

THE USE OF META DISCOURSE MARKERS IN THE MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY THESES' ABSTRACTS

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Abstract

The researchers, through this study, explored the metadiscourse markers' usage in 50 master of Philosophy theses' abstracts. Twenty-five of these abstracts were written by L2 Pakistani female students and rest of the 25 abstracts were written by the male students. The study sighted the frequency usage of metadiscourse markers by the male and female students. Hyland's model (2005) was adopted to achieve the objectives of the study. The results indicated that researchers used the interactive meta discourse markers more than the interactional ones (Interactive Markers 278 whereas 50 interactional markers). The study made it evident that the use of one marker supported the other in terms of cohesion, relevance and strong argumentation of the text. The researchers observed the diversity and variety in the usage of metadiscourse markers. The students showed varied inclinations or tendencies in the usage of metadiscourse markers. The study also concluded that male students used interactive discourse markers more than the female students whereas the female students outnumbered the male students in the use of interactional metadiscourse markers.

Keywords: Metadiscourse Markers, ESL Writers, Academic Writing, Cohesion, Relevance

Introduction

Metadiscourse markers are words, phrases and brief utterances which remain always helpful in creating connection and organization within texts; they express attitude, extend evidence and cognitively relate the reader to the producer of the text. They also help create assurance that the pieces of information in the form of text flow from one idea to the next with coherence and relevance (Schiffrin, 1987).

The linguists divide the expression into major and minor types and suggest additional classifications. However, due to the limited number of categories available, the classification overlaps extensively in the subtypes. Different linguists define the term differently. 'Metadiscourse markers' Crismore et al. (1993) defines as "linguistic material in written or oral texts that does not add anything to the content of the proposal, but is intended to help the listener or reader organize, understand, and evaluate the information presented" (p. 40).

Harris (1959) used the term 'metadiscourse,' which is unique in discourse analysis. Hyland (2005) views that metadiscourse is a relatively novice method to theorize communications among the writers, the readers and the text. There are mainly two types of metadiscourse markers: verbal and nonverbal (Kumpf et al., 2000, Hyland, 2005, Craig, 2008, Hornby, 2010).

Hyland (2005) builds on prior concepts to create his own model, like the previous ones, which has no gaps or overlaps because it is made up of ten subcategories. There are no overlaps in the functioning of metadiscourse markers among the subclasses of this paradigm. Zarei and Mansoori (2011) perceive that the Hyland archetype is built precisely for examining the academic writing. They, therefore, singled out this paradigm to fulfill the purpose of exploring metadiscourse markers. Zarei and Mansoori (2011) are of the opinion that employing appropriate

markers at appropriate places helps enhance the meaning of the text. These markers create a mental apathy among the reader and the writer of the text and help direct or organize the text. On account of this facilitating role, these markers keep the readers and the writers at ease and comfort in understanding and comprehending the ideas at hand.

The numerous catalogues and taxonomies were used to order and categories metadiscourse markers. Almost all of them start from the Halliday's (1973) theory or precepts on language. Halliday is of the opinion that every speaker or writer makes use of the language for the three functions; ideational, interpersonal and textual. Kopple (1985) argues that communication runs in between credibility markers and the relationship markers. Crismore et al. (1993) and Kopple (1985) share the similar footings on discourse markers and their types. But they adopt somewhat different points of views on subtypes of the markers. Keeping evaluation and organizational functions of the text in mind, they laid stress over understanding the writer's point of view as well. It also asked for necessary information and additional explanations for making the message more clear, lucid and comprehensive for the readers or the intended audience. Hyland (2005) argues that such a division is not necessary. Crismore et al. (1993) cover subtypes in the categories like logical connectors, sequencers, reminders, tropicalizes, and subtype code glosses, delimiting markers, announcements and commentaries.

Thompson Model (2001) mentioned these metadiscourse markers as textmarkers and interpersonal markers. He defined the role of a writer who expresses and organizes the communication for some pre destined objectives. Thompson (2001) also catalogues markers into interactive markers and interactional markers.

Table 1. Hyland's model (2005) of Metadiscourse Markers

Types of Markers	Function	Examples
Interactive Markers		
Transitions	Developing relation with main and coordinating clauses	Therefore, and, but, thus ... etc.
Framemarkers	Framing suggestion or arguments	My purpose is, first, ... etc.
Endophoric markers	Moving the readers towards what comes in the next.	As noted earlier, see figure 1, ... etc.
Evidentials	To direct readers to information outside the text.	X (2005) states, According to Z, ... etc.
Code glosses	To expand the propositional meaning.	In other words, such as, is defined as, ... etc.
Interactional Markers		
Hedges	Suggesting the writers to avoid or avert the propositions.	Might, perhaps, possible, ... etc.
Boosters	To lay stress upon	... a fact that, surely, etc.
Attitude markers	To share writer's inclinations	Fortunately, surprising ... etc.
Self-mentions	Referring the writer out and out	I, me, my, ... etc.
Engagement markers	Engaging the reader	You see, you note that, ... etc.

DataCollection

The collected data included 50 abstracts, counting 25 abstracts written by female students and another 25 abstracts written by male students. The abstracts of the theses were singled out only which were written and submitted for the award of the degree of master of philosophy during the years 2016 to 2020.

TheAnalysis

In line with Hyland’s typology of discourse markers, the researchers identified the types and sub types of discourse markers usage among male and female students. The collected data has been analyzed. The description is given in the following tables.

Table 2. Interactive Markers

InteractiveMarkers	Frequency	Percentage
Transitions	155	55.75
Framemarkers	79	28.41
Endophoriamarkers	21	7.55
Evidentials	12	4.31
Codeglosses	11	3.95
TotalNumber	278	

The above-mentioned table and graph show the frequency and the percentage of interactive marker usage. The data also shows sub types-wise frequency and percentage of the marker’s usage. In sub types; transition markers were 155 with 55.75 percentage, frame workers were 79 with 28.41 percentage, endophoric markers were 21 with 7.55 percentage, evidentials were 12 with percentage of 4.3, and code glosses were 11 with 3.95 percentage.

Table 3: Interactional Markers

Interactional Markers	Frequency	Percentage
Hedges	26	52
Boosters	13	26
Attitudemarkers	4	8
Self-mentions	4	8
Engagement markers	3	6
Totalnumber	50	

The above-mentioned table and graph show the frequency of interactional marker usage. The data also shows sub types-wise frequency and percentage of the marker’s usage. In sub types; hedges markers were 26 with 52 percentage, boosters were 13 with 26 percentage, m attitude markers were 4 with 8 percentage, self-mentionswere 4 with percentage of 8, and engagement markers were 3 with 6 percentage.

Gender specific data in sub types' metadiscourse markers usage

Table 5. Transitions

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Transitions		Transition	
'Additive markers And, also, as well as, or, whether or'	26,9,5,4, and 3	Additive markers And, also, as well as, whether or, besides, furthermore, further, in addition, either or, moreover	23,12,9,4,7,3,4,3,3,2
Consequent markers Thus, so	3,1	Consequent markers Thus, so	2,1
'Causative markers Because, in order to'	2,2	'Causative markers Because, in order to, that's why, since, due to'	1,1,1,2,1
Contrastive markers By contrast, despite	1,1	Contrastive markers Otherwise, but, also, while	1,2,1,2
Comparative markers Rather than	2	'Comparative markers Just as'	1

The above-mentioned table shows the usage of transition markers. In sub types of transition markers i.e., additive markers, used by female students were 47, consequent markers were 4, causative markers were 2, contrastive 2 comparative 2 while i.e., additive markers, used by male students were 71, consequent markers were 3, causative markers were 6, contrastive markers were 6, and comparative marker was 1 in number.

Table 6. Frame markers

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Frame markers		Frame markers	
Label stages Primarily, lastly, eventually, at this point	7,3,1,3	Label stages Primarily, eventually, ultimately, finally, in this case	4,1,1,1,1
'Limit text boundaries ' 'Especially, only, today, specifically'	1,1,1,1	'Limit text boundaries Especially, specifically, now a days, now'	2,1,2,1,2,3
Denote sequence First, then, before	1,3,1	Denote sequence First, forth, after, after that	4,2,5,1
Announce goals 'Additional objective of this study was, the purpose of the study was'	3,4	Announce goals The objective of this study, aim of this study was, the main aim of the thesis	2,3,2

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency and the percentage of sub types of frame markers usage. In sub types of frame markers i.e., label stages used by female students were 14, limit text boundaries were 4, denote sequence 5, announce goals were 7 whiles. label stages used by male students were 8, limit text boundaries were 9, denote sequence 12, announce goals were 7 in numbers.

Table 7. Endophoria makers

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Endophoria makers		Endophoria makers	
At first, the second, the third, the fourth	3,2,2,2	‘At first, the second, the third, the fourth, to the question above’	3,3,2,3,1

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency and the percentage of sub types of Endophoria markers. In sub types of Endophoria Markers i.e. endophoria markers used by female students were 9 while endophoria markers used by male students were 12 in numbers.

Table 8. Evidentials

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Evidential		Evidential	
According to	5	According to	7

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of Evidentials used by female students were 5 while evidentials markers used by male students were 7 in numbers.

Table 9. Code glosses

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Code glosses		Code glosses	
In other words, such as, namely	2,3,1	In other words, such as, namely, like, for instance	1,1,2,1,1

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of Code Glosses used by female students which were 6 in number while male students also used the same number.

Table 10. Hedges

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Hedges		Hedges	
‘Often, sometimes, sort of, seemingly, possible, could be, maybe’	7,3,1,1,3,1	Often(3), sometimes(2), about(1), almost(1), kind of (1), maybe (2)	3,2,1,1,1,2

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of hedges used by female students which were 16 while male students 10 such markers.

Table 11. Boosters

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Booster		Booster	
Should,must be	3,2	Should, never, clearly, indeed,infact	3,2,1,1,1

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of booster used by female students which were 5 while male students used 7 such markers.

Table 12. Attitude markers

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Attitude markers		Attitude markers	
Fortunately, Surprisingly	2,1	Fortunately	1

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of attitudemarkers used by female students which were 3 male students used 1attitude marker.

Table 13. Self-Mentions

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Self-Mentions		Self-Mentions	
I, My	1,1	I	2

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of self-mentions used by female students which were 2while male students used 2such markers.

Table 14. Engagement Markers

Female	Usage frequency	Male	Usage frequency
Engagement Markers		Engagement Markers	
You can see that, notthat	1,1	You can see that	1

The above-mentioned table shows the frequency of engagement markers used by female students which were 6 male students used 1such marker.

Results and Discussion

The results of the study indicated that students used interactivemarkers more than interactional ones. In metadiscourse markers’ interactive types, the subtype ‘transition markers’ were used more frequently. The frequency usage was 155. The second most frequently used subtype of interactive markers was frame markers which were preferred 79 times. In the second category i.e. interactional markers, the subtype ‘hedges’ occurred 26 times while the ‘boosters’ appeared 13 times. Other subtypes were least preferred. The analysis of sub types of transition markers usage shows the frequency of additive markers, used by female students were 47, consequent markers were 4, causative markers were 2, contrastive 2 comparative 2 while i.e., additive markers, used by male students were 71, consequent markers were 3, causative markers were 6, contrastive markers were 6, and comparative marker was 1in number.

The analysis of frequency of frame markers usage. In sub types of frame markers i.e., label stages used by female students were 14, limit text boundaries were 4, denote sequence 5, and

announce goals were 7 whiles. Label stages used by male students were 8, limit text boundaries were 9, denote sequence 12, announce goals were 7 in numbers. The results show the tendency of the students in using the metadiscourse markers in their M.Phil. Theses' abstracts. The male and female students made a good usage of these markers. The reasons for preferring one metadiscourse marker over the other can be the result of the readings these students made in their past academic pursuits. The syllabi, teachers' preferences for some metadiscourse markers, fellows' perceptions in using these markers might have influenced the writing tasks done by the students who produced these theses abstracts.

Conclusion

This research paper was an attempt to explore the usage of metadiscourse markers in the abstracts written by male female students enrolled in M.Phil. English linguistics program of the Islamia University of Bahawalpur. The results showed that the use of meta discourse markers is indispensable. The study surfaced that the use of one marker supported the other in making the text more congruent and logically well-knit as for as ideas and their flow was concerned. An apparent tendency was seen in the usage of markers types and subtypes. It was also concluded that the male students used interactive discourse markers more than the female students whereas the female students outnumbered the male students.

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