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University Students' Ability In Discourse Type Recognition

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Abstract: The aim of the study is to identify the discourse type recognition of university students. Descriptive qualitative study was employed to explore the students' ability in recognizing discourse types. To achieve the objective of the study, a test of discourse type recognition was administered to 25 students of non-English department at a private Islamic university in Yogyakarta. The findings showed that most students found it difficult in recognizing discourse types, the physical form, and the situation in which the discourse types might be found. Other than that, the existence of cultural specificity in discourse types might hinder the students from predicting the proper names for the discourse types. This suggested that the students need to be given more exposures on discourse types and cross cultural understanding to help them identify the discourse types better.

Keywords: Discourse types recognition; names of discourse types; cultural specificity

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INTRODUCTION

The English language teaching and learning, particularly in the context of teaching English as a foreign language, usually puts an emphasis on teaching the four skills of language, such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking (Hinkel, 2006; Juan & Flor, 2006; Lotherington, 2004; Powers, 2010; Usó-Juan & Martínez-Flor, 2006; Velayati, Muslem, Fitriani, & Samad, 2017). Moreover, according to Yusuf, Fajrina, & Sari (2016) language teaching has mostly concerned on the formal language system which focuses on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary. However, to make the communication successful, acquiring the four skills of language and focusing the teaching on pronunciation, grammar, and vocabulary are not enough. Rather, it requires the discourse skills to make the learners able to succeed in the communication. Discourse skills can be regarded as one's ability to use

language for communication (AY, 2010; Aydoğan & Akbarov, 2014; Milton, 2013). Hence, it is very prominent to teach discourse skills to the English language learners. It is very essential as it is a key for successful communication.

In terms of the discourse skills, discourse type recognition is one of several discourse skills which needs to be mastered by the English language learners. Discourse type is something or any kind of text which we usually use everyday with the purpose to orient ourselves towards the communication in which we are involved (Graesser & McNamara, 2011; Richardson & Dale, 2005). Furthermore, Cook agrees that it is very important to introduce the students to different types of discourse in order to help the students to succeed in the interaction in which they might involve. He adds that, in terms of language teaching and learning, there are plenty of books which have tried to raise

the awareness on the students to deal with different discourse types. However, only very few books concern on the issue of identifying and recognizing discourse types.

As what has been mentioned earlier, discourse type recognition is one of the keys to succeed in communication. Grabe (2003) states that the ability to remember a discourse or recognize a discourse is important to an effective comprehension. Similarly, McElhone (2012) explains that discourse type recognition is one of the skills of discourse processing. It is the very first step of discourse processing which allows a successful communication to occur. According to Nystrand (2006), discourse processing focuses on the ways in which one attempts to comprehend and understand the language. They further explain that comprehending a language like several process, including the identification of letter, sound, word, sentence-level unit, books, and even conversational communication. Therefore, identifying and recognizing the discourse type are also a prominent part to language comprehension.

In terms of the discourse types recognition, the students of English as a foreign language may find it hard to name the discourse types in English. Though they might have been familiar with a certain form of discourse types, it happens quite often that they cannot mention the terms of the discourse types. Despite the importance and the problems which might occur in relation to discourse type recognition, there are only a limited research studies conducted in the area of discourse type recognition. A research study which can be found related to discourse type recognition was conducted by Ameer (2013) which revealed that the students of English language meet several difficulties in finding the proper terms for a discourse type. Hence, in this study, the researcher also attempt to examine and find out the students' ability in recognizing discourse types in English to enrich the findings of the previous study.

According to Ameer (2013), there are several efforts which have been done to make a classification on discourse types, in which the discourse characteristics could be related to a certain type of discourse. Some classifications of discourse types are made by experts like Steger in Ameer (2013). In discourse type classification proposed by Steger in Ameer (2017), he attempts to categorize discourse types based on the situation of the discourse. He focuses more on distinguishing the discourse types on the basis of sociological analysis. The model of discourse types by Steger in Ameer (2013) then classifies discourse types as follows: presentation, message, report, publication, conversation, and interview.

Another classification made on discourse type was proposed by (Patterson & Weideman, 2013). In his classification model, he points that discourse types are anything that we see in everyday life which leads us towards communication. He further explains that the students should not be burdened with names, rather discourse types are metalanguage which exists in daily life and is advantageous to be learnt by the students of foreign language.

Below is the classification of discourse types as proposed:

recipe	joke	report	label
letter	advertisement	anecdote	massage
chat	seminar	poem	note
song	novel	notice	biography
speech	story	sign	essay
lecture	manual	article	warrant
ticket	menu	cheque	will
conversation	sermon	telegram	row

In addition to the above classification, Eslami & Eslami-Rasekh (2007) also mentions that discourse types can be various and cover a larger scope than the mentioned classification. He also claims that many textbooks can divide the materials by the functions or the topics that the discourse types might share.

It has always been a general truth that teaching a language is also teaching the culture of the target language. Teaching the terms of the discourse types emerges an issue

if the taught terms are specific or familiar to the students (Cook, 1989). He later explains that some discourse types can be regarded as being under the universal categories, such as songs, and that the others might be shared between cultures which are closed to each other, like Christmas card. However, it should be noted that in teaching discourse types, there could be some terms in which we should not take for granted as each term has exact translation equivalent. Pattison (2007) adds that the teachers with a sufficient knowledge of cultural studies understand that even in a close culture, there may be some differences which cannot be avoided.

Cook (1989) also states that in the heterogenous or multicultural classrooms where the students might come from different cultures or where the teacher might come from a different culture from the students, there can be a discussion between the students and the teacher of what the students understand by different terms. This kind of activity can be motivating for the students to learn about discourse types as well as the language and the culture. On the contrary, in the homogenous classroom in which the students and the teacher are from one or the same culture, the situation can turn to be more difficult, as in learning to recognize the discourse types, the students need to depend on the teacher's understanding of the language and the culture being taught.

In the process of recognizing the discourse types, context seems to be one of the prominent aspect that hold the crucial point in linking the language use with the discourse type recognition (Rivers and Temperley, 2008; Widdowson 2011). To be able to recognize and understand the discourse type, one should be able to be aware of the context where the discourse types might be found. Cook (1989) notes that there are several features which could be taken into account and attributed to the context of discourse types. These features could be identified in order to make it easier for us to recognize the discourse types.

METHOD

In this study, the researcher attempted to explore the students' abilities in recognizing discourse types in English. This study was a descriptive qualitative study. Ary, Jacob, and Razavieh (2010) state that descriptive qualitative study tries to interpret a process or phenomenon. Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2011) explains that in descriptive research study, the phenomenon or process is described as the way things are. The descriptive design of the study was chosen as the researcher intended to obtain rich data about the students' ability in recognizing discourse types and explore them deeper. In collecting qualitative data, Ary, Jacob, and Razavieh (2010) state that the researcher could use a variety of data collection techniques. In this study, the data were collected through observation and test. Observation was used to frame the process of the teaching and learning process of discourse type recognition. Meanwhile, a test was used to find out and justify the students' ability in discourse type recognition.

In order to help the researcher to describe the phenomena and the process, the researcher attempted to answer three questions that could help ther in describing the students' discourse type ability. The questions were adopted from (Felton & Kuhn, 2001). This study aims at describing the problems faced by the students in identifying the discourse types. It also to describe the culture specific the examples of the discourse types and the students' understanding on the name of discourse types in English.

The subjects of the study were the students of a non-English department at a well-known Islamic private university in Yogyakarta. The students were the first semester students of Agribusiness study program. By the time the study was conducted, the students were taking English as a general lecture subject. They were taking Integrated English Learning Level 2 as their course subject. It should be noted that these students were the students whose the scores of

the English proficiency ranged from 400 to 420. Therefore, it could be assumed that the students' levels of proficiency varied from elementary to low intermediate. In this level of proficiency, the students were expected to have been able to recognize reading texts and passages based on the texts' the situations, conditions, topics, and contexts in which they were already familiar with.

Sequence of the Implementation Activities

In the implementation of the teaching practice, the researcher employed genre-based language teaching. The genre-based approach was used as genre-based approach could allow the students to know the nature of the texts' features in terms of the linguistic features, structure, and the communicative purpose of the text (Dirgeyasa, 2016; Jiang, 2012).

It should be noted that in this study, the researcher attempted to find out the students' ability in recognizing discourse type. Thus, it was also important to make the students familiar with the features of the discourse type. For this reason, genre-based approach was used to deliver the material. In genre-based approach, there were several steps to be used, such as building knowledge, modelling, joint construction, and independent construction of the text. Since this research study focuses on recognition of the discourse types, the research study only covered two stages of genre based approach, which were building knowledge of the text and modelling of text. Below is the explanation of the steps:

1. BKO (Building Knowledge of the Field). In the stage of BKO, the researcher showed the students several pictures of discourse types. This activity aimed at activating the students' schemata.
2. MOT (Modeling of Text). In modelling of text, the researcher provided some examples of discourse types to the students. After that, the students were given several discourse types to be discussed. They were asked to discuss the function, the physical forms, and the

situation where they usually deal with a certain discourse type. Then, the students were asked to identify the pieces of discourse types.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Implementation of the Teaching and Learning Process of Discourse Type Recognition

Before asking the students to do a test on discourse type recognition to find out how well the students understood the terms of the discourse type, the researcher tried to explain and provide the students with some examples of the discourse type. There were several things which the researcher took into account in this pedagogical practice. The first thing was the number of terms of the discourse type. Based on the classification of the discourse type, there are a lot of terms of the discourse type that the students need to be able to acknowledge. Thus, it can burden the students. Considering the numbers, the researcher decided to choose the discourse types which might be found under the topic of holiday. This consideration was made as Airey & Linder (2009) also mentioned that discourse type is often taught under a certain discourse type. The topic of holiday was chosen because at that time, the students were studying about vacation plan. Second, in helping the students to recognize the discourse types, (Gural & Shulgina, 2015) also proposes that there are thirteen ways which can be used. However, considering the limited time for the implementation, the researcher decided to aid the students to discourse type recognition by eliciting and focusing them on the function, physical forms, and the situation.

In the implementation, before directly answering the evaluation questions and finding out the ability of the students in recognizing the discourse types, the researcher explained and engaged the students in the warming up activities related to discourse types first. Initially, the researcher provided the students with several pictures of

discourse types. The researcher showed the students the pictures of the discourse types that usually are found by the students when they are on a holiday. At this point, the researcher also explained a brief about what was meant by discourse type. The pictures shown to the students included map, guide book, notice, business card, advertisement, and bus schedule. Most of the students were familiar with the given pictures. However, they did not know the correct terms to say the words in English. Therefore, the students said the terms in their native language. Another problem found in the recognition was when in Indonesian term, the discourse type of sign and notice, as an example, is often regarded as '*tanda*' but in English, the terms are differed into sign when it likely shows a direction, and notice when it contains a warning.

This case also marked the cultural specificity in the effort done by the students in discourse type recognition. The researcher then helped the students by eliciting several questions, such as where and in what kind of situations they usually found the pictures, what the physical form of the picture was, and what the function was.

After showing the pictures of the discourse types, the students were given an activity to identify the names of the discourse types. They were given some pictures and were asked to label them with the correct name of the discourse type. The students were asked to take into account the physical form, the function, and the situation in which the usually the discourse types as well. In this activity, the students seemed to better understand about the notion of discourse types. After completing this activity, the researcher explained deeper and gave more examples about discourse types.

The researcher then asked the students to work in groups. Each group was assigned with one or two discourse types to be described and explained. The students needed to find the characteristics of a certain discourse type and thought about the function, the physical form, and the situation. The students then shared the result of the

discussion to their classmates. The researcher also encouraged the students to pay attention to the features of the discourse type and the styles of language usually found in a certain type of discourse. As the explanation and the discussion on discourse types were considered adequate for the students, the researcher gave the students a test to be fulfilled. After that, a test was administered to justify the students' ability in recognizing the discourse type. The test was also made as the basis of answering the research questions

The Problems Faced by the Students in Identifying the Discourse Types

In the test, the students were asked to identify the discourse types. This test was made as the base of answering the evaluation questions proposed earlier in this paper. In the test, six discourse types were chosen. They were postcard, note, announcement, sign, advertisement, and itinerary.

As what has been mentioned earlier, the discourse types were chosen on the basis of discourse type classification by Hashemi & Ghanizadeh (2012) and his theory that discourse types can be taught and classified under the similar discourse topic. As the topic being discussed was about holiday, the chosen discourse types were adjusted to the topic and the six types were appointed because those types were usually found under the topic.

Prior to the test, the students mostly found it hard in defining the proper terms for the discourse types. However, in the test, this problem could be taken care of as the students were given an explanation on the discourse type. Hence, the explanation made the students able to identify the discourse types better. Even so, there were some mistakes that the students showed in identifying the discourse type during the test.

Furthermore, the problems that the students dealt with in identifying the discourse types could be seen and interpreted from the scores of the test. The three tables below show the students' scores on their performance in identifying the discourse

types, as well as the physical forms and the situations of the discourse types (Connor & Mbaye, 2002; Gilbert & Dabbagh, 2005; Lawrence, 2002).

Table 1. The students' scores in discourse types recognition

N O	Discourse Type	Correct		Wrong		Total	
1	Postcard	25	100%	0	0%	25	100%
2	Note	24	96%	1	4%	25	100%
3	Announ- cement	22	88%	3	12%	25	100%
4	Sign	25	100%	0	0%	25	100%
5	Adverti- sement	25	100%	0	0%	25	100%
6	Itynetary	22	88%	3	12%	25	100%

Table 2. The students' scores in identifying physical forms of discourse type

N O	Discourse Type	Correct		Wrong		Total	
1	Postcard	9	36%	16	0%	25	100%
2	Note	17	68%	8	4%	25	100%
3	Announ- cement	17	68%	8	12%	25	100%
4	Sign	24	96%	1	0%	25	100%
5	Adverti- sement	24	96%	1	0%	25	100%
6	Itynetary	16	64%	9	12%	25	100%

Table 3. The students' scores in identifying the situations of the discourse type

N O	Discourse Type	Correct		Wrong		Total	
1	Postcard	6	24%	19	76%	25	100%
2	Note	16	64%	9	36%	25	100%
3	Announ- cement	24	96%	1	4%	25	100%
4	Sign	25	100%	0	0%	25	100%
5	Adverti- sement	21	84%	4	16%	25	100%
6	Itynetary	12	48%	13	52%	25	100%

Based on the three tables above, it can be seen that the students often made mistakes in defining the proper terms for discourse types. The precentages of scores indicated that postcard is the most difficult type of discourse to be recognized by the students. The majority of the students, with the total amount of 74%, failed to recognize the correct term for postcard. Only 6 students, or 24% of the total students managed to recognize it. Eventhough all students seemed to be able to identiffy the physical forms of the postcard,

which was a kind of letter written in a paper, they showed a contrast in identifying the situations of the discourse type. Only 9 students or 36% of the total students were successful in recognizing the situation.

Other than postcard, itinerary was also a discourse type which was difficult to recognize. It came as the second discourse type which was difficult to identify by the students. Only 48% of students could answer the term correctly. The case of postcard applied the same on itinerary as the majority of the students was able to identify the physical forms correctly but could not point the situation well. It could be seen from the percentage in table 2 that 88% of the students were able to give the correct answer of the physical forms. However, table 3 shows that only around one-third of the total students, or 36%, could mention the situation of the discourse type.

In the third position, note came as another discourse type which was often failed to be recognized by the students. It was also found that some students were unable to identify note as 36% of the students were found to have answered it incorrectly. Although they managed to understand the physical forms, because 96% of the students could answer it properly, 32% of them were unable to identify the situation for the discourse types.

Advertisement was placed fourth in terms of the students' ability in discourse type recognition, out of 25 students, 84% could have answered and named the discourse type correctly. All of the students were also able to identify the physical forms and only one student or 4% of the total students made a mistake in identifying the situation.

When it comes to identify announcement as a discourse type, the students did not experience much difficulty. Almost all of the students, 96% of them, were able to answer the discourse type well. The students were also able to acknowledge the physical form of the discourse types as the percentage shows that 88% students were able

to get the answer right. However, in terms of noticing the situation, the percentage is lower as it shows only 68%. Lastly, the percentage of scores in recognizing sign indicates that the students were likely to be very successful in identifying this discourse type. It is because all students or 100% of the students were able to recognize the discourse type and the physical form as well. In terms of the situation, 96% of the students also succeeded in providing the correct answer.

In brief, the three tables indicated that the biggest problem that the students encountered in discourse type recognition was defining the proper terms for the discourse types. This problem was almost similar to the problem found prior to the test. This finding was also in line with Abdul-Ameer (2013) finding that the students of English language often met difficulties in finding the proper names for a discourse type. Other than that, it was also found that the students experienced difficulty in approximating the proper situation in which a discourse type might be found. However, the students seemed to be able to have successfully acknowledged the physical forms of the discourse types. This finding marked that context played an important aspect that linked the students into discourse type recognition (Andrews, 2005; Blythe, Croft, & Strelec, 2002; Fauziati, 2010).

The Culture Specific Examples of the Discourse Types

Based on the table 1, table 2, and table 3 presented earlier, there are several things which need to be taken into account. First, the students showed almost similar percentages in the percentages of discourse type recognition, physical form, and situation, for some discourse types, like sign and advertisement. It can be seen that the students show close and similar percentages in answering the question related to sign, which are 100% for discourse type recognition, 100% for physical forms, and 96% for situation. Similarly, the students also show stable scores in the percentages of advertisement as they could acknowledge the

discourse type, physical form, and the situation with the percentages of 84%, 100%, and 96% respectively. It indicates that there might be a parallel ability in the students' performance in identifying discourse type, physical form, and situation. On the other hand, it shows that the students might have already been familiar with the discourse types, along with their physical form and the situation in which they might could the discourse type. Hence, it can be assumed that it is possible if the students often find or get the exposure of the discourse types that it provides them with the background knowledge that they are able to identify the discourse type, the physical form, and the situation correctly. It also shows the close cultural relation between the students and the discourse types (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004; Mohr & Lee, 2000; Moreau & Leathwood, 2006).

However, in the other discourse types, such as postcard and itinerary, the students shows fluctuated scores instead of stable and equal scores. In postcard, for instance, the students only could answer 24% correctly for the name of the discourse type and only 36% could answer the situation right. However, all of them could give the correct answer on the physical form. This indicates that the students might fail to identify the name of the discourse type and the situation because they are not familiar with the discourse type. In the Indonesian culture, people rarely exchange postcard during holiday season. The students might be more familiar with letters, but they hardly know about postcard. Hence, the students were unable to figure out the proper term and situation of the discourse type. This example of discourse type signifies that the students' lack some background knowledge about a certain culture outside their existing culture. The same case happens in itinerary as well. Less than a half of the total students could mention the name of the discourse type but the majority of them were able to identify the physical form and the situation. This is because in Indonesian culture people tend to have the same term to refer to a schedule instead of giving a more specific term like

itinerary. Those cases demonstrate that the examples of the discourse types might point to the existence of culture specificity. Even though, some examples of the discourse types might be close to the students' cultures, some others are unfamiliar for them. The cultural specificity could cause the failure on students to be able to predict the terms used to name a certain discourse type. It might prevent them to predict the situation and the physical forms as well. This finding is in line with what has been stated by Rosen et al. (2004); Wagner, Liston, & Miller (2011) that there may be some cultural differences which cannot be avoided that might prevent the students from pointing the correct discourse types. The cultural specificity in this case may happen due to different cultures which exist between the native and the target language. It affects the students' background knowledge or schemata in recognizing the discourse type.

The Students' Understanding on the Name of Discourse Type in English

Before the test was administered, the students were given an explanation about discourse types. The students were provided with some leading activities to build their background knowledge in recognizing the discourse types under the specific topic, in this case, the topic was about holiday and vacation. This activities were expected to give the students better understanding about discourse types and to help them having a good realization when it came to them to recognize the discourse types in the test.

When dealing with leading activities, the students were provided with some pictures of discourse types and were asked to mention the names. Some of them looked hesitated as they might be familiar with the discourse types in Indonesian language but they did not know the English words for them. Therefore, some students tried to give explanation of the discourse type. Some others also mentioned the Indonesian terms for that. After the leading activities, both the researcher and the students discussed some discourse types which were usually found under the topic. In

this point, the students were able to gain better understanding and to be more familiar about the discourse types. This activity helped the students a lot and equipped them with many terms which would be useful for them in identifying the discourse types. In the test, the students were asked to put their understanding of theories on discourse types into practices. In the test, the students were able to answer the given questions with the names of discourse types in English. However, not all the answers were correct. The students showed fluctuated scores in defining and recognizing the discourse types. For some discourse types, the students could provide 96% to 100% correct answers, like announcement and sign. In contrast, for some other discourse types, by referring to table 1, only 24% students could mention correctly the name for postcard and 48% got the answer right for itinerary. Meanwhile, for advertisement and note, 84% and 64% of the total students could give correct answer respectively.

The result of the test shows that the students had already shown good understanding in some discourse types, such as advertisement, announcement, and sign, because almost all students could mention correctly the names of the discourse types. The majority of the students also could name note correctly. However, a quarter of the total students were able to identify postcard and less than a half of them were able to recognize itinerary. The students' difficulty in recognizing some names of the discourse type could be referred to the second research question about cultural specificity. Different culture of the target language and the native language might hinder the students from giving the correct names for the discourse type as the relation between the cultures was not close. This finding is also in line with Park & Cardie (2012); Wright, Koutsoftas, Capilouto, & Fergadiotis (2014) statement that in recognizing the discourse type, it should be considered whether the terms are specific or familiar to the students because some terms might be universal, but the others might be different based on the cultures. In

Indonesia for example, the students regarded itinerary similar to as 'schedule' but in England, the term is different. The students in Indonesia are also not really familiar with the culture of sending postcard and this hinders them from mentioning the proper name for the discourse types.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

In general the conclusion can be summarized that Many students still experienced problems in terms of discourse type recognition. Some of them were unable to mention the discourse types. Some others were unable to recognize either the physical forms or the situations. To deal with this, it would be good for the English teachers to put an emphasize on the importance of the discourse types to students. It would also be beneficial if the students were given more exposures to more types of discourse. As in this research study the types of discourse were limited only to the topic of holiday, the other teachers should also note that it would be helpful to broaden the scope of discourse types to be introduced to the students.

The test result on the discourse types recognition shows that cultural specificity which exists in the discourse types might prevent the students from predicting the correct answers for the discourse types. It also indicated that the students could give the correct answers if the culture is close to their culture. This suggests the teachers to emphasize and teach the students about cross cultural understanding to help them identify the discourse types better. It would be advantageous as well to provide the students with schemata or background knowledge to make it easier for the students to recognize the discourse types if the discourse types are not familiar in their culture.

Some students find it hard to determine the proper names for discourse types. This can be minimized by giving the students leading activities to introduce the students to the terms. Other than that, cultural

specificity might hinder them from defining the names for the discourse types. Hence, as what has been mentioned earlier, building background knowledge and cross cultural understanding are very prominent to be done.

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