A Corpus-based Study of Linguistic Features of Evaluative Stance in Academic Discourse

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งานวิจัยที่ผ่านมา (อาทิ Hunston, 2007 และ Hyland, 1999; 2008) แสดงให้เห็นถึงความสำคัญของการใช้ลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ในการแสดงทัศนคติและการเผยแพร่องค์ความรู้เกี่ยวกับ สัมพันธสารในชุมชนวิชาชีพอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพ ซึ่งลักษณะทางภาษาศาสตร์ดังกล่าวเปิดโอกาสให้ผู้อ่านต่อรองและประเมินความคิดเห็นต่างๆ งานวิจัยนี้มุ่งตรวจสอบการใช้คำหรือข้อความที่แสดงการประเมินในสัมพันธสารวิชาการ โดยเน้นศึกษากลวิธีการสื่อสารเพื่อบ่งบอกอัตลักษณ์ของผู้เขียน ผู้วิจัยได้รวบรวมบทความวิจัยทางด้านภาษาศาสตร์ประยุกต์และการสอนภาษาจากวารสาร 10 อันดับที่ได้รับการยอมรับและนำมาวิเคราะห์อย่างเป็นระบบด้วยวิธีคลังข้อมูลวิเคราะห์ ผลการวิจัยเผยให้เห็นว่าผู้เขียนที่มีความเชี่ยวชาญและมีประสบการณ์ใช้รูปภาษาที่แสดงอัตลักษณ์ เช่น ทัศนะภาวะปริชาน (epistemic modality), คุณานุประโยคที่ถูกวางไว้ข้างหลัง (extraposed ‘it’), กริยาแสดงการสื่อสาร (communication verbs) และบุรุษสรรพนาม (personal pronouns) อย่างหลากหลายตามหน้าที่ที่แตกต่างกันของแต่ละทัศนคติการประเมิน ผลการวิจัยครั้งนี้แสดงให้เห็นถึงความสำคัญของความเข้าใจการใช้รูปภาษาต่อการแสดงทัศนคติในงานวิชาการ และทำให้ผู้อ่านและผู้เขียนบทความวิชาการใหม่มีความเข้าใจที่ดียิ่งขึ้นในการผลิตผลงานทางวิชาการ นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิจัยยังมีส่วนช่วยในการปรับปรุงการเรียนการสอนด้านการใช้ภาษาและวิชาการเขียนเชิงวิชาการเพื่อให้สอดคล้องกับชุมชนสัมพันธสารอีกด้วย

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Abstract

Recent research (e.g., Hunston 2007; Hyland 1999; 2008) has marked and evidenced the importance of effectively using linguistic features as a major component in expressing stances and as an essential part of the shared knowledge of the professional discourse community by giving space for negotiation and evaluation of viewpoints. The present study is concerned with the use of the expression of evaluation in academic discourse, focusing on some communicative strategies for indicating auditorial identity. With the corpus-based approach, research articles on applied linguistics and language teaching selected from top-ten journals were systematically complied and analyzed. The results revealed that professional and experienced writers exploit stance markers including epistemic modality, extraposed 'it', communication verbs, and personal pronouns, variably in terms of different functional types of evaluative stances. The findings highlight the importance of understanding the use of stance devices in academics, facilitating a better understanding of novice readers and writers when writing academic productions. Pedagogically, the description of this study contributes to ways to improvement of practical language and academic writing courses to suit the discourse community.

1. Introduction

English is considered to be the most important world language (Crystal, 1997). It is used in every domain of communication professionally and scholarly, particularly in higher worldwide education. It has become one of the main tools for distributing advanced knowledge from studies among scholars all over the world through research articles. To be precise, a research article is a piece of published writing which aims to share the knowledge in the discipline and educational field. In this regard, in English

Language Teaching (ELT), the role of academic journals is more prominent, as witnessed by their frequent publications. In order to facilitate the reading and/ or writing of research articles, both native and non-native speakers of English need to be aware of the language style conventionally used in their fields of interest.

Traditionally, English academic writing has been thought of as a convention-bound monolithic entity that involves distant, complex and impersonal prose (Ivanic, 1998). A common perception of academic text is that its main purpose is to present information in an objective and impersonal way, characterized by lexico-grammatical features such as nominalization and the passive voice, compared to casual conversation. Therefore, total avoidance of a writer's presence or presenting the information in impersonal way is required in academic writing. However, as opposed by Kanoksilapatham (2005), language, be it spoken or written, is complex, reflecting an interaction and manifestation of linguistic features conveying a message. It contains linguistic devices which can help reader or listener to organize, interpret and evaluate the propositional content (Hyland, 1999; Crismore et al., 1993). In terms of academic writing, Dontcheva-Navratilova (2009) pointed out that academic discourse is as a purposeful interaction between writers and readers in which the writers try to construct a coherent representation to build up a relationship with the discourse community by giving dialogical space for negotiation and evaluation of their views. For decades, thus, there has been increasing number of interests in exploring interaction in discourse specifically written texts that embody interactions between writers and readers as a wide range of linguistic features could contribute to the writers to use or project their stance in their writing.

A number of previous studies (e.g., Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Hyland, 2005; Martin, 1997) focusing on interaction between writers and readers in discourse are increasing in the discourse analysis field. For instance, Hunston and Thompson (2000) suggested that writers can express their identity and evaluation through some interactive aspect of discourse, which can be divided into three main functions of evaluation, namely ideational, interactional and textual functions. These three aspects of meanings are correlated with the study conducted by Halliday & Hasan (1989) positing systemic-functional linguistics. Using the analytical framework of the interpersonal model of metadiscourse, Hyland (2004) proposed that using hedges and boosters as communicative strategies could convey the writers' degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition and expressing an attitude to the audience. The study illustrated that the use of hedges enables the writers to acknowledge the existence of alternative voices and viewpoints and to withdraw their commitment to the proposition, while the use of boosters helps to close down alternatives and to show a high degree of certainty. Such a study on metadiscourse provides a means of investigating the relationship between academic writers and their readerships. The results of these studies reflect that, even though academic writing is usually thought to be impersonal, writers can express their opinions in their texts to present their findings and evaluate these findings, and comment on them. Taken together, the choice of linguistic features could reflect the shared world of writers and readers, which is constructed with the ultimate aim of persuading the reader to accept the writer's view. That is, interaction between writers and their readers can be found in the discourse, and at the same time they try to avoid their identities in paper through the linguistic features used in order to follow the traditional way of writing (Hunston, 2000).

With regard to the *Discussion* section in academic articles, this part conventionally requires authors to express their ideas and opinions, evaluate and compare the results of their studies with the previous studies as it is the space opened for possible reactions of readers within their academic communities (Kanoksilpatham, 2005). The *Discussion* section that, to write successfully research articles in English conventionally for academic success of both native and non-native speakers of English, various discourse strategies are substantially needed in order to persuade the audience to accept writers' claims and viewpoints. Therefore, the study of evaluation in the *Discussion* section in research articles can provide a considerable amount of information about a text. However, the studies in this line of research (e.g., Hyland, 2002; Marin, 1997) have also mostly been conducted on a variety of disciplines of research articles and multiple methods, leading to a certain limitation, no overall and clear-cut typology of the resources which the writers employ to express their positions and connect with readers. This necessitates further research on leads to the present study. It is hoped that the results of this study would provide a basic understanding for the use of the evaluation by turning them into an explicit statement opinion in writing academic research. It also may be valuable to readers who perceive themselves as having difficulty in understanding what messages are going to be conveyed.

Given that the roles of linguistic features in reflecting, constructing ideas and opinions and the importance of the *Discussion* section in research articles are imminent, the principal objective of this study is to investigate how writers express their evaluative stances through the choice of linguistic features in international academic journals, specifically in the section of *Discussion*, the section that the writers must evaluate the findings of their studies to gain their readers to read on and trust their findings. In particular, the study seeks to answer to the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic features conveying the meanings of evaluative stance in academic discourse?
2. What are the communicative functions of these linguistic features of evaluative stance in research articles?

2. Related Studies

Traditionally, academic writing can be seen as an objective, faceless and impersonal form of discourse. However, over the past decade, a number of research studies on the written texts particularly academic writing (Hyland, 1999; Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Hyland & Tse, 2004), revealed that written texts embody interactions between writers and readers. These studies evidenced that a range of linguistic features can be used to contribute to the writer's projection of a stance to the material referenced by the text, to evaluate the information gained from the study, and to a acknowledge alternative views from the previous studies, etc. Consequently, a variety of linguistic resources such as hedges, reporting verbs, *that*-constructions, questions, personal pronouns, and directives have been examined for the roles they play in the discourse (Hyland, 2000; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

As the view of evaluation in written texts gains greater interest, more researchers have turned their attention to the concept of evaluation. According to Hunston and Thompson (2000), the expression of the speaker or writer's attitudes, feelings, and values can be expressed in texts, covering areas sometimes referred to as 'stance', 'modality', 'affect', or 'appraisal'. They suggest that an evaluation performs three functions. First, it expresses the speaker's or writer's opinion, and in doing so it reflects a value system of that person and their community. Second, it constructs and maintains relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader. Third, it organizes the discourse.

As observed by Biber et al (1999), evaluation conceptually is comparative, subjective, and value-laden. Linguistically, it may be analyzed lexically, grammatically, and textually. The evaluation performs several roles in the discourse, consisting of a) it expresses the speaker's opinion and thus reflects the value-system of that person and their community; b) it constructs relations between speaker and hearer (or writer and reader); and c) it plays a key role in how discourse is organized.

Although different definitions of the term evaluation are made, several studies in discourse analysis identified that the patterns of linguistic features could perform communicative functions, including the expression of evaluation of writers in texts (e.g., Hunston & Thompson, 2000; Hewings & Hewings, 2002; Kanoksilapatham, 2003). The important findings from these studies agree to reveal some linguistic features used in discourse to perform discourse functions (i.e., extraposed *'it'* and *that* complement clause, and predicate as communication verbs and adjectives)

"IT" in Discourse

General grammar books categorize 'it' as a pronoun, while in some cases, *'preparatory it'* or *'dummy it'* are used elsewhere in describing the phenomenon in syntactic level. However, with respect to discourse function, several terms of *'it'* are used in observing metadiscoursal function such as *it-clause* and *anticipatory 'it'* in discourse analysis studies. The term *anticipatory 'it'* and *extraposed subject* are used in the study conducted by Kanoksilapatham (2005). She proposes that those two terms of it-clause in which the subject is placed at the end of the clause on the one hand, and it-clause in which is inserted in the normal subject position as the grammatical subject in English on the other hand could perform the evaluative stance of the writers.

Kanoksilapatham's (2005) study focusing particularly on scientific discourse using multidimensional analysis, *'it'* and *extraposed* subject provides a means for scientists to express their comments or attitudes without making their identification explicit. In this case, *extraposed 'it'* can be used in two types of complement clauses: *that* complement clause controlled by predicative adjectives, as well as *to* complement clause controlled by adjectives. The study also reported that *that* complement clauses are generally known to index information integration to expand the idea-unit in the dependent clause. Namely, the authors' stance is given in the main clause, and the propositional information is given in the *that* complement clause.

Jacobs (1995) proposed some problems found in writing and reading, a piece of academic writing. Jacob's study identified that the pattern *it-clause* and *that-clause* could contribute to problems for non-native speakers as such features of academic writing functioning both to express opinions, comment on and evaluate propositions in a way that these markers can allow the writer to remain in the background. These linguistic features draw a conclusion that writers mostly use these linguistic features as strategies to the impression of the presentation of objective, and impersonal knowledge.

In an exhaustive study focusing on evaluation in academic writing, Hewings & Hewings (2002), presented pairs of sentences giving congruent forms in their study, one with *extraposed* subjects and the other without:

a) That these results are provisional must be emphasized.
   aa) *It* must be emphasized that these results are provisional.
b) To acknowledge the differences is important.
   bb) *It* is important to acknowledge the differences.

From the pairs above, they suggest that clause-initial *'it'* can perform a wide variety of grammatical functions. Congruent with Hewings & Hewings (2002), Biber, Johanson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) observed some grammatical features in academic writing, claiming that *it-clauses* followed by *extraposed that-clause* as in (aa) are moderately common in academic setting both prose and written news report, but rarely found in fiction and conversation. While *it-clauses* with an adjective followed by *extraposed to-clause* as in (bb) are rarely found in conversation, moderately common in fiction and written news reports, but common in academic writing.

Another interesting study focusing on the grammatical and communicative functions of *extraposed* clause constructions was conducted by Rodman (1991). The findings of this study suggested that using *'it'* is an important strategy in academic writing. Rodman's study revealed that this construction delayed the notional subject and verb. It is also a marked construction used to emphasize the *extraposed* elements. The study pointed out that, by this structure, 'new' information is presented at the end of the sentence where readers are likely to find it easier to process. Rodman (1991)'s findings are in line with Herriman (2000)'s study. That is, extraposition is beneficial to writers because the structure makes available the means to present attitudinal meanings at the beginning of the clause while concealing the sources of this attitude with an impersonal subject or so-called dummy subject *'it'*. This concealment increases the facticity of a statement and provides writers with a means of varying evaluation as an explicit and negotiable proposition.

From these studies, thus, it can be said, in a very broad sense, that both patterns of *it-clause* - with that complement clause which is controlled by predicative adjectives, and to complement clause controlled by adjectives,

are used as writers' strategies to perform communicative functions and can be found in academic writing, but rare in terms of spoken mode of communication. These studies also suggested that the use of *it-clause* is a strategy to add the impression of the presentation of objective and impersonal knowledge. In addition, as observed by Craswell (2005), in academic writing, the preference of *extraposed 'it'* over the first person (*'I'* or *'We'*) can persuade the readers to believe and thrust that the content will be expressed after that is objectively presented in the impersonal subject.

Predicate and Adjective in Evaluative Function

Other linguistic features which can express the evaluative function in discourse are predicate and adjective. In terms of predicate, Biber et al (1999) pointed out that the evaluative potential of this kind of structure can be introduced by a range of different predicates. Their study suggested that, as a common case, writers select a verb to hold the *that*-clause in the scope of the evaluation. This clause is frequently followed by cognitive or affective verbs such as *think, know,* and *believe*, speech act verbs, like *say* and *state*, and other communication verbs such as *suggest* and *prove*.

A recent study conducted by Hyland & Tse (2005) suggested from the corpus of their study that, *that*-clause structure highly occurs in research writing after the use of adjectives e.g., confident, unclear, etc. as the examples of the texts as follows:

a) We are *confident that* those two variables will suffice to monitor success of CM implementation. (Electronic Engineering)

b) However, it is unclear that such cost savings are being fully realized since EDLP stores also engage in price promotions. (Business Studies)

The study claimed that these examples lie not only in their formal resemblance on the surface of the discourse, but in their functional kinship, a relationship in which different uses cohere around a core meaning of evaluation represented. *That*-clause is a site where the writers must foreground their main claims and evaluations as a matter of urgency to gain readers' attention and persuade them to read on.

Similar to Hyland's (2000) study of 160 book reviews from different disciplines, the study found some evaluative terms cut across disciplines, while others have a preferred status in one or two fields. In this regard, frequently used evaluative adjectives for all eight disciplines include *useful, important,* and *interesting*, while *detailed* and *up-to-date* are frequently used in the hard sciences. Congruent with Hyland's study, a recent study focusing on adjective and *that*-clause by Kanoksilapatham (2003) illustrated the adjectives that control that complement clauses are particularly likelihood adjectives e.g., likely, possible and probable, attitude adjective (i.e., interesting, acceptable, necessary), and factual or certainty adjectives (e.g., impossible, evident, obvious). Those adjectives indicate that these simultaneously occuring features index the author's expression of their agreement, opposition, evaluation, and interpretation of propositions.

In sum, as suggested by previous research studies, several mechanisms to express writers' evaluative stance have been investigated. This approach can be seen as attitudinal dimensions including features such as selecting predicate and/or using adjective with *that*-clause. This style of writing, as explained by Hyland (2002), refers to the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. It is the way that writers intrude to stamp their personal authorities onto their arguments or step back and disguise their involvement (p. 176).

Discussion Section

It is agreed by scholars that the *Discussion* section is one of the most important sections of research articles (e.g., Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Swale, 1990). In general, the *Discussion* section in a research article might stand alone or be included with the *Conclusion* section. Swales (1990) asserts that the *Discussion* section is presented as a mirror image of the introduction after analyzing by using move analysis theory. Moreover, he suggests that the Discussion section would present results.

Swales and Luebs (2002) examined *Discussion*s from a continuous run of twenty-five articles published in early 1998 in the Journal of Personality and Social Psychology. Their study revealed that the *Discussion* section strongly advocated the importance or noteworthiness of their findings. Likewise, the *Discussion* section should provide the writers' comment on their main findings. Lewin et al. (2001) also investigated social science research articles dealing with *Discussion* section. Concerning a general resetting of the research scene, they reported the finding using move analysis that basically *Discussion* section will open with reporting the results of the study and evaluating these findings. Then, the writer of each study mostly will offer the interpretation as well as state implications from the finding gained after having conducted the study.

Clearly seen from the literature mentioned above, the *Discussion* section can be viewed a crucial part of research articles, presenting the results of the study as well as evaluating those results in order to gain the readers' attention to read on and trust their evaluation. A number of reasons are offered to explain difficulties in writing this particular section. For instance, the successful writing of this section requires the knowledge of linguistics and discourse and special care in choosing appropriate linguistic features (Shaw, 1991). Given the importance of the *Discussion*

section and evaluative stance in academic texts, it is needed to explore linguistic devices functioning as an evaluation used by writers in academic research articles in the *Discussion* section which is the site where the writers should give their evaluation on their findings.

3. Methods

Data Collection and Analysis

In this section, the corpus compiled by the researcher are exemplified to illustrate how it is sizable and at the same time representative. The factors taken into consideration when designing the corpus are as follows:

1. Data Compilation

In order to assure that all of the research articles selected in the present study are representative and reliable, and the results of the present study can be generalizable, the following steps need to be taken into account. First, since previous studies on discourse study have shown that disciplinary variations can have influences on rhetorical structure and language use (e.g., Nwogu, 1997; Posteguillo, 1999; Swales, 1990), to control possible disciplinary variation, the selected research articles were randomly selected from the top five journals in the field of applied linguistics and English language teaching - English for Specific Purposes (ESP) and System. Then, all of the journals were systematically complied and representatively selected based on the impact factor[2] released in 2010. Five articles were, thus, systematically selected from each journal,

[2] The impact factor is the average number of times that articles published in a specific journal in the two previous years were cited in a particular year. This figure is from Journal Citation Report (JCR), providing quantitative tools for evaluating journals. It is useful in identifying the significance of absolute citation frequencies.

yielding a corpus of 20 research articles of approximately 190,000 words. Next, as the journals differ in the extent of their academic or educational focus—some will combine *Discussion* section with *Conclusion* section, only the articles reporting explicitly on the *Discussion* section in the articles from those journals are appreciated.

To analyze the data, frequency analysis was conducted to provide quantitative data for the possible number of linguistic features of evaluative stance, found in the corpus. Then, the semantic reference of the meanings of communicative functions presented by these linguistic features was analyzed qualitatively on the basis of what their functions are in the text.

2. Inter-coder Reliability Analysis

At this juncture, it is noted that, due to the semantically driven characteristic of discourse analysis, it is possible that two different individuals may demarcate different meanings of linguistic features. This limitation crucially calls for the integration of inter-coder reliability analysis, a solution to help boost the strength of the analysis of the study. In this study, three experts in ELT professionals serve as coders to verify that the meanings or communicative functions can be agreed upon across individuals. All of the five coders completed their M.A. either in the United Kingdom or in Thailand. At the time of study, they were the faculty members in the language institute at public and private universities in Thailand. As a part of this procedure, a coding protocol was devised, based on the initial discourse analysis. The coding protocol comprises of the linguistic devices illustrated by examples taken from the corpus.

The coders were trained how to use the coding protocol to carry out discourse analysis. Following training, brainstorming, discussing, and questioning, the coders were asked to independently analyze linguistic devices of the corpus (5 articles). Upon completion, the intercoder

reliability was assessed by percentage in order to indicate the satisfactory agreement level between the researcher and each of the three coders. In the present study, the percentage agreement assessed was 87.

4. Results

This section presents the sets of linguistic features identified in academic corpus, their interpreted communicative functions in discourse, and representative excerpts taken from the corpus to illustrate such co-occurrences.

From the data compilation, it was found that writers used epistemic modality, communication verbs, extraposed *'it'*, and personal pronouns to express the evaluative stance of the writers towards the thing or the proposition the writers are talking about. The following table illustrates the difference in number of each linguistic feature found in the corpus.

Table 1 Frequency of linguistic features of evaluative stance

Linguistic features of Evaluative Stance	Frequency Found in text	Percentages	Example realizations
1. Epistemic modality	22	44%	the experimental research papers in medical journals *can be analysed*, the nine moves identified in the JRV *would* seem to fall into
2. Communication Verbs	10	20%	the data *suggests* **that**, the results obtained in this study *indicate* **that**
3. Extraposed 'it'	10	20%	***it** does become apparent* **that**, ***it** seems undeniable* **that** ***it** is important* TO, ***it** is not easy* TO
4. Personal Pronouns	8	16%	*I* still find that, *we* cannot speak, *we* are still left with the important questions
Total	50	100%	

Table 1 illustrates that the number of times that epistemic modality is used 22 times which is 44%. Communication verbs recur 10 times which is 20%. This figure is equivalent to the recurrence of the use of extraposed 'it' with that complement clause, and to clause controlled by predicate and adjective while the recurrence of the use of personal pronouns rank last which amounts to 8 times, and therefore equivalent to 16% of the total numbers of linguistic features found in the corpus.

From the data shown in Table 1, it can be concluded that most of the writers choose to use epistemic modality to express their evaluative stances. Communication verbs and extraposed 'it' are the second most frequent choice among these writers. Then, the use of personal pronouns like *'we', 'I', 'my'* and *'us'* is least frequently used to express their evaluative stance. Based on the assumption that each linguistic feature help to perform an evaluative stance of the writers, the following sections describe the characteristics of possible variations of the co-occurrence pattern of linguistic features, and the assignment of each type from the analysis in details.

4.1 Epistemic Modality

The use of epistemic modality recurs most frequently in the corpus. As Hunston and Thompson (1999) described that evaluative stance is the speaker's or writer's sense of the probability or necessity of a statement, the discourse functions of epistemic modality are considered to express the evaluative stances of the writers (i.e., *may, would,* and *can*). The following text samples indicate the authors' attitude towards propositional content by modal auxiliary verbs such as *may* and *could* (italicized and underlined).

(1) a. This study has shown that experimental research papers in medical journals *can be analysed* in terms of a conventional schema, consisting of hierarchically ordered knowledge structures referred to as Moves and their constituent elements or Sub-Moves. (RA 4)

b. The DEE system *may* also account for the tendency for the information contained in Moves 8 and 9 to always occur in the final segments of the text. (RA 1)

c. Their wishes to have more English lessons *could be interpreted* as signs that they still needed guidance and consultation from teachers who would teach these lessons. (RA 2)

d. The results obtained in this study indicate that there are nine possible moves which *may be realized* in a typical JRV text. (RA 1)

e. It *may* well be that the students *would have been rated* in exactly the same way as in February, had one or two more entriesbeen taken into account. (RA 3)

From the text samples shown above, the writers use epistemic modality to present their evaluative stances in different meanings. That is, the assumptions in (b), (d) and (e) which the notion that the proposition after the epistemic modality can probably happen, or assessment of possibilities in (c), or their confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed in the discourse in (a). As Nunan (2004) suggested, modality is the dimension of an utterance which allows the speaker or writer to reveal his or her attitude towards 1) the propositional content, or 2) the illocutionary force of an utterance. Accordingly, these reasons can support the findings of the writer's using epistemic modality to reveal their evaluative stance. As clearly seen from the above examples, stance is virtually always expressed through the use of epistemic modality, representing the writer's assessment of the truth value or credibility of statement about the world.

Moreover, it is evident that the writers will use epistemic modality when they would like to interpret their analysis or results to draw the

generalization in (c) and (d) or show possibilities of their thought in (e). Particularly, the verbs that are usually used in the corpus include *interpret, realize* and *analyze*, and most of them are always used in the passive construction. Therefore, it may be interpreted that this feature is a crucial element in the use of epistemic modality for indicating the writers' judgments about validity of their findings and their thought in academic research writing because they recur the most frequently in the corpus, serving several meanings for the authors.

4.2 Communication Verbs and *that* clause

Another evaluative stance found in academic discourse can be clearly seen by the use of a wide range of different predicates. Most commonly, because of this corpus gained from the Discussion section, communication verbs such as *suggest, show* and *indicate* are used to state the results of the study. More interestingly, from the corpus, we can see that this kind of verb would mostly be employed to state the findings with *that* clause controlled by such a verb. This means that the writers will express their attitude towards the proposition in the *that* clause and is typically realized by the controlling predicate. The following text samples taken from the corpus illustrate the set of occurring features: communication verb (italicized) and *that* clause (underlined)

(2) a. At the time when the research took place, although there had been a general decline in learning English among the informants in comparison with that in China, the data *suggests* **that** some learners had been acquiring new motives, knowledge, and beliefs as well as strategies in language learning after being exposed to the new settings. (RA 2)

b. The results obtained in this study *indicate* **that** there are nine possible moves which may be realized in a typical JRV text. (RA 1)

c. The first analysis, which tries to rate students' strategy use in general, *shows* **that** there is a great difference between students. (RA 3)

d. The results obtained in this study *show* **that** a typical medical researchpaper may be made up of eleven schematic units or "Moves", consisting of three each from the Introduction and Methods sections, two from the Results section and four from the Discussion section. (RA 4)

The use of communication verbs in the *Discussion section* has a powerful meaning in discourse. That is, writers can persuade their communities to certify their claims as recognized knowledge through a careful, precise presentation of the results; namely, *show* in (c) and *indicate* in (b). In addition, they may generally mark their claim as a suggestion in (a), and indication-- *indicate* in (b) and *suggest* in (a). Moreover, in (c) the writer highlighted his findings or supporting information by presenting them with the word 'great difference' revealing the striking difference as hypothesized at the beginning of the study. Also, the writers express their assumptions by making claim on their result towards the use of epistemic auxiliary *'may'* as shown in (b) and (d). This might be possible that they are open to the readers to discuss or negotiate their thought of their findings. In a nutshell, it can be said that with this strategy to indicate the results of the study, the range of communication verbs (e.g., shows, indicate, and suggest) are used to indicate the strategy called 'abstract entity' by using inanimate source (the result shows that…) to present the authors' own result of the research. This is congruent with Hyland and Tse's (2004) study claiming that concealing the source of the evaluation, by generalizing the source or attributing responsibility to subjects which cannot be traced to the author, can also be seen as an authorial stance

as it represents a conscious decision not to accept direct responsibility for the interpretation which follows.

4.3 Extraposed 'it', *that* complement clauses controlled by predicative adjectives, and *to* complement clauses controlled by adjectives

Another set of linguistic features co-occurring quite frequently includes extraposed *'it'*, *that* complement clauses controlled by predicative adjectives, and *to* complement clauses complement clauses controlled by adjectives. While writers almost always refer to their findings first in the Discussion section, from the corpus, it shows that almost half the evaluations were attributed to unidentified source, usually through the use of an *'it'* subject. Therefore, in academic discourse, the extraposed 'it' provides a means for the authors to express their comments or attitudes without stating their identification explicit (Hewings & Hewings, 2002). It is a strategy that the writers try to distance themselves from interpreting the findings of their studies. The following text samples taken from the corpus illustrate the use of extraposed *'it'* with *that* complement clauses.

(4) a. *it does become apparent* that the more successful students use the strategies more frequently, and thus get a higher score according to the rating scale. (RA 3)

b. Elsewhere (Halbach, 1995) *it had become evident* that one of the main problems of the weaker students was the selection and/or creation of appropriate, well-focused follow-up activities, which seems to confirm this impression. (RA 3)

c. On the other hand, *it seems undeniable* that it is also the more successful students who find it easier to explain what they have done and thus will get a better score for strategy training (see Skehan, 1989, p. 80, for a similar point). (RA 3)

Biber et al. (1999) demonstrated that predicate adjectives provide the authors with a means to express their stances, and *that* compliment clauses controlled by adjectives indicate clearly that expression of the author's stance. Therefore, *that* complement clauses here are generally known to index information integration to expand the idea-unit. In other words, predicative adjectives are used as heads of *that* complement clauses, indexing an expression of the writers' stance. That is, syntactically, the writers' stance is given in the main clause, and the propositional information is portrayed in the *that* complement clause (e.g., *it had become evident one of the main problems of the weaker students was the selection* …). Also, from the examples text above, the stance towards propositions can be characterized as interpretation, attitude or generalization.

From the data, the adjectives that control *that* complement clauses are particularly factual/certainly adjectives (e.g., *evident, apparent*), and attitudinal adjectives (e.g., *undeniable*). This indicated that these co-occurring features index the author's expression of their certainty or confidence in their findings in (a), and certain judgment of propositions in (c).

Similarly, the following text samples (5) from the corpus illustrating the set of co-occurring features like extraposed 'it' co-occuring relatively frequently with *to* complement clauses controlled by predicate, are used to pull the readers into the discourse at critical points to guide them to particular interpretation (Hyland, 2001).

(5) a. Thus, before drawing any conclusions about students' use of strategies, ***it*** *is important* TO gain further insights into it with the help of other instruments such as direct observation, think-aloudtechniques, etc. (RA 3)

b. Although this result seems to be corroborated by some other studies in the field (for a summary, see Skehan, 1989), ***it*** *is not easy* TO establish which of the two-- language proficiency or strategy use-- comes first since, as Skehan points out, ``one can [. . .] argue that learner strategies do not determine proficiency, but are permitted by it'' (Skehan, 1989, p. 97). (RA 3)

c. Thus, ***it*** *is difficult* TO determine whether Moves 2, 3 and 4 in Mckinlay's characterization are really separate Moves or subcategories of a single Move. (RA 4)

From the sample texts above, they illustrate the use of *extraposed 'it'* (bolded), predicative adjectives (italicized), and to clauses controlled by adjectives (capitalized). These linguistic features work together to create a text that expresses the author's evaluative stance. It is clear that semantic class of controlling predicative adjectives are evaluative adjectives e.g., important—expressing the writer's confidence in their findings in (a), and ease/difficulty adjectives e.g., easy, difficult - expressing the difficulty and uncertainty to make a claim or generalization) as shown in (b) and (c). In other words, the co-occurrence of these predicative adjectives and to complement clauses represents the authors' ease or difficulty with (c), and appraisal of (a and b), propositions in complement clauses.

Taken together, from the examples above, the co-occurrence of these linguistic features (extraposed 'it', *that* complement clauses controlled by adjectives, predicative adjectives, and *to* complement clauses controlled by adjectives) indexes the authors' personal stances towards the propositions in the *that/to* complement clauses in an impersonal way. That is, their personal stance is back grounded and not directly attributed to specific individuals.

4.4 Personal Pronouns

Apart from the extraposed 'it' providing a means for the writers to express their comments or attitudes without stating explicit their identification in the text or discourse, in the corpus of this study, it also reveals the use of pronoun *'I'* and *'We'*, as well as one of possessive case like *'my'* and *'us'*. The following text samples are a typical example illustrating the use of personal pronoun and possessive pronoun (italicized and underlined) in academic discourse.

(6) a. At the same time, *my* informants also exhibited signs of manipulating crucial elements of the social settings and adopting appropriate strategies for their own purposes. (RA 2)

b. However, in spite of these drawbacks, *I* still find that the insights about students' use of strategies provided by the analysis of the diaries are valuable, and that using a rating scale of this type is useful. (RA 3)

c. Although *we* cannot speak of a direct correlation between strategy use and academic performance, it does become apparent that the more successful students use the strategies more frequently, and thus get a higher score according to the rating scale. (RA 3)

d. Having said this, *we* are still left with the important questions of why JRV texts have the kind of schematic structure identified above and what advantages this structure has for the lay reader attempting to decode the message in a typical JRV text. (RA 1)

e. This refers us to one of the problems of trying to establish a comparison by analysing a small number of entries (a minimum of only four) from the beginning and end of the course in order to draw some general conclusions as to students' use of strategies. (RA 3)

The above text samples illustrate the use of personal pronouns which perform the discourse functions. For example, the use of *'we'* in (d) and *'I'* in (b) signal the presence as researchers in the research paper. They also characterize specific discourse contexts where writers want to emphasize their role and responsibility for their claims in research. In other words, *'we'* here in the text (d), and *'I'* in (b) are used where the writers want to stress their personal contribution and their presence in the research article.

Moreover, it is found that the use of *'we'* in the sample text (c) refers to the 'writers and readers'. That is, the group of referents of the pronoun *'we'* is larger group of people including the speaker and audience. The speaker's intention in the instance (c) is to involve the audience in what he is talking about. By using *'we'*, the writers presuppose the readers' background knowledge and ability to follow the argument whereas by using *'I'* referring only to the researcher, it may be that the researcher is confident in and ensure his findings of claim to his target readers. Simply put, regarding the discourse functions, the use of personal pronoun in the corpus all relate to the representation closely linked to the referent of representative or spokesperson of a group.

In addition, the use of possessive case *'my'* from the corpus can reflect the important role of informants of the study. The writer uses the possessive case to show the relationship and give the importance of the data gained from the participants all the time. It might be said that the use of *'my'* in the corpus as the writers just show the results from their study only. This means that they do not want to make a big claim when they draw the discussion and conclusion. They would like to confirm their findings using *'my'* to refer to their results only.

With respect to the style of research writing, the use of pronoun in academic research might not be consistent with the traditional approach which states that the style of writing for academic prose should be distant and impersonal way as mentioned earlier (Fortanet, 2004). To discuss the use of personal pronouns in academic research in details, first of all, this style of writing is American style which is quite widely accepted today in modern academic writing. This approach can be used to express the writers' identities in their academic papers. Therefore, viewing written text as interaction, this linguistic feature can be revealed by analyzing its discourse functions which not only indicate the nature of modern journal articles, but the writers-researchers also emphasize the originality and importance of their research by shortening the distance from readers, and stressing solidarity. Moreover, it can be used to seek the acceptance and recognition of readers, and target academic community. That is why writers put themselves or their presence in the paper and why they perceive their relationship with the readers in the study by using personal pronouns. Consequently, knowledge of the use of personal pronouns is of great value since this may represent a difficulty for the understanding of international students who are not used to seeing this writing style.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study focuses on the analysis of evaluative functions and stances in Discussion section of research articles. Overall, the analysis of evaluative stance in academic discourse applied in this specialized corpus reveals some sets of co-occurrence of linguistic features including epistemic modality, communication verbs with that clause, extraposed 'it', *that* complement clauses controlled by predicative adjectives, and *to* complement clauses controlled by adjectives, and personal pronouns

contributing to differently writers' evaluative stance in academic discourse. Each linguistic feature commonly found in the present study reveals that the writers can express their evaluative stances by using some linguistic features to work together as communicative functions in discourse even though it is usually seen as objective and impersonal.

The analysis of evaluative stance as shown by the use of linguistic features reflects how the scholars in the field achieve their communicative functions in the Discussion section. To be precise, the meanings of each linguistic feature representing in the corpus are distinct. As found in the study, epistemic modality can be used to present the assumption, the assessment of possibilities, and confidence of the writers whereas communication verb can indicate precise presentation of the results. Extraposed 'it' recurs with two features: *that* complement clauses controlled by predicative adjectives, and *to* complement clause controlled by adjectives, which express the writers' confidence and feelings of difficulty in making a claim or generalization. Put another way, these two linguistic features can index the authors' personal stance towards the proposition in an impersonal way. On the contrary, the use of personal pronouns is used to refer to both speakers and audience to involve what the article is about, and to reflect the importance of the subjects of the study. This style of writing also shows the identity of authors in the text.

Understanding the choices of linguistic features used in academic discourse provides important information on the evaluative stance that the writer is taking towards the projected subject. The meaning of such linguistic features observed in this paper play an important part in conveying the writer's position on what is being evaluated. From the findings of this present study, it is shown that evaluation is important to discourse for two reasons: it plays a vital role in constructing the ideological basis

of a text, thereby locating writer and reader in an ideological space; and it also plays a significant role in organizing a text. Evaluation on both the autonomous and the interactive planes take part in both functions. However, the corpus used in this study is still limited. There should be a clear-cut method to be used in analyzing and specifying linguistic features of evaluative stance, which is better or more practical than the definition by Hunston and Thompson (1999). Moreover, this present study focuses on the function of evaluative stance only. Therefore, further study is needed to focus more and use the wide range of corpus to gain several types of linguistic features presenting discourse functions.

This research study is pedagogically beneficial in language teaching in general and in particular in the instruction of reading and writing academic research article in a number of ways. First, the results of this study provide a list of linguistic features used in expressing the evaluative stance of the writers through academic discourse. In this regard, a better understanding of how scholars use linguistic features or lexical-grammatical features to convey attitudinal or evaluative meanings can enable novice and new scholars to enhance their writing skills. Second, the findings could shed some light into the awareness of some linguistic features that can empower learners to become proficient academic readers. Finally, the study's findings would offer practical implications to advanced language learners who perceive themselves as having difficulty in understanding research articles and teachers interested in pedagogy in reading and writing instruction.

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