

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a general overview of this study which includes the background of the study, purposes of the study, statement of problems, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

1.1 Background of the Study

The quest for scientific-proven discoveries that will be valuable for the continuation of knowledge refinement has been integral to the academic realm. Conducting research and presenting the findings in a research article (RA) has therefore become a series of accustomed practices among academicians. The productivity to publish RA is continuously valued for its widely known practicality as a key genre to facilitate knowledge claims dissemination (Herrando-Rodrigo, 2014). In addition, RA publication constantly gains immense interest owing to the fact that a good publication record is pivotal in the increment of individuals' recognition as well as validating institutions as prestigious ones (Brewer et al., 2002; Flowerdew & Habibie, 2021). It is therefore common for reputable journals, such as those indexed by major bibliographic databases (Suiter & Sarli, 2019), to be the main target of RA submission. Reputable journals are preferred for better accessibility, readership, and citations of RA which can showcase the credibility of the researchers. To achieve these merits of RA publication at the most, the understanding of conventions in which knowledge is presented in particular ways that will be digestible and acceptable to the addressed audience then shall be taken into account (Metoyer-Duran, 1993; Nagano, 2015).

As a genre, RA has its own conventional format that builds the whole vehicle to deliver newly founded knowledge. It is typically opened with an abstract, followed by Introduction, Method, Results, and Discussion (IMRD) sections (Swales & Feak, 1994). Each section is then regarded as another independent genre, considering that they belong to a set of communicative events with distinct

communicative purposes (Kanafani et al., 2022; Swales, 1990). Among sections in RA, the introduction is perceived as the most difficult and time-consuming section to write, even for experienced authors (Bajwa et al., 2020). This challenging nuance is related to the central role of an introduction in conveying research novelty and significance (Setiawati et al., 2021; Swales, 1990). In addition to that, the communicative purpose it has to comply with is to attract the readers' interest to the topic under investigation through the presentation of research rationale, moving from the general research background to the specific research questions or hypotheses (Swales & Feak, 1994). That is to say, the introduction needs to highlight the new value that is offered by the research as a means to elucidate unanswered phenomena based on the background issue. This matter thus leaves the authors with "an unnerving wealth of options" in deciding the amount of information to be included and how to present it in the most direct and appealing way (Swales, 1990, p. 137). In relation to RA publication, an impressive introduction is inevitably and eventually important to convince the journal reviewers that RA is worth publishing (Lim, 2012; Luthfianda et al., 2021). On the contrary, a poorly written and confusing introduction section can possibly reduce the chance of RA from being published (Ahlstrom et al., 2013).

The construction of an introduction that can fulfill its communicative purpose and satisfy the expectation of the journal reviewers is inseparable from the selection of words to express the introduction objective. This correlates with the nature of a genre that have certain expressions to define its effectiveness (Ellis et al., 2008; Hyland, 2013). Furthermore, the use of formulaic expressions is essential to mark fluent writing, where the authors are reckoned as the inclusive members who can produce a discourse in a familiar way to its community (Coxhead & Byrd, 2007; Wray, 2002). In the case of introduction writing, the use of appropriate expressions is of a great importance as they can signal the competence of the authors in understanding the generic practice of RA writing. Consequently, it can be counted as a step to increase the chance of manuscript acceptance among the intended readers.

One of the foremost studies on formulaic multi-word expressions was performed by Biber et al., (1999), leading to the emergence of the term 'lexical

bundles' (LBs). In their study, 'LBs' is defined as extended collocation, i.e. sequences of three or more words that statistically tend to co-occur in discourse. The characteristics of LBs that distinguish them from other expressions are defined through their frequency, fixedness, idiomaticity, and structural status (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2004). LBs occurrences in a set of discourses are much more frequent when compared to other forms of expressions, such as pure idioms, that have rare to no occurrences. Their fixedness is also frequency-oriented in which only word combinations that fit the predetermined frequency criteria will qualify as LBs, regardless of their alternate forms. However, there is still flexibility that makes LBs differ across different discourses. Some LBs have been identified to appear in fixed sequences (e.g. *there's a lot of*), particularly in spoken discourse. While those more typical in written discourse are in fixed frame patterns consisting of function words with "intervening variable slots" filled by content words (e.g. *in the (case/context/field) of*) (Biber, 2009, p. 294). Most LBs, nevertheless, are non-idiomatic and structurally incomplete. Instead of having a complete structure, most of them bridge two structural units: they start at a phrase or clause boundary and end as the first elements of the second unit. Hereby, LBs are seen as discourse building blocks that help the construction of cohesive discourse (Biber et al., 1999; Cortes, 2013) as well as signaling units that guide the audience to foresee the upcoming information in the discourse (Nesi & Basturkmen, 2006).

The importance of LBs as discourse building blocks has invited a number of researchers to conduct studies on the use of LBs in RAs. Some studies focused their attention on LBs in RA with specific disciplines (e.g. chemistry (Zare & Valipouri, 2021), economics (Damchevska, 2019), music (Savelyeva, 2021), and applied linguistics (Nasrabady et al., 2020)). Others put their attention on the LBs used by non-native English authors (e.g. Turkish authors (Bal-Gezegin, 2019), Thai authors (Panthong & Poonpon, 2020), and comparison of LBs by Iranian and English authors (Pourmusa, 2014)). Rather than treating RA as one single discourse, some researchers have put their interest in investigating LBs across different RA sections (e.g. abstracts (Shahriari et al., 2013), introductions (Jalali & Moini, 2014), discussions (Jalali & Moini, 2018), introductions-methods-results comparison (Shahriari, 2017), and abstracts-conclusions comparison (Shahmoradi et al., 2021)).

Reflecting that each section of RAs is regarded as a genre with a probability to manifest LBs differently, studies in this area seemingly will leave a promising output as a guide for the use of proper expressions across different RA sections. However, although some studies have touched on this domain, studies specifying the exploration of LBs in the introduction section remain scant. Whereas, as previously mentioned, presenting an adequate introduction section is considered difficult concerning its importance to carry the significance of research in an attempt to get the RA published. The closest related study as mentioned above, Jalali and Moini's (2014), focused on medical introduction sections and reported that most of the founded LBs are phrasal and structurally built by noun phrases. Since Jalali and Moini's study has covered the investigation of LBs structures in published hard science research article introductions, it is interesting to presume that there may be discrepancies in the manifestation of LBs (both structurally and functionally) between the introduction section of soft science RAs that pass the journal review and those that do not. To the author's knowledge, no studies have explored this matter yet, and this study is therefore driven to initiate one.

1.2 Purposes of the Study

This study is aimed to analyze and compare the manifestation of LBs in the introduction section of accepted and rejected soft science RAs, specifically in applied linguistics. This study covers the comparison of LBs in terms of their structures and functions.

1.3 Statement of Problems

Based on the explained background, this study is focused on addressing the following questions:

1. How does lexical bundles (LBs) manifestation structurally differ in accepted and rejected applied linguistic research article introductions?
2. How does lexical bundles (LBs) manifestation functionally differ in the two groups of research article introductions?

1.4 Scope of the Study

This study is focused on analyzing and comparing the manifestation of LBs in the introduction sections of accepted and rejected RAs in the field of applied linguistics. The data scope of this study covered the introduction sections of RAs that were accepted and rejected by an Indonesian Scopus-indexed journal. To assist the analyses and comparison, this study employed the taxonomies of LBs structures from Biber et al. (2004) and functions from Hyland (2008b) (elaborated in chapter II).

1.5 Significance of the Study

The findings of this study are expected to be the avenue for a better understanding of LBs use in the introduction section of RA. The findings are further hoped to provide guidance for the writing of RA introductions, especially in the field of applied linguistics, to support the probability of RAs acceptance and publication in targeted journals.

1.6 Clarification of Terms

1. Lexical bundles

Lexical bundles can be defined as bundles or sequences of a minimum of three words that have a tendency to co-occur in discourse (Biber et al., 1999). They are essentially multi-word expressions that are typical for a discourse; however, for a bundle of words to be defined as a lexical bundle, it must meet several cut-off criteria predetermined in a study. The criteria include the length of the bundles, along with their minimum frequency and dispersion in a range of text. For instance, Biber et al. (1999) intended to analyze four-word bundles in their corpora of conversation and academic prose by setting the cut-off criteria that the word combinations in their study must occur at least ten times per million words and be spread across at least five different texts to qualify as lexical bundles.

2. Applied linguistics

Applied linguistics can be explained as an academic discipline that relates the knowledge about (a) language, (b) how it is learned, and (c) how it is used, to

achieve some purpose or solve problems in the real world (Cook, 2003; Schmitt & Celce-Murcia, 2020). In a broader sense, applied linguistics is concerned with the understanding of language's role in human affairs with the provision of knowledge for those who are in charge of taking language-related decisions such as in the classroom, workplace, law court, or laboratory (Wilkins, 1999).

3. Research article introduction

In a research article, an introduction is usually placed right after an abstract. As the name implies, the introduction becomes a section to introduce the research. Its primary purpose is to present the research rationale, moving from the general discussion of the topic background to the specific research question or hypothesis. While the secondary purpose it carries is to attract the readers' interest in the investigated topic (Swales & Feak, 1994).

1.7 Organization of the Paper

This paper is organized into five chapters as follows:

1. Introduction

This chapter provides an overview of the background of the study, purposes of the study, statement of problems, the scope of the study, the significance of the study, clarification of terms, and organization of the paper.

2. Literature review

This chapter elaborates on the concepts, theories, and previous studies related to the present study.

3. Research methodology

This chapter describes the research design, data collection, and data analysis procedure used in this study.

4. Findings and discussion

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the analyses and the discussion of their implication.

5. Conclusion and suggestions

This chapter delivers the conclusion of the findings in this study and suggestions for related future studies.