

Metadiscourse and Contrastive Rhetoric in Academic Writing: Evaluation of a Small Academic Corpus

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Abstract—Metadiscourse is a popular concept among linguists and educators. It helps to understand how writers structure their texts in order to facilitate the understanding of the text successfully. This study explores various features of metadiscourse and contrastive rhetoric in a small corpus of academic writing of Pakistani learners at tertiary levels. The paper follows Hyland's (2004) interactive and interactional resources modal to determine metadiscourse features in the corpus. The analysis explores the data through quantitative examination as well as qualitative investigation into the texts. The paper emphasizes on developing awareness of metadiscourse features to make students' writing more effective and well structured.

Index Terms—metadiscourse, contrastive rhetoric, academic writing, discourse analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept of academic writing is rather innovative in Pakistani academic context. Over the past decade, private universities in Pakistan have played a major role in bringing awareness to raise academic standards in terms of quality education, research culture and broader perspectives of knowledge in line with global development of higher education sector. However, the pace of this awareness is rather sluggish at schools that are the nurseries of prospective university students. Students trained in state and in a large number of private schools generally lack capabilities to compete the educational challenges at tertiary level due to inadequate academic training in various study skills.

The situation is complicated with two different media of instructions in Pakistan i.e. English and Urdu. English is rapidly replacing the medium of Urdu instruction alongside an on-going debate on selecting the right language for learning. The phenomenon of English language acquisition is intricate as Pakistani English is equally influenced by American and British English in terms of grammar and pronunciation as well as by Urdu in terms of syntax structures and other socio-linguistic aspects. These factors make students' task of language acquisition and language proficiency both in Urdu and English rather complex. Frequent and excessive mingling of English and Urdu impacts the linguistics identities of both languages in speakers' mind, and L1 and L2 influence hugely impact students' language acquisition with quality.

In this perspective, Pakistani university students in general, having no training, struggle to cope with using the academic discourse in their academic work appropriately. Many universities introduce courses in study skills for students to achieve the skills essential to meet the challenges of graduate studies. However this arrangement is not apparently sufficient as Asghar (2013) refers to his study of a group of students at higher secondary level in Pakistan who, at large, did not demonstrate the ability even to compose a piece of writing accurately on their own. In order to overview Pakistani students' skills in academic writing at university level, this paper has selected a small group of students from a private university who are studying for an undergraduate degree in business or IT. Through the analysis of the corpus, this study hopes to explore the problem areas in Pakistani university students' academic writing in order to increase awareness among teachers and course developers of writing.

II. METADISOURSE

Metadiscourse is defined as the linguistic resources used to organise the discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader (Hyland, 2000). It helps writers to appropriately structure the discourse with logically connected ideas. In other words, metadiscourse refers to the thinking and writing process of a writer through signal words in text which inform readers on the development of thought as well as text. It reflects writer's attitude towards text and readers by:

- Indicating their attitudes through signal words/phrases e.g. *I believe, on the contrary, first, second, in order to explain* etc.
- Announcing the next event in text e.g. *I will show, compare, explain, conclude* etc.
- Expressing logical connections in text e.g. *therefore, however, on the other hand* etc.
- Hedging certainty e.g. *probably, it seems that, it might be* etc.

A number of studies, informing on various dimensions, have been conducted on written texts to investigate the importance of metadiscourse e.g. Chiosmore (1989), Swales (1990), Buton, (1999), Maurenan, (1993) and Velcro-Grace, (1996), Hyland (2000), Hyland (2004). Hyland & Tse (2004) argue that metadiscourse offers a way of understanding the interpersonal resources of a writer to uncover something of rhetorical and social distinctiveness of disciplinary communities i.e. it provides the devices which writers use to organise their text, show their attitudes towards the text and their audience. Hyland and Tse proposed a model to identify metadiscourse features in academic writing (Figure 1).

Category	Function	Examples
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Interactive resources	Help to guide reader through the text	
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Transitions	express semantic relation between main clauses	in addition/but/thus/and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	finally/to conclude/my purpose here is to
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above/see Fig/in section 2
Evidentials	refer to source of information from other texts	according to X/(Y, 1990)/Z states
Code glosses	help readers grasp functions of ideational material	namely/e.g./such as/in other words
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Interactional resources	Involve the reader in the argument	
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Hedges	withhold writer's full commitment to proposition	might/perhaps/possible/about
Boosters	emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition	in fact/definitely/it is clear that
Attitude markers	express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately/I agree/surprisingly
Engagement markers	explicitly refer to or build relationship with reader	consider/note that/you can see that
Self-mentions	explicit reference to author(s)	I/we/my/our
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Figure 1: The model of metadiscourse by Hyland & Tse (2004)

At interactive resource level, the model informs the readers on the organisation of the text and how writers organise and present the content within the text. Interactional functions relate "to the writer's attitude towards the text through hedging, boosters, self-references" (Hyland & Tse, 2004: 159). It informs on how the writer shows response to the contents of the text. Bunton (1999) views meta-text as the writer's self-awareness to the text whereas Hyland & Tse (2004) claim that this model of metadiscourse represents the writers' awareness of unfolding the text, giving clues to their own thinking process of how they perceive and develop their thoughts within the text.

Both of these types of functions are interrelated in the sense that the writer achieves interpersonal goals by using textual devices such as transitions, additive, endophoric markers, evidential markers, frames markers etc. These markers also serve as self-evaluation on the writer's part for they indicate the points writers want to highlight, explain, compare or contrast. They also inform the readers of the writer's linking, and/or, transition from one idea to the other. This paper follows the same model of metadiscourse in academic texts by Hyland & Tse (2004) to analyse text at interactive and interactional level.

Contrastive Rhetoric

Kaplan (1996) believes that contrastive rhetoric has been controversial in ESL research for many reasons: first early research on rhetoric focused only on the final product. Moreover, it did not compare texts from the same genres. Secondly, rhetoric research did not consider writers' writing skills in their first language and norms of writing in first language. Finally there is no universal rhetorical model to compare and evaluate the rhetoric researches. Kubota (2004) introduces the concept of critical contrastive rhetoric that investigates the issues of language and power in cultural thoughts within a text. However later work in the area addresses these issues for more valid studies and findings. For example see Liebman (1992), Mastuda (1997), Kubota (1998), Kubota (2003), Hirose (2003), Liu (2005), Jarrat, Losh & Puente (2006).

Grabe and Kaplan’s (1996) claim that “language, and thus writing too, is the product of human mind and is therefore inseparable from that mind, and all its attendants subjectivity, value-orientation and emotion” (pp. 177). They believe that “contrastive rhetoric has its origin in notions of language structures, learning, and use” (pp. 199). The goal of contrastive rhetoric is thus to describe how written texts operate in larger cultural contexts. Contrastive rhetoric provides an increased awareness of the conventions L2 writers bring to composition classes and this awareness is pedagogically significant because it enables teachers to assist learners in analysing their expectations versus the expectations of their English reading audiences based on the rhetoric they have learned in contrast to the rhetoric they are learning.

III. THE DATA

The data for this study consists of 11 written texts, each of about 450 words at average written by three female and eight male students, studying as a class at bachelor level in a Pakistani private university. The class consists of male and female students from various disciplines such as business studies and IT studies at undergraduate level. All the students belong to mixed academic backgrounds of ‘A’ Level and mainstream Bachelor of Arts (BA) examination in Pakistan. This course is mandatory for all the students at this university. The selected texts for this study were randomly taken from one of the routine sessions on writing and the students’ consent was taken to anonymously analyse the discourse of these texts for research purposes.

The writing task is opinion based writing. The prompt required the students to respond to an email by an American friend explaining their concept of a Pakistani national. The required length of the email was between 450 – 500 words. Few students wrote more than the limit whereas some could just reach the limit, constituting a corpus of about 4200 words.

The students were asked to reply to an email by an American friend who wanted to know more about various characterises of Pakistani nationals which western media failed to project in the west. Though all the students were supposed to be familiar with emailing system and use it as a part of their academic and personal routine, only four out of eleven students considered the intended audience and the genre required for this task. Rest of the seven students started writing as if they were writing an essay on a given topic.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS

In order to analyse the data, all the interactive and interactional metadiscourse were counted and enlisted in tabular form for numerical analysis and presentation of the data. Though the discussion of the analysis repeatedly refer to male and female inclinations in using certain metadiscourse features, the study does not claim to generalise the gender based differences/similarities because of imbalanced gender proportion of the sample population as well as the limited scope of the corpus. However, it useful to highlight gender based priorities to initiate further possible research topics with a focus on these perspectives. The analysis does not take into account endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses for these features did not occur in these texts. Likewise, in order to keep the discussion focused, the analysis does not consider the grammatical construction of the texts. Terms ‘F’ and ‘M’ in the discussion of the corpus refer to female and male participants respectively.

An overview of the data (Figure 2) shows that this group of writers made a more frequent and greater use of interactional devices (73%) as compared to interactive devices (33%). Excessive use of interactional devices to reflect the writers’ attitude towards the topic is rationalised because of the opinion based nature of the writing task. Likewise, high frequency of self-mention (36%) is also understandable in such type of texts. However, other devices such as hedges, frame markers and boosters are significantly lower. The writers used hedges 4% and attitude markers 5% of all the metadiscourse devices which could have been increased to make the language of the texts more polite and cultural sensitive, particularly with the foreign audience. In the use of interactive resources, the writers used transitional devices but they do not seem to frequently use frame markers, which are important for well organised structure.

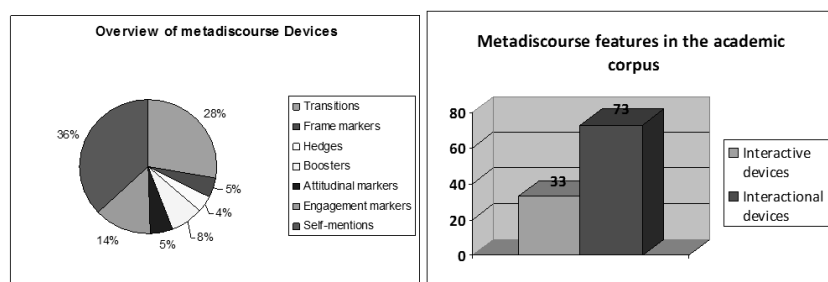


Figure 2: Overview of the corpus analysis

Figure 2 suggests that these writers are somewhat familiar with using interactional devices but they require further training on the use of interactive devices to organise their ideas and structure their writing more cohesively and

coherently. The following sections analyse the corpus at micro level by looking at each metadiscourse device individually.

A. Interactive Resources

1. Transitions

A high ratio in the use of transitions, representing internal connections in the discourse, is clearly an important feature of academic argument (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Transitional words and phrases link the sentences, paragraphs and the whole text in the form of a continuous thought. The writers use them to help readers recall what has previously been said or to anticipate the coming thought. Figure 2 shows that transitions constitute 28% of the whole metadiscourse devices used in the texts. The difference is not significant as compared to self-mentions i.e. 36%. But qualitative examination of corpus shows that use of transitions and self mentions was not used equally by all the writers. As figure 3 shows, all the three female writers used transitional devices more frequently as compared to the male writers.

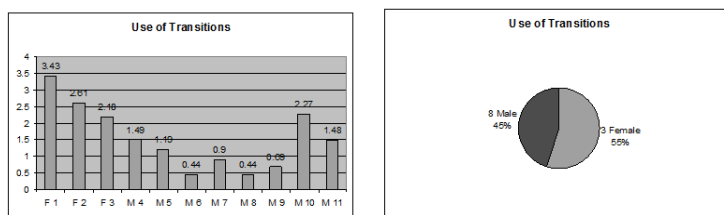


Figure 3: Use of transitions

Three female writers used 55% of transitions as compared to 8 males who used 45% transitions, which reflects that the female writers demonstrated a significantly greater ability to use transitional devices in writing. However, the quality of transitions is another issue to be considered in this respect. The most frequently used transitions are *but*, *and*, *this* and *that*. In this opinion based task, the writers were expected to use a variety of advanced transitions to illustrate, contrast, emphasize, make concessions, give examples and summarise details. Nevertheless, the corpus does not demonstrate much transitional support, to enable readers trace connections between the ideas conveniently. In the corpus, all the writers started a new sentence or paragraph without linking it to the previous one, which made the reading of the texts somewhat uninteresting and difficult to understand. Sometimes the writers use transitions awkwardly. For example:

I heard a lot that Pakistanis are very negative thinkers and there is a lot of gender differences and that the life in Pakistan is very easy and tension free because no one thinks good about others....(F 3)

This example, and quite a few more like this, emphasize that despite these writers have frequently use transitional devices, they require focused guidance on using appropriate and a variety of devices to suit the purpose of the writing task.

2. Frame Markers

Another metadiscourse feature is frame markers that help readers to understand the construction of the text and identify various stages in discussion. Reading of the text becomes more difficult in the absence of frame markers because readers do not know the beginning, end or development of thought. Frame markers represent 5% of all metadiscourse features in this small corpus. As shown in figure 4, a low percentage of frame markers indicate the writers' tendency of not using frame markers sufficiently in the task. They do not seem to make conscious efforts to use frame markers to signal the developmental stages in their thoughts. In the corpus most of the paragraphs and new ideas are introduced without signalling the stage of development in thought.

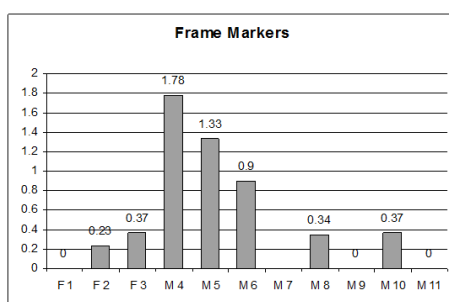


Figure 4: Use of frame markers

Interestingly, figure 4 reflects that male writers are higher frequent users of frame markers as compared to female writers. The latter used frame markers at a very low ratio whereas one female writer did not use this device at all. However, examination of the corpus shows that all the writers do not demonstrate a realistic use of interactive resources. For example, see the following quotations from the texts where writers produced sentences without continuing the sequence of thoughts logically:

1. *Speaking out the terrorism, Pakistan has played a major role in resisting the terrorist. They are very civilized.....
The economy of Pakistan is increasing day by day. The education school is also increase. You can see millions of students in Pakistan are getting the scholarship from the foreign ministries.....M 5.*
2. *Our culture represents brotherhood, forgiveness etc. I am proud of being a Pakistani.
In Pakistan we have combined family.....M 6*
3. *A real and true Muslim in Pakistan is always loving his country. Every person wants to be well mannered and educated.
The education given in Pakistan is of two types.....M 7*
4. *Pakistani generally respects the elder and love with younger. I think 95% people are Muslims. I think one of the main targets of American world is always show the wrong picture of Islam.M 9.*
5. *Pakistani people are not so rude. They respect elders. Family institutions are strong in Pakistan. Younger respect their elders.....M 8*

In example 1 above, the second sentence is completely a new thought and not linked with the first sentence. It is not clear who the writer is referring to by using 'they'. The next sentence is also a new thought without linking with the previous ones.

In example 2 above, the writer first talks about his culture and lifestyle, later switches to his feelings about being Pakistani, and finally switches back to Pakistani lifestyle without any transitional signals. The writer of example 3 does not show coherence between the first two sentences and starts a new paragraph, which is seemingly an attempt to start a new topic without justifying how description of a Pakistani national is related to Pakistani educational system. Similarly in examples 4 and 5, there is no connection among the three continuous sentences in the same paragraph.

The corpus does not reflect mind mapping or planning of the writing task and apparently the writers seem to have been carried away with their thoughts without organization and logical sequence between ideas. The students didn't indicate shift to the next thought or stage through frame makers. They make sudden shifts from one idea to the other. Only three male writers (M4, M10 & M11) indicated some sort of frame markers in the beginning or at the end. These are the same students as had considered their audience, started the task by addressing the main topic, and finished by saying farewell. With the exception of these three texts, there is no other evidence of properly used frame markers in the texts. Some writers used a frame marker 'first' but they seemed to forget to move to the next stage and kept writing all their thoughts as subsidiary thought to stage 1.

The intended audience of this writing task is most likely to be unfamiliar with the culture and might have required extra information to understand the writer's point of view. The writers could have used code glosses to explain or give extra information at certain points but there is hardly an example of code glosses in the texts, which denotes that the writers have most probably made exaggerated assumption about the intended audience's knowledge who is an American friend, in this case, and apparently request to be provided with more information to enhance his/her vision of Pakistani nationals.

B. Interactional Resources

1. Hedges and Boosters

Hedges indicate the scale of writers' involvement and their priorities to show how far they want to reveal their opinions vividly whereas boosters are used to emphasize the argument. Hedges also reflect writers' reluctance to communicate information categorically. This corpus is potentially capable of using both of these features. An opinion based piece of writing requires writers' to clearly indicate their viewpoint on the topic with a caution of not becoming insolent in making comments to the audience In this corpus, hedges and boosters constitute 5% and 8% respectively of metadiscourse features used (see Figure 2).

The female writer (F1, F2 and M5) have demonstrated high frequency of hedging (Figure 5). Overall tendency of using hedges only by two female writers at the ratio of 37% is substantial as compared with that of four male writers at the ratio of 63%.

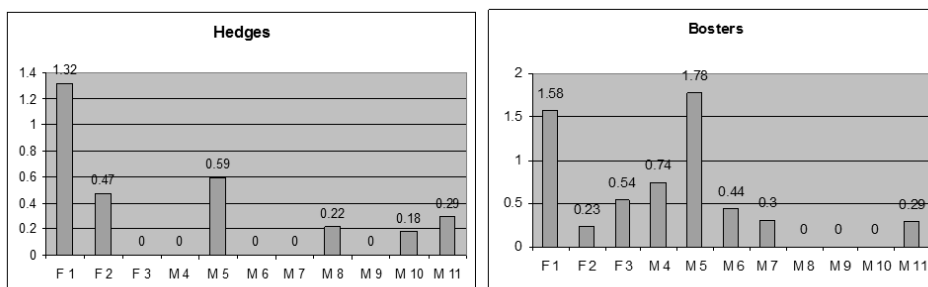


Figure 5: Use of hedges and boosters

The numerical examination of the data reveals that most of the hedges and boosters are used only by 55% students. Rest of the students did not show a tendency of using hedges in their writing. For example:

Pakistani people are very poor in obeying law.....they do not respect or even do not bother to say hello to others. (M4)

...the difference which is in between Pakistani and American is that Pakistani is a Muslim and Americans hate Muslims.... (M7)

There are many mistakes in European nation but we don't know them because media is not presenting the real picture. M8

American society feels shame to live with old people. M10

All the above facts could have been written in a more polite and indirect manner but all the writers have shown a tendency to express their ideas, at times rudely, that reflects that it is not an individual's style to communicate, rather they have not been taught how to use hedging in writing.

Likewise, the writers have not used boosters appropriately to emphasize their point. There is a ratio of 40% and 50% between the use of boosters among female and male writers respectively. Though, the male writers apparently seemed to use boosters more frequently than the female writers, considering their small number, the latter demonstrated greater tendency in using boosters (Figure 5).

Figure 5, however, indicates that only one writer from each gender (F 1 and M 5) used boosters at higher ratio that raised the scale in both groups. Otherwise overall the texts do not show moderate use of boosters. Three male writers, out of eight, did not use any booster in their writing. The following examples, and quite a few others in the texts, show that the writers have mostly emphasized the words, rather than the argument, and inappropriate use of bossters has at time spoiled the image of the argument.

Pakistani people are very technical. M 4

Media is showing very wrong image... M 5

This is really very astonishing M 7

2. Attitude Markers

Hyland & Tse (2004) observe that attitude markers express the writer's appraisal of propositional information, conveying surprise, obligation, agreement, importance, and so on. Use of a variety of attitude markers can convey the writers' mild or firm stand on an issue more effectively, without spoiling the writers' goodwill. Proportion of using attitude markers in the sample texts between male and female writers is 87% and 13% respectively (Figure 6). A close examination of the data shows that male writers have shown greater tendency to use attitude markers to appraise propositional information.

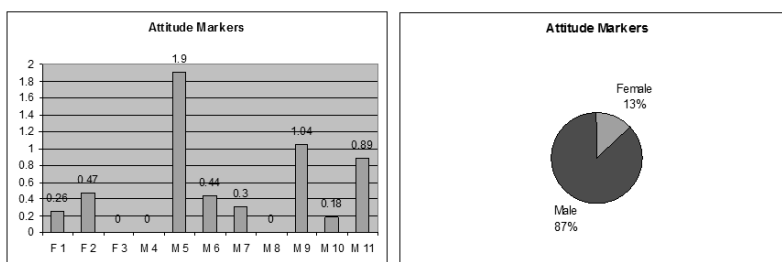


Figure 6: Use of attitude markers

However a qualitative analysis of the texts reveals that out of 11, three students did not use any attitude marker at all whereas one student used the same attitude marker thrice. Three writers used only one attitude marker whereas only three writers used different markers with a ratio of two markers by each. Figure 6 denotes that male writers largely have broader awareness of using attitude markers in writing.

3. Engagement Markers

Writers use engagement markers to directly address the reader in order to involve them in discussion (Hyland 2001). It can be done in various ways, for example, by addressing them directly, or including them as participant in discussion. Overall use of engagement markers in the texts is 14% out which 4% markers were used by female and 10% markers were used by male writers (figure 7).

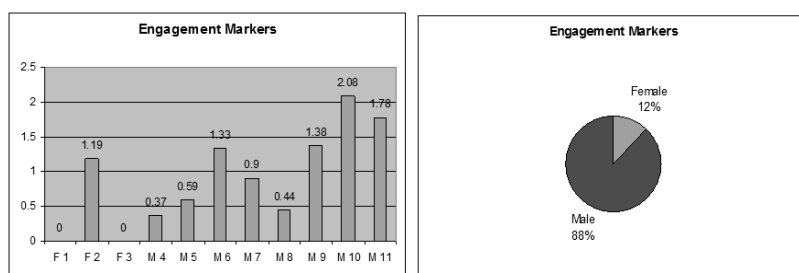


Figure 7: Use of engagement markers

Overall the percentage of using engagement markers between male and female writer is 88% and 12% respectively. Two female writers did not use any engagement markers, whereas four male writers used engagement markers with a marked high frequency as compared to others.

4. Self-Mentions

Self-mentions reflect the degree of author presence in terms of the incidence of first person pronouns and possessives (Hyland & Tse, 2004). The texts show 23% and 77% frequency of reflecting author presence by female and male respectively (figure 8). Male writers show larger frequency mainly because of their more frequent use of self-mentions and partly because of their greater number.

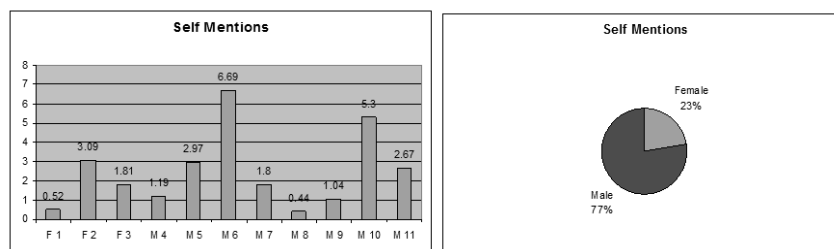


Figure 8: Use of self-mentions

It can be safely asserted that all the the writers were aware of the importance of being vocal in this writing task which involved personal view on a topic.

A comparative look at both male and female writers' use of metadiscourse (figure 9) reflects that female writers demonstrated greater tendency in using transitions, self-mentions, boosters and hedges at the rate of 38%, 31%, 11% and 9% respectively.

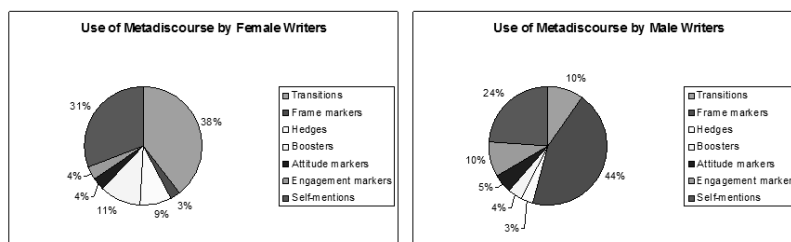


Figure 9: Use of metadiscourse by both genders

On the other hand male writers tend to use frame markers, self-mentions, engagement markers and transitions with a frequency of 44%, 24%, 10% and 10% respectively. Considering the difference in number between both genders, it can logically be concluded that female writers have reflected their presence in the texts with much higher frequency than the

male writers. On the other hand male writers have shown a higher tendency to use frame markers at a scale of 44% in contrast to that of female writers that is 3% only. Despite the findings indicate certain tendencies among male and female writers in terms of using metadiscourse features, I do not find it rational to generalise the findings on gender basis in such a small corpus. However, looking back at Figure 1, it can be suggested that this group of writers requires more attention towards using frame markers, transitions, hedges and attitude markers to make their writing more effective and more convincing. Particularly, female writers need guidance on using more of interactive devices to structure their writing whereas male writers require further training on using interactional or interpersonal devices in their writing. Use of code glosses will also help to illustrate ideas for readers by making text easier to understand.

C. Contrastive Rhetoric

Grabe & Kaplan (1996) suggest the types of knowledge which are important in teaching of writing from contrastive rhetorical angle.

- i. Knowledge of rhetorical patterns or arrangement
 - ii. Knowledge of composing conventions and strategies needed to generate text
 - iii. Knowledge of the morpho-syntax of the target language, particularly as it applies at the inter-sentential level
 - iv. Knowledge of the coherence-creating mechanisms of the target language
 - v. Knowledge of the writing conventions of target language in the sense of both frequency and distribution of types and text appearance
 - vi. Knowledge of the audience characteristics and expectations in the target culture
 - vii. Knowledge of the subject to and specialist knowledge
- (p. 200)

Discussing the data by the criteria of these types of knowledge strengthens the findings mentioned in the previous section. A good piece of writing contains description of process, classification, definition, more important to less important etc. With the exception of very few, the writers in this study generally did not demonstrate awareness to these devices. There is no pattern in the arrangement of ideas. Most of the writers started abruptly, without having any clear outline in their mind. They did not move from most important to less important, nor did they classify or define various entities. For example F 1 writes:

A typical Pakistani person can be an emotional ..

The word emotional has different dimensions and definitions in various cultures which she did not specifically define. M4 classified ideas by giving headings like family, education, law and order, but he did not maintain symmetry and moved to and fro between his classifications. He talked about family, education, law and order and then he discussed illiterate people, and talented people. He did not relate the ideas logically. On the contrary, M5 started his discussion with civilized nature of people and then moved to economy of the country, and later to Pakistani students' achievement in term of securing scholarships. All these ideas could have been more impressive if they were connected logically. M7 did not show any structure, organization, or classification of ideas in a pattern. All the writers demonstrated the same unorganised structure. F1, 2 and 3 showed more organised patterns because they had used transitions to link the ideas and they moved comparatively more naturally and smoothly in a sequence.

The corpus does not reflect the knowledge of strategies to generate texts. The stages of pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing are somewhat innovative in Pakistani main stream academics. This is probably one of the main reasons why the sample population of this study did not produce a coherent piece of writing.

Section 4.1.1 on transitions shows the level of knowledge of coherence-mechanism, the reflected in the corpus. As far as the knowledge of writing convention of target language is concerned, with the exception of three writers (M 4, M 10, M 11), none of the rest students showed awareness to this aspect. Rather they carried on writing in the form of paragraph. None of the writers showed awareness to the knowledge of the audience characteristics and expectations to have information on the portrait of a typical Pakistani national.

The writers also did not demonstrate the knowledge of the subject and specialist knowledge. Writers made vague claims to make their claims valid. For example:

I can tell you that according to the statistics of 2005 – 2006 the I.Q. level of Pakistani people.....M4

...the American top doctor of kidney specialist his name is Mr Butt. Its mean Pakistani are talented...M9

One more example I want to give you about intelligence of Pakistan is that one man his name is Mr Ahmad who teach the English in America.... M4.

Most of the writers seem to believe that whatever they claim will be acceptable by the audience, an assumption which reflects their underestimation and ignorance of audience expectations. The concept of research based writing or

argumentative writing is generally naïve to undergraduate students in Pakistan. Throughout their academic career, they usually have come across with reading and writing materials that is comprised of extracts from the original sources. This lack of exposure to original sources also causes lack of referencing to support their viewpoint with arguments in their writing. Likewise, this also denotes that these students heavily rely on guided writing and lack ability to think and produce critically as well as independently. The same deprives them of awareness of logically structuring their writing with well-connected ideas.

V. FINAL WORD

The above analysis shows that both interactive and interpersonal resources in texts were not used quite effectively. Metadiscourse, as noticed by Hyland & Tse (2004), helps learner to “engage readers and create a convincing, coherent text peopled by readers, prior experiences and other texts” (p: 167). Absence of this awareness in almost all the texts denotes that metadiscourse features are not appropriately addressed in a Pakistani English writing classroom to equip learners with useful and effective writing techniques. If the corpus in question has demonstrated some awareness to using these devices, it is most likely due to students’ unconscious effort based on their exposure to English language over a number of academic years. With the exception of four, the students failed to demonstrate their awareness of producing the appropriate genre required for this task, which denotes lack of training and awareness in selecting appropriate genre writing on students’ part. The data analysis in section 4 proposes to essentially train learners on structuring their writing with logical organisation of their ideas. Evidence from the corpus analysis also emphasizes the need of training learners in academic writing with a keen focus on issues in contrastive rhetoric in order to avoid strong L1 influence in L2 writing.

This study potentially intends to bring awareness to educators and teachers of writing of the problem areas in academic writing, which needed to be addressed in order to help learners write appropriately to suit purpose and audience. The study also suggests the educators and the teachers to teach writing skills with consideration to audience and hence helping the audience through appropriate use of discourse markers for clear and effective communication. As Swales (1991) rightly points out, there might be no standard organisational structure for opinion based writings, there are certain preferred expectations and the way information should be organised. Teachers and curriculum developers need to be aware of these expectations and guide learners to realise how to encompass such characteristics in their writing. This study also intends to emphasize the issue of learner training in the context to encourage autonomous learning.

(2014) referring to the same context, also highlight that the textbooks used in this context do not foster autonomous learning. They highlighted how editors of one of the textbooks used their commentary on the texts to form the opinion of learners in a particular way. Such tact is most likely to discourage independent and critical thought on learners’ part. This also deprives learners of the ability of structuring and refining their academic skills. Therefore, it is highly recommended that while learners are taught particular skills, such as academic writing, they should be trained to become autonomous and independent learners as well in order to perform more effectively in the academic set up and beyond for overall improvement.

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