



Ministry of Science, Research, and Technology

Azerbaijan Teacher Education University

Faculty of Literature and Humanities

English Department

A Thesis Submitted to the English Department in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts (M.A.) in English Language Teaching

**A Comparative Analysis of Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics
Research Articles by Iranian and Native Speaker Academic Writers**

Supervisor:

B. Behnam (Ph.D.)

Advisor:

A. Ramazani (Ph.D.)

By:

Farzaneh Najafi

July, 2010

Tabriz, Iran



وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری
دانشگاه تربیت معلم آذربایجان
اداره کل تحصیلات تکمیلی

"به نام خدا"

«صورتجلسه نتیجه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد»

طبق درخواست شماره ۹۰۰/۳۵ مورخ ۸۹/۴/۲۰ تحصیلات تکمیلی دانشکده ادبیات و علوم انسانی و مجوز شماره ۱۷/۱۹۲ مورخ ۸۹/۴/۲۲ تحصیلات تکمیلی دانشگاه، جلسه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد آقای / خانم فرزانه نجفی به شماره دانشجویی ۸۶۱۳۰۱۳۰۷ در رشته زبان انگلیسی گرایش آموزش زبان انگلیسی تحت عنوان:

A Comparative Analysis of Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics Research Articles by Iranian and Native Speaker Academic Writers

به ارزش ۴ واحد در ساعت ۱۰ روز چهارشنبه تاریخ ۸۹/۴/۳۰ در حضور هیئت داوران مرکب از:

امضاء

۱ - استاد یا استادیاراهنما آقای دکتر بیوک بهنام

امضاء

۲ - استاد یا استادیار مشاور آقای دکتر ابوالفضل رمضانی

۳ - عضو هیئت داوران آقای دکتر احد مهروند

امضاء

۴ - نماینده اداره کل تحصیلات تکمیلی در گروه آقای دکتر فرزاد سلحشور
از طرف پراختش رضانی

برگزار شد و پایان نامه ایشان با درجه عالی نمره ۱۹ ارزشیابی گردید.

رئیس دانشکده

امضاء

۱۹/۵/۱۶





وزارت علوم، تحقیقات و فناوری
دانشگاه تربیت معلم آذربایجان
فاز ۴ کل تحصیلات تکمیلی

"به نام خدا"

تاییدیه اعضای هیئت داوران حاضر در جلسه دفاع از پایان نامه کارشناسی ارشد

اعضای هیات داوران نسخه نهایی پایان نامه آقای سرمه زار محمدرضا

تحت عنوان: A Comparative Analysis of Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics Research Articles by Iranian and Native Speaker Academic Writers

را از نظر شکل و محتوا بررسی نموده، پذیرش آن را جهت نایل به درجه کارشناسی ارشد مورد تایید قرار دادند.

اعضای هیئت داوران	نام و نام خانوادگی	رتبه علمی	امضاء
۱- استاد راهنما:	دکتر بهلول محمدی	دانشیار	
۲- استاد مشاور:	دکتر ابوالفضل رحمانی	استادیار	
۳- استاد ناظر:	دکتر احمد محسنیوند	استادیار	
۴- استاد ناظر:			
۵- نماینده اداره کل تحصیلات تکمیلی:	دکتر ارشد	تسویه	

*Dedicated to dear Dr. Behnam
who has always been an inspiration
in my academic and personal life*

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor Dr. Behnam for his generous support and invaluable comments on various drafts of this thesis. Without his support and encouragement this piece of work would have been impossible. I would also like to thank Dr. Ramazani, my advisor, for his close reading of my thesis.

I am also grateful to Dr. Behin and Dr. Salahshoor who taught me a lot during my M.A. studies and never deprived me of their vast knowledge of discourse analysis.

Last but not least, I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to Dr. Kuhi, for his insightful advice on methodology and help with checking the inter-rater reliability of samples from my data.

Abstract

This study was carried out to compare the use of metadiscoursal resources in applied linguistics research articles written in English by Iranian and English native speaker academic writers in order to determine how differently or similarly the two groups of writers made use of these important rhetorical strategies and what the possible causes of the observed patterns might be. In so doing, conclusion sections of 120 (60 Iranian and 60 native speaker) research articles were selected randomly from different issues of the recently published Iranian and international journals in the field and were analyzed based on Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse' (2004) metadiscourse model. As the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses indicated, the two groups of writers were rather similar in the case of interactive metadiscoursal elements and the specific functions they performed in the corpus. The most revealing and interesting divergences occurred regarding the use of interactional resources, with native speaker academics revealing their complete superiority to their Iranian counterparts. The reasons behind these findings might be attributable to the interplay of a range of factors such as the nature of academic writing, genre constraints, disciplinary knowledge, writers' rhetorical, educational and cultural backgrounds, the size of the audience being addressed and a range of other factors which can be subject to further research.

Key Words: academic writing, interactive metadiscourse, interactional metadiscourse, cross-cultural communication

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	i
Acknowledgements.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Tables.....	vii

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Study.....	2
1.2 Significance of the Study.....	3
1.3 Research Questions.....	4
1.4 Definition of the Key Terms.....	5
1.4.1 Interactive Metadiscourse.....	5
1.4.2 Interactional Metadiscourse.....	6
1.5 Organization of the Thesis.....	8

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Persuasion and Social Construction of Knowledge in Academic Writing.....	10
2.2 Contribution of Metadiscourse to Persuasiveness of Academic Writing.....	14
2.3 Conceptions of Metadiscourse.....	16
2.4 Classifications of Metadiscourse.....	22

2.5 Metadiscourse Studies.....	39
2.5.1 Metadiscourse across Genres.....	40
2.5.2 Metadiscourse across Disciplines.....	41
2.5.3 Metadiscourse across Languages.....	43
2.5.4 Metadiscourse across Texts Written in English by Writers with Different Linguistic and Cultural Backgrounds.....	43

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction.....	48
3.2 Data and Data Selection Criteria.....	48
3.3 Procedures of Data Analysis.....	52

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 Introduction.....	61
4.2 General Findings.....	61
4.3 Interactive Metadiscourse.....	65
4.4 Interactional Metadiscourse.....	79
4.5 Summary of Discussion.....	109

Chapter 5: Conclusion

5.1 Conclusion.....	112
5.2 Pedagogical Implications.....	113

5.3 Suggestions for Further Research.....	115
References.....	116
Appendices.....	122
The Abstract in Persian.....

List of Tables

Table 2.1 Vande Kopple’s classification of metadiscourse.....	23
Table 2.2 Crismore et al.’s classification of metadiscourse.....	24
Table 2.3 Hyland’s classification of metadiscourse.....	27
Table 4.1 Frequency of interactive and interactional metadiscourse used in the corpus.....	62
Table 4.2 Ranked metadiscourse categories.....	64
Table 4.3 Frequency of interactive metadiscoursal elements used in the corpus.....	66
Table 4.4 Frequency of code glosses used in the corpus.....	71
Table 4.5 Frequency of citation forms used in the corpus.....	73
Table 4.6 Frequency of citation functions used in the corpus.....	74
Table 4.7 Frequency of endophoric markers used in the corpus.....	79
Table 4.8 Frequency of interactional metadiscoursal elements used in the corpus.....	80
Table 4.9 Frequency of hedging devices used in the corpus.....	84
Table 4.10 Frequency of boosting devices used in the corpus.....	89
Table 4.11 Frequency of engagement markers used in the corpus.....	95

Table 4.12 Frequency of self mention forms used in the corpus.....101

Table 4.13 Frequency of self mention functions used in the corpus.....102

Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Background and Purpose of the Study

The myth of impersonal nature of academic discourse has recently been disproved. Instead, academic writing is now increasingly recognized as a form of social interaction which not only conveys information, but also signals an author's attitude towards content and how it relates to the audience of texts (Hyland, 1998a, 2004, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004). Obviously, one of the most important means of manifestation of these interpersonal aspects of academic writing is the analysis of metadiscoursal features employed by writers.

According to Hyland and Tse (2004) “metadiscourse is self-directive linguistic material referring to the evolving text and to the writer and imagined reader of that text” (p. 156). Metadiscourse as an interactive and rhetorical characteristic of academic writing has been investigated in a range of genres and from different perspectives, including studies emphasizing its variation across disciplines (Hyland, 1998a, 1999c, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004), genres (Hyland, 1999c, 2004), languages and cultures (Adel, 2006; Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen, 1993; Dahl, 2004; Mauranen, 1993; Marandi, 2003).

In line with this developing literature on metadiscourse studies and taking a contrastive rhetorical perspective, this study attempts to compare the use of metadiscourse in conclusion sections of applied linguistics research articles written in English by writers with different linguistic, cultural, and educational backgrounds, namely Iranian and English native speaker academics in order to determine how similar or different the two groups of

writers could be in their tendencies to use metadiscourse and what the possible causes of those divergences or convergences might be.

1.2 Significance of the Study

This study is based on Mauranen's (1993) assumption that metadiscourse use varies according to cultural practices, the traces of which can be found in writers' use of English. Taking this into account, and considering the fact that the first requirement in today's competitive world of academic publication is persuading gate keepers of one's findings and claims and the fact that this is highly influenced by how writers make use of metadiscoursal resources, making non-native speaker writers aware of their tendencies to use metadiscourse, and whether and to what extent they use these resources similarly or differently from native speakers of English can be considered rewarding. By this, we do not mean that there are some prescriptive native speaker norms, deviations from which are completely unacceptable, but rather we want to emphasize the fact that academic writing norms and the ways writers persuade their readers may vary from one cultural community to another and that being unaware of such differences undoubtedly, puts the academic writers of small language communities such as Iran into a disadvantage and may be considered a hindrance to effective communication and might lead to risks such as misunderstanding of the writer's intentions or attitudes. For instance, the overuse of boosters in some rhetorical traditions might be a sign of writer's confidence, while this

might be taken by an English reader as a sign of the writer's disrespect for the audience who are not left enough space to form their personal opinions or make their own judgments.

Taking the above mentioned factors into account, we can argue that the comparative studies of the kind undertaken in this study can be considered as a first step in making non-native speaker academic writers aware of their tendencies to use metadiscourse in comparison with their native speaker counterparts and helping them to make informed decisions on how to persuade their audience of their findings and claims.

1.3 Research Questions

Based on what has already been mentioned, this cross-cultural and rhetorical study answers the following questions:

1. What are Iranian and English native speaker academic writers' preferred patterns regarding the use of interactive and interactional metadiscoursal elements and their specific sub-categories?
2. What are the possible reasons behind potential divergences or convergences in these writers' preferences?

1.4 Definition of the Key Terms

The main terms used in this study are those used in Hyland (2004) and Hyland and Tse's (2004) metadiscourse classification. Based on these, a brief definition of the main categories and subcategories of each of these elements is provided in this section.

1.4.1 Interactive metadiscourse

According to Hyland (2005a), interactive features are used to “organize propositional information in ways that a projected target audience is likely to find coherent and convincing” (p. 50). In other words, the function of these metadiscoursal elements is to shape the information in order to meet the expected needs of the audience for providing guidance throughout the text. There are five sub-categories for these elements.

Transitions are devices mainly used for signaling logical relationship of ideas in a text and as Hyland puts it, they “help readers interpret pragmatic connections between steps in an argument” (ibid.) and they can mark a range of internal relationships between ideas, including additive (for instance, and, furthermore, moreover, etc.), contrastive (for instance, in contrast, however, on the other hand, etc.), and consequential ones (for instance, thus, therefore, consequently, etc.) (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Frame markers are devices which indicate “text boundaries or elements of schematic text structure” (Hyland, 2005a, p. 51). These interactive elements can be used to sequence or order points in an argument via items such as *first, a/b, 1/2*; they can label text stages or discourse goals via items such as *in sum, my purpose is* (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Endophoric markers are mainly used to “refer to other parts of the text in order to make additional material salient for the reader” (ibid., p. 168). These features often refer to tables, figures and sections in other parts of the text via elements such as *see figure 2, as noted above* (Hyland, 2005a).

Evidentials indicate the sources of information from texts other than the current one. These are in fact, the same as citations and quotations. These items are mainly realized by expressions such as *Z states, according to X*, etc. (ibid.).

Code glosses are mainly concerned with guiding the reader by restatements of ideational materials through rephrasing and exemplification. The major aim of such elements is ensuring reader comprehension. These elements are mainly signaled by expressions such as *in other words, that is, for example*, etc. (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

1.4.2 Interactional metadiscourse

The interactional dimension is more related to the actual communicative functions that the author wishes to transmit to the audience. These features are essentially “evaluative and engaging, influencing the degree of intimacy, the expression of attitude, epistemic

judgments, and commitments, and the degree of reader involvement” (ibid., p. 168). There are five sub-categories for these elements.

Hedges indicate “the writer’s decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold commitment to a proposition” (Hyland, 2005a, p. 52). They are, in fact, the writer’s attempt to open a space for negotiation and avoid categorical assertions (ibid.). These devices are realized by items such as *possible*, *might*, *perhaps*, etc.

Boosters have the opposite function of hedges. These devices allow writers to “close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty in what they say” (ibid., p. 52). Commitment to propositions is often realized by devices such as *clearly*, *obviously*, *demonstrate*, etc.

Attitude markers indicate “the writer’s affective, rather than epistemic attitude to propositions” (ibid., p. 53). These devices convey attitudes such as surprise, agreement, importance and the like via items such as *unfortunately*, *hopefully*, etc.

Self mentions reflect the degree to which a writer is visible in his/her text. The extent of author presence is mainly revealed via frequency of first person pronouns such as *I* and *we* (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

Engagement markers reflect the extent to which writers highlight the presence of their readers in the text. Reader involvement is mainly achieved via devices such as second person pronouns, imperatives, question forms, and asides (ibid.).

1.5 Organization of the Thesis

The organization of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter 1 provides a general introduction for the study by outlining background and purpose of the study, research questions and definition of the key terms.

Chapter 2 links the current research to previous studies by explaining different approaches taken to metadiscourse definitions and classifications and different types of studies done in this regard.

Chapter 3 is a detailed description of data, data selection criteria and procedures of data analysis.

Chapter 4 presents the most important findings of data analysis and provides a detailed interpretation for them.

And finally, **Chapter 5** provides a general summary of the major findings of the research by explaining conclusions and pedagogical implications which can be drawn from the study.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature