

Interactional Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics Master theses: A Corpus Based Comparative Study

Received: 02/07/2014; Accepted: 17/02/2019

Abstract

The purpose of the present study is to examine the interactional metadiscourse features in the introduction and conclusion sections of the Master dissertations written by Algerian students at the University of Constantine 1. The analysis is based on a corpus of 20 Master dissertations introductions and conclusions from Applied Language Studies Discipline. This study seeks to show the distribution of interactional metadiscourse in students' dissertations sections and the differences in the use of these features. The analysis of this study shows that the distribution of Interactional metadiscourse signals differs in the two sections. The findings of this study may have some pedagogical implications for teaching writing in academic disciplines and genres especially to EFL learners.

Keywords: Interactional Metadiscourse; Academic Writing; Master Dissertations; Writer-reader interaction

Tahar Bouchemet *

Faculty of Letters and
Languages
Department of Foreign
Languages
University of Mentouri
Constantine 1
(Algeria)

Résumé

Le but de la présente étude est d'examiner les caractéristiques de métadiscours en interaction dans les sections introduction et conclusion des thèses de maîtrise écrites par des étudiants algériens à l'Université de Constantine 1. L'analyse est basée sur un corpus de 20 thèses de Master introductions et conclusions de Discipline. Cette étude vise à montrer la répartition des métadiscours en interaction dans les sections de dissertation des étudiants et les différences dans l'utilisation de ces caractéristiques. L'analyse de cette étude montre que la distribution des signaux de métadiscours en interaction diffère dans les deux sections. Les résultats de cette étude peuvent avoir certaines implications pédagogiques pour l'enseignement de la rédaction dans les disciplines et les genres académiques, en particulier pour les apprenants de l'EFL....

Mots clés: Métadiscours interactionnel; écriture académique Dissertations de Master; Interaction de Lecteur-auteur

ملخص

الغرض من هذه الدراسة هو دراسة خصائص ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي في قسيمي المقدمة والخاتمة من أطروحات مذكرات الماجستير لطلبة اللغة الانجليزية في جامعة قسنطينة 1. ويستند التحليل على المدونات النصية لعشرين 20 أطروحة لطلبة الماجستير تخصص لغات تطبيقية. تسعى هذه الدراسة لإظهار توزيع ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي في أقسام الأطروحات والاختلافات في استخدام هذه الميزات. ويظهر تحليل هذه الدراسة أن توزيع الإشارات ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي يختلف في القسمين (المقدمة والخاتمة). نتائج هذه الدراسة يمكن أن تكون لها آثار على تدريس الكتابة الأكاديمية في التخصصات والأنماط وبشكل خاص على متعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي؛ كتابة الأكاديمية؛ مذكرات الماجستير؛ تفاعل قارئ كاتب

* Corresponding author, e-mail: tbouchemet@gmail.com

1. Introduction

When we write any piece of writing we have to build up a relationship with our intended readers. If writers want to build this interactional relationship with their readers, they should employ certain linguistic elements which are considered as secondary discourse or metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse refers to linguistic devices 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. It is defined by Hyland (2000) "as the interpersonal resources used to organize a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader" (109). Halliday (1998) claims that although the term is defined by various scholars in different ways, it is seen as an umbrella term including a collection of features that help relate a text to its context by assisting readers to connect, organize, and interpret material in a way preferred by the writer with regard to the understandings and values of a particular discourse community.

Following Hyland's model (2005), in this study, metadiscourse is defined as "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" (p.37). (Mao, 1993) claims that metadiscourse is not a stylistic device, but is dependent on the rhetorical context in which it is used and the pragmatic function it fulfils. Some researchers think that metadiscourse fulfils a dual function: a) It helps the writer to organize the content of the text;

b) It assists the reader to understand and interpret the text.

2. Reader-writer Interaction

The importance of author and author roles for the communicative and learning process is controversial because views of writers and their roles vary from one discipline to another. The views vary even within the same discipline from one historical period to another because different cultures and beliefs or inquiry systems. Points of view about the role of speaker/author were different over the centuries (Golden, Berquist, and Coleman, 1976)

During the classical period, the main concern for Aristotle and his followers was the developing syntax of the speech act. These rhetoricians determined the act of speaking entailed and devised a grammar for talking about its parts and their relationships. VandeKopple (1985) suggested that exploring metadiscourse would increase students' sensitivity to the needs of their readers, making them better able to meet those needs, and thus changing writer-based prose (Flower, 1979) into reader-based prose. Furthermore, he argued that understanding metadiscourse would make writers more aware of the truth value of the propositional content and turn them into ethical writers who pay more attention to reflecting any doubts they may have rather than simply asserting that their statements are true.

Significant attention has been paid to metadiscourse in written texts by many researchers. However, very few studies have looked at variations in how student writers incorporate metadiscourse into a text. Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) have shown that appropriate use of metadiscourse plays an important part in a successful text. When student writers lack an overall knowledge of rhetorical conventions, they do not know how to make good use of these interpersonal and textual functions of language. This often leads them to produce writer-based prose in which the propositional content is not effectively conveyed, thus lowering the overall quality of their texts.

The place in which the discourse occurs is defined as the forum. Unfortunately, students rarely have a clear sense of audience. When students do consider audience at all, it is a real person who gives a perceptible response - a teacher who provides a grade, not someone with whom to create a dialogue. Part of the inability to consider an audience is caused by the failure of most composition classrooms to develop into forums or discourse communities. How to create a forum in the classroom and evoke a sense of audience in student writers is a challenge, but it is one that must be addressed. Halliday 1976, considered language use as a social and

communicative engagement that involves two parties, a producer and a receiver. We write to be read, and in order to accomplish this goal, the writer and the reader must work together through the medium of the text.

Many researchers consider written texts as comprising interaction between writers and readers. In this paper, we argue that interaction use both interactive and interactional resources. In the one hand, interactive resources help to guide the reader through the text. In the other hand, interactional resources involve the reader collaboratively in the development of the text. By using these items writers try to show their presence in the text. Hyland(2008) presented the notion of voice in academic writing in a more detailed way. He argued that “As writers we show who we are by the choices we make in our texts in much the same way that our speech, clothes and body language index our social class, occupation, group memberships and so on.” (p, 1)

To make interactions in texts possible, a system of stance and engagement should be present. As Hyland (2008) clearly put it:

“Stance refers to the writer’s textual ‘voice’ or community recognized personality, an attitudinal, writer-oriented function which concerns the ways writers present themselves and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments. Engagement, on the other hand, is more of an alignment function, concerning the ways that writers rhetorically recognize the presence of their readers to actively pull them along with the argument, include them as discourse participants, and guide them to interpretations.” (p, 3)

According to Thomson (2001), there is a bias towards interactive aspects of metadiscourse. This can be justified in that interactional aspects are less and less overt in academic texts. However, many researchers have shown that both aspects need to be taken into consideration. The most significant categories among interactional features are those in which writers intervene to comment on the content of the text. However some researchers look more specifically at persuasive writing by students. Authors use comments or commentaries to draw reader into an implicit dialogue which include imperatives and questions.

3. Metadiscourse Functions: Textual and interpersonal

Some linguists consider metadiscourse as an unclear term and can be realized by various linguistic forms. It is also a pragmatic construct and performs some rhetorical actions. Generally, it can be classified according to the functions it fulfils in the text.

When people use language, they usually work toward fulfilling three macro functions (Halliday, 1994). They try to give expression to their experience, to interact with their audience, and to organize their expressions into cohesive discourses. In other words, Halliday also states that people communicate with messages that are integrated expressions of three different kinds of meaning; ideational, interpersonal, and textual.

- **The ideational function:** the use of language to represent experience and ideas. This roughly corresponds to the notion of propositional content.

- **The interpersonal function:** the use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluations and feelings.

- **The textual function:** the use of language to organize the text itself, coherently relating what is said to the world and to the readers. (Hyland, 2005:26)

Hyland (1999) believes that “textual metadiscourse is used to organize propositional information in ways that will be coherent for a particular audience and appropriate for a given context” (p, 7). He believes that the writer of a text predicts the receiver’s processing difficulties and requirements, and accommodates them by using certain devices.

Hyland also states that interpersonal metadiscourse markers let writers express a viewpoint about their propositional information and their readers. It is essentially an evaluative form of discourse and expresses the writer's persona. (ibid)

3. Metadiscourse Models

Metadiscourse is fundamentally an open category which can be realized in various ways. There are huge arrays of linguistic elements from punctuation and typographic markers (like parentheses and underling) and paralinguistic cues which

accompany spoken messages (like tone of voice and stress) to whole clauses and sentences which are used to reveal ourselves and our purposes in our written or oral texts (Hyland, 2005). A variety of metadiscourse taxonomies have, therefore, been proposed (Crismore, 1989; Vande Kopple, 2002; Hyland, 2005; Adel, 2006).

Vande kopple (1985) introduced the first model that comprises two main categories of metadiscourse, specifically “textual” and “interpersonal”. Textual metadiscourse consist of four strategies: text connectives, code glosses, illocution markers, and narrators. Interpersonal metadiscourse is made up of three strategies: validity markers, attitude markers, and commentaries. Vande Kopple’s model was particularly important in that it was the first systematic attempt to introduce a taxonomy that generated many practical studies, and gave rise to new taxonomies. According to Hyland (2005), the categories are, however, unclear and functionally overlap. Citation, for example, can be used to enhance a position by claiming the support of a credible other (validity markers). They can also be used to show the source of the information (narrators).

Crismore et al. (1993) introduced a revised model. They retained the two major categories of textual and interpersonal, but reorganized and separated the subcategories. The textual metadiscourse was further divided into two categories of “textual” and “interpretive” markers to separate organizational and evaluative functions. Textual markers are composed of those features that assist to organize the discourse, and interpretive markers are those features used to help readers to better interpret and understand the writer’s meaning and writing strategies (Crismore et al., 1993).

Almost all the above models follow Halliday’s (1994) tripartite conception of meta-functions which distinguishes between the ideational elements of a text (the ways we encode our experiences of the world) and its textual and interpersonal functions. Some analysts, like Adel (2006), do not follow Halliday’s functions. She distinguishes between two main types of metadiscourse; “*metatext*” and “*writer-reader interaction*”. Metatext reveals the writer’s or reader’s speech act. Writers may comment on their own discourse actions. They may, for example, introduce a topic, state an aim, or close the topic. Metatext can also represent the aspects of the text itself like its organization, wording, or the writing of it. Writer-reader interaction represents the linguistic expressions which are used by the writer to engage the reader. These linguistic expressions like *you might think* or *lets elaborate on it* represent the writer’s awareness of the existence of the reader and are exploited to interact with him (Adel, 2006, pp, 36-37).

However, the model proposed by Hyland (2005), includes two main categories of *interactive* and *interactional*. This model owes a great deal to Thompson and Thetela’s conception (1995), but it takes a wider focus by including stance and engagement markers. The interactive dimension of metadiscourse concerns the writer’s awareness of his audiences, and his attempts to accommodate their interests and needs, and to make the argument satisfactory for them. On the one hand, the interactional dimension is related to the writer’s attempts to make his views explicit, and to engage the reader by anticipating his objections and responses to the text. On the other hand, it assists the reader to understand and interpret the text. By making use of these metadiscoursal features, the reader can decode, reconstructs and interpret any text while reading. In short, by providing context, it facilitates communication, supports the writer’s position and builds the writer-reader relation..

4. Metadiscourse in Academic Writing

Metadiscourse is chiefly important at advanced levels of academic writing. It represents writers’ attempts to present and negotiate propositional information in ways that are meaningful and appropriate to a particular disciplinary community.

On the one hand, metadiscourse enables readers to recover an interpretation consistent with their disciplinary knowledge and *community-specific* rhetorical expectations. The writer needs to make assumptions about the reader’s processing abilities, contextual resources, and inter-textual experiences. On the other hand, metadiscourse focuses on the participants of the interaction, and the adoption of an acceptable academic persona. The writer here makes choices to express a ‘voice’ consistent with disciplinary norms by revealing a suitable relationship to his or her data, arguments, and audience (Hyland & Tse, 2004).

The dialogic nature of academic writing suggests that writers not only present themselves as competent insiders, or project their voice as authors, but conceivably more importantly involve their readers in the joint construction of disciplinary discourse in acceptable ways (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). Thompson, 2001 claimed that writers construct a "reader-in-the-text" by drawing on their understanding of a rhetorical context and by predicting a reader's likely response to propositions and the textual conversation among members of a disciplinary community. This means that writers must employ recognised ways of developing academic arguments and building interpersonal solidarity with their readers in a way that they find the arguments familiar, appealing and persuasive.

5. Hyland's Model of Metadiscourse

By proposing his new model of metadiscourse, Hyland (2005) seeks to overcome the controversies surrounding the notion of metadiscourse, which are based on the distinction between propositional and non-propositional (metadiscoursal) matter. He also provides an alternative to the long-standing categorization of metadiscourse as either textual or interpersonal.

Therefore, Hyland's new model advocates the need to view all metadiscourse as interpersonal: "in that it takes account of the reader's knowledge, textual experiences and processing requirements and that it provides writers with an armory of rhetorical appeals to achieve this" (Hyland, *ibid*, p. 41). Hence, metadiscourse is self-reflective linguistic material, attempting to guide the reader's perception of a text while focusing attention on the ways writers project themselves in their discourse to convey their stance towards both the content and the audience of the text. Hyland also underlines the ability of metadiscourse to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, to aid the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and to engage with readers as members of a particular community.

Metadiscourse is thus built upon the belief that communication is social engagement and based on a view of language as a dynamic entity since: "as we speak or write, we negotiate with others, making decisions about the effects we are having on our listeners or readers" (Hyland, *ibid*, p. 3).

The new model (the interpersonal model of metadiscourse) proposed by Hyland identifies the existence of two dimensions of interaction. The first one is the interactive dimension which: "concerns the writer's awareness of a participating audience and the ways he or she seeks to accommodate its probable knowledge, interests, rhetorical expectations and processing abilities" (Hyland, *ibid*, p, 49). This dimension comprises the sources which address ways of organizing and constructing discourse with the reader's needs in mind. The second one is interactional metadiscourse which deals with the ways the writers comment on their own messages to make their views known while revealing "the extent to which the writer works to jointly construct the text with the reader" (*ibid*).

Hyland's framework consists of two dimensions of interaction; the interactive and the interactional dimensions. The interactive resources help the writer to organize propositional content to make it coherent. These features are transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, code glosses and evidential. Interactional resources allow the writer's expression of a textual 'voice'. These resources are self-mention, hedges, boosters, attitude markers and engagement markers. The interactional resources involve the reader in the argument and indicate the writer's perspective towards the propositional content.

The table below clearly illustrates the two major categories. Each category has some sub-categories with their functions provided with some examples.

Table N 1. Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse according to Hyland (2005)

Category	Function	Examples
1. Interactive	Assists in guiding the reader through the text	Resources
Transitional	Indicates relations between main clauses	in addition, but, thus
Frame markers	Discourse acts, stages and sequences	finally, my purpose
Endorpic markers	Indicates information in other part of text	as noted above,
Evidentials	Indicates information in other sources	Crawford states
Code Glosses	Elaborates definitions of words or phrases	Namely, such as, e.g.
2. Interactional	Involves the reader in the text	Resources
Hedges	Withholds commitment and open dialogue	might, perhaps possible
Boosters	Indicates certainty or close dialogue	in fact, definitely
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	arguably, unfortunately
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author	I, we, my, me, our
Engagement markers	Explicitly builds relationship with reader	you can see that, note,

6. The Interactional Dimension of Metadiscourse

These features involve readers and open opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by alerting them to the author's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves. They help control the level of personality in a text as writers acknowledge and connect to others, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties and guiding them to interpretations. But these resources are not only the means by which writers express their views, but are also how they engage with the socially determined positions of others. They therefore act to anticipate, acknowledge, challenge or suppress alternative, potentially divergent positions and so work to expand or restrict opportunities for such views (White, 2003). There are five sub-categories.

- *Hedges*: are devices such as *possible, might and perhaps*, which indicate the writer's decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold complete commitment to a proposition. Hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation. Writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, considering the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow (Hyland, 1998a). Hedges therefore imply that a statement is based on the writer's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge, indicating the degree of confidence it is prudent to attribute to it.
- *Boosters*: are words such as *clearly, obviously and demonstrate*, which allow writers to close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty in what they say. Boosters suggest that the writer recognizes potentially diverse positions but has chosen to narrow this diversity rather than enlarge it, confronting alternatives with a single, confident voice. By closing down possible alternatives, boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices (Hyland, 1999a). Their use strengthens an argument by emphasizing the mutual experiences needed to draw the same conclusions as the writer. The balance of hedges and boosters in a text thus indicates to what extent the writer is willing to entertain alternatives and so plays an important role in conveying commitment to text content and respect for readers.
- *Attitude markers*: indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions. Instead of commenting on the status of information, its probable relevance, reliability or truth, attitude markers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration, and so on. While attitude is expressed by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and so on, it is most explicitly signaled metadiscoursally by attitude verbs (e.g. *agree, prefer*), sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*) and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*).
- *Self mention*: refers to the degree of explicit author presence in the text measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (*I, me, mine, exclusive we, our, ours*). All writing carries information about the writer, but the convention of personal projection through first-person pronouns is perhaps the most powerful means of self-representation (Ivanic, 1998). Writers cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments, their community and their readers. The presence or absence of explicit author reference is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and a contextually situated authorial identity (Hyland, 2001b).

- *Engagement markers*: are devices that explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants. So in addition to creating an impression of authority, integrity and credibility through choices of *hedges*, *boosters*, *self mention* and *attitude*, writers are able to either highlight or downplay the presence of their readers in the text. Because affective devices can also have relational implications, attitude and engagement markers are often difficult to distinguish in practice.

7. Corpus and Method

In order to carry out a comparative analysis of the interactional components of Hyland Interpersonal model in Master dissertations of Applied Language Studies, a corpus was compiled which is composed of the introduction and conclusion sections of 20 Master dissertations from Applied Language Studies at the University of Constantine 1. Most of the dissertations were taken from the library online data base. Some of them were E-mailed to us by their owners. The total corpus size is 19924 words.

A variety of metadiscourse taxonomies have been proposed (Crismore, 1989; Vande Kopple, 1985; Beauvais, 1989; Hyland, 2005). The system adopted here follows Hyland's (2005) taxonomy in distinguishing interactive and interactional types of metadiscourse. The schema is summarized in table 1 above. For the analysis of the corpus a Concordance tool (Antconc 3.3.5w) is used. The paper aims to answer the following questions:

- Are there differences in the use of interactional markers in the introduction and conclusion sections?
- Is the framework for metadiscourse analysis provided by Hyland (2005) valid to be applied to the Master dissertations genre?

Table N 2. The Size of the Corpus

Number of theses	Total number of words	Number of words in introductions	%	Number of words in Conclusions	%
20	19924	11503	57.73%	8421	42.27%

From the table above, we can notice that the number of words in introductions (57.73%) is more than conclusions (42.27%). So this is maybe due to the nature of each section.

8. Results and discussion

Table N 3. Frequency and Percentage of Interactional Metadiscourse in the whole corpus

	Hedges	Boosters	Attitude Markers	Engagement Markers	Self-mentions	Total
Frequency	281	177	55	108	154	785
Percentage	35.79%	22.547%	7%	13.757%	19.617%	100%

According to Thompson and Thelata (2005), the use of interactional metadiscourse is an attempt to bring in the readers' voice and is actually more closely associated with identity variable. As the table 3 above shows, hedges are the most frequent features. Master students used 281 elements which represent 35.79%. Boosters and self-mentions also are used intensively (22.54% and 19.61% respectively). Attitude markers are the least used elements. Students used only 55 features which represent 7%.

Table N 4. Frequency of the interactional metadiscourse features in introductions and conclusions corpus

Categories		Introductions		Conclusions	
		Total No.	%	Total No.	%
Interactional Markers	Hedges	149	36.253	132	35.294
	Boosters	74	18.004	103	27.54
	Attitude markers	36	8.759	19	5.08
	Engagement markers	75	18.248	33	8.823
	Self-mentions	67	16.301	87	23.262
Σ		411	100%	374	100%

The total frequency of metadiscourse markers in introductions and conclusions written by students suggests that they employ metadiscourse differently in the two sections.

As can be seen in table 3, the student writers almost equally use the interactive metadiscourse in *introductions* and *conclusions* (57.73% and 42.27% respectively). A closer look at the table indicates that they differ only in the use of boosters, attitude markers and engagement markers. Hedges and self-mentions are used somewhat similarly.

The difference is significant in the use of engagement markers. The frequency of engagement markers in the introductions is 75 which represents 18.248% whereas 33 items in conclusions which represents only 8.823%. Engagement markers explicitly address readers, either by selectively focusing their attention or by including them as participants in the text through second person pronouns, imperatives, question forms and asides (Hyland, 2001). These functions are mainly performed by questions, directives (imperatives such as *see*, *note* and *consider* and obligation modals such as *should*, *must*, *have to*, etc.) and references to shared knowledge. Student writers use reader pronouns (you, your, inclusive we) and interjections (by the way, you may notice) to meet readers' expectations of inclusion and disciplinary solidarity, addressing them as participants in an argument. The examples below are taken from the students' corpus:

- a. They hold the belief that these errors will vanish while they must consider the way of the correction.(Master Student corpus)
- b. To be able to receive and transmit meaning effectively and correctly; learners must have all the competences which will be mentioned below. (Master Student corpus)
- c. The speaker on the other hand, should always pay attention that an unintended nonverbal message can express absolutely the opposite of what he really wanted to say. (Master Student corpus)
- d. *After what has been said*, we can add that communication is one of the most fundamental assets of human beings. (Master Student corpus)
- e. Scheduling is the most important tool to estimate how much time you need and how to use your time so that you know what you can do through the 365 days. (Master Student corpus)

Table 4 shows a slight difference in the use of attitude markers though it is used minimally in both sections. Students used only 19 elements in conclusions which represent 5.08%. they used 36 features In introductions which represent 8.75%. Attitude markers express the writer's appraisal of propositional information, conveying surprise, obligation, agreement, importance, and so on. Students use very few commentaries such as unfortunately, *interestingly*, *I wish that*, *how awful that* in order to address readers directly, drawing them into an implicit dialogue by commenting on the reader's probable mood or possible reaction to the text (*you will certainly agree that, you might want to read the third chapter*). However, it seems that Master students tend not to equally insert their affective evaluations into their texts. The frequency of 55 elements in both suggest that Master students prefer not to communicate their emotions and fail to build a human relationship with readers.

- a. A questionnaire seemed most appropriate for investigating our hypothesis. (Master Student corpus)
- b. Ideally, they should be adapted to the needs of learners but most importantly they should be interesting. The teacher should know how to adapt existing materials to local realities. (Master Student corpus)

- c. The table shows that 96% of pupils answered *correctly*, in contrast, 4% did not. (Master Student corpus)

The use of boosters is another area of difference between the two sections. Master students use more boosters in their texts (22.54% in the whole corpus) when they come to express certainty and emphasize the force of propositions. However they use them differently in the two sections (74 in *introductions* and 103 in *conclusions*). Boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices (Hyland, 1999). Their use strengthens an argument by emphasizing the mutual experiences needed to draw the same conclusions as the writer.

The reason why students use more boosters in their introductions is possibly due to their certainty about the findings of their research. That is why they extensively use words such as *clearly*, *obviously* and *demonstrate*, which allow them to close down alternatives, head off conflicting views and express their certainty in what they say.

- a. Figure 6 shows *clearly* that the overwhelming majority of the sample (96%) view nonverbal language as being very significant in oral communication. (Master Student corpus)
- b. his is the method that has the major number of Arabized technical terms, it is *always* ready for new terms and walking with the everyday amelioration. (Master Student corpus)
- c. Students *must* always try to enhance their level in translation in general and in business translation in particular. (Master Student corpus)

Master students use hedges more similarly in both sections (*introductions and conclusions*). Hedges mark the writer's reluctance to present propositional information categorically. They are linguistic resources which signal reader-responsibility (Hinds, 1987), deference towards the discourse community and doubt and tentativeness (Silver, 2003). They are displayed through conditionals, modals and epistemic verbs. Hedges are devices such as *as possible*, *might* and *perhaps*, or frequency adverbs like *sometimes*, *often*, *usually* which indicate the writer's decision to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold complete commitment to a proposition. According to Hylland (1998), hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation. It seems that students show a high degree of difference in both dissertation sections. The examples below are taken from our students' corpus.

- a. The various use of the translation strategies *would not* unite the people within the context of a single joke. (Master Student corpus)
- b. One will certainly have impediment understanding others and getting lessons as well as making himself understood. *Possibly*, because of this concept, many talkative learners are silent in a foreign language class. (Master Student corpus)
- c. This may lead us to conclude that a considerable number of students *would* answer the test without considering cultural differences. (Master Student corpus)
- d. One will certainly have impediment understanding others and getting lessons as well as making himself understood. *Possibly*, because of this concept, many talkative learners are silent in a foreign language class. (Master Student corpus)

Self-mentions also are almost equally used. They explicitly signal the authorial persona of the writer(s). They feature self-references and self-citations. Students make

use of 154 features which represent 19.61%. Self mention is a key way in which writers are able to promote a competent scholarly identity and gain approval for their research claims. While master students are taught to avoid the use of first person, it plays a crucial interactional role in mediating the relationship between writers' arguments and their discourse communities, allowing them to create an identity as both disciplinary servant and creative originator (Hyland, 2001). The most frequent self-mention items in both dissertation sections are: *our*, *us*, and *we*. Master students avoid using the first person pronoun *I* because it is not academically accepted in writing by their supervisors and examiners. Here are some examples:

- a. With body language, *we can* transmit our state of mind, emotions, attitudes and feelings through behaviours without saying a word. (Master Student corpus)
- b. This chapter has been devoted to test *our hypothesis*. We have introduced *our sample*, and then we moved to describe *our research* tool. (Master Student corpus)
- c. It shows the *writer's* ability in playing with words to influence the reader or listener. (Master Student corpus)
- d. The same thing applies to *the author's* attitudes, beliefs and their opinions that are reflected through words. (Master Student corpus)

9. Conclusion

We attempt to compare two Master dissertations sections (introduction and conclusion) in the employment of interactional metadiscourse markers. Interactional metadiscourse employment is found to vary considerably across the two dissertations sections. Although all Hyland's interactional model resources are used by students in our corpus, some features are extensively used such as hedges 35.79%, boosters 22.54% and self-mentions 19.61% in table 3. Other markers are minimally used compared to the first ones. Attitude and engagement markers were the least used ones. However the present study shows that the use of interactional metadiscourse varies across the two dissertations sections (*introductions and conclusions*). The main difference is in the use of boosters, engagement and attitude markers. The results of the study suggest that the framework of interactional metadiscourse proposed by Hyland proved to be suitable to analyze Master dissertations genre.

To sum up, these differences in metadiscourse are surely important when making textbooks or when teaching genre writing seminars or specialized language courses in higher education.

References

- [1]. Ädel, (2006). *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins.
- [2]. Beauvais, P. J. (1989). A speech act theory of metadiscourse. *Written Communication*, 6, 11-30. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741088389006001002>
- [3]. Crismore, A. (1989). *Talking with Readers: Metadiscourse as Rhetorical Act*. New York: Peter Lang.
- [4]. Crismore, A., Markkanen, R. & Steffensen, M. (1993). "Metadiscourse in Persuasive Writing". *Written Communication* 10, 1: 39–71.
- [5]. Halliday, M.A.K. (1994). *An Introduction to Functional Grammar*. 2nd edition. London: Edward Arnold.
- [6]. Halliday, M.A.K. 1998. 'Language and knowledge: the "unpacking" of text'. Desmond Allison, Lionel Wee, Bao Zhiming and Sunita Anne Abraham (eds.) *Text in Education and Society*. Singapore: Singapore University Press and World Scientific. Ch.10. pp.157-178.
- [7]. Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: a new typology. In U. Connor, & R B. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2..*
- [8]. Hyland, K. 1998) "Persuasion and Context. The Pragmatics of Academic Metadiscourse". *Journal of Pragmatics* 30: 437–455.
- [9]. Hyland, K.(1999). 'Disciplinary discourses: writer stance in research articles' in C. Candlin, and K. Hyland (eds): *Writing: Texts, processes and practices* London: Long-man, pp. 99-121.
- [10]. Hyland, k. (2000) *Disciplinary discourses: Social Interactions in Academic Writing*. London : Longman
- [11]. Hyland, K. (2001). Putting specificity into specific purposes: how far should we go? *Perspectives*. 13, 1-21
- [12]. Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: exploring interaction in writing*. London: Continuum.
- [13]. Hyland, , & Tse, . (2004). Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. *Applied Linguistics*, 25/2, 156-177
- [14]. Mao,L.(1993). I conclude not: Toward a pragmatic account of metadiscourse. *Rhetoric Review*, 11(2), 265-289.
- [15]. Nash, W. (1992) *An Uncommon Tongue*. London: Routledge.
- [16]. Silver, M. (2003) The stance of stance: a critical look at ways stance is expressed and modeled in academic discourse. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes* 2 (4), 359-374.
- [17]. Thompson, G. (2001) 'Interaction in academic writing: learning to argue with the reader'. *Applied Linguistics*, 22(1), 58-78.
- [18]. Thompson, G., & Thetela, P. (1995). The sound of one hand clapping: the management of interaction in written discourse. *TEXT* 15(1), 103-27.

- [19]. Vande Kopple, W. J. (1985). Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse. *College Composition Communication*, 1 (36), 1.
- [20]. Vande Kopple, W. J. (2002). Metadiscourse, Discourse, and Issues in Composition and Rhetoric in E. Barton and G. Stygall (eds): *Discourse Studies in Composition*. Rensselaer, NJ: Hampton Press, pp. 91-113.
- [21]. Vassileva, I. (2001) 'Commitment and detachment in English and Bulgarian academic writing'. *English for Specific Purposes*, 20(1), 83-102.