

# **ANALYZING AUTHOR'S ATTITUDE OF THE THESIS ABSTRACT WRITTEN BY AN UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT: A PATH FOR CRITICAL REVIEW**

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## **Abstract**

*An abstract is the most important part of the thesis. Good abstract shows the content of the writing. It is a verbatim form of text which is concise and informative so that the readers easily deduce the content of the paper. However, abstract sometimes shows a lack of minimum requirement. Hence, it indicates the authors' attitude as well as their critical writing. Using data taken from the undergraduate students of English department of private university in Indramayu, West Java, author's attitude and his writing skill were criticized. The results of the analysis suggest that the author's attitude and skill were challenged in terms of appraisal and modality. Grammar problem was also discussed. As the implication, this study suggests the framework how to check and criticize students' writing before their texts are published.*

*Keywords: abstract, attitude, appraisal, grammar, tenses*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Living in a discourse paradigm, all seem to be texts-that is how thing is meaningful. In sense of critical discourse analysis nothing is given, nothing is neutral. In thesis writing to make sure, the author works under the supervision. Good thesis, mostly do people agree, implies good process of supervision.

Abstract writing as a part of thesis structure has its characteristics (Alwasilah, 2015). An abstract shows what the content of the thesis is. Therefore, by reading the abstract of the thesis, the readers are already there-inside of the paper. They have surfed and hopefully understand what the thesis is talking about.

As an academic writing, the abstract should be constructed according to the academic ethics. The abstract of thesis has its characteristics, generic structure for instance (Swalles & Feak, 2008). Mostly, the use of future tense is avoided since it is a part of report texts. Thus, most of the tenses used here are past and present tenses to provide a high certainty of occurrences (Emilia, 2010).

As a text, abstract of thesis indicates the authors' intention. It is a kind of attitude. This is interpersonal. Consequently, all words and sentences employed in the texts are choices (Swalles & Feak, 2008). Therefore, reading is the key (Misdi, Hartini, & Farijanti, 2014). Good abstracts suggest

that the authors are good readers. From this point of views, then the recent study is aimed to investigate and to analyze the author's attitude of abstract written by the undergraduate student of a private university majoring in English education.

This perspective of the study is driven from the theory of Critical Discourse Analysis. The analysis is done under the umbrella of Critical Thinking (Chafee, 2000; Emilia, 2010), Systemic Functional Grammar as well as Systemic Funtional Linguistic provided by Halliday (1985), Fairclough (1995, 1989); Gerot and Wignell (1995); and Emilia (2011).

## **II. Data**

First of all, the text was written by the undergraduate student of English department of a private university in West Java. This text is interesting to discuss since it is one of the issues relating to English education, especially in developing critical writing among the students (Emilia, 2010) which was available online.

## **III. Analysis**

In term of genre, this text belongs to abstract which has, of course, its specific purposes for its particular stages and uses in particular ways (Gerot & Wignell, 1995). This text was written because the phenomenon in language learning exists. 'An abstract us a greatly condensed version of a longer piece of writing that highlights the major points of covered, and concisely describes the content and scope of the writing' (Bond, 2009). He further suggests that it uses an introduction/body/conclusion structure which presents the purpose, results, conclusion, and recommendation (p.2). Thus, this text fulfills the basic requirement. However,

since there are some ungrammatical sentences found in the text, it fails to concise well paragraphs (Ibid) as seen in Sentences 3,4,5,8,9, 10, and 11(see appendix).

In term of critical thinking and critical literacy, it seems that the text is less condensed as can be seen from the use of less passive voice and logical connection as written text (Halliday, 1985; Gerot & Wignell, 1995). It can be assumed that the text was written less knowledgeable author (undergraduate student) but it also reveals that there was ineffective supervising since abstract is written in English education department of universities.

The situation above will be different if the text is written by more skillful students, e.g postgraduate students. It will be also different if the text is written by students of non English department. But, the interesting is that the text seems attacking me as a reader. As I read this text, I was criticized so it affects me as the one of the language educators (Emilia, 2010, 2011).

As the topic is about the English spelling, it invites the readers of English education. It tells the information about the mistakes made in English spelling done by the students of a primary schools in West Java as there is absence of references (Chaffee, 2000; Emilia, 2010). Thus, this information was limited to these school students, but it may happen to other students of other primary schools in learning English. Moreover, since the text is available in universities, scholars of English are the main invited readers, not public or other department, e.i. Indonesian program.

When nominalization is used in the text, it appears as written language (Halliday, 1985; Gerot & Wignell, 1995). As the results, lexicogrammatical and linguistic

features indicate distinctive ideational and interpersonal meaning of realization within the text as shown and elaborated in the following discussion.

### Modalities

As supported by Eggins' (1994: 180 "modalization is the expression of the speaker's attitude toward what s/he's saying in expressing judgement about certainty, likelihood, or frequency of something happening or being", the discussion of the interpersonal realization in this text will focus on the modalities which is presented in the following table as the basis of certainty.

Table 1. Modality

Modalities	modals	total
High	Must	1
Median	Will	1
low	want	1
		3

As can be seen from the table, this text uses once high modality, once medium modality, and once low modality. High modality is proved by the following

Therefore, the students must be aware towards the spelling, not only towards the meaning of a word (moves 23).

The finding indicates high confidence in making argument (Shujing, 2010). However, the use of medium alerts the readers about less confident argument as in

They will make spelling error in their writing.(move 3).

Whereas the low modality such as *In this research, the writer wants to know (move 4)* show the readers about low confident argument (ibid). the use of various modalities suggest that the

arguments provided in the text impress the readers' acceptability (Nash, 1990, as cited in Shujing, 2010). Thus, in term of academic writing (abstract), low modality is avoided (Chaffee, 2000).

In term of abstract writing, the use of present and past tense is applied (Chafee, 2000) to reveal that there is high certainty talking about the fact or science (Halliday, 1985; Gerrot & Wignell, 1995; Emilia, 2010, 2011) as shown in the following

Spelling influences the goodness and badness of writing skill (1)  
It is, however, past tense is hardly found in the text as presented in the calculation of the following

Table 2. Tenses and forms used in the abstract

Tenses	Findings	total	Notes
<b>Present</b>	Sentences 1 - 15	15	In-bracket numbers
<b>Past</b>	None	0	-
<b>Active form</b>	Sentences 1,2,3,4,5,7,8,10,11,12,14, and 15	12	
<b>Passive form (voice)</b>	Sentences 6, 9, and 13	3	Underlined-green numbers

Meanwhile active forms as seen in 12 sentences as used in the text (see table above) are in nominal sentences. It, again suggests that the text creates density and try to make conciseness (Halliday, 1985; Gerrot & Wignell, 1995; Chafee, 2000). The existences of nominalization is also as prove that the writer does objectivity in the argument made in the text, and this is common in scientific text (Gerrot & Wignell, 1995: 69).

The process of transitivity uncovers how the writer did the objectivity in the position of ideational meaning realization (Eggin, 1994; Gerrot & Wignell, 1995). From the 22

moves which have already been analyzed, 7 processes are material. Three processes are mental. Eleven processes are relational and there is only 1 verbal process. The use of material processes indicates that there is creative process. Mental processes show that the writer always thinks consciously in identifying or assigning the quality of the work as indicated by the use of more relational process. And as the characteristic of spoken language, verbal process indicates that the writer is obliged to do analysis and report. Thus, the information is successfully given (shared) for others (Gerrot & Wignell, 1995:77). The overall calculation of processes is provided in the following table.

Table 3. Tabulation of ideational meaning realization in the text

Types of processes	Total	Notes
1 Material	7	Means creativities
2 mental	3	Affective/ reactive (feeling), cognitive (think), perceptive (through 5 senses): conscious can think, no much acting
3 Relational	11	Identify or assign quality
4 verbal	1	Obligatory to do something, reporting (overall from doing to giving benefit for others)

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The thematic analysis was done to reveals writer's consistency in establishing coherent text (Eggin, 1994; Gerrot & Wignell, 1995; Emilai, 2010, 2011. As the data provided below, textual themes mostly appear in the text to indicate that the theme is always in line with the topic discussed. While there is only five topical themes are shown in the text that show that readers about subjectivity of the writer in making argument. And again, little

interpersonal themes (3 themes) are shown in text alert readers about writer's mood.

Table 4. Types of themes

Type of themes	Total	Notes
Topical themes	5	Subjective (active)
Textual themes	13	Related to the topic discussed
Interpersonal theme	3	Modal, wh element: polarity

Even in some cases, *they* is used in the text, from this overall thematic themes, the findings suggest that the writer commits to what is written in the text of abstract.

From the overall discussion about interpersonal meaning and lexicogrammatical realization, language also indicates power (Fairclough, 1995). Within the principles of action, the text is giving information. In term of representation of giving information, present tense is mostly used to assert the factual information. To extent of the certainty and objectivity, nominalization and relational processes were done. In term of consistency and commitment, giving information was realized in topical themes.

### Appraisal

Another segment of analysis about interpersonal meaning is appraisal (Martin & White, 2005; Hood & Forey, 2007). The use of explicit words such as *goodness and badness* (sentence 1) and *do not understand..* (sentence 2) indicate both positive and negative judgment. This imply writer's attitude toward the result of the study, e.i. his attitude toward his analysis (Hood & Forey, 2007). At the same time, the writer signals his interest of affected

feeling by using expression of *want to know..(sentence 3)* which is categorized into low emotion. This is different when the writer indicates his strong expression of feeling such *must be aware..(sentence 15)*. However, by the end of his analysis, the evaluation is given by expressing appreciation toward the analysis as in the use of *accepted (sentence 13)*. From this overall discussion about appraisal, the findings suggest that the writer's attitude is positive or like

Table 5. Appraisal findings

Appraisal	Findings	To	note
Judgment	Sentence 1, 2	2	Goodness and badness , Do not understand (Blue highlighted)
Affect	Sentence 3 and 15	2	Wants to know, must be aware (Yellow highlighted)
Appreciation	Sentence 13	1	Accepted (Green highlighted)

### Grammatical errors

In terms of grammatical mistakes, the result of coding is presented in the following table.

Table 6. Grammatical errors

Grammatical construction	Findings	Total	note
Correct	1,2,6,7,12,13,14, and 15	8	
Incorrect	Sentences 3,4,5,8,9, and 11	7	Lined words

The finding as shown in the table 6 suggests if the text is lack of critical

awareness. It seems that proofreading as the main part of the process of academic writing was skipped or at least, there was no grammar checking. In other words, it shows the low quality of grammar mastery of the authors.

### IV. Conclusion

As to my conclusion, the text provided here is an abstract which was written by the student of English department of private university in West Java. Some ungrammatical structures, form and tenses, and low modality found in the text indicate the author's attitude. The attitude suggests that lack of self-awareness and critical writing. However, the abstract fulfills the principle of abstract writing in general.

### V. Implication and suggestion for further research

The study implies that the abstract writing as a part of thesis completion was running under poor supervision. However, further analysis on this area is needed.

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