# Contrastive Analysis of Metadiscourse Markers Used by Non-native (Iranians) vs. Native (Americans) Speakers in Developing ELT Materials

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## Abstract

Metadiscourse is a widely used term in current discourse analysis and language education, referring to an interesting, and relatively new approach to conceptualizing interaction between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users. Despite the growing importance of the term, however, it is often understood in different ways and used to refer to different aspects of language use. In the present study the metadiscourse markers used in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and the ones written by native (Americans) speakers are contrastively analyzed. The framework of this research was Ken Hyland's model (2005) proposed as interactional and interactive resources. The purpose of this study was to see whether interactional metadiscouse markers are different and/or similar in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans) speakers and to what extent these interactional metadiscourse markers are different and/or similar. Moreover, this study also aimed at investigating whether interactive metadiscourse markers are different and/or similar in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans) speakers, and to what extent these interactive matadiscourse markers are different and/or similar. The data collection procedure was carefully performed and the raw data submitted to SPSS (version 17.0) program to calculate the required statistical analysis in order to address the research questions and hypotheses of the study. The results of the research revealed that the interactive metadiscourse markers were not statistically different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and native (Americans). But the interactional metadiscourse markers were statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans). Thus interactional metadiscourse markers were not statistically similar in both texts.

**Keywords:** metadiscourse, metadiscourse markers, interactive markers, interactional markers.

## INTRODUCTION

In recent years there has been a growing interest in the interactive and rhetorical character of academic writing, expanding the focus of study beyond the idea ional dimension of text, or in other words from how they characterize the world, to the ways they function interpersonally. Such a view argues that academic writers do not simply produce texts that plausibly represent external reality, but use language to offer a credible representation of themselves and their work, and to acknowledge and negotiate social relations with readers. The ability of writers to control the level of personality in their text, claiming solidarity with readers, evaluating their material, and acknowledging alternative views, are now recognized as a key feature of successful academic writing. This perspective, however, has been slow to filter through to studies of TEFL in general and materials developments in particular.

A growing body of research has sought to identify the rhetorical features of particular languages, often comparing these features to those in English texts.

Studies which have directly addressed the ways different writing cultures use metadiscourse offer

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the view that, compared with other languages, Anglo-American academic English tend to:

- be more explicit about its structure and purposes;
- employ more, and more recent, citations;
- use fewer rhetorical questions;
- be generally less tolerant of asides or digressions;
- be more tentative and cautious in making claims;
- have stricter conventions for sub-sections and their titles;
- use more sentence connectors (such as *therefore* and *however*); and
- place the responsibility for clarity and unde standing on the writer rather than the reader.

It should be mentioned that Harris (1959) for the first time coined the term "matadiscourse" in order to better express the pragmatic relationship between writer and reader several decades ago (as cited in Beauvais, 1989). Williams (1981) further developed the concept in his text, *Style: Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (as cited in Hyland, 2005). Over the past several classification systems developed for metadiscourse markers since the initial interest in this topic (Beauvais, 1989; Crismore, 1984; Hyland, 2005; Kopple, 1985; Wiliams, 1981). Most of the classifications generally organize the linguistic units under two basic types: textual and interpersonal (Dafouz-Milne, 2008).

Vande Kopple (1997) referred to metadiscourse as discourse that writers use, not to expand referential materials, but to help readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes toward the information material.

Vande Kopple created a classification system to include features such as hedges, connectives, and other various forms of commentary to demonstrate the concepts of writer's influence over the reader. Williams (1981) developed most metadiscourse taxonomies which follow the template set by this classification (as cited in Hyland, 2005). Due to numerous issues with the categories, including vagueness of definitions and divisions of categories, Vande Kopple's scheme has been revised through the years by various writers, including Vande Kopple himself in 1997 and 2002 (Hyland, 2005).

Hyland (2005, p. 133) observes that "metadiscourse is self-reflective linguistic expressions referring to the evolving text, to the writer, and to the imagined readers of that text. It is based on a view of writing as a social engagement and, in academic contexts, reveals the ways writers project themselves into their discourse to signal their attitudes and commitments."

On the basis of the above definition, Hyland (2005, p. 49) offers the *Interpersonal Model* of Metadiscourse Markers as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1**
**Metadiscourse Markers (Hyland, 2005, p. 49)**

| Category | Function | Examples |
|---|---|---|
| Interactive | Assists in guiding the reader through the text | Resources |
| Transitional | Indicates relations between main clauses | in addition, but, thus, and, furthermore, moreover, by the way, similarly, likewise, equally, in the same way, correspondingly, on the other hand, therefore, consequently, in conclusion, admittedly, nevertheless, anyway, in any case, of course |
| Transitional | Indicates relations between main clauses | in contrast, however, on the contrary |
| Frame markers | Discourse acts, stages, and sequences | finally, my purpose is, to conclude, first, then, 1/2, a/b, at the same time, next, to summarize, in sum, by way of introduction, I argue here, my purpose is, the paper proposes, I hope to persuade, there are several reasons why, well, right, ok, now, let us return to |
| Endophoric markers | Indicates information in other parts of the text | as noted above, see Fig 2, refer to the next section |
| Evidentials | Indicates information in other sources | according to X, Z states |
| Code glosses | Elaborate definitions of words or phrases | namely, e.g., such as, in other words, this is called, that is, this can be defined as, for example |
| Interactional | Involves the reader in the text | Resources |
| Hedges | Withholds commitment and open dialogue | might, perhaps, possible, about, almost, probably |
| Boosters | Indicates certainty or close dialogue | in fact, definitely, it is clear that, clearly, obviously, demonstrate |
| Attitude markers | Express writer's attitude to proposition | remarkable, unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly, logical, appropriate, prefer, hopefully |
| Self-mentions | Explicit reference to author | I ,me, my, mine, we (exclusive), our, ours, us |
| Engagement Markers | Explicitly builds relationships with reader | you can see that, note, consider, see, should, must, have to, by the way, you may notice, you, your, we (inclusive) |

**Research Questions**

Based on the aforesaid facts, the present study tries to answer the following research questions:

*1. Are interactive metadiscourse markers different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans)?*

*2. To what extent are interactive metadiscourse markers different or similar in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans)?*

*3. Are interactional metadiscourse markers different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans)?*

*4. To what extent are interactional metadiscourse markers different or similar in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans)?*

**METHOD**

**Source Materials**

In this research the following source materials were analyzed:

Three High School Textbooks of English Language series which are developed by Iranian authors:

- Birjandi, P., Soheili, A., Noroozi, M., & Mahmoodi, Gh. (2013). *English Book 1*. Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran. [1st Ed. 1984, Reprinted, 1994].
- Birjandi, P., Soheili, A., Noroozi, M., & Mahmoodi, Gh. (2013). *English Book 2*. Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran. [1st Ed. 1984, Reprinted, 1998-99].
- Birjandi, P., Soheili, A., Noroozi, M., & Mahmoodi, Gh. (2013). *English Book 3*. Tehran: Textbook Publishing Company of Iran. [1st Ed. 1984, Reprinted, 1994].

Iranian English Book 1 consists of nine units; Book 2 consists of seven units, and Book 3 of six units. The following parts are included within each unit of these books:

Part A. New Words (The purpose of this part is to familiarize the learner's with new words of the reading.)

Part B. Reading: Before each reading passage, there are several new vocabularies and after the reading passage, the comprehension check questions are given which includes several exercises such as: essay type oral questions, true/false tests, multiple choice tests, and the sentences to be completed.

Part C. Comprehension Questions

Part D. and E. Speak out and Write it down

Part F. Language Functions

Part G. Pronunciation Practice

Part H. Vocabulary Drill

Part I. Vocabulary (In this section the new Words of the Lesson are given in Alphabetic Order). Teachers can review the relevant vocabularies that students have learned in previous classes.

Since only the Reading Section of these books is directly related to the present research, and the data collected were elicited from this section, the details of this section is given below:

First of all it should be mentioned that all of the Reading Sections were analyzed meticulously in order to identify and distinguish Metadiscourse Markers (MDMs). It should also be added that each one of the readings included passages of about 300 words and they are all on General topics such as: A Story about Newton, Holland's Toy Town, and Memory, which are written by non-native authors (Iranians). The present researchers interviewed the authors of the books written by Iranians in order to find out whether they have developed the reading texts themselves, or they have used authentic materials. The authors claimed that the passages were all developed by themselves and that according to them the passages are relevant to Iranians culture.

Three series of Textbooks written by Native American writers:

- Oxenden, C., Latham-Koeing, Ch., & Seligson, P. (1997). *American English File Book 1*. England: Oxford University Press.
- Oxenden, C., Latham-Koeing, Ch., & Seligson, P. (1997). *American English File Book 2*. England: Oxford University Press.
- Oxenden, C., Latham-Koeing, Ch., & Seligson, P. (1997). *American English File Book 3*. England: Oxford University Press.

American English File Books 1 and 2 each are composed of nine units, but *Book 3* consists of seven units. Each unit of the series is composed of four sections and also a two-page practical English and writing, and another two-page of review and check sections are also given.

The researchers' focus in this study was on Reading Sections. It should be mentioned that the number of the reading texts in both non-native and native series of books is approximately the same. But the exercises following the reading texts are different in books developed by native (Americans) and non-native (Iranians). However, the exercises given after reading passages are not related to the researcher's study.

In the course of the study, the present re-

searchers found out that a new text book was developed and published for the first grade of Iranian high school students. So, they decided to see if this newly published book can be compared with the series of books under investigation and which was used in Iranian Junior High Schools for almost three decades.

The researchers got in touch with the authors of that new book and received a copy of it for the purpose of checking it. The contents of the new book were as follows:

- Title of the book
  Khadir Sharbian, Sh., *et al.* (2013).
  *English for Schools Prospect 1.* Tehran: Textbook publishing  Company of Iran.
- Contents
  The book contains eight chapters and within each chapter the following activities are included:
a. Function (conversation/practices)
b. Sounds and Letters (listening/speaking/role play activities)
c. Key Language
    1. Vocabulary
    2. Expressions

A thorough analysis of the whole book revealed that, to our surprise, there was not any one single reading passage. Therefore, this new book had no relevance to the purpose and objective of this study; accordingly, the researchers based their study to the series of aforementioned high school books written by Iranian prominent scholars and the ones which were in use for several decades in our Country.

**Procedures**

The data collection procedure of this study is based on Hyland's list of *Interactive* and *Interactional* metadiscourse markers given above in the Theoretical Background Section of this article (Section 1.1):

A. As a result of thorough reading, the researcher identified *Interactive* markers of metadiscourse which were *different* in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans).

For example:

The phrase "according to…" as an *interactive* marker (Evidentials) was seen in texts developed by native (American), but the texts developed by non-native (Iranians) lacked such marker. And also the words and phrases such as: "in other words, in the same way, furthermore, thus, in addition" as an *interactive* markers (Transitional)

were just seen in texts developed by non-native (Iranians).

B. The researcher also identified *Interactive* markers of metadiscourse which were *similar* in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans).

For example:

The word "but" as an *interactive* marker (Transitional) was *similar* in texts developed by both native (American) and non-native (Iranians); moreover, both kinds of texts developed by native and non-native writers did not include *interactive* markers (Endophoric).

C. Next, the researcher identified *interactional* markers of metadiscourse which were *different* in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and the native (Americans).

For example:

The words "prefer, unfortunately, surprisingly" as different *interactional* markers (Attitude) were seen in texts developed by the natives (American), but the texts developed by non-native (Iranians) speakers lacked such markers.

D. Finally, the researchers also identified *interactional* markers of

metadiscourse which were *similar* in texts developed by non- native (Iranians) and the native (American).

For example:

The word "about" as an *interactional* marker (Hedges) was *similar* in both texts developed by native (Americans) and non-native (Iranians).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**
**Research Questions Number 1 and 2**

The first research question of the present study asked whether *interactive* metadiscourse markers are statistically different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans), and the second question inquired to what extent this type of metadiscourse markers are different or similar in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans). In order to answer these questions, the analysis of crosstabs (two-way chi-square) was performed. The results of chi-square test given in Table 2 indicate that the differences observed are not statistically significant i.e. ($x^2$ (3) = 1.754, $n$ = 631, $p$ = .62, $p$ > .05). Therefore, the first null hypothesis of the current study as interactive metadiscourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and natives (Americans)'' was retained**.**

**Table 2**
**Chi-Square Test for Application of Interactive**
**Metadiscourse Markers in Texts developed by Non-natives and Natives**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 1.754[a] | 3 | .625 |
| N of Valid Cases | 631 |  |  |
| a. 2 cells (25.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .68. | | | |

The frequencies, percentages and standardized residuals (Std. Residual) for the interactive metadiscourse markers (transitional, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses) used in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and natives (Americans) were computed. The former two indices are descriptive and should be interpreted horizontally, i.e. within each group; while the latter – Std. Residual – is an inferential index based on which conclusions as to the significance of the differences between the two kinds of text in using interactive metadiscourse markers can be made. This index should be interpreted vertically for using each of the strategies by the three social distances. Std. Residuals beyond +/- 1.96 (Field, 2009) indicate that the utilization of the metadiscourse markers is not random; hence significantly beyond expectation.

Based on the results, it was concluded that 80.0 % (172 out of 213 instances) of the interactive metadiscourse markers were 'transitionals' in texts developed by non-natives, and 80.1 % (335 out of 418 instances) in texts developed by natives. On the other hand, 15.5 % (33 out of 213) of the interactive metadiscourse markers were 'frame markers' in texts developed by non-natives, and 16.7 % (70 out of 418) in texts developed by natives. Regarding no 'evidentials' (0 out of 213) of the interactive metadiscourse markers were found in texts developed by non-natives, and .5 % (2 out of 418) in texts developed by natives. Next it should be mentioned that 3.8 % (8 out of 213) of the interactive metadiscourse markers were 'code glosses' in texts developed by non-natives, and 2.6 % (11 out of 418) in texts developed by natives. Finally, it was found out that 'endophoric markers' have not been used either by non-native and or by native speakers in texts developed by these groups respectively.

Examining Std. Residuals indicates that none of the above mentioned statistics is selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond +/- 1.96. This finding means that the Interactive metadiscourse markers are not considerably different in the two types of texts.

**Research Questions Number 3 and 4**
The third research question of the present study questioned whether *interactional* metadiscourse markers are statistically different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans), and the fourth question asked to what extent this kind of metadiscourse markers are different or similar in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans).

The results of chi-square test as given in Table 3 indicate that the differences observed are statistically significant ($x^2$ (4) = 71.855, n = 824, p = .000, p < .05) in which the value of chi-square was 71.855, and the *p* value, .000 was lower than the selected significant level for this study, .05. Thus the second null hypothesis of the present study as *Interactional* metadiscourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans) was strongly rejected.

**Table 3**
**Chi-Square Test for Application of Interactional**
**Metadiscourse Markers in Texts developed by**
**Non-natives and Natives**

|  | Value | df | Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Pearson Chi-Square | 71.855[a] | 3 | .000 |
| N of Valid Cases | 824 |  |  |
| a. 2 cells (20.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2.69. | | | |

Based on the results, it was found that 15.3 % (34 out of 222) of the interactional metadiscourse markers were 'hedges' in texts developed by Iranians, but 8.3 % (50 out of 602) percent in texts developed by Americans. In addition, 1.4 % (3 out of 222) of the interactional metadiscourse markers were 'boosters' in texts developed by non -natives, and 1.3 % (8 out of 602) in texts developed by natives. Furthemore, no 'attitude markers' of the interactional metadiscourse markers was found in texts developed by non-natives, however 1.7 % (10 out of 602) appeared in texts developed by natives. It should also be mentioned that

28.4 % (63 out of 222) of the interactional metadiscourse markers were 'self mentions' in texts developed by Iranians, nevertheless 59.5 % (358 out of 602) in texts developed by Americans. Finally, the findings of the study revealed that 55.0 % (122 out of 222) of the interactional metadiscourse markers were 'engagement markers' in texts developed by Iranians, but 29.2 % (176 out of 602) in texts developed by Americans.

Examining Std. Residuals shows that three of the above mentioned statistics are selected significantly beyond expectation, i.e. Std. Residuals are beyond +/- 1.96. This means that Interactional metadiscourse markers are considerably different in the two types of texts. In fact, the application of 'hedges' in texts developed by non-natives (15.3%, Std. Residual = 2.4>1.96) is significantly above expectation.

Also, the implementation of 'self mentions' in texts developed by non-natives (28.4%, Std. Residual = -4.7<-1.96) is significantly below expectation, but its application in texts developed by natives (59.5%, Std. Residual = 2.9>1.96) is significantly above expectation.

Besides, the utilization of 'engagement markers' in texts developed by non-natives (55.0%, Std. Residual =4.7>1.96) is significantly above expectation, but its use in texts developed by natives (29.2%, Std. Residual = -2.8<-1.96) is significantly below expectation.

Based on the results, 49.0 % (213 out of 435) of the metadiscourse markers were 'interactive' in texts developed by non-natives, however 41.1 % (418 out of 1020) appeared in texts developed by natives. Additionally, 51.0 % (222 out of 435) of the metadiscourse markers were found 'Interactional' in texts developed by non-natives, whereas 59.0 % (602 out of 1020) were employed in texts developed by natives.

In general, it was found out that 43.4 % (631 out of 1455) of the metadiscourse markers are 'interactive'; conversely, 56.6 % (824 out of 1455) are 'Interactional' regardless of text type (non-native & native).

It should further be mentioned that according to Table 4, 33.7% (213 out of 631) of the total interactive metadiscourse markers were found in texts developed by non-natives, while 66.3% (418 out of 631) were observed in texts developed by natives.

**Table 4**
**Interactive Metadiscourse Markers in Non-natives and Natives**

| Source | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Non-natives | 213 | 33.7% |
| Natives | 418 | 66.3% |
| Total | 631 | 100% |

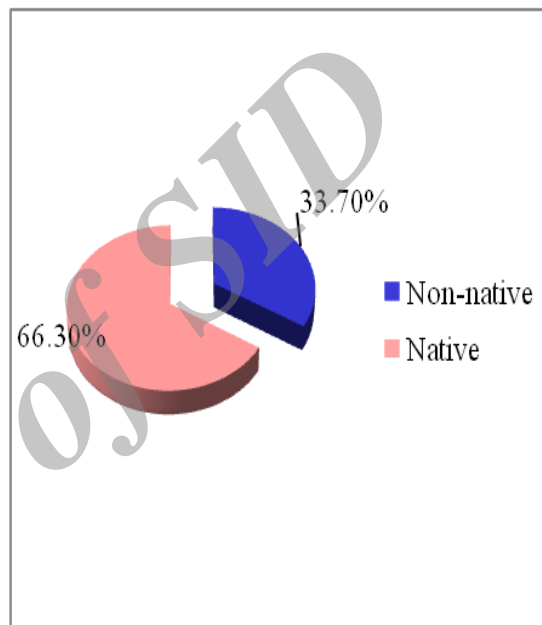Figure 1 below graphically illustrates the related results.



**Figure 1. Total interactive metadiscourse markers applied in texts developed by non-natives and natives**

Finally, the readers should be reminded that 26.9 % (222 out of 824) of the total interactional metadiscourse markers were found in texts developed by non-natives, however 73.1 % (602 out of 824) were appeared in texts developed by natives (see Table 5).

**Table 5**
**Interactive Metadiscourse Markers in Non-natives and Natives**

| Source | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|
| Non-natives | 222 | 26.9% |
| Natives | 602 | 73.1% |
| Total | 824 | 100% |

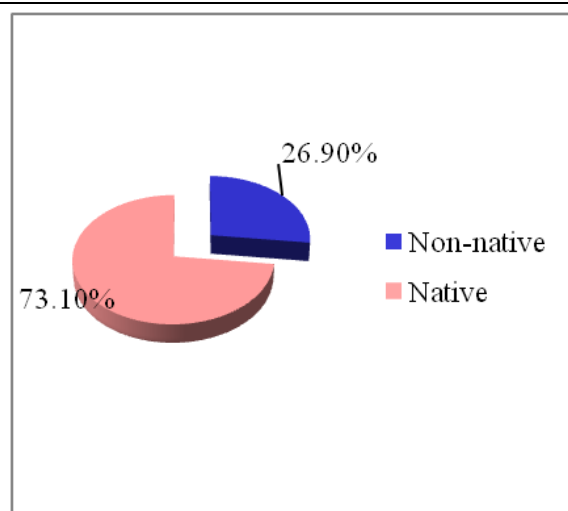The graphical illustration of the results is displayed in Figure 2 below.

**Figure 2. Total interactional metadiscourse markers applied in texts developed by non-natives and natives**

The first research question of this study questioned whether interactive metadiscourse markers are statistically different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans), and the second research question asked to what extent interactive metadiscourse markers are different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans). The Chi-square test indicated that the interactive metadiscourse markers have not been used statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans) ($x^2$ (3) = 1.754, $n$ = 631, $p$ = .62, $p$ > .05). Therefore, the first null hypothesis was retained. So, we can claim that interactive metadiscourse markers are not statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans).

The third research question of the current study asked whether interactional metadiscourse markers were statistically different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans), and the fourth question asked to what extent interactional metadiscourse markers are different in texts developed by non-natives (Iranians) and natives (Americans). Chi-square test detected a statistically significant difference ($x^2$ (4) = 71.855, $p$ = .000, $p$ < .05) in which the $p$ value, .000 was lower than the selected significant level for this study, .05, and accordingly the third null hypothesis was rejected. So, It can be asserted that interactional metadiscourse markers have been applied statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans).

**CONCLUSIONS**

According to the results of the study it can be concluded that there were some differences in the use of metadiscourse markers across the selected series of books developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans). It was foundthat interactive metadiscourse were are not statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans). Therefore, the interactive metadiscourse markers are similar in both types of texts. Moreover, based on the results of the statistics we can assert that interactional metadiscourse markers are statistically different in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans). Thus, interactional metadiscourse markers are not similar in both types of texts.

Despite the effects of new technologies, text books will certainly continue to play an important role in the process of language teaching and learning. The results of this study indicated that interactive metadiscourse markers did not have any differences in texts developed by non-native (Iranians) and native (Americans). But considering the interactional metadiscourse markers, we can claim that there were statistically significant differences in the texts developed by non-native authors (Iranians) with the ones developed by native (Americans). Since from the results of this study, we can find out that some of the interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers can only be applied in academic texts, e.g. Endophoric markers. Metadiscourse markers are also an aspect of language which provides a link between texts, helping to define the rhetorical content by revealing some of the expectations and understandings of the audience for whom a text was written. Put simply, this study reveals that texts developed by non-native (Iranians) are appropriate and useful to meet the students' and the teachers' needs of reading skill of English language within the Iranians undergraduate educational system.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Metadiscourse markers give instructors a helpful way of aiding students towards control over disciplinary-sensitive reading and writing practices. Since it indicates how writers interact with their topic and their readers, investigation by learners of metadiscourse in their own and published writing can present useful assistance for learning about proper ways to transmit attitude, mark

structure, and interact with readers. Consciousness raising is essential in L2 writing teaching and for instructors, this means assisting learners to move beyond the conventional preparations of the style guides and into the rhetorical contexts of their disciplines, exploring the favored models of expression in diverse communities. Students can be aided to read rhetorically and to react, possibly for example, through diaries, on the practices they view and employ themselves (e.g., Johns, 1990).

Introducing students to a consciousness of metadiscourse can prepare learners with significant rhetorical knowledge and provide them with ways of making discourse decisions that are socially structured in the query models and knowledge structures of their disciplines.

Those who prepare materials for EFL student also can hopefully benefit from the finding of the current study. They should utilize more metadiscourse markers in their textbooks to engage efficiently with the readers so that the learners can comprehend their intentions more completely.

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