

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Language as a tool for people to communicate and deliver their message as information, emotion, feeling and idea in daily living. In this case, an opinion or belief is delivered by people to give the information according to their stance and its facts. People deliver the idea, opinion, belief or statement by conveying it through the spoken and written form. Spoken language as a communication way used by people to make a social interaction among the speaker and the hearer. Besides, written language is a system of words used by people to deliver their thought and feeling in any written form.

According to Khajavy, Asadpour and Yousefi (2012), written language has been seen to be important in all aspects of people's life for several countries. One important example of this case is that writing influences the academic contexts. There are many genres of written language which function to be particular purposes and interpersonal relations with the reader. In this regard, academic writing is one interest genre which has attracted numerous researchers in which the research in this field has devoted much attention to the genre of the research articles (Khajavy et al., 2012).

Journal articles which contain review articles and research articles which have grown to be a great interest for many researchers. Journal articles belong to one type of genre which has set of its own role, purpose, practice and content to

inform the reader about what authors will state of something (Hyland, 1996). It is ordinarily written by some lecturers, teachers, college students and scholars which function as a device for authors of various disciplines to disseminate their findings to academic public. To maintain accurateness in delivering stance and claims, authors will limit sentences they write using hedges.

Hedges are used to indicate uncertainty, vagueness, tentativeness and cautiousness which are usually employed by authors in writing (Hyland, 1994). There are some linguistic forms which indicate words or phrases of hedges such as the modal auxiliaries *may*, *could*, *might* and the modal adverbs such as *possibly*, *generally* and *probably* (Coates, 2004). The sentences which contain hedging devices in the form of words, phrases or clauses is probably as indication that the authors are not really sure about what they are stating whether the information is correct and it is not complete enough.

According to Karimi, Gorjian and Eidian (2015), in academic writing, hedges are common feature in which it plays a crucial role which make it unique among other types of writing. However, most readers expect the report of authors' research is quite objective, but the fact is that there are "interactive elements" (Karimi, et al, 2015, p. 121) whose a role that shows a connection among authors' personal opinion and the data existed in the text. The authors' doubt and the uncertainty of information given is one of these interactive elements which is known as hedges.

Hyland (1996) considers hedging as "central in academic writing where the need to present unproven propositions with caution and precision is essential" (p.

433). The authors use hedges as the basic features of academic writing in which it can soften their ideas or statements and make information shared by authors “as neutral as possible” (Musa, 2014, p. 2). Hyland (1996) provides the following examples (p. 435):

- a. I *suggest* therefore that DI degradability *must be* casually linked to Qb site occupation which in turn determines PEST region accessibility to...
- b. These EGTA clots are transparent a *possibly* comprised of thinner fibers than the...
- c. ...decreases by *approximately* 60% at 44°c...

The three examples above can be identified that the author is in the uncertainty and caution claim. Through looking at hedges (in italic words) in the sentences, the author's claim seems only a hypothesis and the essence of the statement is less evident or the evidential status of the assumption has been unproven. Moreover, hedges as a measurement of the accuracy, truthfulness and the certainty of the authors' statement can be observed by the words, phrases or clauses they used in writing. In this case, hedges can be also defined as degree of certainty or uncertainty (Hyland, 1998) in which the examples above show the information which has not been clear enough by looking at the hesitancy, the accuracy and the truthfulness of the author.

Mauranen (1997) argues that "Academic discourse is a world of uncertainties, indirectness, and non-finality—in brief, a world where it is natural to cultivate hedges" (p. 115). Hence, hedges in academic discourse places an important role in which authors use it as an expression in unobtrusive way to deliver their stance. Besides, the study of hedges have been chosen by the writer in this analysis because it is interesting to study how hedging devices are used as

well as they may contribute to the text, instead this study does not analyze how these hedging devices are used correctly.

In addition, the writer only focuses on hedges in the form of phrases, words or clauses found in the discussion sections of journal articles in the field of linguistics. The reason why the writer wants to analyze journal articles, particularly journal articles in the field of linguistics as the subject of this study because journal articles provide the information or experiment which is done by authors to add the knowledge in linguistics field, certainly, it is important in academic discourse. Besides, the writer is one of the college students in Linguistic course of English Study Program at University of Trunojoyo Madura. Furthermore, the majority of authors in writing research use hedging devices in different sections of their articles for different purposes (Hyland, 1996; Varttala, 2001), this makes the deployment of hedging is one of the characteristics of journal articles.

The writer in this study chooses the discussion section because hedging devices are commonly found in discussion sections of journal articles as stated by Hyland (1994) “hedges appear least in Methods, which is the least discursive section, and are most highly represented in Discussions” (p.242). Salagar-Meyer (1994) in her research also argues that hedging devices are used more frequently in discussion section because “it is in this section of research papers that writers speculate, argue, contrast and extrapolate from the described results, and at the same time avoid stating results too conclusively so that the reader can note that the authors are not claiming to have the final word on the subject” (p. 163). It is

strengthened by Lau (1999) who also raised the same results of his research in which hedging devices are mostly used in discussion section because “writers are dealing with logical reasoning when they present experimental results in discussion section” (p. 433). Therefore, the investigation to find hedges is merely focused on discussion sections in journal articles; it is also as a curiosity of the writer to prove it which becomes the main reason for this study.

There are some related studies which have been done in relation to hedges. Most of the previous studies were conducted to analyze hedges in the introduction or background of study section like what has been done by Hidayati, Muhammad and Dallyono (2008) in undergraduate students’ theses and Masters’ theses; Musa (2014) which focused on introduction and discussion sections in Masters’ theses; Karimi, et al (2015) which focused on conclusion sections in English scientific articles; and it is also done by Gladysia (2014) in analyzing hedges in readers’ letter of the Jakarta post.

Some of those studies used the theory of hedges suggested by Salager-Meyer (1994, 1997). The aim of the present study is to find the types and the functions of hedges found in the discussion sections of journal articles proposed by Hyland’s (1994, 1996) theory. Moreover, there is no research done with this topic so far, especially in English Study Program Faculty of Social and Cultural Sciences University of Trunojoyo Madura.

1.2 Statement of the Research Problems

The statement of the research problems based on the descriptive above can be formulated as follows:

1. What are the types of hedges used by authors in the discussion sections of journal articles?
2. What are the functions of hedges used by authors in the discussion sections of journal articles?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

According to statement of the research problems, the aims of this study are:

1. To identify the types of hedges used by authors in the discussion sections of journal articles.
2. To explain the functions of hedges used by authors in the discussion sections of journal articles.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to give theoretical and practical contributions on the analysis of hedges used in academic writing, particularly for the use of hedges in journal articles.

Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich readers' knowledge through the types of hedges which are used and the functions of using hedges in journal articles.

Practically, this study is hoped to provide readers with information about hedges words, so that they have a deeper understanding about the use of hedges in academic writing which contains information from the journals' authors. Readers can determine whether the information is true, certain or uncertain, and accurate. Moreover, readers can get the knowledge whether or not linguistic forms of hedges are appropriately used by authors when they make the stance, claims, idea and opinion in their journal articles.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

The scope of this study is in the field of pragmatics that concerns the discussion of hedges in academic writing, particularly in the journal articles. The limitation of this study is the sentences containing hedges which are found in the discussion sections of journal articles written by authors.

To narrow down the topic, the writer will only focus on analyzing hedges which are found in the discussion sections of journal articles in the field of linguistics by using the theory of types of hedges and functions of hedges proposed by Hyland (1994, 1996).