
Hedges and Boosters in Undergraduate Thesis Abstracts of Qomaruddin University Students

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Abstrak

In writing abstracts, authors usually include metadiscourses such as hedges and boosters. This study aims to compare the use of hedges and boosters in writing undergraduate thesis abstract as a mean of communicative strategy to increase or decrease the strength of the statement. This research data was taken from 25 undergraduate thesis abstract of English Language Education Study Program and 25 from Mathematic Study Program at Qomaruddin University Gresik with 100-250 word range and analyzed based on Hyland's taxonomy (2005). The results showed that there were 22 variants of hedges words with a total use of 53 words and 17 variants of boosters words with a total use of 130 words. In the undergraduate thesis abstract, the students of the English Language Education Study Program dominantly use hedges words, such as in the adverb and verb classes. However, for the use of hedges words in undergraduate thesis abstracts, Mathematic Study Program students are more dominant than English Language Education Study Program students even though the word variants used are still dominated by English Language Education Study Program students, such as in the verb class. In addition, students using hedges have greater value than boosters in writing undergraduate thesis abstracts as a way to reduce the risk of opposition, to show courtesy and to obscure authorship and strengthen opinions. Boosters are also used to demonstrate the originality of research. Hedging by the students shows that there is a lack of knowledge of English rhetoric. Thus, the use of hedges and boosters can also help to improve students' academic writing skills.

Keywords: Thesis Abstract; Hedges; Boosters

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INTRODUCTION

As language has various functions in life, for academic sphere its use is important in communicating ideas. Communication can be both done in oral or written communication. For students wanting to graduate from a university, one of requirements is to write a thesis, as this also happens in Universitas Qomaruddin. This thesis consists of several parts and one of them is an abstract.

An abstract is a brief objective summary of the essential content of a book, article, speech, report, dissertation or other works that present the main points in the same order as the original but has no independent literary value. With abstracts, the writer may not need to see or use the original because it may probably provide him enough information or serve as a substitute to the document. Abstract becomes crucial because readers always read it before reading the entire paper. It tells to inform about the content of a research, the result of research, and also a vehicle for arousing the curiosity and interest of the reader. According to Hyland in Al-Shujairi, Ya'u, and Buba (2016): "The abstract is generally also the readers' first encounter with text, and it is often the point at which they decide whether to continue and give the accompanying article further attention or to ignore it". Abstracts help readers who are going to read the whole undergraduate thesis, by offering an overview of the research, thus saving their time. Besides, in the abstract students' needs to put the support words on the researcher statements, it makes readers believe and recognize for the research. So, the writer should be careful to write abstract since appropriate linguistic categories need to be used.

An abstract involves metadiscourse which associates the appropriate use of linguistic realization (Al-Shujairi et al., 2016). It represents what the writer attempts to guide the reader's perception of a text. Since abstract function as "advertising means" to bring the attention of the reader to read the whole research paper. Metadiscourse is needed to help writers organize their texts, and engage readers. It is the set of linguistic resources that every language has as part of the textual metafunction for linking one part of a text to another.

The challenge in this campus is that writing an abstract is a must for students when writing their thesis and they have to write their abstract in English which is not their first or second language. Thus, writing an abstract in English is probably not an easy activity even for many of them.

Some questions appear from the challenges faced by students in writing their abstract whether or not they have expressed their ideas by using metadiscourse properly or not. Apart from the types of metadiscourse proposed by Hyland (2015), two interesting subtypes are hedges and boosters.

According to Hyland (2004), "Hedges and boosters are communicative strategies conveying the writer's degree of confidence in the truth of a proposition and expressing an attitude to the audience". The use of hedges enables the writers to express a perspective on their statements, to present unproven claims with caution and to enter to a dialogue with their audience, while the use of boosters helps him/her to close down alternatives and to show a high degree of certainty.

In reality, non-native students of college level education who are required to write their undergraduate thesis in English not always aware of the impacts of the amount of hedges and boosters they use in their writing of abstract, where writers stake claim over their finding and conclude their discussion. Using too many boosters will result in an inaccurate of a finding, and in turn, will be misleading for the readers, while too many hedges will give the appearance of uncertainty (Indriani, 2014). One of problems faced by students in writing of English as foreign language is the use of boosters and hedges. Booster are words such as clearly, obviously and demonstrate, which allow writers to close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty in what they say (Hyland, 2005). Their use strengthens an argument by emphasizing the mutual experiences needed to draw the same conclusions as the writer. On the other hand, hedges are devices such as possible, might and perhaps, which indicate the writer's decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold complete commitment to a proposition. Hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be

presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation (Hyland, 2005).

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Therefore, this research examines the use of hedges and boosters in undergraduate thesis abstracts written by undergraduate students of Qomaruddin University.

METHOD

By looking at the object of this study, the most appropriate approach is the linguistic approach corpus. The corpus is a collection of texts, either spoken or written, that is collected on a computer. This approach is a suitable approach to support this research because corpus linguistics is concerned with the use of language in communication. Basically corpus can be in the form of two things, namely in the form of hard copies (e.g. sourced from magazines, newspapers, books, writings) and soft copies (e.g. applications, pages, online dictionaries, etc.)

Fifty students' abstracts, consisting of 200-350 words, from two majors at Universitas Qomaruddin were taken as corpora. *Antconc3.2.4w.exe* was the tool to identify hedges and boosters.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

By using Hyland's taxonomy (2005), it was first hoped to find 101 types of Hedges word variants and 64 types of booster word variants. However, the results of the data showed 16 variants of Hedges were found from the target of 102 word variants in the undergraduate thesis abstracts of English Language Education students and 11 types of Hedges word variants in undergraduate thesis abstract of Mathematic Study Program from a target of 101 word variants. Based on the results of the analysis of the word variants Boosters, it was found 12 types oword variants of Boosters from the target 64 word variants in the undergraduate thesis undergraduate thesis abstract of the English Language Education study program and 13 types of variant word booster from the target 64 variants of the word Boosters in the undergraduate thesis abstract of the Mathematic Study Program student.

Table 1. Findings and Similarities of Boosters

Boosters	ELESP		MSP	
	Var.	Items	Var.	Items
Adverbs	1	1	1	1
Verbs	8	56	8	58
Adjectives	3	4	4	10
TOTAL	12	61	13	69

The result show that the use boosters tends to be dominant in those 25 undergraduate thesis abstracts of English Language Education Study Program is 12 types of boosters and 61 word items used and in undergraduate thesis abstract students of Mathematic Study Program found 13 types of boosters variants and 69 word items were used. This shows that students of Mathematic Study Program used booster word variant and frequency are more dominant than English Language Education Study Program students.



Table 2. Findings and Similarities of Hedges

Hedges	ELESP		MSP	
	Var.	Items	Var.	Items
Preposition	-	-	1	1
Adverb	6	11	5	6
Verb	8	30	4	10
Adjectives	2	2	1	1
TOTAL	16	43	11	18

Then the use of hedges by 25 undergraduate thesis abstract of English Language Education Study Program is 16 types of hedges and 43 word items used, while in undergraduate thesis abstract students of Mathematic Study Program, it was found 11 variants of hedge words and 14 word items used.

As stated in the background, undergraduate thesis abstract becomes crucial since reader always read it before reading the entire paper. The content of undergraduate thesis abstract is more important because if it is lack of information about the research and the reader can be able to stop their undergraduate thesis abstract even their undergraduate thesis or thesis. This study focused on examining the content of undergraduate thesis abstract through the metadiscourse categories' existence.

This research used Hyland's model because the metadiscourse model is based on the research in academic discourse, which makes the model more concrete, more influential and it is also more updated than other models of metadiscourse. According to Abdi, Rizi, and Tavakoli (2010), Hyland's Model is highly preferred in modern metadiscourse studies for being recent, simple, clear and comprehensive.

In this research, the researcher examined the metadiscourse categories especially hedges and boosters word in the undergraduate thesis undergraduate thesis abstract of students English Language Education Study Program and Mathematical Study Program. The researcher found that students of English Language Education Study Program and Mathematical Study Program used some hedges and boosters as seen in Table 1 and Table 2.

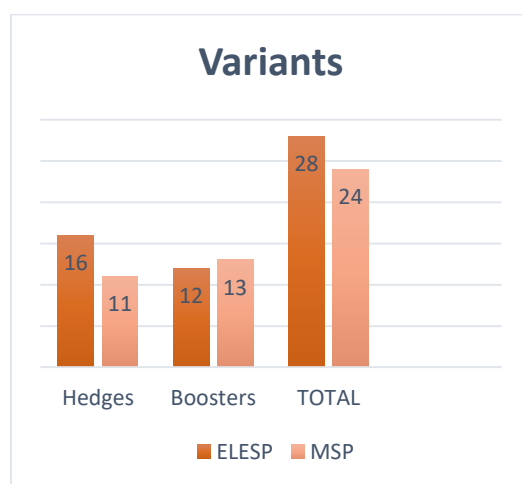


Figure 1. Variants of Hedges and Boosters

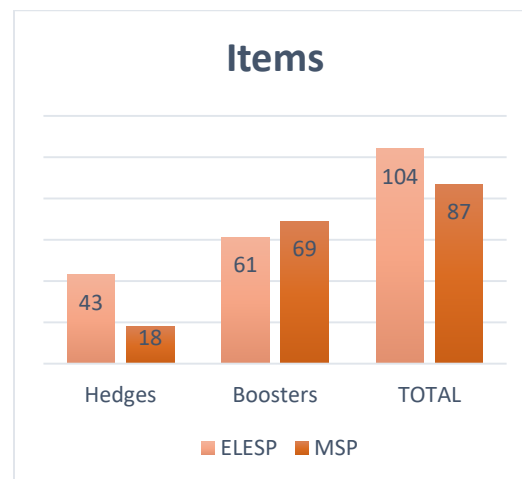


Figure 2. Items of Hedges and Boosters

From Figure 1 and Figure 2, it can be seen that English Language Education Study Program students are more dominant in using Hedges than Mathematic Study Program students. This can indicate that when writing their undergraduate thesis they are very careful to look polite. However, in the use of boosters, Mathematic Study Program students are more dominant than English Language Education Study Program students.

In comparison to some related research, the researchers have found several points. The first is *Metadiscourse Categories of thesis Undergraduate thesis abstracts at English Teacher Education Department* by Khusaini (2019), Khusaini analyzed the metadiscourse categories that frequently appeared the data was taken from English teacher education department student year 2014-2016. In his research, Khusaini examines all types of metadiscourse in abstracts, while the researcher only examines one type of metadiscourse, namely interactional metadiscourse, especially hedges and boosters. The similarity of our research is that we both researched metadiscourse on undergraduate thesis abstracts for English language students, but this particular study was wider than researchers who only examined hedges and boosters and the results of this particular study were to determine the frequency of using metadiscourse while the researcher was to compare the use of metadiscourse between English Language Education Study Program and Mathematic Study Program students.

Then from Etnolinguistic journal *A Comparison of The Interactive Metadiscourse in the Abstracts of Articles Written By Indonesian and NES Scholars* by Mazidah (2019), she analyzed and compared metadiscourse from abstract Indonesian and NES Scholar and the result is Indonesian scholars utilize more metadiscourse than NES scholars. In her research, Mazidah examines 100 abstracts, 50 from Indonesian Scholars and 50 from NES scholars, which is almost the same as this study which compares 25 undergraduate thesis abstracts from English Language Education Study Program students and 25 undergraduate thesis abstracts from PMT students. Just like the research that the researcher mentioned earlier, Mazidah (2019) examined the metadiscourse as a whole, not only hedges and boosters, but also compared the results of the two research subjects, Indonesian scholars and NES scholars, the same as research from researchers that compared the results of two subjects, namely English Language Education Study Program students and Mathematic Study Program students.

The last from journal.um.ac.id *Hedges and Boosters in Undergraduate Students' research Articles* by Salicha, Irawaty, Basthomi (2015), this research analyzed the use of hedges and boosters which are important in academic writing discourse as mean of communicative strategies for increasing and reducing the force of statements. The result of this research showed that there were five types of hedges and three types of boosters. The similarity of our research is the use of hedges and boosters written by undergraduate students but the difference from our research is quite a lot, namely they research articles while researchers examine undergraduate thesis

abstracts and compare them between undergraduate thesis abstracts written by English Language Education Study Program students and undergraduate thesis abstracts written by Mathematic Study Program students. Then in presented the results of their analysis (Salicha, Irawaty, Basthomi 2015) only displayed the words used, while the researcher displayed each word according to the word class that the readers felt would be easier to understand and also the number of their research subjects was 57 articles from ELT and 16 articles from ELL students while subject researchers as many as 25 undergraduate thesis abstracts from English Language Education Study Program students and 25 undergraduate thesis abstracts from Mathematic Study Program students less than them but in a balanced amount.

CONCLUSION

The analysis found that English Language Education Study Program and Mathematic Study Program students who graduated in 2016-2018 mostly used hedges and boosters in their undergraduate thesis abstracts including the word classes they used such as verbs, adverbs, prepositions and adjectives. The results show that the comparison between the use of hedges and boosters in 50 undergraduate thesis abstracts is more dominant than the use of the word boosters compared to hedges with a total use of 130 words from 17 variants of boosters and 53 words from 22 variants of hedges. This shows that the word boosters is more often used in writing undergraduate thesis abstracts for English Language Education Study Program and Mathematic Study Program students.

The analysis shows that English Language Education Study Program and Mathematic Study Program students dominantly often use active verbs when indicating their work or work for their research samples in their undergraduate thesis abstracts.

The results show that students of English Language Education Study Program are more dominant in using hedge word with total 16 word variants and 43 word items used, English Language Education Study Program students use hedges word more often while Mathematic Study Program students because English Language Education Study Program students learn many types of words. So that they know which words are more appropriate to use in writing especially in writing their undergraduate thesis abstract.

The results show that students of Mathematic Study Program are more dominant in using booster word with total 13 word variants and 69 word items used, its because Mathematic Study Program students don't know much about hedges word and know more about boosters word because its often used in writing argumentative paragraph.

There are many similarities and differences between this study and previous research, the differences are the amount of data studied, the research subject, the scope of the research, but all of them have some similarities such as both researching metadiscourse, about the use of metadiscourse by English students even non-English students and compare metadiscourse in student writing.

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