective stance (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998, 2003). It details the SFL discussions on interpersonal meaning by breaking it down into three elements that comprise the linguistic realizations of feelings, emotions and opinions (ATTITUDE), the amplification or toning down subjective values (GRADUATION), and the resources to engage with others by taking intersubjective positioning (ENGAGEMENT) (Martin, 2000; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005; White, 1998). This theory has been outlined in a number of studies in academic texts [see for example, Hood (2004, 2006), Lee (2006)]] and mass media [e.g. White (1998, 2003, 2006)]. Moreover, as in SFL, it considers texts as units of analysis and suggests the analysis of the texts should remain in the discourse semantic level. (For further reading see Martin, 2000, 2003; Martin & Rose, 2007; Martin & White, 2005)

Negotiation in Honours thesis

The honours thesis depicts a well-developed negotiation between the writer and others. Prudently employing interpersonal linguistic resources she introduces and warrants the research, seeks and develops the space of the research (Kwan, 2006), explicates the methodology, analyzes the data and presents the findings. In introducing the research, she directs readers to the focus of the study and frames their expectations towards what and how to read the research. Most clauses are bare assertion—positive declarative in the mood: monoglossic. The clauses used indicate that she has to say so in the very beginning of the stage as there might be no prior context for what to say (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p. 58). Multiple types of engagement with others, which carefully negotiate stance and voices, have started to play since this early stage. She seems to smoothly drive others to follow her argument. To warrant her research, she then positions the research among the crowd. She employs various types of clauses as she engages in various contexts throughout the discussions. She begins by declaring her claim how controversial the field of the study is, and develops her argument by illustrating how the dispute has intensified. Then she positions her own stand among other voices. Negative values, which are directly collided against the positive ones, seem to dominate the discussion. Having got the space, she then explains the details of her research. Finally, she identifies and admits some limitations, but offers solutions to each of them.

To seek and develop the space for the research, the writer develops arguments to warrant the research. The stage is for the writer to displays her awareness and familiarity to the field and the norms of discourse community. She reviews the literature to identify what has been done in the research and what the strengths and weaknesses of those studies are; to prevent duplication of research; to avoid a fault of the previous research; to promote her own research and research design, and to locate a gap from the previous research and help them occupy the gap (Hart, 1998, 2001). Multiple monoglossic and heteroglossic clauses are in play in this stage. The writer seems to limit her use of ATTITUDE and GRADUATION but of more ENGAGEMENT resources. She tends, in many cases, to use more dialogic expansion clauses than contraction, with finally states her own stance. Attributive clauses which play to acknowledge other positions spread across the stage. Countering as dialogic contraction also frequently used to balance the argument. She often displays all the voices and then states her
own by smoothly countering them. She tends not to show her alignment obviously but portraying it with her logical aligning arguments.

To explicate the methodology, she presents her arguments supported by acknowledging others. Monoglossic clauses tend to lead the stage as it deals with what she did in her research. These clauses are supported either with data or others’ voices. The stage seems to be more one way negotiation in which she explains what, why, where, how and when she did the research.

Complex negotiations cover the analysis of the data and the findings. In this last stage, the writer recounts what has previously discussed, justifies the presentation, summarizes the findings, analyzes the data, and discusses them all. For all of these, dialogic expansive and contractive clauses are in play throughout the stage. The ATTITUDE and GRADUATION are also in action. Finally in general, this text has portrayed efficient negotiations between the writer and the readers and the writer and the sources: other positions and voices.

Negotiation in Indonesian thesis

The Indonesian thesis portrays a relatively poor negotiation between the writer and the readers, and the writer and the sources. As in the findings of my previous study (Widhiyanto, 2012), this student inadequately employs interpersonal linguistic resources in negotiating meanings. She seems to try to meet the stages of the thesis genre; yet what she writes is more structural than functional features of it. In general, she employed more monoglossic clauses in which some of them are inappropriately used and limited types of heteroglossic ones. She seems to be so confident with her argument, or, she perhaps unknowingly assumes others to know well her research.

In introducing her research, she seems to talk to herself and/or the readers who really understand her study. As found in the Honours thesis, most clauses are bare assertion—positive declarative in mood: monoglossic. Yet, the heteroglossic clauses, mostly dialogic contracting, are used to support her argument. The clauses used indicate that she might be confidence with her argument, or does not let negotiation to happen. They might also indicate that she unknowingly does not recognize the importance of acknowledging others in academic community. This often happens with inexperienced student writers (Derewianka, 2007).

The review of related literature remains similar to the previous stage. The writer applies the same strategy by relying more on monoglossic clauses and employing limited negotiation with others. The heteroglossic clauses used are mostly to support her argument, without evaluating other positions critically. There is no clear argument about what she tries to depict in the review. She often portrays her position counting on well developed theories. Her voice is influenced by others without necessarily entering into a critical dialogue with them.

The writer explains the methodology in similar way to the previous stages. Monoglossic clauses spread throughout the stage as it plays to recount and warrant her methods. She similarly presents her arguments supported merely by others positions. It seems to be relatively similar to the way honours does: one way negotiation, in which she explains her own research.

Relatively more developed negotiations complete the analysis of the data and the findings. As in honours, the writer recounts what has previously discussed, justifies the presentation, summarizes the findings, analyzes the data, and discusses them all. However, critical analysis and evaluation are not easily found in this stage. The majority of clauses are still monoglossic, with some heteroglossic ones that play more to narrow the space by excluding other dialogic alternatives with others. In general, this text has portrayed insufficient negotiations between the writer and the readers and the writer and the sources: other positions and voices

Conclusion

The results show that the native-English student writer tends to mutually engage with readers throughout her writing in particular ways. The complex negotiation with external academic sources includes “bringing them in”, tactically evaluating them, and thoughtfully integrating them in the argument as it develops. In contrast, the Indonesian student writer tends to report what she has done in her research and pay little attention to the readers’ presence and other voices. She employs external sources to merely support her argument without critically evaluating them. Pedagogically, these suggest that Indonesian student writers need to be explicitly exposed to and taught the ways to engage with outside sources as well as the readers and deploy linguistic resources appropriately and efficiently.

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Biodata

Widhiyanto is a lecturer at Semarang State University. He is currently studying at the Faculty of Social Science University of Wollongong for his doctoral degree under DGHE (DIKTI) Scholarship. He has presented his paper in TEFLIN, ASFLI, ISFC39, ASFLA, and other conferences. His research interests include SFL, discourse analysis and academic writing.