

In the Name of God



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A Cross-cultural Analysis of Metadiscourse Features in Persian and English Opinion Columns

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To good people

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Abstract

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<p>This study set out to compare and contrast usage of self-mention and evidentials, as two metadiscourse features, in opinion columns of Persian and English newspapers. This study is based on the hypothesis that metadiscourse features vary across cultural boundaries. Analysis of 300 opinion columns from Persian and British newspapers indicated that British columnists showed a greater preference for the use of inferential evidentials and self-mention features. Persian columnists, on the other hand, mostly attributed information to unidentified authoritative sources. A lower frequency of self-mention features and their functions was another characteristic of opinion columns written by Persian columnists. Specific identified sources of information were the most frequent types of evidentiality across both corpora.</p>	

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Chapter 1. Introduction

National culture is one of the factors that have been known to affect the emergence of metadiscourse features in texts. In other words, it is known that metadiscourse features are employed in different patterns and emerge in different frequencies as a result of cultural norms and paradigms. Despite this, not much is known about the effects of this factor on the emergence of MD features in non-academic and common text types such as newspaper opinion columns. In fact, due to educational and practical orientation of bulk of metadiscourse studies, many text types that were deemed out of immediate educational concerns were largely ignored in metadiscourse studies. Opinion columns or opinion articles are among this neglected group of texts, despite the fact that these texts have been described as a kind of writing that is reflective of the national culture of their writers (Van Dijk, 1995:38; Pak & Aceveda, 2008:127). As types of texts that are written by culturally knowledgeable people on issues of concern to whole or large parts of society, opinion columns are expected to be greatly influenced by cultural factors. Newspaper columnists who write their opinions in these articles on a daily basis in order to bring about desired effects on the readers would have to resort to culturally acceptable modes of persuasion and language use. Some studies have suggested different modes of persuasion as the cause of variation between opinion columns written by members of different cultures (Murphy, 2005; Dafauze, 2008).

This study set out to compare and contrast self-mention and evidentials as two metadiscourse categories in opinion columns of Persian and British newspapers. Evidentiality is part of the traditional territory of metadiscourse studies that is generally operationalized as the indication of source of information in the text. Self-mention is another metadiscourse feature that was mainly highlighted in the works of Hyland (1998 & 2004 & 2007). Given the fundamental characteristics of opinion columns, that is, their persuasive function and subjective nature, self-mention and evidentials are suitable metadiscourse features worthy of analysis in this type of writing. Self-mention features are in tune with personal and subjective nature of opinion columns, and evidentials with their potentials to manipulate presentation of information can function as powerful persuasive instruments in these texts.

The comparison of Persian and British opinion columns in this study is a quantitative and qualitative analysis. The quantitative analysis is concerned with the frequency of metadiscourse features in opinion columns of each of these languages. The qualitative

analysis, on the other hand, is concerned with relating employment of these features to the overall function of opinion columns and the possible causes of similarity and divergence across the two corpora. In order to provide the basis for this analysis, 300 opinion columns from two British newspapers (*Times* and *Guardian*) and two Persian newspapers (*Jomhuri-ye Eslami* and *Aetemad*) (Islamic Republic and Trust) that were written by native authors of each language were collected. The data collection was conducted in two stages, a first random stage and a second structured stage in which equal numbers of each economical, political and social topics were included. These three topics were included only when dealing with internal issues of their respective societies and addressing the general public. This consideration caters for controlling the audience, which is another influencing factor that needs to be controlled in metadiscourse studies. In fact, by controlling the three factors of topic, audience and nativity of writers, this study aims at providing an optimum context for the emergence of cultural norms of metadiscourse usage. To find out whether or not the observed differences were statistically significant, Chi-square tests were conducted with respect to each category of metadiscourse feature in the corpus. The next chapter provides a concise review of literature of metadiscourse studies in which special attention is paid to self-mention and evidential features. This description is not meant to be comprehensive but rather is purported to be illuminating, relevant and capable of setting the background for the current study.

Chapter 2. Review of Literature

2.1 On metadiscourse

Metadiscourse refers to the employment of a variety of linguistic devices in texts in order to organize them, engage the reader and signal the writer's attitude towards both the reader and the material. Metadiscourse embodies the idea that written communication is more than just an exchange of information and also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who are communicating (Hyland, 2007:3). The concept of metadiscourse is defined as a level of meaning in the text that stands in contrast with the ideational meaning: "on one level we expand ideational material. On the level of metadiscourse, we do not expand ideational material but help our readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate and develop attitudes towards the materials". (Vande Kopple, 2002:93). Although there is generally a consensus among scholars in the field, over the major metadiscursive functions, there is much variation in the classification of these functions and several classifications of these functions have been proposed by scholars in the field (Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Vande Kopple 2002; Hyland & Tes, 2004). Unlike previous scholars such as Vande Kopple (2001) that following Halliday's school of linguistics divided metadiscourse features into textual and interpersonal features, Hyland and Tes argued in favor of an ultimately interpersonal concept of metadiscourse. Based on this view of the nature of metadiscourse, they classified metadiscourse features under the two broad categories of interactive and interactional (2004:168).

Interactive features are those linguistic devices employed by the writer to explicitly organize the unfolding discourse. These features refer to different parts of the text and organize it in such a way to help the reader come to the desired interpretation of the text. Interactive features are also representative of the writer's anticipation of the reader's knowledge, in the sense that they are based on assumptions about the reader's knowledge (Hyland & Tse, 2004:168). Included in this category are:

Transitions: these features express semantic relations between main clauses and comprise a variety of conjunctions such as: 'and', 'but', 'thus', etc.

Frame markers: such markers refer to sequences of discourse acts or text segments that demarcate text boundaries, and reveal the schematic structure of the text. This category also

includes those linguistic devices used to announce discourse goals and signal topic shifts, such as: 'finally', 'to conclude', 'my purpose here is to', etc.

Endophoric markers: the linguistic devices that refer to other parts of the text in order to bring the intended information to the reader's forefront attention, such as: 'see Fig', 'noted above', 'in section 2', etc.

Evidentials: these features indicate sources of information which originate outside the current text such as: 'according to', 'Z states that', etc.

Code glosses: code glosses help the reader grasp the ideational material through clarifications and explanations such as: 'namely', 'e.g.', 'such as', etc.

The second category of metadiscourse features is labeled interactional. These features are employed in the text to alert the reader of the writer's perspective both toward the proposition and the reader. Metadiscourse in this category is viewed as essentially engaging and evaluating. Expressions of attitudes and epistemic judgments along with the writer's expressions of degree of commitment to the propositions expressed are the main components of this category of metadiscourse features. Within this category are included:

Hedges: used to withhold the writer's commitment to the proposition expressed such as: 'might', 'perhaps', 'possible', etc.

Boosters: indicate the writer's certainty of the proposition expressed through the use of linguistic features such as: 'in fact', 'definitely', 'it is clear that', etc.

Attitude markers: express the writer's evaluation of the proposition expressed involving expressions of surprise, obligation, importance; using linguistic elements such as: 'unfortunately', 'surprisingly', etc.

Engagement markers: explicitly refer to or establish relations with the reader through the use of linguistic features such as: 'note that', 'you can see that', etc.

Self-mentions: explicitly refers to the author by using first person pronouns and related possessive pronouns.

As this model was based on the analysis of academic texts, some of its features are adapted to the characteristics of academic texts for example; evidential category in this model is defined as indication of source of information from outside the current text. This definition does not provide a complete picture of all types of evidentials that might occur in other text types. Being aware of this problem, Hyland in his later work (2007:51) states that other types of texts might feature hearsay evidentials (a kind of evidentiality that indicates the source of information as being heard from others, (e.g., It is said that he was killed in the accident). Another type of evidentials that does not seem to be covered by this definition is that type of

evidentiality which presents inductions and deductions on the part of the writer as the source of information. (a complete analysis of evidentials is presented in section 2.7). Other classifications of metadiscourse, based on the kinds of texts they were developed for, give different arrangements and categories of these features. This situation is due to a characteristic of metadiscourse features which is usually referred to as context-dependency (discussed in section 2.4) Lack of correspondence between linguistic forms and metadiscursive functions and the fact that the same linguistic features can fulfill both metadiscursive and non-metadiscursive functions is another problem in this area that could be solved by resorting to another fundamental trait of metadiscourse (henceforth MD) features which is internal reference. The notions of internal reference and context-dependency are discussed in the two following sections.

2.2 Context-dependency of MD features

Emergence of MD features in a text is highly dependent on contextual factors such as the rhetorical purpose of the text, the audience and also factors like the length and generic structure of the text (Hyland 2007:87). Context-dependency of MD features is not limited to the emergence of MD features but holds with regard to the functions that these features play in different texts. In fact, context-dependency of MD features is a two-fold phenomenon, on the one hand, it refers to the fact that not every type of metadiscourse appears in any kind of text and, on the other hand, it means that the same MD features could fulfill different roles in different text types.

Many empirical MD studies provide evidence in this respect. In a mainly quantitative study, metadiscourse features were found by Hyland (1998:445) to show much fluctuation across disciplinary lines. Marketing articles were found to use 90% more personal markers (self-mentions) than Biology articles. Textual (interactive) markers were found to be more frequent in Biology and Astrophysics than in Marketing and Applied linguistics articles. In another cross-cultural study, Duenas (2007:157-158) indicated that there were significant differences between the way Spanish and English business research articles made use of self-mention features to achieve different rhetorical goals. Samraj (2008) found that in Biology PhD dissertations more citations were used than in philosophy PhD dissertations, and PhD students in Philosophy dissertations relied on self-mention and authorial presence to present the information in the text (p. 65). Afros and Schryer (2009) analyzed metadiscourse usage in language and literary studies and found that self-citation and evaluative metadiscourse were the major points of difference between these disciplines (p. 65-66)

2.3 Internal reference

Internal reference is a defining characteristic of MD features which in simple terms means that only those linguistic features that have an internal reference within the ongoing discourse could be considered metadiscourse. Examples below make this idea clear:

2.1 Now I come to the next idea which I presented in the beginning.

2.2 Even though I have never found myself in such an embarrassing situation ...

In example 2.1, the pronoun 'I' has a discourse internal reference as it refers to the author as an entity within the unfolding world of discourse, hence fulfills a metadiscursive function. In the second example, the pronoun 'I' refers to the author of the text not as an entity within the ongoing discourse but rather as an entity in the outside world. This fundamental characteristic of MD is sometimes interpreted as the author's consciousness of the ongoing discourse (Rahman, 2004:36). Emphasizing the importance of this criterion, especially with regard to distinguishing between the ideational expressions of attitudes and evaluations and metadiscursive ones, Rahman provided two clarifying examples that are presented below:

2.3 From the preceding account, it may be noted that the biostratigraphic zones and sub-zones, more or less coincide with the lithological units described earlier.

2.4. It may be possible to develop a systematic procedure to obtain good LOG results by changing the pulling distance with the AIF distance...

The modal expression 'may' in both sentences expresses the author's estimation of possibility of something occurring, which in the first sentence occurs in the text and in the second sentence happens in the world outside the ongoing discourse. So, the first 'my' has a metadiscursive function and the second one has a non-metadiscursive (ideational) function.

2.4 Cross-cultural studies of metadiscourse

Metadiscourse studies as a branch of functional studies of language subscribe to this fundamental assumption that language features vary according to cultural paradigms and norms. Based on their orientation toward practical and theoretical concerns, cross-cultural metadiscourse studies could be divided into two main categories. The first category, that includes the great majority of works in metadiscourse studies, is concerned with practical

needs of students or writers that are required to write in languages other than their mother tongue. So, this branch of studies usually compares metadiscourse in academic texts written by non-native students and experts with metadiscourse in texts written by natives (Peterlin, 2005; Adel, 2006; Hampel & Degond, 2006; Hyland, 1998 & 2002 & 2005; Duenus, 2007; Samraj, 2008). This strand of practically-oriented studies either provides remedial suggestions for the improvement of non-native students' writings or shed light on the organization and generic features of academic texts for the benefits of non-native experts who might lack complete familiarity with native norms of metadiscourse usage. These studies take instances of academic texts as their subject of study and by so doing delimit their findings to metadiscourse features that appear in these types of texts.

The second category of cross-cultural studies of metadiscourse is more theoretically oriented and instead of focusing on academic texts and analyzing their metadiscourse usage for educational purposes, tends to select instances of non-academic texts across two or more languages with the aim of discovering possible differences between them (Crismore, Marrkkanen, Steffensen 1993; Olivera, Sacriston, Bano, Fernandez, 2001; Dafauz, 2008). There are some other metadiscourse studies that cannot be included in these categories, but provide insights into the cultural norms of metadiscourse usage. These studies are not cross-cultural in the sense of comparing metadiscourse in texts produced by members of different cultures, but their findings in relation to metadiscourse usage in languages on which they are conducted are significant. Works of Crismore and Fransworth (1990), Vande Kopple (2002) and Le (2004) are among these studies.

Preponderance of practical and educational concerns in MD studies has resulted in bulk of studies being concentrated on academic texts and meager attention being paid to other text types, despite the fact that some of these ignored texts are among the most suitable texts to be analyzed in this regard. Newspaper texts, in general and opinion columns, in particular are among these texts. Van Dijk (1995:38) claims that opinions expressed in opinion columns are based on "general, socially shared knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, norms and values" and so it is not illogical to assume that newspaper opinion column "perhaps more than any other type of writing, reflects national styles regarding modes of persuasion" (Connor, 1996:143).

2.5 Opinion columns

The term opinion column is either used in a broad sense to refer to three closely related newspaper text types, that is, editorials, letters to editors and newspaper

commentaries, or in a narrow sense to only refer to newspaper commentaries. In fact, these three types of texts are closely similar, in terms of their functions and with regard to the fact that all are short persuasive texts that are written with the aim of influencing the audience views and actions. Subtle differences that exist between these opinion materials arise out of different audiences that they address and also their institutional positions. Editorials express the official position of the newspaper or the institute the newspaper represents and hence are different from the other two texts that represent personal views of their writers. Letters to editors are addressed to editors and do not have the same public audience as editorials and commentaries. With regard to the constitutional position, Dafauze (2008:108) described opinion columns as a kind of text that presents opinions of the author in a more personal style than editorials. Results found by Martin Arres & Nunez Prucha (2006), in their analysis of English and Spanish newspaper commentaries and editorials validate this view.

Subjectivity and persuasion are two fundamental characteristics of opinion columns. Subjectivity is in the essence of opinion columns, as these texts are expressly representative of their author's views and feelings. In fact, unlike news texts that are objective reports of events that have happened in the real world (or at least assumed to be), opinion columns are journalists' reflections on those events and as such are basically subjective. In view of this fundamental characteristic of opinion columns, Martin Arres & Nunez Prucha (2006:226) hypothesized that journalistic commentaries are the place for greater presence of authorial voice than news columns. Their comparative analysis of English and Spanish news columns, editorials and commentaries supported this hypothesis and showed that commentaries and editorials were written in a more personal voice (degree of personal voice was higher in commentaries than in editorials) and in this respect were different from news texts that were written in a detached and objective manner. Persuasion is a basic characteristic of opinion columns and these columns are "some of the most adequate examples of persuasive writings in all countries, setting standards for written persuasion" (Connor, 1996:144) or as Virtanen & Halmari put it "persuasive par excellence" (2005:20).

In view of the context-dependency of MD features (close relations between rhetorical functions of the text and the kind of MD features used) and the fundamental characteristics of opinion columns (subjectivity, persuasiveness and personal nature), self-mention (henceforth SM) and evidentials seem to be among the ideal MD features to be analyzed in opinion columns. The persuasive nature of opinion articles along with another general feature of the newspaper genre, that is, its informativeness make evidentiality an interesting feature for analysis, as it provides the source of information in the text. In opinion articles, information is

not presented in a neutral way, but in such a way to increase the persuasive power of the text. So, evidentials with their great potentials to manipulate the presentation of information in order to enhance the persuasive power of the text can play an essential role in such a genre. Several studies have proved such a role for evidentials in newspaper texts (Le, 2004; Wang, 2008; Hsieh, 2008). Therefore, self-mentions and evidentials seem to play a special role in opinion articles and are worthy of analysis in this genre.

2.5.1 Metadiscourse studies on opinion columns

Within the theoretical framework of metadiscourse little attention has been given to opinion columns. Dafaube (2008) in the introduction of her comparative study of MD features in English and Spanish opinion columns expresses her surprise at the scarcity of works in this regard and introduces the work of Le (2004) that was conducted on the editorials of *La Monde*, as the only exception (p. 96). In fact, these two studies are the only major MD studies conducted on opinion columns. Le (2004) in her analysis of editorials of the *La Monde* was mainly concerned with identification of participants in the argumentations of these editorials (the entities acknowledged and recognized in the ongoing arguments of editorials by the writer). She selected the three metadiscourse categories of person markers (self-mention), relational markers and evidentials as the manifestations of these participants in the argument and analyzed the rhetorical and persuasive goals achieved through the employment of these features. Despite the indisputable merits of this study that were mainly due to the novelty of framework of the study, judicious selection of MD features congruent with the nature of editorials and the new findings it provided on the functions of the aforementioned MD features, this investigation suffered from some limitations. The small size of the corpus (20 editorials) under analysis and the exclusion of some features that are part of the traditional territory of evidentiality are among these limitations. In this study inferential and inductive evidentials were not accounted for and evidential category was limited to hearsay evidentials and indication of third parties as the source of information.

Dafaube in her study of MD features was concerned with the persuasive role of MD features in opinion columns of Spanish and English newspapers. In the first stage of this study, frequency of occurrence of MD markers were determined and then based on the frequency of occurrence of MD markers texts were divided into three categories with low medium and high MD markers. These categories were presented to native informants to write open comments on their persuasive power. In terms of the overall frequency of occurrence of MD features, there was no significant difference between the English and Spanish texts.

Logical markers and code glosses were the textual MD features that showed the greatest cultural variability. While the Spanish texts abounded in additive logical markers (e.g., and, in addition), the English texts showed a greater preference for adversative logical markers (e.g., or, whoever, but). Code glosses were much more frequent in the Spanish texts than in the English texts. With regard to hedges, that were the most frequent MD markers in both texts, there was no cross-cultural difference. High frequency of hedges was interpreted as an indication that these markers play a significant role in the construction of persuasion in opinion columns. Attitudinal markers and certainty markers showed similar frequencies of occurrence in the English and Spanish texts. Other MD markers had very low and insignificant frequencies.

Even though this study purported to give a comprehensive picture of MD features in Spanish and English opinion columns, some MD categories were partially ignored. Self-mention was not recognized as a metadiscourse category and only a small subset of self-mention features under the name of personalization, that was itself part of the commentary category, were accounted. No definition of this sub-category was presented, but from the examples presented in the other categories it is clear that this sub-category did not include instances of self-mention that occur adjacent to other MD categories like hedges. Evidentials were another MD category that were not given due attention. Category of attributors, which was defined as the reference to the source of information, only includes hearsay evidentials and presentation of information from other entities and excludes other types of evidentials.

Apart from these two studies that were conducted on opinion columns within the framework of the MD theory, there are some other studies outside the MD framework that are relevant here. This is due the fact that the MD theory and some of the features studied in this framework get overlapped with other adjacent linguistic areas like the Evaluation theory and Intertextuality theory. One of these studies is comparative study of Martin Arrese and Nunes Prucha (2006). This study purported to analyze engagement features in news reports, editorials and newspaper commentaries of English and Spanish newspapers. The notion of engagement is a part of the Appraisal theory that is concerned with those linguistic resources whereby the authorial voice positions itself with respect to textual voices. Various kinds of evidential features are included into the stock of linguistic categories that realize engagement. Attribution, that in the words of the authors of this study "stands as the representation of intertextual positioning and, as such accounts for all those cases of inclusion of external sources of information in the text" (p. 229), covers a large part of the linguistic features that are classified under the MD category of evidentials. Perception is another engagement

category that includes sensory evidentials and refers to visual or other sources of evidence experienced through senses (p. 232). Inferential evidentials too, are included in the engagement category of cognition.

Review of the results of this study makes its relevance to MD studies on opinion columns clearer. With regard to the engagement category of attribution (inclusion of external sources of information in the text) in the English newspapers, it was found that commentaries mostly attributed information to unidentified sources (e.g., front benches of both main parties, some of those who marched). In English editorials, frequency of attribution was higher and unlike commentaries information was typically attributed to identified sources (e.g., the White House, Tony Blair). With respect to attribution features, news texts were similar to editorials and different from commentaries. In the Spanish newspapers similar results were observed, plus the fact that personal reference to the author in commentaries made these texts different from the editorials and news text. Intertextuality is another area of linguistic inquiry that includes attribution of information to external sources. Within this framework, Wang (2006) compared intertextual features of Australian and Chinese newspaper commentaries. With regard to attribution, it was found that Chinese columnists avoided responsibility for what they wrote through the employment of unidentified sources of information, while their Australian counterparts worked closely with identified sources in order to provide support for their arguments (p. 186).

2.6 Self-mention

In simple terms, self-mention (SM) refers to the explicit presence of the author in the text through the use of personal pronouns (I, me, exclusive we) and related possessive pronouns (my, mine, our). It is an established fact that such features are more characteristic of the spoken language than the written one. Chafe (1982:46) explains the presence of these features as an indication of degree of involvement on the part of speaker/writer in the text and showed that their presence was several times higher in spoken texts than in written ones.

Hyland refers to the presence and absence of SM in writing as a conscious choice (2007:51). This label of conscious choice is reminiscent of the explanation Chafe (1972) gives to the presence of 'I' as a reference to the speaker in spoken language. Chafe was concerned with the semantic resources in the mind of the interactants during the progress of discourse. In his analysis, Chafe labeled those semantic resources that their knowledge was given as foregrounded. Assuming that at any point in the discourse the knowledge of the speaker is foregrounded and so not required to be stated on unconscious grounds, Chafe

relegated presence of ‘I’ as a reference to the speaker to post-semantic processes (like needs of the rhetorical situation) (p. 51-52). Chafe was not particularly concerned with the nature of these post-semantic processes and does not explain them but it is clear that the semantic processes in his analysis are subconscious and any other effective process in the organization of language and choice of lexicon is conscious.

2.6.1 Self-mention as a metadiscourse feature

Not all instances of self-mention are considered metadiscourse. For a self-mention feature to be accounted metadiscourse, it should refer to the author in the unfolding text and not to the author as an entity in the outside world (according to the principle of internal reference). In the first classifications of metadiscourse features SM was not recognized as a separate category. Despite this situation, analysis of the models of metadiscourse presented by Vande Kopple (2002) and Crismore et al. (1993) indicates a heavy, though unrecognized presence of SM features. For example, in Vande Kopple’s model the examples given for almost all categories of metadiscourse features contain instances of SM that could potentially fulfill metadiscursive functions. Some of these examples are as follow:

Table 2.1 Vande Kopple's classification of MD features

Metadiscourse category	Example
Text connective	As I demonstrated in chapter 4
Code gloss	What I mean to say
Illocution marker	I claim that
Modality marker	I find it possible
Evidential	I believe ...
Attitude marker	I wish that

As can be inferred from these examples SM presence has been ignored either in favor of the adjacent metadiscourse features (in the case of modality markers and attitude markers) or under the influence of their own rhetorical functions (in the case of illocution markers, code glosses and text connectives). Exactly the same problem exists in Crismore et al's (1990) model. In fact, SM is a problematic area in terms of classification, as it is mostly accompanied by other types of metadiscourse. To solve this problem and find a way of separating SM from other types of metadiscourse, resort should be made to the essence of metadiscourse. Metadiscourse is concerned with manipulation of writing and adding some features to it in order to influence the way it is read by the readers. Under this basic assumption the question is whether it produces a

different effect if some proposition is presented in personal voice than when it is presented in impersonal voice? This question applies to the examples above, as they might have been presented in impersonal voice.

Answer to this question could be found in a study by Crismore and Vande Kopple (1997) as two pioneers in metadiscourse studies. In their experimental study they presented a group of high school students with passages containing hedged sentences in personal and impersonal voice. The presented passages were of natural and social sciences. In the first stage of the experiment, texts were presented to students with hedges deleted and students' attitudes toward the material were recorded. In the second stage, students were presented with hedges added in personal and impersonal voice. Results of the study showed that when passages of social sciences were presented in personal voice, students' attitude became significantly more positive than when presented in impersonal voice. The reverse was true of natural sciences. These results clearly show that the voice in which some proposition is expressed counts metadiscursively, that is, in terms of its effects on the reader. Hyland (1998) in his classification of metadiscourse features in academic texts recognized SM as a separate feature under the name of person marker that included 'I', 'me', 'my', exclusive 'we', 'mine' and 'our'.

2.6.2 Functions of self-mention

Literature on the use of metadiscursive SM in written texts ascribes many discourse functions to these features. Hyland, as one of the most prolific scholars in the field of metadiscourse studies, states that metadiscourse use is dependent on the rhetorical context (1998:453) and this is particularly true of SM features. Many studies, depending on rhetorical contexts and characteristics of the texts that were the focus of their analysis, have attributed different functions to SM features. Hyland in one of his initial studies on academic texts analyzed 28 articles from several disciplines (Microbiology, Astrophysics, Marketing, and Applied Linguistics) and showed that Astrophysics articles contained the highest frequency of SM. This study showed that in all four disciplines explicit reference to the author co-occurred with verbs of reasoning and possibility and largely performed text-internal functions. Commonly, reference to the author through the use of 'I' were found to signal text frames, introduce research steps or indicate the author's attitude towards methods or findings. In his study, first person pronouns were found to be mainly used for the construction of the text and presentation of the decisions and rarely used to question the studied object, which was taken to be independent of personal perception (p. 452).

Hyland in his subsequent works (2001, 2002) specifically focused on functions of SM in academic articles. In one comparative study, he compared the use of SM in writings of Hong

Kong students with that of research articles written by native experts and found that native experts used SM for a wider variety of purposes. He also found that expert writers were more willing to make solid personal commitment to the authorial powerful aspects of their texts (like methodology) through the use of pronoun 'I'. While half of the occurrences of 'I' in the experts' texts were used to present arguments or claims, only a quarter of occurrences of 'I' in the students' articles fulfilled these functions (2002:1099).

In 2004, Hyland conducted an extensive study on the use of metadiscourse markers where employment of these features was compared across 240 postgraduate dissertations from several hard and soft disciplines including Applied Linguistics, Public Administration, Business Studies, Computer Science, Electronic Engineering and Biology. In this study, he found similar results for the use of SM, as it was identified as a key through which writers were able to promote a competent scholarly identity of their research claims (p. 127). Generally, the soft disciplines showed a richer use of SM, but Computer Science as an example of hard science featured comparable use of SM (P: 173). Some other studies have pointed to the rhetorical functions of SM in other genres. Le (2004) showed how in editorials of *La Monde* the famous French newspaper, reference to the writer through the use of single first person pronoun was avoided, when expected, and replaced by a vague use of plural pronoun to accomplish the rhetorical effect of persuasion (p. 707). A consequence of the close relation between rhetorical purposes of the texts and functions of SM is that many of the findings about the functions of SM are genre-specific and cannot be carried over to other contexts in other text types. Hyland's classification of authorial presence in his analysis of students' and experts' texts (2002: 1099) is a case in point here. It is clear that possibility of occurrence of some of these functions such as 'stating results/claims' and 'explaining a procedure' in other texts such as opinion columns are very low.

Table 2.2 Hyland's classifications of functions of SM features

Function	Example
Explaining a procedure	After finishing the project I found the information system ...
Stating goals/purposes	In this section, I am going to describe ...
Elaborating an argument	I think it works something like this: suppose we start with a new ...
Stating results/ claims	We have now discovered that Byr 2 ...

Some other studies based on the types of texts that were the focus of their analysis have found other functions for SM features. For example, according to Adel (2006:58) Vassileva (1998) found the following functions for 'I' in academic writings.