MEANING-MAKING OF HEDGES
IN THE GOSSIP COLUMN OF THE JAKARTA POST

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas penggunaan 'hedges' (pernyataan yang berisi ungkapan penulis yang dimitigasi) sebagai bentuk pemaknaan posisi penulis dalam kolom gosip pada koran Jakarta Post. Pemilihan koran harian tersebut sebagai instrumen penelitian didasarkan pada tujuan pragmatik, keterjangkauan dan cakupannya yang bersifat nasional. Merujuk pada teori Lakoff (1973), Holmes (1990) dan Hyland (1996a-b), penelitian ini difokuskan pada fungsi dan makna hedges pada konteks yang berbeda, yakni kolom gosip (sebagai konteks informal), yang pada umumnya hedges diteliti pada wacana akademik (sebagai konteks formal). Berdasarkan konsep tersebut, dapat diasumsikan bahwa fungsi dan makna penggunaan hedges akan berbeda jika digunakan pada konteks yang berbeda pula. Hal ini dapat dilihat dari penggunaan fungsi modal epistemik (ungkapan ketidakpastian) dan fungsi afektif (ungkapan solidaritas). Enam kategori hedges ditemukan dalam penelitian ini. Kemudian dari enam kategori hedges tersebut, ditemukan kategori fungsi modal epistemik 'about' (lima kali) dan fungsi afektif (empat kali). Selain itu, penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan hedges pada kolom gosip dapat digunakan oleh selebritis yang terlibat dalam wacana sebagai media pembentukan citra dan identitas sebagai pencipta tren.

Kata kunci: *gosip, hedges, Jakarta Post, kolom gosip, selebriti*

ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the use of hedges (vague language) as the meaning-making practice in the gossip column of the Jakarta Post. The daily newspaper is chosen due to pragmatic purposes, accessibility, and its national coverage. Adapting the framework of Lakoff (1973), Holmes (1990) and Hyland (1996a-b), this study focuses on the hedges' functions and meanings in a gossip column (informal context), apart from an academic discourse (formal context) in which hedges are frequently discussed. This possibly leads to the diverse functions and meanings of the hedges' occurrences within the discourse: through the employment of 'epistemic modal' (the expression of uncertainty) and 'affective' (the expression of solidarity) function. Further, the mostly-found hedges are the epistemic modal 'about' (five times) and the affective modal 'think' (four times) from six hedge categories. Eventually, it is also revealed that hedges used in the gossip column are to enhance the self-image and trend-setting identity of the celebrities, who indeed are involved in the discourse.

Key Words: celebrity, gossip, gossip column, hedges, Jakarta Post

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INTRODUCTION

In an academic context, one of the features of communication style is the occurrence of hedging (Hyland, 1994; 1996a-b). Riekkinen (2009:188) states "hedges can be defined as communicative strategy composed by words or phrases which enable speakers to make them more acceptable to the interlocutor", while Ahmed (2011) argues that hedges express doubts and uncertainties.

Additionally, three essential related concepts of hedges are identified as the following: To hedge means to show vague language. It is used to distinguish between facts and claims. This concept of cautious language, which is mostly accounted in academic discourse, will determine the strength of the claims that are made. Therefore, someone can use an intentionally noncommittal or ambiguous statement, use evasive or deliberately vague language, or be confidently uncertain *(Retrieved from http://www.bbk.ac.uk/front-page).*

There are four reasons to hedge. *Firstly*, to reduce the risk of opposition by toning down the statement to make it less forceful or offensive; *secondly,* to be more precise in reporting results since hedging can possibly present a true statement which is understood by the writer; *thirdly,* to show positive or negative politeness strategies by appearing humble and not all-knowing; and *lastly*, to support someone's position, build writer-reader relationships, and guarantee the level of acceptability within a certain community and to conform to an established writing style in English. The language devices which are usually used as hedges are: **(1) Modal auxiliary verbs**, such as *may, might, can, could;* **(2) Modal lexical verbs** doubting and evaluating rather than merely describing, such as *to seem, to appear, to believe;* **(3) Probability adjectives**, such as *possible, probable, un/likely;* **(4) Nouns**, such as *assumption, claim, possibility;* **(5) Adverbs**, such as *perhaps, probably, apparently;* **(6) Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time**, such as *approximately, about, often, usually, a lot of;* **(7) Introductory phrases**, such as *believe, to our knowledge, we feel that;* **(8) "If" clause**, such as *if true, if anything;* **(9) Compound hedges**, such as *seems reasonable, looks, probable (Adapted from http://www.bbk.ac.uk/front-page).*

The hedge has been discussed in history in the work of Lakoff (1973). In this study, the hedge was related to 'meaning criteria' and the 'logic of fuzzy concepts'. A hedge in these criteria and concepts were used by logicians to indicate that language in nature is 'very often…neither true nor false…but rather true to a certain extent and false to a certain extent, true in certain respects and false in other respects' (Lakoff, 1973:458). Therefore the meaning of a particular sentence is relative and thus may result in 'fuzzy' understanding.

Holmes (1990) asserts that hedges are used to mark solidarity through the use of *I think* and a modal verb *might*. These help to mitigate the content of the speaker's utterance in order to make it less threatening to the interlocutor, while other hedging particles such as *you know* and *sort of* can function as a positive politeness strategy. *You know* may appeal to the participant's shared values, attitudes, and experiences, whilst *sort of* is an appeal for a relaxed relationship between participants.

Hyland (1994) explored hedging in academic writing and an EAP (English for Academic Purposes) textbook. Hyland found that the use of hedging is pervasive in academic writing, usually in the form of 'epistemic devices' e.g. *appear, may, should* and others. These epistemic devices are required in 'effective academic writing' (Hyland, 1996a:477) and as scientific writing 'always carries individual point of view', the relative position of researchers need to be assuredly mitigated. Furthermore, Hyland (1996b) explains that in scientific writing, hedging is the linguistic strategy to gain readers' acceptance as the researchers express claims through modesty and caution.

Hedges are also examined as a meaning-making practice, which means "meaning carriers" (Adenan, 2001:221). Conducting research in Systemic Functional Linguistics, he concluded that "clauses in English Language are the main and most important forms of meaning carriers" (Adenan, 2001:232).

Unlike hedging which is typically associated with an academic context, *gossip* is identified in informal settings. Kurland & Pelled (2000:429) noted that gossip traditionally has been defined as 'idle chatter, chitchat, or the evil tongue'. Elaborating upon gossip in a more detailed manner, Foster (2004) created six functions of gossip, which include: information, entertainment, friendship,

influence, evolutionary and dynamic utility, and guilt. Obviously from these functions, it is noticed that gossip may have both positive and negative aspects.

Exploring the use of hedges in gossip contexts, this paper aims to answer the following questions: (1) What kinds of hedges are used in the gossip column of the Jakarta Post?; (2) How is meaning-making practiced through hedges?; (3) What are the functions of gossip in the gossip column?

LITERATURE REVIEWS

HEDGES

Lakoff (1973) first introduced the term hedges as 'fuzziness' as it makes things more or less fuzzy. This concept shows that by applying hedges, someone is less committed to the certainty of the referential information given. Some lexical expressions such as *I think, perhaps, sort of, often, maybe* are used to make judgments about the degree of membership of something.

Investigating hedges in academic writing, Hyland (1996a) stated that a writer needs to present a claim cautiously, accurately, and modestly in order to point out the individual's point of view. Along with it, hedges help a writer to ally the claim with the community's expectations to accept the statement.

Nivales (2005) explores a *hedge* in relation to the confidence or the detachment of novice writers in diverse disciplines. Adopting Hyland's (1994), she discovered that hedges were almost equally used in the introduction and conclusion sections of the participants' scientific articles.

Martin-Martin (2008) argues that hedges frequently occur in academic discourse as the devices to convince and influence the audience and are traditionally characterized by their rationality and neutrality.

Going along with the use of hedges in a discourse context, Fraser (2010) investigates hedges in political discourses. He focused on the press conferences of the former US President, George W. Bush in 2007. Fraser discovered that hedges permanently cannot be aimed as hedging devices or used as a strategy to evade responsibility. On the contrary, he found that Bush did not use hedges to show evasion of responsibility or to create politeness in his speeches, but rather to convey a lack of precision. Fraser names them as *neutral hedging,* in which hedges do not cope with impacts on the issue being discussed.

Similar to Holmes' concept of hedges being 'fuzzy', Al-Rashady (2012:31) notes that a hedge portrays vagueness, a strategy used by the writer to avoid categorical assertions. His finding indicates that "Hedges protect writers from making false statements by indicating either a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of a proposition, or desire not to express that commitment categorically".

GOSSIP

Kurland and Pelled (2000) noted that the terms of negative and positive gossip do not depend on the certain expression of hedges. Negative gossip is required to investigate a figure or subject who is being gossiped about the bad side of the subject (Fox, 2001) while positive gossip signals positive side of the news.

Exploring gossip in relation to culture, Baumeister, Zhang & Vohs (2004) view gossip as culture learning. Apart from gaining information about an individual, cementing social bonds, or engaging with indirect aggression, the researchers claim that gossip can lead and serve people to learn about how to live in their cultural society.

Dunbar (2004) sees gossip from an evolutionary perspective, as a significant device to serve people of social communication together in boundaries. Through gossip, he proposes provocatively that gossip can replace the grooming of participants in circumstances in order to maintain the social relationships in people's surroundings.

Niekerk (2008) claims that gossip can play an important role in securing others from being exploited by passing on information about bad behavior. Instead of merely small talk, factually, there is "good gossip" which provides beneficial information useful in maintaining social norms.

Meyers (2010) states that gossip is not merely talking about someone else whom the gossiper knows, but it can be gossip about a celebrity. In this study, an active blogger can see the power of the media industry to define the role of celebrity culture which is possibly understood as an influence in readers' daily lives.

Ahmed (2011) comes with the analysis of women's talk and gossip between two female friends that are correlated to the social function of gossip. It is assumed that women's talk somehow tends to bring the sense of gossiping through linguistic processes. Furthermore, women's talk, which indicates gossip, can be seen from its linguistic features such as hedges and collaborative talk. In addition, the conversation demonstrates that the gossip possibly depicts the power relations within the talk.

Tugend (2012) contends that good gossip tends to enhance a subject's reputation. Gossip brings positive meaning in terms of talking about somebody's kindness. Usually, people attempt to praise or flatter the good side of somebody such as talking about achievements, work, life, etc.

Investigating workplace gossip, Edwardt et al. (2012) chose a social network perspective to determine the objects of positive and negative gossip. The study collected the data from the gossip networks of 36 employees in a public child care organization in the United States, and the findings indicate that positive and negative gossip are distributed across the predominantly female organization's network.

Examining the tendency to gossip and self-monitor, Lee & Jane (2013) discovered that apparently gossip reflects and communicates norms which are usually associated with fashion. Conducting research among undergraduates from a large university in Korea, the researchers discovered that "fashion change agents" (p.67) scored higher on the "tendency to gossip", "self- monitor" (p.67) and other possible attitudes or behaviors.

The study of hedges in gossip has been shown by Ahmed (2011) through his analysis on women's talk. However, while the author merely focused on hedging occurrences in speaking, the present study concerns hedges in written discourse in the gossip column of the Jakarta Post. Therefore, it is intended that the present analysis will examine the aspects that were not covered in the previous studies.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

HEDGES

Holmes (1990) notices that hedges are not merely used as a way of signaling uncertainty, tentativeness, or used as tools to mitigate the force of an utterance 'for the sake of politeness' (as Lakoff's 1973 hypothesis states) but are also employed to express uncertainty or tentativeness about a statement. However, she explains that hedges as Lakoff claims, cannot be applied for both sexes, i.e. females or males. Comparing the use of hedges between women and men, Holmes found that women use hedges to assert their views with confidence, or to show positive politeness for softening the statements and for signaling solidarity, rather than to show uncertainty. Whilst for men, they intend to use hedges as an indication of hesitancy and uncertainty.

Holmes (1990) further categorized hedges into two aspects: affective and epistemic modal functions. It is mentioned that the affective meaning shows an expression of solidarity in order to reduce social distance and also create a more-relaxed situation or relationship with the addressee. Therefore, affective meaning possibly indicates a softener or negative politeness marker (Brown and Levinson, 1978). In addition, the epistemic modal meaning can function as an expression of uncertainty about the validity of particular statements, so that it can be an approximation or imprecision signal as well. Moreover, she divided a hedge into: 1) the tag question; 2) three frequent pragmatic particles as hedges: *sort of, you know,* and *I think*; and 3) a pragmatic particle regarded as the intensifier: *of course*.

GOSSIP

Foster (2004) mentions six functions of gossip which are closely related to social functions:

Information Function

It is a device to exchange information which can lead to the individual's capability to map the social environment. In this case, gossip is one of the sources of social knowledge and the proper way to live and behave (Foster, 2004). e.g. the artist (X) will marry (Y). This information might be broadcasted through media which functions as information for society, yet is not automatically true.

Entertainment Function

Spack 1982 (cited in Foster, 2004:85) further

claims that gossip functions as "the sheer *fun* which for most gossipers explains their involvement", which simultaneously convinces that gossiping can gratify the gossiper with amusement. Furthermore, gossiping can satisfy the participants' emotions, e.g. gossip done while watching a football game on TV. The focus of the event is the football game while the gossip is a way to keep the conversation going.

Friendship Function

Through gossip, people or participants involved maintain friendship and intimacy, deal with the sharing of norms, and establish boundaries to distinguish insiders from outsiders (Foster, 2004:85). Unluckily for the outsiders, they simply cannot understand gossip, and this gap is finally used to exclude them from the insiders (Gluckman, 1963), e.g. two close friends intimately and mutually share new updates on their same hobbies such as sports and food.

Influence Function

Foster (2004) mentions that gossip is confessed as an efficient social mechanism, purposeful for reforming or for stigmatizing the sinner to behave, influencing what someone should or should not do from hearing gossip, e.g. the intimate talk on corruption cases is designated to remind others not to do the same thing.

Evolutionary Utility

This concept derives from "evolutionary biology" (Foster, 2004:87). This gossip provides the information necessary for survival (Barkow, 1992 cited in Foster, 2004) such as to preserve news and evaluations about relatives, rivals, or offspring to control resources, sexual activities, or reliable friendships, e.g. "social animals" needs to be aware of "who is in and out…who is friends with whom…who is the best ally" to keep the track of social world (Dunbar, 1994 cited in Foster 2004:87). In the same concept, humans need to know who are friends and foes.

Dynamic Utility and Guilt

In this regard, gossip not only can have different forms and functions to release anger, guilt and anxiety (positive), but also can be seen to break the norms in a negative way which results in guilt (Foster, 2004), e.g. incessant gossip by a woman to her friends about others who are hospitalized (Foster, 2004). This gossip is likely to disturb the hospitalized friends.

METHODOLOGY

Thirty gossip articles are collected from www.jakartapost.com based on the potentiality of hedge occurrences. Those articles, afterwards were selected by looking at the occurrence of hedges supported by the functions, i.e. affective and epistemic modal function, association with a tag question, intensifiers, or some pragmatic particles: *sort of, you know,* and *I think* (as the explanation of Holmes (1990) collaborated with Lakoff (1973), and (Hyland, 1996a; 1996b). Furthermore, hedges found in the gossip column of the Jakarta Post were grouped into a table according to the publishing period, completed by the title of the article and the excerpts of the sentence or expression that possibly contains hedges. Finally, the data downloaded were systematically saved into one folder as a corpus of the gossip column following Conrad (2002) with approximately 3000 words. Previously, the data were retrieved from the online Jakarta Post from the end of March 2013 until mid-April 2013. The online data were chosen as it is easier to collect and analyze, rather than the printed newspaper which takes more time and is more costly.

In analyzing the data, the framework of Holmes (1990) is firstly applied. After reading and scanning it thoroughly, the hedging occurrences were divided into the affective and epistemic modal function categories. With reliance on the definition of Holmes, the affective meaning performs the expression of solidarity and the epistemic modal meaning functions as the expression of uncertainty about the validity of particular statements.

The categorization of hedging functions suggested by Holmes (1990) emerges within the following sentence, "*While sojourns in rehab **seem** to be an inevitable proviso for the young and famous, Andien ….*". Here, the hedge *seem* points out an *affective meaning* as the sense of reducing the tense within the talk is emphasized. Since the whole meaning of the sentence is heading to more negative talk, the hedge *seem* can be used

to present relaxed talk. For the epistemic modal function, it is exemplified by *"Although I **may** have been there before, I always find something different every time," he said as quoted by tribunnews. com.* This shows that the hedge *may* is carrying uncertainty and the speaker 'he' attempts to show imprecision that sounds unsure.

After analyzing the data in order to know the meaning of each hedge found in the gossip article, the following analysis explores the functions of each piece of gossip in each sentence. Tracking the category of Foster (2004) about gossip functions, the analysis is categorized into six groups: Information function, Entertainment function, Friendship function, Influence function, Evolutionary utility, and Dynamic utility and guilt.

FINDINGS

There are 14 hedges found in the gossip column in the Jakarta Post as described in the following table. The table below shows hedges in each article in the corpus of the gossip column and are shown with their occurrence frequency. The possible functions of the hedging related to the context of the statements are also provided.

Table 1
Hedges, Their Possible Functions, and Their Occurrence Frequency

Hedges	Possible function	Frequency
About (Hyland, 1996a)	epistemic modal	5
Seem (Hyland, 1996a)	affective	2
Think (Holmes, 1990)	affective	4
May (Hyland, 1996b)	epistemic modal	1
Possible (Hyland, 1996b)	epistemic modal	1
Often (Lakoff, 1973)	epistemic modal	1
	Total	14

From the classification above, it is revealed that from 30 articles collected in the corpus, 14 hedges are spread between 10 articles. The hedges that were found were then classified into affective and epistemic modal function categories. These affective functions are *seem* and *think*. On the other hand, epistemic modal function hedges such as *about, may, possible,* and *often* are obviously apparent.

Some of the hedges are clustered into affective functions since they are applied in the article in order to show solidarity with the participant (Holmes, 1990). In addition, to reduce the social distance and create a more relaxed situation or relationship with the addressee, this affective function can help. Brown and Levinson (1978) claim that affective meaning possibly shows a negative politeness marker. The rest of the hedging functions are distinguished as an epistemic modal function, in which they are employed in the articles as an indication of certainty, probability/strong possibility and possibility/uncertainty (Hyland, 2000). Therefore, it can present an approximation or imprecision within the sentence as well.

In elaborating upon the six hedges found and their implicit-explicit meanings, each explanation is provided based on the framework of Lakoff (1973), Foster (1990) and Hyland (1996a-b).

DISCUSSION

HEDGES AS MEANING-MAKING

About

According to Hyland (1996a), the modal adverb *about* is included in 'downtoners' in which the function is to lower the effect of the statement's force. For instance, *(1)"I don't want to tell other people [what to do]; it's about sharing," Tina said as quoted by news portal kapanLagi. com. (2) "That's the first moment I started to think about directing," Ed said. (3) "It's about motivating life in a piece so that everybody on stage feels excited and alive," Ed said. (4) ''They talked about sex, the effects of sex and it was an intoxicating world'' (5) "I have many gadgets, about 10,"* Sandra said as quoted by Tribunnews.com. The hedge *about* in examples 1-4 illustrate imprecision on *abstract entities (sharing, directing, motivating, and sex)* while hedge example 5 refers to a number of *a concrete object* (gadget).

Seem

The lexical verb *seem* can be found from *(1) Singer Agnes Monica seemed to strengthen her presence on the international stage after attending the gala premier of Tom Cruise's latest movie, Oblivion, in Los Angeles. (2) While sojourns in*

rehab seem to be an inevitable proviso for the young and famous, Andien parlayed her struggles with self-harm and substance abuse, the fruit of bullying so severe Andien beseeched her parents to home-school her, to find her true musical self. The word *seem* indicates *doubt* (Hyland, 1996a) and *evaluation* (Hyland, 1994). In example 1, the word *seem* is used to *evaluate* Agnes Monica's performance while in example 2, the word seem is used to show *doubt*.

Think

The word *think* is evidenced in (1) *"And I think it's so important for these issues to be talked about,"* she said slowly (2) *"I think that's the way my mind works and I love that I can't ever figure out the theatre puzzle"* (3) *"I think we can wear jackets that are combined with many fabrics,"* one of the members, Cherly, said as quoted by kapanlagi. com, and (4) *"But I think because the music is not that good, we could never perform on TV,"* he said as quoted by kapanlagi.com. All the examples above signal the speakers' opinions. Holmes (1990) notes that the phrase *I think* functions based on the intonation contour that is carried and the syntactic position in a statement as well. Moreover, *I think* is also added to the emphasis of the statement rather than to give force toward the interlocutor. In other words, in example 3, the speaker attempts to convince the listener by softening the statement when saying that wearing a jacket combined with many fabrics is the best way in dressing. In this context, *I think* appears as a softener or negative politeness marker (Brown and Levinson, 1978), which obviously shows affective meaning.

May

The hedging expression *may* is stated in *"Although I may have been there before, I always find something different every time,"* he said as quoted by tribunnews.com. Generally, the tentative verb *may* functions not only to qualify commitment but also to convey certainty or necessity (Hyland, 1996b). In this context, the speaker also expresses modesty by saying that even though he may have been in a certain place, he always finds different things every time. To the listener, the hedging *may* carries a possibility by saying that every time he visits the place, he may find something different.

Thus, hedging *may* should be applied cautiously and does not sound sure.

Possible

For the hedging word *possible*, Hyland (1996b) stated that this modal adjective indicates a probability of something to exist. In this example, *Adi, who became famous for his role in the TV comedy Si Entong, added that the police report was related to possible religious misdeeds*, the modal expression *possible* shows that obviously there is a possibility of the realization of religious misdeeds reported by the police that Adi mentioned before. Furthermore, Adi also attempts to reduce the risk of the claim if it actually did happen, and to make it more acceptable toward the listeners without any big force.

Often

Lakoff (1973) mentioned that the adverb of frequency *often* is included in hedging expressions and categorized as one of type of logic, which functions to show the number of times something happens within a particular period. In this example, *"I'm often asked to sing at the State Palace for state events,"* she said, it can be seen that the hedge *often* points to the speaker's certainty to support the fact that she has been invited to sing at the State Palace events more than once. Indeed, this hedge is necessarily required to be more precise in reporting a true statement which will be understood by the listener.

In summary, the hedge '*about*' as an epistemic modal dominates occurrence frequency in the data, explaining mostly abstract entities and numbers. The second most used hedge is '*think*' as an affective function. The hedge *think* in the above examples show 'arguments' or give 'reasons'.

THE FUNCTIONS OF GOSSIP

Under Foster's (2004) categorizations, the following examples are provided as elaborations upon the three gossip functions discovered in the gossip articles:

Friendship Function

In the gossip articles being investigated, the function of friendship can be found in:

(a) *"While sojourns in rehab seem to be an inevitable proviso for the young and famous, Andien parlayed her struggles with self-harm and substance abuse, the fruit of bullying so severe Andien beseeched her parents to home-school her, to find her true musical self ".*

This statement portrays *the friendship function* by exposing the emotions of the celebrity Andien being interviewed. She maintains friendship and intimacy "through the sharing of norms" with the readers (Foster, 2004:85). She apparently gains her confidence to tell the sad story about herself to the public, since she already feels safe in disclosing it toward the readers.

(b) *But I think because the music is not that good, we could never perform on TV,"* he said as quoted by kapanlagi.com.

The *friendship function* is apparent from the statement above since the speaker is convincing the readers that his music group is not exactly good, thus they are never likely to appear on TV. They attempt to maintain friendship with the readers by being low- profile so that the speaker may gain the reader's sympathy as shared "social meaning" (Abraham, 1970 cited in Foster, 2004: 85).

Information Function

In these sentences below, the *information function* of gossip is apparent through:

(a) *"That's the first moment I started to think about directing,"* Ed said.

The statement tells about the time when Ed was first interested in directing, thus the statement belongs to the *information function*. In this case, he is merely sharing his experience by "disseminating information" (Foster, 2004:84).

(b) "I think that's the way my mind works and I love that I can't ever figure out the theatre puzzle," he said.

This statement is included in the *information function* as the speaker informs the readers how his mind works, which seemingly leads the readers not to do anything about his statement but to guard the flow of the information (Foster, 2004).

(c) *"They talked about sex, the effects of sex and it was an intoxicating world".*

This statement is included in *the information*

function since it merely provides information about what some people, including the speaker, do in a particular event.

(d) *"Although I may have been there before, I always find something different every time,"* he said as quoted by tribunnews.com.

The above statement has the *information function* of gossip as h conveys his impression about a visit to his favourite place. In this context, the speaker narrates what he/ she experienced (Foster, 2004:84).

(e) *"I have many gadgets, about 10,"* Sandra said as quoted by Tribunnews.com".

Prominently, *the information function* is apparent in this statement as it only "disseminates information" (Foster, 2004:84) about Sandra's belongings of 10 gadgets, in which she probably intends to amaze her readers while simultaneously showing her high social status. Moreover, having 10 gadgets at hand is also considered too excessive for most people.

(f) *"I'm often asked to sing at the State Palace for state events,"* she said.

The above statement exposes the *information function* of gossip inasmuch as the speaker simply narrates her experiences to sing at the State Palace, providing information (Foster, 2004). The speaker implies that because she has a good voice, she deserves to be admired by frequently performing at the prestigious place.

(g) *"Adi, who became famous for his role in the TV comedy Si Entong, added that the police report was related to possible religious misdeeds".*

This sentence has an *information function* as it primarily supplies factual and real information (Foster, 2004) that the religious misdeed reported by the police is possibly wrong. The statement uses sources of social knowledge and the proper ways to live that should be followed by people relating to the ban on religious misdeeds.

Influence Function

In the followings sentences, examples of the *influence function* of gossip can be seen:

(a) "I don't want to tell other people [what to do]; it's about sharing," Tina said as quoted by news portal kapanLagi.com.

In this statement, *the influence function* appears as Tina attempts to tell the readers that she merely wants to share particular information, not dictate the readers to do something. Implicitly, Tina shows that she is a democratic person, who easily welcomes others' opinions, rather than lead them with a certain idea. But because it is said by an artist, it may still have an influence function especially for her fans.

(b) "And I think it's so important for these issues to be talked about," she said slowly.

The *influence function* of gossip is highlighted in this sentence, in which the speaker underlines the importance of the issue to be discussed. The readers may either think the same with her or not. As mentioned by Foster (2004), gossip can function to control others.

(c) "It's about motivating life in a piece so that everybody on stage feels excited and alive" Ed said.

The *influence function* is apparent from this statement as the speaker attempts to convince the readers about a particular performance that can lead the people involved to be motivated. In this case, the speaker wants the readers to believe (Foster, 2004) that the performance is a remarkable show.

(d) "Singer Agnes Monica seemed to strengthen her presence on the international stage after attending the gala premier of Tom Cruise's latest movie, Oblivion, in Los Angeles".

This statement contains the *influence function* because the writer strongly emphasizes the presence of Agnes Monica at the premier of the movie Oblivion. It possibly leads the readers to believe that Agnes utilizes her presence as a tool to be internationally recognized (Foster, 2004).

(e) "I think we can wear jackets that are combined with many fabrics," one of the members, Cherly, said as quoted by kapanlagi.com.

The *influence function* of gossip can be seen from this statement, which exposes Cherly's opinion that the combination of a jacket and fabrics might be an appropriate choice to be worn in certain circumstances. It then possibly leads the readers to believe her opinion (Foster, 2004) and use jackets with many fabrics that may suit certain situations.

In the gossiping function section, it is revealed that the *evolutionary utility* and *dynamic utility and guilt function* do not appear in the above gossip. The absence of *evolutionary utility*, *dynamic utility, and guilt function* might be associated with the functions of such gossip which are to break the norms of the society (Foster, 2004). The absence of the three gossip above in this research (gossip among artists in Indonesian context might be affected by the different cultural backgrounds in which Foster's (2004)) gossip classification was established. We also assume that the gossip projected among celebrities might be intended to create *a positive image* through the *information function* (7 times) and direct the readers through the *influence function* (6 times) to show their trend setter identity. This indicates that celebrities expect to be well-known among the readers as well as to influence the reader's way of life. It is also apparent that *a friendship function* is the least applied gossip found. Overall, the celebrities might want to project themselves as being part of a higher social status compared to the followers/readers.

CONCLUSION

Unlike the former studies of hedging in logic and philosophy (Lakoff, 1973), academic writing (Hyland's, 1996a; 1996b), and in the context of men's and women's speech (Holmes, 1990), hedges used in celebrity gossip are framed to create *a positive image* through the information function and are used *to lead a follower's opinion* through *influence functions* (Foster, 2004). Through these ways of projecting, they position the celebrities in a higher position compared to their followers. In doing this, the celebrities in this study employ the epistemic modal *about* 5 times (Hyland, 1996a) and the affective modal *think* (Holmes, 1990) 4 times. Other epistemic modals such as *may*, *possible* and *often* are all used once.

The distribution of hedges in the gossip column is low (14 hedges) from 30 articles, classified into 6 categories. While hedging in academic contexts allow someone to express claims with precision, caution, and modesty (Hyland, 1996b), the gossip column works under its own norms to creative positive self-image and establish trend-setter identities.

Finally the findings and analysis in this study confirm that gossip about celebrities is 'an

important social process' whereby 'relationship, identity and social and cultural norms are debated, evaluated, modified and shared' (Turner, 2004, cited in Meyers, 2010: 28).

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