

A STUDY OF METADISOURSE MARKERS IN PAKISTANI PRESS REPORTAGE

¹Hasan Abbas, ² Muhammad Asim Mahmood, ³Tayyaba Yasmeen

¹ Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan. abbas.hasan787@gmail.com Cell # 03316374878

² Government College University, Faisalabad, Pakistan. masimrai@gmail.com Cell # 03007644579

³ University of Education, Lahore

ABSTRACT: *Metadiscourse is simply defined as ‘talk about talk’ or ‘language about language’ and its basic role in human communication is to facilitate the reader. The present study is an effort to explore the metadiscourse markers in Pakistani Press Reportage. This is a corpus based research project and the researchers have used a corpus of 2.3 million words. A software named Antconc 3.4.4 has been used to extract metadiscourse elements from the corpus. The researchers have used Hyland’s (2005) model of metadiscourse and have extracted both types of metadiscourse markers i.e. interactive metadiscourse markers and interactional metadiscourse markers. The percentage of metadiscourse markers in the whole corpus is 8.42. The interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers have 59.62 and 40.38 percentages respectively within the metadiscourse markers. The researchers have explored the frequencies and percentages of various sub-categories of Interactive and Interactional metadiscourse markers. The researchers conclude that the role of metadiscourse markers in Pakistani Press Reportage is very important because it helps the writer to assert himself, clarify and illustrate his meanings and facilitates the reader to understand the text.*

Key Words: Metadiscourse, Corpus, Press, Interactional, Interactive.

INTRODUCTION

The use of language for the purpose of communication is an ancient phenomenon and the human beings have been doing it for centuries, sometimes without taking into account the intricacies of linguistic composition. Communicative function of human language does not render it uniqueness as communication through some sort of code or expression is a common phenomenon across many creatures of the world. Human language has many characteristics such as displacement, arbitrariness, productivity, reflexivity, cultural transmission and duality [1]. According to the researcher in [2] reflexivity is unique to human language because the other creatures are unable to talk or reflect about their language.

In a broader sense, metadiscourse points to “linguistic items which reveal the writer’s and reader’s (or speaker’s and hearer’s) presence in the text, either by referring to the organization of the text or by commenting on the text in other ways” [2]. The scholar in [3] defines metadiscourse as “those aspects of the text which explicitly refer to the organization of the discourse or the writer’s stance towards either its content or the reader” [3]. The scholar in [4] asserts that “Metadiscourse refers to those features which writers include to help readers decode the message, share the writer’s views and reflect the particular conventions that are followed in a given culture” [4]. The researcher in [5] thinks that metadiscourse is “the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assist the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community” [5]. The researcher in [6] is of the view that metadiscourse should not be considered as something related to stylistics or pragmatics rather it deals dependently on the rhetorical settings in which it is used and the pragmatic function it performs.

The researcher in [7] considers metadiscourse as a tool in the hands of a writer to “guide, direct, and inform” the reader about himself and the text. [7]. It is a string that is unfolded by the writer and later on folded by the reader in order to facilitate and accomplish the process of communication.

According to the researcher in [3], metadiscourse, for the writers, is a tool to “influence readers’ understandings of both the text and their attitude towards its content and the audience” [3]. The use of metadiscourse enhances the understanding of the reader by resorting to shared knowledge of the community or exploiting the common context between the writer and the reader. The researcher in [8] terms metadiscourse as “the language we use when, in writing about some subject matter, we incidentally refer to the act and to the context of writing about it.” [8]. He also considers metadiscourse elements of secondary importance; hence he places them in the category of non-propositional content of information: “Though metadiscourse does not refer to what we are primarily saying about our subject, we need some metadiscourse in everything we write.” [8].

Press reportage is an important genre in the modern era due to its vital role in opinion formation of the masses. The concept of objective reporting is greatly debated these days but the readers hardly come across it because the press reporters, most of the times, manipulate the news according to their newspaper policy or for some other purpose. Only a careful reader can be conscious of these linguistic strategies and can counter them effectively. The awareness of metadiscourse markers can be greatly helpful for the readers to understand the manipulative strategies of the newspaper reporters.

Research Questions

The present study is an attempt to answer the following research questions:

1. What is the percentage of metadiscourse markers in Pakistani Press Reportage?
2. What type of metadiscourse (interactive or interactional) is more frequent in Pakistani Press Reportage?
3. What is the function of metadiscourse in Pakistani Press Reportage?

METHODOLOGY

The present research is a corpus-based research project. The researchers have focused on investigating the role of

metadiscourse markers in Pakistani press reportage. For this purpose, the researchers have used a corpus of 2.3 million words; the corpus consists of equal number of words from five Pakistani English newspapers. The newspapers have been selected on the basis of their circulation. The research methodology for the present research consists of various steps like extraction of metadiscourse elements from the corpus, identification of metadiscourse elements and finding out the frequencies of metadiscourse markers in the whole corpus.

Extraction of Metadiscourse Elements

In this phase, the researchers' job was to extract metadiscourse elements from the corpus. For this purpose, the researchers used software named Antconc 3.4.4. The researchers with the help of Antconc 3.4.4 searched the metadiscourse elements from the corpus one by one as given in [5]. The model consists of two types of metadiscourse elements; interactive metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse. In this way, the researchers were able to find out the frequency of all the individual elements of all the sub-categories of both the categories of metadiscourse markers.

Identification of Metadiscourse Elements

Having extracted the metadiscourse elements from the corpus, the researcher wanted to confirm whether the words were working as metadiscourse elements or as propositional content in the corpus. For this purpose, the researcher had to study the individual items in order to find out their status in the corpus. The researcher named the earlier extracted frequencies as raw frequencies and the frequencies after manual reading as final frequencies. It was impossible to read out all the instances because the number was enormous i.e. 192541. For this stage, the researcher devised sampling method. The elements having frequencies less than one thousand were studied thoroughly whereas the elements having frequencies more than one thousand were dealt with sampling technique. The researchers adopted the method of systematic sampling and out of one thousand items; the first one hundred items were studied in order to determine their status. By adopting this method, the researchers were able to find out the almost actual instances of metadiscourse markers from the text.

Comparison of the Metadiscourse Elements

In this stage of the research methodology, the researchers put the results in tabular form. The frequencies of individual metadiscourse markers were mentioned against them. All the individual items from the sub-categories of one type of metadiscourse markers e.g. interactive metadiscourse were added in order to reach the grand total of the category. Thus, the percentage of both types of metadiscourse markers was reached by finding out the total frequencies of both the categories.

RESULTS

This section of the present study attempts to provide answers to the research questions raised for the study.

Table 1: Number of Corpus Words and Metadiscourse Markers

Item	Frequency/Percentage
Number of Words	2288463
Number of Metadiscourse Markers	192541
Percentage of Metadiscourse Markers	8.42
Percentage of Interactional Metadiscourse within Metadiscourse Markers	40.38
Percentage of Interactive Metadiscourse within Metadiscourse Markers	59.62

Table 1 provides the details of overall count of corpus words, metadiscourse elements, percentage of metadiscourse markers on the whole, percentage of interactional metadiscourse and percentage of interactive metadiscourse. The contents of the table provide answers to two research questions. The first research question about the percentage of metadiscourse markers in the corpus finds the answer that metadiscourse elements are almost tenth part of the whole corpus. The second research question whether interactive or interactional metadiscourse markers have the higher frequency in Pakistani corpus is answered by the frequency comparison of interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers. The interactive metadiscourse markers are more frequent in Pakistani corpus than interactional metadiscourse markers. The difference between the frequencies of the both is almost 20 percent.

Table 2

Frequency and Percentage of sub-categories of Interactive Metadiscourse Categories

Sub-category of Interactive Metadiscourse	Frequency	Percentage
Code Glosses	9653	8.40
Evidential	2528	2.21
Frame Markers	19951	17.38
Transition Markers	82661	72.01
Total	114793	

Table 2 presents the frequency and percentage of sub-categories of interactive metadiscourse markers. The frequency of 'Transition Markers' is approximately three fourth of the whole frequency which almost marginalizes the other sub-categories. The 'Evidentials' are the least frequent metadiscourse markers in this category and happen to be barely existing in this category.

Table 3 : Frequency and Percentage of sub-categories of Interactional Metadiscourse

Sub-category of Interactional Metadiscourse	Frequency	Percentage
Attitude Markers	4065	5.23
Boosters	9570	12.31
Self mention	16682	21.46
Engagement Markers	23968	30.83
Hedges	23463	30.17
Total	77748	

Table 3 explores the sub-categories of Interactional metadiscourse markers and also takes into account the comparative frequencies of these sub-categories. The results of the comparison reveal that 'Engagement Markers' and 'Hedges' make more than sixty percent of the Interactional metadiscourse markers. 'Engagement Markers' are the most frequent among the sub-categories of interactional metadiscourse.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The basic purpose of the present study is to find out the frequency and percentage of metadiscourse markers in the Pakistani Press Reportage. The results show that the percentage of metadiscourse markers in the Pakistani Press Reportage is 8.42. This percentage is almost one tenth of the whole corpus and is reasonably sufficient to illustrate the role and share of metadiscourse elements in the corpus. The researchers have also explored two categories of metadiscourse markers i.e. interactive and interactional. The greater percentage of interactive metadiscourse markers shows that the press reportage has features close to genres such as casual conversation and it also shows the ways the writers use language to negotiate with readers and present their texts interactively in order to create a relationship with the reader [5]. This relationship has many shades as it is established through different categories. 'Transition markers' occur more frequently than any other sub-category of the interactive metadiscourse markers. "Transition markers are mainly conjunctions and adverbial phrases which help readers interpret pragmatic connections between steps in an argument. They signal additive, causative and contrastive relations in the writer's thinking, expressing relationships between stretches of discourse"[5]. The following examples can illustrate the roles performed by transition markers in the text:

- a). No doubt, Nawab Akber Bugti may be remembered as the greatest Baloch chieftain known in modern history with respect to Baloch Nation. *Furthermore*, history will judge Nawab Sahib as a great reformer by abolishing class discrimination irrespective of them being a Bugti or not.
- b). The Balochistan crisis is a national issue because it touches on the very survival of the federation. *Moreover*, all the discontent in that province has resulted from federal acts of commission and omission, and the federation alone has the means and authority to take the steps needed to make amends for the persistent and systemic denial of Balochistan rights.
- c). He said that 2,133 women were tortured during the same year, while 887 faced tortured by police. *Similarly*, 608 women were abducted and 406 were forcefully married, including 176 cases of vani.
- d). The minister said Pakistan would also launch Islamic Sukuk bonds *but* its timing has not yet been finalized.
- e). Unsurprisingly, the Iranians and Syrians were *consequently* determined to make sure the US never stabilised its rule in Iraq.
- f). We would have to wait and see whether the movie makes much of an impact at the Box Office, *nevertheless* it does have an important message, especially considering the time.

In the above examples from the corpus, 'transition markers' have been italicized. As mentioned earlier by the researcher in [5], 'transition markers' basically perform the roles of addition, comparison and consequence. The role of addition is being performed by 'furthermore' and 'moreover' in the first two examples. The words 'similarly' and 'but' perform the role of comparison in third and fourth example. 'Similarly' is being used for the similarity of the arguments whereas 'but' is being used to mark the difference between the arguments. The words 'consequently' and 'nevertheless' are being used to show consequences of the arguments in the last two examples.

The highest frequency of 'transition markers' among the other sub-categories of the interactive metadiscourse markers indicates that Pakistani reporters are very keen about making additions, drawing comparisons and reaching conclusions. This tendency shows that they consider themselves to be the authorities and they are more definitive than suggestive. The sub-category of 'evidentials' is the least frequent among all the categories of interactive metadiscourse markers. The researchers in [9] define 'evidentials' as "metalinguistic representations of an idea from another source". The rare use of 'evidentials' in the corpus reveals that the Pakistani reporters do not like to cite other sources while reporting. They consider themselves to be the most reliable sources. Sometimes when they want to detach themselves from the burden of news, they use 'evidentials' to save their skin.

If we take into account the sub-categories of Interactional Metadiscourse, we find that 'engagement markers' occur most frequently. According to scholar in [5] 'engagement markers' "are devices that explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants. The words like 'assume', 'consider', 'demonstrate' can be considered as examples of this sub-category.

The sub-category of 'self-mention' is the third most frequent sub-category among Interactional metadiscourse markers. The high frequency of this sub-category shows that the Pakistani reporters like to manifest themselves explicitly as first persons. They like to make their presence felt by their readers.

The least frequent sub-category among the Interactional metadiscourse markers is 'attitude markers'. This category takes into account various attitudes of the writer about the proposition and he has to react almost as an outside commentator. That is why; this sub-category is least frequent among the sub-categories of interactional metadiscourse elements.

It can be concluded that metadiscourse markers play an important role in the language used by the Pakistani press reporters and, through these devices, they most of the times like to assert themselves and at the same time the readers are facilitated by the use of metadiscourse markers.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Yule, G. The study of language. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (2010).
- [2]. Adel, A. Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English. John Benjamins Publishing Company, Amsterdam (2006).
- [3]. Hyland, K. Hedging in scientific research articles (Vol. 54). John Benjamins Publishing, Amsterdam (1998).

- [4]. Dafouz-Milne, E. The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: Across- linguistic study of Newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(4), 95-113(2008).
- [5]. Hyland, Ken. *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing*. Continuum, London/New York (2005).
- [6]. Mao, L. R. I conclude not: Toward a pragmatic account of metadiscourse 1. *Rhetoric Review*, 11(2), 265-289 (1993).
- [7]. Crismore, A., Markkanen, R., & Steffensen, M. S. Metadiscourse in persuasive writing a study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication*, 10(1), 39-71 (1993).
- [8] Williams, J. M., & Colomb, G. G. *Style: Toward clarity and grace*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1990).
- [9] Thomas, S., & Hawes, T. P. Reporting verbs in medical journal articles. *English for specific purposes*, 13(2), 129-148 (1994).