

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The physical art of writing is sometimes thought of as mainly the result of cognitive effort on the part of an individual writer (Weigle, 2002). In writing then, more time and energy can be spent on cognitive activities such as planning and information retrieval, as there is less communicative pressure to continuously produce utterances (Grabowsky, 1996 as cited in Weigle, 2002). Writing is the act of replacing the thought into words which need ability. To convey messages or information by writing, people have a challenge to make their writing understandable considering that the addressees or readers do not face directly. Regarding this fact, the writers must construct a coherent message that attempts to deal with the existing knowledge, interests, and goals of the addressees.

In order to fulfill the goals, the writers must be proficient in the academic writing. It should be noted that, the communication by writing is different from that in ordinary speech. Writing differs from speech in a number of important ways, both in terms of textual qualities and in terms of factors that govern the uses of each modality. The texts in writing, then, are more complex with kinds of academic features.

An important characteristic of academic writing is that it conveys facts and information. This feature is common in scientific writing as part of academic writing.

It is objective and impersonal in which the writers describe scientific arguments in their statements. The format of scientific writing includes such sections as title, abstract, introduction, materials and methods, results and discussions. Research articles are scientific texts which aim to inform facts and present contents, which are the combination of facts and evaluations.

Besides, they attempt to convince and influence their readers. Thus, the writers attempt to provide information accurately and objectively. It may seem obvious that a scientific writing is incomplete without the interpretation of the writer. The academics need to state claims with accuracy to present valid information. Dealing with the facts above, there are some features in academic writing to be recognized. One of the features is the concept of cautious language or often called 'hedging'.

Hedging appears as a device for academics to anticipate the reader's possible rejections of their propositions. Hedging is a basic feature in academic discourse that enables academic writers to show their certainty and doubt towards their statements, to show the amount of confidence they put on their claim, and to start a dialog with their readers (Rounds, 1982 as cited in Alkhars 2005). Particularly, hedging devices are used in rhetorical sections such as methods and result, findings and conclusions. Some examples of hedging are *may, assume, unclear, will, often, probably*, and the others. Hedging devices are numerous and can be complex.

Varttala (1999 as cited in Falahati 2007) emphasized the functions of hedging in research articles as the indicator of textual precision and interpersonal relationship. Hyland (1998 as cited in Alkhars 2005) defines hedges as “the means by which the writers can present a proposition as an opinion rather than a fact: items as only hedges in their epistemic sense, and only when they mark uncertainty”. Moreover, Hyland (1994), stressing the significance of hedging in academic discourse, thinks that hedging expressions occur more than other linguistic features in academic discourse, and yet hedging get less focused than other features do. In addition to its functions in academic discourse, hedging can also be recognized in the context of casual and oral discourse.

Hedging has received most attention in its role in oral and written discourse as in human interacting with computer system where hedging is used to show politeness (Bhatt, Evens, and Argomon 2007). Other works on hedging have been focused on disciplinary fields with various genres. Some writers discussed hedging used in medicine, chemistry, psychology and science in research article (Falahati, 2007). Furthermore, hedging is also treated as a tool to differentiate writing ability between L1 and L2 writers (Alkhars, 2005). Researchers have examined hedging across different disciplines. Despite those interests, however, there has been little work that investigated the use and functions of hedging in academic genres, particularly linguistics students' theses.

Thus, this study is important as it attempts to fill such a gap since research into hedging that focuses on linguistics studies has been rarely conducted. This study

focuses on the use of hedging in the introduction of theses by linguistics' students and describes the function of hedging devices. The main objective in this study is to investigate the ways in which linguistics students make claims or statements and whether there are variations in the use of hedging devices. This study is one of the efforts to raise the awareness of this key writing strategy in linguistics study.

This study addresses the following questions related to the use and functions of hedging in the introduction of theses in linguistics. The questions also become the main problem investigated in this study. Hedging devices could indicate the amount of accuracy and uncertainty of statements.

1.2 Statement of problem

1. What are hedging devices that frequently occurred in the introduction of the theses written by linguistics students of English Department Airlangga University?
2. What are the functions of hedging devices frequently used in the introduction of the theses written by linguistics students of English Department Airlangga University?

1.3 Objective of the study

The objectives of the study are to identify and classify hedging devices frequently used in the introduction of theses written by linguistics students. The study

also attempts to observe the functions of hedging devices mostly found in the introductions of the theses

1.4 Significance of the study

This study is expected to help produce new insights in the field of academic writing, especially about hedging. It has been noticed in the literature that the scientific discipline is a discipline that gives hedging lots of attention, such as in scientific writing. Hedging has a role significantly in the English academic writing and there is little work on it. Thus, this research could serve as one of references about hedging devices and be a source for studies in academic writing.

Through this research, the writer expects that the findings can be applied, by English learners, in their writing. They can enrich their knowledge on hedging since its use is essential for academic writing ability. The results of this study may help them know how to use hedging devices to state or show their certainty or doubt in their statements. Finally, the writer hopes that her study can be useful for the students of English departments who are interested in studying hedging as it is useful to improve the academic writing ability.

1.5 Definition of key terms

- 1. Hedging devices** : Any utterance in which the speaker explicitly qualifies his commitment to the truth of the proposition expressed by the sentences he or she utters (Hyland, 1995)

2. **Academic writing** : Academic writing is 'structured research' written by 'scholars'. It addresses topic-based 'research questions' of interest to anyone who is seeking factually-based, objectively-presented information on a particular topic (Hopkins, 2008)
3. **Modal Nouns** : Nouns are the names of "people, places, or things. Many people also include that nouns can signify an event or idea. (Simmons, 1997).
4. **Modal Lexical Verb** : A lexical verb is a verbs which form the primary verb to indicate such things as possibility, ability, and obligation. (Crystal, 1985 as cited in Alkhars 2005)
5. **Modal Auxiliary Verb** : Auxiliaries typically take a verb expression as their complement and have the semantic function of marking grammatical properties associated with the relevant verb, such as tense, aspect, voice, mood or modality. (Radford, 1998)
6. **Adverbial & Adjectival**: An adjective modifies a noun or a pronoun by describing, identifying, or quantifying words. An adverb indicates manner, time, place, cause, or degree and answers questions. (MacFadyen, 2007)

LITERATURE REVIEW
CHAPTER I