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Research Paper

Cross-cultural study of stance and engagement markers in motivational speeches

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Abstract

This cross-cultural study aims to examine how Iranian and American motivational speakers employ metadiscourse devices as a convincing tool to interact with their audience. To this end, eight motivational speeches in English and Persian were randomly selected from 2015 to 2021, and analyzed for the use of stance (i.e., hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions) and engagement (i.e., reader-pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge, and personal asides) expressions. The findings showed that self-mention and attitude markers were the most frequently used stance markers in English and Persian corpus, respectively. Moreover, hedges found to be the least frequently used stance markers in the two corpora. With regard to the use of engagement markers, results showed that reader pronoun is the most frequently used engagement markers, and shared knowledge and personal asides were the least frequently used engagement markers in both languages. Finally, the results of chi-square test showed statistically significant differences in the use of stance and engagement expressions in the two languages, confirming cultural septicity nature of metadiscourse markers, and that speakers of different languages employ interactional devices according to their context.

Keywords: Stance; Engagement; Metadiscourse Markers; Motivational Speeches; Self-Mention; Attitude Markers; Reader Pronoun

1. Introduction

A motivational speech intends to motivate an audience. In other words, motivational speakers attempt to create a positive impact on the audience, persuade them as well as engage them with their speech, and to inspire a positive change through actions. Motivational speakers make use of discourse devices to offer an inspiring speech. Having a persuasive function, metadiscourse markers are used by the speakers and writers to express intentions more effectively and hence to better understand their attitude and emotions. The focus of metadiscourse studies is to explore the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used. In other words, individuals use the language in such a way to ensure they can make their intended meanings clear to their interlocutors. Metadiscourse is often discussed under two broad categories of stance and engagement markers: stance refers to the manner a writer/speaker expresses their attitude and stance their position toward a proposition, and engagement refers to a position where the writer/speaker bring the reader/audience into the discourse by focusing their attention and involving them into the text (Hyland, 2005a).

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As Hyland (2005b, p.3) puts it, “metadiscourse embodies the idea that communication is more than just the exchange of information, goods or services, but also involves the personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those are communicating”. Hence, research on the use of metadiscourse markers in motivational speeches can give us a understanding of how motivational speakers attempt to express their attitude and engage their audience into speech.

Several studies in applied linguistics and corpus linguistics have examined the use of features of metadiscourse across various written genres such as newspaper editorials and journal writing (Alipour and Jahanbin, 2020; Farnia and Mohammadi, 2018), research articles (Abdi, 2009; Farnia and Gerami, 2021; Karimi, et al., 2017), graduate students theses (Mirshamsi and Allami, 2013; Moafi et al., 2021), the focus of which was to explore the use of metadiscourse markers in “disciplinary and genre-specific practices and patterns of use in a wide range of academic settings” (Kashiha, 2022, p. 61), and few attempts have been made to explore spoken discourse (Izadi, 2014).

In this cross-cultural study, we aim to examine stance and engagement expressions as two persuasive devices of metadiscourse markers in English and Persian motivational speeches. Moreover, we aim to explore how the patterns of social interactions may vary across English and Persian languages and cultures. The paper is structured as follows: Section 2 discusses the theoretical background of the study, including definitions of stance and engagement markers in the literature. Section 3 presents the method, illuminating the corpus of the study, analytical framework and data analysis. Results of both qualitative and quantitative analysis are reported in Section 4 along with the discussion. Finally, in Section 5, summary and concluding remarks are presented.

2. Stance and engagement in motivational speeches

The purpose of motivational speeches is generally known to be persuasive. In order to increase the impact of their words, motivational speakers attempt to create interaction in their discourse which not only present their own attitude and position in regard to the topic but also involve their audience. Persuasive languages have broadly been studied from the perspectives of appraisal theory (Martin and White, 2005), evaluation theory (Hunston and Thompson, 2000), and metadiscourse theory (Hyland, 2005a).

This study adopts Hyland’s (2005a) model of stance and engagement as it has been one of the most widely used models to study persuasive language. Stance is writer-oriented and is realized by hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention; whereas engagement is reader-oriented including reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides. The use of these rhetorical devices is socially and contextually dependent (Hyland, 2005b), and “is essentially concerned with writer-reader interaction in written texts” (Qiu and Jiang, 2021). Nevertheless, some research studies employed it to study spoken discourse such as lectures (Kahkesh and Alipour, 2017; Kramar, 2019), presentations (Qiu and Jiang, 2021; Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas, 2005), political discourse (Albalat-Mascarell and Carrio-Pastor, 2019; Liu and Liu, 2020), and dissertation defense sessions (Izadi, et al., 2023).

Results of these studies show that stance and engagement expressions can “represent a community’s system of values, formulating how talk is shaped to make sense to the current interactant” (Hyland, 2005a; Hyland and Jiang, 2019). In this regard, it is assumed that motivational speeches attempt to create an interaction with a wide range of audience and hence a range of discourse features should be employed by a motivational speaker to express a stance and engage their listener. Moreover, results of cross-cultural studies showed variations in the use of stance and engagement expressions with variation of genres and language (e.g., Alghazo et al., 2021; Seyri and Rezaei, 2021). In other words, as Hyland (2008) noted, the use of stance and engagement markers is context dependent and authors/speakers express their positions based on their context, culture or discipline (Hyland, 2005a, 2008).

The present study then aims to investigate how stance and engagement markers are used by Iranian and American motivational speakers. It is intended to study the influence of culture on the use of stance and engagement markers in a persuasive discourse. Hence, this study is guided to pursue the following objectives: First, to explore the frequency and type of stance and engagement expressions used in Persian and English motivational speeches; Second, to investigate if there are significant differences in the use of these expressions in the two English and Persian corpora.

3. Methodology

The data consisted of eight motivational speeches about life movement and progress from four Persian and four English motivational speakers. These speakers were selected randomly from the most popular and influential motivational speakers in Iran and the United States of America suggested by google. The speeches were in the form of videos then were selected from Youtube (www.youtube.com) and Aparat (www.aparat.com) channels. They had been delivered between 2015 to 2021. The first 15 minutes of each speech was transcribed for data analyses. The transcriptions resulted in an English corpus, comprising 13,475 words and a Persian corpus, comprising 12,381 words.

The eight motivational speeches (in total 25,825 words) were analyzed based on Hyland’s (2005b) model of interaction consisting of two categories of stance and engagement. The analytical model is presented in Table 1 below. Stance consists of subcategories of hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions, whereas engagement denotes reader pronouns, personal asides, directives, questions and shared knowledge.



Table 1- Hyland's (2005b) model of interaction

	Category	Function	Example
Stance	Hedges	withhold complete commitment to a proposition	possible, may, might, tendency, could
	Boosters	emphasize certainty and mark involvement with the topic and solidarity	definitely, sure, prove, actually, obviously, highly
	Attitude markers	express the writer's attitude to proposition	remarkable, proficient, unexpected, important
	Self-mention	explicit reference to the writer	our, we, I, my
Engagement	Reader pronouns	offer the explicit ways of bringing readers into a discourse	you, your, we, our
	Directives	direct the readers to engage in three kinds of activities-textual, physical, and cognitive acts	Imperatives and obligation modals
	Personal asides	writers address readers directly by briefly interrupting the arguments to offer a comment	short sentences which briefly interrupt the argument
	Shared knowledge	ask readers to recognize something as familiar or accepted	Obviously, well-known
	Questions	bring the interlocutors into an area where they can be led to writer's viewpoint	rhetorical questions

To ensure reliability of the coding, about 10% of the sample was coded and checked by another rater who was an expert in linguistics. To answer the research questions, descriptive statistics (i.e., frequency) and inferential statistics (chi-square test) were used.

4. Results and Discussion

Results and discussion are presented in two sub-sections. In the first part, results are presented quantitatively with a comparison of stance and engagement markers within the same category and across the corpus. In the second part, results are discussed qualitatively with examples from the study corpus.

4.1 Distributions of Stance and Engagement

Table 2 presents the distributions of stance markers in the two corpora. As the table shows, self-mention is the most frequently used stance marker in the English corpus (30.4%) whereas attitude markers occurred more frequently in the Persian corpus (37.22%). Moreover, attitude markers (28.24%) and boosters (27.17%) were the second and third most frequently used stance expressions in English. However, boosters (24.89%) and self-mention (20.68%) were the second and third frequently used stance markers in the Persian data. Results show that hedges were the least frequently used stance markers in both corpora (14.18% and 17.2% in English and Persian, respectively).

Table 2. The distribution of stance markers

Stance	English Corpus		Persian Corpus	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Hedges	237	14.18	208	17.2
Boosters	454	27.17	301	24.89
Attitude markers	472	28.24	450	37.22
Self-mentions	508	30.4	250	20.68
Total	1671	100	1209	100

Table 3 indicates the distribution of engagement markers in the two corpora. Results showed that reader pronoun is the most frequently used engagement markers in the two corpora (75.38% and 73.13% in English and Persian, respectively). Moreover, directives (8.95% in English and 13.89% in Persian) followed by questions (7.94% and 7.07% in English and Persian, respectively) were the second and third frequently engagement markers in both English and Persian corpora. The findings show that shared results and personal asides were the least frequently used engagement markers in the dataset (see Table 3).



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Table 3. The Distribution of engagement markers

Engagement	English		Persian	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Reader pronouns	902	75.48	879	73.13
Directives	107	8.95	167	13.89
Questions	95	7.94	85	7.07
Shared knowledge	56	4.68	25	2.08
Personal asides	35	2.93	46	3.82
Total	1195	100	1202	100

Table 4 presents the distribution and comparison of stance and engagement markers across the model in the dataset. As shown in Table 4, the use of stance markers in the two corpora were higher than engagement markers which is in line with other metadiscourse studies on spoken genres (e.g., Azlia, 2022; Qui and Jiang, 2021), indicating that motivational speakers attempted to represent a personal voice and provide their own perspectives on how their propositions possibly have changed their own life or other people. This is in line with Biber (2006) who states that stance expressions are more frequently used in spoken genre than written.

As shown in Table 4, the occurrence of markers from the highest to the lowest in English corpus are as follows: reader pronouns (31.47%, 66.93 per 1000 words), self-mention (17.72%, 37.69 per 1000 words), attitude markers (16.47%, 35.02 per 1000 words), boosters (15.84%, 33.69 per 1000 words), hedges (8.27%, 17.58 per 1000 words), directives (3.37%, 7.94 per 1000 words), questions (3.31%, 7.05 per 1000 words), shared knowledge (1.95%, 4.15 per 1000 words) and personal asides (1.22%, 2.59 per 1000 words). The frequency of markers, however, was in a slightly different order in the Persian corpus which is as follows: reader pronouns (36.45%, 70.99 per 1000 words), attitude markers (18.66%, 36.34 per 1000 words), boosters (12.48%, 24.31 per 1000 words), self-mention (10.37%, 20.19 per 1000 words), hedges (8.62%, 16.79 per 1000 words), directives (6.93%, 13.48 per 1000 words), questions (3.52%, 6.86 per 1000 words), personal asides, (1.9%, 3.71 per 1000 words) and shared knowledge (1.04%, 2.01 per 1000 words).

Table 4. The distribution of stance and engagement markers across the corpus

Category	English Corpus			Persian Corpus			
	F	%	Frequency per 1000 words	F	%	Frequency per 1000 words	
Stance	Hedge	237	8.27	17.58	208	8.62	16.79
	Booster	454	15.84	33.69	301	12.48	24.31
	Attitude marker	472	16.47	35.02	450	18.66	36.34
	Self-mention	508	17.72	37.69	250	10.37	20.19
Engagement	Reader pronouns	902	31.47	66.93	879	36.45	70.99
	Directives	107	3.73	7.94	167	6.93	13.48
	Questions	95	3.31	7.05	85	3.52	6.86
	Shared knowledge	56	1.95	4.15	25	1.04	2.01
	Personal asides	35	1.22	2.59	46	1.9	3.71
Total	2866	100	212.69	2411	100	194.73	

Note: F= frequency, %= percentage

Table 5 shows the results of chi-square analyses. Regarding the use of stance expressions, the findings show that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of boosters and self-mention between English and Persian corpus ($p < 0.05$, Sig.= 0.001). In other words, English motivational speakers employed boosters (60.13%) more than Persian motivational speakers (39.87%). Also, English motivational speakers employed self-mention (67.02%) more than Persian motivational speakers (32.98%). However, despite the difference in the use of hedges and attitude markers, no significant difference was found between the two corpora. As Table 5 displays, there is a statistically significant difference in the overall use of stance expressions between the English and Persian corpus. In other words, English motivational speakers used statistically a higher number of stance expressions than their Persian counterparts.

With regard to engagement markers, the findings show that there is no statistically significant difference in the use of engagement markers between the two corpora ($p > 0.05$, Sig.= 0.886). Regarding the categories, results of chi-square showed statistically significant differences in the use of directives and shared knowledge ($p < 0.05$, sig. = 0.001). In other words, Persian motivational speakers used directives (60.95%) significantly more than English motivational speakers (39.05%). However, English motivational speakers used shared knowledge (69.14%) significantly more than Persian motivational speakers (30.86%). Results of chi-square tests displayed no statistically significant differences in the use of reader pronouns, questions, and personal asides between English and Persian corpus.



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Table 5. Frequency and chi-square results of stance and engagement

	Features	English Corpus		Persian Corpus		Total		χ^2	Sig.
		F	%	F	%	F	%		
Stance	Hedge	237	53.26	208	46.74	445	100.00	1.890	.169
	Booster	454	60.13	301	39.87	755	100.00	31.005	.001
	Attitude marker	472	51.19	450	48.81	922	100.00	.525	.469
	Self-mention	508	67.02	250	32.98	758	100.00	87.815	.001
	Total	1671	58.02	1209	41.98	2880	100.00	74.113	.001
Engagement	Reader pronouns	902	50.65	879	49.35	1781	100.00	.297	.586
	Directives	107	39.05	167	60.95	274	100.00	13.139	.001
	Questions	95	52.78	85	47.22	180	100.00	.556	.456
	Shared knowledge	56	69.14	25	30.86	81	100.00	11.864	.001
	Personal asides	35	43.21	46	56.79	81	100.00	1.494	.222
	Total	1195	49.85	1202	50.15	2397	100.00	.020	.886
Total	2866	54.31	2411	45.69	5277	100.00	39.232	.001	

The overall findings display that there is a statistically significant difference in the use of devices between English and Persian corpus ($p < 0.05$, Sig = 0.001). In other words, English motivational speakers used more number stance and engagement expressions than Persian motivational speakers ($n = 2866$, 54.31% and $n = 2411$, 45.69% in English and Persian, respectively).

4.2 Exemplifications of Stance and Engagement Markers

In this part, each subcategory of markers (i.e., stance and engagement markers) along with their examples in both English and Persian corpora are presented. The target device in each extracted example is shown underlined with a translation to Persian examples.

4.2.1 Stance

Stance expressions consisted of hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention.

4.2.1.1 Hedges: Known as words which make things more or less unclear (Lakoff, 1975). Hedges aim to reduce the writer's commitment to a proposition (Fu, 2012; Hyland, 2005a). Hedges can be realized by a number of linguistic resources such as modal auxiliary verbs, modal lexical verbs, modal phrases in the form of adjective, adverbial and nominal, approximators of degree, if clauses and compound hedges (Salager-Meyer, 1997, pp. 131-133). Hedges are also means to attend to interpersonal relationships (Izadi, 2013, 2014). The following examples are from the corpus.

English example

- (1) I lost the flight but probably won my life back.
- (2) There always seem to be a reason to procrastinate.

Persian example

(3) من به شما پیشنهاد میکنم فقط یک بار تصمیم بگیرید که تغییر کنید.

I suggest you decide to change just once.

(4) ممکنه فروشتون بیاد پایین ولی ورشکست نمیشید

Your sales may drop, but you will not go bankrupt.

Examples (1) and (4) use a modal phrase in the form of adverb probably, and examples (2) and (3) use modal lexical verb seem and suggest for hedging the propositions. In contrast to boosters, hedges “imply that a statement is based on the writer's plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge” (Hyland, 2005a, p.52). Low occurrence of hedges in English and Persian motivational speeches might reflect the nature of motivational speech in which the speakers speak in a firm and confident way and use more certain words than probable ones during their speech in order to influence the audience. As this is in contrast with other metadiscourse studies conducted in different genres such as opinion articles (Moghadam, 2017) or 3MT academic presentations (Qui & Jiang, 2021), it may conform to Hyland's (2005b, 2008) statement that the use of metadiscourse markers is dependent on the context in which they are used.

4.2.1.1.1 Boosters

These devices aim to express certainty about a proposition or confidence in a declaration (Abdi et al., 2010) by reinforcing a claim (Gillaerts & Vande de Velde, 2010; Izadi, 2013, 2014; Hyland, 1998), and indicating writer's assurance



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in their messages as well as their involvement in the topic and readers (Hyland, 2008). Examples from the two corpora are as follows:

English example

(5) Chance is **never** a matter of ability. It's **always** a matter of motivation.

(6) You may achieve the goal well in advance or it may take you much longer than you expect but you **must** have a target time before you set off.

Persian example

(۷) تفکر فقیر تفکر به که همیشه فکر میکنه باید خیلی کار کنه که به پول برسه

Poor thinking is the thinking that always thinks that you have to work hard to get money.

(۸) من صحبتیم را با شما میکنم و مطمئنم در میان شما الان افرادی هستند که خورشان به جوش آمده تا تصمیم بگیرند که یک کاری کنند.

I'm talking to you and I'm sure that among you there are people whose blood is boiling to decide to do something.

In the examples above, the authors used different types of boosters (the underlined words) to express certainty toward a proposition. As shown in these examples, boosters emphasize the speakers' certainty in what they say and prevent conflicting views. According to Alipour and Jahanbin (2020), more employment of boosters by the writers can lead to highlighting the significance of a specific concept and attracting the reader's attention. In this study, English motivational speakers talked with more certainty through their speech in order to better highlight the significance of specific concepts and attract the audience's attention.

4.2.1.2 Attitude Markers

Attitude markers are words or expressions which express the writer's opinion (Gillaerts and Vande de Velde, 2010). These words such as unfortunately, hopefully, and surprisingly indicate the writer's emotional attitude such as agreement, surprise, significance, disappointment and is expressed by means of attitude verbs, sentence adverbs and adjectives (Hyland, 2008). The employment of this marker in English and Persian motivational speeches is exemplified in the following:

English example

(9) Reading is the **strongest** signal for success in the future that I've ever seen.

(10) **The Best** definition of self-discipline is that self-discipline is the ability to make yourself do what you should do when you should do it whether you feel like it or not.

Persian corpus

(۱۱) از امروز به بعد هوشمندانه با تمرکز به روی خواستت و با جهت دهی ذهنت کارهات رو انجام بده.

From today onwards, do your work intelligently by focusing on your desire and directing your mind.

(۱۲) من متاسفانه تمام عمرم توی محصولات مارکت پوش بودم یعنی باید تبلیغ میکردم تا مردم بخرن

Unfortunately, all my life I was involved in marketing products, which means I had to advertise so that people would buy.

In the examples above, the superlative adjectives 'strongest' (example 9), 'the best' (example 10), and the adverbs 'intelligently' in example (11) and 'unfortunately' in example (12) expressed the speakers' attitude towards the propositions. Attitude markers arise from the speakers' feelings and emotions. Expressing the speakers' emotions through speech is one of the important ways to attract the audience's attention and to impress them. They have high motivating power to influence the audience and also show the speaker's affective attitude in speech (Azlia, 2022).

As the second most frequently used stance expression in Persian corpus, the results suggest that Persian motivational speakers attempted to persuade Iranian audience through their feelings and emotions. This finding is in contrast with the results of the study by Kahkesh and Alipour (2017) that attitude markers were the least frequent interactional metadiscourse markers in Persian university lectures which could be due to their academic and scientific nature.

4.2.1.3 Self-Mentions:

By means of 'self-mention', "the authors put themselves explicitly on stage" (Gillaerts and Vande de Velde, 2010, p. 131). In this case, the speakers use first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives to create a connection between themselves and the audience (Hyland, 2005b). Self-mentions were the most used stance expressions in English corpus which suggest that English motivational speaker attempted to show how they stand in relation to their arguments, their discipline, and their listeners as well as project an impression of themselves through their speech. Moreover, motivational speakers can share their personal experiences and feelings with the audience using self-mentions.



Moreover, both English and Persian motivational speakers used inclusive ‘we’ to lead the audience to be more receptive as they look up the speaker as a credible person (Scotto di Carlo, 2014). They also used their personality and background to make a proximate relationship with the audience. As Carter-Thomas, & Rowley-Jolivet (2020) noted, “personal reference is therefore a clear indication of the perspective from which a statement should be interpreted” (p.9). Examples from the corpus are as follow:

English corpus

(13) **I** say to **my** girls all of the time that your real work is to figure out where your power base is.

(14) If there’s anyone who wants their life to look like this, it would be **me**.

(15) **I** have so much to offer and so much to give and **I** am not afraid of honoring **myself**.

Persian corpus

(۱۶) من در خودم و زندگیم این را تجربه کرد.

I experienced this in myself and in my life.

(۱۷) هر وقت فکر کردم دیگه راهی نیست با خودم میگم آقا بمحمود معظمی، هزار و یک راه رو هنوز نرفتی.

Whenever I think that there is no other way, I say to myself, Mr. Mahmoud Moazzami, you have not gone a thousand and one ways yet.

(۱۸) امیدوارم هر جای دنیا که هستید با هفت جادویی ما هر روز توی شخیت قدرتمتون دستاوردهای زیادی داشته باشید

I hope that wherever you are in the world with our magic seven, you will have great achievements every day in your strength.

In the examples above, the speakers use personal pronouns I, myself, and us to indicate that the speakers “cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments” (Hyland, 2005b, p. 53). The findings showed the use of self-mentions was lower in Persian corpus compared to English one. This result might be due to the differences in Iranian cultural background. For instance, in a study carried out by Moghadam (2017), it is mentioned that Iranian columnists used few self-mentions and were invisible in their texts due to Iranian educational system in which the students learnt not to make frequent self-references to avoid being arrogant or self-praising.

4.2.2 Engagement

According to Hyland (2005a), engagement markers are used to serve two purposes: To meet the reader’s expectations, and to involve positioning the reader rhetorically. Here, the author pulls readers into the discourse at critical points, predicts possible objections, and guides them to particular interpretations with questions, directives, and references to shared knowledge, and personal asides.

4.2.2.1 Reader pronouns: This device is the most direct way of bringing the audience into a discourse. Reader pronoun is the most frequent used engagement markers in the two corpora (31.47% and 36.45%) meaning that both English and Persian motivational speakers employ the pronoun you and your to address the interlocutor. As Hyland (2008) noted, this feature is rarely used in some writing, and there is huge attention in binding the readers and writer together through the use of general we.

Reader pronouns are the most explicit way that readers/listeners are brought into a discourse; therefore, it is not far beyond the expectation to have the highest occurrence among other markers since in motivational speeches attracting audience’s attention and engaging them through speech is of first priorities. The employment of “you” and “we” by the motivational speakers can make the audience feel invited and engaged, as well as lead them to a joint participation of speaker and audience, and eventually result in a better acceptance of the speakers’ ideas by the audience.

Examples of the employment of reader pronouns are as follows:

English corpus

(19) Other people don’t know their purpose and if **you** don’t know **your** purpose, **your** immediate goal is to figure that out.

(20) **You** only have control over **yourself**.

(21) What is that successful people do habitually every single day that leads to them being in the top 20% of money earners in **our** society?

Persian corpus

(۲۲) شما و من ماندگار میشویم. یا به نیکی و نیک نامی یا به بی تفاوتی

You and I will last. Either to goodness and goodness or to indifference

(۲۳) امروز انتخاب من و شماست. باید از خودمان شروع کنیم.

Today is my choice and yours. We have to start with ourselves.



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(۲۴) خیلی زیاد محیطی که ما توش رشد پیدا میکنیم، شرایط خانوادگی تو، محیطی که توش رشد پیدا کردی روی شیرین زبونی تو اثرگذار بوده.

The environment in which we grow up, your family situation, the environment in which you grew up have an effect on your sweet tongue.

The frequent use of reader pronouns in both English and Persian corpus may conform to Hyland's (2005b, p. 132) statement that "reader pronouns in some cultures promote group solidarity. Moreover, the overuse of reader pronouns in motivational speeches was intended to urge the audience "to learn from the personal experience" (Hyland, 2005b, p. 132) of the speaker.

4.2.2.2 Directives, Questions, Shared Knowledge, Personal Asides: These markers had relatively low occurrences in both English and Persian corpora. This finding is in accordance with Azila (2022) that shows shared knowledge is the least frequent marker used by male and female TED talk motivational speakers. Moreover, in the study carried out by Qui and Jiang (2021), appeals to shared knowledge is the least frequent engagement marker used in 3MT presentations since the presenters encounter heterogenous unspecified audience that makes them unsure of how much background knowledge to employ.

Directives help the speaker to instruct the audience to perform an action and also to see things in a way determined by him/her. Questions engage and interest the audience through the speech and encourage them to follow the speech curiously. In fact, questions act as flicks to prepare the audience's mind. Shared knowledge refers to explicit markers to make listeners recognize something as familiar, accepted and common in speaker-listener relationship. Personal asides are interruptions to offer a comment on what has been said and express the speakers' intended meaning.

Hyland (2005b, 2008) maintains that directives call on the readers to do something, and can be expressed by imperatives and a modal of obligation such as should, must, ought to. Moreover, directives might also be performed by predicative adjectives whose function is to express the writer's evaluation of necessity/importance (e.g., It is necessary/important to understand...). Directives can address the readers to be engaged in three types: textual acts (guiding them a discussion, etc.), physical acts (instructing them to carry out or perform something, etc.), and cognitive acts (getting them understand something in a certain way, etc.) (Hyland, 2005b). The employment of this feature is shown through examples of each corpus in the following:

English corpus

(25) **Remember** this, there is no such thing as failure.

(26) **Keep** track of your progress and **make** adjustments along the way.

Persian corpus

(۲۷) به نیروهاتون آموزش بدهید. مدیرانتون رو آموزش بدهید. حتی اگر خیلی موفق هستید هم این کار را بکنید.

Train your troops. Train your managers. Do this even if you are very successful.

(۲۸) خودتون رو دست کم نگیرید. یکی از عواملی که باعث ایجاد ارزش گذاری یا از بین رفتن ارزش ها میشه اینه که شما خودتون رو دست کم میگیرید.

Do not underestimate yourself. One of the factors that cause the creation of values or the loss of values is that you underestimate yourself.

The findings show more occurrences of directives in Persian corpus. It can be concluded that Persian speakers used more statements to instruct the audience to perform an action and also to see things in a way determined by the speaker. Also it suggests that Persian speakers utilized more authority markers to engage the audience in a motivational speech.

Motivational speakers used questions to create a sense of immediacy and engagement with the reader. By asking questions, the reader will be addressed as someone who has an interest in the issue raised by the question (Hyland, 2005b). Moreover, motivational speaker can motivate the receiver to accept their stance by using rhetorical questions (see Thompson, 2001). It is then obvious that motivational speakers use rhetorical questions to introduce the topic and prepare the audience for what is going to be talked over as well as to instinct their ideas to the audience. The following are some examples of questions in both corpora:

English corpus

(29) If you make a different decision, will you take different actions? Yes or no? But if you take different actions, will you get different results?

(30) What do you do to recruit the best people? How do you keep them? How do you retain them?

Persian corpus

(۳۱) چرا نیایم فکرمون رو نو کنیم؟ چرا آموزش جدید به سیستمون ندیم؟ چرا به جای اینکه ناامید باشیم امیدوار نباشیم؟



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Why don't we come to renew our thoughts? Why don't we introduce new training to our system? Why not hope instead of despair?

(۳۲) قانون سپاسگزاری چی میگه؟ میگه اگر توانایی هات رو ببینی و احساسشون کنی به دست میاری و هر روز برات بیشتر و بیشتر میشه.

What does the law of gratitude say? He says that if you see and feel your abilities, you will get them and every day it will be more and more for you.

Shared knowledge is identified by specific signals asking readers to know something as familiar or accepted (Hyland, 2008). In other words, English and Persian motivational speakers utilized shared knowledge to bring the audience in agreement with themselves (see Hyland, 2005a). Examples of the usage of this feature in the two corpora are as follows:

English corpus

(33) **You know** you think about it most people are good at certain things like maybe you're great marketer.

(34) I was nervous about the competition and then I became my own competition. Raising the bar, every year pushing myself as hard as I knew **sound familiar** to anybody here.

Persian corpus

(۳۵) ظاهراً فروش میاد پایین. ظاهراً اون وامی که قرار بوده جور بشه جور نمیشه..

Apparently, sales are going down. Apparently, the loan that was supposed to be settled will not be settled.

(۳۶) یک تصمیم، یک زندگی جدید را خلق میکند و این قانون است و بدانید که تا تصمیمی اتخاذ نشود تغییری در زندگی رخ نمیدهد

What does the law of gratitude say? He says that if you see and feel your abilities, you will get them and every day it will be more and more for you.

The findings show that shared knowledge was observed more prominent in English corpus. As the use of shared knowledge is more frequent in English corpus than Persian one, it suggests that English motivational speakers could better provide a familiar and common atmosphere with the listeners.

Personal asides permit writers to address readers without deviation by interrupting the argument in brief to suggest a comment on what has been said (Hyland, 2008). Motivational speakers used personal asides as a key reader-oriented approach to show their personality and willingness to directly suggest an idea (see Hyland, 2005b). Samples of the employment of personal asides in the two corpora are as follow:

English corpus

(37) And **what I am trying to say** to you this morning is really simply this morning.

(38) So very quickly-**really about six weeks into this research**- I ran into this unnamed thing that absolutely unraveled connection in a way that I didn't understand or had never seen.

Persian corpus

(۳۹) اما در واقع وقتی من از نعمتی به خوبی استفاده نمیکنم - یعنی یک استعدادی دارم اما اون استعداد رو نمیبینم - من دارم نعمتم رو به کفر مبدل میکنم.

But in fact, when I don't use a blessing well - that is, I have a talent but I don't see that talent - I am turning my blessing into blasphemy.

(۴۰) و این یکی از سیاست های رفتاریه که شما باید داشته باشید. یعنی سیاست رفتاری که داره به شما میگه که خودت رو جلوی آدم ها دست کم نگیر.

And this is one of the behavioral policies that you should have. That is, the behavior policy that is telling you not to underestimate yourself in front of people

5 Conclusion

In this study, the use of stance and engagement expressions was explored in English and Persian motivational speeches. The findings showed that self-mention and attitude markers were the most frequently used stance markers in English and Persian corpus, respectively. Moreover, hedges were found to be the least frequently used stance markers in the two corpora. With regard to the use of engagement markers, results showed that reader pronoun is the most frequently used engagement markers, and shared knowledge and personal asides were the least frequently used engagement markers in both English and Persian motivational speeches. Finally, results of chi-square test showed statistically significant differences in the use of stance and engagement expressions in English and Persian languages, confirming cultural specificity nature of metadiscourse markers, and that speakers of different languages employ interactional devices according to their context.

In sum, the findings revealed variations in the use of stance and engagement markers which can be due to speakers' cultural background in Iran and America. The results of the study confirm Hyland's (2005b) statement that the use of metadiscourse markers pertain to the socio-rhetorical context in which they are used. Metadiscourse markers provide a link between texts and cultures; that is, speakers/writers use metadiscourse markers according to their audience



expectations and understanding. The variations in the use of stance and engagement expressions represent a preferred discourse patterns with respect to the audience “social practices, values and ways of thinking” (Hyland, 2005b).

Despite the findings, the study also suffers from some limitations which could be considered for further research in future. This study focused on motivational speeches in life movement and progress. Future research may examine how the use of stance and engagement markers differ with variation in topics of motivational speeches (e.g., importance of life skills, opportunities in academia, roles of disciplines). Moreover, future studies may investigate the effect of gender in giving motivational speeches.

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Appendix

Appendix 1. English and Persian motivational speeches

		Number of words	Total
English motivational speakers	Tony Robbins	3678	13475
	Brian Tracy	2910	
	Brene Brown	3115	
	Oprah Winfrey	3772	
Persian motivational speakers	Mahmood Moazemi	3661	12381
	AlirezaAzmandiyan	2676	
	MasoomehTeymoori	3464	
	Parisa Nasr	2580	



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