Interactional Metadiscourse in English and Persian News Articles about 9/11

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Abstract—This study aimed to illuminate 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. In order to explore the frequency of these types of metadiscourse and their supposedly significant difference s in both sets of data, Hyland classification system was utilized. The findings from the research illustrated a significant difference in distribution of metadiscourse markers in the corpus due to the fact that American journalist employed interactional metadiscourse markers more frequently in their news articles. Moreover, Iranian journalists inclined not use self-mention and engagement markers due to their reader responsibility and their writing styles in formal contexts. The results of the present study might offer insights to pedagogical implication of this aspect of metadiscourse for journalism students.

Index Terms—pragmatics, interactional metadiscourse, Hyland, 9/11 news articles, English & Persian

I. INTRODUCTION

Pragmatics as a branch of linguistics deals with intended speaker meaning. David Crystal (Crystal, 1987, p.120) believed that "pragmatics studies the factors that govern our choice of language in social interaction and the effects of our choice on others." Regarding the cultural and contextual features in communication, it should be borne in mind that meaning could be more than just a simple interpretation of semantic or syntactic basis. Since 1970, researchers have become interested in investigating the meaning beyond the text in which they are occurring. Many researchers like Sassour, Moris, Carnap, Austin and Grice proposed useful theories that are still the basis of language researchers in this field. Finch (2000) claimed that "Pragmatists focus on what is not explicitly stated and on how we interpret utterances in situational contexts. They are concerned not so much with the sense of what is said as with its force, that is, with what is communicated by the manner and style of an utterance." Therefore, the importance of examining the meaning in relation to its context made researchers to think of linguistic means that represent it.

One of these means is metadiscourse. Hyland (2005) defines this concept as "an umbrella cover which is used for self-reflective statements to exchange the meaning through text, help the writer to mention his/her inputs and stances and engage reader as a member of specific community" (p.46). He believes that metadiscourse markers are not only more than a simple information exchange, but also might include writer's attitude, personality and regarding reader's assumption as well. Hyland claimed that "all metadiscourses are interpersonal for indicating reader's knowledge, textual experiences, and processing needs; and help writers with rhetorical appeals to achieve that."(Hyland, 2005, p.41)

Mass media are recognized as a means of discourse exchange and communication. Therefore, it would be helpful to examine the role of metadiscourse in relation between writer, text and reader as a contributing factor. Thus, the focus of this study is on metadiscourse use in English and Persian newspaper articles. The reason for investigating the articles of newspaper is that most of the previous studies concerned with metadiscourse in educational fields like ESL and EFL teaching, and media, though being important, has not received much attention.

The objectives of the present study

As a matter of fact, this study aims in examining the following questions:

A) Is there any difference and similarities between interactional metadiscourse markers in English and Persian news articles?

B) What do these differences try to imply?

In the following, section 2 will present the concept of metadiscourse and will briefly review its theoretical and empirical backgrounds. Section 3 provides relevant information about the material, data collection and analysis procedures. Section 4 includes finding which consider the number and frequency of metadiscourse markers, followed by a discussion of results in section 5. Finally, section 6 will present conclusions, implication and limitations of the study and some suggestion for further research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

"metadiscourse" also known as "meta language", "meta talk" and "meta communication", introduced by Zellig Harris in 1959. He employed this concept to describe ways of communication by language usage. So far, many researchers proposed various definitions and categorizations for this term. Meyer (1975) used the term "signaling" to talk about the non-content aspect of writing which emphasize some information in the text. In 1980, Schiffrin used "meta talk" to regard the textual features that contribute in demonstrating informational and referential aspect of writing and indicates the writer's stance toward text, as well. A year after, Williams indicated to "wordiness" as a key element which help the reader through the text. In the following years, Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1993) tried to reform the weakness and flaws of previous categorizations by proposing a better classification. Recently, Hyland suggested a new framework for metadiscourse markers which is derived from Thompson and Thetela model (1995). Before then, researchers speculated 2 levels of discourse. In the first level was the propositional aspect and the second level includes metadiscourse as non-propositional concept. Rejecting this assumption, Hyland claimed that these 2 levels depend on each other for creating a cohesive and coherent text; due to the fact that one level described external world, while the other regards the meaning in its relevant context. Together, they form reader's perception and interpretation of the text. Dividing metadiscourse markers into 2 levels-interactive and interactional- Hyland attempted to work out the ambiguity and overlap of previous studies.

The concept of metadiscourse has generated a lot of research in recent years. These studies could be classified into 3 fields:

A) Educational subjects like academic writing and reading comprehension

Table 1 represents the summary of some of the previous researches carried out in this sub-field.

TABLE1.
METADISCOURSE USE IN EDUCATIONAL SUBJECTS

Authors' name	year	Subjects/texts	purposes	results
Intaraprawat & Steffensen	1995	ESL university students persuasive writing	To explore the usage of metadiscourse markers in writing	Improvement of writing quality due to the usage of metadiscourse markers
Camiciottoli	2003	Using 2 economical texts with the same content for 55 Italian university students	To discover the influence of metadiscourse markers on reading comprehension	Simpler and better understanding of reading comprehension because of metadiscourse markers
Hyland & Tse	2004	University students' master thesis of applied linguistics, Commercial studies, computer science, electronic engineering, biology and public administration	To search the usage of metadiscourse markers in academic writing	1-Interactional metadiscourse as the most frequent markers(esp. hedges, transitions, and engagement markers) 2-The most usage of metadiscourse in applied linguistics 3- The least usage of metadiscourse in electronic engineering
Jallilifar & Alihosseini	2007	Using 3 texts with the same content for 3 groups of students with similar language proficiency level	To examine the effect of metadiscourse markers on reading comprehension	Positive effect of metadiscourse markers on reading comprehension development
VahidDastjerdi & Shirzad	2010	University EFL students writing:30 in the elementary level, 32 in intermediate level and 30 in advance level	To investigate the employment of explicit instruction in using metadiscourse markers in EFL writing	1-Direct impact of applying instruction in using metadiscourse on students' writing 2-The most enhancement in writing of intermediate students

B) Different genres

Table 2 illustrates the summary of carried out research in this sub-field.

TABLE2.
METADISCOURSE USE IN DIFFERENT GENRES

Authors' name	year	Subjects/texts	purposes	results
Dafouz milne	2003	Opinion columns of two elite newspapers in Britain and Spain	To investigate the pragmatic use of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in order to achieve persuasion in newspaper discourse	1-The existing difference due to the usage of hedge employment 2-The frequent usage of textual metadiscourse in Spanish news articles 3-The frequent usage of interpersonal metadiscourse in British news articles
Gonzalez	2005	Commercial websites	To illuminate the role of textual metadiscourse	The positive effect of metadiscourse in persuading customer
Zarei & Mansouri	2011	Randomly selected research articles from 2004 to 2006	To examine the role of metadiscourse markers in humanities and non-humanities fields	1-The frequent usage of interactive metadiscourse markers in humanity fields 1-The influence of metadiscourse markers on text by engaging readers
Hashemi & Golparvar	2012	38 randomly selected Persian news articles in 2012	To search the role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse in Iranian newspaper discourse	1-Textual metadiscourse as the most frequent markers 2-Higer usage of text connectives, narratives and commentaries

C) Comparative cross-cultural studies
Table 3 shows some research conducted in this sub-field.

TABLE3.
METADISCOURSE USE IN COMPARATIVE CROSS-CULTURAL STUDIES

Authors' name	year	Subjects/texts	purposes	results
Rahimpour	2006	90 discussion section in English and Persian research articles in linguistics filed	To investigate the impact of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers on writing	Higher usage of textual metadiscourse markers in Persian research articles (esp. hedges and transitions)
Abdollahzade	2007	53 English and Persian newspaper Editorials in 2003	To examine the role of metadiscourse markers in realizing writer's presence	1-Higher application of hedges and code glosses in English newspapers 2- Higher application of emphatics in Persian newspapers
Burneikeite	2008	20 English as L1 and 20 Lithuanian as L2 master thesis in Linguistics	To expand the methodological framework in analyzing metadiscourse and to investigate the metadiscourse marker employment in linguistics fields	1-The most frequent usage of text connective in L2 2-The least frequent employment of endophoric markers in L2

The newspaper serves as an influential medium in keeping people informed world events and, thereby, in extending their knowledge and deepening their understanding. Despite the fact that newspaper still remain a powerful source of news; only few writers investigated the issue (Dafouz ,2003; Hashemi & Golparvar ,2012).

Dafouz (2003) examined the role of metadiscourse markers in persuading readers. He investigated 40 opinion columns of 2 leading newspapers: the British "The Times" and the Spanish "EL Pais". The aim of his study was to determine the types of metadiscourse which occur in newspaper discourse and what is their distribution due to their cultural and linguistic differences. The findings indicated that hedge was the most frequent metadiscourse. The result of this study showed that balanced usage of both textual and interpersonal metadiscourse will be vital in persuasive text.

Hashemi & Golparvar (2012) aimed at exploring the textual and interpersonal metadiscourse in Persian news articles. The corpus of their study included 38 news articles which were selected randomly. They utilized Kopple's classification to detect the frequency and types of metadiscourse. The findings marked text connective, narratives and commentary respectively as the most useful metadiscourse markers in newspaper discourse.

Generally speaking, newspaper as an important genre has not received much attention outside of European and US. (Crismore & Abdollahzade, 2010). Therefore, this study tries to present a comparative analysis interactional metadiscourse in news articles written by American and Iranian journalists.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Material

The data of the present study were collected from leading and most widely read newspapers in US. and Iran by means of random sampling. The English news articles were retrieved from an online newspaper archive, while Persian

were collected from Astan-e-Qods- Razavi library archive. The selected articles were matched for length and topic to ensure comparability. They were written by American (as native-English speaking writers) and Iranian (as native-Persian speaking writers). These writers all tried to cover 9/11 events in 2001.

TABLE4
SIZE OF CORPUS

Size of corpus	English	Persian
Number of articles	30	30
Number of words	1,815	1,780

The news does not consist of only facts about events and issues of the world; rather, news, in addition to the fact, is full of opinion, value judgment, bias, and distortion of reality. So far, 9/11 was one of the argumentative events which could not be covered neutrally by the journalist; hence, metadiscourse enables readers to find out the way journalists used to manipulate the news.

B. Data Collection Procedure

To investigate the role of metadiscourse markers, 30 English and Persian news articles (15 from each newspaper) were collected randomly. In fact, Random sampling is a contributing factor to overcome the diversity of writers' styles. All of these articles were published on 12 September in 2001. The reason why 9/11 news was chosen in this analysis is the importance of the event and its reflection and impacts on the world.

C. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, Hyland (2005) classification of metadiscourse was utilized. (See table 5). This model has been chosen due to the fact that its categorization is more elaborated and frequently used in current studies. (For further study refers to Ken Hyland (2005) in "metadiscourse: exploring interaction I writing" (p.49)).

TABLE5.
HYLAND'S (2005) CLASSIFICATION OF INTERACTIONAL METADISCOURSE

Macro-category	Sub-category	Function	Example (in English)	Example (in Persian)
Interactional (engage reader in the text)	Hedge	Express writer's uncertainty	Might, perhaps …	شاید، ممکن است...
	Booster	Express writer's certainty	In fact, definitely …	در حقیقت، قطعاً...
	Attitude marker	Express writer's attitude	Unfortunately, surprisingly…	متاسفانه، جای تعجب است که...
	Self-mention	Explicit reference to author(s)	I, we…	من، ما...
	Engagement marker	Explicitly build relation with reader	Consider , note …	در نظر بگیرید، توجه کنید...

In the following, some examples of interactional metadiscourse in English and Persian are underlined parts of the sentences:

1- <u>About</u> 50000 people work at the trade center.
2- In the wake of Pearl Harbor, <u>we</u> knew <u>our</u> enemies.
3- In American history, only one comparable event springs <u>obviously</u> to mind: Pearl Harbor
4- جبهه دموکرات برای آزادی فلسطین پذیرش مسئولیت انفجارها در آمریکا را <u>به شدت</u> رد کرد.
5- این <u>بزرگ ترین</u> عملیات تروریستی در تاریخ آمریکا بوده است.
6- یک گزارش تایید نشده حاکی است <u>حدود</u> دهها هزار نفر در تمام حملات سراسری در آمریکا کشته و زخمی شده اند.

All news articles were examined to determine and classify metadiscourse markers manually, and a quantitative analysis was conducted in order to identify the frequency of different types of metadiscourse and to answer the research questions. To normalize the present study to a common basis to compare the frequency of occurrence, this research employed 200 words approach.

Furthermore, to analyze the data statistically, SPSS software was applied.

To find out whether there is any difference between the metadiscourse distribution in both English and Persian news and to explore the meaning beyond this difference, the Chi-square test was employed.

IV. RESULTS

TABLE6
METADISCOURSE NUMBERS AND FREQUENCIES IN CORPUS

Interactional metadiscourse markers	Frequency of metadiscourse markers		percentage of metadiscourse markers	
	English	Persian	English	Persian
Hedge	58	21	38%	32%
Booster	28	13	18%	20%
Attitude markers	40	31	26%	48%
Self-mention	18	0	12%	0
Engagement markers	9	0	6%	0

As it can be seen in table 6, the number of interactional metadiscourse markers employed by American journalists (70 %) is higher in comparison with Iranian journalists (29 %).

In the news articles written by American journalists, hedges were the highest metadiscourse marker (38%), followed by attitude markers (26%), booster (18%), self-mention (12%), and engagement marker (6%).

In Persian news articles, attitude markers were the most frequent interactional metadiscourse marker (48%), followed by hedge (32%), and booster (20%). Table 3 clearly shows that Iranian journalists did not employ self-mention and engagement marker.

Detecting the difference between English and Persian interactional metadiscourse, the chi- square test was applied.

In English news articles, the chi-square test disclosed the following results:

a) Between hedges and boosters, the asymptotic significance (0.001) is less than 0.05 which indicates the significant difference between these two markers; where hedges are employed more frequently.

b) Between hedges and self-mention, the asymptotic significance (0.000) is less than 0.05 and it shows the difference between these metadiscourse markers is significant; as hedges are used more than self-mention.

c) Between hedges and engagement markers, the asymptotic significance (0.000) has been less than 0.05 that reveals the difference; since the usage of hedges are higher.

d) Between boosters and engagement markers, the asymptotic significance (0.002) is less than 0.05. This displays the fact that these two markers differ significantly. In fact, boosters are used more frequently.

e) Between attitude markers and self-mention, the asymptotic significance (0.004) is less than 0.05, and the clear difference points out the application of attitude markers are higher.

f) Between attitude markers and engagement markers, the asymptotic significance (0.000) is less than 0.05. Furthermore, the existing difference is significant; for the fact that attitude markers are used more.

Nevertheless, there is no significant difference between hedges and attitude markers (p=0.069> 0.05), boosters and attitude markers (p=0.146> 0.05), boosters and self-mentions (p=0.140 > 0.05), and self-mention and engagement markers (p=0.083 > 0.05).

In Persian news articles, the chi-square result demonstrated no significant difference between hedges and boosters (p=0.170 > 0.05), and hedges and attitude markers (p=0.166 > 0.05). However, the difference between boosters and attitude markers was significant (p=0.007> 0.05), due to the fact that application of attitude markers were higher.

Comparing English and Persian articles chi-square results revealed that the usage of boosters (p=0.019> 0.05) and (p=0.258> 0.05) include no significant difference, while hedge employment showed significant difference (p=0.069> 0.05), for as much as hedges are the most numerous metadiscourse markers in English news articles.

V. DISCUSSION

Hyland (2005) believes that interactional resources help writers making their inputs clear and engaging their readers in the text. Hence, these types of metadiscourse express solidarity and point toward the relation writer tries to build with his/ her reader and text.

Similarities have been found in the corpus indicate that three interactional metadiscourse markers- hedges, boosters and attitude markers- are used more in English and Persian news articles; yet the statistical differences among these three markers are significant.

English and Persian news articles differ in the way they prioritize metadiscourse sub-categorizations. Therefore, the analysis of these presented data illustrates that in English news articles, the amount of interactional metadiscourse markers exerted by American journalist are higher. It is due to the fact that they are concerned with reader-writer responsibility. In spite of the fact that Iranian journalists prefer to act conservatively especially about political (such as 9/11) and religious matters, they inclined toward writer responsibility.

The findings also revealed that American journalists employed self-mention and engagement markers in their articles. The reason why there is no sign of these two metadiscourse markers in Persian news articles is because of their different writing styles in formal contexts. Iranian writers have trained to use a third person pronoun and passive structure in order to avoid self-mentioning in their text, while English writers feel free to a part of the text they are writing. The other motive is due to Iranian journalism conservatism and their writer responsibility approach toward text.

In comparison with Iranian (32%), American journalists applied hedges (38%) as the most frequent metadiscourse marker, while there was no significant difference in using boosters and attitude markers in their articles. Hyland (2005) claimed that American writers tend to be cautious and tentative. By exerting hedge, it seems that journalists are trying

not to show that they are knowledgeable about the proposition. Therefore, they express their uncertainty or their lack of commitment toward the truth conditions, particularly since 9/11 is a political subject and yet argumentative one. Intraprawat and steffenson's (1995) study pointed out that writers would achieve success by using hedge more frequently. Thus, it might be a good idea for Iranian journalists to go through training courses for expanding the usage of this type of metadiscourse marker.

The analysis of the data also revealed that there is no significant difference in employing boosters in English (18%) and Persian (20%). This indicates that Iranian and American journalists did not intend to represent a high degree of certainty and preferred to conduct their readers by leaving the alternative viewpoints open.

According to Hyland (2005), attitude markers refer to "writer's affective, rather the epistemic, attitude to proposition, as they convey concepts like surprise, anger, agreement and so on" (p.53). Comparing the application of attitude markers in corpus, it can be seen that Persian news articles involve a higher degree of this metadiscourse marker (48%) than the Americans (26%). Attitude markers are contributing factors in helping readers realize not only the necessary propositional contents, but also the writer's stance toward the subject. Iranian journalist tried to demonstrate their news articles devoid of being dull and impersonal by using this aspect of metadiscourse more frequently. They also tend to show their stance implicitly instead of free using of self-mention.

VI. Conclusion

This study tried to investigate the role of interactional metadiscourse markers about 9/11 news articles published in 2001 in US. and Iran. It also intended to illustrate the frequency of metadiscourse markers and to explore the difference between these two types of news articles. The result of the present study disclosed that interactional metadiscourse are more utilized by American journalists.

The findings also indicate that, among the interactional metadiscourse, the employment of hedge, booster and attitude marker are higher. In addition, hedges had the highest usage in English news articles, whereas attitude markers topped in Persian articles. However, there was no significant difference in booster application in the corpus. This is perceived from the results that besides linguistic difference between Iranian and American journalists, there are culturally different, as well. It can be exemplified through their writing styles in formal contexts and their responsibility toward the relations they are trying to build with readers, text.

This comparative study might provide pedagogical implication. 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. Hence, journalists by exerting metadiscourse markers not only would be able to deepen their readers' understanding, but also might ensure to conduct them to grasp the content completely and ideally.

Appendix A

All of the English news articles used in this study were retrieved from:
http://www.newseum.org/todaysfrontpages/archive.asp
http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/september11/la-11pages,0,862645.htmlstory#axzz2kQAl97Ot
http://voices.washingtonpost.com/blog-post/2010/09/911_on_newspapers_front_pages.html
It should bear in mind that since Iran is under strict sanction, the above internet websites were the only resources.

All of the Persian news reports were collected from Astan-e-Qods-e-Razavi library which is located in Imam Reza Holy Shrine in Mashhad, Iran.

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