



## **A Linguistic Analysis of Metadiscourse Markers in Literary and Scientific Articles**

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### **Keywords**

Metadiscourse,  
literary,  
scientific,  
textual,  
interpersonal.

### **Abstract**

Metadiscourse markers enables writers communicate their ideas and arguments as well as represent themselves more efficiently in their writings. This study intended to examine the metadiscourse features in literary and scientific articles. For this purpose, five articles of each type were selected in order to be analyzed. The study adopted the classification of metadiscourse markers based on Crismore et al. (1993) model in which metadiscourse is divided into textual and interpersonal markers. The study displayed that there are differences in the utilization of various metadiscourse markers between the literary and scientific genres. In general, the study found that writers of literary articles used metadiscourse markers less frequently than those who write in the scientific genre. In addition, the study showed that textual metadiscourse markers are, in fact, highly utilized in scientific articles while literary ones employ interpersonal markers more often.

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## **1. Introduction**

The most common way for authors to communicate their linguistic awareness, voice, and attitude to the reader is by providing explicit commentary on the current discourse. This allows the reader to grasp better both the topic matter and the writer's attitude toward the subject matter. In addition, authors typically write on two different levels at the same time, discourse and metadiscourse. The content of the first level is propositional in nature and serves as the primary focus and the second level assists readers in reading, organizing, comprehending, and interpreting the text. Additionally, metadiscourse plays an essential part in the process of creating successful and productive communication, and it provides a strong foundation for understanding communication as a form of social interaction (Hyland, 2005). The utilization of metadiscourse usually differs according to the type of the text, whether it be a novel, an article, a scientific paper etc. Thus, the current study is quantitative. It aims at analyzing metadiscourse markers in scientific and literary (non-scientific) articles. Hence, the main question that the study seeks to answer is whether discourse markers are over-used or under-used in these two types of discourse.

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## **2. The Problem, Aims and Hypothesis**

The writer acknowledges the readers' desire for explanation, validation, and involvement through metadiscourse. Such characteristics reflect the vital role metadiscourse plays in conveying the desired message to readers via text and in illuminating why the issue is thought to be a critical area of study for scholars. The majority of metadiscourse research has focused on metadiscourse and its effect on academic writings across fields and cultures.

It is unclear, however, if the utilization of metadiscourse techniques differs in literary and scientific articles. As for the aims, this study seeks to first identify the various metadiscourse markers in scientific and literary research articles and, second, to investigate the frequency of the various types of metadiscourse devices used in each type of article. The first hypothesis of the study is that metadiscourse markers are used more frequently in scientific articles than literary ones, and the second hypothesis is that textual metadiscourse markers are highly utilized in scientific articles while literary ones employ interpersonal markers more often.

## **3. The History of the Study of Metadiscourse**

The coinage of the term metadiscourse is often ascribed to the American linguist Zellig S. Harris (1959). In his article, Harris distinguished types of markers (or kernels in the original description). He suggests that these markers differ from their co-texts. Moreover, they often share words or pronouns with the neighbouring words. These markers can be omitted from the text without causing any changes in the overall content or meaning. At that time, metadiscourse was still beyond the realm of discourse analysis, and its influence was limited.

Metadiscourse was given little attention until the 1980s, despite the fact that it plays an essential role in the communication that we have on a daily basis. This was after the publication of several seminal early studies in the field, such as Williams (1990), Crismore (1983, 1989), and Vande Kopple (1985). These works provided essential insights into a variety of topics, including how metadiscourse is understood, as well as what its core types are. After that, The publication of two major publications on the issue, one by Hyland (2005) and one by Adel (2006), sparked a remarkable surge of research on the topic. In their study, not only was the idea of metadiscourse developed in great depth and breadth, but also corpus methodology was used to investigate metadiscourse use systematically throughout a large body of text. Over the course of the past several years, metadiscourse has experienced a spectacular rise in popularity within the domain of discourse analysis, and it has been avidly adopted by scholars who are attempting to define a variety of genres (Hyland, 2017).

Some approaches and theories of metadiscourse are based on other linguistic theories. For instance, Beauvais' (1989) is inspired by speech act theory, Adel's (2006) is a Jacobson-based theory, Aguilar's (2008) is based on the relevance theory, and Abdi et al.'s (2009) is developed based on the cooperative principle theory. However, the majority of metadiscourse approaches and models are inspired by Hallidayan Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG). The approaches based on SFG have garnered the most attention among the myriad of other different theories of metadiscourse. The SFG theory is based on the idea that language has

three different yet connected ideational, textual, and interpersonal metafunctions. Therefore, metadiscourse can be considered a functional category (Hyland, 2004).

#### **4. Defining Metadiscourse**

Despite the expanding interest in and volume of research on metadiscourse, there is no consensus on its definition, classification, and conceptualization. Inasmuch as the concept of metadiscourse lends itself to various interpretations, diverse views may contribute to this debate (Hyland, 2017). Metadiscourse can be fully realized in various linguistic forms and used as a means of providing a practical interpretation of the textual discourse. As a result, metadiscourse makes communication with the readers easier, improving their capacity to comprehend the texts. The authors employ a variety of linguistic markers to represent themselves across their works, allowing readers to understand better what they have written. However, while stressing the positive impact of using metadiscourse on the overall content and delivery of discourse, Crismore (1983) warns that the excessive and inappropriate use of metadiscourse can hinder readers' understanding of a text.

Furthermore, Hyland (2004) defines metadiscourse as the interpersonal resources that writers draw upon in order to arrange a discourse. According to Hyland (2000), metadiscourse is the embodiment of the notion that interaction includes more than the exchange of information, ideas, or resources; rather, communication also involves the qualities, viewpoints, and beliefs of the interactants (Hyland, 2005). Because metadiscourse places strategic emphasis on the text, the writer, and the reader, effective utilization of this mode of discourse is essential for effective communication with the reader, who is meant to be the recipient of the information being conveyed (Hyland, 2004).

#### **5. Review of Previous Studies**

In the most recent few decades, a substantial amount of research has been conducted on utilizing metadiscourse markers in all varieties of discourse. These studies study a wide range of topics, and their foci are just as diverse as the data and material they investigate. Nonetheless, most studies focus on metadiscourse markers in academic discourse. For example, (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Burneikaitė, 2008; Musa, 2014) all examined the degree the effect of the academic genre influences the use of metadiscourse markers in post-graduate studies and theses. These studies have determined that there are both variances and similarities in the utilization of metadiscourse. Concerning the utilization of metadiscourse markers in literary works, Sadeghi and Esmaili (2012) investigated the presence of metadiscourse markers in two original books as well as their abridged versions. The study, which was conducted using the framework of Hyland and Tse (2004), concluded that there was not a significant distinction between the original novels and the abridged versions of those novels. This leads one to believe that the authors of both the original and the abridged versions of the text did everything in their power to produce texts that are consistent with one another. As for the scientific genre, Abdi (2002), for example, investigated the occurrence of interpersonal metadiscourse devices in natural and social sciences to highlight the writer's choice of markers and expose their identity. Both kinds utilized metadiscourse markers extensively, while social science authors appeared to

employ interpersonal metadiscourse devices more frequently than natural science authors.

## 6. The Model of Analysis and Data Selection

As mentioned earlier, there are multiple classifications of metadiscourse markers based on the corresponding linguistic subfield. The current study adopts the model presented by Crismore et al. (1993), which is inspired by Hallidayan SFG theory. In this approach, metadiscourse markers are classified into the two primary types of **Textual** and **Interpersonal** metadiscourse. The subcategories of textual metadiscourse are **Textual** and **Interpretive Markers**. The following table, which is adapted from Crismore et al. (1993), illustrates the full classification:

**Table 1.** Classification of Metadiscourse Categories (Crismore et al., 1993)

<b>TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE</b>
1. Textual Markers
<i>Logical Connectives</i>
<i>Sequencers</i>
<i>Reminders</i>
<i>Topicalizers</i>
2. Interpretive Markers
<i>Code Glosses</i>
<i>Illocution Markers</i>
<i>Announcements</i>
3. Hedges
4. Certainty Markers
5. Attributors
6. Attitude Markers
7. Commentary

The main reason for adopting this classification is that it is designed to analyze written rather than spoken texts. It is utilized in order to enable readers to comprehend how a text is connected rather than how it relates to outer events (Crismore et al., 1993).

The data of this study consists of five literary articles viewed from the *Inquiries Journal* website and five scientific articles from the *Nutrition Journal*. The ten articles are chosen according to their length, which is relatively equal. After selecting the articles, they were thoroughly scanned to collect the metadiscourse markers in each category. Second, the researchers reexamined the collected data numerous times to ensure that all the metadiscourse markers had been detected. Third, the researcher made two tables consisting of the various metadiscourse markers present in each category. Fourth, the researcher calculated the frequencies of each metadiscourse marker category.

## 7. Results of the Study

The following tables provide a representation of the findings obtained from the study:

**Table 2.** Frequency of Metadiscourse Markers in the Literary Articles

<b>Textual Markers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Logical connectives	128
Sequencers	26
Reminders	3
Topicalizers	14
Code glosses	57
Illocution markers	2
Announcements	1
<b>Interpersonal Metadiscourse</b>	
Hedges	219
Certainty markers	36
Attributors	12
Attitude markers	9
Commentary	4

**Table 3.** Frequency of Metadiscourse Markers in the Scientific Articles

<b>Textual Markers</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Logical connectives	109
Sequencers	47
Reminders	5
Topicalizers	26
Code glosses	71
Illocution markers	1
Announcements	4
<b>Interpersonal Metadiscourse</b>	
Hedges	102
Certainty markers	11
Attributors	23
Attitude markers	3
Commentary	1

The tables above show that there are significant variations in the utilization of metadiscourse markers between literary and scientific articles. For example, the frequency of logical connectives is high in both types. However, logical connectives are used more frequently in literary articles because scientific articles rely on direct statements. Another major difference is the higher frequency of code glosses in the scientific articles. More importantly, there is a clear discrepancy in the use of interpersonal markers, which seems more prevalent in literary articles. And finally, the use of textual markers is higher in both types.

## 8. Conclusion

The findings of the study refute one of the two hypotheses given by the researcher and support the other. In regards to the first hypothesis, the study found that metadiscourse markers are used more frequently in literary articles. On the other hand, the study showed that textual metadiscourse markers are, in fact, highly utilized in scientific articles while literary ones employ interpersonal markers more often.

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