

THE USE OF RASA 'TO FEEL' AS A HEDGE IN APPRAISAL THEORY: A CORPUS STUDY

Karisma Erikson Tarigan¹, Margaret Stevani²

Catholic University of Saint Thomas Medan, North Sumatra, Indonesia

¹erick_tarigan2006@yahoo.com

²margaretstevani19@gmail.com

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Abstract

The word *rasa* 'to feel' or 'to taste' in Indonesian was usually used to show a feeling or taste. It concerned as a hedge or a word whose function was to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy. Through this study, the writers aimed at describing the use of 'rasa' as a hedge through corpus study derived from Indonesian novels. To analyze the data, the write applied appraisal theory that classified the assessment of language into three categories, that were affect, judgment, and appreciation by using descriptive qualitative method. The result of the study showed that *rasa* 'to feel' was used as a hedge for judgment, affects, and appreciations. The result indicated that Indonesian were more careful when they gave comments on whether someone was good or bad or whether what they met or violated some social standards and did not need to when they talked about someone's feeling or gave appreciation.

Keywords: Appraisal theory, Hedges, Semantics, Indonesian novels

Introduction

Hedges are the words or phrase, which, when attached to an assertion appears to be apologetic, uncertain, and/or undermining (Chrisler & McCeary, 2010). Hedges are usually represented by lexical verbs such as *think*, *assume*, *probably*, *maybe*, *wonder*, *appear*, and *suggest* (Haase & Orlova, 2019). Such thing also happens in the Indonesian novels in which, for instance, the actor does not have a desire to express the truth value of his statements (Hyland, 1998). Meanwhile, in Indonesia, the word that has similar meaning of those English words is *rasa*. Although it commonly refers to taste of food as the primary meaning, another meaning is positioned as hedges which define as *to feel*, for example in the sentence such as *Saya rasa saya melihat kamu kemarin* (I think I saw you yesterday). The synonyms of *rasa* in Indonesian language are *pikir* (think), *sepertinya* (seems), *mungkin/kemungkinan* (*maybe*, *probably*), and *asumsi* (assume). Regarding the meaning, according to Kaltenbock, et al (2010), hedges were defined with respect to semantic and pragmatic in the framework of prototypically conditions to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy (p.51). In other words, by using hedges, the definition or statement used in the utterances will be opaque to be understood that might cover the motives of the speaker towards the other participant or hearer. Since it is related to cognitive aspect, therefore, the hedges indicating feeling is not followed by nominalization or objects. Reppen et al (2002) believe that the use of hedge is to describe a word or phrase 'whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy.' It means that hedge can weaken or strengthen the category of membership in the sentence.

In Indonesian culture, when people say *rasa* or *rasanya* to show their feeling, there might imply doubtfulness, certainty, and believe about the things. Indeed, the use of *rasa* as hedges is able to direct participants getting involved to the speaker's mind by considering that it is true regardless the fact. Hence, it requires much attention in order to identify whether it reflects the truth condition or not. To classify the types of hedges, Martin and White (2005) were the first authors suggest the appraisal theory to evaluate the language. Valdeon (2021) states that Martin and White (2005) particularly emphasize metaphor as means of provoking a positive or negative response because it allows opinion to masquerade as reporting in readers. These theories can be said as the further development of Halliday's (2005) Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). In SFG (Halliday, 2004, Eggins, 2004), there are three metafunction operated to analyze language which are ideational (transitivity analysis), interpersonal (relation between the speaker and the addressee), and textual (mood and theme). The appraisal theory is based on the interpersonal metafunction since it talks about the utterances, between the speaker and the participants. Three categories for language assessment are affect, judgment and evaluation, in which those can be understood by its context, not the word as a single unit.

Some researchers actually had studied about hedges in different ways. A prior study by Shih-Ping Wang and Khunkhenova Tatiana (2016) discussed kinds of hedges that occur in EFL journal papers. They believe that hedges is one of politeness strategies which can be applied in academic subjects. In their analysis, it exposures the number of data about the types of hedges in which modal auxiliary *can*, verb *suggest*, and adjective *most* are the most frequent used as the hedges. Meanwhile, another one taking Indonesian language as the source data done by I Nyoman Suka Sanjaya (2016) studies hedges written in the research articles in pragmatics scope. He states that hedges are linguistic expressions which have persuasive effect especially in the research articles. The study compares the use of hedges between articles written by the natives (English speakers) and the Indonesians whom the official language is not English. He brings the issues in socio-cultural context so that it is found that the native written articles apply hedges to express negative politeness because of its egalitarianism concept in the society, while Indonesian writings use them for positive politeness is purposed based on the solidarity ideas developed among its people. Those two prior studies are different from this present one since the focus is on the word *rasa*, not all types of hedges occur in the novels. In addition, it tries to scrutinize the tendency of using particular kind of language attitude containing in *rasa* that might reflect characteristics of Indonesian writers as well.

Two research questions underlying this study are what types of attitudinal meaning presented in the Indonesian novels, and why those meanings are used by the writer. The first question is more about the findings done by categorizing the word *rasa* into three categories above, while in the second question, the researchers discuss the tendency of Indonesian novels in implying attitudinal meaning.

Literature Review

Lexical Metaphor

Munday (2012) defines that lexical metaphors are one device that can provoke an attitudinal response indirectly. Kongsmo (2010) argues that metaphors should be interpreted as implicit comparisons between two hidden concepts. Lassen (2003) states that lexical metaphor defines as any semantically equivalent identification or any association of one thing with another by replacing a word or phrase from the semantic field and it naturally belongs to by a word or phrase from another, in the context, less usual semantic field. Shrivastava (2019) emphasizes that in a lexical metaphor, one subject is implied to be another so as to draw a comparison between their similarities and shared traits. The purpose of using a lexical metaphor is to take an identity or concept that we understand clearly (second subject) and use it to better understand the lesser known element (the first subject).

Evaluative Meaning

As the development of SFG, appraisal theory is a part of interpersonal metafunction that

focuses on the language evaluation. This concerns on how the speaker or writer communicate their shared feeling or values. In other words, it is said as attitudinal evaluation since the meaning is about the speaker/writer evaluates the entities, the happenings, or state of affairs in positive or negative behavior. Illie & Sandel (2015) state the evaluative meanings described by the appraisal framework provide some of the mechanisms by which the “interpersonal” metafunction operates, in that they present speaker/writers as revealing their feelings, tastes, and opinions with greater or lesser degrees of intensify and directness, as construing propositions as more or as less contentious or warrantable, and as thereby aligning or disaligning with value positions in play in the current communicative situation. Rocci & Saussure (2016) explain that evaluative meanings by which speaker/writer attitudes and stances are expressed were typically characterized as connotational and view the feelings about entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. According to the statement, evaluative meaning aims to see the speaker/writer’s intention in using language in which the meaning of utterances purposes to influence the reader/hearer to do the same as what they say.

Appraisal Theory

Joyce and Feez (2016) state that to distinguish between interpersonal meanings that express emotions, judgements of others and evaluations of phenomena, linguistics use appraisal theory as an analytical tool. Bullo (2014) assumes that appraisal theory provides one way of unveiling speakers and writers’ ideological positions encoded in positive or negative evaluations of, and attitudes towards, entities. It focuses on interpersonal meaning with the way in which people interact, including the feelings they try to share.

Wang and Munday (2020) claim that the appraisal theory developed from the description of interpersonal meaning in systemic functional linguistic. The appraisal framework comprises three interactive system, namely attitude, engagement, and graduation. Yang & Li (2020) propose the system of attitude embodies three types, that were affect, judgment, and appreciation. Besides, attitudinal meaning marks out the difference between explicit and implicit expressions and the positivity of the attitudes. There are three semantic regions of attitude evaluation suggested by Marthin and White (2005) that involves aesthetics, ethics, and emotion. For the emotion, it is related to emotional feeling owned physiologically since born, and so called as **affect**. In other words, affect is also the assessment to an emotional reaction such as happy or sad, interested or neglected, like or dislike, and so on. Aesthetics is how we appreciate or evaluate ‘artifacts, entities, happenings, and state of affairs by reference to aesthetics and other systems of social valuation’ (White, 2005). It is known as attitude of **appreciation**. The other one is ethics by which it is usually concerned with the moral values that exists in the society. In ethics, the evaluation is called as **judgment** which means ‘the assessment of human behavior and/or character by reference to ethics and other social norms’. Responding the evaluation of attitude in language by Martin and White, it can be understood that the language contains meanings that are potential to link between the writer and the reader.

Research Method

The method of this study was in the form of descriptive qualitative method by using appraisal theory by Martin and White (2005) to reveal ‘*rasa*’ in Indonesian novels by using hedge by Reppen et al (2002). Descriptive qualitative was to answer a research question related to incidence, prevalence, or frequency of occurrence of a phenomenon of interest and its characteristics (Gray et al, 2016). To conduct this study, the researchers used the website www.corci.org. The website provides 2715 occurrences of the word ‘*rasa*’. Based on the data, 3 types of appraisal theory in the form of sentences which showed the use of *rasa* as a hedge were identified and analyzed.

Results and Discussion

The use of *rasa* as a hedge in the three semantic regions were discussed below.

Judgment

The word *rasa* containing judgment could be seen in these sentences:

- a. *Tanpa mereka berdua, RASAnyanya jaringan kita di sekolah sudah habis!*
(Without both of them, I think our school network is finished!)
- b. *Sedangkan Ali Topan yang RASAnyanya ke sekolah cuma iseng, dan hidupnya semi acak-acakan, ulangannya paling apes dapat 8.*
(While Ali Topan, who I think goes to school for pleasure has a messy life, at least gets an 8).

Rasa with the suffix *-nya* accommodated judgment towards certain things. In (a) '*rasanya*' referred to the situation that states about a fact. Meanwhile, in (b), it pointed to particular subject which was Ali Topan. '*Rasanya*' in this context was not about a fact but the opinion from the speaker in the novel towards a character, which the truth was uncertain. Although the speaker did not know about the truth, he had issued the judgment about him and made others considered that it was true.

Affect

Affect was usually connected with the individual norm which was about the person and the feeling of bad or good, deserved or undeserved, and so on.

- a. *Gua mau nekat kayak si Topan, belum sanggup RASAnyanya. Gila, babe si Farah punya pestol. Kalau gua ditembak bisa celaka.*
(I daren't do like Topan, I think I can't).
- b. *Ia tahu gelang emas dan uang itu berasal dari simpanan Mbok Yem. RASAnyanya ia tak tahan menerima budi itu, namun untuk menolak ia tak tega.*
(He knew that Ma Yem had the golden bracelet and money as her saving. He thought he could not accept her offer, but he could not turn them down too).

When '*rasa*' indicated affect, it tended to affiliate with opinion that came up from the person. However, the two sentences above proved that it could be about a fact as well. Example (a) described an affect showing the opinion of speaker about himself, whether he was able or unable. This statement was uttered by using negative polarity *belum* which meant not yet. Besides, in this context, the speaker valued his own ability by which it could be responded by saying the possibility that 'he was able to do that'. It was different from example (b) that showed a fact of feeling which could not be placed by anyone. Only the speaker knew the situation. Moreover, by seeing its context, it was impossible to say 'Don't be shy, no problem you received that gift', since the situation was only experienced by the speaker himself and no one might value it.

Appreciation

Appreciation was related to the aesthetic values referring to the things or phenomena. Here were the examples of *rasa* that portrays appreciation.

- a. *Anna Karenina Yang Manis! Saya senang sekali menerima suratmu. Saya tiba-tiba jadi bersemangat dan hidup teRASA tidak suram lagi.*
(Sweet Anna Karenina! I am happy to receive your letter. I suddenly feel motivated and I don't feel life is not gloomy anymore).
- b. *KuRASA rangkaian huruf-huruf seperti alif laam miim, alif laam ra, haa miim, yaa siin, nuun, kaf ha ya 'ain shaad adalah rumus-rumus Tuhan yang dahsyat maknanya.*
(I think the string of letters like alif laam miim, alif laam ra, haa miim, yaa siin, nuun, kaf ha ya 'ain shaad is God's formula which has magnificent meaning).

In sentence (a), the word *terasa* in this context indicated the fact that the speaker got

spirited about the condition. However, *rasanya* in the sentence *Rasanya, baru pertama kali dalam sejarah hidup saya sampai hari ini, saya menerima perhatian yang menakjubkan* was personal experience in which the speaker valued this moment as something amazing during his life. 'Rasa' that meant an opinion also happened in example (b). The speaker in (b) tried to evaluate the Arabic words by saying that they had magnificent meanings, so it could be inferred that this statement was a part of appreciation about the aesthetics.

Based on the analysis, the word 'rasa' in Indonesian novels was mostly related to judgment. It conveyed how personal feeling bounded with the social norms surrounding it. The acts or attitudes of the people (speakers) in the story were considered by ethics available in the circumstances, that could be pro or contra to the norm applied there. On the other side, hedges indicated affect was upon the individual domain which shown very personal feeling or experience, whether it was bad or good, right or wrong, accepted or neglected, and so on.

Besides, by seeing the percentage in the use of hedges, most speakers utilized 'rasa' to deliver their opinions. They were somehow not quite sure about what they believed in or entrusted with, but the hedges might direct the people's response to something which was (uncertain). When the speakers had no doubt on their own ideas, the utterances were usually added by the matter of facts followed by logical explanation which was written as follows:

Dia sudah bosan heran dan bertanya-tanya, bagaimana caranya otak Ali Topan bekerja. Ia yang punya catatan rapi, belajar cukup getol, tapi jarang dapat angka tujuh pada setiap ulangan Aljabar atau Kimia. Sedangkan Ali Topan yang RASANYA ke sekolah cuma iseng, dan hidupnya semi acak-acakan, ulangannya paling apes dapat 8. Kalau nggak sungkan sama Pak Guru, dia selalu dapat 9 atau 10. Brilian-lah, begitu kalau orang Barat bilang. "Jadi skorsing gua berakhir pas dua hari menjelang minggu tenang, Bob?"

(He can't stand his wonder, on how Ali Topan's brain works out. He whom the notes are well-arranged, has been study hard, but seldom he got score at 7 in each test of Algebra or Chemistry subject. While Ali Topan who is considered school is for fun, and with his messy life, he got at least 8 for the test. When he is not that reluctant to the teacher, he always gets 9 or 10. Such a brilliant, as so called by the Westerners. "So, my suspension will end up in two days ahead to holiday for preparing test, Bob?")

It could be seen that the other facts were potential to support judgment and made it a fact. Meanwhile, in the type of appreciation, for instance, the opinion was constructed by the entities involved in the happening moment. As the effect, the hedges using 'rasa' uttered by the speakers might impress other participants about the contents, and created the assumption of being more polite. This was also the influence of the Indonesian culture (as a part of Eastern culture) in which the level of politeness was exist. However, it could be inferred as well that this kind of hedges implied the speaker's carefulness in delivering his or her ideas, especially to make judgment.

Conclusion

To conclude the result of data analysis, it was found that 'rasa' as a hedge was construed by its context in order to see intensional attitude in referring it. From three classifications of language appraisal, the attitude of judgment was more frequent compared to two other categories which were affect and appreciation. This phenomenon happened in Indonesian novels by which the hedges using 'rasa' was adjusted to the culture developed in the society. It was also considered as being more polite and indicates carefulness to utter the ideas or opinions than directly state the intention.

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