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Loyalty to Traditional Prescriptions or Facing the Challenge of Realities: An Investigation into the Status of Metadiscourse Awareness in Academic Writing Coursebooks

Davud Kuhi

Department of the English Language, Maragheh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Maragheh, Iran

*Corresponding author: davudkuhi@iau-maragheh.ac.ir

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Abstract

The well-established affiliation of metadiscourse research tradition to the philosophy of ESP raises some inevitable expectations on how much and how well the concept has been geared to meet the practical necessities of academic writing pedagogy. In light of such an expectation, a corpus of 35 academic writing coursebooks published during the last three decades was evaluated in terms of the possible realizations of key resources of interaction in pedagogical tasks. Due to its theoretical rigor and analytically operationalized nature, Hyland's model of metadiscourse (2005a) was taken as the guiding framework for the current evaluation. The quantitative findings emerging from the analysis of the corpus did not sound sufficiently promising, suggesting that those theoretical developments have not yet been ideally translated into pedagogical designs; however, the rich range of resources identified in the tasks (i.e., the 55 categories emerging from the evaluation of the corpus) suggest that the rigorous tradition of research in metadiscourse has contributed to the effective operationalization of the concept for pedagogical objectives. It has been argued that through the effective introduction of the concept of metadiscourse into pedagogical designs and its appropriate operationalization, novice participants of academic/scientific discourse communities would be enabled to redefine the nature of academic communication and get rid of a large number of misconceptions which have become fossilized through long years of the dominance of positivistic thinking.

Keywords: academic writing, academic writing coursebook, metadiscourse, metadiscourse awareness

Introduction

In light of the scholarly thinking of a large number of researchers, the very proposition that metadiscourse is a key ingredient in the negotiation of meanings in academic discourse has become a well-established fact. The emergence of the idea owes a lot to a number of developments: a shift in the philosophy of science (development of a social constructivist paradigm of science) a shift in the philosophy of language (development of a reality-constitutive view of discourse, developments in our conception of the nature of academic discourse and genre, developments in the philosophy of discipline, developments in our understanding of the significance of culture in academic meaning-making, etc. (see Kuhi 2017a for a detailed discussion on this). These shifts and developments have helped us understand that language should not be seen as a transparent means of exchange of already constructed academic/scientific knowledge. Rather it should be considered as the key ingredient in its very construction and constitution (Jaworsky & Coupland 1999). In fact, we have gradually been trying to get rid of some old misunderstandings originating from the feelings of "alienation" developed towards the academic/scientific discourse (see Halliday 1993/2004 for a discussion on some of these misconceptions) and started to acknowledge the fact that the discourse of science is adjusted and adapted to the social, cultural, historical, pedagogical, and ideological expectations of scientists/authors and their intended audiences, that it is embedded in the activities of the individual members of social groups, that it is not as the accurate representation of what our world looks like rather it is mediated through selection, foregrounding, and symbolization acts, that it is not as a depository of inscrutable, indefinite and monolithic practices frozen in time, and that it is adjusted to unpredictable sociocultural variables (for a detailed discussion on this see Hyland 2005a, Hyland 2009, Kuhi 2017a, Kuhi 2017b).

Acknowledgment of the role of metadiscourse in the negotiation of /scientific academic meanings has triggered the development of a number of research directions. Some have approached the issue from a (cross-) disciplinary dimension to show that metadiscourse use in academic meaning-making is inextricably bound to social performances, cognitive styles, social understandings, and epistemological assumptions of specific

disciplinary communities. More specifically, this dimension of research has indicated that writers in different scientific/academic disciplines have to persuade their readers in different ways, that metadiscourse plays a significant role in developing a context for interpretation and highlighting a number of ways in which communicative acts define and maintain social groups, that metadiscourse provides connections between academic genres and disciplinary cultures and through these connection it defines the rhetorical context by demonstrating some of the expectations and understandings of the community for whom a text has been produced, that creating and maintaining a disciplinary appropriate level of social relations in a text is central to developing persuasive argument, that writers in different scientific/academic communities represent themselves, their texts and their audience in different ways, and that rhetorical practices are intimately connected to the objectives of particular disciplines (Afsari & Kuhi 2016, Harwood 2005, Hewings and Hewings 2001, Hyland and Tse 2005, Hyland and Tse 2004 are some typical instances of this research tradition).

In addition, the very fact that members of different academic communities belong to diverse cultural backgrounds has encouraged a large number of academic discourse researchers to approach interpersonal mechanisms of academic meaning-making from cross-cultural perspectives (see, for instance, Adel 2006, Akbas (2014), Attaran 2014, Breivaga, Dahl & Flottum 2002, Dahl 2004, Thue Vold 2006). This dimension of research has taught us that metadiscourse use does not follow a uniform pattern across languages and that affiliation to diverse cultural backgrounds may result in different realizations of author/reader roles in academic discourse (e.g., reader-responsible vs. writer-responsible). In light of the findings of a large number of cross-cultural investigations, it has been acknowledged that what is seen as reasonable, agreeable, appropriate, organized, precise, cohesive, and coherent in a piece of academic writing may differ across cultures. As Hyland (2006) has highlighted, the affiliation of the members of academic communities to different cultures may result in different ways of perceiving the author and audience, different preferences and priorities for organizing

texts, different writing processes, and different social, and symbolic implications of different types of texts.

The place of metadiscourse in individual rhetoric of giant figures of different scientific/academic communities has also attracted some researchers. Typical studies like Crismore and Farnsworth's (1989) analysis of Darwin's use of metadiscourse in *The Origin of Species*, Hyland's (2008) investigation into the use of such features in John Swales' rhetoric, Hoey's (2000) research on the persuasive power of Noam Chomsky's scientific prose, Henderson's (2001) work on strategies of exemplification in Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, and Kuhi & Alinejad's (2015) analysis of Stephen Hawking's community-bound voice in his scientific prose have informed us that much of what is considered as social, collective and agreed-upon conventions of negotiation of meaning in scientific/academic communication may be an integral quality of a parent member's individual rhetoric. In fact, part of the academic identity of a well-known discourse community member lies in his/her smart and thoughtful manipulation of discourse, and metadiscourse has a critical place in this regard: it facilitates rational appeals by connecting ideas and arguments together; it is linked to credibility appeals whenever the writer's authority and competence should play a role, and it touches affective appeals whenever there is some need to respect the reader's point of view.

Mainly inspired by Swales' metaphor-based conception of genre which sees academic genres evolving and changing diachronically in response to the evolving and changing requirements of discourse communities (see Swales 2004), a relatively recent direction of metadiscourse research has concentrated on the diachronic evolution of such features (see, for instance, Kuhi & Dustsadigh 2012, Kuhi & Mousavi 2015, Rezaei, et al. 2020, Rezaei et al. 2021, Kuhi & Rezaei 2020, Hyland & Jiang 2016a, Hyland & Jiang 2016b, Hyland & Jiang 2018a, Hyland & Jiang 2018b). This view is inspired by the assumption that academic genres and their textual/discursive qualities are sensitive to the requirements of the sociocultural context within which academic communication is located and the evolution of metadiscourse is a response to some of these changes (Kuhi 2017a and Kuhi 2017b have outlined a numbersocio-culturalural factors which play a role in shaping the (meta)discursive qualities of academic discourse).

Metadiscourse research has also been developed enormously within generic (see, for instance, Akbas 2014, Dobbs 2014, Gholami et al 2014, Latawiec 2012) inter-generic (cross-generic) (see, for instance, Hyland 2002, Hyland & Tse 2005, Kuhi & Behnam 2011) and intra-generic (cross-sectional) (see, for instance, Kuhi et al 2012, Kuhi & Rezaei 2020, Rezaei et al 2020, Rezaei et al 2021) dimensions. This research tradition has developed on the basis of a number of key assumptions: that there could be a meaningful relationship between metadiscourse and genre and that the nature of the social relationship between the writer and the imagined audience varies across genres or genre sections; in fact, it has been assumed that the use of metadiscourse can be considered as a key way in which genres differ, and differences between academic genres in terms of the use and frequency of metadiscourse can reveal how textual choices reflect the different communicative objectives of writers, the different assumptions writers make about their readers, and the different kinds of interactions they create with their audience. In light of these investigations, we understand that the use of metadiscourse is sensitive to the social and symbolic significance and interactional mechanisms of academic genres and there is no stable, fixed, universal, and homogeneous convention to be utilized in all academic genres.

The above-mentioned directions of research clearly indicate that shifts in the philosophy of science and the subsequent developments in our understanding of the nature of academic communication have given rise to an increasing interest in the concept of metadiscourse, and this research tradition has been establishing itself as one of the major areas of interest in academic communication. Of course, it should be highlighted that this research tradition has originally emerged and developed within an ESP (English for Specific Purposes) philosophy of language education and metadiscourse research shares some assumptions and expectations with other traditions of academic discourse analysis (e.g., corpus analysis, genre analysis, grammatical-rhetorical analysis, intercultural rhetorical analysis, etc.). That is why, it inherently carries with itself some pedagogical motivations, assumptions, and implications.

This affiliation to the philosophy of ESP raises some inevitable expectations on how much and how well the concept has been adjusted to meet the practical necessities of academic writing pedagogy. A review of the previous literature shows that the concept of metadiscourse has motivated a relatively large number of pedagogically motivated investigations and researchers with pedagogical and practical concerns have tried to find ways of bridging the theory-practice gap. Moreneo's (2003) investigation into the types of language descriptions to be provided in EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classrooms in light of metadiscourse awareness, Mei & Alison's (2005) research on the use of evaluative essays written by undergraduate students, Wong's (2005) suggestions on the use of metadiscourse awareness in academic writing pedagogy, Rodriguez Junior's (2003) attempt to integrate the concept of metadiscourse into computer-mediated-communication in writing classes, Hyland & Hyland's (2001) study on the integration of metadiscourse into written feedback mechanism in writing classes, Ifantidou's (2005) pioneering work on EAP writers' perception of the functions of metadiscourse, and Kuhi's (2017b, 2020) investigation into the possibilities and challenges of integrating hybridity into EAP writing pedagogy are some typical studies. However, it seems that despite this much effort in highlighting the significance of the concept in EAP writing pedagogy, one central issue has not been appropriately addressed: any attempt to trigger a metadiscourse awareness among teachers and learners involved in EAP writing requires (amongst other measures of course) integrating the concept into the body of guidelines, tasks, and instructions provided by academic writing coursebooks. In fact, it is expected that in light of this rigorous tradition of research, academic writing coursebooks expose EAP learners to writing activities that explicitly and/or implicitly raise their awareness of the significance of interpersonal mechanisms in academic writing. A pedagogically-motivated tradition of research should finally find its way to the realities of the EAP writing classrooms and we expect EAP writing classes to manifest some realizations of the findings of research in the types of tasks and instructional activities.

I believe that after so much multidimensional development, we can no longer treat metadiscourse as a purely theoretical construct remote from the realities of academic writing. The development of the concept of

metadiscourse is in fact the outcome of researchers' growing interests in sociocultural realities of academic writing (see Kuhi 2017a) and these realities should be injected into teaching/learning activities. Introduction of the concept of metadiscourse into EAP writing programs and its appropriate operationalization mean acknowledging some of the sociocultural realities neglected and sometimes even rejected in traditional EAP writing courses (see Babapoor & Kuhi 2018 and Chang & Swales 1999 for a discussion on the challenges between pedagogical expectations and realities of academic writing). This necessity triggered in me an interest to find out how much academic writing coursebooks have welcomed the concept and whether the developers of such coursebooks recognize the status and significance of metadiscourse in their pedagogical designs. A further objective of the current study was to develop a coherent categorization of the metadiscoursally-informed resources in the pedagogical activities of the coursebooks sampled for evaluation. It is hoped that such a framework would be of potential use for those academic writing material developers recognizing the significance of metadiscourse and searching for an operationalized model of the concept.

Method

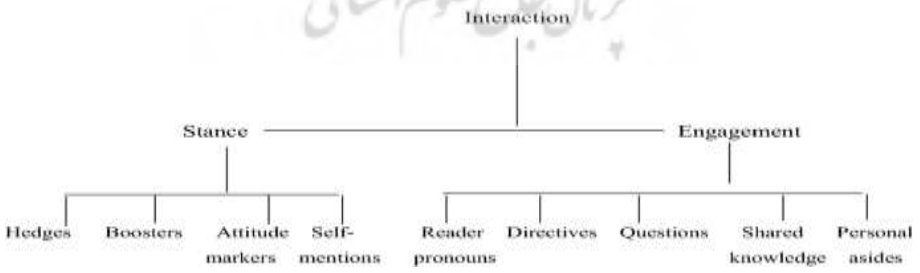
Corpus

The current investigation focused on a corpus of 35 academic writing coursebooks. Although the major sampling procedure followed in the current research was convenience sampling, in the construction of the corpus, a number of additional issues were taken into consideration. Primarily, due to the fact that the concept of metadiscourse and interest in the interpersonal dimensions of academic writing has mainly developed during the last three decades, only the coursebooks published within this time span were included in the corpus. Amongst the 35 coursebooks selected for evaluation, only four belonged to the 1990s, seventeen coursebooks were published in the 2000s, twelve coursebooks belonged to the 2010s and two coursebooks belonged to the 2020s. This selection is expected to reflect the inevitable distance between theoretical developments

and pedagogical applications. In order to be included in the corpus, the coursebooks had to meet another significant criterion – addressing academic writing issues. Some of the coursebooks in the corpus explicitly carried the phrase 'academic writing' or similar phrases in their titles; they were conveniently considered for evaluation. Some, however, did not carry such a phrase in their titles; instead, they carried references to an academic genre (e.g., journal article, research article, essay, research report, etc.). In a few cases, we had to trust the explicitly stated objectives in the introductory sections or even scan the table of contents to make sure the selected coursebooks really touched academic writing issues (see Appendix for an alphabetically arranged list of the coursebooks included in the corpus).

A framework for evaluation

The rich literature on metadiscourse and its realizations in written academic discourse shows that the concept has been defined and categorized in a relatively large number of ways (see, for instance, Adel 2006, Bunton 1999, Crismore et al. 1993, Hyland 1998, Hyland 2005b, Vande Kopple 1988). Due to its theoretical rigor and analytically operationalized nature (see Kuhi 2010), Hyland's model of metadiscourse (2005a) was taken as the guiding framework for the current evaluation. However, it should be highlighted that due to the focus of the current research on interpersonal (not textual) dimensions of metadiscourse, the evaluation was limited to the interactional dimension of Hyland's model and the interactive (textual) aspects of metadiscourse were excluded. Hence the key metadiscourse resources which guided the evaluation included the ones in the following figure:



Key Resources of Academic Interaction (Hyland, 2005b, p. 177)

Of course, it should be mentioned that in a research project like the current one, it is difficult to follow a purely pattern-imposing procedure and researchers usually need to keep the guiding frameworks flexible and open enough so that any instructional task in the coursebooks meeting the dominant interactional functional criteria could be included. Hence, as the readers will notice below, the themes emerging from the evaluation project are much more diverse than the categories in the original model, so it deserves to be underlined again here that in labeling a coursebook task as metadiscoursally-oriented, the major criterion has been functional. Following Hyland (2005b), this functional criterion has been conceptualized in terms of the two dominant categories of the model above:

a. Whether the specific task targets *stance*: Does it help the learners understand that academic writing needs to help the writers express a textual voice or community recognized personality? This functional criterion has been seen as an *attitudinal dimension* including the way writers can present themselves, and convey their judgments, opinions, and commitments.
b. Whether the specific task targets *engagement:* Does it help the learners understand that successful academic writing requires writers to relate to their readers with respect to their position in the text? This functional criterion has been seen as an *alignment dimension* whereby authors of academic texts connect to their readers, acknowledge the presence of their audience, acknowledge their uncertainties, and see their readers as discourse participants.

One significant methodological issue should be mentioned regarding the process of developing functional labels for metadiscourse categories as they appear in Table2. In a number of cases the categories included in Table 2 functionally overlap; it was, therefore, possible to assign them into a single category but since it was necessary to keep the functional labels as close as possible to the wordings of the coursebook tasks, I decided to keep them independent. There was also a pedagogical consideration here: the developed framework could have a great potential to be used as a comprehensive guiding model for future material development projects

acknowledging the significance of metadiscourse in academic writing. In fact, I feel that to be considered an integral component of pedagogical materials, the concept of metadiscourse should be further operationalized and abstract terminology utilized in theoretical models should be linked to concrete textual manifestations; the current attempt might be of some value in this regard as well. One further methodological issue to be mentioned is that due to the pragmatic nature of metadiscourse features, the whole process of evaluation was carried out manually.

Results and Discussion

Is the overall picture promising?

Table 1. reveals the overall picture of the status of metadiscourse in the 35 coursebooks selected for evaluation. While we found 20 books addressing metadiscoursal aspects of academic writing, only 9 books in the corpus treated metadiscourse positively (i.e. they encouraged the academic writing learners to take care of metadiscourse while developing academic texts). Among the coursebooks selected for the evaluation, four books discouraged the use of metadiscourse in academic writing and 7 books addressed metadiscoursal features in contradictory manners – encouraging the use of some features and discouraging the use of some other features (for detailed information on this, also see Table 2).

Table 1

Overall Status of Metadiscourse in Academic Writing Coursebooks

Total Number of Academic Writing Coursebooks in the corpus	Number of Coursebooks **Addressing** Metadiscourse	Number of Coursebooks *only* **Encouraging** the Use of Metadiscourse	Number of Coursebooks *only* **Discouraging** the Use of Metadiscourse	Number of Textbooks Addressing metadiscourse Use in **Contradictory** Ways (sometimes encouraging and sometimes discouraging)	Number of Coursebooks **Not Addressing** Metadiscourse Use at all
35	**20**	**9**	**4**	**7**	**15**

Even though the project was not originally motivated by quantitative expectations and I do not really want to adopt a generalizing tone here, the picture emerging from the analysis of this corpus does not sound as

promising as expected. My intimate engagement in metadiscourse research for approximately two decades tells me that the cornerstones of the interest in interpersonal dimensions of academic written discourse were laid in the late 1980s and this now well-established tradition of research, which has attracted hundreds of researchers and resulted in the publication of a considerable number of articles and books, should have found a stronger voice and status in pedagogical designs. Of course, in my sampling procedure, I took care of a natural and inevitable distance between theoretical developments and pedagogical considerations. As I mentioned above, amongst the 35 coursebooks selected for evaluation, only four belonged to the 1990s, seventeen coursebooks were published in the 2000s, twelve coursebooks belonged to the 2010s and two coursebooks belonged to the 2020s. However, the findings run against my personal expectations: 9 out of 35 does not sound promising at all, and what this means to me is that theoretical developments are not translated into pedagogical designs as easily as we expect. In fact, 15 (out of 35) coursebooks did not address any metadiscourse issue either negatively or positively, and this means that for the authors of these coursebooks interpersonal meaning in academic communication means nothing. At least for those authors who approached metadiscourse in a negative manner, we can think of some justifications – that they are still under the influence of a positivist paradigm of academic discourse and that they do not believe in the essence of a social-constructivist paradigm which sees social/interpersonal relationships as an inseparable ingredient of academic/scientific writing. But while any pedagogical design of academic writing material needs to be informed by a theory of academic/scientific discourse, I wonder what the justification behind a zero realization of metadiscourse in some coursebooks could be!

Themes emerging from the evaluation

Table 2 summarizes the major themes emerging from the evaluation project where the number of tasks encouraging and discouraging the use of metadiscourse features in academic writing can also be seen inside parentheses. The emerging themes can be approached from a number of perspectives:

a. *The operationalization potential of the concept of metadiscourse*

Evaluation of the pedagogical tasks in the sampled coursebooks in terms of (negatively/positively) addressing interpersonal mechanisms of meaning-making in academic writing resulted in the identification of 55 categories. This rich range of resources targeted in the tasks means that the relatively long and well-established tradition of research in metadiscourse has contributed to the effective operationalization of the concept for pedagogical objectives. In fact, the very nature of applied linguistics research is expected to establish bridges between abstract theoretical developments and concrete pedagogical necessities (see, for instance, Widdowson 2003 for a rigorous argument on this) and without an effective dialogue between theory and practice "heady just remains heady, the humdrum, humdrum" (Widdowson, 2003, p. 8). The evidence provided by this evaluation suggests that in terms of operationalization for pedagogical purposes metadiscourse research has been loyal to its underlying ESP philosophy and those involved in developing material for academic writing courses have access to a large number of resources to be targeted by the designed tasks. Bringing this wide range of resources together (to be used in the future development of academic writing materials) can also be seen as an original contribution of the current project.

b. The metadiscourse properties whose use has been encouraged more frequently

Among the metadiscourse features emerging from the evaluation process, the *use of cautious/tentative language* was the most frequently encouraged feature (11 tasks) which was followed by *reducing the level of certainty /toning down the strength of affirmations /toning down strong claims* (8 tasks). Of course, we can also see the *use of hedging devices* (6 tasks) functionally close to the two former properties, which means that for designers of the materials included in the corpus developing a relatively weak authorial position/stance against some propositions is a significant quality of academic discourse. *Use of active voice (instead of passive voice)* (6 tasks) and *self-mention/ use of first-person pronouns* (6 tasks*)* are also among the high-ranking resources, which implies that the old misconception regarding academic communication devoid of human agency is being replaced by the recognition of the active role of human agency in the

construction of academic meanings. *Use of modal auxiliaries* (4 tasks) and *signaling the significance of propositions* (4 tasks) stand next in terms of frequency.

c. The metadiscourse properties whose use has been encouraged less frequently

Among the least frequent metadiscourse features, *use of informal language/ use of idiomatic and colloquial language, use of contracted forms, use of second-person pronouns, addressing the readers directly* and *use of rhetorical questions* should be particularly highlighted; these features have only been discouraged and there is no single task in the selected coursebooks encouraging the use of these features. This means that for the designers of the academic writing coursebooks evaluated here the use of any feature which might contribute to the development of an informal, intimate, and reader-friendly atmosphere in the text should be abandoned (of course, this runs contrary to the findings of studies like Chang & Swales 1999, Hyland & Jiang 2017 which find informality as an integral quality of interpersonal mechanisms of academic discourse). Also, for the designers of these books, there seems to be no room in academic writing for a direct engagement with readers and that could be the reason why *use of second person pronouns* and *direct questions* have not received any attention.

d. The metadiscourse properties whose use has been discouraged more frequently

Among the metadiscourse properties emerging from the evaluation process, *use of informal language/ use of idiomatic and colloquial language* (8 tasks) and *use of personal style* (7 tasks) were the most frequently discouraged metadiscourse features. Next stood *use of subjective language* (4 tasks), *use of direct questions addressing the readers* (3 tasks) and *use of inclusive we* (3 tasks).

e. Is the coverage of features acceptable?

Regardless of quantitative values carried by the features emerging from the evaluation, it seems that the coverage of metadiscourse features in the sampled academic writing materials is acceptable. In fact, the key resources of academic interaction proposed by Hyland (2005b) all appear among the

themes categorized in Table 2. As discussed above, the rich range of resources identified here might imply that the complex process of operationalization of abstract concepts and their realization in pedagogic academic writing tasks is developing well.

Table 2
M*etadiscourse Features Addressed in Academic Writing Coursebooks*

Metadiscourse Features Addressed in the Academic Writing Coursebooks (Number of Tasks Encouraging-Number of Tasks Discouraging)
1. Metadiscourse generally (7-1)
2. Use of informal language/ Use of idiomatic and colloquial language (0-8)
3. Use of personal style (1-7)
4. Use of personal pronouns (1-2)
5. Use of subjective language (2-4)
6. Use of attitude markers (3-1)
7. Use of direct questions (addressing the readers) (1-3)
8. Developing authorial voice/ Developing author's own voice/stance (3-1)
9. Constructing an appropriate author "persona" (1-0)
10. Use of inclusive *we* (1-3)
11. Use of exclusive *we* (1-1)
12. Use of persuasive language (1-0)
13. Use of hedging devices (6-0)
14. Claiming credibility (1-0)
15. Stating personal perspectives (1-0)
16. Author's own face-saving (1-0)
17. Other authors' face-saving (1-0)
18. Use of active voice (instead of passive voice) (6-1)
19. Developing a sense of the anticipated audience/audience awareness (3-0)
20. Rhetorical consciousness-raising (2-0)
21. Use of imperatives (2-0)
22. Self-mention/ Use of first-person pronouns (6-1)
23. Signaling the significance of propositions/findings, etc. (4-0)
24. Indicating different levels of certainty (2-0)
25. Reducing the level of certainty /Toning down the strength of affirmations /Toning down strong claims (8-0)
26. Use of cautious language/ Use of tentative language (11-0)
27. Use of emotive language (1-1)
28. Use of contracted forms (0-1)
29. Identifying others' voices/ Reference to other authors to reduce the rigor of limitations (2-0)
30. Showing confidence (1-0)
31. Showing the strength of your claim (1-0)
32. Use of evaluative language (2-1)
33. Use of negative evaluations (1-0)
34. Use of positive evaluations (1-0)
35. Use of rhetorical questions (0-1)
36. Use of discursive *I* (1-0)
37. Use of modalizing expressions (2-0)
38. Use of limiting expressions (3-0)
39. Qualifying/moderating claims (1-0)
40. Use of modifiers (1-0)
41. Use of modal auxiliaries (4-0)
42. Use of obviousness markers (1-0)
43. Use of scare quotes (1-0)
44. Use of second-person pronouns (0-1)
45. Using expressions which show researchers' positions (2-0)

46. Appealing to ethos (1-0)
47. Appealing to pathos (1-0)
48. Claiming author's own ideas (1-0)
49. Distancing the author from his/her statements (1-0)
50. Appeals to shared knowledge (1-0)
51. Addressing the readers directly (0-1)
52. Use of softer vocabulary (1-0)
53. Anticipating alternative interpretations (1-0)
54. Developing a standpoint for potential readers (1-0)
55. Appeal to readers (1-0)

Conclusion

Development of the concept of metadiscourse is the outcome of the recognition of the social nature of academic/scientific writing. This social character implies heterogeneity and unpredictability in terms of discursive properties (Kuhi 2017b, 2020). When translated into the pedagogical context of teaching/learning English for academic purposes, this heterogeneity and unpredictability might be seen as a source of threat. What our learners might expect is a sterilized picture of the context of academic communication where discourse is shaped by reference to a set of rules and conventions already prescribed by pedagogical materials. However, I firmly follow Chang and Swales (1999) in the belief that EAP courses should prepare the novice members of academic discourse communities for unpredictable and heterogeneous communicative encounters. To inject this spirit of unpredictability and heterogeneity, academic writing syllabus designs need to be regularly updated by the findings of academic discourse studies. Research on diachronic, social, cultural, interdiscursive, and intertextual properties of academic discourses is expected to provide academic writing syllabus designers with deep insights in this regard; novice academic writers need to be constantly made aware of the fact that academic communication takes place in complex sociocultural contexts and that they should be made ready for the challenges emerging from the very hybrid and unpredictable nature if such contexts.

The introduction of the concept of metadiscourse into pedagogical designs of academic writing and its appropriate operationalization would partially guarantee the success of this mission. Through exposure to

metadiscourse and its textual realizations, novice members would be made able to redefine the nature of academic communication and get rid of a large number of misconceptions which have become fossilized through long years of the dominance of positivistic thinking.

Even though the sampling procedure in this project might not sound as ideal as we might expect, the findings showed some weak and strong aspects of the translation of the concept of metadiscourse into academic writing materials. The emerging category of resources can be of help to those sharing with us the belief that our teaching materials should be further informed by the recognition of interpersonal mechanisms of academic meaning-making. It should also be emphasized here that metadiscourse is intimately sensitive to generic variations and its conventions of use differ from one academic genre to another. It was already highlighted in this paper that metadiscourse use is sensitive to the social and symbolic implications and interactional mechanisms of scientific/academic genres and there is no fixed and universal convention dominating all academic genres. This basic assumption should guide our approach to the status of metadiscourse in future academic writing material development, and as further teaching materials are produced by focusing on generic specifications, the way metadiscourse is used in each genre should also be taken into account. We might also look at this as a further possibility for research in the future.

Declaration of interest: none

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Biodata

Davud Kuhi is a full-time academic member of the department of English language at Islamic Azad University. He has been researching different properties of academic discourses for approximately two decades and has published a large number of articles in prestigious national and international academic journals.