

A Comparative Study of Metadiscourse Markers in English and Persian News Reports about the September 11 Event

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Extended Abstract

1. Introduction

Hyland (2005) defines metadiscourse as a “cover term for the self-reflective expression used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with reader as members of a particular community” (p. 37). Hyland has admitted that these rhetorical features convey the relation between the writer, text and reader which is more than a pure exchange of information. In this vein, newspapers are important means of information exchange. Readers of any social level in communities have access to it and on the other hand, unlike TV and radio, it would not oblige its users to confine themselves to a specific time or place. Therefore, the role of newspapers in reflecting the news is really significant. In spite of the importance of newspaper discourse, it has not been successful in absorbing researchers’ attention to study on language devices like metadiscourse markers in this type of texts.

2. Theoretical Framework

In analyzing the data of this study, Hyland’s (2005, p. 49) framework was utilized since it is a more elaborated and convincing model for metadiscourse categorization and it has been used in most of the recent studies. Hyland (2005) divided the metadiscourse markers into two broad categories: interactive and interactional, each of which is divided into five sub-categories. The interactive metadiscourse group contains: (1) Transition: expresses relations between main clauses, e.g. in addition, thus, and, (2) Frame marker: refers to discourse acts, sequences or stages, e.g. finally, my purpose is, (3) Endophoric markers: refers to information in the parts of the text, e.g. noted above, see figure, (4) Evidential: refers to information from other text, e.g. according to X, Z states, (5) Code gloss: elaborates propositional meanings, e.g. e.g. such as. The second group of metadiscourse markers includes: (1) Hedge: expresses writer’s uncertainty, e.g. might, perhaps, (2) Booster: expresses writer’s certainty, e.g. in fact, definitely, (3)

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Attitude marker: expresses writer's attitude, e.g. unfortunately, surprisingly, (4)
Self-mention: Explicit reference to author(s), e.g. I, we, (5) Engagement marker: explicitly build relation with a reader, e.g. consider, note.

3. Methodology

The data of the present study were collected from the leading and most widely read newspapers in the U.S. and Iran by means of random sampling. Random sampling is a contributing factor to overcome the diversity of writers' styles. The English news articles were retrieved from an online newspaper archive, while the Persian ones were collected from Astan-e-Qods- Razavi library archive. The data sampling was based on easy accessibility, popularity and mass circulation of news articles. To normalize the present study to a common basis to compare the frequency of occurrence, this research employed 100 words approach. In fact, all of these articles were published on 12 September in 2001. All news articles were examined to determine and classify metadiscourse markers manually. Furthermore, to analyze the data statistically, SPSS 18 software was applied. To find out whether there is any difference between the metadiscourse distribution in both English and Persian news and to explore the meaning beyond this difference, the chi-square test was employed.

4. Results and Discussion

The findings revealed that all types of metadiscourse markers were present in both sets of data, but that there were similarities and differences between the two groups regarding their distribution and frequency. In general, interactive metadiscourse markers were employed the most in news reports, in comparison to interactional metadiscourse markers, according to chi-square test results. As for the subcategories of interactive metadiscourse, transitions and evidentials were meaningfully the most frequent markers in English and Persian news reports. Regarding the subtypes of interactional metadiscourse, hedges, attitude markers and boosters were statistically employed the most in both sets of data in terms of frequency of occurrence. Moreover, attitude markers, hedges, boosters and evidentials were used in both groups of news articles to display the hidden ideology for achieving power, but engagement markers and self-mentions were only present in English news reports to show the totalitarian ideology.

5. Conclusion

This study tried to investigate the role of metadiscourse markers about 9/11 news articles published in 2001 in the U.S. and Iran. This comparative study might provide pedagogical implications. It would be practical to train journalism students about using metadiscourse markers appropriately in order to achieve more success in reporting the world's events. Hence, journalists by exerting metadiscourse markers not only would be able to deepen their readers' understanding, but also might ensure to conduct them to grasp the content completely and ideally.

Key Words: Metadiscourse, Ideology, Hyland model, 9/11 event, English Newspapers, Persian newspapers.

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