CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

The title of the study is ‘A Systemic Functional Analysis of the Interpersonal Metaphor in Computer Science Texts.’

The term “Interpersonal Metaphor” refers to the meaning expansion of a clause that influences the relationship and interaction between the reader and the writer. The study focuses on the written works of the Computer Science genre. The study is grounded in the framework of “Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL)”, developed by Halliday. Halliday and Matthiessen (2004:23) suggest that “a language is a resource for making meaning and meaning resides in systemic patterns of choice.”

This chapter will provide an overview of the study covering the research purpose and the significance of the study. The chapter ends with the delimitation of the study.

1.1 Statement of Research Area

This research is associated with text analysis of Computer Science texts. It investigates the Interpersonal meanings in the metaphorical realizations in the text. As a Computer Science graduate, the researcher observes that first year Computer Science students have great difficulty understanding the academic textbook as prescribed by the curriculum. In order to understand the course, some students would choose to have popular textbooks as their supplementary material. The phenomenon of students choosing popular texts to help them understand the course leads to this research. The study explores the differences between the linguistic patterns of academic and popular texts.

In SFL, language is a social semiotic (Halliday and Hasan, 1985; Halliday, 1985, 1994; Martin, 1992; Halliday and Matthiessen, 1999, 2004). The word 'semiotic' means that language is a resource for making meaning. Halliday (2006:295) notes that "language has evolved to serve the function of meaning". According to Halliday, language performs three functions simultaneously: The Ideational metafunction is concerned with the representation of ideas and subject content, the Interpersonal metafunction is concerned with the interaction between addresser and addressee in expressing the self and influencing others and the Textual metafunction is concerned with information flow and the organization of the message.

According to Halliday and Matthiessen (2004), there is a potential of semantic expansion in the Interpersonal meaning of a clause. Halliday proposes two systems in Interpersonal Metaphor, which are the Metaphor of Mood and the Metaphor of Modality. The two systems are given a detailed treatment in Chapters 2 and 3.

Data for the study come from the topic ‘Loops’ derived from two books. The first book is a prescribed textbook for first year Computer Science students in the University of Malaya entitled ‘The Introduction to Java Programming’. The second book is entitled ‘The Complete Idiot’s Guide to Java 2’ which is available in most major bookshops in Malaysia.

1.2 Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to explore the features of Interpersonal Metaphor in the academic textbook and the popular text. The Interpersonal Metaphor is able to show the interactiveness of the texts.

The aim of the research is three fold. First, the text is approached using the linguistic model of Halliday & Matthiessen (2004). The model is supported by complementary ideas from Halliday and Hasan (1985), Halliday (1985 & 1994) and Martin (1992).

The second aim is to show how the Interpersonal Metaphor is realized in the texts by analyzing the texts using the Mood and Modality systems.

The third aim of the study is to determine how the Interpersonal Metaphor influences the interactiveness of the text.

1.3 Major research question

Based on the aims in Section 1.2, the study has two research questions:

(1) How is the Interpersonal Metaphor realized in the data?

(i) Through the Metaphor of Mood

(ii) Through the Metaphor of Modality

(2) How does the Interpersonal Metaphor influence the interactiveness in text?

1.4 Significance of the study

This research may contribute to the field of English for Science and Technology (EST). Generally, language in scientific discourse is 'extremely difficult to access' (Bloor & Bloor, 1995:221). It is also said that scientific disciplines are "forbidding and obscure" (Halliday, 1989:159). This case is particularly true for specialized text that involves technical terms and jargons (Halliday, 1989:159).

The object of investigation is the interpersonal features that influence the relationship between the writer and the reader of the text.

The analysis of this study may uncover the reasons why students would choose the popular text over the prescribed text in Computer Science studies. The research may have pedagogical implications in the field of EST to help in the development of more accessible materials to beginner Computer Science students.

1.5 Delimitations of the study

This research is done manually and therefore is limited to a topic from two different subgenres of Computer Science books, which are the textbook and the popular text. The level of interactiveness of the books as a whole may not be fully determined. A further investigation may be carried out on other chapters in Computer Science books that are available in the market to validate the findings of the study that the popular texts are more interactive than textbooks.

Metaphorical realizations in text also involve the Ideational and Textual dimensions. Since studies on Ideational dimension have been carried out (Schleppegrell, 2004; Thompson, 2004), further research can combine multidimensional

Metaphors in text, since the three metafunctions in language are not mutually exclusive, but complementary.

1.6 Chapter Summary

This introductory chapter has provided a brief outline of the study on the Interpersonal Metaphor in Computer Science texts. Chapter 2 covers the literature review of this study. This is followed by Chapter 3 that discusses the research design and theoretical framework. Chapter 4 provides the analysis and findings. Chapter 5 concludes the entire study.