Engagement Markers in Discussion Section of Research Articles Written by English Education Students and Articles Published in Reputable English Journal

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Abstract

Some studies concerned about engagement markers (EMs) have been conducted among international authors. However, it does not literally trigger Indonesian scholars to study this discipline. Based on this fact, this research aimed to compare EMs in the discussion section of research articles (RAs) written by English Education students of Bengkulu University and RAs published in a reputable English journal. The corpora were analyzed by using the documentation checklist with a quantitative approach. The results showed that the more frequent types of EMs employed by students were knowledge appeals and directives. Similarly, experienced authors of RAs published in the reputable English journal employed the same dominant EMs. However, the order of minor prevalent markers in both corpora differed slightly. The Chi-square test result indicated that the differences in EMs between both corpora were significant in quantity (with Asymp sig. 0.000). More specifically, the experienced authors used a more considerable amount of EMs. In conclusion, the higher frequency of EMs in experienced writers' RAs signifies the authors' awareness of using EMs to construct relationships with readers. Therefore, it is essential to emphasize the use of EMs in academic writing. Further study is suggested to analyze the accuracy of EMs in the corpora and focus on a particular type of EMs for achieving more comprehensive findings.

Keywords: Engagement markers; experienced authors; research articles discussion

Introduction

One of the scientific structures in research article that is considered as an essential part is the discussion section. According to Arsyad (2013), authors present their research's contribution to the available and current literature in the discussion section. Although it is a vital part of a research article, writing discussion section is

challenging, since it requires authors to arrange their notions and interpretation comparing with others (Irawati, Saukah, & Suharmanto, 2018).

According to Siddique, Mahmood, and Iqbal (2017), RAs authors employ various linguistic tools to deliver the intended message that could be obtained and construed correctly by the readers. One of them, as proposed by Hyland (2005), called metadiscourse, refers to how authors arrange the writings, engage the readers, and signal attitudes to the discourse and the audience. It is counted as a necessary element to create a good work by which the intelligibility of communication in research articles can be achieved (Zarei & Mansoori, 2011).

Hyland (2005) classified metadiscourse markers into two types namely: interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse guides the readers to understand what the text tells about coherently and cohesively. It consists of code glosses, evidentials, endophoric markers, frame markers, and transitions markers. Meanwhile, interactional metadiscourse involves the reader collaboratively in the development of the text. It is divided to self-mentions, attitude markers, boosters, hedges, and engagement markers. Among those categories, Millán (2014) defines the engagement markers as explicit linguistic forms which allow authors to connect readers and include them as discourse participants. In line with this, engagement markers are regarded as effective in engaging readers and increasing potential readership (He & Rahim, 2019).

Several studies have been conducted concerning on engagement markers. Sahragard and Yazdanpanahi (2017) conducted a comparative study of engagement markers (EMs) employed in humanities research articles (RAs) and science research articles (RAs). Similarly, He and Rahim (2019) did a comparative study of engagement markers (EMs) in research articles (RAs) and opinion pieces (OPs). In addition, Khatibi and Esfandiari (2021) analyzed the engagement markers in American and internationally published Persian research articles.

Based on those works, it can be concluded that the studies about engagement markers (EMs) were mainly discussed by international authors rather than Indonesian authors. Other than that, the study of EMs in different levels of research articles that are articles written by undergraduate students and written by experienced authors have not been found so far. In this regard, the experienced authors who published their papers in the reputable journal were assumed to have

better quality of RAs than undergraduate students. It might be because the students lack in experience, and their articles were published in a different level journal with the experienced authors. Consequently, the comparison can be a reference on how EMs are supposed to be used in academic writing especially research articles.

Research Methodology

This research was conducted by using a quantitative method with comparative analysis. It aimed to compare the use of engagement markers in the discussion section of research articles written by English Education students of Bengkulu University and articles published in a national accredited journal. The rationale of comparing the corpora was to acknowledge how experienced authors used engagement markers in research articles compared to the students. Therefore, it can be a guidance for students in arranging research articles reflected to the way that the experienced authors have employed.

The corpora for this study were 30 articles consisting of 15 articles written by English Education students published in Journal of English Education and Teaching (JEET) indexed by Sinta 4. Meanwhile, the remaining 15 articles were published in national accredited journal, namely Studies in English Language and Education (SiELE), indexed by Sinta 1. The corpora can be seen in the following table.

Table 1: Corpora of study

Types of RAs	Code	Text	Average Length of Discussion Words
RAs written by students	SA	15	1342.46
RAs written by experienced authors	EA	15	1487.93
Total		**30**	

From table 1, it was found that the size of the discussion section in each article was different. Meanwhile, this research aimed to get a fair analysis comparing engagement markers between the different corpora. Therefore, the researcher analyzed the use of engagement markers in every 1000 words to allow the comparison across different size of corpora.

EMs found in the corpora were noted and classified in the checklist documentation based on the theory proposed by Hyland (2005). To ensure the

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reliability of research analysis, the inter-rater reliability analysis was employed. The process of ensuring the reliability used Cohen's Kappa formula in SPSS application. Furthermore, the Chi-Square test was also conducted to check the significant degree of EMs differences in the corpora.

Findings and Discussion

Findings

The results of the analysis done by the researcher were compared to the analysis conducted by co-rater. The co-rater got 20% of articles from the total corpora that were randomly chosen to be analyzed. The co-rater had the printed form of 6 selected articles and followed instruction from the researcher before doing the analysis. The differences of both results were counted to be calculated using Cohen's Kappa test in SPSS software. The result of the agreement can be seen as follows.

Table 2: Symmetric measures of Cohen's Kappa agreement

	Value	Asymp. Std. Error[a]	Approx. T[b]	Approx. Sig.
Measure of Agreement	.928	.051	10.034	.000
N of Valid Cases	117			

According to the table, the Kappa agreement measurement showed a value of 0.928. In order to interpret the meaning of the value, the researcher consulted the agreement scale of Cohen's Kappa proposed by Altman (1991). Based on the scale, the scale of 0.928 is categorized to a very good agreement. Therefore, by using the agreement scale stated above, it can be concluded that the agreement scale of inter-rater reliability in this research based on Cohen's Kappa coefficient is categorized as very good agreement. Based on the calculation, the results found in this research are statistically and scientifically reliable.

EMs in Students' Research Articles

The frequency and percentage of engagement markers were calculated to see the more frequent types of EMs used in the discussion section of research articles written by English Education students of Bengkulu University. The distribution of EMs

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found in research articles written by English Education students can be seen in the table below.

Table 3: Distribution of EMs in students' RAs

	Engagement Markers (EMs)				
	Directives	Reader Mentions	Knowledge Appeals	Questions	Personal Asides
Raw Frequency	**43**	**5**	**76**	**4**	**2**
Percentage (%)	**0.28**	**0.03**	**0.50**	**0.02**	**0.01**

Based on the table, all types of engagement markers; directives, reader mentions, knowledge appeals, questions, and personal asides were used in the corpora but they were different in terms of frequency. Knowledge appeals were the highest markers which contained 0.50% of the total words in 15 corpora. It was followed by directives (0.28%), reader mentions (0.03%), and questions (0.02%). Meanwhile, personal asides had the least frequent occurrence (0.01%). In conclusion, the more frequent types of EMs in the discussion section of RAs written by English Education students of Bengkulu University were knowledge appeals followed by directives. The following example illustrates how the author used EMs.

(1) The result of this research is **similar** to the previous studies although this research investigated three enrollments meanwhile the the previous studies investigated one enrollment. *(knowledge appeal in SA-3)*

(2) It **can be seen** in the book, that 5 from 16 chapters use those Basic Competences. *(directive in SA-6)*

(3) If **we** referred to the standard, it means that the range of words they have was more than 3,000 words, therefore based on Depdiknas (2004) if the students have more than 3,000 words it means their knowledge about vocabulary was similar to late senior high school students or higher education. *(reader mention in SA-8)*

(4) Motivation is crucial force which determines **whether a learner embarks on task at all, how much energy he devotes to it, and how long he perseveres it.** *(question in SA-7)*

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(5) **The researcher believes** that those negative suggestions would worsen the anxious feeling of the students. *(personal asides in SA-15)*

EMs in Research Articles Published in National Accredited Journal

The frequency of EMs was calculated in order to find out the more frequent types of engagement markers in the discussion section of research articles published in a national accredited journal. The distribution of EMs can be seen in the following table.

Table 4: Distribution of EMs in RAs written by experienced authors

	Engagement Markers (EMs)				
	Directives	Reader Mentions	Knowledge Appeals	Questions	Personal Asides
Raw Frequency	120	1	216	7	1
Percentage (%)	0.8	0.006	1.44	0.04	0.006

It can be seen in table 4, articles written by experienced authors also used all the types of engagement markers, but they were different in terms of frequency. It was found that knowledge appeals had the highest percentage (1.44%) from the total words in the 15 corpora. It was followed by directives (0.8%) and questions (0.04%). Meanwhile, reader mentions and personal asides had the lowest percentage among the total words of corpora (0.006%). The following examples illustrate how authors in the corpora used EMs.

(6) **In fact**, a solution was required to prepare the readiness of PSETs to work as teachers in the future. *(knowledge appeals in EA-2)*

(7) **It is necessary to test** using every aspect of writing separately (analytic scores). *(directive in EA-9)*

(8) By constantly reflecting on their classroom practices, questioning **what is going on in the classroom,** and finding solutions to their own teaching problems, their professional competence will grow on their own. *(question in EA-5)*

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(9) In some instances, **we** need to understand a sentence, guessing the meaning of unknown words or phrases may be done comfortably and more efficiently than opening up dictionaries. *(reader mention in EA-11)*

(10) **Another interesting finding to discuss here** is the emergence of   problem-solving strategies as a strategy category that was used more frequently after support strategies during the Covid-19 pandemic. *(personal asides in EA-6)*

The Differences of the Use of EMs between Two Corpora

In order to check whether the EMs differences in the two corpora were significant or not, Chi-square test was conducted. It compared five categories of EMs in articles written by English Education students of Bengkulu University and articles written by experienced authors in a national accredited journal. The Chi-square test was conducted by using SPSS software. To make a conclusion with 95% of confidence, the value labeled as Asymp. Sig. (which is the p-value of the Chi-Square statistic) should be less than 0.05 (the alpha level associated with a 95% confidence level). The result of Chi-Square test can be seen in the following table.

Table 5: Chi-Square test for the use of EMs in both corpora

N	Pearson chi-square value	Df	Asymp. Sig
475	97.316^a	1	.000

The result of Chi-Square test showed that the Asymp. Sig was 0.000 (<0.05), which indicated a significant different in the calculation. In conclusion, the use of EMs in research articles written by students and research articles published in the national accredited journal is significantly different based on the statistical result.

Discussion

One of the first things to note is that authors of RAs in the national accredited journal and RAs written by students favored all types of EMs, namely directives, reader mentions, knowledge appeals, questions, and personal asides. It was relevant to previous studies (Hyland & Jiang, 2016; He & Rahim, 2019; Al-rickaby, 2020; Khatibi & Esfandiari, 2021) that discovered all types of engagement markers in their corpora of study. It indicated that engagement markers were considered important in arranging academic works especially research articles.

The prominent EMs used in both corpora also had a same pattern that is knowledge appeals followed by directives. The fact that knowledge appeals becoming the most prevalent markers was in line with a study conducted by Parkinson and Adendorff (2004). They state that research articles emphasize theories and methods. As a result, a higher portion of knowledge appeals indicates that research articles authors are more willing to foreground a framework based on shared knowledge. Based on the study, it was probably one of the factors for the occurrence of knowledge appeals as the dominant markers.

The use of directives in research articles is also considered necessary as it proposes an action to be carried out by readers. By using directives, authors of RAs acknowledge the presence of their readers and engage them to the discourse by guiding them to do a particular action. The essential role of directives was proven since it was found as the second dominant marker in both corpora. However, it is claimed that the use of directives is potentially risky, and it is often regarded as bald-on-record threats to face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). It means that directives tend to insist readers doing something in a way determined by writer that will undermine the harmony of reader-author relationship (Hyland, 2002). That is why the result in this study showed that the use of directives in both corpora couldn't be in the highest prevalent markers.

Regarding frequency comparison of both dominant EMs, the use of knowledge appeals seem to be higher in RAs written by experienced authors rather than RAs written by students. This fact indicated that the experienced authors were aware that their readers vary in background knowledge. Therefore, they attempted to make readers hold certainty without boundaries. It also confirmed to Hyland (2001) that appeals to share knowledge are used by authors to assign readers within apparently naturalized gaps of discipline.

Similarly, the frequency of directives used by students was less than directives used by experienced authors. It occurred due to the fact that students tried to avoid demanding their readers to do something. It was perhaps because the students lacked the authority to be highly bold in their writing. It is in line with Brown and Levinson (1987) that directives as bald on record face-threatening acts claim greater authority for the writer over readers. More precisely, the writer specifies how the reader should participate in the text or perform an action outside the text.

Concerning other types of EMs found in the corpora, it can be seen that reader mentions and questions became the less dominant markers in both corpora with some slightly differences of the frequency. In terms of reader mentions, the use of inclusive "we" appeared to be the more prevalent in RAs written by English Education students than RAs written by experienced authors. It might be due to experienced authors are aware that the use of reader mentions must be appropriate and they avoid to address readers as directly as possible using reader mentions. It is also in line with Hyland (2008) that research articles authors are more constrained about using this explicit recognition of the reader.

In aspects of questions, the findings in this study only found the use of rhetorical questions in both corpora. It was in line with Hyland (2005) that most of the questions in the corpora are rhetorical and do not require any answer. Those rhetorical questions were used to attract and engage the readers. Even though questions can invite readers to be engaged in the discourse and raise the sense of interest among the readers, Sahragard and Yazdanpanahi (2017) claim that some authors believe that questions are too personal and intrusive, so they avoid too many questions in their works. Perhaps, it was the rational of the authors to employ less questions among other EMs and tend to use rhetorical questions as it seems less intrusive rather than direct questions.

On the other side, the least prevalent engagement marker used in both corpora was personal aside. The use of personal aside is considered as the author's meta-comment on the ongoing argument in the discourse (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). However, the result of personal asides in this study was different from a research by He and Rahim (2019) that encountered personal asides in the form of parentheses and dashes. Similarly, the personal asides found in the corpora were different from the previous study conducted by Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi (2017) in which the personal asides could be identified by looking at dashes and parentheses punctuation. Meanwhile, in this study, the researcher did not find the punctuation used by the authors. Therefore, the researcher determined the personal aside by analyzing the contextual meaning of its use based on theory by Hyland (2005).

For further analysis, the lowest occurrence of personal aside in this corpora indicated that the author avoids to intimately interfere the discussion stated in research articles, since the personal aside is considered having more explicit

intimacy (Hyland, 2005). It was different with the higher occurrence of personal asides in other genres of writing, such as blog writing, as studied by Zou and Hyland (2020). They found that personal asides were used frequently since the blog writing aims to get intimacy between authors and readers as much as possible besides trying to interject their personal sides to be complied by readers.

The analysis revealed that overall, there was a higher occurrence of engagement markers in the discussion section of research articles published in a national accredited journal rather than articles written by English Education students of Bengkulu University. It indicated that authors who published their articles in the reputable journal concerned engagement markers as an influential part in compiling their research report. It means that they did not merely produce texts that plausibly represent external reality, but also use language to acknowledge, construct and negotiate social relations with readers. It is in line with Hyland (2005) that academic writing is now widely recognized to be dialogical, involving interaction between a writer's authorial persona and the reader.

This finding was also relevant to the study by Hyland (2004) that compared the use of metadiscoursal tools between different levels of research articles (masters' and Ph.D.'s). He found that the dissertation made more concerted attempts to engage with their readers than the master's degree writings. It was concluded that the Ph.D. authors were aware that metadiscoursal markers represent a reflective awareness of self, text, and audience. Therefore, they attempt to present themselves as competent academics immersed in the ideologies and practices of their fields. Similarly, the articles published in the national accredited journal were written by more competent academics to show themselves and their research contributions to the current knowledge. Comparatively, articles written by English Education students of Bengkulu University were primarily written as a fulfillment to complete their bachelor degree. In the most cases, it was their first time to arrange and publish a research article.

Conclusion and Suggestion

Based on the finding, some points can be highlighted as the conclusion in this study. First, the overall finding showed that both authors employed all types of EMs. However, they differed in terms of frequency in which EMs used by experienced authors have a greater amount than students. Second, the trend of dominant

markers in both corpora were also similar that are knowledge appeals followed by directives. Third, there was a significant difference between engagement markers in RAs written by students and RAs written by experienced authors in the national accredited journal. In addition, the differences in the use of EMs in both corpora could be seen in the occurrence of the less prevalent markers in which the minor markers used by students were reader mentions, questions, and personal asides, while experienced authors were questions, reader mentions and personal asides.

The present study has contributed to provide a comparison of different authors in using engagement markers for their works. Therefore, it can be a reference for students to use engagement markers in their writing based on the way of experienced authors employed them. The findings of this research may have pedagogical implication for teaching that the use of engagement markers should be taught explicitly in the writing course or perhaps other possible courses.

This study suggested that students can reflect the experienced authors who have employed engagement markers in their research articles. For further research, authors can try to find out whether engagement markers used in the corpora were applied accurately. Moreover, further research might be conducted within a single type of engagement markers among five categories (directives, reader mentions, knowledge appeals, questions, and personal asides) to specify the use of a particular engagement markers in academic writing. In order to construct a more representative result, the researcher can involve more corpora of the research articles.

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