

In the Name of God

A Comparative Study of Reflexive Metadiscourse in Applied Linguistics Research Articles Published in International and National Journals

A Thesis Proposal

Supervisor:

By:

**1. Introduction**

**1.1. Preliminaries**

This corpus-based study is an attempt to compare the development of reflexive metadiscourse in research articles between native and Iranian non-native authors of applied linguistics discipline written in English. Metadiscourse is a term that is used in discourse analysis and is the way that writers use to make their text comprehensible and acceptable for their readers and to make an interaction with readers (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Hyland, 2005). Metadiscourse, as defined by Toumi (2009), is “text about the text or talk about talk, depending on the nature of discourse investigated, either written or oral’’ (p. 64). Metadiscourse is essentially an open category which can be realized in numerous ways. The focus of early studies of metadiscourse was mainly on reflexive metadiscourse, or discourse reflexivity - a feature of scientific text. (Mauranen, 1993).

Adel (2006) categorized reflexive metadiscourse into two subcategories:

1. Personal metadiscourese: Make explicit reference to the discourse participants.

a) Self-mention, b) relational markers, and c) reference to the participants.

2. Impersonal metadiscourse: Does not make explicit reference to the discourse participants.

a) Reference to the code, b) impersonal self-mention, c) impersonal directive, d) endophoric markers, and e) code glosses.

The reflexive model of metadiscourse has four features:

1-Explicitness is the writer’s commentary on her/his ongoing text. It also refers to explicit wording.

2-Contextuality plays an important role in identifying metadiscourse units.

3-The reference must refer to the current text not another text.

4-The unit can be considered as metadiscourse if it refers to the writers and readers of the ongoing text (Mauranen, 1993).

Another model classified by Hyland (2005) is textual and interpersonal function of language. The interpersonal function: encoding the writer-reader interaction by using language, make the connection between readers and writers, and the writers can express their feelings and attitudes in text.

The textual function: organizing the text by using language, and making it meaningful for the readers.

So using the correct metadiscourse markers in the text can make it more meaningful and can make a friendly relationship between writers and readers. Reflexive metadiscourse markers can distinguish the dry text from friendly text (Hyland, 2005).

**1.2. The Literature Review**

Metadiscourse has been studied in different languages in cross-disciplinary studies between English and some other languages. A study carried out by Pooresfahani, Khajavy and Vahidnia (2012) aimed to examine the metadiscourse features in Iranian applied linguistics and engineering writers, and to compare these two disciplines in using these features. Results showed that both disciplines use interactive and interactional features in their research articles. Both applied linguistics and engineering authors make use of interactive metadiscourse more than interactional metadiscourse. But the frequency of metadiscourse features, interactive and interactional features in engineering research articles were more than applied linguistics research articles.

Kim and Lim (2013) did a study to analyze metadiscourse features in research articles introduction written in English and Chinese. They employed Hyland’s Model (2004) in their study. The results showed that the interactive metadiscourse was used more than interactional form in both RAs introduction. English introductions use less attitude markers while Chinese introductions benefit the greater use of endophorics, attitude markers and engagement markers.

Salas (2015) investigated the development of reflexive metadiscourse in research articles from three disciplines written in Spanish and the frequencies of metadiscourse markers in cross-disciplinary variation, namely, linguistics, economics and medicine. The study analyzed its data according to (Adel, 2006; Hyland, 2005) metadiscourse model, namely: self-mentions, relational markers, reference to the participants, references to the code, endophoric markers and code glosses. The result showed that the frequency of metadiscourse markers in economic research articles is similar to medicine research articles but these two disciplines were different compared to linguistics.

Many researchers have conducted studies on the use of hedges and boosters as meta-discourse markers. Previous studies intended to compare the use of these markers between two masscirculation newspapers in Iran and the United States, Keyhan and Washington Post, respectively, about the Eleventh course of presidential election in Iran. The finding indicated that Washington Post (American newspaper) and Keyhan (Iranian newspaper) were different on the use of hedges and boosters before and after election. Based on these results the difference are concerned with the political and cultural forms that are evident in the larger sociocultural contexts in which these two newspaper articles are embedded (Yeganeh, Heravi, & Sawari, 2015).

In their study, Salar and Ghonsooly (2015) examined the two groups of context (Persian and English research articles) in order to analyze the metadiscourse features used in the introduction sections within Knowledge Management discipline. They compared the use of interactional and interactive metadiscourse features in two contexts. English knowledge management research articles used more interactional metadiscourse markers than Persian. The frequency of using hedges in English research articles was more than Persian research articles. Compared to hedges, the research articles in both languages included more boosters.

**1.3. Statement of the Problem**

Academic writing plays an important role in organizing and conveying knowledge. The focus is always on the grammatical point in writing, and the other elements are neglected. (Hyland, 2005; Mauranen, 1993). One of these elements is reflexive metadiscourse feature. In writing, the writers must make an interaction with their readers, but unfortunately most of the texts are written for the purpose of conveying information. (Hyland, 2005). Using reflexive metadiscourse in writing can help produce influential writing. One of the problems that writers might face is how to use metadiscourse features in their writings, how to engage with their topics and their readers, and how to turn their writings more friendly. So knowing about reflexive metadiscourde can help the writers to overcome these problems.

Previous studies have been conducted on different languages to find the difference of using metadiscourde markers. (e.g., Kim, Min-Hwa Lim, 2013; Pooresfahani, Khajavi & Vahidnia, 2013; Salar & Ghoonsooly, 2015). Different models of metadiscourse were examined such as, interactive and interactional, textual and interpersonal (e.g., Hyland, 2005; Mauranen, 1993). But the reflexive model in metadiscourse was not considered previously. In earlier studies reflexive model was investigated. That is, in terms of reflexive metadiscourse markers no research has investigated the difference between research articles published in international and national journals. Salas (2015) investigated this model in research articles in Spanish. And now based on this framework the study will compare the model in research articles published in international and national Journals which tries to fill the apparent gap in research on metadiscourse.

**1.4. Purpose and Significance of the Study**

This study will aim to investigate the grammatical features that signal metadiscourse markers in a corpus of research articles from applied linguistic discipline published in international and national journal via the reflexive model of metadiscourse (Adel, 2006). In other words, this study will be an attempt to investigate the differences of reflexive metadiscourse markers frequencies between international and national Journals.

The findings of this study will be significant because they can help ES/AP learners and teachers and researchers to learn how to use appropriate metadiscourse markers in order to make their writings sociolinguistically intelligible and acceptable. And the teachers can also understand the vital role of metadiscourse markers in writing and can set it as a part of their teaching. Teachers need to make students aware of the fact that metadiscourse elements can affect their writing styles. Therefore, teaching metadiscourse markers in ES/AP classes can improve the writing skill of the students.

**1.5. Research Questions**

The study will address the following questions:

1. What are the lexico-grammatical features which signal metadiscourse in research articles published in international journals of applied linguistics?

2. What are the lexico-grammatical features which signal metadiscourse in research articles published in national journals of applied linguistic?

3. Are there statistically significant difference between the two corpora in terms of the rate of occurrence of metadiscourse features?

**2. Methodology**

**2.1. Corpus**

The corpus that will be used in this study consists of 100 applied linguistics research articles published in international and national journals, 50 by international and 50 by national journals. Research articles will be selected by means of random sampling from well-established journals indexed in ISI and ISC journals and based on their impact factors. The articles will be published articles in scientific journals of applied linguistics. They will be articles published between 2010 to 2015. They must be written directly in English. Translated articles will be neglected.

**2.2. Instruments**

For this corpus-based study of metadiscourse in research articles written in English, the Adel’s model (2006) will be employed. The model is as follows:

1-Personal metadiscourese:

(a) Self-mention: How writers refer to themselves,

(b) Relational markers: How writers establish a relationship with their reader,

(c) Reference to the participants: How writers refer to their own text.

2. Impersonal metadiscourse:

(a) Reference to the code/text: Reference to the full, part and other semiotic modes of the text.

(b) Endophoric markers: Is used as cataphoric and anaphoric by referring to other parts of the text.

(c) Code glosses: Paraphrase a propositional meaning.

**2.3. Procedure**

This study will apply Adel’s model (2006) to investigate metadiscourse markers used in these corpora, which will analyze two types: personal and impersonal metadiscourse markers. From the micro corpus analysis, eight major functional categories will be developed. The study will employ quantitative approach. All the corpus data will be manually annotated to identify the metadiscourse markers. The first step is to find the related articles in applied linguistics journals. The second step is to get a number of word count in the text, to specify the length and ensure the comparability of the corpus. The count in corpora will be normed to a basis per 1000 words. Identifying reflexive discourse markers manually and then classifying them into personal and impersonal metadiscourse markers is defined as the third step. The final step is to find the frequency of metadiscoursal features (eight categories) separately for both corpora.

However, before the main analysis of the collected data begins, ten percent of them will be subjected to a pilot study. To do so, this part of the data will be scrutinized by the researcher and her supervisor in order to reach agreement over the method of analysis and the feasibility of the study. After preliminary analysis, its inter-rater reliability will be ensured through Phi correlation.

**3. Data Analysis**

In order to compare the data obtained from the two groups of corpora, the frequency of each corpus will be calculated, and then the Chi-square will be conducted to show if there are any significant differences in metadiscourse markers of international and national journals.

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