

# House-made Writing Style Guide:

*Reflecting on the practice around academic text writing in an Indonesian university context*

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**Abstract—** This paper addresses some issues around academic culture within the context of an Indonesian higher education. It makes a case of the revision of a house-made writing style guide implicated by the new governmental policy which has to do with academic text writing practice, including that of undergraduate thesis. Within this context, the paper will talk about identification of some conspicuous problems around the practice of academic text writing which encompasses two main issues: niche and language expressions. These two points constitute my agenda of action when engaged in a project to revise a house-made writing style guide as an attempt made to help cultivate academic culture projected to better prepare Indonesian academic discourse community to deal with the situations implicated by, particularly, the recent Indonesian policy on higher education.

**Keywords—** *writing style guide; academic text writing; academic culture; meta-genre*

## I. INTRODUCTION

One point of the recent educational policies pertaining to higher education in Indonesia is the stipulation that an undergraduate student is to write a thesis or final project, replacing the previous policy in which writing a thesis was optional. Despite the option whether to write a thesis or a final project, the strong tendency is that an undergraduate student is to write a thesis in order to meet the requirements for the degree completion. This preference seems to be, in part, the consequence of the expectations set in the job market which tends to require the applicants to show that they write thesis when completing their undergraduate studies. Some conversations with colleagues at neighbouring institutions and graduate students coming from some universities across Indonesia undertaking Master's and Doctoral studies at our university also confirm this point. This policy usually takes a uniform manifestation of requiring undergraduate students to do research resulting in the writing of thesis. Such manifestation has been affirmed by the fact that the abovementioned government policy also requires that the theses are populated in the institutions' repository. The undergraduate research is stipulated to be the application of the knowledge acquired by the undergraduate students (MORTHE, 2015).

Some similarities about undergraduate research can be identified in other regions such as Europe and the US (Chapp & Benvenuto, 2013; Laursen, Hunter, Seymour, Thiry, Melton, 2010; Peterson & Rubinstein, 2016; Wolfensberger, 2015). The identification of the advantages of undergraduate research has made it commendable to call for more undergraduates to be involved in research (e.g., Caccavo Jr, 2009; Kinkead and Grobman, 2011). However, the policy in the European countries and the US tends to do with select few undergraduates, which is different from that of Indonesia in which each undergraduate student (senior) is to do research irrespective of their academic strengths and interests. The policy seems to take no account of the notion of multiple intelligences. Different views on this issue have been around. What I have seen and heard in some institutions has been very much reminiscent of the voices expressed by Kinkead and Grobman (2011) about the possibilities of undergraduate research in the context of US higher education institutions. Compared to the success stories of undergraduate research, particularly in the area of STEM (see e.g., Eagan Jr, Hurtado, Cang, Garcia, Herrera, Garibay, 2013; Webber, Nelson Laird, BrckaLorenz, 2013), Kinkead and Grobman's (2011) have spotted varied issues with regard to English studies such as areas and directions of undergraduate research, different views of the faculty on the efficiency and values of undergraduate research supervision, fora wherein the undergraduate students may potentially disseminate their research findings. By and large, Kinkead and Grobman have identified some avenues where undergraduate research program potentially shows its strengths.

The above Indonesian policy on undergraduate thesis seems to have been thought of to go in line with the pressure on the Indonesian academics, particularly Master's and Doctorate students, and inevitably faculty members, to be better published. The government might have thought that undergraduate research components culminating in thesis or final project is a plausible way to initiate the cultivation of academic culture allowing the future academics to be more prepared for international publications in particular and professional life in general. Probably on very few occasions, undergraduate thesis supervisors may also collaborate with the supervisees for possible publication of the research. Even though this avenue is not specific to Indonesia, for some affinity has also surfaced in the US educational institutions (see e.g., Eagan Jr, Hurtado, Cang, Garcia, Herrera, Garibay, 2013; Webber, Nelson Laird, BrckaLorenz, 2013; Kinkead & Grobman, 2011), in the Indonesian context, this point seems to relate to the recent amendment of the scoring rubric for promotion of Indonesian academics to senior lectureship and professorship. One of

the consequential amendments has to do with the weighting put on publication, the previous weighting being 25% and the new one 45% of the total scores of the promotion portfolio. In addition to meeting the percentage, for academics to get promoted to professorship, they have to produce articles published in reputed international journals as the required materials in the portfolio for promotion (PERMENPAN RB, 2013).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Setting aside the detailed mechanism, the recent situation around the national policy on publication especially that pertinent to international journal publication shares much in common with those in Poland and Spain. Identifying the situation in Poland, Gonerko-Frej (2014) observes that Polish academic culture is characterised with the evaluation system of academic output which uses different categories of publications, journals with impact factor being the highest (Category A). Despite the fact that it is difficult to equalise Indonesian linguistic situation to that of Spain which is categorised into semiperiphery, Burgess' (2014) observation of the academic situation in Spain indicates some similarities to that of Indonesia: publication in ISI-indexed journals with impact factor is much favoured. Burgess goes on to say that such a policy has put more burdens on scholars in the area of soft sciences compared to their counterparts in hard sciences. In addition, as put forth by Gonerko-Frej (2014), the Polish academic policy has brought along more pressure on the need to publish in journals written in English, for the journals falling into Category A abovementioned are mostly those published in English. And Indonesian academic culture shares a similar characteristic.

A comparison to Turkey, also characterised with semiperiphery, demonstrates further similar situations. It is true that Turkish's state policy regarding research and publications has been in place ahead of that of Indonesia, yet some points of similarities are worth noting. Reflecting on and analysing the situation in Turkey, Uysal (2014) presents some historical points of policies against which to view the situation in Turkey at present. All this suggests that Turkey has since several years back adopted a centre-based policy regarding research, publishing, and promotion for academics. Indonesia, on the other hand, just adopted a similar policy recently. Reflecting on what has been going on in Turkey, a similar situation seems to potentially occur in Indonesia. Currently, as noted earlier, publication in Indonesia is supposed to be oriented towards international journals, suggesting some degree of centre-based approach in the policy. This has also been coupled up with the policy on promotion. In this regard, Uysal (2014) has identified the provision of incentives allocated to those successful in publishing in international journals as one of the factors boosting the publishing performance of Turkish academics, which is similar to that in Indonesia. However, Uysal also noted that to some extent this policy is not necessarily congruent with the local political situation in universities: those publishing in international journals are not automatically much appreciated with regard to institutional opportunities, e.g., managerial promotion. Additionally, centre-based policy on research and publishing does not necessarily guarantee direct benefits to the Turkish society. In our observations, the situation in Turkey is very much reminiscent of the situation in Indonesia.

Reflecting on the postcolonial position of Indonesia, auto-critique, to borrow Spivak's (2005) remark, for the purpose of figuring out our own situation is commendable. One of the troubling situations that Indonesian academics face as nonnative speakers of English can be identified by looking at Flowerdew's (2001) work. His study on the problems hampering nonnative English writers in their attempts to publish articles in international (suggestive of English) journals has made some resonance in the contextual boundaries of the recent regulations advocating the need for international publication by Indonesian academics. Additionally, interviews with some editors of Indonesian-based journals (Basthomi, 2007) have indicated that the editors had not oriented the editing process for international readership: the readers they had in mind were mainly Indonesians. This potentially accounts for why Indonesian writers tend to have some points of proclivity in writing. Analysis of some doctoral prospectuses written in English by Indonesians also confirmed the point that Indonesian doctoral proposal writers tend to spend much of their space on providing or elaborating concepts pertaining to the variables of their research projects; they tend to fail to show gaps in research which can be worked about by critically reviewing the literature relevant to their research topics (Basthomi, 2009; Rakhmawati, 2014). Mapped onto the findings of Flowerdew (2001), this finding lends support to the identification of potential difficulties Indonesian writers would face in order to get their works published in international journals.

It seems to hold true that pragmatism is an inevitable disposition of English departments in Indonesia: the departments are expected to hone the learners' attainment of sound communicative ability (competence) in using English. The consequence is that, to some extent, Indonesian learners of English are suggested to consciously acquiesce with regard to English norms. It is worth noting that the acquiescence is made on informed basis in that the learners are cognisant of the Indonesian norms vis-à-vis their counterparts in English. This situation, we believe, will not necessarily jeopardize the learners' sense of Indonesian norms; instead, it will assist to affirm the existence of their conception of the Indonesian norms. The juxtaposed concepts of the Indonesian and English norms, in Saussurean sense, will show that they are different. Through the vivid differences, the two kinds of norms are very likely to affirm each other in terms of their very existence. The affirmation, in turn, engenders knowledge by which students may effectively venture into the advantageous co-modification of their postcolonial leverage by, pragmatically, making use of the instrumentality of English.

The abovementioned affinities of the Indonesian context and others have to do with language issues faced by learners of a

foreign language like the Indonesian undergraduate students majoring in English within the context of English as a foreign language. This poses a number of challenges if not problems to both students and supervisors, especially when the supervisors have to work with students of less academic interests (and strengths). The fact that all undergraduate students, including those of affirmative programs, are to write thesis in a foreign language, English, adds to the challenges. As adumbrated earlier, while some American educators are calling for wider involvement of undergraduates including those of the minority (see e.g., Webber, Nelson Laird, BrckaLorenz, 2013; Kinkead & Grobman, 2011), in the Indonesian context, we have put this top-down policy in place. In other words, it seems unlikely that Indonesian higher education institutions would opt for non-thesis undergraduate policy irrespective of the students' academic strength. When the policy applies to able undergraduates, some faculty may see it as the catalyst for the setting up of a mining site from which they may reap golden works potential for publication, which is also another aspect of the new policy on higher education in Indonesia. In fact, scholarly publication of the academics of Indonesian higher education institutions has recently been one of the major concerns of the Ministry of Research, Technology, and Higher Education. This concern has been expressed in the regulation which sets the national standard of higher education (MORTHE, 2015).

Pertinent to the abovenoted situation, the present study was basically self-reflective in which I made use of my observations as the basis of this writing. My observations of some Indonesian universities have shown that the stipulation has been responded to with some actions the main form of which is the setting up of a unit providing some advice on writing for publications in reputed journals. This seems to echo the call for systemic support for students (Bommarito, 2015) and this situation holds true in my institution. It needs noting that my institution has also made a step to revise its house-made writing style guide. My observations of the undertaking of the house-made writing style guide revision soon showed that different voices of different individuals were bound to surface, including the possible juxtaposition between Indonesian cultural norms and those of English and across different disciplines brought along by the personnel involved in the project. This situation links to the notion that bilingualism and biculturalism do not have symmetrical relationship, indicating that language acquisition is not necessarily manifest in the same degree as cultural acquisition. Cultural acquisition which includes, *inter alia*, genre knowledge as shared by the discourse community and the communicative purposes to accomplish as one produces academic pieces of writing such as thesis and journal article is not simple (Rakhmawati, 2014). This situation but adds to the challenges that Indonesian academics should face as they aspire to contribute to international publications.

Germane to the main intention underlying the writing style guide as a meta-genre, my observations were made at the vantage point of English language teaching (ELT) in the Indonesian context wherein nationally the status of English is as a foreign language, despite the proposed shift of the status (Mukmination, 2004). As under any circumstances ELT is principally aimed at guiding the learners to attain sound communicative ability, attempts on the part of the teachers to allow the learners to see and consciously subscribe to the foreign language (L2) norms may constitute a sound alternative during the process of education. By so doing, the teachers may help the learners enrich their comparative cultural outlook or what Genç (2018) refers to as open-mindedness, complementary to their own cultural norms by which they have been living: thinking and acting. In the process of education, learners need to explicitly know and practice L2 cultural norms in the production of written texts. Practicing L2 cultural norms does not necessarily readily endanger first language (L1) cultural norms. On the contrary, this just strengthens the learners' understanding of their own cultural norms, for these norms are brought to their consciousness—through some kind of comparisons—during the educational process. This allows the learners to entertain on some comparative undertaking.

The above point seems to have been the driving factor undergirding few studies, in the Indonesian context, carried out to seek for some understanding of some features and properties of academic writing (e.g., Basthomi, 2006, 2009, 2012a, 2012b; Basthomi, Wijayanti, Yannuar, & Widiati, 2015; Basthomi, Yannuar, Hidayati, Wijayanti, 2017; Rakhmawati, 2014; Wijayanti & Widiati, 2013). Despite the existence of the studies on academic genre in the Indonesian context and many others outside of Indonesia (e.g., Ädel & Römer, 2012; Johansson, 2009; Murillo, 2012; Parkinson, 2013; Rankin & Schiftnr, 2011; Römer, 2009; Tseng, 2011), to my knowledge, there seems to be lacking attention to the genre of writing style guide functioning as a tool to forge the establishment of norms or conventions constitutive of genres produced by and circulated among the discourse community members, whereas in fact academics as members of a discourse community tend to create ways to allow themselves and their new members to come to terms with the genres (Swales, 1990). Regardless of the possible varied definitions of genre, the definitions have evolved into some consolidation, as Swales (2009:5) has put it, in that genre bears the following principal points:

- (a) a balance between constraint and choice; (b) the role of local contextual coloring in the realization of genre exemplars, such as the Brazilian predilection [sic] for using *Considerações Finais* for the final article section title; (c) a greater sense that genres and genre sets are always evolving in response to various exigencies; and (d) a consequent more nuanced approach to genre awareness-raising and genre acquisition.

Similarly, referring to Reuter (2007), Donahue (2009:431-432) defines genres as objects that regulate the interactions among actors and between actors and knowledge ... genres constitute themselves as structural elements of key didactic functions through the relationships they have with practices. Genres are regulators in the learning process, organizing the work of didactic subjects, influencing teaching and evaluation ... school genres do not exist independently of extra-scholastic genres, in the scientific, private, or professional domains. In addition, he emphasizes the importance of characterizing genre in terms of its place in the didactic system, its disciplinary status, and its stability and history in relation to other genres.

Echoing the didactic functions of a genre abovementioned, a writing style guide bears similar properties. Therefore, I would tend to categorise writing style guide into a genre. As this genre regulates the production of other genres, it is safe to refer to writing style guide as a meta-genre. Similar to language to talk about language as meta-language or “learning how to learn” as meta-learning (Jankowski, Duch, & Grąbczewski, 2011:V), writing style guide makes up a meta-genre, i.e., a genre spelling out what is expected of genre(s) to produce.

### III. METHOD

Oftentimes, research in the social sciences deals with narrative data from other parties as research subjects, not with narrative data from the researchers themselves (Helsig, 2010; Fischer & Goblirsch, 2006; Schnee, 2009). But basically, the narrative data originating from other parties and from the researchers themselves is not much different: both come from the selection process in each of them and require researchers' subjectivity when it comes to efforts to understand it (Baynham, 2000). Because the social field, including applied linguistics, does not have to be directly concerned with truth as that in science, narratives from other parties as well as from the researchers themselves are sources that can be trusted in human activities including mentoring activities in scientific writing (Rogers, 2011). In the context of such understanding, this study was reflective of my own narrative data from my personal observations. This narrative data consists mainly of the identification of several issues of academic practice around writing.

So, the following discussion draws on my observations of the project on the revision of the existing writing style guide in a university in Indonesia. My observations were made possible through my assignment as one of the members of the team commissioned to revise the existing house-made writing style guide. The results of the observations are focused on two issues: points of understanding based on analysis of an academic genre and the employment of the understanding in the revision of the house-made meta-genre of academic writing guide.

Let me restate that my recent engagement in the project devoted to revising a writing style guide was intended to galvanise academic culture at a state university in East Java, Indonesia. The revision was to a great extent an attempt to respond to the new policy issued by the Ministry aforementioned. The project has pulled together personnel and drawn on views of academics of different disciplinary backgrounds, for the product was projected to benefit *civitas academica* of varied disciplines at the university. The principal intention utterly expressed by the Team Leader was to help shape scientific works (theses, research reports, papers, articles) so as to be publishable in, particularly, internationally reputed journals. Since the project was carried out within the Indonesian setting, there creeps in the issue around the status of English in the Indonesian context in view of international publication suggestive of the use of English (Gonerko-Frej, 2014).

### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is true that the present discussion is centred around genre; however, the following is not to go further with more discussion of the definitions of what genre is. Rather, what follows is about what is behind the scene consequential to the establishment of academic culture. This might be somewhat occluded from a number of people and this is the purpose of this piece to reflect on this issue for educational and other possibly relevant purposes.

#### A. Some Surfacing Concerns

As mildly indicated earlier, the writing style guide as a meta-genre to devise was projected to incorporate varied disciplinary areas which in general are represented by the faculties in the university: education, letters (and arts), mathematics and science, engineering, social sciences, physical education, and psychology. The critical spirit underlying the production of the writing style guide is to allow for the writing of academic pieces with some potential of publication. With this in mind, attempts have been made to engage a handful of varied parties to represent different disciplines. For efficiency, the selection of the representatives was decided on by the core Team members. Initial sessions involving those representatives was made wherein the guiding principles of the revision of the writing style guide as a meta-genre were presented by the Team Leader. The sessions led to the point of agreement that the meta-genre was devised for the purpose of situating and cultivating the writing of academic pieces by the *civitas academica* so as to bear potential for international publication. This then posed the core Team members with the need to identify the main factors attributable to the publication of the *civitas academica* in international media which are likely to be sites for intercultural meeting points.

I would see that the project shares some features of action research in which each member sets an agenda to put forth some propositions. My propositions, drawn on research on the genre of academic writing in the Indonesian context consist of some aspects categorised into two main points: the notion of niche and some language expressions. These two points are what have invited some kind of contestation of different degrees of intensity (Soja in McIntosh, 2012). The notion of niche has been unanimously attended to by the Team members from different angles using different labels. The labels surfacing include gap, space, positioning, contextualization, uniqueness, news values, originality, and significance. The term niche has been understood



pretty much in the same way as that of space (see Swales, 1990, 2004). Positioning is meant to show the team members' expectations that the piece to write exhibits some kind of links to the existing web of research relevant to the topic. This point basically shares the same idea as contextualization. Positioning through contextualization can actually mean an attempt to show the uniqueness of what is being worked about; uniqueness is polished through critical comparison with the existing relevant works functioning as the context in which the proposed work is positioned. When the uniqueness is eloquently worked about, originality obviously comes out, for originality is bound to be assessed through comparison. When all this is achieved, basically, the work shows some degree of significance which warrants that the work is worth conducting and reporting.

The above situation well resonates what Berkenkotter and Huckin (1995) have referred to as news value of research and/or publication and echoes one of the six criteria for the recognition of excellence (Lamont, 2009). The six criteria Lamont has put forth include clarity, quality, originality, significance, methods, and feasibility. Of the panel from whom Lamont gathered data about research excellence, originality and significance are deemed the most crucial receiving the heaviest weighting in the scoring rubric. As noted above, these two are interrelated, thus making up the most crucial in the recognition of excellence. My quick corpus search using AntConc concordance software of writing guides accessible from 21 different Indonesian universities during the revision process of the above-noted meta genre has demonstrated dim instruction that researchers should work about originality (see Table 1).

TABLE I. ISSUE ON "ORIGINALITY" IN META-GENRES

Key words searched	Hits	Remark
Gap	2	2 hits of 2 different guidebooks
Kesenjangan (gap)	4	3 related to literature review, 1 in abstract
Kebaruan (novelty)	0	
Orisinal (originality)	3	Related to novelty
Signifikansi (significance)	9	All related to statistical significance, not the urge to do the research

The search for the word "gap" has demonstrated 2 occurrences. Of the two occurrences, one is in Introduction and the other in Literature review. The search for "*kebaruan*" has shown no hit, "*kesenjangan*" revealed 4 hits (3 related to literature review and one in abstract), "*orisinalitas*" disclosed 41 hits, all of which dealing with originality in a juxtaposition with plagiarism, without any reference to novelty, the search for "*orisinal*" or "original" having affinity to novelty has found 3 hits, and the search for "*signifikan*" has led to 9 hits all of which do not relate to significance of research in general but relational significance of variables as in statistics. Therefore, this piece of information made up one of my agenda as one of the Team members in revising the meta genre.

As regards this point, my comparative personal observations of students have demonstrated that those who understand the notion of niche (hence write accordingly) in their thesis proposals have a tendency to be strongly capable of satisfying the expectations of the supervisors and examiners; they are successful in working about the notion of news values. Since this is my conviction which has been substantiated in my own project (see Basthomi, 2012c), I listed this in my agenda in the attempts to revise the existing writing style guide. This spirit has actually motivated me and colleagues to explore the features making up genres which allow the cultivation of the knowledge to shape in the form of meta-genre. As an attempt to gain this genre knowledge (Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Tseng, 2011), I interviewed few Indonesian journal editors and/or reviewers (Basthomi, 2006, 2012a, 2012c). The interviews disclosed that the editors/reviewers have different focus of what to be deemed crucial in the writing of research articles (RAs) (Basthomi, 2006, 2012c). At the macro level of article writing, Indonesian journal editors and/or reviewers do not give particular attention to Introduction section, whereas international journal editors tend to focus on this section (Flowerdew, 2001). This may bring about problems to Indonesians aspiring to publish in journals whose editors' expectations might be different from those of the Indonesian counterparts. Therefore, care should be taken in producing writing style guide for Indonesian academics so as to allow them to be familiar with genre features normally practiced in international journal publication.

The fact that the (Indonesian) journal editors and/or reviewers strongly influence the writing of research articles (RAs) (see Swales, 2004) suggests a possibility that Indonesian writers show typicality in writing the Introduction section. The issue has been evidenced by the fact that the writing of introductory section of articles published in one Indonesian-based accredited journals is of high degree of variability (Basthomi, 2006). In addition, and pertinent to the writing of the introductory sections of doctoral thesis prospectuses, Basthomi (2009) found that the introductory texts also have a strong tendency to be dense with review of concepts. An example drawn from a prospectus titled "Genre Analysis of International Conference Paper Abstracts" exhibits that, out of the 34 paragraphs making up the introduction, 21 paragraphs relate to review of concepts. This review might reflect what Swales (1990) labels in his CARS model as "review." However, Swales (1990) refers to the review of items of previous research, suggesting that in the attempt to work on a niche in a research proposal, one needs to see the web of relevant studies (Basthomi, 2009, 2012a). This problem has also been confirmed in Rakhmawati's (2014) research. This situation suggests that the Indonesian journal editors and/or reviewers partly have inculcated the Indonesian writers of RAs with this practiced cultural norm in academic writing.

Regarding the above issue, there seems to be no significant dissenting views of the Team members, but slight differences have come up concerning my evaluation if the existing version of the writing style guide to revise has actually catered for this need. This evaluation soon led the Team members to realize that the existing writing style guide requires more explicit mention of some points believed to be able to guide writers to show the significance of the study that they aspire to work on in the introductory section. The explicit points mainly include the expectations that the writer critically reviews previous studies relevant to the topic they are writing, not a mere introduction of the issue at stake (which is the core of the existing version of the writing style guide). This expectation is also coupled up with that of the currency and adequacy regarding the previous relevant studies to review.

### *B. Some Language Expressions*

Some points pertaining to language expressions in my agenda as a member of the Team commissioned to revise the existing writing style guide include the use of author references, the writing of names of persons to acknowledge, and the writing of curriculum vitae. In some studies in my research group thus far, we have focused, be it individual or collaborative, on the following points.

#### *1. Author references*

Research around authorial presence in the Indonesian context has been manifest in the attention to author pronouns; yet, very little has focused on author self-references. Among the few researchers with concerns about this issue include Wijayanti and Widiati (2013) and Basthomi et al. (2015). Building on Hyland's study on undergraduate foreign language theses, Wijayanti and Widiati (2013) considered not only pronouns but also other self-references (e.g. 'the researcher', 'the author' and 'the writer') which they called 'author self-references.' Basthomi et al.'s (2015) study interestingly further documented the phenomenon of author presence in academic texts, that is, the overuse of 'the researcher.' Of 262 texts of theses and articles totalling 2,075,323 words, Basthomi et al. (2015:1104) have come up with the following data:

TABLE II. CO-OCCURRENCES OF THIRD PERSON POINTS OF VIEW IN EFL ACADEMIC WRITING

References	No. of Occurrences	Percentage
'The researcher(s)'	7,848	89.75%
'The writer(s)'	738	8.44%
'The author(s)'	158	1.81%

In this research, 'the researcher' was identified to have the function of representing self-reference. This is different from what Hyland (2002a) has documented. In Hyland's study, 'the researcher' was found to act as both a referent and self-reference to the authors' previous studies. My observations of the references to represent thesis or article writers have indicated a specific phenomenon, that is, Indonesian academics tend to use impersonal expressions in their academic writing. This seems to have reverberated what Hyland (2002b:351) has put forth. His research has indicated that the uses of first person pronouns by L2 writers were three times lower than those by experts. Hyland's (2001, 2002a, 2002b) projects have revealed that the use of 'I' is still problematic for L2 writers in academic texts. This is also shared by student writers in the Italian context (Vergaro, 2011).

The abovementioned points of research results have shown that some differences may exist among writers and readers with different cultural backgrounds. These issues have brought us to some pedagogical concerns when discussing alternatives to revise the existing writing style guide, for, again, this guidebook functions as a meta-genre which shapes the production of academic genres by the academic community members in my university.

#### *2. Acknowledgements section: terms of address*

Another point of agenda to raise in the revision of the writing style guide has to do with the writing of acknowledgements section. This was agreed on to be a point of attention based on some considerations as follows. As of January 17, 2008, I selected and analysed 40 thesis acknowledgements sections (out of 286 theses at the Graduate Program, Universitas Negeri Malang, ten of theses submitted in 2007, ten in 2006, ten in 2005, and another ten in 2004). The analysis brought me to two issues: about the parties to thank and the way to address the acknowledged parties in the thesis acknowledgements section (Basthomi, 2008). Of the parties to mention, the first salient one is "God" with various ways of mentioning. This issue but endorses the findings of Kadarisman (2009). An interesting point to note is that, of the list of the addressees, thesis advisers always appear in the texts, showing some kind of obligatory practice. Additionally, the practice of mentioning family members and/or relatives is also quite customary. Out of the family members and/or relatives, husband or wife is usually mentioned the last in the texts of acknowledgements.

As regards the way of addressing, there is no single case where the writers mention the names of their first and second thesis advisers without the use of title(s), particularly, academic titles. Pertinent to the mention of friends/classmates, family members/relatives, and spouse, there is no unanimity in using the terms of address. Occasionally, they do not use titles, but, rather frequently, they use academic titles. We also need to note that when the writers mention the titles of the addressees, they also tend to use socio-religious titles, particularly, H which stands for *Haji* (male) and Hj which stands for *Hajah* (female). By and large, I have had an impression that thesis acknowledgements texts by Indonesian writers tend to sound respectful (Basthomi, 2008), even

when endearing terms are also used, e.g., my beloved husband, dr. Lili Sukmawati, “dr.” being an Indonesian title for a medical doctor. This example exhibits the combination of the endearing expression of “beloved” which sounds intimate and the formal-respectful expression of “dr.” which sounds distancing.

In view of the inevitable inseparability of language and culture, it can be safely assumed that the situation as presented above requires selection and arrangement of linguistic resources of terms of address so as to be unmistakably-etched in mind. My belief is that the Indonesian writers tend to have Indonesians as their readers (Basthomi, 2006, 2007; Rakhmawati, 2014). This is so much so since even the small portion of thesis acknowledgements section manifests the cultural properties. As a comparison (anecdotal though), the abovementioned Indonesian way of acknowledgements writing might be distinct from the American way. Reading Ph.D. theses submitted to American universities, one may find it normal that an address to thesis supervisors is in the form of nickname. However, it is also similarly normal to read one academic title (either Professor or Dr., not both) plus full name or surname for the purpose of addressing their supervisors. In the second case, American thesis authors may easily write, for example, Dr. (Emily) Black (dropping professorship title) when addressing their advisers whose designation is Professor. Or, alternatively, they may write Professor (Emily) Black (without mentioning Dr.). All this knowledge constitutes the point in my agenda in the process of revising the writing style guide.

### *3. The writing of curriculum vitae*

The analysis of some texts of curriculum vitae (CV) integrally attached to thesis (Basthomi, 2012b) has insinuated that the writing of CV is a kind of obligation (at least in my University), even though it is not really crucial for examination. In terms of content, the texts of CV exhibit some kind of tensions between academicness and personal touch. Out of the amalgam, of these two points, personal information, for instance about age and family, outweighs the academic one. Additionally, it is interesting to note that all of the CVs I analysed are written in third person point of view. The use of third person point of view links to the objectivist approach to the presentation of self-identity expressed in the CVs. This objective approach strongly suggests that the “self” expressed in the CVs sounds quite factual.

The above information about the practice of writing CV among Indonesian thesis writers along with my comparative outlook on the same issue within the context of North American universities make up my proposition in discussing points in the revision of the writing style guide book. My agenda is to what extent the Team needs to be aware of other cultural norms relative to (or in comparison with) the Indonesia ones for the purpose of escorting Indonesian writers so as to be close to the writing of pieces with high potential for international publication.

### *C. House-made meta genre: demystification*

Out of the issues around language expressions, the three issues abovementioned have stood out persistently if not obdurately, challenging for the Team members to sort out. These three issues include the use of reference to represent the writer, the way to acknowledge people (how to mention people’s names, related to address system), and the writing of curriculum vitae (CV) of the writer. All the three issues intimately link to cultural norms as practiced in the Indonesian context.

Noted earlier, Indonesian writers, particularly those within the context of the given university, are accustomed to using third person point of view in representing themselves. They tend to strongly use “the researcher(s)” to represent themselves as the writer-researcher(s), instead of first person “I” or “we.” As this has to do with the cultural norms entrenched in the Indonesian academic society, ambivalence has come to the fore. The Team representative with expertise in Bahasa Indonesia has not been decided regarding this cultural tension. This has led to a deadlock without agreed solution.

Similarly, as I made a case of the American way of addressing in the writing of thesis acknowledgements section, ambivalent response has also come to the fore. My purpose of highlighting the American mode of address was meant to cultivate possibilities before a decision was made. My point is that the existing writing style guide, to my knowledge, has not made the academics at the given university really aware of the possible alternatives other than those of the Indonesian norms practiced thus far: the tendency to be respectful with the mention of full-fledged academic and socio-religious titles. Dropping the titles in addressing the significant parties in the thesis acknowledgements section seems to be unthinkable in the Indonesian context. Therefore, it seems to be hard among other Team members to adopt the non-Indonesian cultural norms (particularly English) and writing practices around this issue.

Capitalizing on a small-scale research on the writing of CV as an integral part of a thesis (Basthomi, 2012b), the case of narcissistic allusion of the CV writing by Indonesian thesis writers in the deliberation sessions of the writing style guide revision process was raised. The narcissistic self-image building through the disclosure of personal information in the CV have called for a reconsideration including the reason why the existing writing style guide book has stipulated the “obligation” to attach CV to thesis; the obligation is understood to have been mandated in the existing writing style guide, for the writing of CV is accompanied with a specific instruction the points of which include, inter alia, the obligation to use third person point of view.

All the above baffling issues have raised a question on the tension between the need to submit to “international norms” as implicated by the globalizing English at stake and the urge to cultivate Indonesian cultural norms. The former, in my view, harmoniously links to the basic spirit as expressed by the Team Leader, i.e., to escort the Indonesian academics to have materials

of high potential for international publication; whereas, the latter meets the spirit of postmodernism wherein Indonesian agency should ideally be exercised.

## V. CONCLUSION

Early on, I have situated this paper within the context of genre, for the project has been around the revision of a writing style guide as a meta-genre which is responsible for the shaping of genre(s). It should be clear that as part of the Team commissioned to revise the writing style guide, I have some personal agenda and undertake some actions accordingly. It should also be clear that the agenda as manifest in my actions in the Team has been made on the basis of some empirical data that I have drawn; I have made use of some small corpora of academic genre that I have had access to, particularly those by foreign language learners in comparison with those by native speakers (Johansson, 2009). Specifically, my agenda has been made on the basis of some descriptive data of “language of learners” (Römer, 2009:83). It is true that this project does not show any direct relationship between corpus research and language teaching as that, for instance by Durrant (2014) and Nam (2010), but probably it has played around the “bridge” between corpus research dealing with a particular genre and pedagogical practice (Römer, 2009:95), particularly that in the form of helping cultivate academic culture within the context of an Indonesian university, which may bear some norms different to those practiced in a wider context of international academic fora.

What the above point suggests is that the writing style guide as a meta-genre needs to balance the tension: on the one hand, it needs to allow the targeted parties to be aware of the expectations pertinent to international publication and, on the other hand, it should accommodate the Indonesian cultural norms as potential elements for enrichment of genre targeted to shape. In other words, the writing style guide needs to encourage the cultivation of comparative outlook allowing Indonesian academics to be cognisant and mindful of the potentially varied voices and to be more informed in making decision regarding cultural orientations in producing academic pieces of writing.

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