

# An Approach to Metadiscourse Markers: A Contrastive Study of English and Arabic Linguistic Research Articles

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## Abstract

The present study investigates metadiscourse markers role in linguistic research articles to realize the social contrasts among English and Arabic cultures in performing research articles. It utilizes a contrastive text of seventy research articles of different English and Arabic researchers. Metadiscourse markers reflect the culture of researchers in either Arabic or English language through a contrastive statistical outcomes that reinforces the current research goal. Two types of metadiscourse are dominant across the study: interactive and interactional. Moreover, in a way to illustrate the differences among the selected research papers, the study uses the Chi-square tests in its investigation.

**Keywords:** Interpersonal, Interactive, Interactional markers, Systemic functional grammar, Code glosses, Hedges, Boosters, Chi-square test

## 1. Introduction

Across academic writings, two points of view exists: the first, which seems to be more traditional, represents it simply as a record of scientific facts communicated through a neutral and targeted paper, which reflects facts that exclusively indicate reality. The second point of view, which is the most popular and boundless, represents academic writings as a sort of social commitment, including communication across academic writers and readers. (Widdowson 1984; Crismore, Farnswarth 1990; Hyland 1994, 2000, 2005) among others who represent the second point of view. (Widdowson 1984: 220), for instance, argue that academic writing resembles other type of writing in demanding authors to count the readers

in a way to engage their experience, manage text issues, and response to the content. However, readers of academic writings simultaneously attempt to anticipate ideas, investigate writers, and assess work for its value and significance to their study (Hyland 1994: 239).

Likewise, Crismore and Farnsworth (Crismore, Farnsworth 1990: 118) point out that scientific research writings is not a work that reflects facts only and exclusively indicate reality, but it employees the fact that any academic writing is a cultural perception that engages writers and readers. Consequently, they exchange meanings and utilize resources in a way to establish writings coherently that reveal their character, validity, readers affectability and connection with the message (See (Hyland 2005)). Furthermore, (Hyland 2000) states that writers task is to accomplish something beyond delivering writings through which they represent facts. They additionally arrange the status of their cases, introduce their works most powerfully, and settle realities with assessments and confidence with doubt. It is remarkably that (Mauranen 1993) recommends that the theory of academic writings includes a clear contradiction. It is both general (since it starts in the all generality of science) and at the same time irregular (since it reflects social variety). Researches in contrastive languages and translation studies have disclosed considerable contrasts in the principles of academic writings among different languages.

Though distinctive appearances of tedacademic writings still need to be investigate, it commonly performs on one of two strategies: the primary one, which contains facts that indicate reality and the metadiscourse one, which enables readers to comprehend what is said and what is implied in the primary one. The fundamental objective of the current research paper is to set up comparisons among English and Arabic research articles: language and culture. As the research proceeds, part 2 is devoted to introduce the term metadiscourse, where part 3 represents the research questions. Moreover, in part 4 the analytical section is carried out and its processes are clarified. In part 5, propositions and results are investigated. After all, part 6 introduces conclusions elaborately.

## **2. Metadiscourse**

Zellig S. Harris (Harris 1959) has first represented the term ‘metadiscourse’ as a language tool to portray content items which remark on the principle information of any text, however those items comprise only dispensable information. The term was snubbed and was implemented back in discourse across researchers (Williams 1981; Vande Kopple 1985; Crismore 1989) as they were eager to enhance writing techniques. By the mid-1990s, text analysis based on this concept was confronted by linguists, which in a way prompted a scope of new views on content. As a result of this, the investigations of metadiscourse picked up its significance (Vande Kopple 2002).

As a newly defined term, Metadiscourse is represented through a wide variety of definition (Vande Kopple 1985, 2002; Crismore, Fansworth 1990; Markkanen et al. 1993; Luuka 1994; Bunton 1999; Hyland 2000, 2005; Hyland, Tse 2004; Dafouz 2003). (Crismore 1984: 280) hints that the main target of metadiscourse across texts is to 'direct rather than inform the readers.' (Vande Kopple 1985: 83; 1997: 2) describes the term as ' discourse that people use not to expand referential material, but to help the readers connect, organize, interpret,

evaluate, and develop attitudes towards that material.' Thus, (Hyland 2005: 3) admits '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 who are communicating', and subsequently 'the writer is not simply presenting information about the suggested route by just listing changes of direction, but taking the trouble to see the walk from the reader's perspective.' Furthermore, metadiscourse is 'the spread term for the self-intelligent articulations used to arrange interactional implications in a content, helping the essayist (or speaker) to express a perspective and draw in with per users as individuals from a specific network' (ibid: 46).

Through a variety of linguistic structures, metadiscourse is represented as a conceptual and indistinct term. Moreover, it is a pragmatic notion that performs a bulk of linguistic and stylistic activities. As per (Hyland 2005), 'the significance of metadiscourse lies in its role in explicating a context for interpretation and indicating one way which acts of communication define and maintain social groups.' Regarding its central role in academic writings, metadiscourse conveys a cultural perspective significantly through illuminating the writer's distinctiveness and specifying the way he assumes his readers should react to his intentions (Toumi 2009: 64). Hence, utilizing metadiscourse in academic writings is correlated with the foundation of a coherent and logic text.

Hyland represents the complete structure of metadiscourse. He organized the expressions of metadiscourse into two groups: interactive and interactional. The interactive group is utilized to sort assumptions in a manner that seems coherent and persuasive to readers. On the other hand, the interactional group is concerned with the manners through which writers perform communication by interfering on target message. Such groups were eluded by Halliday in 'the systemic functional grammar' as interpersonal and textual factors. Hyland (Hyland 2004, 2005) improved the concept as all metadiscourse items are interpersonal 'it takes account of reader's knowledge, textual experience, and processing needs <... >' (Hyland, Tse 2004: 161).

Across numerous kinds of books, metadiscourse has been surveyed, such as books (Crismore 1984; Hyland 1999, 2000), papers (Bunton 1999), writings (Markkanen et al. 1993; Crismore et al. 1993), scientific explanations (Crismore, Fansworth 1990; De Oliveira, Pagano 2006), notices (FuentesOlivera et al. 2001), research papers (Myers 1989; Mauranen 1993; SalagerMeyer 1994; Luuka 1994; Valero-Garcés 1996; Moreno 1997, 1998; Swales 1990; Hyland 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001; Mur Duen as 2007; Faghih, Rahimpour 2009), course books (Hyland 1994, 1999, 2000); informal discussions (Schiffrin 1980) and newspapers (Le 2004; Dafouz-Milne 2008). Moreover, metadiscourse has been investigated among English and other different languages (Markkanen et al. 1993; Mauranen 1993) and (Valero Garcés 1996).

Few decades ago, various organizations of metadiscourse markers have been suggested (Vande Kopple 1985; Crismore et al. 1993; Beauvais 1989; Hyland 1998, 2005; Dafouz 2003). A large number of these organizations represented those linguistic categories according to their functional targets of interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers. Obviously, textual metadiscourse reflects the association of writings, whereas interpersonal

metadiscourse reflects the writer's attitude both to subject of the text and the probable reader. Another interpersonal perspective of metadiscourse is advanced by (Hyland 2005) and (Hyland, Tse 2004) through which all the classifications of metadiscourse are significantly interpersonal as they need to consider the readers' knowledge, textual requirements. They implemented Thompson's (Thompson 2001) model of interactive, instead of textual, and interactional, instead of interpersonal, metadiscourse. Though the current research accepts the notion that metadiscourse markers are basically interpersonal in a way to influence the reader, it also recommends utilizing the functional characteristics of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse categories.

### 3. Research Objectives

- i. Examining similarities and differences between English and Arabic and interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers across research articles.
- ii. Investigating English and Arabic languages' relations and responsibilities to both readers and writers.
- iii. Exploring the cultural impact of Arabic language on learners writing and/or reading in English and Arabic.

### 4. Research Methodology

#### 4.1 Corpus

The selected material across the current research is composed of 70 research articles of contemporary English and Arabic linguists, across the period from 2002 to 2009, derived from international journals. The tables below represents the statistics of the chosen articles both in Arabic and English. A copy of the selected articles references are available upon request.

Table 1. Corpus statistics

	<i>Arabic</i>	<i>English</i>
Number of articles	36	34
Total number of words	25,552	23,903
Average number of words per article	7,097,7	7,030, 2

#### 4.2 Analysis Model

This current research adopted Hyland's (Hyland 2004) model of metadiscourse markers as a standard model of analysis, where Hyland classified such markers into two main groups, regarding a bulk of subdivisions.

I. Interactive Markers: Such markers allow writers to handle the construction of information in a way that reflects the desired flow of details that satisfies readers' demands through the following markers:

a) Transitions: Those markers used to represent additive, consequential, and contrastive shifts across any piece of discourse: *and, in addition, but, thus, etc.*

b) Frame markers: Such markers highlights elements of text structure and text limits: *my motivation here is to, at last, to close, and so forth.*

c) Endophoric markers: These markers organize the connection between the information presented in a part of the text and information in another part of it in a way to facilitate material accessibility: *in area, see figure, noted above, and so forth.*

d) Evidentials: Those markers indicate a broader sense of connection between the information presented across the text and information in another text: *X states, (Y, 2010), According to X, etc.*

e) Code glosses: Such markers help readers comprehend intellectual elements through the text, where the writer restates specific information in a way to highlight a special focus: *to be specific, for example, as it were, e.g., etc.*

II. Interactional Markers: These engage the reader into the core of the text. Moreover, they 'focus on the participants of the interaction and seek to display the writer's person and a tenor consistent with the norms of the disciplinary community' (Hyland 2004: 139):

a) Hedges: Those renounce the complete responsibility to proposition: *might, about, perhaps, possibly, etc.*

b) Boosters: They underscore writer's confidence in proposition: *it is clear that, in fact, definitely, etc.*

c) Attitude markers: These reflect writer's assessment to information presented across the proposition: *unfortunately, surprisingly, I agree, etc.*

d) Engagement markers: Such markers emphasizes the connections drawn with readers: *consider, can see that, note that, etc.*

e) Self-mentions: They allude to writers' occurrence in different pronoun forms across the text: *I, we, our, my, your, etc.*

#### 4.3 Procedure

The selected corpus is read and analyzed accurately for metadiscourse markers. The analysis is repeated to compare results as a way to ensure results. Hence, the results are operated through a statistical analysis through utilizing chi-square. One major problem confronted the study is selecting the appropriate articles as some articles association the discussion section with other sections, those are rejected. Consequently, the discussion sections are excluded from the selected articles.

### 5. Results and Discussion

Through this section, a comparison of the quantitative and qualitative results of interactive and interactional markers among English and Arabic linguistic research articles. This table

displays the recurrences of the interactive and interactional markers across Arabic and English articles and their complete statistical analysis.

Table 2. The frequency of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in Arabic and English

Categories	Arabic		English		
	Total	%	Total	%	
Transitions	576	46.33	411	39.03	
Frame markers	33	2.65	52	4.93	
Interactive	Endophoric markers	11	0.88	20	1.89
	Evidentials	59	4.74	97	9.21
	Code glosses	51	4.10	42	3.98
Interactional	Hedges	311	25.02	237	22.50
	Boosters	70	5.63	56	5.31
	Attitude markers	63	5.06	41	3.89
	Engagement markers	17	1.36	3	0.28
	Self-mentions	52	4.18	94	8.92
$\Sigma$	1243		1053		

The first chi-square test is performed to investigate the distinction between English and Arabic interactive markers. Table (3) shows the estimation of chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 15.97$ ) which reflects a considerable value at the  $\alpha$  level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) provided the freedom degree 4. Consequently, this represents a crucial distinction between English and Arabic metadiscourse use of interactive markers.

Table 3. Chi-square test values of English and Arabic writers' use of interactive metadiscourse markers. Significance Level = 9.488

P	df	Value	
0.005	4	15.97	X
			< 0.05
		1352	n

With the results of Arabic= 730 and English= 622, figure (1) reflects the fact that Arabic Linguistics Research Articles utilize a higher number of interactive metadiscourse markers than the English Linguistics Research Articles use. A thorough investigation of the subclasses of interactive metadiscourse markers reveals a remarkable distinction of the cross-linguistic factors. Across such markers, the number of transitions in the two languages exceeds the number of subclasses which in a way enhances text organization and information management. Though, researchers of the Arabic language employ transitions progressively than the researchers of English language did. As the graph shows, transitions are used in

Arabic Linguistics Research Articles three times more than the other markers, where transitions are used in English two times only more than any other markers. Moreover, in Arabic Linguistics Research Articles, evidentially appear to be the second in use, and they are also more than the English Linguistics Research Articles. Code glosses are employed more frequently in Arabic Linguistic Research Articles than English Linguistic Research Articles. While frame and endophoric metadiscourse markers across the English Linguistics Research Articles are more apparent than in Arabic Linguistics Research Articles.

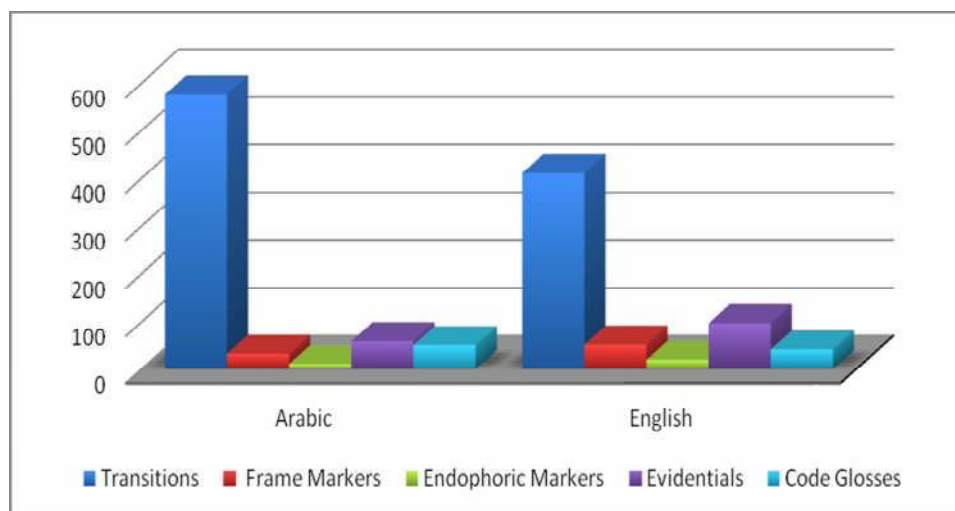


Figure 1. Arabic and English Interactive metadiscourse markers

The first chi-square test is performed to investigate the distinction between English and Arabic interactional markers. Table (4) shows the estimation of chi-square ( $\chi^2 = 13.10$ ) which reflects a considerable value at the  $\alpha$  level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ) provided the freedom degree 4. The results denote the fact that both English and Arabic writers use interactional markers in a completely different ways. Thus, such a trivial hypothesis is eliminated.

Table 4. Chi-square test values of English and Arabic writers' use of interactional metadiscourse markers. Significance Level = 9.488

P	df	Value	
0.01	4	13.10	$X < 0.5$
		944	n

Accordingly Figure (2) shows the higher number of interactional markers used by the Arabic Linguistic Research Articles than English Linguistic Research Articles: Arabic,  $n = 513$  and English,  $n = 431$ . Moreover, a greater distinction exists among the function of all subclasses of the interactional markers. Even though it is used extensively across Arabic Linguistic Research Articles, hedges, among the interactional metadiscourse subclasses, are still used the most in English and Arabic: Arabic= 311 and English= 237. Actually, the linguistic facts and the preferred perspectives are integrated across any linguistic research articles in a way that accomplish the optimum desired effect. Boosters appear to be the second in use across Arabic articles, where self-mention books the second place in English articles. In the third place of Arabic Linguistic Research articles attitude markers exist, where they come to be the

fourth in the English Linguistic Research Articles. Furthermore, among the Arabic Linguistic Research articles hedges, boosters, and attitude and management markers are more employed than English Linguistic Research Articles. One of the lowest interactional markers utilized in both English and Arabic articles are the engagement markers.

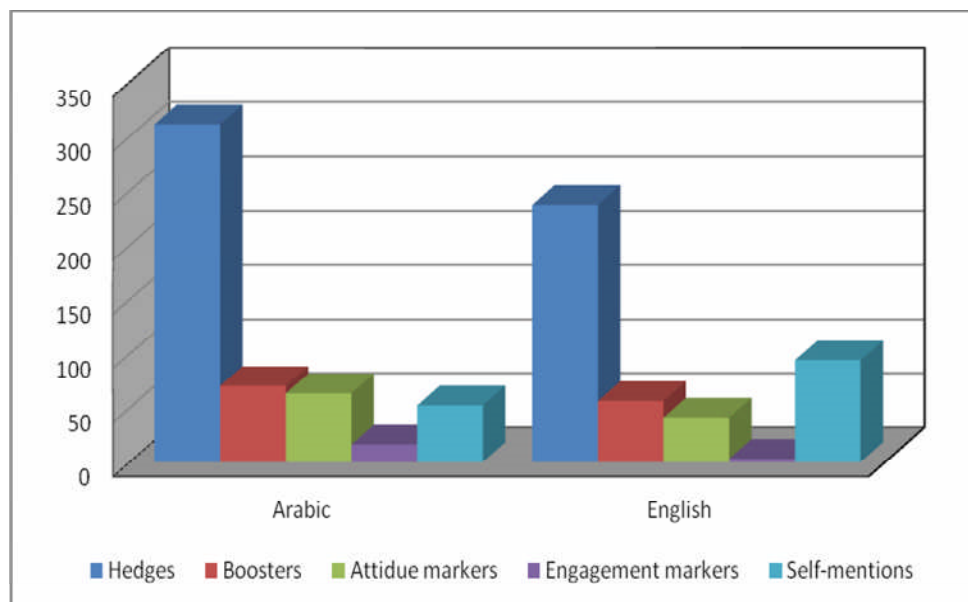


Figure 2. Arabic and English interactional metadiscourse markers

Table 5 indicates that the complete investigation of the selected corpus represents 2,296 metadiscourse markers in 49,455 examined words, which gives 1 metadiscourse marker in each 23 words of the investigated English articles (23.903 words) with a total percentage of 4.4%, whereas it gives 1 metadiscourse marker in each 20 words of the investigated Arabic articles (25.552 words) with a total percentage of 4.86%.

Table 5. Investigation of metadiscourse markers' results in both English and Arabic

	Total Words	Metadiscourse Frequency	Interactive	Interactional	Total
English	23,903	1053	2.6	1.8	4.4
Arabic	25,552	1243	2.8	2.0	4.86
Z-test	-----	-----	15.97	13.10	$X^2 = 29.04$

The statistics accomplished in table 5 are performed with reference to the whole number of metadiscourse markers, regarding the whole words examined in both Arabic and English articles. As a matter of fact, a huge number of metadiscourse markers are utilized among Arabic and English Linguistic Research Articles which emphasizes the significance of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the structure of any research articles. Thus, these results stress the fact that Arabic and English Linguistic Research Articles employ interactive markers more than interactional ones, which highlight the importance of textual consistency to readers. Therefore, it is impracticable to undermine the significance of metadiscourse markers across any research articles both in English and Arabic languages.



However, Arabic articles reflect a higher presentation of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers which emphasize that Arabic articles incline to guide readers across any research text in a way that helps to demonstrate coherence.

As illustrated in the statistical analysis presented across the current research, it is clear that Arabis and English Linguistic Research Articles vary in the manner they organize the subclasses of metadiscourse markers. Arabic Linguistic Research Articles prefer to utilize transitions the most (46.33), while endophoric the least (0.88). On the other hand, English Linguistic Research Articles tend to employ transitions extensively (39.03), but slightly use engagement markers (0.28). Using transitions extremely among English and Arabic Linguistic Research Articles reflects how writers of both languages are keen to establish a deep sense of connection across their articles despite the variations listed throughout the current research.

Native English and Arabic research writers endeavor to simplify their ideas, claims, and theories in a way to indicate an experimental evaluation of the suggested proposals. The current research represents hedges frequency in Arabic Linguistic Research Articles as 1 to each 77 words, where it appears to be 1 to each 100 in English Linguistic Research Articles. This outcome contradicts clearly with Hyland's suggestion of hedges as the highest recurrence with 1 to each 50 words in academic writings (Hyland 2000). Moreover, Hyland states that boosters are employed 'to mark involvement and solidarity with an audience' (Hyland 1998). The obvious statistical results denote that boosters frequency across Arabic Linguistic Research Articles is 1 to each 327 words, whereas it is 1 to each 426 in English Linguistic Research Articles. This highlights a considerable linguistic variation among research articles of both languages. Likewise, attitude markers are used to guide readers to comprehend writers' proposals, perspectives, and intentions across the text through surprise, think. Agreement, and disagreement expressions. Here, the statistical analysis show 1 attitude marker for each 405 words in Arabic research writing, whereas it shows 1 attitude marker for each 583 words in English research writings. Such a result denotes the fact that Arabic Linguistic Research Articles tend to use attitude markers more than English Linguistic Research Articles, which in a way emphasized cultural, psychological, and social differences between the two languages. Hence, across the current comparison 1 attitude marker exists for each 5 hedges. Obviously, evidentially across English Linguistic Research Articles give a fixed base to the documenting process. Here, evidentially appear to be the third subclass marker, while it comes in the fifth rank across Arabic Linguistic Research Articles.

Self-mention is crucial across research writings, 'the points at which writers choose to announce their presences in the discourse are those where they are best able to promote themselves and their individual contributions' (Hyland 2001: 223). Being used in English Linguistic Research Articles extensively, writers seek to establish more personal identity than Arabic Linguistic Research Articles' writers. This highlights author indifference which in a way helps promote his/her responsibility of the text structure and content. Code glosses offer restatement, exemplification, and clarification across research articles. The analysis shows that code glosses are the least to be used among Arabic and English Linguistic Research Articles, where it comes to be the seventh in both languages regarding the investigated

metadiscourse markers. Such a fact ensures that the investigated texts are proper. To overcome such a dearth, writers of Arabic Linguistic Research Articles manage to repetition in a way to stress their openness. Frame markers introduce shifts that represent boundaries of any text; the current study shows that frame markers are used more in English Linguistic Research Articles.

## 6. Conclusion

As one of the complex processes that examine readers' criticism, comments, and reactions to research writings, metadiscourse markers' analysis across linguistic research articles in a contrastive statistical analysis is the goal of the current research paper. It has been proved here that metadiscourse markers in both Arabic and English Linguistic Research Articles perform a critical task in research development. As a result of their deep care for content and formal properties of text, the statistical analysis shows that interactive and interactional markers are present in Arabic Linguistic Research Articles more than in English Linguistic Research Articles. Such a conclusion reflects the fact that Arabic Linguistic Research writers focus on textually rather than personality, which is completely consistent across research writings. Conversely, English and Arabic Linguistic Research Articles employ interactive markers more than interactional ones as a way to underscore coherence across research articles. It is now clear that difference of utilizing metadiscourse markers among English and Arabic Linguistic Research Articles reflects their cultural variations. Finally, the study reflects a crucial academic conclusion; Arab researchers should demonstrate their knowledge of English writing principles to enhance their effectiveness and popularity in linguistic research articles.

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