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An Investigation of Interpersonal Meta Discursive Markers in English Persuasive Essays Written by Iranian EFL Students

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ABSTRACT

Objective: Metadiscourse assists the writer to get the reader to better understand and perceive the text. The aim of this study was to investigate the way interpersonal metadiscourse markers were applied within persuasive essays written by Iranian EFL students.

Methods: The participants (N=50) were asked to write an essay in which to persuade city dwellers to leave the city and start a new life in a rural area. Interpersonal metadiscourse markers, such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions, were traced and analyzed.

Results: The occurrences were observed in their textual context to facilitate the identification of their function. The results indicated an unbalanced presence of metadiscourse markers in the essays written by Iranian EFL learners in favor of directives as a realization of boosters.

Conclusions: It was inferred that metadiscursive markers might be configured based on cultural norms in the students' native culture. It is suggested to teach EFL students to apply modal verbs to adjust the weight of imposition of boosters.

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Introduction

Language is utilized by mankind for diverse aims such as transmitting and acquiring information, expressing emotions and the like. There are instances of language use that rather than fulfilling ideational (information-giving) function of language focus on readers/listeners to manipulate, orient or influence them by attempting to convince them of the trustworthiness or at least importance of their assertions embedded in the text. Consider the following false news title that appeared in social media recently: "Indian fortune teller: Covid-19 pandemic to stay for decades." A hypothetical similar title such as "Brazilian fortune teller: Covid-19 pandemic to stay for decades" would not be as persuasive. The former sounds more persuasive than the latter as the word 'Indian' connotes mystic/esoteric knowledge perhaps through associations with images of Indian Sadhus and swamis (holy men) or spiritual gurus. Such instances of language use highlight metadiscursive aspect of language use. The notion of metadiscourse was coined by Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989), who included in this term textual elements through which the writer or speaker delineates his/her presence in the text to affect the way where the interlocutor, reader in the case of a written message, and receiver in the case of an oral message, interpret or reacts on the message.

Metadiscourse refers to the linguistic material, spoken or written, that does not add anything propositional or content, but it helps the receiver of the text to organize, interpret and evaluate the information given. Moreover, there is a social constituent in metadiscourse, which can be interpreted as the control that the author exercises over his own speech and on its receiver in order to ensure that the message arrives in the desired form. The term metadiscourse was developed by Vande Kopple (1985) as a cover term for both textual and interpersonal functions of language. According to Flowerdew (2015), the interpersonal role of metadiscourse is "to signal the communicative intent of the writer/speaker and show how the propositional level of the discourse is to be interpreted on the part of the reader/listener" (p.17). The textual metadiscourse refers to a set of tools that writers/speakers use to organize their texts (Flowerdew. 2015).

The analysis of the written production carried out by non-native English learners has been the object of study by a large number of authors who have analyzed the interlanguage of the writers of a foreign language, studying aspects linguistic, rhetorical, cultural or discursive. The emergence

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of a large number of studies devoted to the study of metalinguistic characteristics of different types of texts is not accidental. Although a number of researchers (e.g., Biber & Finegan, 1989; Conrad & Biber, 2000; Chafe & Nichols, 1986; Hyland, 2000, 2005; Thompson & Hunston, 2000) have investigated interpersonal function of language use in writing under such term as evaluation, affect, appraisal, evidentiality, hedging and stance, only recently researchers have started to utilize the discoursal frameworks to assess the metadiscursive markers of writing. Thus, this study aims to identify interpersonal metadiscursive signals in English persuasive essays written by Iranian EFL learners in a university writing course.

Literature Review

Writing

Approaches to teaching writing in a foreign language are closely related to the field of discourse analysis since discursive competence is an integral part of the communicative competence as proposed by Hymes (1972). It is logical to assume that knowledge of discourse and the cognitive processes of creating meaning are paramount in the theory of teaching writing in a foreign language. Two approaches to writing, namely product and process, have evolved since the 60s and 70s in the 20th century. However, it is also fair to note that the distinction between the so-called "product" and "process" approaches to teaching writing is rather arbitrary because in practice they use elements each other (Biber *et.al.*, 1999). Neither is the whole English teacher community familiar with the ideas of the two approaches nor do course book writers adhere to one view or the other. As a refinement of the process approach, “post-process” approach was also proposed to reflect social context in the discursive construction of reality in the process of writing (Atkinson, 2003; 2004).

The product approach consists of performing supervised tasks containing indications of the genre and purpose of writing, thesis statement and the text structure plan. The strictest form of manifestation of this approach in teaching is assignments of five paragraph essays. However, the alternative process approach to teaching writing reflects humanistic tendencies (Couture, 1986). The major intention of writing as a type of communicative activity is to create and develop the meaning of written discourse. Two main principles of the process approach are cognitive and personal or expressive processes. Cognitive processes play a role in the organization of written discourse, and the personal processes are to do with the students’ own style of presentation in

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semantic, organizational and linguistic aspects. Working in small groups, which contributes to closer interaction between students and the teacher, free writing, and a more varied spectrum of assignments have become characteristic of the process approach of teaching writing. These techniques are also typical of modern teaching methods of language teaching. Nevertheless, the term "process" does not mean at all a rejection of the traditional tasks of substitution, transformation, construction of sentences and paragraphs.

The "post-process" approach does not represent a radical change in the methodology of teaching writing in a foreign language, but it is a continuation and variety of the process approach. This term is intended to reflect the complexity the meta-discursive structure of the written text, which includes not only cognitive and personal but also the social dimension of writing. Cognitive processes are not fundamental in the creation of a meta-discursive sense. This indicates a shift of emphasis in favor of teaching of the social dimension of written discourse (Atkinson, 2003).

Students make a large number of errors precisely in the process of creating a meta-discursive meaning. Such errors are often more difficult to be classified than, for instance, grammatical or lexical ones. Among the most common errors are poor audience awareness, weak logical connection between sentences and paragraphs, and poor inter-textual cues.

Discourse and Metadiscourse

The formation of discourse requires structural and semantic connectivity. Connectivity ensures the integrity of the text. It is accepted to divide connectivity into cohesion and coherence. By cohesion is meant a set of lexical and grammatical means for expressing connections between text units. Coherence provides the semantic organization of the text as a whole (Ädel, 2006). Metadiscursive signals, demonstrating the properties of both cohesion and coherence, provide the grammatical and semantic integrity of the discourse. The pragmatic functions of such signals refer to the reflection of the process of interaction between the speaker and the listener and the transfer of the writer’s attitude.

Discourse is made on two levels: the first - propositional, is associated with the transfer of information on the subject of the message, while the second - metadiscursive, is related to the organization, interpretation, and evaluation of this information (Vande Kopple 1985): Metadiscourse accompanies and organizes the main discourse. The term does not refer to the

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substance of ideas, but to the writer himself and the reader. According to Crismore (1990), Vande Kopple (1997) and Hyland (2005), metadiscourse does not increase propositional material. Instead, it is a terminology used by the writer with a social sense to guide readers to: connect, organize, evaluate and position themselves against propositional content. Thus, there are meta-discursive signals to regulate both internal textual relations and relations between the writer of the text and the text itself. The former shows intertextual relations. The latter shows interpersonal relations. This is how the speaker/writer exercises control and self-control in the process of communication, making it more effective. Textual metadiscourse works as a guide to organize propositional information such as Connectors (therefore, also); Glosses: to give additional explanations or to delimit a content (that is, in other words) and the Frame markers that make the content explicit (to conclude; in summary). The interpersonal metadiscourse tries to establish a personal communication between the author and the reader, insofar as it expresses the sense in which the former wishes to be interpreted by the latter. These elements help the writer to correctly format the text, so that the reading becomes like a dialogue, as a result, the reader is more easily persuaded. Ultimately, both categories of metadiscourse serve persuasive purposes, but each uses a different strategy to increase the persuasiveness of the text.

Etymologically, the prefix "meta" (from the Greek meta - between, after, through) is a part compound words, meaning intermediate, following something, moving to something or another. Linguistic theory is no stranger to such terms e.g., meta-text, metalanguage. The basic interpretation of the term “discourse” is a coherent text in combination with extralinguistic (pragmatic, sociocultural, psychological) factors. As a category of (natural) speech, discourse may be in the form of oral or written speech, relatively complete in semantic and structural terms, the length of which is potentially variable. In a broader sense, discourse is understood as a set of practices that are implemented on the basis of certain types of text (speech macro-acts), which have a number of common determinants of the corresponding sphere of communication (political, economic, religious, etc.) signs, as well as the very set of texts generated and perceived in this area of communication. In other words, discourse is a communicative context that not only contains text but also background and circumstances that come along with the event, as well as assessment and information provided by its participants. In the same vein, the term discourse emphasizes the nature and essence of speech as opposed to language. It is in speech that speaker's position in

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relation to the stated proposition is determined. As such, the term discourse highlights the subjective plane of the message (utterance).

Metadiscourse consists of linguistic choices the writer or speaker chooses to establish contact and to influence the listener/reader. The speaker/writer can approach or share the point of view with his/her receiver by manipulating pronouns or expressing authority through the use of imperatives or influence the receiver through adverbs. It is through metadiscursive strategies that the writer or speaker makes his/her presence manifest. Metadiscourse also expresses the attitude of the person producing the message towards the content of the message.

Metadiscourse is related to the metalinguistic function attributed by Halliday (1985), who makes a distinction between three main functions: the ideational one, which consists in giving expression to one's own experience, the interpersonal one by interacting with the public, and finally the textual one, thanks to which the speaker organizes what he/she wants to say so that it makes sense in a given context, making his/her speech a cohesive and coherent. Metadiscourse, as the word itself says, is a discourse on the discourse and therefore consists of those expressions that illuminate both the plot of the intentions and the rhetorical attitude of the enunciator so as to model his/her relationship with the interlocutor.

The distinction between propositional and metadiscursive meaning was also addressed by other authors such as Kopple (1985, 2002), who affirms the existence of two levels of meaning, one providing the reader with information about the topic and the other helping him/her organize, interpret, and evaluate his/her attitude about the information provided in the text. According to Hyland (2005), the two levels of meaning present in a text cannot be considered as autonomous elements but as interdependent. Metadiscursive meaning, has to be considered as the means through which the propositional content of a text is made coherent, understandable and persuasive for a given reader. The meaning and understanding of a text are achieved both through the propositional dimension, that is, the content, and through the metadiscursive dimension. Thus, each text or message includes both a propositional and a metadiscursive function, which are considered inseparable.

Hyland (2005) offers a theoretical framework based on a functional perspective that allows to define and operationalize the markers; the key principles being: a) metadiscursive items are

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different from propositional aspects of discourse; b) the metadiscursive item refers to aspects of the text that express an interaction between the writer and the reader and c) the metadiscursive item refers only to relationships that are internal to the discourse. Hyland's (2005) typology of metadiscursive encompasses two categorizes: the first - propositional, is associated with the transfer of information on the subject of the letter, while the second - metadiscursive, is related to the organization, interpretation, and evaluation of this information (Vande Kopple 1985, p. 83) The term does not refer to the substance of ideas, but to the writer himself and the reader. According to Crismore (1990), Vande Kopple (1997) and Hyland (2005), metadiscourse does not increase propositional content. Instead, it is a terminology used by the writer with a social sense to guide readers to connect, organize, evaluate and position himself/herself against the propositional content. Thus, there are meta-discursive signals to regulate both internal textual relations and relations between the writer of the text and the text itself. The former shows intertextual relations. The latter shows interpersonal relations. This is how the speaker/writer exercises control and self-control in the process of communication, making it more effective. The following table shows both categories. The textual metadiscourse works as a guide to organize propositional information such as Connectors (therefore, also); Glosses: to give additional explanations or to delimit a content (that is, in other words) and the Frame markers that make the content explicit (to conclude; in summary). The interpersonal metadiscourse tries to establish a personal communication between the author and the reader, insofar as it expresses the sense in which the former wishes to be interpreted by the latter. These elements help the writer to correctly format the text, so that the text becomes like a dialogue; as a result, the reader is more easily persuaded. Ultimately, both categories of metadiscourse serve persuasive purposes, but each uses a different strategy to increase the persuasiveness of the text.

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Category	Function	Examples
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	Express the relations between the main clauses	*In addition; but; thus; and*
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	*Finally; to conclude; my purpose is*
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	*Noted above; see Fig.; in section 2*
Evidentials	Refer to information in other texts	*According to X; Z states*
Code Glosses	Elaborate propositional meaning	*Namely; e.g.; such as; in other words*
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	*Might; perhaps; possible; about*
Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	*In fact; definitely; it is clear that*
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude towards the proposition	*Unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly*
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to the authors	*I; me; my; our; we*
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with readers	*Consider; note; you can see that*

Persuasive Writing

Persuasive writing is a versatile text formation strategy for regularly reproduced situations (advertising, politics, religion, etc.) in which the dominant goals are to cause a change in communicative behavior of the addressee, when he/she makes a decision on the necessity / desirability / possibility of performing the actions initiated by the addressee. Persuasion is a strategy in which communicators try to persuade other people to change their opinion or behavior in relation to a problem by transmitting a message in an atmosphere of free choice. The implementation of writing strategies is largely based on the communicative functions of linguistic means capable of representing the writer's persuasive position through a balance of assertion and compromise (Qin & Uccelli, 2019).

The means of implementing the communicative strategy of persuasion, which is an influence on a person's consciousness, depends on the degree of formalization of the type of discourse, on the communicative situation and the addressee (Hyland, 1998). Thus, speakers/writers need to take into account such interrelated factors as the type of audience, purpose, the structure of the speech, and linguistic means of persuasion to achieve their communicative goal. At the same time, it is necessary to take into account the clarity and accessibility of knowledge, values, intentions existing in a particular society.

Metadiscursive markers contribute to the realization of the category of persuasion, facilitate the process of interpretations of statements by marking changes in topic, contrasting, and generalizing the speaker's attitude to the proposition of the utterance and direct the readers to the most relevant information (Crismore, A., Markkanen, R. and M.S. Steffensen, 1993). The language of persuasion

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is a special battle forms of interaction of its participants are characterized by the use of expressive language to influence the audience. To that end, writers often use epithets, metaphors, comparisons in their essays (Steffensen, 1993).

Research rationale and aim

In case interpersonal metadiscourse in texts written by EFL learners greatly differs from the conventional form of use by native writers, the final text would appear strange and may lose persuasive capacity due to the fact that the reader would not feel comfortable with the writer-reader relationship that emanates from the text. Determination of the communicative-speech parameters of interpersonal metadiscourse provides new insight into solving the problem of the relationship between discourse and text, which is relevant for modern linguistics, according to which texts are considered not only from the point of view of their belonging to one or another communicative-speech sphere, but also in connection with what unites them (Kuswoyo & Siregar, 2019). Thus, the following research question was posed:

- What are the most typical interpersonal metadiscursive markers in persuasive essays written by Iranian EFL students?

Materials and Methods

Design

Descriptive analysis was used to reveal invariant characteristics of persuasive metadiscourse. Within the framework of this study, the analysis of metadiscursive means of expressing the writer's position in Iranian EFL students' writing was carried out. The analysis of texts made it possible to identify meanings based on linguistic data expressing the intentions and expectations of communicants, and to show how linguistic resources contributed to the implementation of the cognitive processes of text structuring.

Participants

Iranian EFL students majoring English majoring English translation were considered the population of the study. A group of 50 students at the B.A. level of the English who were taking a course on the writing of essays at the University of Payam-e-Noor, Shiraz, Iran participated in this study. University studies are expected at this level to have already established a fairly reliable

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knowledge of English. The group had enrolled in the course and were recruited through convenience sampling.

Procedure

After the course started, the routine instruction of essay writing was presented. The textbooks used for the instruction was Essay Writing Simplified (Fitzgerald, 1993). After two weeks, the students received their first draft accompanied by the written comments of teachers. Therefore, they were required to review the task for the next week and present a second draft. The entire procedure lasted for five weeks. Each participant completed two drafts: before training (Draft 1) and after training (Draft 2). The written tasks were coded and photocopied, and were analyzed by three experts, including the researcher.

Data analysis

Hyland's (2000) framework was used to analyze the data. Hyland (2000) identifies five dimensions, namely:

- Hedges: They indicate the decision that the author makes not to commit himself literally with the expressed proposition, so that the information can be presented as an opinion and not as a fact.
- Boosters: They mark the expression of certainty and emphasize the propositional force of a statement, as well as the commitment to what is said. It is a persuasion strategy that consists of emphasizing certain information.
- Attitude markers: They indicate the affective attitude of the author, including surprise, agreement, importance, and frustration of the writer with respect to the propositions.
- Self-mentions: They imply the explicit presence of the author in the text through the use of the first person singular.
- Engagement markers: They help the reader to be more closely engaged with the text by asking questions, making suggestions and addressing readers directly.

Results

The analysis focused on the use of markers in relation to the co-text. Therefore, the emphasis was on the meaning of a word in context. To decide if a word is a metadiscursive element was to determine what the word meant in this place of the text to highlight the writer-reader relationship.

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The presence of metadiscursive elements in the texts indicated the intentions of the writers. In our analysis we gave an account of the elements of the interpersonal metadiscourse that the students used in their persuasive essays.

Interpersonal markers are distinguished by their focus on the addressee. They provide a variety of means of expressing a subjective position. Interpersonal markers increase the illocutionary power of the utterance (e.g., indeed, clear, obvious), indicate presuppositions, express the attitude towards the content from the point of view of the writer (e.g., strange, unexpected), indicate the interpersonal sphere of the writer and the reader (e.g., look, you can see, turn to, consider), explicate the vocation to the writer (e.g., me / we, mine / our). In short, they help to better involve the reader in the content of the text itself. It should be noted that in this work, attention is focused on the dominant meanings that most explicitly project the presence of the writer in the essay.

1. Hedges

When the purpose of writing an essay is to persuade, the writer must convince the addressees of the reliability and the seriousness of the its content. For example, writers use the adjective important to convince their readers of the seriousness of their text. The degree of manifestation of the attribute of adjectives is very often concretized, enhanced, or, conversely, diminished with the help of adverbs. One of the most frequent exponents of the measure are adverbs especially, significantly, (most) more, broadly, much, which intensify the degree of features in terms of power, coverage, depth or frequency of manifestation. Their main function is not only to enhance the degree of the feature, but also to draw the attention of addressees to its scale or intensity. Thus, the grading of the feature seems to be important for the writers since it allows them to show the power of persuasion.

As hedges, modals allow the writer to express different degrees of doubt in relation to the propositional content. In other words, it can also be said that they register a lower degree of commitment or responsibility of the writer in relation to the content that he/she presents in his/her texts. Our analysis revealed 1.1 hedgers per 1000 words in the corpus, including b) cognition verbs, c) impersonal constructions, d) adverbs of doubt and e) expressions of one's opinion.

2. Boosters

The next group of meanings, representing the boosters, is necessity and obligation, expressed by verbs, adjectives and nouns. In such situations, the writers emphasize the importance of taking

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certain measures in relation to the problems raised, attracting the attention of the addressees with a universal directive message. Such means are classified as directives, since they convey the intention of the writer to influence the actions of the addressees, that is, they are rhetorical means of influencing the writers on the relationship with addressees (Hyland, 2002).

Another group of boosters, markers of certainty, allow the writer to register an absolute commitment to the truth value of the propositional content. That is, the writer openly assumes responsibility for the content presented in his text. Markers of certainty can be: a) cognition verbs, b) impersonal constructions and c) adverbs. Our analysis revealed 6.3 boosters and hedgers per 1000 words in the corpus, including directives. In other words, two-thirds of boosters were directives.

3. Attitude Markers

Attitude is the expression of the speaker's stance towards the truth value of his/her proposition (Vergaro, 2004). Human beings have specific habits, preferences, beliefs, and expectations, which determine their attitudes towards the proposition (Conrad, Biber, 2000). It is noted that attitudes limit dialogism, as the writer promotes his/her point of view, limiting or rejecting others (Koutsantoni 2004, p. 169). Indeed, it sounds quite categorical, especially if supported by a logical rationale. Confidence in the truth of knowledge and conviction in righteousness contribute to the creation of the necessary speech act and its effect on the recipients. This allows writers to be categorical in their statements expressed using verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and other contextually determined signals.

Mention should also be made of adverbs that reinforce the meaning of adjectives or verbs and make statements persuasive. In addition, modal words of adverbial origin not only enhance the feature expressed in a verb or adjective, but are also able to intensify the entire proposition, adding confidence to the writer's judgment (Chiluwa & Anurudu, 2020).

According to Hyland (2005), expressions of confidence impose on readers the writer's point of view, control their conclusions, prevent dissent, and present them as passive recipients of the writer's ideas (Hyland 1998). By engaging readers in the text in this way, the writer assumes that they have an appropriate body of knowledge to check, verify and accept the proposed arguments. In addition to these means, there are contextually determined indicators of confidence, which are

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discursively oriented towards the expression of the writer's conviction. In this regard, the most frequent were the designs with not only ... but also; only, only, namely, which themselves and in the context of other means specify in which part of the proposition the writer emphasizes his confidence. Our analysis revealed 4.3 attitude markers per 1000 words in the corpus, all of which appeared in the body of the essays.

4-Self-mentions

Self-mention implies the explicit presence of the author in the text through the use of the first person singular pronoun (Wu & Zhu, 2014). It is sometimes associated with mitigation, e.g. I think / believe / suspect / hope / guess, etc. All such uses are associated with considerations and care in handling claims (Hyland, 2008). Conversely, a powerful authorial presence can also be signaled by the use of self-mention, where the writer displays a high level of authority meaning both 'a right to control or command others' and 'knowledge or expertise in a particular field' (Tang & John, 1999). Our analysis revealed that one/third of instances of the use of self-mention functioned as a mitigation signal, with the rest implicating authorial presence.

Self-mention also helps the reader to find his/her way through the essay. Think of the essay as an uncharted land, where the reader needs a guide. Here comes the writer to draw the reader's attention to points which are plainly visible or obvious within the essay, and to arrive at a conclusion that he or she presumes is shared by the reader. This particular usage of self-mention is often realized in the plural, inclusive form of we or us (Tang & John, 1999) through such words as see, note, and observe. Our analysis revealed no cases of self-mention serving this function (Afsari, & Kuhi, 2016).

Self-mention may also be used to highlight the role of the writer as the organizer of the material in the essay. Writers take the responsibility of organizing and outlining the material by referring to selves (Tang & John, 1999). This function is often evident in the introduction and conclusion paragraphs of a five-paragraph essay, with such expressions as in this easy 'I am going to argue that….'Our analysis revealed no cases of self-mention serving this function *(Behnam, et.al.,2014).*

At times self-mentioning is used to give the writer the status of an eye-witness to give a first-person account of an event or direct evidence perhaps to add to the credibility of his/her stance. This function helps to make a story appear real. It also gives the writer's account details. Here the

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writer narrates his/her own experiences. Examples include such expression as 'once I saw …. I have talked to many….'Our analysis revealed no cases of self-mention serving this function.

Our analysis revealed 2.1 self-mentions per 1000 words in the corpus, all of which appeared in the introduction section of the essays to highlight role of the writer as the organizer of the material in the essay. Other functions of self-mentions were almost non-existent in the students' essays.

5- Engagement markers

According to Hyland (2001, 2005), engagement refers to rhetorical strategies that writers use to bring their readers explicitly into their texts by focusing their attention, anticipating their objections, and recognizing their uncertainties. By asking questions, making suggestions and addressing readers directly, writers show dialogic awareness. Engagement metadiscourse signals may also be used to show how respectful and considerate of readers the writer is (Mohamed and Rashid, 2017).

Hyland (2001) proposes a number of potential metadiscoursal engagement markers, namely real and rhetorical questions, inclusive first person pronouns, impersonal pronouns, second person pronouns, directives. imperatives, references to shared knowledge, and reader-addressed parenthetical comments. Our analysis revealed 3.1 engagement markers per 1000 words, all of which appeared in the body of the essays.

Discussion

During the analysis The researchers were not able to verify the diversity of metadiscourse markers in the essays written by Iranian EFL students in English. Boosters by far constituted the most frequent category. Thus, it could be interpreted that the abundant presence of boosters is accepted by the teachers. Another possible explanation is that metadiscursive elements might be configured according to cultural norms (See Huang, & Xu, 2020). This finding is in agreement with Atkinson's assertions (2003; 2004), who proposed a strong connection between writing and culture. Lee and Canagarajah (2019) hold similar views. Kaiser (2002) showed that more manifestation of feelings was found in the texts of Venezuelan students than in the texts of German students. On the contrary, regarding the manifestation of doubt and insecurity, the latter presented a higher frequency than Venezuelan students. The result may also be attributable to the proficiency level of the students as reported by Bax, *et.al.*(2019).

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Two-thirds of boosters used in the essays belonged to the subcategory of directives, or utterances which instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer (Hyland, 2002; Swales, 2019). They were mainly expressed by an imperative, by a modal of obligation addressed to the reader, or by a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgment of necessity (Ngampradit, 2020). Directives are thought to be less dialogic than other boosters as they leave no space for disagreement. According to Hyland (2002), directives are highly associated with imposition, which is different from the participants' perceptions of the rhetorical context. Hyland (2005) maintains that directives constituted the most frequent devices applied in students' texts to induce readers' participation. In other words, directives are not just commands. Rather they are complex rhetorical strategies that writers use to modify their relationship with readers and to put them in the position of strength in a negotiation process. The most imposing use of directives involves forcing readers to understand the text in a certain way by directing them to consider certain aspect of an argument. Directives often lead readers to conclusions by highlighting what to emphasize in the argument. It was this type of directives that was the most frequent one in students' writings rather than those used to elaborate a point.

Self-mentions serve three functions, namely helping the reader to find his/her way through the essay, highlighting the role of the writer as the organizer of the material in the essay, and giving the writer the status of an eye-witness to give a first-person account of an event or direct evidence perhaps to add to the credibility of his/her stance. All instances of self-mentions found in this study served to highlight role of the writer as the organizer of the material in the essay. Other functions of self-mentions were almost non-existent in the students' essays. In addition, all self-mentions appeared in the introduction section of the essays. These two facts together suggest that the students were influenced by their teachers' instructions, as normally the teachers instruct the students to give an overview of the body of the essay in the introduction section from their own point of view through such expressions as "in this essay I am going to…". Other uses of self-mentions are normally ignored in writing classes. The fact suggests the learnability of writing strategies.

Conclusion

Modern man lives in a situation where he has the opportunity act as a recipient and communicator, instantly receive unlimited amount of information, join the information interaction with all

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participants in communication in all areas of life. It is estimated that during the existence of the Internet, the total number of authors of any texts has grown by about 10 times in relation to the total number authors throughout the history of mankind. However, a large-scale increase in the number of participants in various kinds of communications does not mean improving the quality of communication.

A more proficient knowledge of the metadiscursive markers utilized by the students in their essays could be contributed to improving the pedagogical orientations, especially of the teachers who are in charge of dictating content, chairs or courses on written composition, since it would be about boosting pragmatic competence of students based on meeting the prerequisites of a genre, of a specific writing task. This, undoubtedly, would require the prior analysis of corpus from different academic genres and from different disciplines Until now, we have reflected on the usefulness of teaching some aspects of metadiscourse in relation to persuasive writing, but there is still much to investigate in this sense.

This researcher suggests that the analysis of the metadiscourse in the classroom be carried out by the students in pairs (the writer and a reader), since in this way the writer would receive observations from a reader, which would contribute to the latter developing their text better and being more sensitive to the needs of the audience, enabling them to recognize those needs.

Pedagogical Implications

EFL students may be taught to use modal verbs to adjust weight of imposition of directives. Modality gives the reader freedom of action. For example, a writer who signals his desires instead of making an explicit request gives the reader freedom of action. To do so, the writer often uses expressions beginning with a modal followed by a clause whose subject is the recipient. This discursive function shows the presence of the writer in the text as a person who has his own position on the issue under consideration. It lies in the fact that the writer focuses the attention of the addressees on important aspects and adds his own subjective participation. This strategy was absolutely missing the in students' essays.

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Data availability statement

The original contributions presented in the study are included in the article/supplementary material, further inquiries can be directed to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving human participants were reviewed and approved by ethics committee of Islamic Azad University. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

M.D contributed to the study conception and design, material preparation, data collection and analysis. The author contributed to the article and approved the submitted version.

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