



Metadiscourse in the introductions of PhD theses and research articles



Tomoyuki Kawase^{*,1,2}

Faculty of Arts and Education, Deakin University, 221 Burwood Highway, VIC. 3125, Australia

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 9 July 2014

Received in revised form 19 August 2015

Accepted 24 August 2015

Available online xxx

Keywords:

Genre analysis

Rhetoric

Metadiscourse

Doctoral thesis or dissertation

Research article

Introduction

ABSTRACT

Previous studies have indicated that the introductions of PhD theses and research articles are similar in their rhetorical features. In contrast, it has been suggested that metadiscourse as a rhetorical device is constructed in a different manner in these texts. However, very few studies have sought to empirically validate this assumption. This paper investigates how research writers construct metadiscourse in the introductions of their PhD theses and subsequently published research articles. The analysis shows that the majority of the writers make greater use of metadiscourse in their article introductions. The most significant changes include greater use of phrases referring to previous research, less reference to other parts of the text, and still less use of phrases signalling authorial presence. Close examination reveals that these variations derive from genre-specific features, including that writers of PhD thesis introductions present previews of the subsequent chapters. This paper closes by arguing that the variations can also be ascribed to the nature of the PhD thesis as an educational genre and that of research articles as a professional genre in which writers need to survive severe competition to get their manuscripts published.

© 2015 The Author. Published by Elsevier Ltd. This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC-ND license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Previous studies of academic writing have often indicated that the introductions of PhD theses and research articles (RAs) are similar in their rhetorical features (e.g., [Bunton, 1998, 2002](#); [Feak, Swales, & Irwin, 2011](#); [Paltridge & Starfield, 2007](#); [Samraj, 2008](#); [Swales, 2004](#)). [Swales \(2004\)](#), for instance, wrote that the overall structure of the introduction of PhD theses “in broad outline is comparable to that of research articles” (p. 117). [Samraj \(2008\)](#) noted that “[s]tudies of introductions in research articles and PhD theses have made it clear that a crucial rhetorical function of introductions is to justify the study being reported” (p. 56). However, it has been suggested that writers of these introductions are dissimilar in terms of how they construct the rhetorical device of metadiscourse or “self-reflective linguistic expressions referring to the evolving texts, to the writer, and to the imagined reader of that text” ([Hyland, 2004](#), p. 133; see also [Adel, 2006](#); [Crismore, 1989](#); [Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993](#); [Mauranen, 1993](#)). [Swales \(1990\)](#) claimed that “the key differentiating aspect of

* Current address: 59 Tono Inuigaito, Joyo, Kyoto, Japan.

E-mail address: tkawjpb@gmail.com.

¹ This is where the actual work was done; it is not the author's current affiliation.

² Tomoyuki Kawase is a researcher for whom English is a foreign language. He completed his PhD studies at Deakin University in Australia. His thesis explores Japanese researchers' development of academic literacy in English. His research interests also include the roles of rhetoric in knowledge construction.

dissertation writing [from article writing] is a much greater use of metadiscourse" (P. 188). Bunton (1998) analysed 13 PhD theses and presented findings to explicitly support Swales' claim. Paltridge and Starfield (2007, p. 89) attributed thesis writers' greater use of metadiscourse to "much lengthier" text characteristic of the thesis genre. Swales (1990) drew the same conclusion by saying that "[m]etadiscourse goes with extensive textual territory" (p. 189). Studies examining more specific usage of metadiscourse in PhD theses and RAs also tend to indicate variations derived from genre-related factors. Koutsantoni (2006), for instance, argued that research writers change how to use metadiscourse items to control the strength of their claims according to their relationship with the intended audience of the genre (e.g., thesis examiners and journal reviewers) (cf. Shaw, 2000).

It should be noted that none of the conclusions drawn in the above studies are about the metadiscourse use in the introductions alone. Moreover, to my knowledge, no study has empirically sought to examine assumptions regarding how and why metadiscourse is constructed differently in the introductions of PhD theses and RAs based on the comparative analysis of both texts.

This paper explores how eight writers construct metadiscourse in the introductions of their PhD theses and RAs that they later produced based on the theses. By doing this, it examines the assumption that variations in the use of metadiscourse in these texts can be attributed to the nature of the genre. The findings will provide useful insights, especially for early career researchers aspiring to publish RAs based on their theses.

2. Material and methods

2.1. Definitions of metadiscourse

Previous studies have often classified metadiscourse in relation to the three communicative functions of language identified by Hallidayan systemic functional grammar (e.g., Halliday, 1994), as has been pointed out (e.g., Ädel, 2006; Hyland, 2005). They are explained by Hyland (2005, p. 26) in the following terms:

- The *Ideational function*: the use of language to represent experience and ideas
- The *Interpersonal function*: the use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluations and feelings
- The *Textual function*: the use of language to organize the text itself, coherently relating what is said to the world and to readers.

It appears that the majority of metadiscourse theorists (e.g., Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2000; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985, 2002) have adopted the notion that metadiscourse does not serve an ideational function (i.e., to construct propositional content) but textual and interpersonal functions. In contrast, studies like Ädel (2006) and Mauranen (1993) consider that metadiscourse contains (meta)textual items alone, questioning the notion that metadiscourse consists solely of non-propositional items.

We should note that separate analyses of metadiscourse items with single functions could lead to miss the possible interactions between them (cf. Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 2002). This point is suggested, for example, by Hyland as follows:

In other words, while metadiscourse theorists tend to see textual, interpersonal and propositional (ideational) elements of the texts as discrete and separable, Halliday reminds us that texts have to be seen more holistically. Discourse is a process in which writers are simultaneously creating propositional content, interpersonal engagement and the flow of text as they write. (Hyland, 2005, p. 27)

Nevertheless, previous studies suggesting thesis writers' greater use of metadiscourse in the introductions (e.g., Bunton, 1998; Paltridge & Starfield, 2007; Swales, 2004) tend to assume that metadiscourse contains only metatextual items. Swales (2004) wrote that "I prefer the term metatext" (p. 121) when commenting on his earlier claim of thesis writers' "greater use of metadiscourse" (Swales, 1990, p. 188). Bunton (1998) did not examine interpersonal items in his metadiscourse analysis; thereby noting that "choice of the term 'metatext' rather than metadiscourse seems particularly apt" (p. 219). Paltridge and Starfield (2007) used metadiscourse and metatext interchangeably, which can be seen from their definition that "metadiscourse (also referred to as metatext) refers to discourse about discourse" (p. 89).

Therefore, this paper addresses a need to examine whether and why research writers make greater use of metadiscourse in their PhD thesis introductions than in their RA introductions based on the definition that metadiscourse consists of both metatextual and interpersonal items.

2.2. Data selection

The corpus analysed in this paper consists of the introductions of PhD theses and RAs by the same authors. They are a part of the data analysed in my previous study (Kawase, 2011) that investigated Japanese researchers' development of academic literacy in English. The theses were selected from those successfully completed at Anglophone (i.e., Australian) universities.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/6843216>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/6843216>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)