# Engagement in literature reviews of Thai and international research articles in applied linguistics

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## Abstract

Engagement plays a crucial role in expressing authors' viewpoints and dialogistic positioning to engage their readers with their research. It can be performed by using linguistic features such as reporting verbs, modal auxiliaries, or intensifiers. However, the need for the authors to express their positioning in the context of and engage themselves with other researchers' work, especially in the literature review, seems to pose a big challenge for L2 novice researchers. This study then aims to investigate engagement in literature reviews. The data are 20 research articles published in Thai and international journals (10 from each journal) in the field of applied linguistics. The analysis is based on Engagement in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. The study reveals that there are slight differences in the use of engagement by the two groups. This probably conveys the conformity of Thai journals' authors to the norm and convention of expert academic writers. However, countering and confrontational positioning (e.g. *Although Sakui's study offers some insightful results obtained through observations and interviews, it lacks adequate description and explanation …*) have been found relatively more often in international journals to engage the readers towards the writers' justification of knowledge. On the other hand, compelling viewpoints by using bare assertion without any reference (e.g. *Beliefs are influential factors in individual learner differences.*) have been found relatively more often in Thai journals to convince the readers. This could make Thai journals' statements sound more authoritative and imposing to the readers.

## 1. Introduction

Statements obtained from research articles can interestingly provide different interpersonal meanings. As an example, consider two statements taken from research articles [Source: Geng & Wharton, 2016; Cheng & Unsworth, 2016]:

(a) Previous research has also suggested that local institutional culture may influence writers' deployment of interpersonal resources.

(b) Negotiating academic conflict to justify one's new contribution requires a writer's strategic interaction with multiplevoices.

Sentence (a), by referring to an external source (i.e. previous research) and using a modal auxiliary (i.e. may) can be seen as less compelling and more reader-friendly as it opens up more space for the readers' freedom to have alternative viewpoints. On the other hand, sentence (b), by making no reference to any other source, is more assertive and less reader-friendly, as it closes down the dialogic space for the readers to have diverse viewpoints, making the statement an authorial proposition. These two statements are aimed to express authors' viewpoints and positioning in order to persuade and engage their readers, despite different linguistic features being employed. These interpersonal meanings in academic writing are of interest and necessity to study

since they are potentially useful for researchers in persuading and engaging their readers with their research.

The widely-held view that academic writing is persuasive (Hyland, 2011) has been confirmed by a number of researchers (e.g. Hood, 2010; Hunston, 1994; Hyland, 2005; Kong, 2006), and interpersonal meanings play an important part in this persuasiveness. Academic persuasion is needed for the writers to create solidarity and credibility with their readers (Hyland, 2005). To make a text persuasive, academic writers or researchers employ evaluative resources to "show their attitudes, opinions, or stances towards the construed propositions or research entities and to interact with the readers" (Xie, 2016, p.1). These evaluative resources (e.g. linguistic features) are considered evaluation or evaluative language.

Evaluation is used to persuade the readers towards the credibility and value of the research, in which engagement plays a crucial role in expressing writers' viewpoints and dialogistic positioning to engage their readers with their research. In engaging the readers towards the significance of their research, writers need to interact with and position themselves in the context of multiple voices, namely other researchers in their community and disciplinary readers (Cheng & Unsworth, 2016; Geng & Wharton, 2016).

Despite the importance of evaluation, it has been repeatedly attested in a number of studies that there is a lack of evaluation in novice academic writers' texts (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Loi, Lim & Wharton, 2016; Xie, 2016). These studies further reported that in expressing evaluation to persuade the readers, performing engagement is regarded as a challenge, especially for novice writers who use English as a second language (L2) (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Xie, 2016). Even though this has provoked increasing interest among researchers, the problem of a lack of engagement of novice writers in the peripheral countries (such as China and Thailand) is still found (Geng & Wharton, 2016; Xie, 2016), but has received less attention. Therefore, this highlights the necessity of investigating evaluation in terms of engagement in English research articles published in Thai and international journals.

Moreover, since the writers need to express their viewpoints and their positioning in the context of and engage themselves with other researchers' work, especially in the literature review, this seems to pose a big challenge for L2 novice writers (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Geng & Wharton, 2016). Surprisingly, in spite of the recognition of these difficulties, research on the deployment of evaluation in terms of engagement in the literature review has been relatively neglected. In filling this gap, this study then aims to investigate the use of engagement in the literature reviews of research articles.

All in all, in order to help L2 novice researchers overcome the challenges of engaging the readers and positioning themselves with respect to other researchers, the purpose of this paper is to investigate evaluation in terms of engagement in literature review sections of English research articles published in Thai and international journals. It is hoped that the findings would shed more light on how engagement in the literature review can be performed, potentially useful for Thai applied linguistics researchers to engage their readers with their research.

## 2. Literature Review
### 2.1 Language of Evaluation: Engagement

Even though engagement has been rooted on the same ground that all verbal communication is dialogic (Bakhtin, 1981), it has been defined and identified differently by different researchers. The two most recent approaches towards engagement are Hyland's (2005) model of engagement and Martin and White's (2005) engagement in Appraisal Theory. The

researchers agree that dialogic interaction involves writers' positioning towards the subjects being discussed, and with respect to the background of others who hold alternative viewpoints.

However, more as a reader-focused and alignment dimension, engagement in Hyland's (2005) model is defined as the way "writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations" (p. 176). By using language choices such as reader mentions, directives, and appeals to shared knowledge, writers are allowed to interpersonally negotiate and present their claims with awareness of their readers and their readers' reaction (Hyland, 2016). Via this 'reader-in-the-text' (Thompson, 2001) marking, writers are able to engage their readers by establishing interpersonal affiliation and rapport.

On the other hand, engagement is defined by Martin and White (2005) as "all those locutions which provide the means for the authorial voice to position itself with respect to, and hence to engage with, the other voices and alternative positions construed as being in play in the current communicative context" (p.94). In other words, it refers to "the ways writers position themselves to other voices" (Hyland, 2016, p.30). Even though this notion of engagement is argued by Hyland (2016) as writer-focused or closer to authorial stance, its dialogic perspective also gives importance to interpersonal meaning by taking the readers' responses and the backdrop of prior utterances into consideration (Martin & White, 2005).

Engagement by Martin and White (2005) is one subsystem in their Appraisal Theory, which is a new approach to the language of evaluation, developed within Systemic Functional Linguistic (SFL) framework. It is said to be "probably the most theory-grounded study of the functions and forms of evaluative meaning in English" (Hunston, 2011, p.2), and "the most systematic analyzing tool that offers a typology of evaluative resources available in English" (Hyland, 2005, p.174). Moreover, since "evaluation is best seen as working at the discourse level of text" (Thompson & Ye, 1991, p.367) and appraisal meaning is discovered at the discourse-semantics part of language, Appraisal Theory is a helpful tool for identifying evaluative language implicitly encoded in the co-text (Xie, 2016).

Many researchers (e.g. Geng & Wharton, 2016; Loi, et al., 2016; Xie, 2016) have agreed that Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory is a suitable framework to investigate evaluative language in both novice academic writing and research articles. Moreover, engagement in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory is regarded to be the most suited to examine academic persuasion, as the main interest of this engagement framework is the interaction of multiple voices, both internal (i.e. writers themselves) and external (i.e. readers, other researchers), with the interpersonal aim towards building conviction of the research (Cheng & Unsworth, 2016). All these have clearly made engagement in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory the most relevant to this research.

Despite its significant strengths, Appraisal Theory is not without weakness. One main criticism of this theory is its subjectivity since the texts can be potentially interpreted in different ways, contingent on the subjective positions of readers (Martin &White, 2005). The unavoidable exposure to this subjectivity has raised awareness on analysts' side not only to take context into account, but also to socially and consistently position themselves throughout the analyzing process of the evaluative language (Martin & White, 2005; Xie, 2016). To minimize the possible risk from this subjectivity, this study has taken this precaution into account and conducted a reliability check to ensure consistency of the analyzing results of this theory.

In general, Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) consists of three subsystems: Attitude, Graduation, and Engagement. Attitude deals with emotions and feelings. It is further categorized into Affect (reacting to emotion), Judgment (evaluating behavior), and Appreciation (evaluating things). Graduation provides the means to manipulate the strength of semantic values. It is further classified into Focus (categorizing by sharpening and softening those values) and Force (assessing the degree of intensity and quantification). Engagement is concerned with the position of authorial voice with respect to other voices in the current communicative context.

In particular, the relevant subcategories within Engagement subsystem are summarized with brief descriptions and some of their linguistic realizations in Figure 1.
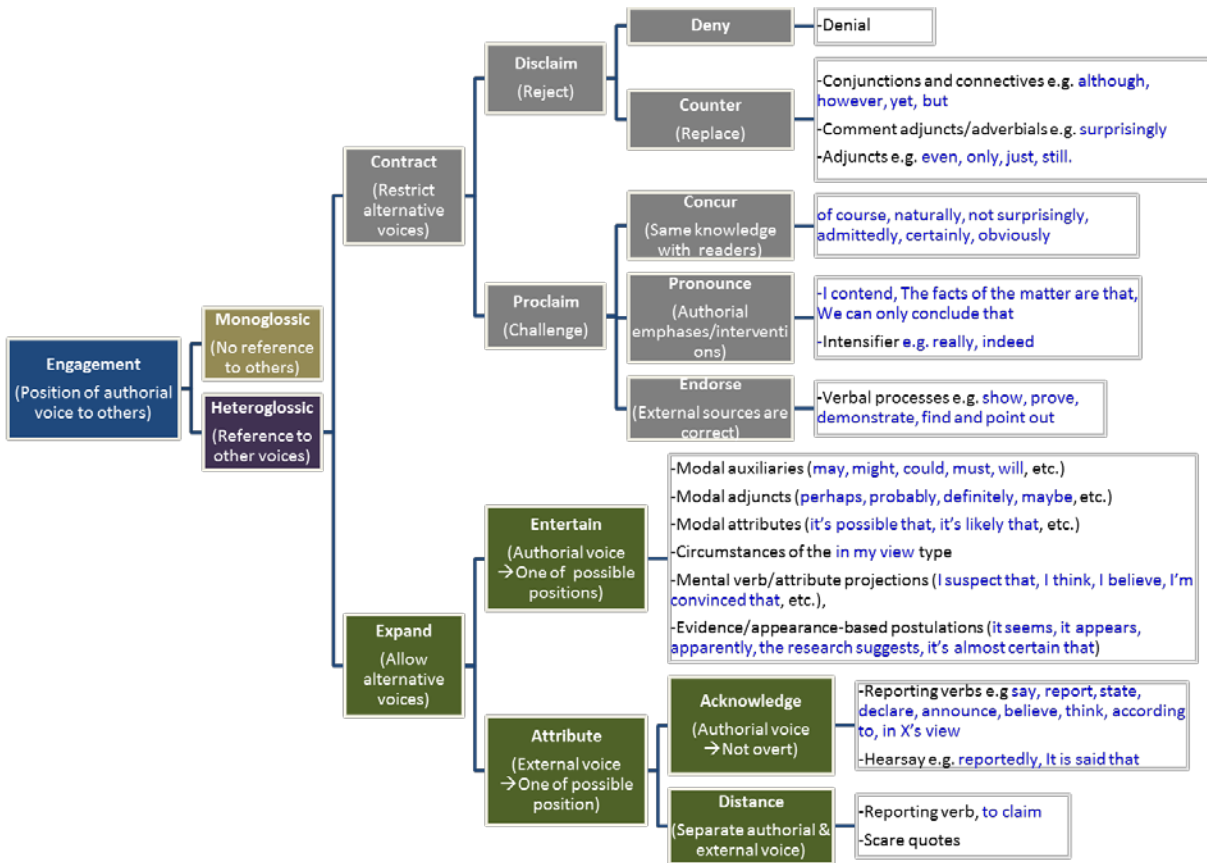


**Figure 1.** A Summary of Engagement Subsystem, adapted from Martin and White (2005)

Engagement is further divided as monoglossic (making no reference to other voices) and heteroglossic (making reference to other voices). For example,

a) Humans are warm-blooded mammals.
b) Biologists said that humans are warm-blooded mammals.

Example a) is instance, in which the author makes no reference to external sources; therefore, example a) is monoglossic. On the other hand, example b) is instance, in which the author refers to external sources (i.e. biologists); therefore, example b) is heteroglossic.

Heteroglossic propositions can be further classified into four main categories: disclaim, proclaim, entertain, and attribute.

Within the disclaim category, the authors close down dialogic space with the readers by rejecting or countering any alternative or contrary viewpoints from them. Disclaim is further sub-categorized into two sub-types: deny and counter. Under the proclaim category, the authors limit dialogic space with the readers by challenging any alternative viewpoints from them, since the authors present propositions as highly reliable and acceptable by readers. Proclaim is further sub-categorized into three sub-types: concur, pronounce, and endorse.

Within the entertain category, the authors welcome and open up for alternative viewpoints from the readers by presenting propositions grounded from the authors' own subjectivity as one of many possible positions. Under the attribute category, the authors allow the most dialogic space for alternative viewpoints from the readers by presenting propositions grounded from external subjectivity as one of many possible positions. Attribute is further sub-categorized into two sub-types: acknowledge and distance.

These four categories are grouped into dialogic contraction and dialogic expansion, contingent upon the degree to which they limit dialogically alternative voices and positions (dialogic contraction) or open up for other alternative voices and positions (dialogic expansion). Therefore, the disclaim and proclaim categories are grouped into dialogic contraction, while the entertain and attribute categories are grouped into dialogic expansion.

## 2.2 Previous Studies on Engagement

The ways in which novice writers, especially L2 students, express their evaluation in terms of engagement have been of much interest among scholars. Examples include Geng and Wharton (2016) and Xie (2016), who investigated the use of evaluative language choices made by L2 postgraduate students in applied linguistics.

Due to the interest in the way postgraduate students engage themselves in the context of other works, Geng and Wharton (2016) conducted a comparative study of L1 Chinese and L1 English writers in discussion section of doctoral theses by applying the Engagement subsystem. The finding showed that there are no significant differences in the patterns of engagement resources between these two groups, and first language does not seem to be a variable which influences evaluative language choices. It was further suggested that disciplinary culture can be predominant in disciplines with a stable and homogenous knowledge base and structure.

On the other hand, Xie (2016) conducted a detailed textual analysis complemented by a quantitative perspective in the literature review sections of Chinese MA theses by applying Appraisal Theory. It is concluded that Chinese MA students prefer to convey evaluation in a more explicit way, express dominantly positive evaluation, tend to take a neutral position when referring to other voices, and make compelling claims. Even though this study did not reveal much how the evaluative values co-articulate with each other in the texts, it is still considered a good guideline for applying analytical framework to the present study, due to the same focus on the literature review section.

Another line of research worth mentioning extends the above single-framework study by enriching evaluative language with genre-based knowledge in order to understand how rhetorical meanings are achieved through the co-articulation of meaning-making resources. This integrated perspective has been deployed by many researchers (e.g. Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011; Cheng & Unsworth, 2016). In highlighting the linguistic resources that can be explicitly linked with the functional move, Chang and Schleppegrell (2011) employed both a micro-system of linguistic

resources and a macro-system of discursive practices in the introduction section of educational research articles in social sciences by drawing on the Engagement framework in connection with the rhetorical move (Swales, 1990, 2004).

In a similar vein, Cheng and Unsworth (2016) explored how the linguistic resources co-articulate with each other to negotiate academic conflict. By applying Engagement and Hunston's (1993)framework in research article discussion sections in applied linguistics, they found out that engagement tactics are varied in relation to functional components of academic conflict to activate readers' positive evaluation of the new knowledge. Moreover, conflict is not resolved by explicitly dismissing the opposing studies but by conferring legitimacy upon the new findings.

From the review of these previous four studies, it seems clear that engagement in Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory can be used to explore the deployment of evaluation in terms of engagement in both novice academic writing and research articles. Moreover, there has not been a published work relating to engagement in English research articles published in Thai journals. Besides filling this gap, the need for undertaking the present study has been motivated by the realization that there is a scarcity of the research in the deployment of evaluation in terms of engagement in literature review sections, in which the appropriate reference to other texts and the response to prior utterances is an essential feature of academic writing (Hyland 2002; Salom & Monreal, 2014).

### 2.3 Previous Studies on Literature Review

Literature review is considered an essential section in research writing because its main purpose is to integrate related studies, indicate gaps or weaknesses of others' work, and pave the way for the justification of the writers' research (Kwan, 2006; Monreal, 2015; Salom & Monreal, 2014). Despite this importance, writing the literature review is a challenge for academic writers, especially for novice researchers (Jian, 2010). To help overcome this problem, many researchers (e.g. Jian, 2010; Kwan, 2006; Monreal, 2015; Salom & Monreal, 2014) have studied the rhetorical movements in literature reviews to examine their textual organization and understand their rhetorical structure by drawing on the move analysis developed by Swales (1990) and applied by Kwan (2006).

However, to justify the value of the study to obtain acceptance from readers, it is crucial for academic writers not only to make appropriate reference to other works but also to demonstrate evaluation of others' and the writers' own work (Bruce, 2014; Kwan, Chan & Lam, 2012; Salom & Monreal, 2014). In other words, writers need to express their critical voice and dialogic positions in relation to other works, to engage and persuade the readers towards the credibility and value of their own research. As this interpersonal dimension of literature review is interesting, and some studies attest that inexperienced and novice writers find this evaluative task difficult (Bruce, 2014; Kwan, Chan & Lam, 2012), the deployment of evaluation in terms of engagement in literature review is studied of necessity, especially in the Thai context.

Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to investigate evaluation in terms of engagement in literature review sections of research articles published in Thai and international journals by drawing on the Engagement subsystem of Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. The major research questions addressed in the present study are:
1. What are engagement categories and sub-categories used in the literature review section of research articles published in Thai and international journals?

2. What are the similarities and differences between the literature review section of research articles published in Thai and international journals, in the use of engagement categories and sub-categories?

## 3. Methodology
### *3.1 Data Collection*
Since differences in the disciplines of the texts may produce any reported differences in the research's findings (Cominos, 2011), the data analyzed in this study was all selected from the same discipline of applied linguistics. The reason for the selection of this discipline is that research findings in other disciplines may not be readily transferable (Wang & Yang, 2015) because of its "interdisciplinary" (Bruce, 2014, p.87) nature. Moreover, as a subset of the social sciences in soft-knowledge fields which "rely more on a dialogic engagement and more explicit recognition" (Hyland, 2011, p.205), in applied linguistics it is considered challenging for L2 novice researchers to perform engagement with readers.

A total of 20 research article literature reviews published in one Thai journal and one international journal (10 articles from each) published between 2012 and 2016 were randomly chosen from the selected journals. A small set of data was appropriate for this study, in which texts were analyzed manually and contextually with interpersonal meaning being highlighted and classified via an interpretive process before the occurrence frequency of each category was counted and compared. In other words, this labor-intensive process of analysis and interpretation required thorough contemplation of co-text. Therefore, a relatively small corpus was indispensable. The necessity of a small corpus for manually and contextually annotated analysis is also asserted by Geng and Wharton (2016), who conducted a comparative study to investigate evaluative language in 12 doctoral discussion sections written by L1 Chinese and L1 English writers.

The selection of recently published research articles, between 2012 and 2016, can represent the latest instantiated use of evaluative language expressed in research articles. In terms of journal selection, all the articles in the two corpora were considered to be from quality journals; that is, Thai journals were those listed by the Thai Journal Citation Index Centre, and international journals were selected from high-impact journals. Investigating evaluation in quality journal articles is appropriate, since the final objective of the study is to inform the novice writers of the existing rhetorical practices which are extensively used in the published research articles.

Moreover, to collect data from the same specific field of applied linguistics, this study selected research journals in English Language Teaching (ELT), that is, *PASAA* for Thai journals, and *System* for international journals. The chosen texts from both journals all have an independent literature review section and are within the following length range: Thai corpus (total 10,690 words; average of 1,069 words per research article literature review); international journal (total 9,618 words; average of 962 words per research article literature review).

### *3.2 Data Analysis*
### *3.2.1 Coverage of the coding*
Prior to the main analysis, this study carried out a preliminary pilot study to help decide what to code and what not to code. All metadiscursive subheadings, introductory or transitional sentences (e.g., This chapter will first …, then …., finally …), and illustrative languages such as figures, tables, and example sentences were excluded from the coding process due to their main purpose of textual organization and illustration rather than informative function and evaluative meanings. Moreover, since the purpose of this study is to investigate evaluation in terms of

engagement expressed by the researchers, direct quotation of the cited literature and research questions were not selected for coding.

*3.2.2 Coding scheme*

Appraisal Theory's engagement subsystem was coded following Martin and White's (2005) taxonomy (Figure 1) from left to right. First, this study coded whether the proposition is monoglossically or heteroglossically formulated; second, heteroglossic formulations were coded into their subcategories. In the coding, only monoglossic formulations were given explicit codes symbolized by [Mono], while heteroglossic formulations was indicated by the various coding of the specific heteroglossic subcategories. The example below illustrates the coding of monoglossic and subcategorized heteroglossic formulations:

> The cognitive perspective considers beliefs as relatively stable mental representations **[Mono]**. Characterised by using normative approaches, cognitive studies mainly concern beliefs about the nature of language learning (**Mohebi & Khodadady, 2011**) **[Hetero_expand:acknowledge].**
>
> [Source: Li &Ruan, 2015]

*3.2.3 Coding procedures*

As mentioned in the literature, one main criticism of Appraisal Theory is its subjectivity since the meaning of the texts can potentially be interpreted in various ways. This suggests the need for caution in making a deliberate decision on a coding unit before analyzing and coding the data. Even though meaning units for coding can be a group of words, statements or paragraphs, the fact that coding a too-broad range of meaning units may cause complexity in analysis, and coding a too-narrow range of meaning units may cause fragmentation (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004) should be given great awareness.

After a few attempts in coding a pilot study, we found that coding the meaning units on clausal basis or on every occurrence of potential engagement resources is too narrow, and can also cause complexity of analysis due to multiple and varying interpretations from fragmented results. Considering a holistic and coherent way to understand the interpersonal meaning of the sentence as a whole, with more emphasis on the complete meaning, the most suitable range of meaning units for coding was sentences. Therefore, the coding unit for engagement resources in this study is a sentence.

Furthermore, since data should not fall into more than one category (Graneheim & Lundman, 2004), the coding in this study was one category per one sentence as shown in the above example 3.2.2. The sentence-based and one-category coding in this study is considered pioneering, and different from other studies. Since the sentence is considered "the most extensive domain of grammatical structure" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004, p.436), sentence-based analysis is likely to yield more a systematic and comprehensive way of analyzing and understanding the interpersonal meaning of texts.

Moreover, it is hoped that sentence-based analysis will possibly mitigate the complexity of analysis caused by multiple interpretations and thus accommodate the comparison of the findings. In order to identify sentence boundaries for coding, we applied a rule-based module, in which "." is regarded as the sentence boundary when it is not preceded by predefined words e.g. Pvt., Ltd., etc., and "." is also disregarded when it is preceded by an abbreviation and immediately after digits which do not follow a space character.

In coding, this study followed four steps. First, the literature reviews of research articles were carefully read; and while reading, potential engagement resources were searched for at the sentence level. Second, engagement resources were assigned to one of the engagement categories and sub-categories. Third, each engagement category and sub-category in the two corpora was searched for electronically by using the AntConc concordance tool to find the total occurrence frequency of each engagement category and sub-category. Fourth, each occurrence was carefully analyzed in context to ensure its function as engagement.

Due to the different lengths of the two corpora, a normalized frequency per 1,000 words (/k) of the occurrence of the engagement resources was calculated in this study. Moreover, to ensure coding reliability, a sample selection of the text span was chosen for independent coding by the researcher and one inter-rater. Then, the researcher and the inter-rater had a detailed discussion on all items of disagreement, and the inter-rater reliability was found to be 86 percent, considered an acceptable level of agreement. There were also several rounds of discussion among the researchers and another graduate student before it was decided to use the sentence as the basis for analysis.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

As the purpose of this research was to investigate evaluation in terms of engagement in literature review sections of English research articles published in Thai and international journals, the results of this study are presented below by answering the two research questions identified in the study in terms of engagement categories and sub-categories used, and any similarities or differences in the two corpora.

### 4.1 Distributions and preferences of monoglossia vs. heteroglossia

The present analysis reveals that literature review sections of English research articles published in both Thai and international journals use more heteroglossic (67% for Thai and 83% for international journals) than monoglossic (33% for Thai and 17% for international journals) formulations, as displayed in Table 1. The higher frequency of heteroglossia is consistent with the nature of a literature review, in which writers are expected to establish critical voices by integrating a network of prior scholarship, making an appropriate reference, and demonstrating the writer's position about the literature in relation to their own work (Bruce, 2014; Kwan & Lam, 2012; Salom & Monreal, 2014).

**Table 1**. Frequency and percentage distribution of monoglossia vs. heteroglossia in literature review section

| Category | Thai Journals | | International Journals | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | Frequency (/k) | Percentage | Frequency (/k) | Percentage |
| Heteroglossia | 25.0 | 67% | 29.4 | 83% |
| Monoglossia | 12.2 | 33% | 5.9 | 17% |
| **Total** | **37.1** | **100%** | **35.4** | **100%** |

*Note:* /k = normalized frequency per 1000 words.

As indicated in Table 1, in a comparison of the two corpora, it can be said that heteroglossic resources were used to a greater extent in literature review sections of research articles published in international journals, and monoglossic resources were used more often in Thai journals, even though the ratio gap is not a sharp one. This dominance of heteroglossia is in agreement with what

is found among expert academic writers from Mo's (2010) and Du's (2010) study of research article literature reviews in various disciplines, and in research article abstracts in international journals, respectively. This can imply the conformity of Thai journals' writers with the norm of expert academic writers in making reference to alternative voices or viewpoints.

However, since monoglossia makes no reference to external sources and offers no recognition of alternative viewpoints but the writers' own assertion, the higher frequency of monoglossia in Thai journals' texts could be interpreted as reflecting that Thai journals' writers tend to express compelling propositions to align and convince the readers, as indicated in the below example.

(1) Beliefs about language learning deal with learners' cognition that forms certain kinds of attitudes or ideas towards the language they are learning, and this effect largely impacts learners' acquisition of a language.**[Mono]**

[Source: Thai 3, 2015, p.68]

Moreover, as monoglossia provides no alternative or dialogic viewpoints, the higher proportion of "undialogized" (Bakhtin, 1981, p.427) assertions possibly makes Thai journals' statements sound more authoritative and imposing to the readers. The relatively high proportion of monoglossia has also been uncovered in literature review sections of Chinese English-major MA theses from Xie's (2016) study and discussion sections of L1 Chinese and L1 English doctoral theses from Geng and Wharton's (2016) study. Therefore, it implies that the heavy employment of monoglossic resources to engage and position themselves is considered as characteristic of novice researchers.

### 4.2 Distributions and preferences of heteroglossic subcategories

In this study, it was found that there are more dialogic expansions (72% for Thai and 61% for international journals) than dialogic contractions (28% for Thai and 39% for international journals) in both Thai and international journals as demonstrated in Table 2. The higher proportion of dialogic expansions could imply that both Thai and international journals' writers position themselves with respect to other voices cautiously by welcoming rather than closing down the possibility of alternative viewpoints. The result of more dialogic expansions is somewhat compatible with Xie's (2016) research in Chinese English-major MA theses, and this could be attributed to the characterization of applied linguistics as a soft discipline, in which knowledge is "qualitative and reiterative" (Becher, 1990, p.335), and is therefore inclined to openly accept other points of view.

As Table 2 shows, among all heteroglossic resources, 'acknowledge' occupies the largest proportion (60% for Thai and 50% for international journals). Under dialogic expansion, 'acknowledge' considers alternative voices as one of many possible positions, and it is not explicitly made manifest where the writer's voice stands with respect to alternative voices (Martin & White, 2005). It is generally realized through reporting verbs such as *X says/reports/ thinks/states/declares/believes/announces that, according to X, In X's view*, etc. and hearsay such as *…reportedly , It is said that…*, etc.

**Table 2.** Frequency and percentage distribution of subcategories of heteroglossia in literature review section

| Subcategory of Heteroglossia | | | Thai Journals | | International Journals | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | Frequency (/k) | Percentage | Frequency (/k) | Percentage |
| **Contract** | Disclaim | Deny | 1.1 | 4% | 2.2 | 7% |
| | | Counter | 2.0 | 8% | 5.2 | 18% |
| | Proclaim | Concur | 0.1 | 0% | 0.0 | 0% |
| | | Pronounce | 2.0 | 8% | 1.2 | 4% |
| | | Endorse | 1.8 | 7% | 2.8 | 10% |
| **Total Contraction** | | | **6.9** | **28%** | **11.4** | **39%** |
| **Expand** | Entertain | | 2.9 | 12% | 2.9 | 10% |
| | Attribute | Acknowledge | 15.0 | 60% | 14.8 | 50% |
| | | Distance | 0.2 | 1% | 0.3 | 1% |
| **Total Expansion** | | | **18.1** | **72%** | **18.0** | **61%** |
| **Grand Total** | | | **25.0** | **100%** | **29.4** | **100%** |

*Note:* /k = normalized frequency per 1000 words

The dominance of 'acknowledge' in both Thai and international journals is more or less anticipated, since "citation is central to the social context of persuasion" (Hyland, 1999, p.342), and it is considered one of the most typical resources in engaging with external voices in academic discourse (Hyland, 2000), especially in literature review (Xie, 2016). Moreover, the similar dominant proportion of 'acknowledge' in both Thai journals' and international journals' texts implies that Thai journals' and international journals' writers both tend to take a neutral position towards external voices. In other words, their position in relation to external voices is not explicitly expressed, as illustrated in the below example.

(2) Schwartz (2013) **reported [Hetero_expand:acknowledge]** that later immersion in L2 and continuing development of L1 did not result in retardation in language development of preschool bilingual children in L2.

[Source: Thai 1, 2015, p.6]

(3) Ellis (2008) also **believes [Hetero_expand:acknowledge]** that learning strategies are influenced by learners' explicit beliefs about how best to learn.

[Source: Inter 4, 2015, p.108]

As illustrated in Table 2, the neutral position of the writers in both corpora is further confirmed by the sparse use (1% in both corpora) of 'distance' (e.g. *X claims that …, there is a misunderstanding that …*), a dialogic expansive device which separates or disaligns the authorial voice from external voices (Geng & Wharton, 2016). This strongly suggests that the writers of both Thai and international journals hesitate to explicitly or negatively criticize the cited source, and this hesitation indicates their compliance with the norm of the academic discourse community when referring to other voices. The practice of this neutral position has been found by many researchers, whose analyses have been conducted not only with research articles (e.g. Hyland, 2002) but also with MA theses (e.g. Petric, 2007; Xie, 2016).

Another noteworthy feature is 'entertain', which is the second most-often used heteroglossic resources under dialogic expansion in both corpora (12% for Thai and 10% for

international journals). By representing the authorial voice as one of possible positions, 'entertain' options make an allowance for alternative perspectives via modal auxiliaries (*may, might, could, must, will, etc.),* modal adjuncts *(perhaps, probably, definitely, maybe*, etc.), modal attributes (*it's possible that …, it's likely that …* etc.), circumstances of the *in my view* type, certain mental verb/attribute projections (*I suspect that …, I think, I believe, I'm convinced that, I doubt*, etc.), and evidence/appearance-based postulations (*it seems, it appears, apparently, the research suggests …, it's almost certain that*) (Martin & White, 2005).

This speculative position reflects a certain degree of modesty and caution in the writers' discursive formulations, which could be considered as reader-friendly because it overtly invites readers to participate in the dialogue, and it makes the readers feel less imposed-upon. Therefore, the frequent use of 'entertain' in both corpora can be characterized as the writers' demonstration of politeness, which is extensively accepted as an essential feature in the context of academic writing (Martin-Martin, 2008) and employed to establish a good interactive relationship between the writers and the readers (Yang, Zheng, & Ge, 2015). The 'entertain' options exemplified below in (4) and (5) are used to welcome alternative viewpoints and express tentativeness, respectively.

(4) The notion of continuum is **likely [Hetero_expand:entertain]** to solve this sort of compliment receiver's dilemma.

[Source: Thai 7, 2014, p.37]

(5) As well, **it appears [Hetero_expand:entertain]** that there is a further dimension of self-development, that relates to an individual teacher's creativity, the choices they make and their teaching style.

[Source: Inter 1, 2016, p.103]

In comparison of these findings with the relevant literature, a contrasting result is found in Geng and Wharton's (2016) study, in which 'entertain' is used more often than 'acknowledge' in the discussion sections of doctoral theses written by L1 Chinese and L1 English writers. The contradictory outcome between their study and this study may be attributed to the fact that in the discussion section, the writers are more likely to focus on discussing and making an evaluative comment on their own work rather than providing extensive citations and making reference to other research as is done in the literature review section.

As opposed to dialogic expansion which opens up to other alternative voices and positions, dialogic contraction closes down that possibility. Under dialogic contraction, 'counter' occupies the largest proportion in both corpora (8% for Thai and 18% for international journals). By representing the current proposition to replace and counter the prior utterances and alternative viewpoints, 'counter' is often realized by conjunctions and connectives (e.g. *although, however, yet, but*), comment adjuncts/adverbials (e.g. *surprisingly*), and adjuncts (e.g. *even, only, just, still*) (Martin & White, 2005).

The dominance of 'counter' under dialogic contraction in both Thai and international journals reflects the writers' rhetorical strategy to respond and react to opposing or contrary viewpoints by establishing a challenging position not only to justify the writers' knowledge claims but also to restrict alternative viewpoints, as illustrated in the below example.

(6) **However [Hetero_contract:counter]**, Adendorrf's CS functions in the classroom, which are classified broadly into pedagogical and social functions, can serve the purpose of learning and create solidarity in classroom contexts better.

[Source: Thai 9, 2016, p.101]

(7) **Although [Hetero_contract:counter]** Sakui's study offers some insightful results obtained through observations and interviews, it lacks adequate description and explanation of how EFL teachers engage in classroom management in real time.

[Source: Inter 9, 2013, p.150]

However, as the higher frequency of 'counter' in the present study occurs in international journals' texts, this suggests that international journals' writers tend to rely more on countering strategy or "confrontational tactic" (Cheng & Unsworth, 2016, p.50) in replacing and correcting alternative views with their own justification. The high occurrence of 'counter' under dialogic contraction is in alignment with Xie's (2016) and Geng and Wharton's (2016) findings in literature review sections of Chinese English-major MA theses and discussion sections of L1 Chinese and L1 English doctoral theses, respectively. It could be inferred from this alignment that in research articles' sections where the writers are required to position themselves in the context of other researchers' work, as in literature review or discussion sections, countering strategy is commonly used to engage and persuade the readers towards the writers' justification of knowledge.

Considered as another category of citation, 'endorse' is the third- and second-most frequently used heteroglossic resource under dialogic contraction in Thai (7%) and international journals (10%), respectively. By endorsing the cited information via the use of affirmative reporting verbs such as *show, prove, demonstrate, find, point out*, etc., the writers position themselves in agreement with the external voices, which are presented as credible, correct, justifiable, and rational (Geng & Wharton, 2016; Martin & White, 2005; Xie, 2016). However, in addition to the suggested reporting verbs, the realization of the authorial voice's position with respect to the proposition is also contingent upon a reading of co-text, as highlighted by Martin and White (2005). The following examples from our corpus illustrate that circumstance.

(8) Byram's (2008) definition provides a **helpful explanation**. He **states [Hetero_contract:endorse]** that intercultural competence is "the capacity to engage with people of a cultural group and identity to which we do not belong, …"

[Source: Thai 2, 2016, p.188]

(9) There was a **never-ending enthusiasm** for one method or another **until** Kumaravadivelu (2003) **introduced [Hetero_contract:endorse]** the concept of the "postmethod era" implying a move beyond methods.

[Source: Thai 5, 2015, p.98]

In example (8) and (9), the authorial voice supports Byram's (2008) and Kumaravadivelu's (2003) proposition by the positive evaluation '**helpful explanation**' and '**never-ending enthusiasm … until**', respectively. Both examples clearly present the way writers deploy evaluative language to position themselves in affirmative alignment with the external voices. However, in comparison of the two corpora, 'endorse' is used to a greater extent in international journals. This could imply that international journals' writers resort more to the cited information

construed as reliable and valid to support their study. In other words, this projection of inner authorial voice can apparently impress or convince the readers that the writers are experts in the field, as the intended meaning-making is conveyed through those contractive resources (Chang & Schleppegrell, 2011).

Based on the above findings and discussion, it can be said that the authors in international journals tend to apply a greater extent of evaluative language in terms of engagement than authors in Thai journals. However, due to the fact that there are only slight differences in the use of engagement resources by the two groups, this could convey the conformity of Thai journals' authors with the norms and conventions of international journals' expert academic writers for the authorial positions towards alternative voices or viewpoints in the literature review section. Nonetheless, presumably owing to the lesser academic experience of Thai journals' authors and the lesser expectations of readers towards Thai journals' authors, countering and confrontational positioning have been relatively used more by international journals' writers to engage the readers towards their justification of knowledge. Moreover, strong and affirmative propositions towards the cited information have been found relatively more in international journals, in contrast to the cautious and tentative standpoints in Thai journals. In addition, it is interesting to find out that in attempting to convince readers, Thai journals' authors utilize more bare assertions, with no reference made to other alternative voices.

Nevertheless, the results of this study need to be treated with some caution. First, since the results of this study were mostly obtained via interpretive process and the counting of occurrence frequency, they might not be able to reveal how evaluative resources co-articulate with each other in the texts and might dismiss other interesting items, which are less frequent in occurrence but still worthy of attention. Second, as this study is focused only on the Engagement subsystem and on one discipline of applied linguistics, future research could investigate other subsystems of Appraisal Theory (Martin & White, 2005) across a variety of disciplines, to have more comprehensive understanding of how interpersonal meanings are presented in different contexts.

## 5. Conclusion

Although this study is based on a small corpus, it yields interesting and useful results. Generally, the findings of this study show that engagement resources are commonly used in the literature review sections of English research articles published in both Thai and international journals in order for the authors to express their viewpoints and position themselves in the context of other researchers' work. The similar results in the use of engagement resources seem to indicate both groups of writers' awareness in engaging with the readers and construing dialogic standpoints in their texts. However, it is noteworthy that some particular differences in the deployment of engagement resources might be attributed to other factors such as readers' expectations, norms and conventions of the academic discourse community, the institutionalized nature of academic discourse, and disciplinary culture (Dahl, 2004; Li & Wharton, 2012). Therefore, in order to overcome the challenges of expressing evaluation and persuading the readers towards the value of their research, novice writers not only need to closely examine the engagement resources but also need to take those factors into consideration, as the writers are required to obtain discoursal knowledge and align with the guidelines of their academic communities for favorable communicative practices (Ahmed, 2004).

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