A Contrastive Study of Stance-Markers in Opinion Columns of English vs. Farsi Newspapers

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Abstract

This contrastive study was conducted to contrastively analyze English and Farsi newspaper opinion columns in terms of the frequency of different types of stance markers.60 newspaper opinion columns (30 written in English and 30 written in Farsi) from 10 wide spread newspapers published in the United States and Iran in 2015 were analyzed. Hyland's (2005) model of stance markers (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention) was used as the framework of analysis.The findings revealed that hedges and self-mentions used by English columnists were considerably more frequent than those employed by the Farsi columnists. In contrast, Farsi columnists used large number of boosters and attitude markers. Although, attitude markers were in the last position of sub-categories of stance markers in both corpora.Generally, it could be concluded that the similarities and differences among columnists could be related to the cultural and linguistic preferences of the writers in languages. This study could be beneficial for EFL students and teachers in understanding intercultural linguistic problems in language use, and could be used to lead to creative reading and writing in journalism and ESP courses.

Keywords: metadiscourse,interactional metadiscourse, stance markers, newspaper, opinion columns

Introduction

Despite the presence of various types of media in modern human's life, newspapers still remain as a powerful source of news and information. They not only serve an informative purpose in our modern societies, but also educate their readers by going beyond main facts in the in-depth analysis of columns, commentaries and editorials.

According to Greenberg (2000) opinion discourse presumes a significant communicative function through contributing to the media's role of producing certain, "preferred" opinions about the world. The function of opinion discourse within the larger context of newspaper coverage is to provide newsreaders a special and reliable "voice" that will speak to them directly about events of public importance (Flower, 1991, p.221). Persuasion is a main characteristic of opinion columns and these columns are "some of the most adequate examples of persuasive writings in all countries, setting standards for written persuasion" (Connor, 1996, p.144). Furthermore, opinion columns tend to obtain and strengthen much of the readers' knowledge and beliefs (Van Dijk, 1988). These texts, like editorials, concern topics that are ''considered to be of particular societal importance at the time of publication'' (Le, 2004, p.688).

Metadiscourse is a widely used term in current discourse analysis and English for Academic Purposes, but it is not always used to refer to the same thing. For some, it is an idea limited to elements which refer to the text itself, looking inside to those aspects of a discourse which help arrange the text as text (Hyland, 2010). Obviously, metadiscourse is a main area in discourse analysis which helps writers to carry their intentional message efficiently by creating a social and communicative interaction with the reader. Despite using metadiscourse markers, writers would be capable of creating a coherent text and therefore raising the efficiency of the text. Metadiscourse elements are rhetorical tools that make a text reader-friendly and as such enable the writer to reach the audience. Research over the past two decades has shown that the use of metadiscourse in writing may vary from one language and culture to another and that the conventions followed in its use may be different in different cultures (Abdollahzadeh, 2003; Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993; Mauranen, 1993). Cultural values are carried by language and set ways of engaging others in writing. They can affect perception, language, learning, communication and particularly the use of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005a).

Hyland (2005a) specifies that metadiscourse is included the 'interactive' and 'interactional' dimensions. 'Interactive' elements are features of a text that indicate the hypothesis a writer creates about his/her reader. The 'interactional' mentions expressions of the writer's position and stances, and as Hyland (2005a, p. 49) revealed, it is an expression of "the writer's voice or community based personality". By definition, the interactive features manifestthe writer's performance in their text, while the interactional features illustrateit. The interactive metadiscourseincludes transitions markers, frame markers, endophoramarkers, evidential and code glosses, likewise interactional resources include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention and engagement markers (Hyland, 2005a). Interpersonal metadiscourse is one of the linguistic features for directing a good relationship with audience in text. Because of this feature which examines interpersonal relationship and interaction between writer and reader, persuasive writing relates to this kind. Ultimately, interpersonal metadiscourse markers will be easy to find in persuasive text, especially opinion articles.Stance refers to the "writer-oriented features" of interaction and concerns the ways writers comment on the accuracy of a claim, the extent they show their commitment to it, or the attitude they want to express to a proposition or the reader (Hyland, 2005a). By stance, Hyland (2005b) indicates that researchers demonstrate their voice or personality and devolve their judgments, opinions and commitments. Presenting stance depends on the employment of four elements: hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions (see Figure 1).
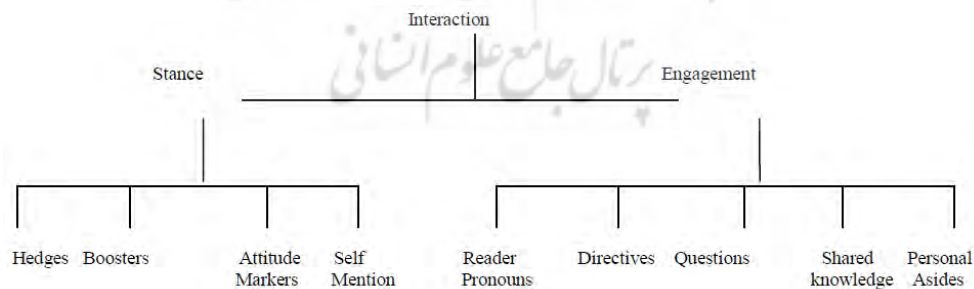

Figure 1: Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse

Hyland (2005a) defines hedges as devices that indicate the writer's decision to keep back complete dedication to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion instead of fact. In research articles, he states, all statements are evaluated and interpreted through assumptions; therefore, writers have toevaluate what weight to give a claim, supporting to the degree of accuracy or reliability that they want it to convey and maybeasserting protection in the event of its eventual displacement (Hyland, 1998). In other words, hedges highlight the subjectivity of an opinion by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and as a result express that opinion to negotiation (Hyland, 2005a). Isabel (2001) believed that hedging is important for two main reasons. The first is to present the author's attitude toward his declaration and the second reason is to show the author's attitude toward the readers, that is to say that the author shows his declaration to be depended on his expectations from the readers.

In addition, according to Hyland (2005a), hedges try to persuade readers by opening a diffuse space where interpretations can be discussed. Making a claim is risky because it can deny existing literature or question the views of one's readers. Arguments shouldassimilate readers' expectations that they will be allowed to participate in a dialogue and that their own views will be accepted in the discourse (Hyland, 2005a).

Restated in Hyland (2005a), boosters are words which allow writers to express their conviction in what they say and to point involvement with the topic and unity with their readers. In other words, boosters are words which allow writers to stopchoices, prevent opposing views and declare that they are definite in what they say (Hyland, 2005a). Their function is to emphasize shared information, group membership, and engagement with readers (Hyland, 1999). Ultimately, boosters can help writers to present their work with certainty while effecting solidarity between writers and readers, setting the caution suggested by hedges against declaration and involvement (Hyland, 2005b).

According to Hyland (2005a), attitude markers indicate the writer's affective, attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, along with others. Attitude is expressed throughout a text by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and mostly by attitude verbs, sentence adverbs, and adjectives. Attitude markers provide a chance for writers to reveal a notion of shared

attitudes, values and reactions to material. In this way, these devices help writers to reach their main goals in persuasive writings or persuading their readers (Hyland, 2005a).

As stated by Hyland (2005a), interactional meanings are largely sent through attitude and engagement markers in popularizations, showing the writer's affective reactions to material, mentioning what is important, and encouraging readers to engage with the topic. Unlike their roles in research papers, where they indicate the writer's attitudes and values shared with other members of a disciplinary community, attitude markers in popularizations help to convey an informal voice and emphasize the accessibility of the material. The attitudes expressed are those which the interested unqualified reader might be wanted to hold, rather than the writer.

Self-mention refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001). The presence or absence of explicit author reference is mainly a conscious choice by writers to embrace a particular stance and identity. All writing conveys information about the writer;however, the convention of personal projection through first person pronouns is maybe the most influential ways of self-representation (Ivanic, 1988).

Metadiscourse choices which accomplish explicit writer presence are almost related to authorial identity and authority (Ivanic, 1998). In research writing the strategic use of self-mentionenables writers to claim such authority by expressing their convictions, emphasizing their contribution to the field, and pursuing recognition for their work (Kuo, 1999). They can play an important role in showing the writers' relationship with the reader and their discourse community (Kuo, 1999). Kuo also mentions that knowing how to use personal pronouns productively has a great importance as giving them the opportunity to emphasize their own contributions to their field and reinforce the agreement with their readers. Self-mentions, in fact, help the writers to distinguish their voice from the other point of views and communicate the uniqueness of their contribution to create commitment and trustworthiness and develop connection with audience (Hyland, 2008).

Regarding the literature on the use of metadiscourse in newspaper genre, Dafouz-Milne (2008) investigated the role of metadiscourse in the opinion

columns of two elite newspapers: The Spanish *El País* and the British *The Times*. The results revealed that the Spanish writers applied considerably more textual metadiscourse than the English writers; on the contrary, the British writers deployed more interpersonal markers. Moreover, Noorian and Biria (2010) examined the role of interpersonal metadiscourse in opinion articles written by American and Iranian EFL journalists in two elite newspapers in the United States and Iran, *The New York Times* and *Tehran Times.* The findings indicated on the presence of interpersonal metadiscourse in both data sets, but there were significant differences between the two groups concerning the occurrences of interpersonal markers, particularly in the case of commentaries. Kuhi and Mojood (2012) examined a corpus of 60 newspaper editorials (written in English and Persian) based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse. The results disclosed some similarities and differences in the use and distribution of metadiscourse resources across English and Persian data which were attributed to cultural/linguistic backgrounds of both groups of editorialists. The interactional category and attitude markers proved to be, respectively, the predominant metadiscourse category and subcategory in newspaper editorials genre. In addition to these studies, there are a number of studies which focused on interactional metadiscourse, stance and engagement markers.Hyland (2008) suggested that interaction in academic writing is achieved by making choices of stance and engagement features. Based on the analysis of 240 research papers from eight disciplines, he found that self-mentions and reader-pronouns, particularly inclusive *we,* were more common in the humanities and social sciences while directives were the only interactive feature which occurred most frequently in the hard disciplines.Yazdani, Sharifi and Elyassi (2014) illuminated the role of interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Persian news articles about 9/11 events. For this purpose, 30 English and Persian news reports (15 from each) were collected randomly and Hyland's classification system was utilized. The findings from the research illustrated that American journalist employed interactional metadiscourse markers more frequently in their news articles. Moreover, Iranian journalists inclined not use self-mention and engagement markers. Moreover, Sayah and Hashemi (2014) explored two specific devices as stance and engagement features as Hyland's (2005) model and Prince, Frader, and Bosk's(1982) classification of hedges in different discourse ISI and non ISI journals. They

found significant differences in developing features like hedges, self-mention and appeals to shared knowledge in either of them.

Newspaper discourse is probably among the most remarkable genre since it is undeniably one of the most popular public media which has a wide range of audience (Noorian&Biria, 2010), however most of metadiscourse studies focused on academic genre. On the contrary, the investigation of metadiscourse and in particular interactional metadiscourse in newspaper genre has received little attention (Dafouz, 2008; Le, 2004; Abdollahzadeh, 2007; Noorian and Biria, 2010; Kuhi&Mojood, 2012). Ultimately, in newspaper genre, some studies such as Abdollahzadeh (2007) and Kuhi and Mojood(2012) investigated metadiscourse use in English and Persian newspaper editorials. However, little attention has been given to investigate interactional metadiscourse, and in particular stance markers in use in English and Farsi newspaper opinion columns. Regarding cross-linguist studies, to the present writer's knowledge, Abdollahzadeh (2007), and Kuhi and Mojood (2012) used cross-linguistically analysis of metadiscourse use in English and Farsi newspaper editorials. Nevertheless, there is a need of cross-linguist or contrastive research to investigate sub-categories of metadiscourse in newspaper opinion columns.

In order to fill the gap that exist in the studies on metadiscourse, this study was conducted to contrastively analyze the use of stance markers categories and sub-categories in English and Farsi newspaper opinion columns to compare the probable differences and similarities in these texts and to determine the most frequent sub-categories to the least frequent sub-categories of stance markers in each group and compare the similarities and differences. Besides, this contrastive study looked at some of the qualitative aspects of the use of stance markers in the two corpora in order to find the reasons behind these similarities and differences.

Method

Corpus

The corpus of this study consisted of 60 newspaper opinion columns (30 written in American-English and 30 in Farsi) which concluded 23603-word corpus of English and 22990-word corpus of Farsi. The opinion columns in

both sets of data were selected from different range of topics like social, political, cultural, economic, and world events. The two corpora were constructed by the use of the opinion columns published in the electronic versions of five English and Farsi newspapers. English newspapers included *The Los Angeles Times (latimes.com), The New York Times (nytimes.com), USA Today (usatoday.com), Washington Post (washingtonpost.com),* and *The Washington Times (washingtontimes.com).*Farsi newspapers included *Arman (armandaily.ir), Etemad (etemadnewspaper.ir), Shargh (sharghdaily.ir), Keyhan*(*keyhnnews.ir*), and *Mardomsalari (mardomsalari.com).* From each newspaper, six opinion columns were selected. Due to the fact that cultural norms are different across different languages and also across varieties of English (Adel, 2006), only American-English newspapers were included in the data to prevent the possible effects of this factor on the results and findings of the study. Also, due to the possible effect of diachronic factors, only the ones published in 2015 were included in the corpora.

Instrumentation

The analyses in this study were based on the first dimension of Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse in academic texts.He subcategorizes stance as hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention. (See Figure 1). The reason for choosing this model was that it is a powerful, explicit and useful model of metadiscourse. The items considered to be stance markers were identified and categorized in the texts based on Hyland's list of "metadiscourse items" (2005a, pp. 218-224), (see Appendix A).His classification of metadiscourse markers provides a good starting point for the analysis as it is fairly comprehensive; therefore, few elements were likely to be failed to notice.Beside searching items, functions of items in the texts similarly were also considered in the qualitative analysis. Since this list was originally presented in English, each of these items were translated into Farsi by using the Aryanpour Progressive English-Persian Dictionary (2000) in order to have a Farsi list for the Farsi corpus.

Procedure

In order to reach the purpose of the study, the corpus of the research was settled after finding opinion columns from newspaper web sites and selecting different topics with different columnists.Subsequently, based on Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse, the stance markers were distinguished and classified manually in the texts.Conversely, the analysis was not limited to search items; frequency of stance markers in the analyzed text was also considered.

One of the key feature of metadiscourse is that metadiscourse distinguishes external and internal relations. An internal relation connects events in the text, arranging the discourse as an argument and expressing function of metadiscourse. An external relation connects events in the world outside the text. Thus, in the process of analyzing texts, the sentences representing an external relation (e.g. citations) were not considered. In English corpus, for instance:

"as Obama put it, "to get worked up around issues that don't <u>actually</u> make <u>us</u> safer but make for good political sound bites."*The Washington Post, November 20, 2015*

In the sentence above, "actually" as a booster, and "us" as a self-mention were not considered. Another example from Farsi corpus is

ممکن است یک رستوران بگوید <u>من</u> در ازای قیمت یک‌پرس غذا، دوپرس از همان غذا به مشتری می‌دهم.

Arman, June 10, 2015

[Maybe, one restaurant tells <u>I</u> give two portion of food to a costumer in exchange for price of one portion of food.]

In the sentence from the Farsi corpus, "I or من" was not considered as a self-mention.

After identifying and categorizing the stance markers, in order toestablish the frequency of different types of stance markers and to determine the differences between the two corpora, aquantitative analysis was conducted.Chi-square tests were utilized to analyze the data to explore any differences among the overall frequency of stance markers in Farsi and English corpus, and also among sub-categories of stance markers in both

groups.Moreover, the most frequent sub-categories of stance markers were determined. To examine stance markers in Farsi opinion columns, the Farsi equivalents of English markers were considered. Since a single judgment seemed to be inadequate, the opinion columns were double checked by the supervisor. Several discussion sessions were held with the supervisor to solve any problems in the identification of stance markers used in the newspaper opinion columns. Furthermore, the length of the textswasnormalized to a common basis by applying 1000-word approach (elements per 1000 words) to compare the frequency of occurrence because it was not possible to have texts with exactly the same length.

Results

As it was mentioned earlier, opinion columns of English and Farsi newspapers were analyzed to find differences and similarities of stance markers usage. Here, the frequency of stance markers was counted and calculated per 1,000 words. Table 1 demonstrates the total number of stance markers in the opinion columns of English and Farsi newspapers per 1000 words as well as percentage of the frequency.

Table1

Total number of Stance Markers per1000 words in two different Opinion Columns of Newspapers

Corpus	Raw Number of Stance Markers	Frequency per 1000 words	Percentage
English (23,603 words)	818	34.65	3.46%
Farsi (22,990 words)	493	21.43	2.14%

As illustrated in Table 1, the total frequency of stance markers of English opinion columns consists of 3.46 percent of the words and Farsi ones consist of 2.14 percent.

Chi-square tests were run in order to examine probable significant differences between the Farsi and English groups for employing stance markers.

Table 2
Chi-square Analysis of overall frequency of stance markers on Hyland (2005)

	Chi-square	df	Asymp. Sig.
Stance markers	80.568	1	.000

Based on the results of Chi-square test in Table 2, it can be inferred that there was a noticeable difference between the groups in overall using of stance markers (p<0.05).

In order to find the differences and similarities in the use of stance markers in these texts, the frequency of each stance marker per thousand words were calculated and their percentages were computed. Table 3 illustrates the differences and similarities of each stance marker in each group.

Table3
Distribution and percentages of Sub-Categories of Stance Marker in English and Farsi Opinion Columns

Stance Markers	English			Farsi		
	Raw Frequency	Frequency per 1000 words	Percentage	Raw Frequency	Frequency per 1000 words	Percentage
Hedges	380	16.1	46.47	101	4.39	20.48
Boosters	157	6.65	19.19	215	9.35	43.64
Attitude Markers	52	2.20	6.34	83	3.61	16.85
Self-Mention	229	9.70	28.00	94	4.08	19.03
Total	818	34.65	100	493	21.43	100

As indicated in Table 3, in the case of English corpus, Hedges (16.1 per thousand words) are followed by Self-Mention (9.70 per thousand words), Boosters (6.65 per thousand words), and Attitude Markers (2.20 per thousand words), while in Farsi corpus Boosters (9.35 per thousand words) followed by Hedges (4.39 per thousand words), Self-Mention (4.08 per thousand words), and Attitude Markers (3.61 per thousand words). Results revealed that Attitude

Markers placed in the last position in both English and Farsi opinion columns, although the Farsi group used these resources slightly more than the English group (3.61 vs. 2.20 per thousand words).

Table 4 illustrates the findings of sub-categories of stance markers, and a Chi-square test on both English and Persian corpora.

Table 4

Chi-square Analysis of sub-categories of stance markers based on Hyland (2005)

Sub-categories of stance markers	Chi-square	df	Asymp.Sig.
Hedges	161.832[a]	1	.000
Boosters	9.043[b]	1	.003
Attitude markers	7.119[c]	1	.008
Self-mention	56.424[d]	1	.000

Based on the results of Chi-square analysis in Table 4, it can be inferred that English columnists showed more tendency toward the use of hedges, and self-mentions ($p<0.05$). On the contrary, Farsi columnists used more boosters and attitude markers.

Moreover, the most frequent sub-categories of stance marker had been counted (Table 5).

Table 5

Distribution and percentages of Most Frequent Sub-Categories of Stance Marker in English and Farsi Opinion Columns

Stance Markers	English			Farsi		
	Most Frequent Sub-Category	Raw Frequency	Percentage	Most Frequent Sub-Category	Raw Frequency	Percentage
Hedges	*Would*	72	18.94	*May*	17	16.83
Boosters	*Really*	15	9.55	*Must*	81	37.67
Attitude Markers	*Even*	22	42.30	*Even*	35	42.16
Self-Mention	*We*	67	29.25	*Our*	44	46.80

As shown in Table 5, in English corpus, the highest frequency of Hedges use belongs to *"Would"* with (18.94%). Boosters are used mostly *"Really"* with (9.55%). *"Even"* with (42.30%) is used frequently as Attitude Markers, and finally *"We"* (29.25%) as Self- Mention are the most widely used one.On the other hand, in Farsi corpus, the highest frequency of Hedges use belongs to *"May or* ممکن، محتمل*"* with (16.83%). *"Must or* باید*"* with (37.67%) is frequently used as Boosters. Like the English corpus, *"Even or* حتی*"* with (42.16%) has the highest frequency in Attitude Markers, and *"Our or* مال ما*"* with (46.80%) is frequently used as Self-Mention.

Going beyond the statistical analysis and frequency-based information of the data, this contrastive study looked at some of the qualitative aspects of the use of stance markers in the two corpora, which revealed some details.

a.Hedges: The data in Table 2, demonstrated that hedges were more frequently used in the English opinion columns than in the Farsi opinion columns. Although the purpose of the study has not been to analyze if these hedges are used correctly, it is interesting to study howthey are used. The following extracts are examples of the corpora in which some of the hedges occurred. Literal translations are given for Farsi examples.

Example (a):

Second, it **seems probable** that cops **would** be less **likely** to abuse their authority if they were being tracked. *(En. Corpus, The New York Times, April 14, 2015)*

The topic is about "The Lost Language of Privacy", and the writer expressed reasons to put body-mounted cameras on police officers and believed that it would be a good idea, and also had a careful approach to it.

Example (b):

The foundation is not required to disclose donors or expenditures, so following the money in a **possible** secret operation **may** not be **possible**. *(En. Corpus, The Washington Times, March 25, 2015).*

The opinion column is about "Another murky mystery surrounding Hillary's private email". The writer tried to answer one of the unanswered questions about the BlumenthalDrumheller connection and avoided certainty.

Example (c):

All post-publication changes **would** be visible to readers, and the editor **could** provide annotations to explain why the changes were made, and when. *(En. Corpus, Los Angeles Times, August 25, 2015).*

''A rule for online news: Errors are inevitable; lack of transparency is not'' is the topic. The writer tried to explain advantages of digital publishing in order to alert readers to substantive changes and alterations. The function of hedges is to carry a cautious approach to the post-publication changes.

Example (d):

این نامه **ممکن است**به مدیران ارشد یا خود وزیر آموزش و پرورش ارسال شود همانطور که **ممکن است** آنها به مسئولان دیگری نامه بنویسند.*(Fr. Corpus. Arman, February 3,2015)*

[This letter **may**be sent to top managers or education minister, while they **may** write a letter for other administrators.]

This opinion column is about problems of teachers in Iran. Some teachers sent some letters to officials in order to express their discontents. The hedges in this example, represent the weakening of the claim, and may show doubt.

Example (e):

به‌نظر می‌رسدکه این هدف به‌همراه اهداف دیگری در سال ۲۰۱۵ نیز مطرح باشد و کشورها متعهد شوند که نسبت خط فقر کشور خود را در قیاس با سال پایه ۱۹۹۰ به نصف کاهش دهند.*(Fr. Corpus, Shargh, September 30, 2015)*

[It **seems** that this purpose with other purposes is raised in 2015 and countries pledge to decrease their county's poverty line scale by half in comparison with 1990.]

The topic is about poverty line with political base, and the writer gave ideas about the updated the international poverty line. Here, the hedges function is to convey a cautious approach to the statements being made.

Example (f):

افزون بر این قیمت بازار نفت همیشه‌ثبات نداشته و**گاهي**دچار نوسان بوده است.
(Fr. Corpus, Mardomsalari, February 22, 2015)

[In addition, oil price has not always been constant and has **sometimes** fluctuated.]

The topic is about oil price and lobbing with it. The writer's idea is that world policies influence oil price.The writer is basically expressing that he cannot be certain about oil priceand his idea lies in his experience.

Moreover, the results of the study in Table 6 indicated that some hedges were used more often than others.

Table 6
The ranked frequency of most common Hedges per1000 words in two different Opinion Columns of Newspapers

English opinion columns	Percentage	Farsi opinion columns	Percentage
1. Would	(18.94%)	1. May ممکن	(16.83%)
2. Could	(13.64%)	2. Rather بیشتر	(7.92%)
3. Should	(6.57%)	3. Couldn't نتوانست	(7.92%)
4. May	(5.78%)	4. Seems به نظر می رسد	(6.93%)
5. Possible	(4.73%)	5. Often اغلب	(5.94%)
6. Might	(4.73%)	6. Maybe شاید	(5.94%)
7. Likely	(3.68%)	7. Could می توانست	(3.96%)
8. Rather	(2.63%)	8. Sometimes گاهی	(3.96%)
9. About	(2.36%)	9. Unlikely بعید	(2.97%)
10. Claim	(2.36%)	10. Claim ادعا	(2.97%)

Table 6 demonstrated the most common to the least common hedges in English and Farsi opinion columns. "*Would*" with (18.94%) stand in the first place of the table in English opinion columns whereas, "*May*" with (16.83%) stand in the first place of the Farsi opinion columns.

b.*Boosters:*Based on the results in Table 2, boosters were more frequently used in Farsi corpus than in English corpus. Following extracts are some examples of boosters found in English and Farsi data. Literal translations are given for Farsi examples.

Example (a):

Certainly Republicans have identified foreign policy as a winning issue. *(En. Corpus, The Washington Post, June 12, 2015)*

The topic is about "America's foreign policy recovery". In this part, the writer explained why some blamed the current administration. The booster seems to be used in order to express a high degree of confidence in the sentence.

Example (b):

America may be great, **in fact** I would argue it is, but it **sure** doesn't look great right now. *(En. Corpus, The New York Times, September 14, 2015)*

"America is great" is the topic, and the writer compared Europe with America in greatness. Here, "in fact" precedes the idea or hypothesis that America is great, and "sure" shows a high degree of confidence of the writer.

Example (c):

This would be done to make the Internet more "fair," **of course**. *(En. Corpus, The Washington Times, February 16, 2015)*

The topic is about "FCC, FEC look to ruin the internet". "This" in the sentence referred to regulate the Internet like a utility service. The booster seems to function as a rhetorical device used to convey the author's interpretation as a generally accepted idea or fact.

Example (d):

واضح استکه هنرمندان تئاتر و تجسمی کشور نیز جزو همین جامعه هستند و برای همین جامعه کار می‌کنند، پس ایراد **باید**در طراحی پوستر باشد.*(Fr. Corpus, Mardomsalari, January 13, 2015)*

[It is **clear** that theater and performing artists of the country are also members of this society and work for this society; so, objection **must** be in the design of the poster.]

The topic is about the poster of Fajr film festival. The writer criticized the design and designer of the poster. The boosters are used to express the author's personal opinion in a distinct way.

Example (e):

در واقع باید عواملی که باعث مهاجرت نخبگان می‌شود مورد بررسی قرار گیرد *(Fr. Corpus, Arman, November 22, 2015)*

[**In fact**, factors that cause brain drain **must** be examined.]

The opinion column is about reasons of brain drain in Iran. In this part, the writer talked about Iranian elites who are experts in other countries.The boosters seem to function as rhetorical devices used to convey the author's interpretation as self-evident.

Example (f):

اگر این اشتباه تاریخی در این مقطع حساس انجام شود، **قطعا** موجب ناکارآمدی بیش از پیش سیستم فعلی براساس دلایل زیر می‌شود.

(Fr. Corpus, Keyhan, December 20, 2015)

[If this mistake in this critical time occurs, it will **certainly** cause this current system ineffective more than ever for these reasons.]

The topic is about why the transfer of insurance to health department is not good. The booster appeared to be used to reveal a high degree of certainty in the text.

Furthermore, the results in Table 7 indicated a preference for certain boosters.

Table 7

The ranked frequency of most common Boosters per1000 words in two different Opinion Columns of Newspapers

English opinion columns	Percentage	Farsi opinion columns	Percentage
1. Really	(9.55%)	1. Must باید	(37.67%)
2. Never	(7.64%)	2. Of course البته	(9.76%)
3. Sure	(7.00%)	3. Certainly قطعا	(9.30%)
4. Found	(6.36%)	4. Believe اعتقاد دارد	(6.51%)
5. Of course	(6.36%)	5. True درست	(3.72%)
6. Find	(5.73%)	6. Show نشان دادن	(3.25%)
7. Believe	(5.09%)	7. Really واقعا	(2.79%)
8. In fact	(4.45%)	8. No doubt بی شک	(1.86%)
9. Indeed	(4.45%)	9. Always همواره	(1.39%)
10. Certainly	(3.82%)	10. Clearly آشکارا	(0.46%)

The results in Table 7 revealed the most common to the least common boosters in English and Farsi opinion columns. "*Really*" with (9.55%) stands in the first place of Table 7 in English opinion columns. On the other hand, "*Must*" with (37.67%) stands in the first place of the Farsi opinion columns.

c. *Attitude Markers:* The data in Table 2 shows that the frequency of attitude markers in both English and Farsi opinion columns are nearly the same. The following extracts are examples of the corpora in which some of the attitude markers occurred. Literal translations are given for Farsi examples.

Example (a):

In particular, it's **important** that new members keep those opportunities in mind, and act when and where they can to refocus Congress on the people's business.*(En. Corpus, USA Today, January 15, 2015)*

The opinion column is about "Things Congress can get down in 2015". In this part, the writer focused on the frustration with an obstinate "do-nothing" Congress. In this sentence, the writer delivered importance to the tasks of new members of Congress.

Example (b):

And, as the debate over cop-cams has unfolded, I've been **surprised** by how many people don't see the downside to this policy. *(En. Corpus, The New York Times, April 14, 2015)*

The topic is about "The lost language of privacy", and the writer came to this conclusion that putting body-mounted cameras on police officers is not a good idea and delivered his surprise.

Example (c):

Sanders, Clinton's closest competitor, turned in a capable performance as well, and, **importantly**, avoided his occasional weakness of sounding angry. *(En. Corpus, Los Angeles Times, October 14, 2015)*

The opinion column is about "Democratic debate a talking-point triumph for Hillary Clinton". The writer delivered importance of avoiding angry sound.

Example (d):

حساسیت و واکنش شهروندان در فضای مجازی علیه اظهارات اخیر نتانیاهو وسیع و **فوق‌العاده**بود.

(Fr. Corpus, Shargh, March 6, 2015)

[Sensitivity and reaction of citizens in social media against recent claims of Netanyahu were extensive and **remarkable**.]

The topic is about Iran nuclear deal, and its influence on politics and society. The writer started the text with the sentence above, and expressed his wonderfulness about the proposition.

Example (e):

دراین مبحث نیز **متاسفانه**با ضعف‌هایی جدی مواجهیم.

(Fr. Corpus, Etemad, August 1, 2015)

[Also in this topic, **unfortunately**, we encounter serious weaknesses.]

This topic is about the new plan of air pollution prevention. In this part, the writer focused on management of city traffic that could control air pollution, and delivered his frustration.

Example (f):

جالب آنکه آنچه مایه تزلزل دولت بیروت شده عدم توانایی آن برای حل معضل زباله‌هایی است که چهره شهری را که زمانی عروس خاورمیانه نامیده می‌شد آلوده کرده است.

(Fr. Corpus, Arman, August 31, 2015)

[It is **interesting** that what caused insecurity in Beirut government was inability of the government in solving garbage crisis which has polluted the city.]

The opinion column is about garbage crisis of Beirut and widespread protests by people. Based on the writer's idea, the inability of the government in solving garbage crisis was interesting.

Moreover, the results of the study revealed that some attitude markers were used more often than others.Table 8 presented the most common to the least common Attitude Markers in English and Farsi opinion columns. In both English and Farsi opinion columns, "Even" with (42.30%) and (42.16%) stand in the first place of the table.

Table 8

The ranked frequency of most common Attitude Markers per1000 words in two different Opinion Columns of Newspapers

English opinion columns	Percentage	Farsi opinion columns	Percentage
1. Even	(42.30%)	1. Even حتی	(42.16%)
2. Important	(23.07%)	2. Unfortunately متاسفانه	(15.66%)
3. Agree	(7.69%)	3. !	(13.25%)
4. Agreed	(7.69%)	4. Interesting جالب	(4.81%)
5. !	(3.84%)	5. Hopeful امیدوار	(۴.۸۱%)
6. Fortunately	(1.92%)	6. Surprising تعجب برانگیز	(۲.۴۰%)
7. Surprised	(1.92%)	7. Astonishing عجیب	(2.40%)
8. Disappointing	(1.92%)	8. Important مهم	(2.40%)
9. Appropriate	(1.92%)	9. Remarkable فوق العاده	(1.۲۰%)
10. Importantly	(1.92%)	10. Fortunately خوشبختانه	(1.20%)

d. *Self-mention:* The data in Table 2 presented that self-mention was more frequently used in the English opinion columns than in the Farsi opinion columns. The following extracts are examples of the corpora in which some of the self-mentions occurred. Literal translations are given for Farsi examples.

Example (a):

By limiting the height of buildings based on the width of the street, **we** can increase density without creating high-rise canyons. *(En. Corpus, Los Angeles Times, July 24, 2015)*

The topic is "How to make Los Angeles more affordable and more livable". In this part, the writer answered what would better planning look like in Los Angeles.

Example (b):

I don't think it's naïve to suggest that what came out ofParis gives **us** real reason to hope in an area where hope has been all too scarce. *(En. Corpus, The New York Times, December 14, 2015)*

The topic is "Hope from Paris", and the writer talked about Paris climate accord, and in this sentence, the writer represents himself.

Example (c):

Now as the U.S. enters a presidential election year, **our** economy seemingly back on track after years of inactivity, the markets are preparing for a different action. *(En. Corpus, USA Today, December 15, 2015)*

The topic is "Markets are never ready for the Fed". In this part, the writer talked about markets that are not prepared for the fallout by any stretch of the imagination. Here, "our" represents the writer and more other people.

Example (d):

اقتصاد **ما** از بیماری‌های گونه‌گون و مزمنی رنج می‌برد که جز به عزمی والا و همتی جهادی و تکیه بر داشته‌های خودی، امیدی به درمان آن‌ها نخواهد بود.

(Fr. Corpus, Keyhan, June 15, 2015)

[**Our** economy has been suffered from so many chronic and diverse diseases that there would be no hope for remedy except high resolution, and relying on own assets.]

The topic is about Iran's nuclear deal and its following consequences. In this part, the writer claimed that Iran's economic problems were not relied on just sanctions.

Example (e):

اگر قیمت‌گذار دولت باشد، **ما** سال‌ها عقب خواهیم افتاد.

(Fr. Corpus, Arman, June 9, 2015)

[If the government controls prices, **we** will get back down the years.]

The topic is about price controls, and based on the writer's idea, producers should determine the prices. In this sentence, "we" means the writer and people.

Example (f):

پایین آمدن سرانه مطالعه در جامعه **ما** دلایل عمیقی دارد و نظر **من** نیز در این باره حرف آخر نیست.

(Fr. corpus, Etemad, May 13, 2015)

[Fall of reading capitation in **our** society has profound reasons and **my** idea about this is not the last word.]

The opinion column is about what new generation is not questioning. The sentence above is the first sentence of the column.

Furthermore, the results of the study suggested a preference for certain Self-mentions. Table 9 showed the most common to the least common self-mention in English and Farsi opinion columns.

Table 9

The ranked frequency of most common Self-Mention per1000 words in two different Opinion Columns of Newspapers

English opinion columns	Percentage	Farsi opinion columns	Percentage
1. We	(29.25%)	1. Our مال ما	(46.80%)
2. I	(28.82%)	2. I من	(۱۸ ۰%)
3. Our	(14.84%)	3. We ما	(13.82%)
4. Us	(8.29%)	4. My مال من	(۱۰,۶۳%)
5. My	(4.80%)	5. Me مرا	(۰.۴25%)
6. Me	(3.63%)	6. Us به ما	(4.25%)
7. Mine	(0.87%)	7. The author نگارنده	(2.12%)

In Table 9, "We" with (29.25%) stands in the first place of the table in English opinion columns. In contrast, "Our" with (46.80%) stands in the first place of the Farsi opinion columns.

Discussion

This study was conducted to compare the frequency of different types of stance markers in English and Persian newspaper opinion columns in order toidentify the probable differences and similarities in the use of stance markers in thesetwo types of data. Moreover, this contrastive study looked at some of the qualitative aspects of the use of stance markers in the two corpora to find the reasons behind these similarities and differences.

The results showed that stance markers are more frequently used in opinion columns of English than Farsi newspapers. The findings regarding the overall use of stance markers in Farsi corpus revealed that there is a significant difference between the use of stance markers in English and Farsi newspaper opinion columns.The results of Chi-square tests confirmed the statistical significance of the difference among the two categories of English and Farsi columnists.This finding demonstrates that English writers were evidently aware of the important role of metadiscourse in persuasive writings (Hyland, 2005a).In a similar study, Yazdani et al. (2014) illustrated that the number of interactional metadiscourse markers employed by American journalists was higher in comparison with Iranian journalists about news articles of 9/11 events. On the contary, Kuhi and Mojood (2012) found that overall frequency of metadiscourse resources in two groups of editorials- English and Persian editorials- was similar, and they concluded that both groups used metadiscourse to clearly signal text organization, assess its contents and persuade their readers.

The findings regarding the use of each stance markers in both groups revealed that hedges were most frequently used in the English opinion columns. However, the results revealed that hedges were not frequently used in the selected Farsi opinion columns. It can be concluded that English columnists refuse to give the commitment and open dialogue, and that they are more sensitive in asserting their claims and tend to address their readers indirectly (Ghadyani&Tahririan, 2014).The hedges function as means of conveying a cautious approach to the statements being made, which might be a strategy used by writers to "gain acceptance for their work" (Hyland, 2000, p. 179) since hedges provide the author the opportunity toavoid taking responsibility of the statement at a later time. Also, it suggests that the author is open for discussion or even open to being proven wrong. Claiming to be too certain of a statement could cause a reader to become suspicious about a potential lack of objectivity behind the statement.As Crystal (1988) mentioned, using hedging words are not always because of the author's lack of knowledge. He revealed three other reasons for using hedging words; first, people intentionally do not like to be definite all the time. Second, sometimes, the writer understands that the audience needs only half-truth specifically in scientific writings. And third,

using hedge words can act as safe guard, approaching further questions. This result was appeared in the study carried out by Kuhi and Mojood (2012) in which they concluded that the American editorialists overuse hedges, as compared to Iranian editorialists. Furthermore, in the news articles written by American journalists, hedges were the highest metadiscourse marker in Yazdani et al. research.

In Contrast, Farsi columnist used more Boosters than English columnist in the selected opinion columns to show they are certain about a given idea. Such a difference is clearly representing that cultural differences are certainly at work in text creation. The lack of hedges and the overuse of boosters in Farsi opinion columns provides feeling of certainty in contrast to the English opinion columns. Farsi columnists appear to be less conservative and instead address their readers directly. The risk of overusing boosters is that the writer would be in possibility of being criticized by the readers. Overusing boosters by Iranian writers might demonstrate that they are so certain about their results that they use powerful expressions, leaving little doubt about their interpretations. This issue might imply Iranian writers' lack of knowledge of such devices. In the studies by Noorian and Biria (2010) and Kuhi and Mojood (2012), these results were demonstrated.

The frequency of attitude markers in Farsi opinion columns were more than English opinion columns. This indicates that these markers played a role in Iranian columnists' attempt in persuading their readers regardless oftheir cultural or linguistic backgrounds (Kuhi&Mojood, 2012).However, attitude markers were in the last position of sub- categories of stance markers in both corpora. These results showed that both English and Farsi columnists are reluctant to show their attitudes directly.The reason that could be mentionedis that both set of writers in the genre of opinion columns might be unaware of the power of these metadiscourse devices which help writers in accomplishing their main goals in persuasive writing and in persuading their readers. This result is quite inconsistent with the result of the study conducted by Kuhi and Mojood (2012). Beside the similar use of attitude markers in both sets of data, the results uncovered that attitude markers form the most frequentmetadiscourse strategy, both within interactional category andmetadiscourse resources, in general, in both English and Persiancorpus.Moreover, in the study of Yazdani et al. Persian news article involve a higher degree of these markers than the Americans. They indicated that Iranian journalists tend to show their stance implicitly.

The findings also revealed that American columnists employed self-mention more than Farsi columnists. Employing more Self-Mention by the

English columnists suggest that they like to attach themselves to the discourse community, which helps them to get involved in the argument (Hyland, 2001)**.** The reason why self-mention is not frequent in Farsi opinion columns is because there might be different writing styles in formal contexts. According to Yazdani et al.Iranian writers have instructed to use a third person pronoun and passive structure to prevent self-mentioning in their texts.Therefore, as Wishnoff (2000) argues, culture is important in clarifying what peoplesay, and how, where, and when they say it.

The study revealed the most frequent sub-categories to the least frequent sub-categories of stance markers in each group. Apparently, certain hedges were more commonly used than others. The modal verbs *would, could,* and *may* appeared to be the most frequently used hedges for both groups.Previous research has demonstrated that ESL textbooks seem to place a higher emphasis on teaching modal verbs as ways of expressing doubt or certainty to foreign learners (Holmes, 1988). Perhaps this focus in ESL textbooks might be one of the underlying reasons why the texts in this study contained a large number of modal verbs functioning as hedges. Moreover, these results suggested that boosters such as *really* in English corpus, and *must* in Farsi corpuswere frequently used among columnists.Perhaps this indicates that the columnists were willing to boost their statements to a certain degree, and prefer to use a confidence marker as strong as *must*. As for employing attitude markers, the findings revealed that *even* was used in both of the study corpora. Furthermore, some self-mentions were commonly used such as *we*, *our*, and *I*. The use of *we* and *our* suggest that authors want to spread responsibility by making it seem more collective (Ekoc, 2011; Koutsantoni, 2006).Besides, Ivanic (1998) mentioned that using *I* is critical to reliability of the text, and helps to form the commitment of writers to their words and create a relationship with their readers.

To conclude, the present study set out to compare the frequency of sub-categories of stance markers in English and Persian opinion columns of newspapers to the probable differences and similarities. Concerning similarities, the frequency of attitude markers in both sets of opinion columns were nearly the same, and also less frequent subcategories of stance markers in both groups were matching. The findings were also interesting in that the most common sub-categories of attitude markers in both sets of data were equivalent. These similarities can be attributed to generic conventions. In other words, the necessity of acting within the same genre would not support using the same amount and type of metadiscourse cross-culturally, however, the similarities found between two groups of data demonstrated that genre conventions demand the specialist writers have some priorities close to each other

(Kuhi&Mojood, 2012). Despite relative similarities of English and Farsi opinion columns, some significant intercultural differences in the linguistic preferences of American and Iranian columnists were found. Based on the results, it could be stated that the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention, and the most common sub-categories of stance markers differed across two languages which were clearly making a cultural difference. According to Hyland (1998b), the use of metadiscourseitems has been nearly related to the traditions and norms of cultures in genera and discourse communities.

This study would give insights into the teaching of English as a foreign language in general and the teaching of writing in English in particular. The study could be beneficial for EFL students in understanding their intercultural linguistic problems in language use, helping to produce more effective and reader-based texts. Moreover, the findings of the study could be used to lead in creative reading and writing in journalism classes and ESP courses. Thus, helping students of journalism to produce a kind of writing that is really informative and persuasive in the eyes of readers and also consistent with the background cultural context. 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.

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Appendix A

Metadiscourse items investigated

Hedges	Estimate
About	Estimated
Almost	Fairly
Apparent	Feel
Apparently	Feels
Appear	Felt
Appeared	Frequently
Appears	From my perspective
Approximately	From our perspective
Argue	From this perspective
Argued	Generally
Argues	Guess
Around	Indicate
Assume	Indicated
Assumed	Indicates
Broadly	In general
Certain amount	In most cases
Certain extent	In most instances

Certain level	In my opinion
Claim	In my view
Claimed	In this view
Claims	In our opinion
Could	In our view
Couldn't	Largely
Doubt	Likely
Doubtful	Mainly
Essentially	may
Maybe	Supposed
Might	Supposes
Mostly	Suspect
often	Suspects
On the whole	Tend to
Ought	Tended to
Perhaps	Tends to
Plausible	To my knowledge
Plausibly	Typical
Possible	Typically
Possibly	Uncertain
Postulate	Uncertainly
Postulated	Unclear
Postulates	Unclearly
Presumable	Unlikely
Presumably	Usually
Probable	Would
Probably	Wouldn't
Quite	**Boosters**
Rather x	Actually
Relatively	Always
Roughly	Believe
Seems	Believed
Should	Believes
Sometimes	Beyond doubt
Somewhat	Certain
Suggest	Certainly
Suggested	Clear
Suggests	Clearly
Suppose	Conclusively
Decidedly	Prove
Definite	Proved
Definitely	Proves
Demonstrate	Realize
Demonstrated	Realized
Demonstrates	Realizes

Doubtless	Really
Establish	Show
Established	Showed
Evident	Shown
Evidently	Shows
Find	Sure
Finds	Surely
Found	Think
In fact	Thinks
Incontestable	Thought
Incontestably	Truly
Incontrovertible	True
Incontrovertibly	Undeniable
Indeed	Undeniably
Indisputable	Undisputedly
Indisputably	Undoubtedly
Know	Without doubt
Known	**Attitude Markers**
Must	!
Never	Admittedly
No doubt	Agree
Obvious	Agrees
Obviously	Agreed
Of course	Amazed
Amazing	Importantly
Amazingly	Inappropriate
Appropriate	Inappropriately
Appropriately	Interesting
Astonished	Interestingly
Astonishing	Prefer
Astonishingly	Preferable
Correctly	Preferably
Curious	Preferred
Curiously	Remarkable
Desirable	Remarkably
Desirably	Shocked
Disappointed	Shockingly
Disappointing	Striking
Disappointingly	Strikingly
Disagree	Surprised
Disagreed	Surprising
Disagrees	Surprisingly
Dramatic	Striking
Dramatically	Strikingly
Essential	Surprised
Essentially	Surprising

Even x	Surprisingly
Expected	Unbelievable
Expectedly	Unbelievably
Fortunate	Understandable
Fortunately	Understandably
Hopeful	Unexpected
Hopefully	Unexpectedly
Important	Unfortunate
Unfortunately	My
Unusual	Our
Unusually	Mine
Unusual	Us
Self Mention	The author
I	The author's
We	The writer
Me	The writer's

Biodata

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