Interactional Metadiscourse in the Writings of Novice vs. Established Members of Academic Communities*

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Abstract
Novice academic writers, particularly Iranian graduate students (IGSs), upon entering an academic community, are hypothesized to face probable difficulties in practicing rhetorical expectations set by the experienced (EXP) members, hence, not being able to write in a way acceptable to these professionals. To explore the probable rhetorical distance between them, this study investigated the employment of interactional metadiscourse markers (IMMs) in the writings of IGSs (MA and Ph.D.) and EXP figures in Applied Linguistics. 120 recent research articles (RAs) served as the corpus of the study. Drawing on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, all occurrences of the five types of IMMs were functionally identified, and compared. To detect any possible significant differences between the corpora, Chi-square tests were run. The results indicated that the IGSs used far less IMMs than the EXP ones in their RAs. However, the general pattern of their metadiscourse use was similar to the EXP writers'. It can be concluded that although the IGSs are relatively aware of general rhetorical framework of the genre based on IMMs, they seem to be far away from the rhetorical standards set by the established members of the discipline. Finally, the possible justifications and implications of the study were presented.

Introduction

Graduate students, as new members of academic communities, tend to start communicating their thoughts and sharing their findings with the other members using written academic discourse. For most of these students, this seems to be their first attempt in the actual and serious use of this relatively unfamiliar register in the forms of theses, dissertations, and research articles (RAs). Undoubtedly, the new context requires a different selection of terminologies, specific grammatical constructions, and conventionalized rhetorical strategies so as to achieve the objectives of successful communications (Gilquin & Paquot, 2008; Russell, 2014). Naturally, the process of accommodating to such rather unfamiliar features can be problematic for non-native student writers, who are accustomed and bound to their own cultural and rhetorical backgrounds. Particularly, in EFL contexts, these problems are multiplied by the complexities and intricacies involved in acquiring the language itself (Hyland, 2005).

In Iranian academic situation, graduate students are recently required to publish at least one RA while they receive no particular formal training for the task, specifically about the prominent rhetorical features of the discourse. Moreover, it appears that the conventional rhetorical features of academic and disciplinary communities are not entirely known to them (Talati-Baghsiahi & Khoshsima, 2016). Consequently, this might lead to the composition of RAs which are not rhetorically acceptable to the established members of their respective scientific communities, who set, develop, and use this conventionalized rhetorical strategies and behave as the gatekeepers for the scientific communities to ensure that young researchers and novice writers write in the appropriate ways. Accordingly, one can think of a probable distance between the established members of the community and the Iranian new members regarding rhetorical norms and conventions, as one possible reason why most of these papers fail to be published in indexed professional journals. So, it is not surprising to find that EFL students, particularly Iranian ones, fall short when disciplinary experts' writings are treated as the norm or point of reference. Even if their

grammar and vocabulary range is of a relatively high standard, they still have to master the genric rhetorical demands of their discipline.

As a result, the present study, with the hope to cast more light on the issue and contribute to understanding more about the Iranian graduate students' (IGSs) academic writing rhetorical problems, aimed at investigating the probable distance existing between their writing rhetorical features and those of the experienced (EXP) writers through using interactional metadiscourse markers (IMMs).

A large number of studies on metadiscourse appeared in literature in various areas of Applied Linguistics. Some leading ones include Crismore et al., (1993), Vande-Kopple (2002) and Hyland and Tse (2004) who investigated metadiscourse functions to develop theoretical and practical frameworks for productive future studies. Also, Hyland (2005) made an effective attempt to explore the nature of metadiscourse and the writer-reader interaction through writing. In addition, the types and functions of metadiscourse resources, their distributions across discourse, and the rhetorical patterns they follow have been investigated in a number of different genres and contexts including textbooks, advertisements, newspaper discourse, academic talks and lectures, postgraduate theses and dissertations, and research papers which resulted in diverse and sometimes contradictory findings. In addition, some other studies have investigated the relationship between metadiscourse use and reading comprehension and its impact on the writing quality of learners.

Generally, the results of most of these studies have shown that the use of metadiscourse in writing may vary across different languages, cultures, genres, and disciplines. Some have also suggested that the conventions followed in its employment may be different in different discourse communities (Abdollahzadeh 2003; Burneikaitė, 2009; Crismore et al., 1993; Mauranen 1993). Academic discourse communities, in their own turn, enjoying their own specific objectives, values, and conventions with specific readers' needs and expectations, are supposed to require particular rhetorical systems to obtain their aims, hence, demanding specific patterns of metadiscourse use. These

rhetorical patterns are hypothesized to be one of the problematic features of discourse to be acquired by those who tend to join the communities as novice members. However, the research investigating the metadiscoursal strategies of novice academic members, exploring their problems, and examining their possible distance from those of the experts and experienced ones is really scant.

Most of the previous corpus-based studies have tried to explore the effects of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic variations on the use and distributions of metadiscourse markers in different types of academic discourse written by professionals. Such studies mostly focused on contrasting texts written by writers of various linguistic and cultural backgrounds with those of English native writers. In other words, they seem to have supposed English native texts as the norm and standard form of discourse including rhetorical systems which must be followed by non-native ones when writing in English. The idea could be considered only when non-natives are supposed to write for an audience of native English. This, however, is not necessarily the point in academic communities whose members come from different parts of the world including English speaking countries. Therefore, since the audience of academic writing includes all international academics, writers are supposed to employ rhetorical strategies which are well conformed to the disciplinary and genric norms and conventions set by established members of that community.

A major negligence is investigating the possible distance between new members of academic discourse communities and the experienced members who are supposed to establish and develop the rules and conventions for the rhetorical requirements of this specialized language, and behave as the gatekeepers of the scientific communities to ensure that young researchers and novice writers write in the appropriate ways. Illuminating on these possible discrepancies, one can best explore the deviant and/or avoidance rhetorical strategies on the part of the newcomers in order to contribute to their disciplinary qualification and, hence, being recognized by the community professional members. Moreover, As Hyland (2004b) contends,

investigating novice scholars' use of metadiscourse is vitally required in order to provide writing teachers with empirical evidence of how interpersonal dimensions are really accomplished in student-produced discourse. The importance of investigating discourses written by novice writers vs. experts rather than natives vs. nonnatives in EAP writing instruction has also been emphasized by Tribble (2017):

> I would conclude that drawing on notions of nativeness, or setting up NS vs. NNS dichotomies for EAPWI [English for Academic Purposes Writing Instruction] is directly unhelpful to students and teachers. … A focus on expertise, by contrast, leads to EAPWI programs which pay attention to disciplinary requirements, encourages the introduction of written genres …., supports cooperation between linguistic and disciplinary specialists, and de-legitimizes the kinds of one-size-fits-all strategies ….. I would still argue that our best way forward in supporting our students is to use an expert/apprentice dichotomy as the starting point for EAP writing instruction,... In this way, we can start to help apprentice writers to build the expertise that they need to succeed ….. (p. 40)

Accordingly, drawing on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, the present study aimed to explore and to provide greater insight into whether and to what extent IGSs, both MA and Ph.D., as novice members of discourse community differ from EXP writers in terms of the use of IMMs in their RAs in the field of Applied Linguistics. Specifically, this study will address the following research questions:

1. Are there any significant differences between the IGSs' RAs and those of the EXP writers regarding the frequency use of IMMs?

2. How and to what extent do the IGSs and the EXP writers differ from each other regarding the frequency and distribution of IMMs?

Methodology

The Corpus

The corpus of the study consisted of one hundred and twenty English RAs in Applied Linguistics (Forty articles for each group of writers) The three samples, selected equally from both male and female writers (twenty articles for each group gender), were chosen via a random sampling out of a pool of articles drawn from the journals published in 2011 through 2017.

The journals from which the experienced scholars' papers were selected are of the most widely read, internationally prestigious, and indexed journals and the ones from which the novice authors' articles were chosen are national and international journals of good reputation. This was reached, to some extent, by the assistance of some scholars in the field. Moreover, in order to take care of the time factor as an important element in genre change (see Widdowson, 1998), all the RAs were chosen among articles published between 2011 and 2017. In addition, limiting the study to samples from only a single academic discipline is to meet the homogeneity of the texts and focus on the variations caused by experience rather than discipline.

Instrumentation

The study made use of interactional metadiscourse function, a micro level feature of text rhetoric, to examine the rhetorical systems and strategies used in the samples. This is, actually, part of a larger study on all types of metadiscourse of which interactional function was chosen to be reported in this paper. Accordingly, Hyland's (2005) IMMs used in the study can be regarded as the instruments. The five types of IMMs with the examples are as follows:

- *Hedges* represent the writer's reluctance to assert propositional information categorically, such as *may; perhaps*.

- *Boosters* denote certainty and emphasize the force of propositions, such as *in fact; certainly*.

- *Attitude markers* depict the writer's assessment of propositional information by articulating surprise, agreement, obligation etc., such as *fortunately; amazing*.

- *Engagement markers* explicitly address readers to focus their attention on the text or include them as participants, such as *note that*.

- *Self-mentions* show the extent of explicit writer presence in the discourse in terms of first-person expressions, such as *I; we*.

All of the linguistic realizations (lexical or phrasal) served as the criterion by which the samples were investigated.

Data Collection

All occurrences of IMMs of the five types mentioned above were counted in the samples. The analysis was conducted considering the functional meaning. Since possible metadiscoursal items "can serve either a propositional or metadiscoursal function" (Hyland, 2004b, p. 136), every token was manually assessed in context so as to ensure that it acted as metadiscourse. For instance, in (1), *about* does not function as a metadiscourse marker but merely as a preposition referring to topic/subject of something, but in (2) it acted as a hedging device to demonstrate attribute:

1) However, students' goals might not always parallel teachers' expectations <u>about</u> how class members should participate (EXP 9).

2) We tried to win the teachers' confidence so that their reluctance to articulate their cognitions <u>about</u> two delicate aspects of their profession could diminish (PhDtxt 13).

All instances like (2) which do not serve as metadiscourse were not included in our analysis. On the other hand, some markers act dual functions; for instance, *must* can be used epistemically as a booster (3) or show necessity as an engagement device (4):

3) There emerged a widespread belief among researchers that such chaos <u>must</u> be the source of all important randomness in nature (PhDtxt 4).

4) It <u>must</u> be remembered that these were people who were already motivated enough to choose to study a foreign language at university (EXPtxt 36).

Procedure and Data Analysis

The researcher considered IGSs (both MA and PhD) who major in Applied Linguistics as the representatives of Iranian novice members of the academic community while scholars holding an academic degree of at least assistant professor and publishing at least twenty RAs were considered as experienced writers, hence established members of the community. Moreover, it is noteworthy that since the established members are not necessarily confined to any specific social communities, nationality will not be regarded as a determining feature in their identification.

After operationalizing the three groups of authors, the identification of the journals out of which the articles were to be taken was made according to the criteria of reputation, indexing, and accessibility. Once the journals were identified, all the articles the authors of which met specifications of the three operationalized groups of authors were selected, annotated, categorized, and listed in a table. This served as the main corpus of the study from which one hundred and twenty articles were selected randomly as the samples of the study.

The corpus included only the body of every paper. Then, the above-mentioned model of IMMs was applied into the corpora. So as to detect IMMs as precisely as possible, every corpus was searched electronically for all the IMMs by the AntConc 3.4.4 program. Afterward, a rigorous contextual and functional analysis was carried out and the number of IMMs was recorded in each corpus separately. The IMMs recorded in the samples were, thus, classified according to the five above-illustrated types. In order to determine how IMMs were distributed within the two samples, the number of IMMs per type was

computed as a percentage of the total number of IMMs in each sample. Furthermore, the data were normalized to frequencies per 10,000 words to be applied in statistical tests and analyses for sound comparison.

The data collected were processed using SPSS software version 22.0 to analyze the descriptive and inferential statistics. To explore whether the probable differences between the two samples in terms of the use of IMMs are significant or not, the Chi-square (X^2) non-parametric test was run.

Results and Discussion

Generally, the descriptive analysis of the data indicated different proportions of IMMs in the three corpora with a total number of 9822 occurrences in EXP texts (about one metadiscourse marker in every 28 words), 5412 instances in PhD texts (about one in every 42 words), and 5336 occurrences in MA texts (about one in every 42 words). In other words, close inspection of data evidenced that the EXP writers employed IMMs approximately twice as many as those used by the IGSs (both MA and PhD) in their RAs. Table 1 below demonstrates the number of IMMs per 10,000 words for each type as well as for the total IMMs used in the three corpora in order to help make a sound interpretation about the variations.

Table 1 *Interactional metadiscourse occurrences on type in the corpora per 10000 words*

Type	EXP	IGSs		
		PhD	MA	Total
Hedges	150.3	111.9	110.5	111.2
Boosters	85.5	67.8	72.3	70
Self-mentions	43.3	7.1	8.1	7.6
Engagement markers	39.7	23.9	24.9	24.4
Attitude markers	33.7	24.2	23.1	23.6
Total	352.6	234.8	239	236.9

As Table 1 indicates, both PhD and MA texts have included fewer IMMs than the EXP texts (352.6 IMMs per 10,000 words in the EXP sample versus 234.8 occurrences in the PhD sample and 239

occurrences in the MA sample). The EXP texts have also included a higher proportion of IMMs in each type. In other words, a fairly similar pattern emerged with the employment of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers, with EXP scholars using notably more devices than the IGSs. The obtained results are incongruent with what some previous studies have reported on Iranian scholars' discourse rhetorical features in that they generally tend to employ fewer metadiscourse markers in their texts than specifically native ones (e.g., Shokouhi & Talati-Baghsiahi, 2009; Zarei & Mansoori, 2007).

So as to make a more reasonable comparison and more valid judgment about the use and distribution of IMMs in total and in different types within each sample, the proportion of each type was calculated in the form of the percentage of the total number of metadiscourse in a ranked order in each sample (see Table 2). As the data confirms, although the frequency occurrences of IMMs used in the three samples are distributed with similar weights and order across the five types, their proportions within each sample vary. In other words, consistent with studies on academic discourse (Hyland, 2005; Koutsantoni, 2006), hedges, noticeably, are the most frequently applied metadiscoursal resources in the three samples although they constitute a higher proportion of all IMMs in PhD (%47.6) and MA Texts (%46.3) than the EXP ones (%42.6). Boosters turned out to appear the second most frequent type of IMMs in all three samples. However, the proportion they constitute within each sample is different from those of the other two groups of texts. That is, %30.3 of all IMMs in MA texts and %28.9 in PhD texts belong to boosters while they constitute only %24.3 of all IMMs in EXP texts. Although self-mentions are the third most frequent IMMs in EXP sample (%12.3), they appear to be the least frequent in the other two groups of texts (%3 in PhD and %3.4 in MA texts). It seems that the two groups of writers (EXP vs. IGSs) differ dramatically in employing these devices. Engagement markers and attitude markers, which have been used less frequently than the other

types in EXP texts, seem to constitute a similar proportion of all IMMs in all the three samples.

Table 2 *The proportion of each type in the form of the percentage of the total number of metadiscourse in each sample*

Type	EXP	IGSs		
		PhD	MA	Total
Hedges	%42.6	%47.6	%46.3	%46.9
Boosters	%24.3	%28.9	%30.3	%29.6
Self-mentions	%12.3	%3	%3.4	%3.2
Engagement markers	%11.3	%10.2	%10.4	%10.3
Attitude markers	%9.6	%10.3	%9.7	%10
Interactional M.	%100	%100	%100	%100

Tables 1 and 2 testify that although there seem to be some similarities in the distribution of different types of IMMs and in the general pattern which has been followed by the three groups of writers, they tended to apply them with different frequencies in their writings. As a consequence, the findings are seemingly indicative of the existence of a distance between the EXP and the IGSs in employing IMMs. Therefore, in order to answer the first research question posed earlier and to see whether the differences between the samples are significant, the Chi-Square test was run (see Table 3).

Table 3 *The results of Chi-square for the EXP and IGSs writers regarding the frequency of IMMs*

	Experience			Test Statistics		
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Chi-square	df	Asimp. sig.
EXP–IMMs	353	295.0	58.0	22.807	1	.000
IGSs–IMMs	235	295.0	-58.0			
Total	590					

Table 3 demonstrates that the IGSs writers differ significantly ($\chi^2 = 22.807$, $p < .05$) from the EXP writers regarding the employment of IMMs in their texts. In other words, Chi-square analysis proved the existence of a remarkable distance between the IGSs writers as novice members of the community and the EXP writers as established

members in the case of employment of IMMs in their RAs. So, these findings imply that the Iranian novice members might lack, to some extent, the ability to properly interact with their audience based on the respective academic community conventions. Accordingly, this lack of awareness about the dominant metadiscourse styles and strategies in the community discourse may lead to the novice writers' failed attempts in qualifying themselves as an acceptable member of their own discourse community. In sum, as genre awareness, specifically documented knowledge about the rhetorical features of community discourse, could be regarded as one of the fundamental stipulations for "transition from novice to expert" writers (Rath, 2010, p.6), the IGSs might lose the chance of successful attendance in their own discourse community and, consequently, scholarly publication in international indexed journals. To put it in other way, one important way for the novice writers to enjoy widespread acceptance within the academia could basically be having the rhetorical knowledge of academic discourse at their commands since, as Hyland (2009, p.1) puts it academic discourse can simply be viewed as "the ways of thinking and using language which exist in the academy".

The significant difference detected between the EXP and IGSs writers as regards the total number of IMMs, however, does not necessarily imply that the explored variations of different types of IMMs between the samples (see Table 1) are significant as well. Accordingly, Chi-square statistical test was also run on the data collected for each type to explore whether the variations observed in descriptive statistics are significant.

Table 4. *The results of Chi-square for the EXP and IGSs writers regarding the frequency of all types of IMMs*

Types of IMMs	Test Statistics		
	Chi-square	d.f.	Asimp. Sig.
Hedges	5.828	1	.016
Boosters	2.104	1	.147
Attitude Markers	1.724	1	.189
Self-mentions	24.020	1	.000
Engagement Markers	4.000	1	.046

Hedging Markers

As table 4 delineates, hedging markers have also been used significantly more frequent in the EXP texts than the texts by the IGSs ($\chi^2 = 5.828$, p <.05) although the descriptive analysis confirmed that this type of IMMs was the most appealing in all the three corpora. This is in line with most of the studies conducted on hedging devices earlier between Iranian and native English writers (e.g., Falahati, 2004; Samaie, Khosravian, & Boghayeri, 2014; Shokouhi & Talati-Baghsiahi, 2009). However, although the current study is not merely cross-cultural and cross-linguistic in nature, the variation could be, to some extent, attributed to the writers' lingua/cultural background. Moreover, since the main dependent variable was supposed to be expertise, most of the detected variations could have been resulted from the IGSs writers' unawareness of the community rhetorical conventions because of their little experience as a new community member. The lower use of hedges can also be interpreted with regard to the multi-functionality of modal auxiliaries, which constitute the major part of hedging usages in discourse. That is, due to the fact that modal auxiliaries can denote different semantic and pragmatic notions, they seem to be challenging for the novice writers to employ in their discourse (Hyland 2005), hence resulting in an avoidance strategy. Yet, the EXP texts documented to contain a much higher proportion of them. As an example 'would' had a frequent occurrence in the EXP sample as an epistemic marker contributing to the writer's detachment from the force of the proposition hence being considered as a hedge:

5) Also, the specific linguistic domain (e.g., morphology, phonology) for which such drugs <u>would</u> be helpful is not yet clear (F-EXP 13).

It, however, appeared mostly in the IGSs' texts denoting the deontic notion of volition which is not regarded as a hedging device:

6) By the same token, they were told that their right of remaining anonymous <u>would</u> be assured (M-PhD 15).

The modal verbs 'may' and 'might' are also among the devices which have been employed far fewer in the IGSs' texts than the EXP sample. So, they can be presumed to be less skilled or not assured in the range of meanings that all the modals carry. Surprisingly, of the one hundred and one devices investigated in this study under Hyland's (1996) four sub-categories of hedges (attribute, reliability, writer-oriented, and reader-oriented) less than fifteen devices approved to be used in far lower frequency in the IGSs papers than the EXP ones. In other words, the IGSs have used most of the hedging devices with a similar frequency as the EXP writers. This may suggest that the IGSs relatively follow the conventions of the genre in focus, yet they may have problems with some devices semantically and pragmatically. Some markers may also be controlled by their lingua/cultural background of the IGSs writers.

Moreover, as regards the four sub-categories of hedges mentioned above, the results testified that the IGSs writers differ significantly in applying the 'attribute' and 'reliability' devices from the EXP writers, yet the variations in the employment of the 'writer-oriented' and 'reader-oriented' sub-categories are not significant. To put it in simple words, as example 7 indicates, the IGSs do not seem to be qualified in ways of hedging the correspondence of proposition to reality to approach the precision of their expression (attribute). The IGSs writers also indicated to be far away in precisely signaling their confidence in the truth of the propositions and in explicitly conveying an appropriate assessment of the reliability of statements (reliability). On the other hand, the results are indicative of the IGSs' competence in limiting their commitment to statements as writers (writer-oriented) to guard themselves against possible criticisms (see example 8). Moreover, they showed no difficulties in hedging expressions to give deference and recognition to their audience (reader-oriented) and avoid distasteful over-confidence in attempting to gain their readers' acceptance of propositions (see example 9).

7) The way information and materials are presented <u>are</u> key factors in encouraging participation and engagement in the learning

process which not only <u>leads</u> to better achievement but also <u>prepares</u> individuals for their life (F-PhD 20).

8) However, the greater use of native cultures in developing digital activities <u>seems</u> to have some bearing on the quality of the L2 text produced (M-PhD 2).

9) More specifically, in writing classes, the students <u>should</u> be involved in the writing process by getting feedback … (F-MA 7).

Generally, the significantly lower use of hedges on the part of the IGSs writers suggests that they, as new members of the respective community, make far greater unmitigated claims and generalizations than the EXP members, and tend not to "acknowledge the provisional nature of their results" (Mur-Dueñas, 2011, p. 3073). This could result in a major rhetorical gap which must be crossed by the IGSs to be accepted as effective members of the community (Jalilifar, & Shooshtari, 2011).

Boosters

Boosters refer to communicative strategies applied to increase the force of arguments. Boosters let authors show the conviction they want to attach to the proposition and allow them to assert a statement with confidence. They also signal writers' solidarity and involvement with their readers. The importance of boosters in academic writing lies in the fact that they contribute to a proper "rhetorical and interactive tenor" (Hyland, 1998, p. 2). This importance has seemingly been recognized by the two groups of writers of the study since they employed them as the second more frequent type of IMMs in their papers which is in accord with some related studies conducted earlier (e.g., Keshavarz & Kheirieh, 2011; Sarani, Khoshsima, & Izadi, 2017; Shokouhi & Talati-Baghsiahi, 2009). However, although the EXP writers also proved to favor the employment of boosters in their text more than the IGSs, the results of the chi-square test ($\chi^2 = 2.104$, p >.05) does not evidence that the differences between them are significant (see Table 4). In other words, it was revealed that the IGSs writers expressed their stances towards the propositional content with a similar degree of certainty in

comparison with the EXP authors. This, unexpectedly, is not in agreement with the results of the earlier studies on boosters between Iranian and Native English academic writers most of which have reported the higher proportions of boosters employed by native English writers in RAs than Iranian ones (e.g., Faghih & Rahimpour, 2009;). In fact, these findings testified that academic community rhetorical conventions might sometimes differ from those practiced by native English writers. Yet, a comparison of English native academic writings with those of the academic community experts regarding these devices could better illuminate the issue.

Moreover, concerning the two general sub-categories of boosters (emphatics and amplifying adverbs), the results testified that the writers of the two samples used them with similar proportions in their discourse. This can be a reliable indicator that the IGSs writers are fairly aware of both functions of linguistic devices used as boosters and the genre conventions regarding these rhetorical features. However, some specific devices were identified not to be much favored by the IGSs writers such as think, know, and indeed, while some others were used more frequently in the IGSs' texts than the EXP writers' like believe and prove (see example 10). This could be likely attributed to the lingua/cultural preferences of the IGSs writers.

10) As with the results of the pretest, the posttest scores given by the two raters proved to be highly reliable (M-PhD 17).

The last point to be mentioned is the fact that hedges and boosters constitute %46.9 and %29.6 of all the IMMs used in the IGSs writers' texts respectively while the same markers comprise %42.6 and %24.3 of all markers employed in EXP texts (see Table 2). This is an indicator of the fact that the IGSs have kept rather the same high emphasis on the commitment to and detachment from the propositions they made among other functions performed by IMMs.

Attitude Markers
Attitude markers seem to appear as another group of IMMs in which no significant differences ($\chi^2 = 1.724$, p >.05) were detected across the two

corpora based on the Chi-square test results (see Table 4). That is, the two groups of writers have exploited attitude markers in their texts with relatively similar proportions. These findings are also in line with the results of the study conducted by Attarn (2014) on the ESP research articles written by Iranian and native English scholars. However, she investigated the discourses produced by the two groups of expert writers. This may be indicative of the IGSs' ability in taking personal stances towards the assertions they made, and following the requirements of the discourse community and genre in revealing their affective positions about the propositions. Still, this category of MMSs is not commonly used in either sub-corpus matching Keshavarz & Kheirieh's (2011) findings of Applied Linguistics RAs.

As regards the sub-categories of attitude markers naming attitude verbs, adverbs and adjectives, no significant differences were also detected between the two groups of texts, hence emphasizing the IGSs' commitment to the community's conventions and their writing within the framework of the genre regarding the amount of affective stances they can take towards their statements. The only remarkable difference discovered within the raw data was that the IGSs have used a very limited range of devices (about twenty-seven) out of the sixty-six attitude markers comparing with the EXP writers who employed about forty-five of them. That is, although the tokens of the devices exploited by the two groups of writers were relatively similar, their types were more limited in the IGSs' texts. In short, the IGSs have not used most of the linguistic elements regarded as attitude markers in their discourse. This could be possibly interpreted by acknowledging the limitation in the IGSs' knowledge of production vocabularies. In other words, it might still be difficult for these EFL students to use as many vocabularies as their expert counterparts in their writings.

Self-mentions
The results of this study demonstrated that the frequency of the various forms of self-mention in the corpora is quite different with the EXP writers using far more self-mention expressions in their texts than the IGSs (both MA and PhD). More clearly, they have used the markers

approximately five times as many as the IGSs writers. As Table 4 depicts, the detected variation is also statistically significant ($\chi^2 =$ 24.020, p <.05). The finding is confirmed by Hyland's (2001b, 2008) studies in which he found a similar amount of self-mention devices in Applied Linguistics articles written by established members of the community. Far lower use of self-mentions on the part of IGSs is indicative of their reluctance to signal their explicit presence in the discourse. This can be interpreted based on the assumption that student writers may lack the confidence to present their voice explicitly throughout the discourse since they may think that they are not in an academic position to present alternative views and challenge the opinions of established members of the community. Tang and John (1999) also comment that students can be intimidated by a sense of insecurity they might feel about the validity of their assertions which is the consequence of acknowledging themselves as the ones who locate at the lowest position in the academic community.

A further justification for the lower employment of self-mentions on the part of the IGSs writers might be the fact that the conventions of authorial presence and identity in expository discourse are not certain. Some textbooks and style guides are encouraging the novice academic writers to write impersonal and objective texts, while others advise them to make their presence explicit in the text using first-person pronouns. The same challenge might arise from cultural beliefs and conventions developed in the writer's social contexts.

With regard to the linguistic elements denoting self-mention, the EXP writers have used first person devices more than ten times as many as those employed by the IGSs in their texts. Instead, the result also showed that the IGSs' texts demonstrated a higher proportion of the expression 'the researcher(s)' comparing with the EXP writers' texts. The findings regarding the use of first person devices are in agreement with what Hyland (2002) found that many second language student writers appear uncomfortable with exploiting first-person pronouns in their texts. Moreover, they suggest that the IGSs students are more willing to signal their presence in the text more indirectly and implicitly

using 'the researcher(s)'. One interesting point to be mentioned is that this minor presence is mostly felt when they are obliged to refer to the researcher in describing their own study and methodology rather than when discussing their findings and presenting their claims:

> 11) Once <u>the researcher</u> made certain that the participants formed a homogenous sample, a pre-test examining the knowledge of the target words and reading passages was administered (F-PhD 6).

Yet, the EXP writers dominantly make their presence explicit even when they have alternatives not to refer to themselves in expressing the study's objectives:

> 12) In this article, <u>I</u> wish to explore dimensions of learner agency as a complex dynamic system (F-EXP 4).

Engagement Markers

Engagement markers are yet another type of interactional feature which is probably considered as the most conspicuous realization of an author's dialogic awareness (Hyland, 2001a). Employing directives, reader pronouns, interjections, and questions as different sub-categories of engagement markers, writers attempt to engage their readers as the real parties in constructing the discourse. This feature, however, was not welcomed similarly by the two groups of writers in the current study. That is, the IGSs writers, unlike the EXP authors, prefer not to engage the assumed readers much in the process of constructing their discourses. As Table 4 depicts, the EXP writers employed this metadiscoursal feature with a significantly higher frequency in their writings than the IGSs writers ($\chi^2 = 4.000$, p <.05). This variation can probably be attributed to the IGSs' cultural preferences in approaching politeness in interaction. Avoiding the employment of directive elements, which are frequent in EXP texts (see example 13), might be regarded as an indicator of the IGSs' attending to readers' negative face. Another interpretation for the lower use of engagement markers on the part of IGSs writers could be that they are not as pragmatically competent as their EXP counterparts in dealing with the disciplinary politeness strategies properly.

13) <u>Imagine</u> a society full of A$^+$ students as defined by traditional education (M-EXP 11).

Finally, the statistical analysis of the data showed that the Iranian MA and PhD Applied Linguistics students did not differ significantly (χ2 = .034, p >.05) in applying IMMs in their RAs (see Table 5). Therefore, the findings testified that the two sub-groups of the IGSs are relatively similar in applying and distributing the given metadiscoursal resources in their texts hence being located in a similar distance from the EXP members of the respective community regarding these specific rhetorical strategies.

Table 5 *The results of Chi-square for the PhD and MA writers regarding the frequency of IMMs*

Experience			Test Statistics		
	Observed N	Expected N	Residual	Chi-square	df	Asimp. sig.
PhD-tional	235	237.0	-2.0	.034	1	.854
MA-tional	239	237.0	2.0			
Total	474					

Conclusion and Implications

Comparing written academic discourse in the genre of RA, this investigation aimed at identifying any probable distance existing between the IGSs as novice members and the EXP figures of the academic community of Applied Linguistics in terms of utilizing IMMs as important rhetorical strategies. In other words, this study seeks to facilitate the chance of scholarly attendance for novice second language writers in the respective discourse community through providing assistance with rhetorical requirements and conventionalized strategies regarding the employment of IMMs. The findings demonstrated that, generally, there seems to exist some significant variations between the IGSs and the EXP writers in terms of frequency of IMMs in their discourses although the general pattern of IMMs distribution appears to be rather similar in the two groups of texts. That is, the findings evidenced the IGSs writers' reluctance in employing hedges, self-mentions, and engagement markers as illustrated to be required for the

genre by the established members. Consequently, it can be concluded that the IGSs are far away from the requirements of the community, discipline, and genre as regards the employment of these rhetorical resources. Of course, such deviations imply different interpretations and justifications among which are the IGSs' lingua/cultural background, the lower level of their language competence, and their lack of awareness regarding the importance of IMMs in academic discourse. Anyway, this should first be addressed properly by the IGSs themselves as the main addressee of the present study and by style guide writers, curriculum developers, syllabus designers, and academic writing teachers to make the graduate students qualified for successful and scholarly attendance in the community.

However, the findings proved that the IGSs writers are appropriately competent in applying boosters and attitude markers. That is, the differences between them and the EXP scholars were not meaningful. They showed their awareness in the way they should express their certainty towards the propositions and in taking affective stances about the statements. Furthermore, they demonstrated that they are relatively aware of the general patterns governing the use and distributions of IMMs. In other words, the proportions of different types of IMMs in the form of the percentage of all IMMs in the IGSs' texts and the distributional preferences of the five types demonstrate a relatively similar pattern with those of the EXP texts. Accordingly, it can be concluded that the IGSs writers follow, to a high degree, the general pattern governing the relative proportions of different types of IMMs which is possibly affected by the general framework of the gene and the community conventions.

The last point to maintain is the fact that the MA and PhD students exhibited a similar competence and ability in utilizing these rhetorical resources, and demonstrated common drawbacks in dealing with them in their discourses.

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