

Audience Interaction in Iranian English Newspapers

¹Seyed Jamal Ebrahimi, ²Seyed Foad Ebrahimi

¹English Department, Shadegan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shadegan, Iran

²English Department, Shadegan Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shadegan, Iran

Jetco2003@yahoo.co.uk

Abstract- The present paper seeks to explore the role of metadiscourse markers in newspapers material as a kind of persuasive writing. Metadiscourse analysis is the study of how discourse talk about discourse or writing about writing. To fulfil the above mentioned purpose, two kinds of news were chosen from two Iranian newspapers written in English language, namely *Tehran Times* and *Iran Daily*. The first is a sample of front page news and the other is a kind of economic news. Data analysis was done based on Ädel (2010) model of metadiscourse taxonomy. Findings suggest that samples of Managing the Message metadiscourse were available in Iran Daily newspaper only.

Key words: Metadiscourse, Newspaper discourse, Audience Interaction

1.Introduction

When we write or speak, we talk about the world and about ourselves but what is more noticeable is that we use the language to talk about talk or write about writing. This latter part of language characteristic is what referred to as language reference to itself or language description of itself or in a technical term it is called ‘ reflexivity ’ (Lyons, 1977: 5). This is the quality of language that give uniqueness to language as a “cultural code for social communication” (Silverstein, 1976: 16). At first you may think of reflexivity as a property limited to discourse linguists or other society experts who deal with language and its properties. However, it is a main characteristic of language even in everyday use of language (Jakobson, 1980). Verschueren (1999: 187) considered this property of language as an “original evolutionary prerequisite of language development and all verbal communication is self-referential to a certain degree.”

Language reflexivity is manifested in different ways, one of which is ‘ metadiscourse ’. It is “ discourse about the evolving discourse, or the writer’s explicit commentary on her own ongoing text” (Ädel, 2006: 2). By

metadiscourse, the writer use non-topical materials to signal the way she wants the reader to take while navigating through the text and infer the intended meaning and the way he is preferred to respond.

Studying this property gains importance because of two reasons. One, which is mentioned above, is the role that it plays in all aspects of language use. The other is the huge number of people who use English as their communication language in the world. As Kachru (1992: 38) stated, there are around 350 million speakers of English as a first language while there are around 1.2 billion speakers of English in the world. These figures lead us to think that the English language is mainly spoken by non-native speakers. This being the case, the need of this article is quite clearly felt.

Although metadiscourse has a half century literature and has been studied intensively especially in writing, newspapers are one of the texts that received little attention in researching metadiscourse despite of its vital role in the civilized world today. Iranian newspapers have been the subject of some studies as there are some scholars working on newspapers discourse including Noorian and Biria (2010) who investigated whether American and Iranian

editorial use the same metadiscourse markers. They found that there are a significant difference between the above-mentioned different nationality editors because of different culture preferences, genre conventions, and Iranian writers English language experience. There is another English – Spanish cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse by Dafouz-Milne (2008) to find out the role of metadiscourse markers in constructing and attaining persuasion. They also found these markers to be present in both languages with various distributions and composition especially in Logical markers ad code glosses.

Both of Noorian and Biria (2010) and Dafouz-Milne (2008) researches were inter-cultural, inter-lingual and also using an older models by Ken Hyland and Crismore. This

paper intends to explore one of the two kinds of metadiscourse that presented in Ädel(2010) model of metadiscourse taxonomy, namely *Audience* interaction. Also we are comparing two newspapers from the same country (I.R. Iran) and the same language (English as a Foreign Language) and at the same day (February 08, 2012).

2. Methodology

The corpus on which this paper is based comes from two newspapers, namely *Iran Daily* and *Tehran Times*. Two pieces of news were chosen from each newspaper; one is the main news from the Front page and one is from the Economic page making four pieces of news totally.

Table1. number of words in selected news in Tehran Times and Iran Daily newspapers

Number of words	Iran Daily			Tehran times		
	Front page	Economic	Total	Front page	Economic	Total
	690	362	1052	248	181	429

Once the information gathered, we started analyzing the data. As earlier researchers did not use the new model of Ädel (2010), this model is used for this paper. There are also some other reasons behind this model usage in this research. This model includes more subdivisions and also separated *Metatext* from *Audience interaction*. This model also tested on both spoken and written corpuses so that later on we can compare the results of this research with those of oral news from television and/or

radio. As we are dealing with the Audience interaction part of the model, therefore, we proceed by explaining only this part of the model.

This category in Ädel’s(2010) model of metadiscourse taxonomy includes a few discourse functions, namely *Managing comprehension channel*, *Managing audience discipline*, *Anticipating the audience’s response*, *Managing the message*, *Imagining scenarios*.

Table 2. The subtypes and the discourse functions of Audience interaction taxonomy of metadiscourse (adopted Ädel,2010: 83)

Audience Interaction	References to the audience
	Managing comprehension/channel
	Managing Audience Discipline
	Anticipating the audience’s response
	Managing the message
	Imagining scenarios

This part of the model includes only one category of metadiscourse called *Reference to the audience* which subdivided into five discourse functions.

Managing comprehension/channel:

This is a function used to ensure being at the same part of the text in a way that the addresser and the addressee(s) know which part of the text or speech the other one is attending now; put it another way, it is more or less serves like a locator for the other part.

e.g. “can you guys hear?”
 “did I answer your question?”

Managing audience discipline:

In this function the audience is requested to do something such as open their book to page X, or be silent, and so on.

e.g. “alright, can i get your attention please?”

Anticipating the audience response:

This function acts to anticipate the audience’s response or reaction or objection to what is mentioned.

e.g. you might still think that ...

Managing the message:

In this function, the core message is emphasized in a way that the addresser wishes the audience to pay attention to or remember. It

refers to areas where the addressee explicitly comments on the desired uptake.

e.g. I hope that the reader has arrived at similar positions after reading this paper.

Imagining scenarios:

This is the last function in this subtype. It deals with the addressee’s clearly asking the audience for considering something from a specific perspective to get them engaged.

E.g. Imagine the following situation. You have to ...

3. Results and Discussion

The following metadiscourse markers were found in our data after being analysed based on Ädel’s(2010) model of metadiscourse taxonomy:

Table 3. The frequency of metadiscourse markers found in each newspaper

Audience Interaction	References to the audience	Metadiscourse markers in ID*	Metadiscourse markers in TT**
	Managing comprehension/channel	X	X
	Managing Audience Discipline	X	X
	Anticipating the audience’s response	X	X
	Managing the message	3	X
	Imagining scenarios	X	X

*Iran Daily newspaper

** Tehran Times newspaper

The quantitative analysis of the two data sets revealed that the first two functions, *managing comprehension/channel* and *Managing audience discipline* mainly deal with spoken data. For this reason, some spoken language examples are included for more illustration of the functions.

As we can see from above table only *Managing the message* metadiscourse markers (3 times) used to manage the message the addressee intends the audience (here the newspaper readers) to receive and pay more attention to. This part is the important part of the speaker’s or the writer’s message. The following sample was found:

“This cooperation can help the IAEA better learn about the peaceful nature of Iran’s nuclear activities.”

“ It is regrettable that European leaders disregard their people’s interest and take a

course that will put their nations under pressure.”

This sample along with two others were directly quoted from the interviewee. The interviewee used this strategy or function to mention the important points that he wanted the reader of the news to understand and also used the same strategy or function to convince the interviewer that this is one of the important parts of the message that should not be excluded from the final draft of the news. At the same time, since the interviewer id from the same culture, understood the point and included the point in his final printed news.

4. Conclusion

Being a persuasive type of writing in nature, the newspapers largely use reflexive language or metadiscourse to persuade the reader to read

the whole text or news. This is because metadiscourse is not informational but textual and interpersonal Metatext about text. One of these metafunctions is 'managing the message' used by Iran Daily newspaper to signal their managing of the message for the reader(s). This is what we found in this study to be of use for the journalists when writing their columns. Further studies with larger corpus are needed to signify the role of this metafunction as well as the others.

References:

- [1]. Ädel, A. (2010). Just to give you kind of a map of where we are going: A Taxonomy of Metadiscourse in Spoken and Written Academic English. *Nordic Journal of English Studies*, 9(2), 69-97.
- [2] Ädel, A. (2006). *Metadiscourse in L1 and L2 English: Annelie Ädel* (Vol. 24). John Benjamins Publishing Co.
- [3] Dafouz-Milne, E. (2008). The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: A cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40(1), 95-113.
- [4] Jakobson, R. (1980). *The framework of language*. University of Michigan.
- [5] Kachru, B. B. (Ed.). (1992). *The other tongue: English across cultures*. University of Illinois Press.
- [6]. Lyons, J. (1977). *Semantics. vol. 2*. Cambridge University Press.
- [7]. Mesa, R. A., Silverstein, M. N., Jacobsen, S. J., Wollan, P. C., & Tefferi, A. (1999).
- [8]. Population-based incidence and survival figures in essential thrombocythemia and agnogenic myeloid metaplasia: An Olmsted county study, 1976–1995. *American journal of hematology*, 61(1), 10-15.
- [9]. Noorian, M., & Biria, R. (2010). Interpersonal metadiscourse in persuasive journalism: A study of texts by American and Iranian EFL columnists. *Journal of Modern Languages*, 20, 64-79.
- [10]. Verschueren, J. (1999). *Understanding pragmatics*. London.