

Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse: What is it and Should it be Taught in EFL Writing Classrooms?

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ABSTRACT

Interpersonal metadiscourse (IM) is referred to linguistic resources that are used to refer to the act and the context of writing about some subject matter. It is the technique of organizing discourse, expressing the writer's attitudes towards the text and reader. This literature review presented an IM as the representation of the writer's consciousness of the unfolding text as communication and how writer situates audience in the text to create convincing and coherent prose in the particular social context. An IM revealed the writer's awareness of the reader and his or her need for elaboration, clarification, guidance, and interaction. The significant function achieved by IM resources was facilitating the comprehensibility of the text. This review article discovered the classroom instrument with appropriate metadiscourse resources has a positive impact on the development of EFL learners' writing. Moreover, the inclusion of IM markers in EFL writer's text not only developed its coherence but also became comprehensible to the reader. Therefore, IM was found to be applicable in EFL writing classrooms. In this review paper, metadiscourse is not identified as a teaching methodology but seen that it has important implications for EFL writing classroom practices.

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is fundamental tool human beings use to communicate with each other to express and receive ideas and thoughts. Meyers (2014: 89) announced, "[l]anguage is what makes us human." Writers communicate to make sure their receiver obtains the significance they intend to deliver. The purpose of discourse among the communicators is to express the knowledge, to network with the audience, and to regulate the expression in a systematic way. Gholami, Tajalli, and Shokrpour (2014) stated that language is not only used to talk about ourselves and the world but also to talk about talk where metadiscourse get involved with.

The term metadiscourse was put forward by an American linguist, Zellig Harris in 1959, "to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer's attempts to guide a receiver's perception of a text" (Hyland, 2005, p. 3). The meaning of "metadiscourse" can be divided into two parts; *meta* and *discourse*. *Meta* means "beyond" that comes from Greek and *discourse* means "communication" (Jahani, 2017).

The word "metadiscourse" can be interchangeably traded with many discourse terms. Metadiscourse is referred as "metacommunication" (Rossiter, 1974), which includes all verbal and non-verbal elements, such as tones and intonations. Meyer (1975, as cited in Khabbazi Oskouei, 2011) branded metadiscourse as "signaling". She pointed out that, signaling does not complement new content to the discourse, instead it serves as a device to show writers or speakers' opinions by highlighting certain semantic elements. Lautamatti (1978, as cited in Estaji & Vafaeimehr, 2015; Khabbazi Oskouei, 2011) considered metadiscourse as "non-topical material". Halliday (1978) regarded metadiscourse as linguistic elements which texts involve and establish a relationship between writers with readers, and similar view was shared by many other researchers like; Crismore, (1993); Vande Kopple, (1985); Williams, (1981); Lautamatti, (1978); Meyer, (1975). Psycholinguist Keller (1979) labeled metadiscourse as "gambits" which are used to present topics, manipulate turns, and express attitudes or emotions. Further, sociolinguist, Schiffrin (1980, as cited in Estaji & Vafaeimehr, 2015 & Khabbazi Oskouei, 2011) perceived metadiscourse as "meta-talk" which can organize or evaluate discourse.

Despite metadiscourse being labeled differently, the categories introduced by Rossiter, Meyer, Lautamatti, Halliday, Keller, and Schiffrin are more or less similar. What is obvious in their distinction between two levels of discourse is propositional and non-propositional (Khabbazi Oskouei, 2011). While writers supply readers with information on

the propositional level, writers guide readers throughout the text on the non-propositional level. However, they did not set a clear boundary between the two levels of discourse as the two may overlap at times.

Metadiscourse has been defined by various scholars in different ways. Hyland (2004) viewed metadiscourse as “self-reflective linguistic expressions referring to the evolving text, to the writer, and to the imagined readers of that text”. Later, Hyland (2005) announced the definition of metadiscourse as “...the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meaning in the text, assisting the writers to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community” (p. 37). While this definition relates to some of the earlier works on metadiscourse, it is also clear that it differs from it in important ways, overlapping with other views of language use which emphasize the interpersonal, such as evaluation, stance, and engagement. Essentially it sees metadiscourse as a system of meanings realized by an open-ended set of language items. In the recent metadiscourse studies, his definition is frequently used in analyzing academic text types.

Applied linguistics consists numerous elements of discourse analysis and one amongst is metadiscourse. It is one of the discourse analyses popularly used to analyze the text of writer and has gained extensive attention from many researchers in recent decades. There are diverse conceptualizations and classifications of metadiscourse proposed by different renowned researchers and metadiscourse analyst (eg: Ädel, 2006; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993; Hyland, 2005; Kopple, 1985). Amongst, an interpersonal metadiscourse by Hyland (2005) is a relatively new technique and an extensively used framework in present discourse analysis. An interpersonal metadiscourse refers to the style writer project themselves in the text to communicate with their interlocutors (Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Hyland, 2005; Kızıl, 2017), and it is a notion which is based on a view of writing as a social engagement. Generally, metadiscourse attempts to guide writer’s perception of the text to the reader. Therefore, an involvement of writer with their interlocutor through text, the mutual acts of comprehension is significantly realized through using metadiscourse resources in their meaning-making process.

1.1 Purpose

The purpose of this review article is to study the interpersonal metadiscourse and its application in EFL learners’ writing development, in this case, the Bhutanese students at the secondary school level. According to the curriculum prescribed by the Royal Education Council, Ministry of Education in Bhutan, students need to become members of a writing community in classrooms where they are regularly able to share their essays, poems, and letters with other writers (Teacher's Guide to English Reading and Literature, 2014). This curriculum presents a program which will give students the opportunities to write in a variety of forms. The objective of giving them more opportunities in writing is to develop their abilities and skills in writing. However, learning the art and the craft of writing takes time and need consistent practices.

In the following sections, this review paper will be organized into IM and its development which explains the IM model is new, comprehensive, and clear in discourse studies, writing communication in EFL Setting, application of IM in EFL writing classrooms, and conclusion and implications.

2- INTERPERSONAL MODEL OF METADISOURSE AND ITS DEVELOPMENT

Ever since the emerge of metadiscourse, it served a pivotal framework for discourse analysis and numerous researchers including (Ädel, 2006; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2005; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Kopple, 1985) had analyzed the meaningful use of metadiscourse in communication. Broadly, metadiscourse communication can be categorized into textual and interpersonal resources based on Halliday’s three meta-functions of language; ideational, interpersonal, and textual (Hyland, 2005). The ideational function concerns to the propositional meaning, while the interpersonal and textual functions are the sphere of metadiscourse.

Following the framework of Halliday, numerous metadiscourse taxonomies have been presented over the past decades (e.g: Ädel, 2006; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 2005; Kopple, 1985) and these taxonomies exhibited more comprehensive, clarity and simplicity with a similar theoretical base except for (Ädel, 2006), whose taxonomy appeared quite different (Abdi, Rizi, & Tavakoli, 2010). Amongst the taxonomies, an interpersonal model of metadiscourse by Hyland (2005) is preferred in many recent studies for it being recent, simple, clear, and comprehensive. Nan and Liu (2013) concluded Hyland’s theory of metadiscourse as a significant analytical framework in discourse analysis offering a promising application in exploring the interpersonal relationship through interactional resources and textual meaning of language by interactive resources. IM is the use of language to encode communication, permitting the authors to involve with audiences to take on responsibilities and to express, and comprehend appraisals and feelings.

This new perspective of metadiscourse considered all discourse decisions that writers make are results of the relationship built between the text producer and receiver through the text. The IM is recognized as an important means of facilitating communication between the text producer, text, and receiver. Hyland's interpersonal metadiscourse model recognized two kinds of meaningful use of interaction: interactive dimension to organizing propositional information and interactional dimension to involve the audience in the text, which Thompson (2001, p. 61) considered that these two aspects of interaction "are essentially the two sides of the same coin" (as cited in Hyland, 2005, p. 44).

2.1 Interactive Dimension

In the interactive dimension, the writer seeks to accommodate with plausible information, interests, rhetorical expectations and processing abilities concerning the awareness of a participating audience in the text (Hyland, 2005). In other words, Hyland (2010) said, interactive concerns the systematic organization of discourse to anticipate reader's knowledge and reflecting writer's explicit assessment guide that can be recovered from the text. Therefore, the focus of interactive metadiscourse centers on the content of the text involving markers such as transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses.

Transition markers are logical connectives use to link the ideas with the use of conjunctions and adverbials phrases expressing relations between main clauses. They signal addition (*and, furthermore, moreover, by the way, etc.*); comparison (*similarly, likewise, equally, in the same way, correspondingly, etc.*); and consequence (*thus, therefore, consequently, in conclusion, etc.*)

Frame markers are the signal of text boundaries; materials sequencing (*first, then, a/b, at the same time, next, etc.*); level text stages (*by way of introduction, to summarize, in sum, etc.*); announcing discourse goals (*I argue here, my purpose is, the paper purposes, I hope to persuade, there are several reasons why, etc.*); and an indicator of topic change (*well, right, OK, now, let us return to, etc.*)

Endophoric markers refer to information in other parts of the text like (*in section 2, see table 1, as noted above, see figure 1, etc.*)

Evidentials are the indicators of textual material from other sources like (*according to X, 1990, to cite X, etc.*)

Code glosses are the elaboration of propositional information to guide the reader to the meaning of ideational text like (*this is called, in other words, this can be defined as, for example, etc.*)

2.2 Interactional Dimension

In the interactional dimension, the writer concerns the way to conduct interaction by intruding and remarking on their communication (Hyland, 2005) and it allows writer to express the voice of the text (Ramoroka, 2016). Hyland (2010) noted, interactional concerns writer's efforts to control the level of personalities in the text and establishes suitable relationships with interlocutors in the discourse. The interactional dimension indicates five markers; hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mention.

Hedges indicate the writer's withholding commitment to a proposition. The writer use devices as *possible, may, clearly, perhaps*, indicating the decision to recognize viewpoints and alternative voices.

Boosters are the indicators which writer allow to close down choices, head off conflicting views and state their assurance in what they say, using resources like; *clearly, obviously, demonstrate, etc.*

Attitude markers are the indicators of writer's effective attitude to the proposition using the signal of attitude verbs (*agree, prefer*); sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*); and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*).

Engagement markers explicitly address the reader, focusing them as discourse audiences with two purposes. First, writer use pronouns (*you, your, we, our*) and interjections (*by the way, you may notice*) to adequately meet the expectations of the reader. Second, writer rhetorically involves audience into the discourse indicating by imperatives (*see, note, consider*) and obligatory modals (*should, must, have to*).

Self-mention markers are first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives like; *I, me, mine, we, our, ours*, indicating the presence of writer in the text and it is judged by the frequency.

In the recent years, researchers' attention on the significance of IM in the discourse analysis has been considered and recognized as a fundamental feature in the communication. Maintaining the popularity of metadiscourse analysis, Amiryousefi and Rasekh (2010) stated that IM has become one of the common ground in discourse analysis to understand how writer involves themselves with their audience through the text. Most importantly metadiscourse is documented as a significant mean of facilitating communication, sustaining writer's position and building a

correlation with the audience (Hyland, 1998). Moreover, Hyland (2005) highlighted that interpersonal model of metadiscourse as a good framework for understanding communication as social engagement. The presence of metadiscourse markers facilitates the comprehensibility of the text, and significantly it guides the writer to change the difficult or dry texts into coherent and reader-friendly materials with the judicious use of metadiscourse (Davoodi, 2016; Hyland, 2005; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

3- WRITING COMMUNICATION IN EFL SETTING

Writing, as a communicative tool, plays an important role in learning a foreign language like English. However, an effective writing is considered to be a serious problem and difficult for EFL writers. Redd-Boyd and Slater, (1989, as cited in Vahid Dastjerdi, 2012) stated many EFL writers experience difficulty in adapting their prose for readers. This is generally because of the different conventions writers are familiar with from their home community and cultures. Because of this, we cannot expect either L1 or L2 students to just ‘pick up’ suitable metadiscourse usage from their assigned readings or other course materials, for these, often provide inappropriate models (Vahid Dastjerdi, 2012). In the study of Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995), it was discovered that good essays showed a greater variety of metadiscourse features within each category than poor essays. Likewise, Jones (2011) analyzed an essay by non-native speaker (NNS) and found that students faced difficulties in constructing a coherent argument. Bhutanese writers face the similar problems in EFL writing classrooms. Therefore, the researcher believes the use of IM resources is an important technique to improve writing skills of EFL writers. The reviewer believe the findings of Cheng and Steffensen (1996) that stated metadiscourse markers make text more accommodating toward readers, and to the strengthening of the ideational as well as the interpersonal and textual meanings of the text.

English language in Bhutan is more than merely a means of foreign language (FL) communication. To teach many different subjects in schools, colleges and training institutes, English language is used as a medium of instruction. However, Bhutanese student writers face difficulties in communicating to readers through English. Dorji (2015) examine English language writing competency skills in one of the technical colleges in Bhutan. From the perspective of teaching faculty, it was believed that students still lack writing skills at the college level. On the other hand, students felt the need of separate soft skill language module to enhance their writing skills. Although there is no any empirical research to support at the secondary school level, the reviewer as an EFL writing teacher for past several years experienced that the Bhutanese EFL student writers face difficulties with a coherent argument and reader engagement in their writing texts. Therefore, the reviewer felt a need to figure out some techniques that might be helpful for learners in order to improve their writing performance in English.

4- APPLICATION OF INTERPERSONAL METADISOURSE IN EFL WRITING CLASSROOMS

The importance of IM is slowly becoming recognized in language teaching, but until recently was largely neglected as teachers focused instead on the content teaching: how writers and speakers conveyed their ideas. Particularly, academic writing was seen as a limited textual practice ignoring the role of rhetorical functions and interpersonal strategies. Writing, as a communicative tool, plays important role in learning a foreign language like English. Since effective writing is considered as a problem for EFL Bhutanese student writers at the secondary level, the reviewer felt a need to figure out some procedures and applications that can be helpful for learners in order to improve their writing performance using interpersonal metadiscourse markers.

Hyland (2005) mentioned that students should receive an appropriate instruction in metadiscourse using models of argument which allow them to practice writing within the socio-rhetorical framework of their communities. Based on this assumption, Vahid Dastjerdi (2012) studied the impact of explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on EFL learners’ writing performance. The findings indicated generally that explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers significantly improves EFL learners’ writing ability. Similarly, Yaghoubi and Ardestani (2014) investigated the explicit or the implicit instruction of metadiscourse markers and the writing skill improvement. The finding revealed that with both the explicit and the implicit instruction of metadiscourse markers had a positive effect on the learners’ writing and significantly improved EFL participants’ writing ability. A similar result was revealed in the study of the writing performance of Iranian EFL learners in the light of metadiscourse awareness by (Farhadi, Aidinloo, & Talebi, 2016).

Elsewhere, Jones (2011) stated that the writer’s lack of relationship with the reader may be the cause of a writer’s difficulties with coherence. Experienced from the real classroom writing activities, the reviewer concludes that Bhutanese EFL writers’ text lacks metadiscourse markers because readers face difficult to comprehend the intension of the communication. The literature on the theory of the IM by Hyland (2005) suggested that one significant function achieved by metadiscourse resources is facilitating the comprehensibility of the text. He further mentioned metadiscourse markers help to transform a dry and tortuous piece of text into coherent and reader-friendly prose.

Learning from the insight of various metadiscourse studies, (e.g.: Davoodi, 2016; Hyland, 2005; Hyland & Tse, 2004; Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore, 1993) the texts with metadiscourse markers have positive effect on the development of EFL learners' writing skills and comprehension of written texts. Alavinia and Zarza (2012) investigated the effect different metadiscourse markers on Iranian EFL learners' perception of written texts. The findings of the study favor the argument holding that metadiscourse markers bring about an increased amount of coherence and reader-friendliness in texts.

Essentially, teaching EFL learners to use metadiscourse means helping them to develop a sense of audience and equipping them with the means to engage with that audience appropriately. Metadiscourse is the way we negotiate material through interactions with others (Hyland, 2005). Teaching students to use metadiscourse effectively, therefore, stresses the importance of such interactions. Roozafzai and Talebinejad (2014) studied the effect of model-essay aid to direct corrective feedback on EFL learners' use of meta-discourse markers in writing. This study found teacher-student-conference and direct corrective feedback leaves a positive effect on Iranian EFL learners' use of metadiscourse in writing comparison-contrast essays.

Familiarizing EFL students with metadiscourse can draw attention to how language is used in relevant context to improve their writing performance. For example, an explicit instruction of metadiscourse markers on EFL learners supports writing performance and facilitates text coherence. Therefore, the reviewer contemplates it is relevant to incorporate metadiscourse resources in the course syllabus of EFL writers at the secondary level in Bhutan to guide to write comprehensible texts to their readers. An awareness of metadiscourse would offer EFL writers to better understand the cognitive demands that texts make on readers and the ways writers can assist them to process information. It would also provide them with the resources to express a stance towards their statements. Likewise, learning to use metadiscourse would allow them to negotiate stance and engage in a community-appropriate dialogue with readers.

5- CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION

Since the origin of metadiscourse, linguists' interested in discourse analysis and to understand the interpersonal function of written text has emerged as revolutionary in the field of language studies (Hyland, 2004) and received considerable attention from various scholars. Many studies made an effort to clarify characteristics of metadiscourse in different texts in terms of discursual, structural, and metadiscourse properties (Gholami et al., 2014). Besides, many scholars also studied awareness and instruction of metadiscourse in EFL writing classrooms and came to understand that EFL writers' texts turn out to be comprehensive to readers using appropriate metadiscourse. Therefore, this paper concluded with an appraisal that metadiscourse involves writer into the text portraying their characters and attitudes, assuming the audience are convinced coherently in the particular situation than merely exchanging the information.

IM is not a teaching methodology but it was seen as supporting technique and has important implications for classroom practices. Many studies supported the presence of IM markers in EFL writing instructions explicitly or implicitly help EFL learners in writing ability. Moreover, the inclusion of IM markers not only make texts coherent but also comprehensible that help readers to understand texts easily. Likewise, IM in writing also helps in engagement between the text producer and the audience. In conclusion, relating to the findings of IM, it is seen as an effective EFL classroom instructions, adhere coherence and comprehensibility of texts, and as a useful technique in engaging audiences, thus, the teaching of IM is suitable for the Bhutanese EFL writing classrooms.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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