

Reporting Verbs in Academic Articles Written by English Teachers in Sumatera Barat: A Study of Professional Competence of English Teachers

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ABSTRACT

In the area of academic writing, citation has a major portion as it has to be included in the writing. Citation plays some roles, which enables writers to attribute content to other sources and allows writers to convey reported research activity and evaluation of the messages from the cited ideas. In citing, writers need to use reporting verb as a tool to attribute to the writer of the ideas. There are many variation of reporting verbs. Each of the variation plays different roles in attributing to the original writer. Thus, good knowledge about reporting verbs is closely related to the competence of the writers in producing good quality writing. However, the proper use of reporting verbs seems to get limited attention by writers, especially among non-native English writers. This library research will provide us more options about reporting verbs, especially Hyland's new framework of reporting verbs as well as the relationship of the reporting verbs used with the professional competence of English teachers, especially in the area of academic writing.

Keywords: Reporting Verbs, citation, academic writing, teachers' competence

1. INTRODUCTION

Teachers' competency is a crucial element in academic word. As stated in Regulation of the Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 16/2007, there are four competencies that teachers have to master. They are pedagogical competence, professional competence, social and personal competence. Teachers' competencies, especially for pedagogical and professional competencies in Indonesia are tested using a standardized test called Ujian Kompetensi Guru (teachers competence test) and held by Pusat Pengembangan dan Pemberdayaan Pendidik dan Tenaga Kependidikan. Nevertheless, it is a spreading issue that teachers get lower scores in the test. Some of them even take the test three or four times due to their low achievement. For example, the data from 2017 of English teachers' competence test area in one of regencies in Sumatera Barat, namely Padang Pariaman show that English teachers were struggling to reach the preferable score in UKG. The total average score was only 49.74, while the minimum score for passing the test is 70. In the area of pedagogical competence, the average score is 59.87 and for professional competence, the average score is only 45.41. It shows us that the professional competence of teachers in Padang Pariaman is an issue in our education today. Sadly, this condition happens not only in Padang Pariaman, but almost in every area of Sumatra Barat.

As a competence that deals with the capability of the teachers in mastering the subject, it is quite surprising that the teachers get low score in this area. This condition attracts some researches to conduct the study regarding

with teacher professional competence in Indonesia. Ahmad and Setyaningsih (2012) found that less than 30 percent of English teachers observed, master the learning materials. In another research, Syamsinar (2015) found that English teachers have problems mostly in vocabulary mastery, pronunciation problem, and the way to communicate the lesson to the students. We may be alarmed by this fact, as the proper use of grammar, structure, vocabulary and subject-related language functions in transferring the lesson will represent English teachers professional competence (Puspitasari Arum, et al, 2018).

These mention studies are quite clear about the problems that are usually found related to professional competence of Indonesian English Teachers. The problems are mostly in the area of vocabulary mastery, pronunciation, communication way, grammar, and structure of the English. The condition regarding to the English teachers' competence attracts researcher to find out about English teachers' competence in another area, which is academic writing.

The researcher conducted a preliminary research related to the teachers' academic writing, especially articles written by English teachers in Sumatra Barat. Articles were chosen based on the quick survey about the latest types of academic writing that teachers wrote. This preliminary research reveals an interesting situation to the researcher, which is the limited variation of the reporting verbs used in the articles. More attention is on the literature review section. Monreal and Salom (2011) point out, reporting verbs are mostly found in the Literature

Review section of research articles. Since the literature review section contains many citation and scholars' idea, it even more reveals the tendency of repeating the same reporting verbs over and over in the articles. It is quite an irony because reporting verbs have many types and crucial function in an academic writing. The redundancy and the limited option of the reporting verbs used in the articles avoid the writers, in this case the English teachers from writing academic text professionally.

Why do reporting verbs play important roles in teacher's academic article? How to use reporting verbs to avoid redundancy and repetition in the article? How do reporting verbs help teachers' professional competence? We will find out more in the next section.

II. ENGLISH TEACHER'S PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE

It is widely known that teachers' competence is a growing issue now. There have been many studies about this topic. Even though the number of the studies grows, there is no generally accepted definition of the concept of competence (Roelofs and Sanders, 2007). Mulder in Roelofs and Sanders (2007) define competence as the ability to achieve certain performances level.

Mulyasa (2007) explains competence as knowledge, skills, and abilities or capabilities that a person achieves, which become part of his or her being to the extent he or she can perform particular cognitive, affective, and psychomotor behaviors well. In short, competence can be defined as knowledge, skills and behavior that enable someone to do something well. Slavik (2008) defines the teacher competence as a set of knowledge, skills and teachers personal qualities. Thus, knowledge, skills, and abilities to have professional performance are closely related to the teachers' competence.

There are four competencies that teachers have to possess by teachers based on regulation of National Ministry of Education Regulation Number 16 Year 2007. They are pedagogical competence, which is an ability to teach effectively. The second competence is interpersonal competence. This competence deals with personal ability who reflects an attitude of a teacher. the third competence is an ability to interact with colleagues, students, parents of students, and society. The fourth competence that has to be mastered by teachers is professional competence. This competence is the ability of the teacher to master the knowledge.

To achieve the levels of performance among the teachers in Indonesia, The ministry of National Education has developed several standards of competences. As stated before, there are four kinds of competences that have to be mastered by teachers, one of them is professional competence (Department of National Education, 2007). As previously stated, professional competence deals with the ability of the teacher in mastering the knowledge, especially practical knowledge which teachers can apply to a specific situation, especially in their classes and their subject domain.

Professional competence of teachers plays a crucial role in English teaching. The fact is that most of

the English teachers worldwide are not native speakers of English (Canagarajah in Richards, 2011). However, the competence of the teachers in English teaching is not a debatable issue, since the competence of English teaching is not depend on it. The important skill that has to be mastered by the English teachers is how to effectively teach and how to interact English proficiency with other aspect of teaching (Bailey in Richards, 2011)

Based on Regulation of National Education Ministry of the Republic of Indonesia, professional competence has several sub-competences. They are mastering the concept, materials and structure of the subjects, mastering standard competency and basic competencies of the subjects, developing learning materials creatively, developing their professionalism, and using the information and communication technology.

While Slavik (2008) also categorized the teacher's professional competence into five items are as follows: mastering a systematic body of knowledge, ability to apply to apply practical experience in the specialization according to the subject of the study, ability to transform the knowledge based on the subject of study, ability to integrate the inter-diciplinary knowledge and create subject-links, and ability to use the information and communication technology effectively. These sub-competences is adaptable to all the teachers, including the English teachers. Thus, the English teachers have to possess these characteristics in order to achieve the professional competence.

III. WRITING ACADEMIC ARTICLE

Writing is a process of creativity. It involves feeling along the process. How writer feels and writer's personal perception is usually seen throughout the writing product. Yet, in the area of academic writing, writers has to prioritize rational over emotional. It differs academic writing from the other types of writing (Belcher, p.1). In accordance, Soles (p. 7) claims that academic writing should be free from personal narrative. In writing academically, writers have to consider many aspects. Swales and Feak (2012: p. 3) described 5 aspects to be considered in producing an academic writing. They are audience, purpose, organization, style, flow and presentation. By paying attention to the 6 aspects, the goal of academic writing will be achieved by the writers.

Citing scholars' works is another distinguishing feature in the area of academic writing. This activity has a complex communicative purpose with syntactic, semantic, and pragmatic variations (Jalilifar, 2012). Appropriate and effective use of citations helps writer to appropriately integrate other people's words and ideas into their writing. In doing so, writers have to attribute to the original source and writer. Referring to the works of other scholars has an important role in the knowledge construction in academic writing (Hyland, 2002)

An academic article, as a type of academic writing, is getting popular today. Academicians from all over the world produce big amount of articles every year. Academic articles have several main characteristics. First, academic article is usually based on a research project, part

of theses or dissertation (Davis, p..., Soles 2010, p. 6). Second, academic article has no more than 1 main argument/topic. The number of the words in the academic writing also makes a characteristic of academic writing. The length shouldn't be more than 5000 words (Soles, 2010. P6) or 8000 words (Davis, p). The last characteristic is publicly consumed (Davis). An academic article is produced to be read by many readers with the particular interest of topics.

IV. LEXICO-GRAMMATICAL FEATURES IN ACADEMIC ARTICLE WRITING

Lexico-grammar is a term used to emphasize the interdependence and continuity between vocabulary (lexis) and syntax (grammar), in this case, academic article. The interdependence of lexis and syntax occurs as the lexis or vocabulary chosen by the writer will provide the insight about meaning of the whole article. The knowledge of the lexico-grammatical features in the writing process has to be possessed by the writer of academic articles. It is a major challenge for many writers. A good knowledge of the vocabulary choice is needed to elevate the quality of the academic article. Thus, the comprehension, retention, and appropriate use of words should be taken into consideration by the writers. To get them all, a rich understanding with various context has to be mastered (Celebi et.al)

Lexico-grammar is a part of meaning-making system of a language, including in the written form (texts). Sinclair (2004, p. 272) explains that a word contains many meanings. He states that certain types of meaning have a tendency to occur in positive or negative contexts. Thus, academic writers have to be very mindful in choosing a word or lexis that they want to use in their writing. In this case, the choice of word that will be studied more is the reporting verb in the article that produced by the English teacher.

a. Reporting Verbs

Reporting verbs are the verbs used to refer to original sources or introduce borrowed information in academic writing (Houge & Oshima, 2006, p.43). Referring to the original sources is obligatory as the writers use others' ideas in their own writing. By using reporting verbs, the writer is able to use the most appropriate words to relate to the source which they have found convincing and suitable to support their claim. This will directly contribute to the recognition from other members from the discipline itself.

The use of a reporting verb is one of the most explicit ways of attributing content to another source, and represents a significant rhetorical choice. The wide range of verbs that can be used to introduce reports allow writers to convey both the kind of activity reported and whether the claims are to be taken as accepted or not (Hunston, 1993; Tadros, 1993; Thomas & Hawes, 1994). Using reporting verbs appropriately helps writers to establish the credibility of writing (Hyland, 2002). Furthermore, Hyland claims that Reporting verbs as one of the lexical devices that can be used for expressing a stance and connecting or aligning the writer with the readers.

b. Functions of Reporting Verbs

It has been stated previously about the function of reporting verbs, which are referring to the original sources, attributing content to another source and represent a significant rhetorical choice, and establishing the credibility of writing. The proper use of reporting verb can give a significant contribution in building the relationship between writer and the reader. The reporting verbs impact the strength of the claim and reported made (Jafarigohar & Mohammadkhani, 2005.p. 2491)

Some experts have previously defined the function of reporting verbs clearly. Hyland (2005) defined reporting verbs as a lexical device which benefits writers in displaying their stance as well as establishing a connection with readers. As stated by Swales and Feak (2012:156), writers' stance in academic writing allows writer to reveal both what writer knows and what writer thinks. Thus, stances will enable writer connect with the readers of their work.

The importance of reporting verb was also discussed by Hunston (2000) as a factor that contributing in establishing the credibility of the claims and also the writers. Charles (2006) states that reported verbs can be used to show opinion and personality towards the idea or the cited work if they are properly used. Hyland (1999) categorized the function of reporting verbs more detail. This categorization is then elaborated in 2002 into a more specified framework.

In the 2002 framework of Hyland, there are several functions of reporting verbs that can be used by writers. First is representing experimental activities or actions carried out in the real world. Second is portraying writers' mental process in order not to fall into personal judgments, and the last is expressing writer's view about the cited work (Hyland, 2002).

First function is called as Research Acts. Hyland classifies the verb that fall into this section as: observe, discover, notice, show (usually occur in statements of findings) and analyze, calculate, assay, explore, plot, and recover (which are usually occur in showing procedure). The second function is called as cognition acts. The verbs used in this category is believe, conceptualize, suspect, assume, and view (generally used). Furthermore, in this category, writer can choose to show a positive attitude towards the cited works and accepted it by using words such as: agree, concur, hold, know, think, or understand. If the writers do not agree about the borrowed information, the writers can use verbs such as disagree, dispute, and not think. What if the writers feel kind of neutrality about the cited work? There is option for this category. The writers can use verbs such as: picture, convey, anticipate, and reflect.

The last function of Reporting Verbs is called Discourse acts. This category is divided into tentative verbs such as: postulate, hypothesize, indicate, intimate, suggest, evade, exaggerate, not account, not make point (doubt) . Another section is assurance, which the use of verbs as: state, describe, discuss, report, answer, define,

summarize (neutrally inform the readers) and argue, affirm, explain, note, point out, and claim (support writer's own view). The last section in this category consists of the words such as: deny, critique, challenge, attack, question,

warn and rule out (attributing the objection to the original author).

The table below summarizes the types of the reporting verb that can be used by writer:

Table 1. Category of reporting verbs

| No | Category/Sub-category | Reporting Verbs |
|-----------------|---|--|
| 1 | Research Act | |
| | <i>Finding</i> | |
| | Factive | confirm, solve, show, establish, demonstrate |
| | Counter-Factive | overlook, ignore, fall, misunderstand |
| | Non-Factive | obtain, find, observe, identify |
| | <i>Procedures</i> | <i>Analyze, calculate, essay, explore, plot, recover</i> |
| 2 | Cognition Acts | |
| | <i>Positive</i> | <i>think, understand, agree, concur, hold, know,</i> |
| | <i>critical</i> | <i>not think, disagree, dispute,</i> |
| | <i>tentative</i> | <i>suppose, suspect, believe, doubt, speculate,</i> |
| | <i>neutral</i> | <i>Anticipate, reflect, picture, conceive</i> |
| 3 | Discourse Acts | |
| | <i>doubt</i> | |
| | tentative | Suggest, intimate, postulate, hypothesize, indicate |
| | critical | not account, not make point, evade, exaggerate |
| | <i>assurance</i> | |
| | factive | argue, affirm, explain, note, point out, claim |
| | non-factive | report, answer, define, summarize state, describe, discuss |
| <i>counters</i> | <i>attack, question, warn, rule out, deny, critique, challenge,</i> | |

V. CONCLUSIONS

The previous sections of this paper have explained us about teachers' professional competence especially in academic writing as well as reporting verbs. There have been quite many descriptions and explanations about the two elements. Some of us might wonder, in what ways do these elements interconnect? As previously stated, scholars have come with many ideas and updates about the proper and accurate use of reporting verbs. The more writers, in this case teachers are adaptable in using them appropriately, the higher their competence' level is, especially their professional competence in the area of academic writing.

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