The Use of Boosters in Written and Spoken Discourses by Indonesian ELT Students

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Article History	Abstract
	This study aimed to delineate the use of by Indonesian English Language Teaching (ELT) graduate students boosters in written and spoken discourses. This study was a descriptive qualitative study involving 20 participants. The data were collected from the graduate students' thesis background and their presentations in thesis proposal seminar. To calculate the frequency of boosters, corpus-based approach using a concordance software, i.e. AntConc (3.4.4) was used. The use of boosters was classified according to boosters taxonomy adapted from Hinkel (2005) and Hyland (2005). This study discovered that the patterns of the use of boosters in both discourses were alike: E–P–A. Second, more boosters were more applied in spoken discourse. Based on the total number of booster variant in taxonomy, roughly 65% was applied in both discourses. Therefore, discourse modes, written and spoken, can influence the use of boosters in academic discourse.

INTRODUCTION

Boosters are metadiscourse devices which are employed to represent writers'/speaker' position. Hyland (2005) classifies boosting expression into interactional metadiscourse which is straight, individual and associated with interpersonality. Additionally, it also functions to express the writers' /speakers' explicit views on a notion that can engage readers/listeners to get involve in the academic discourse (Hyland, 2000; Seskauskiene, 2008), and highlight the certainty and put emphasis on the force of a proposition (Khajavy, Asadpour & Yousefi, 2012). Besides, Hyland as cited in Algi (2012) state that boosters are words that enable the writer or speaker to deliver certainty and to imply his/her engagement with the topic.

It is apparent that boosters are substantial discourse markers in academic discourse. In academic discourse, it is essential for a writer/speaker to evaluate the certainty of his/her claims (Hyland, 2000) particularly for students in which they must be able to use 'right kind of language' to convey their ideas and to generate rhetorical,

cognitive and pragmatic values of the discourse (Seskauskiene, 2008). Therefore, boosters are important for a writer /speaker wherein they are able to show their degree of confidence toward the proposition, either written or spoken (Heng & Tan, 2010).

In regard to this topic, several studies have investigated the use of booster expressions in written discourse (Takimoto, 2015; Serholt, 2012; Getkham, 2016). In the study conducted by Takimoto (2015), it revealed that boosters were likely found in humanities and social sciences articles due to the fact that they were more interpretative. Moreover, Serholt (2012) and Getkham (2016) found that boosters were mostly used in the 'introduction' and 'discussion' sections of articles or papers.

Furthermore, some studies have investigated the use of booster in academic writing particularly the 'discussion' section. Dobakhti (2013), for instance, tried to find out the differences and similarities of the use of boosters in qualitative and quantitative research articles. The results showed no significant difference on the use of boosters in both types of research articles, yet a highlight of this study was high numbers of booster on finding section. Additionally, Resmayani (2016) compared male and female in using booster and the results also showed no obvious differences found. Besides, in terms of frequency there was also no significant difference between ELT (English Language Teacher) and ELL (English Language Literature) students. Nonetheless, little is known on the use of booster in spoken discourse. Granqvist (2013) conducted a study to find out the numbers of booster used in a TV show by both female and male. The finding revealed that female used booster more frequently than male; however, the gap was not so distant.

In fact, spoken and written discourse are quite distinct in terms of paralinguistic signals, preciseness, organization, deviations, lexical diversity, and repetition frequency (Bartsch in Ghasemi & Jahromi, 2014). One of abovementioned distinctions, preciseness, is dealing with the writer's /speaker' stance on a claim which includes the use of boosters. Due to this differences, this study investigated the use of boosters in introduction section of research proposal and highlighted the differences in both types of discourse. The introduction was selected since previous studies have not discussed introduction section yet.

In regard to the explanation above, this study was intended to examine the use of boosters in both written discourse and spoken discourse in ELT context. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. How are boosters employed in written and spoken discourses in regard to types and frequency?
2. In which discourse, are boosters more likely to occur?
3. What is the distribution of boosters variants in written and spoken discourses?

METHOD

This was a descriptive qualitative study using corpus-based approach. 20 graduate students majoring English Language Teaching at Universitas Negeri Malang were willing to participate in this study. The data for written discourse were obtained from research proposal of the participants, while the spoken discourse data were from their presentation in the seminar. The focus was merely on 'background of the study' section.

In collecting the data, the researchers underwent the following steps:

Step 1. Asking the subjects' willingness to be the subjects of this study and explaining the process of collecting the data.

Step 2. Kindly asking for the thesis proposal files to the subjects and recording their presentation in the seminar.

Step 2. Transcribing the recordings of the presentations.

Step 3. Giving the code to the files as "discourse mode (abbrev)_subject's number" i.e. TP_1 — TP_20 and TPP_1 — TPP_20 in the computer.

Step 4. Building the corpora by changing the files in (.docs) format into (.txt) format, as required for concordance analysis, by utilizing *AntFileConverter (1.2.0)*.

In order to analyze the data, a concordance software, i.e. AntConc (3.4.4), was utilized. This software was specifically designed by Anthony (2014) to calculate the frequency of booster in accordance with the types. Furthermore, an English dictionary software was also used, i.e., Cambridge Dictionary (2008), to see whether the words were categorized into booster variant or not. Lastly, this study used booster taxonomy by Hinkel (2005) and Hyland (2005) (see Appendix 1).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS
Research Finding
Based on the findings, 77,532 words were the numbers of corpora analyzed. From the total number, 61,614 words were found in thesis proposal corpus and and 15,918 words were found in thesis proposal presentation corpus.

Boosters Occurrences in Terms of Type and Frequency
There were 822 boosters in thesis proposal corpus and 280 boosters in thesis proposal presentation corpus. After calculating the type and the frequency of boosters, it was found that the patterns for both kinds of discourse were similar - P, A and E as it is displayed in Table 1.

Table 1. Frequency of boosters

No.	Number of Subjects	Corpus	Boosters Frequency			Total
			P	A	E	
1.		Thesis Proposal	173	155	494	822
2.	20	Thesis Proposal Presentation	68	34	178	280

Where:

P = Universal and negative pronouns

A = Amplifiers

E = Emphatics

The highest frequency was Emphatics (E) type (TP = 60.1% and TPP = 63.57%). The moderate frequency was Universal and negative pronouns (P) type (TP = 21.05% and TPP = 24.29%). The lowest frequency was Amplifiers (A) type (TP = 18.86% and TPP = 12.14%). In addition, the following excerpts display the examples boosters in the thesis proposal and the proposal presentation.

Excerpt 1:

> *"Both the teacher and the students <u>found</u> the approach useful when using a five-stage process applied to word problems focused on statistics." (TP_5)*

Excerpt 2:

> *"The research gap is because there is <u>no</u> study about the implementation of QS in English language teaching...." (TPP_7)*

Based on Excerpt 1 and Excerpt 2, expressly, the students employed the variant 'found' to say the proposition in a strong way and without any doubt and the variant 'no' to comprise the pronoun used to refer to universal noun.

Comparison between Boosters in Written and Spoken Discourses in terms of Frequency

To make sure the data were comparable, the analysis was done in the normalized frequency. In order to do so, the formula proposed by Resmayani (2016) was utilized wherein the calculation results were in per thousand word (ptw). The results showed that boosters were more likely used in thesis proposal presentation than thesis proposal. The results can be seen in Table 2.

Table 2. Normalized frequency of boosters

| No.	Number of Subjects	Corpus	Normalized Frequency of Boosters			Total
			P	A	E	
1.		Thesis Proposal	2.81	2.52	8.02	13.34 ptw
2.	20	Thesis Proposal Presentation	4.27	2.14	11.18	17.59 ptw
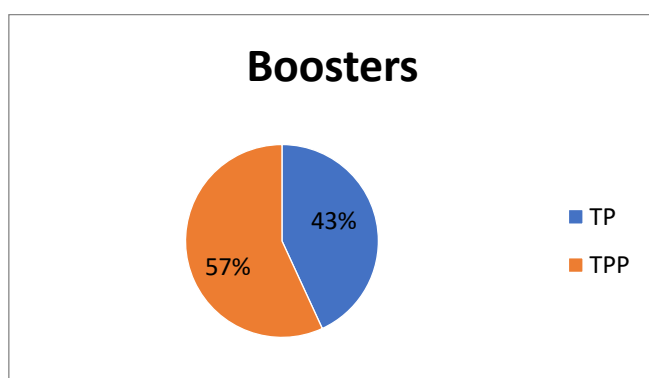
Graphic 1. Boosters in both discourses

Distribution of Boosters Variants

From the total of 91 boosters variants (P = 7, A = 40, E = 44), it was found that 60 boosters variants appeared in both discourses. It indicates that 65.93 % of booster variants in the taxonomies were used in both discourses. More specifically, the

students used 65.93% of booster variants in thesis proposal and 41.76 % of those in thesis proposal presentation. The comparison of booster variants appearances can be seen in Graphic 2.
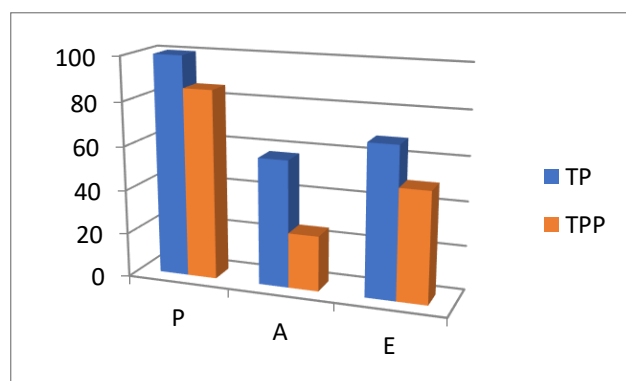
Graphic 2. The percentages of booster variants occurrences based on types

Discussion

The orders of occurrences of boosters in the two corpora were the same: E – P – A. The highest frequency was Emphatics (E). The moderate frequency was Universal and negative pronouns (P). The lowest frequency was Amplifiers (A). It indicates that students often say something in a strong way and without any doubt in both written and spoken discourses. They moderately use pronouns that refer to universal and negative noun / noun phrase. They seldom employ the words used to increase the size or effect of something. This is in line with Wang (2010) who say that a writer/speaker might use precise language such as boosters when writing something or saying something. Further, the writer/speaker' intention or goal of writing or speaking influences types of boosters they employ since each type has different function (Rashady, 2012).

Based on the finding, more boosters are used by ELT students in spoken discourse than written discourse. Spoken discourse is less descriptive and more prescriptive than written discourse (Daniel *et al*., 2009). Besides, spoken mode requires a speaker to make more cognitive attempt, presumably because the speaker has direct interaction and communication with the listeners. As a result, spoken mode makes the discourse more dynamic. The speaker takes less distance or space to their utterances and portray things more specifically.

Additionally, in terms of formality, written mode is considered more formal than spoken mode. That is why students are not excessively demanded to use mitigating and polite (or distant) language. It is supported by Koch and Oesterreicher in Areta (2016) who state that students can show their position with certainty in spoken discourse. They can confidently show their stance and boost their utterances.

The distribution of boosters variants used by students is affected by their lexical richness because one of its measurements is lexical variation (Laufer and Nation, 1995). In other words, students with high lexical richness will use more booster variants. Therefore, looking at the percentage of the distribution of boosters variants employed by the students in this study, it is suggested that the students' lexical richness

related to and boosters be improved. For instance, *very* was the most frequent variant of boosters in Amplifiers (A) type used by the students in both written and spoken discourses; on the contrary, other synonymous words, e.g. *enormously* and *severely* were totally unused by the students. This lack of lexical variation indicates the students' lack of lexical richness on boosters variants.

CONCLUSION

Discourse modes, either written or spoken, have an impact on the use of boosters. The orders of occurrences of booster types in ELT students' written and spoken discourses are the same. In fact, boosters appear more in ELT students' spoken discourse. Spoken mode makes the discourse more dynamic. The speaker takes less distance or space to their utterances and portray things more specifically. Additionally, booster variants are used in moderate quantity by ELT students in both written and spoken discourses. The distribution of boosters variants used by the students is affected by their lexical richness. Further, more boosters variants appear in the students' written discourse, overall.

The body of knowledge about hedges and boosters would need a deeper investigation on the factors affecting students' use of boosters. This study focused on the discourse modes, written and spoken. In this way, the researchers recommend future researchers to conduct research on other factors affecting the students' use of boosters, for example, personality, i.e. extrovert and introvert, etc.

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Appendix 1. Taxonomy of Boosters (Adapted from Hinkel (2005) and Hyland (2005))

No.	Type	Variants	
1	Universal and negative pronouns	all	none
		each	no
		every-pronominals	no-pronominals
		every	
2	Amplifiers	absolutely	severely
		downright	so (+adjective/verb)
		altogether	sharply
		always	strongly
		amazingly	too (+ adjective)
		awfully	terribly
		badly	totally
		by all means	unbelievably
		completely	very
		definitely	fully
		deeply	well
		a lot (+ comparative adjective)	in all/every respect(s)/way(s)
		forever	much (+ adjective)
		enormously	never
		entirely	not half bad
		even	positively
		ever	perfectly
		extremely	greatly
		far (+ comparative adjective)	highly
		far from it	hugely
3	Emphatics	a lot (+ noun/adjective)	indeed
		certain(-ly)	no way
		clear(-ly)	outright
		complete(-ly)	pure(-ly)
		undoubtedly	real(-ly)
		exact(-ly)	such a (+ noun)
		extreme	strong
		for sure	sure(-ly)
		great	total
		actual(-ly)	believe (s)/(d)/(ing)
		beyond/no/without doubt	conclusive
		establish (es)/(ed)/(ing)	demonstrate (s)/(d)/(ing)
		doubtless	decidedly
		evident (ly)	find (s)/(ing)/found

in fact	know (s)/(n)/(ing)/knew
must (possibility)	obvious (ly)
of course	prove (s)/(d)/(n)
realize (s)/(d)/(ing)	show (s)/(ed)/(n)/(ing)
think (s)/(ing)/thought	true (ly)
incontestable (ly)	undeniable (ly)
incontrovertible (ly)	undisputedly
indisputable (ly)	definite