

Metadiscourse in Persian/English Master's Theses: A Contrastive Study¹

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Abstract

In the present study, a new metadiscourse typology is presented with ten sub-types: connectives, topicalizers, reminders, intention markers, interpretive markers, hedges, emphatics, attributors, persona markers, and relational markers. The first five constitute textual metadiscourse, and the rest constitute interpersonal metadiscourse. This study also investigates the impact of language/culture on the use of metadiscourse in the Master's theses of 3 groups: native (Iranian) speakers of Persian, non-native (Iranian) speakers of English, and native (British) speakers of English. The introductions and discussions of these theses were compared for amounts and types of metadiscourse used, by means of a number of split-plot ANOVAs. The different groups were found to use metadiscourse types differently; more specifically, they were found to use connectives, hedges, attributors, and persona markers differently from one another. This study has implications for a number of disciplines, in particular teaching English as a foreign language.

Keywords: metadiscourse, contrastive rhetoric, Persian vs. English, EAP, Master's theses

INTRODUCTION

Of the language skills taught in TEFL/TESL classes, writing is definitely the least appreciated and the most neglected. Instructions in reading and writing are often delayed until more advanced stages of

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language learning, and even when they are taught from the beginning, they are given secondary importance. However, for those learners who intend to continue their studies in English, reading and writing are obviously important skills; students will find themselves reading more and more English texts, as well as writing term papers, research articles, proposals, theses, dissertations etc. And even for those not majoring in English, the ability to express themselves well in English may often be necessary for communicating with colleagues abroad, submitting papers for publications and conferences, and continuing their studies in an English-speaking country.

This issue becomes even more important in countries such as Iran, where little or no formal L₁ composition instruction exists at schools or universities. For many Iranians, expressing themselves in writing in their native language is a daunting task; therefore, it is only natural to assume that learning to write well in English will be even more formidable. For those majoring in English, however, it is often an important key to success. This group must learn, if not how to write like native speakers of English, at least how to be most effective when addressing an English-speaking audience.

One aspect of writing for which students should receive instruction is the use of metadiscourse. Metadiscourse refers to "what they inject into the text besides the content" (Crismore 1985a, p. 6), or "whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed" (Williams 1981, pp. 211-212). It is important in that it relates to two of the three metafunctions of language: the textual and the interpersonal (see Halliday 1973). English learners receiving instruction in writing should also learn how and when to use metadiscourse, and how English and Persian² writing differ in the types and amount of metadiscourse they allow in different contexts. This knowledge is particularly consequential for graduate and postgraduate students,

² On reading the present study, Dr. Crismore called my attention to the confusion that exists about the terms Persian/Farsi among non-Iranians. I would therefore like to point out for those of my readers who are not familiar with Iran that Persia is the old name for the present Iran, and Persian is the name of the official language of Iranians. The words Persian/Farsi are used interchangeably; however, the word Persian is preferred when referring to the language in English.

since Swales (1990, p. 188) suggests that “the key differentiating aspect of dissertation writing is a much greater use of *metadiscourse* [emphasis original].” The present study, therefore, addresses the issue of metadiscourse in English and Persian M.A. theses. A comparison will be made concerning the types and frequencies of metadiscourse used in the introduction and discussion sections of the Master’s theses of three groups: native (Iranian) speakers of Persian (Farsi), non-native (Iranian) speakers of English, and native (British) speakers of English.

Background and Related Literature

Avon G. Crismore describes metadiscourse as “the rhetorical act of discoursing about the spoken or written discourse” (1984a, p. 66), and explains that its intention is to “*direct* rather than inform the readers” (Crismore, 1984b, p. 280). She suggests (1985b) that there are two levels of discourse: primary and secondary. Primary level discourse is only concerned with “subject matter propositional content,” while secondary level discourse (metadiscourse) is concerned with “a discourse about the primary level discourse” (p. 10). Some examples of metadiscourse are: *obviously; however; first; in this chapter we saw; e.g.; according to Smith; I mean; dear reader.*

Crismore (1984b, p. 281) claims that metadiscourse contributes to text organization in that it allows readers to “reconstruct the author’s writing plan,” and helps them to “set up expectations, confirm them, and integrate the text.” The use of such devices also allows the writer to reveal her/his attitude toward the subject matter, to convey her/his personality, and to interact with the reader, making the text more reader-oriented and “friendly.”

Vande Kopple’s Metadiscourse Taxonomy (1985)

Drawing on work by Williams, Lautamatti, and Crismore in his often-cited article, Vande Kopple (1985) identified seven categories of metadiscourse:

- 1 – **text connectives**: These help readers understand how the text is organized and how its parts are connected. They include words and

phrases that show sequences (e.g. *first of all*); those that show some kind of logical or temporal relationship (e.g. *however*); reminders about material presented earlier (e.g. *as we saw above*); announcements about material to be presented later (e.g. *we shall see in chapter 2*); and topicalizers, that draw our attention to the thematic centrality of a phrase (e.g. *regarding*).

2 – **code glosses**: These help the reader understand the meaning of a part of the text, for example, *metadiscourse is discourse about discourse*.

3 – **illocution markers**: Illocution markers make explicit for the reader what speech or discourse act is being performed at a certain point of the text, e.g. *we claim that, to sum up, for example*.

4 – **validity markers**: These express the author's view of the validity of the propositional content. **Hedges** indicate the author's doubt (e.g. *maybe*); **emphatics** emphasize the author's belief (e.g. *clearly*); and **attributors** attribute the content to others, thus influencing the reader's opinion (e.g. *according to Vande Kopple*).

5 – **narrators**: If, on the other hand, phrases like *according to Vande Kopple* are used primarily to inform the reader who said what rather than influencing them, they are called **narrators**.

6 – **attitude markers**: These let the writer reveal her/his attitude toward the propositional content, for example, *surprisingly*.

7 – **commentaries**: This is when the writer directly addresses the reader, for example *you might want to skip the first chapter, and dear reader*.

Vande Kopple divides metadiscourse into two main types, **textual** and **interpersonal**. He places text connectives and code glosses in textual metadiscourse.

Crismore et al.'s Classification System (1993)

In 1993, Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen revised Vande Kopple's taxonomy after working with actual data. Among other changes, they collapsed Vande Kopple's "narrators" and "attributors" into one, because, as they pointed out, the purpose of both is to increase the force and persuasiveness of the argument. Their classification is as follows (Figure 1):

- A. TEXTUAL METADISCOURSE (used for logical and ethical appeals)
 - 1. Textual markers
 - Logical connectives
 - Sequencers
 - Reminders
 - Topicalizers
 - 2. Interpretive markers
 - Code glosses
 - Illocution markers
 - Announcements
- B. INTERPERSONAL METADISCOURSE (used for emotional and ethical appeals)
 - 3. Hedges (epistemic certainty markers)
 - 4. Certainty markers (epistemic emphatics)
 - 5. Attributors
 - 6. Attitude markers
 - 7. Commentary

Figure 1: Crismore et al.'s (1993) Classification System for Metadiscourse Categories

Analyzing Metadiscourse: Some Difficulties

Perhaps the most formidable aspect of metadiscourse coding is trying to achieve consistency and avoid subjectivity. Due to its very nature, metadiscourse analysis is unavoidably a functional rather than a formal linguistic analysis. As Markkanen et al. (1993, p. 141) note, "No linguistic criteria can be used since it [i.e. metadiscourse] can be realized through all kinds of linguistic units, ranging from affixes to whole clauses." A related difficulty is that what is considered textual metadiscourse in one context might be interpersonal in another context, and propositional content in a third context. In fact, Crismore et al. (1993) propose that some linguistic items function simultaneously as metadiscourse and propositional content. Finally, different readers often have different perceptions of the function(s) of a linguistic unit, depending not only on the readers' linguistic/cultural backgrounds, but possibly also on their sex, personality, cognitive factors, etc.

The Metadiscourse Taxonomy Adopted in the Present Study

Initially, I did the analysis using Crismore, Markkanen, and Steffensen's (1993) classification system; however, some problems arose. One was that *announcements* seemed unjustifiably placed under interpretive markers, as they perform a function very similar to that of *reminders*. Another major problem was the subcategory *illocution markers*. Illocution markers overlap with several other subcategories, for example, with *announcements* in phrases such as *I conclude* and *In chapter two, I state again that*; with *attitude markers* in *I regret, I congratulate, and I hope*; and with *hedges*, such as in: *I hypothesize, I think*. Similar confusion can be seen throughout the literature respecting other subcategories of metadiscourse. (The interested reader may refer to Marandi 2002.) Finally, therefore, I decided not to use any of the taxonomies as they stand, but instead to develop a slightly different one. The revised classification system of this study is presented in Figure 2.

This typology is different from other typologies in several respects. One important difference is that "illocution markers" *per se* do not constitute a separate class; instead, similar to other words and phrases, those items that have hitherto been considered illocution markers are individually assigned to different categories, depending on how they affect a given text.

Also, the present category "interpretive markers," which is by definition very similar to former "code glosses," does not include all definitions, as these are believed to often constitute part of the propositional content. Whether a definition constitutes metadiscourse or not depends wholly on its context.

- A. Textual metadiscourse
 - 1. text organizers
 - (a) connectives
 - (b) topicalizers
 - (c) reminders
 - (d) intention markers
 - 2. interpretive markers
- B. Interpersonal metadiscourse
 - 1. hedges
 - 2. emphatics

3. attributors
4. persona markers
5. relational markers

Figure 2. Revised Metadiscourse Taxonomy of Present Study

Furthermore, the former “commentary” has been renamed “relational marker” in the present study; and the definition of former “announcements” has also been broadened in the present “intention markers,” in order to include not only future intentions (e.g. *in the next chapter we will discuss*), but also the immediate writing strategies of the author (e.g. *I conclude*), and the author’s general writing purposes (e.g. *the present book is about*), as these are all felt to relate to the same metadiscursive function. On the other hand, when the author’s writing purposes are mentioned in retrospect, and using the past tense, it counts as a reminder (e.g. *this study aimed to*). [However, in analyzing metadiscourse, one should take care not to confuse the author’s writing strategies/intentions (e.g. *I divided chapter two into three subsections*) with their *research* strategies (e.g. *I divided metadiscourse into ten subcategories*). The former is an instance of metadiscourse, whereas the latter is mere propositional content.] Another change in the taxonomy was subsuming sequencers under connectives as “temporal connectives.” According to the new taxonomy, connectives has four subtypes: additive, adversative, causal, and temporal. Each of these corresponds to one of the four subtypes of conjunctions proposed by Halliday and Hasan (1976).

METHOD

Corpus

Since it was important that the texts used in this study be comparable, an effort was made to select Master’s theses from comparable fields of study. As the non-native English texts were chosen from among the Iranian M.A. theses in TEFL, the British English texts were selected from among the Master’s theses in TESL. For the native Persian texts, Master’s theses of Education were chosen, as both the course descriptions of the graduate courses in Education, and the format of

the M.A. theses in Education were found on investigation to be very similar to those of TEFL/TESL.

The native Persian and non-native English texts were selected from among the theses of Tehran University, and the native English texts were chosen from among the theses of Birmingham University in England. Ten theses were chosen from each group. All theses were selected randomly from among those dated after 1990.

Procedure

As mentioned previously, a total of 30 M.A. theses were randomly selected from among the theses of three groups: native speakers of Persian, native (British) speakers of English, and non-native (Iranian) speakers of English. The introduction and discussion sections of these theses were chosen for study, as being the most "rhetorical" (Mauranen 1993), and were analyzed for the types and amounts of metadiscourse (textual and interpersonal) used.

Data analysis

One of the assumptions that must be met with Chi-square analyses is that the data consist of frequencies. Hatch and Lazaraton (1991, p. 406) write, "Do not attempt to perform a Chi-square analysis using proportions." On the other hand, the data in the present study could not be used as raw frequencies, because the M.A. theses were of varying lengths and were not directly comparable. An alternative was to use the more robust ANOVA. Hatch and Farhady (1981) suggest using ANOVA instead of Chi-square when the frequency data is capable of being converted to an interval score for each participant. ANOVA is more powerful as well as more robust than Chi-square, and has the additional advantage of showing interactions. Therefore, mixed-plot ANOVAs were run.

RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A number of mixed-plot ANOVAs were carried out in this study. The first compared the use of the metadiscourse sub-types —i.e. connectives, topicalizers, reminders, intention markers, interpretive markers, hedges, emphatics, attributors, persona markers, and

relational markers— by the three groups in the introduction and discussion sections of their Master's theses. The significant effects of this ANOVA are summarized below.

Metadiscourse: $F(4.8, 128.2) = 75.211; p < 0.05$

Metadiscourse*Group: $F(9.5, 128.2) = 4.014; p < 0.05$

Metadiscourse*Chapter: $F(4.4, 118.7) = 5.630; p < 0.05$

(Due to the significance of the results of the Mauchly's test, the more conservative Greenhouse-Geisser test has been used in this study, which uses adjusted degrees of freedom.)

As the results show, both the main effect Metadiscourse and the interaction effects Metadiscourse*Group and Metadiscourse*Chapter were significant, meaning that the ten subtypes of metadiscourse are used differently from one another, and that the different groups use them differently across different chapters.

Another ANOVA was carried out, this time comparing the use of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse by different groups and across different chapters. The significant effects of this ANOVA appear below:

Metadiscourse: $F(1, 27) = 13.486; p < 0.05$

Metadiscourse*Group: $F(2, 27) = 4.000; p < 0.05$

As we may see, this time only Metadiscourse and Metadiscourse*Group are significant. Therefore, it appears that while textual and interpersonal metadiscourse are used differently across different groups, they are not used statistically differently across chapters. A comparison of the results of the two ANOVAs presented so far suggests that some metadiscourse subcategories are used differently across chapters, but that these differences cross out the effects of one another in the larger textual vs. interpersonal metadiscourse scheme. Figure 3 below shows how textual and interpersonal metadiscourse were used by the three groups in the introductions (left) and discussions (right) of their Master's theses.

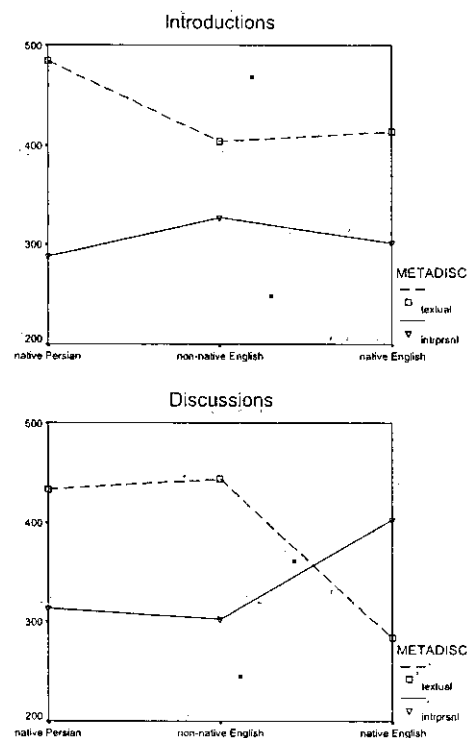


Figure 3. Estimated marginal means for textual vs. interpersonal metadiscourse: Group*Metadiscourse*Chapter

Interestingly, native speakers of English appear, superficially, to have used textual and interpersonal metadiscourse equally, but as the above profile plots show, they have actually used textual metadiscourse much more than interpersonal metadiscourse in the introductions, and much less than interpersonal metadiscourse in the discussions. However, the *total* amounts of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse used by the native speakers of English throughout the two chapters are roughly the same, giving the false impression that these two types of metadiscourse are used uniformly throughout the native English M.A. theses.

Further ANOVAs were carried out, namely, one for each of the ten metadiscourse sub-types, investigating whether they were used differently by the 3 groups in their introductions and discussions. In

the case of connectives, the subcategories additive, adversative, causal, and temporal were also compared. The significant effects of this ANOVA (i.e. for connectives) appear below:

Connectives: $F(1.9, 52.3) = 28.983$; $p < 0.05$

Connectives*Group: $F(3.9, 52.3) = 2.950$; $p < 0.05$

Group: $F(2, 27) = 4.162$; $p < 0.05$

The results of the Scheffé and Bonferroni multiple-range tests indicate that connectives are used significantly more by native speakers of Persian than by native speakers of English ($I - J = 21.16$; $p < 0.05$). Also, the Bonferroni pairwise comparisons for connectives indicate that additives and temporal connectives are used significantly more by the three groups than adversatives and causal connectives.

Regarding topicalizers, none of the main or interaction effects were significant, and in the case of reminders, only the main effect Chapter was statistically significant beyond the level of 5% [$F(1, 27) = 19.228$; $p < 0.05$]. In other words, reminders were used significantly less in introductions (mean = 3) than in discussions (mean = 52.30), but they were not used differently by the three groups. Similarly for intention markers, only the main effect Chapter was statistically significant [$F(1, 27) = 13.806$; $p < 0.05$]; indicating that intention markers were used significantly more in introductions (mean = 81.13) than in discussions (mean = 32.50), but that they were not used differently by the different groups. Respecting interpretive markers, the main effect Chapter was statistically significant [$F(1, 27) = 11.497$; $p < 0.05$], but the interaction Chapter*Group was not. The main effect Group was also initially seen to be significant, but showed no difference in either the Scheffé or the Bonferroni post hoc tests. It seems, therefore, that interpretive markers are not used statistically differently by the three groups; however, they are used significantly more in introductions (mean = 120.13) than in discussions (mean = 79.63). It appears, therefore, that from among textual metadiscourse markers, only connectives are used differently by the three groups.

Regarding hedges, it is seen that both main effects, i.e. Chapter [$F(1, 27) = 4.841$; $p < 0.05$] and Group [$F(2, 27) = 7.875$; $p < 0.05$], are statistically significant, but that the interaction Chapter*Group is

not. This means that while chapter and group both significantly influenced the occurrence of hedges separately, the fluctuations of each were relatively constant across all levels of the other. A comparison of the means indicates that the significance of Chapter is due to the much higher use of hedges in discussions (mean = 106.87) in comparison with introductions (mean = 87.23). Also, the Scheffé and Bonferroni multiple-range comparisons indicate that native speakers of Persian use hedges significantly less than native speakers of English ($I - J = -72.90$; $p < 0.05$).

Emphatics, similar to topicalizers, show no significant main or interaction effects, meaning that they were not used differently either by the groups, or across chapters. Attributors, on the other hand, showed a statistical significance for the factor Group only [$F(2, 27) = 3.658$; $p < 0.05$], meaning that attributors were used more or less similarly in introductions and discussions, but that the three groups used them differently. Interestingly, while the “notoriously” conservative Scheffé test (Hatch and Lazaraton 1991, p. 354) is unable to locate a significant difference, the less demanding Bonferroni test indicates a barely significant difference between native speakers of Persian and native speakers of English, with a p-value of .048. In order to resolve this issue, two more multiple-range tests were carried out: the Tukey test and the Tamhane’s T2. Both showed significant differences between native speakers of Persian and native speakers of English. (Tukey: p-value = .041; Tamhane’s T2: p-value = .025) Therefore, it appears that attributors are used significantly more by native speakers of Persian than by native speakers of English. In the case of persona markers, the main effect Group [$F(2, 27) = 3.568$; $p < 0.05$] as well as the interaction effect Chapter*Group [$F(2, 27) = 5.021$; $p < 0.05$] were seen to be statistically significant beyond the level of .05. Both the Scheffé and the Bonferroni tests indicated that non-native speakers of English use persona markers significantly less than native speakers of English ($I - J = -37.15$; $p < 0.05$). Regarding the significant interaction, the estimated marginal means for persona markers indicates that while native speakers of Persian use persona markers somewhat more than native speakers of English in

their introductions, they use far less persona markers in their discussions.

Finally, concerning relational markers, no significant main or interaction effects are seen.

DISCUSSION

As the results of the statistical analyses indicated, metadiscourse as a whole is indeed used differently across groups, as well as across chapters. However, different types of metadiscourse are used differently from each other, and not all types of metadiscourse were used differently by the different groups, or in different chapters. In this section some of the possible reasons for the results of the analyses will be explored.

In order to refresh the reader's mind, we are reminded that of the ten metadiscourse subtypes, only four were used significantly differently by the three groups: connectives (textual), hedges (interpersonal), attributors (interpersonal), and persona markers (interpersonal).

The difference in the use of connectives is perhaps best illustrated in Figure 4 below. As the figure indicates, native speakers of Persian used connectives the most, whereas native speakers of English used them the least. Interestingly, though, while native speakers of both Persian and English used more connectives in their introductions than in their discussions, non-native speakers of English used fewer connectives in their introductions than in their discussions. This means that the Iranian learners of English in the study did not follow the patterns of connective use of either their native or their target tongues, but instead used a different pattern altogether. This seems to indicate that while learners of English sensed a difference in the usage of connectives in English and Persian, they lacked the ability to detect the exact direction of this difference.

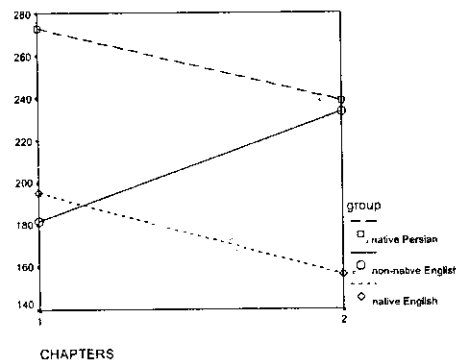


Figure 4. Estimated marginal means for use of connectives: Chapter*Group (Chapter 1 = introductions; Chapter 2 = discussions)

Regarding hedges, we saw that native speakers of Persian used significantly fewer hedges than native speakers of English. Non-natives, on the other hand, were somewhere in between native speakers of Persian and English with respect to their use of hedges. Obviously, different reasons could exist for a person's preferring to hedge heavily: true uncertainty; fear of consequences; a desire to seem/be polite and modest; a desire to show deference for the reader's opinion and to respect the reader's right to disagree; a desire to seem/be open-minded instead of dogmatic; a desire to lessen the reader's resistance by meeting her/him halfway; or merely because it seems to be the fashion, or to be preferred by a given audience. A group's hedging could be due to one or a combination of these reasons, and determining which reason is true at a given time is very difficult, especially without knowing the exact circumstances that led to it. To make things even more complicated, we must remember that a group is made of individuals, and it is not always possible to ascribe the same motives to the whole group indiscriminately. At most, we can say that native speakers of English seem to prefer hedging more heavily than native speakers of Persian; and that if Iranian learners of English chose to address a British audience, they would probably be more effective if they hedged more often than they are accustomed to do in their native tongue, and vice versa.

Interestingly, the non-native (Iranian) learners of English of the present study seem to be halfway between the native speakers of

Persian and English with regard to their use of hedges, which points to the possibility that hedging patterns may be learnt or acquired (at least to an extent) by language learners.

All three groups (native Persian, non-native English and native English) used considerably more hedges in their discussions than in their introductions. This is not surprising in that it is usually the discussion sections that present the most controversial ideas and which are, therefore, most likely to be hedged by the author so as to lessen the reader's resistance, by indicating the author's uncertainty, modesty, open-mindedness, politeness, and/or her/his deference toward the reader's judgment.

Interestingly, however, emphatics—which are, in a sense, the opposite of hedges—were not used significantly differently in the introductions and discussions of the theses, or by the three different groups.

It was also found that native speakers of English used attributors significantly less than native speakers of Persian; and again, non-native speakers of English were somewhere in between these two groups. Again, more than one reason may exist for a person's choosing to cite others in their writing: Some authors may feel that citing others shows that they are on top of the literature and are familiar with all the related publications in the field; some may use citations to document their claims by invoking the support of people whose opinions hold weight; some people may want to give credit to the people who originally had the idea under discussion; others might lack the self-confidence to present their own ideas, or might prefer not to take upon themselves the responsibility for what is written; yet others may make frequent use of citations in order to increase the volume of their work, and meet word count criteria; and some people might use attributors because they feel that it is expected of them. Once again, it is difficult to determine which of the above possibilities actually apply to particular circumstances, and it might even be unfair to attempt it, especially without being fully aware of the characteristics of the authors, their audiences, as well as the circumstances that led to the writing of a particular text.

It is interesting to speculate whether there is any relationship between frequent/infrequent use of hedging and attributors; that is, whether the native speakers of Persian feel less need to hedge due to their having frequently documented their work through the use of attributors, while the native speakers of English use more hedges to compensate for having used less attributors. This idea seems to receive some support from the fact that non-native speakers of English, who use fewer attributors than native speakers of Persian and more than native speakers of English, also hedge more frequently than native speakers of Persian and less frequently than native speakers of English.

Use of persona markers also differed significantly from one group to another, showing both a significant main effect Group, and a significant interaction effect Chapter*Group. This time, however, the difference lay between native and non-native speakers of English, with native speakers of English using far more persona markers than non-natives.

So, what are the possible reasons for using/not using persona markers? Writers might use persona markers frequently in order to establish a close reader-writer relationship, and to make the text more reader-friendly; they might also use persona markers a lot when they are relying greatly on their personal convictions and opinions in order to influence the reader. Another possibility is that the author feels at home with the prospective audience, or that the author feels strongly about the propositional matter of the text.

Again, is it possible that there is any relationship between the significant differences in the use of hedges, attributors, and persona markers? For example, is it possible that native speakers of English use persona markers and hedges so frequently and attributors so infrequently because they rely mostly on their personal opinions rather than the opinions of others in trying to convince their readers? And does the relatively infrequent use of persona markers and hedges by the Iranians stem in part from their relying mainly on the opinions of the "authorities" rather than their personal convictions and ideas? And if so, does this difference stem from the Iranian participants' having a more objective, academic view, or, instead, from the British

participants' being more creative and self-reliant? Or from both or neither? Again, we see that interpreting differences in employing metadiscourse is a delicate and difficult job, and that all such interpretations should be regarded as tentative suggestions.

Of the six other types of metadiscourse that were not used significantly differently by the three groups, topicalizers, emphatics, and relational markers showed no significant main or interaction effects whatsoever, whereas reminders, intention markers and interpretive markers were used significantly differently in different chapters. Topicalizers and relational markers were used very rarely by all three groups, and their frequency sizes were so low that one could not expect to find significant differences. Reminders were used significantly more in discussion sections than in introductions, which was only to be expected, as one could hardly expect to be reminded of what has passed before in the *first* chapter of a thesis. The same is true of intention markers, which were used significantly more in introductions than in discussions: again, one would expect to be told of the writer's intentions toward the beginning of a text, rather than at the end. Regarding interpretive markers, also, one would normally expect to be given definitions and explanations early on in the text, so that one could understand the rest of it with more ease.

Another point meriting interest was that, on the whole, textual metadiscourse was used significantly more in introductions than in discussions, whereas interpersonal metadiscourse was used considerably less in introductions than in discussions. This, again, seems reasonable, as textual metadiscourse is used to organize a text, and to help the reader understand it. Obviously, in order for a text to be understood, everything needs to be made clear from the very beginning, hence the frequent use of textual metadiscourse in the introductions. On the other hand, the discussion sections are usually intended to persuade the reader to come to the author's way of thinking. This would obviously necessitate the use of interpersonal metadiscourse, which is used to appeal to the reader's emotions, and to influence her/his opinion.

CONCLUSION

Once again, we are shown that language/culture is a complex issue, and we see that metadiscourse, like so many other language issues, is not to be easily reduced to a single theory. On the one hand, the results of this study lend some support to the idea of the universality of metadiscourse, in that all types of metadiscourse were used by all three groups. On the other hand, this study also indicates that, similar to many other rhetorical conventions, a person's use of metadiscourse is often influenced by their culture/mother tongue. In other words, although all languages/cultures seem to make use of metadiscourse, their preferences sometimes differ. These differences appear to exist both at the organizational level (i.e. textual metadiscourse) and the affective level (i.e. interpersonal metadiscourse), and they can, therefore, have far-reaching effects on a person's writing, as well as on how that writing is received by others. For this reason, the results of this study can have important implications for the teaching of writing. Being aware of the accepted rhetorical conventions of English and their differences with the conventions of our own language/culture can help both students and teachers to pinpoint and avoid writing problems.

While this study has explored some important questions about the use of metadiscourse in Persian and English, it also leads to other interesting questions, such as: How would the writing of the different groups—with their different metadiscourse use patterns—be rated for effectiveness by their prospective addressees? And would the same patterns hold for different fields of study, languages, cultures (e.g. American as opposed to British), genres, registers, or even different universities (since different schools often make different demands)? Also, would the results differ in a study of oral rhetoric as opposed to written rhetoric?

Finally, metadiscourse terminology has close affinity to linguistic terminology; in fact, metadiscourse borrows many terms and ideas from systemic functional grammar (e.g. *textual* and *interpersonal*, taken from Halliday 1973) without actually adhering to the principles of this grammar. These similarities are not accidental; obviously there is a close relationship between systemic functional grammar and the concept of metadiscourse. Therefore, an important step in making

metadiscourse taxonomies and studies more objective, scientific, and coherent would be to place metadiscourse theories and typologies within the realm of systemic functional grammar, and to relate them to the wealth of theories, definitions, and typologies that exist there. Systemic functional grammar is a comprehensive theory of discourse (Halliday 1994); therefore, basing metadiscourse theories on systemic functional grammar will broaden the perspective of metadiscourse researchers, and, at the same time, allow them to address a wider audience.

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