

Gender-based Study of Interactive Metadiscourse Markers in EFL Academic Writing

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Abstract—This study aimed at exploring the gender differences in the usage of interactive metadiscourse markers in a sample of EFL academic essays written by male and female EFL majors joining the College of Languages and Translation, Al-Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University. Further, it aimed at supporting the results with justifications in light of the cultural difference and discursive psychology approaches. To achieve this aim, thirty academic essays written by EFL male students and thirty essays written by EFL female students were analyzed based on the metadiscourse framework proposed by Hyland (2005). In order to achieve an acceptable degree of reliability, the essays were first analyzed electronically using a concordance software program. Then, all the interactive metadiscourse markers were examined qualitatively in context to determine their actual functions. The findings of the study indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between male and female students in using some interactive markers namely transitions, frame markers, and code glosses, in which the female students surpassed male students. The qualitative analysis, on the other hand, indicated that the student's psychological and cultural variations might be a source of gender differences regarding the employment of metadiscourse markers. The study also provided some implications for researchers, writing teachers, and textbook publishers in terms of enhancement of metadiscoursal proficiency in EFL writing classrooms.

Index Terms—metadiscourse markers, gender-based study, interactive metadiscourse markers, written discourse analysis

I. INTRODUCTION

Language is considered as the most essential tool of communication in which the absence of language means the absence of communication. One of the important parts of communication is writing skill, as it compasses a lot of different communicative functions. In this context, writing can be defined as a system for interpersonal communication using various styles of language. In the academic context, writing skill has an extremely significant educational role as key element both for understanding and learning. It develops self-expression and individual progress, and allows people to gather, refine, share, and preserve knowledge and understanding (Graham, 2006).

For EFL students, writing skill is even more important. The capacity to write an academic essay is an important phase in foreign language learning. It effectively promotes acquiring the target language through engaging learners in an active process of selecting appropriate vocabulary, forming meaningful sentences, and using other principles of academic writing to communicate their intended ideas and thoughts clearly and effectively (Miller & Cohen, 2001). Thus, to compose comprehensible communicative writing, the learners need to consider certain important interactional components called 'metadiscourse markers'.

Metadiscourse term goes back to Zelling Harris (1959) as a way to understand language in use, and how writers succeed in directing a reader's grasp of a text (Hyland, 2005). In other words, metadiscourse is the interpersonal markers used to arrange a discourse or the stance of the writer towards its content or its reader (Hyland, 2005). The accurate employment of such markers in academic essays can significantly raise their quality.

Reviewing previous literature tackling discourse analysis, it was found that there are many frameworks for exploring metadiscourse markers (e.g. Ädel, 2006; Hyland & Tse, 2004). Some researchers limit metadiscourse markers to components that help structure the text (direction, purpose) as a text which is known as the "reflexive" model (Ädel, 2006). On the other hand, many scholars have taken a broader perspective and referred it to the way authors and speakers represent their understanding of the topic and the intended audience in the discourse; this is well-known as the "integrative" or interactive' model (Hyland, 2005). The present study focuses on the interpersonal model (Hyland, 2005) since this model is one of those which was taken as a reference and adopted by numerous studies in the field of language studies (Pasarihu, 2017; Kan, 2016; Yeganeh & Ghoreishi, 2015;). The study also mainly focuses on factors that can influence academic writers' linguistic choices vary, one of the most important is gender. In linguistics, gender has been primarily regarded as an independent variable that impacts linguistic production (Jing, 2011). Despite a quite large number of studies have targeted the gender differences in second language academic writing (e.g., Javid, Farooq

& Umer, 2013; Kubota, 2003; Waskita, 2008), the gender differences in terms of Hyland (2005) interactive metadiscourse markers usage in academic writings of EFL learners in general and in Saudi context in particular has received little attention. Thus, it deserves additional investigation and warrants comprehensive analysis. Hopefully, this study aims to fill an important gap in previous research on gender differences in academic writing in EFL context.

A. Purpose and Questions of the Study

This study aimed at exploring the gender differences in the usage of interactive metadiscourse markers in a sample of EFL academic essays written by Saudi male and female EFL majors. It also aimed at identifying which interactive metadiscourse sub-categories predominate in academic writing and how they are distributed according to cross-linguistic preferences of both genders. Further, it focused on supporting the obtained statistical differences with the justifications in light of the cultural difference and discursive psychology approaches. With these aims in mind, the study seeks to answer the following main question:

- What are the significant gender differences in the usage of Hyland (2005) interactive metadiscourse markers in academic writing between male and female EFL majors at Al-Imam Muhammad Ibn Saud Islamic University?

The following sub-questions were derived from the main question:

1. Which interactive markers are predominantly used by female EFL majors? and why?
2. Which interactive markers are predominantly used by male EFL majors? and why?

B. Significance of the Study

According to Newman (2003), most studies on gender differences are based on quantitative methods only, so they rarely explain the motivation for gender differences in language. Accordingly, the present study intended to explore the gender differences in terms of interactive metadiscourse markers in depth using both quantitative and qualitative methods. The researcher expects that the combination of the cultural difference and discursive psychology approaches in justifying the gender differences in the present study have the potential to shed some new light on gender differences studies.

Moreover, the results of this study may have important pedagogical implications to enhance academic writing efficiency and the written communication skills of EFL students. This could be reached by providing valuable insights and important implications for interventionist approaches for teaching EFL learners to improve their metadiscoursal proficiency and to use metadiscourse markers more effectively taking into account the effect of gender factor.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Concept of Gender

In language and gender studies, linguists have studied the concept of gender from different perspectives. During the 1960s, gender was seen as biological sex. This movement was called the essentialist movement. However, in the early 1970s, there was a movement away from essentialist and dichotomous conceptions of gender to a performative model where gender is seen as the accomplishment and product of social interaction (Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003). Therefore, according to Coates (2016), gender is no longer seen as given but rather as something that we 'do'. The present study adopts the idea that gender is a 'performative' concept that is done as a result of the social practices toward individuals and the way that individuals interpret these practices.

B. Language and Gender Area of Research

In the field of discourse analysis, some researchers direct their efforts to understanding why gender differences appear through a functional approach where the same linguistic form may serve a variety of functions, depending on the context of its use (Holmes, 1995). According to the functional approach, gender is seen as inherent to the individual. From this perspective, gender can be treated as an independent variable, whose effects can be assessed on dependent variables (Holmes & Meyerhof, 2003). On the other hand, some scholars focus instead on communicative styles in which they take elements of the social context into account. The communicative approach conceptualizes gender as a role that depends on social structural position and the expectations associated with that position (Holmes, 2003).

However, the current study adopted the functional approach. It sought to explore the effect of gender factor as an independent variable in the usage of interactive metadiscourse markers. Moreover, it attempted to figure out the reasons behind those variations in the light of difference theory and the discursive approach.

C. Key Approaches to Language and Gender Research

During the last few decades, many approaches to gender differences mirrored in language have developed building on each other. Cameron (1992) asserted that the science of language and gender is divided according to these different points of view. In order to situate this study within a theoretical framework, this section will provide a general overview of the main phases in the study of language and gender.

First of all, the deficit Approach. This approach considers language of women as an essentially imperfect and powerless compared to language of men as it is limited in vocabulary, simpler in structure, and lacking in substance (Tej & William, 2006; Pearce, 2007). Later on, appeared the dominance model, a contextualized approach that links

gender differences in language to the imbalance in economic power that men have over women in society (Hare-Mustin and Marecek, 1994). In spite of its effective role in stressing the connection between power and language, this approach has some shortcomings as being limited only to the effects of power which do not explain clearly differences between males and females.

Around the mid-1980s appeared the difference approach was formed and remained popular until the early 1990s (Locher and Graham, 2010). This approach was represented by Deborah Tannen in her book *You Just Don't Understand* (1990), in which she argues that male and female conversation is cross-cultural communication, and men and women stem from different subcultures because they grow up in a different environment. This positive view allows linguists to examine the female language outside of the oppressed framework (Coates, 2004). The social constructionist framework sees gender as a social construct rather than as a given social category (Holmes, 2007). Gender is no longer seen as a fixed category, but rather as a social construct (Coates, 2004).

The discursive approach which falls under the social constructionism finds context to be the foundation for the variations. Linguists focusing on language and gender are also exploring how some variables related to culture, e.g. race, class, economics, and geography help in constructing gender (Butler, 1990). Accordingly, both genders must develop disparate strategies and skills to function appropriately in and to accommodate with cultural and sociolinguistic needs in the society they live in (Cameron, 1997). This method emphasizes the need to conceptualize the term 'gender' as a verb, not a noun (Coates, 2004).

D. Metadiscourse Theoretical Considerations and Models

According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse is "a widely used term in current discourse analysis and language education, referring to an interesting, and relatively new, approach to conceptualizing interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users" (Hyland, 2005, p.1, as cited in Alsubhi, 2016).

Several attempts to conceptualize the concept of metadiscourse resulted in many different models (Deborah Schiffrin, 1980; Joseph Williams, 1981; John Sinclair, 1980; William Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993). However, Hyland (2005) provided the probably most comprehensive framework for the study of metadiscourse which is adopted in the present study.

In order to resolve the long-standing controversy around metadiscourse, Hyland (2004) set three essential principles for reconsidering the theoretical basis of the concept. The first principle is that metadiscourse, as distinct from propositional aspects of discourse, are essential elements of the text meaning that help relates the text to its context by taking into consideration the reader's needs, existing knowledge, understandings, relative status, and intertextual experiences. The second principle is that these markers embody the interaction between the writer and the reader through some aspects. The third principle is that metadiscourse refers only to relations which are internal to the discourse rather than external or experiential.

According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse markers are divided into two categories: interactive and interactional markers; the former deal with means of discourse organization and represent writers' evaluation of which section or idea needs more clarification in order to limit and direct any possible misunderstanding of the text. The latter are concerned with the strategies of regulating writer's personality in the text, as well as the amount of reader involvement (Hyland, 2005). The current study focuses on examining interactive since they are an important part of all kind of writings, especially for EFL writers, as they highlight the ideas and information organization in coherent and convincing ways to the audience (Hyland, 2005).

Interactive markers, according to Hyland (2005), enable the writer to control the flow of knowledge to specifically define his or her desired interpretations. Interactive markers include five categories: First, 'transitions' consisting of a set of devices, mainly conjunctions, used to label additive, contrasting, and consequential discourse steps in contrast to the outer sources. Second, 'frame markers' which refer to borders or schematic structure elements of the text, e.g. sequencing and labeling text stages items. Third, 'endophoric markers' help in making ideas expressed in a text more notable and connected for the reader through linking between text sections. Fourth, 'evidentials' reflecting the external sources of the text ideas/knowledge. Finally, 'code glosses' signaling the rewording of knowledge regarding the ideation.

E. Gender Studies of Metadiscourse Markers in Writing

Some literature that examined the effect of gender on the use of metadiscourse markers (Ädel, 2006; Francis, Robson & Read, 2001; Tse & Hyland, 2008) assured that male and female writers did utilize metadiscourse markers differently in their written texts. A recent study by Seyyedrezaie and Vahedi (2017) investigated male and female authors' type of stance markers usage by analysing sixty English, Persian articles, and English articles written by Persian speakers. Five categories of stance markers (textual, epistemic attitudinal, deontic and causation) were identified according to Xu and Longs' (2008) classification. They found that males and female authors held the same habits in utilizing markers of stance. Results showed also that the male writers outperformed females in using epistemic markers which made their writings more convincing. However, this study was limited to an examination of a five categories of stance markers of Xu and Longs' (2008) model in TEFL articles. It could have been optimized if a larger sample size across different fields and various genres had been investigated.

In the context of academic essays written by male and female EFL students, Yeganeh and Ghoreyshi (2015)

conducted one of the most pertinent studies concerning the role of gender on using booster and hedge. They attempted to explore the role of gender in applying metadiscourse markers in forty English research articles written by native speakers of Persian. The results revealed that gender plays an important part on the use of two metadiscourse features, booster and hedges. While Females preferred using hedges, Males inclined more to using boosters. This study helped in predicting the results of the current study since it has investigated gender differences in EFL academic writing. However, only forty research articles were randomly chosen in this study which is relatively small sample for approaching generalization of the research results unlike the present study which focuses on (60) academic essays. Also, opposite to the current study, this study was limited to only two subcategories of the interactional marker.

In the same context, Serholt (2012) conducted a study to investigate the gender differences in the use of hedges and boosters. Her study was conducted by analysing (20) randomly selected comparative essays written by Swedish advanced learners of English. Results revealed that females exceeded males in their inclination to offer robust devotion to their given information while both genders used hedges more than boosters. Opposite to the present study, Serholt's (2012) study was limited to only (20) academic essays as well. The study also examined only two metadiscourse markers which are hedges and boosters. It could have been optimized if larger sample size had been used and more metadiscourse markers have been investigated.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. *Research Design*

The present study is a descriptive comparative study. The research methodology employed in this study is a mixed method approach (quantitative as well as qualitative), in which that the data is collected qualitatively and analyzed quantitatively and qualitatively, using frequencies of the metadiscourse markers.

B. *Participants*

The study sample included sixty (30 male and 30 female) Saudi EFL undergraduates; joining the College of Languages and Translation, Al-Imam Mohammad bin Saud Islamic University. The participants were chosen randomly in the second semester of the academic year 2018/2019. All the participants are from the fourth year (level seven) to ensure that all students have finished the same required courses of academic writing and grammar. Also, they are expected to be at upper intermediate or advanced English proficiency level since they have accomplished the requirements of the previous levels. Their aged

C. *Data Collection and Research Instruments*

The instrument for collecting data was an essay writing test, the test consisted of two writing prompts; participants have to choose one and write a complete opinion essay about the chosen topic. The data set of the study sampled a group of academic essays. The data consisted of (60) opinion essays. As the average length of the single essay was from (250) to (300) words, the corpus of the study altogether consisted of (17,000) words. The interpersonal model of Hyland (2005) was employed as an instrument to analyze interactive metadiscourse markers used in the students' written texts to find whether or not male and female writers were different in using these markers in terms of frequency and type.

D. *Data Analysis and the Study Procedure*

The study is a contrastive investigation of gender differences in terms of metadiscourse markers used in (60) academic essays written by Saudi undergraduates. After receiving the required permission from the institution, the participants were briefed about the purpose of the treatment, and their approval was ensured to participate in the study. Sixty students were randomly selected to set for the essay writing test. The researchers analyzed the sixty essays in two consecutive stages. The focus of stage one was on examining the possible similarities and differences between males and females in the usage of the interactive metadiscourse markers, based on Hyland's (2005) classification, electronically with the help of a computational linguistic tool called 'AntConc software' and manually in which the essays were read word by word carefully. Stage two focused on examining the type and frequency and of metadiscourse markers then compare the results of the two gender groups using the concordance analysis tool AntConc software. In the quantitative analysis, three analytical procedures were used, the frequency of occurrence per 1000 words, the proportional percentages of metadiscourse categories to the total use, and the Chi-square test, to increase the results' accuracy.

In light of the difference and discursive psychology approaches, the differences in the usage of interactive metadiscourse markers by male and female students were justified.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results obtained from both quantitative and qualitative analysis indicated significant gender variations between Saudi male and female EFL majors in interactive metadiscourse markers use. The major gender differences were marked in the general usage of interactive markers as well as in each subcategory as follows:

A. *Overall Differences in Using Interactive Markers*

Quantitative analysis of the study corpus indicated that female students employed a higher proportion of interactive markers as well as devices of every single subcategory compared to male students except for two devices. The first is endophoric markers where males have exceeded females by a difference of only four markers. The second one is evidential markers where both genders have recorded a low but identical number of frequencies. See Fig. 1.

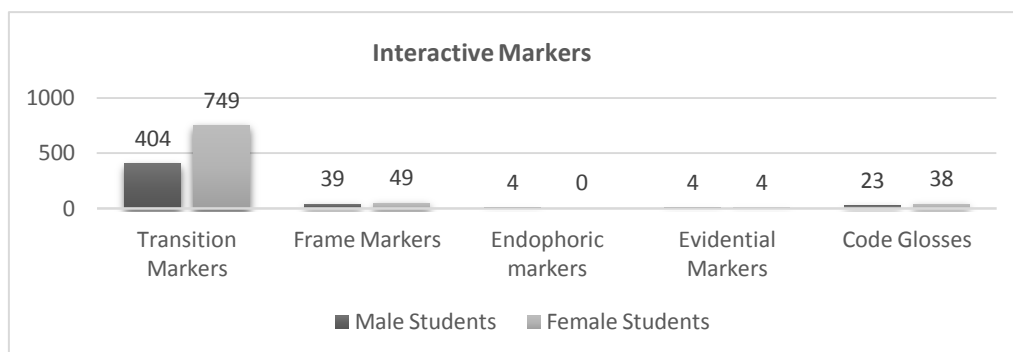


Figure 1. Overall Distribution of Interactive Metadiscourse Markers in the Corpus

The mean frequency of interactive markers in the essays written by male and female students was (m= 95) and (m=168) respectively. This result implies that the female students focused more on organizing the text to guide readers rather than on involving the reader in the text. This finding was compatible with Crismore (1993) and contrary to other previous studies (Tse & Hyland, 2008; Ghafoori & Oghbatalab, 2012).

A Chi-Square test was run to determine the significance of male and female students’ different application of interactive metadiscourse markers in their opinion essays. The obtained results, as shown in Table (1), a statistically significant difference in the global use of the metadiscourse markers was found between males and females, P-Value = 0.027 < 0.05.

TABLE 1. RESULTS OF CHI-TEST OF FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS’ USE OF INTERACTIVE MARKERS

P	df	Test Statistic	P-Value	N of valid cases	Level of Significance
0.05	4	10.961	0.027	1314	9.49

Some reasons can explain this variance between the two genders in the intensive use of interactive markers. It has been proved that females are more status-conscious than males. Accordingly, they tend to use more standard precise expressions such as metadiscourse markers in their writings. According to Tymson (1998, cited in Merchant, 2012), females are process-oriented in their communication, so they tend to focus more on readers’ conception and recapture of the real meanings presented in the text. On the other hand, males are described with goal-driven communication style which makes their writings to be informative.

This finding of the female higher use of interactive markers is compatible with the results of Crismore’s (1993) study. In her investigation of the use of metadiscourse markers in persuasive essays written by U.S male and female university students, she concluded that female students applied more metadiscourse markers in general, including interactive markers. On the other side, this finding disagrees with some other studies (Hyland & Tse, 2006; Ghafoori and Oghbatalab, 2012). In their analysis of twenty applied linguistics research papers, Ghafoori and Oghbatalab (2012) have found that English male and female writers showed a relative similarity in their overall use of interactive markers.

The variation in the results of the above studies could be attributed to the genre of discourse as Crismore (1993) utilized persuasive essays and Ghafoori and Oghbatalab (2012) used academic research papers in their investigations. Hyland and Tse (2006) proposed that the difference in men and women use of language might be affected not only by gender but also by different factors as disciplinary discourses and writing genre. Thus, it is possible to say that the use of interactive markers in opinion and persuasive essays seems to be influenced by gender.

B. Differences in Using Transitions

The quantitative analysis revealed that female students used more transition markers than male students, (see Fig 2). The total frequency of transition markers in females’ essays was (749) with mean of (m=33) which equalizes (65%) of the total number of transitions used in both genders’ texts. On the other hand, the total frequency of transition markers in males’ essays was (404) with mean of (m= 18) that equalizes (35.04%) of the total number of transitions in the corpus.

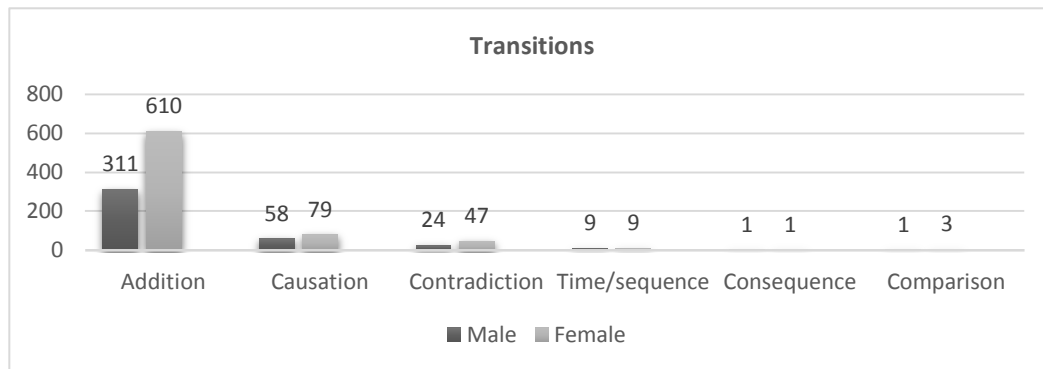


Figure 2. Frequency of Types of Transition Markers in the Corpus

Statistical results of Chi-Square test, as it is shown in Table (2), revealed that p-value is $0.014 < 0.05$, which means that Chi-square analysis has revealed a significant difference in transition markers employed by male and female students.

TABLE 2.
RESULTS OF CHI-TEST OF FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS' USE OF TRANSITIONS

P	df	Test Statistic	P-Value	N of valid cases	Level of Significance
0.05	22	39.125	0.014	1153	33.92

As it is seen in Fig. (2) above, both genders applied addition markers the most which inclines with the results of (Pasaribu, 2017; Vali & Kianiparsa, 2010). In line with Alsubhi's (2016) finding, the conjunction "and" was the most frequent transition marker in the corpus. It was used (516) times by female students which equals (44.75%) of transitions in the corpus, and (273) times or (23.68%) by male students. A possible explanation for the high frequency of additive markers in male and females' essays can be referred to the influence of the mother tongue of the participants (Arabic) that is presented in using long sentences; as Arabic discourse is recognized by parallelism in structure and diffusion of coordination (Hinkle, 2002).

Transition markers are the most used interactive markers in the present corpus. This result is in agreement with the findings of other related studies (Heng and Tan, 2010; Javaid and Mahmood, 2017; Zakaria and Malik, 2018) which asserted that transitions were the highest used metadiscourse markers among English learners. It seems quite natural that transitions were frequently used by the students since they are the conventional way of structuring cohesion in the text (Hyland, 2005). Pasaribu (2017) also found out that EFL students focus extensively on prepositional connections in their writings to clarify meaning.

Female greater use of transition markers is in agreement with Hyland (2012) in which he found that female philosophers tended to be heavy users of transition markers in their writings compared to male philosophers. It also agrees with Rahmat, Tan, Yean, Yahaya and Whanchits' (2020) study. In their study, they asked male and female students to write reflective essays to find out how they felt about their experience learning English in Malaysia. Female learners reported (57.2%) more transitions compared to the male writers (42.8%).

Female tendency to apply more transitions could be attributed to the cultural and psychological differences between the two genders. Women's communication style including negotiation, mediation, and facilitation is very effective especially in academic writing (Basow & Rubenfield, 2003). This type of communication style is clearly reflected in transition use which helps in marking the text structure (arrangement) by establishing logical connections between sentences, paragraphs, and sections. "This influences the reader friendliness of a text and primarily involves the management of information flow" (Tse & Hyland, 2008, p. 12, cited in Hyland, 2013).

C. Differences in Using Frame Markers

As it is shown in Fig. (3) below, female students employed about (56%) of frame markers in the whole corpus while males used (44%) which indicates a slight difference between the two groups. This result coincides with Suksawas' (2016) study that revealed that female Thai students used higher frame markers in their letters to the editor and news reports compared to male encounters. Rahmat et al. (2020) confirm this finding by reporting that female writers (61%) used more than male writers (39%) in their study. This finding suggests that female students showed more tendency to convince and persuade with the discourse by signaling relationship of the ideas and ordering materials.

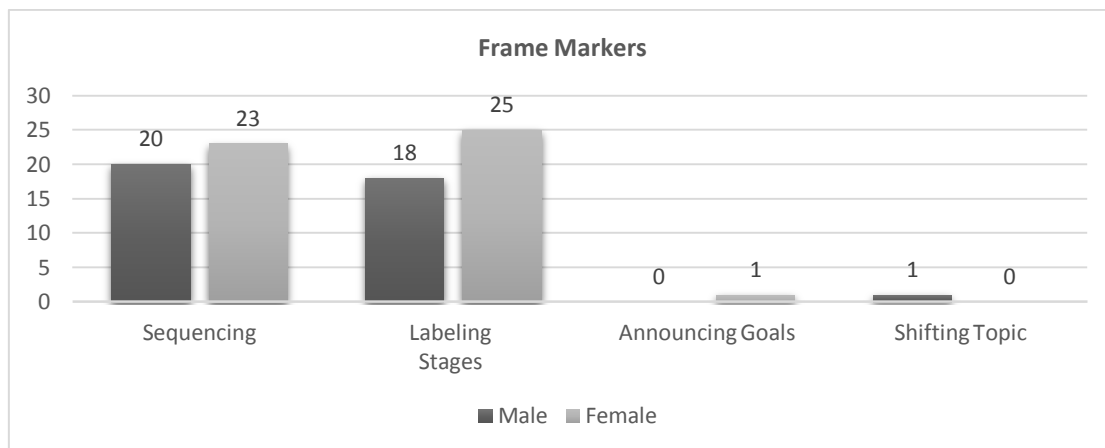


Figure 3. Frequency of Types of Frame Markers in the Corpus

A Chi-Square test was run to determine the importance of male and female students' different application of frame markers. Statistical results, as shown in Table (3), revealed that $p\text{-value} = 0.022 < 0.05$, Chi-square analysis also revealed a significant difference in frame markers employed by male and female students.

TABLE 3.
RESULTS OF CHI-TEST OF FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS' USE OF FRAME MARKERS

P	df	Test Statistic	P-Value	N of valid cases	Level of Significance
0.05	24	39.797	0.022	88	36.42

A closer analysis of the subcategories of frame markers indicated that female students showed a higher frequency of using sequencers and labeling stages markers compared to male students as "now" and "in conclusion". On the other hand, both groups tended to use fewer announcing goals as "would like to" and shift topic markers "in regard to" in their essays. This indicated the fact that both genders tended to elaborate on the relation between ideas rather than announcing the discourse goals. It seemed that they were following what Wahab (2006) referred to as 'the Asian rhetorical model' that is evasive, as they tended no to express their intentions explicitly.

D. Differences in Using Endophoric Markers

The quantitative analysis indicated that the use of endophoric markers was extremely rare in the males' essays while being totally absent in the female essays. In this case, the Chi-Square test is not required since there was no comparison as shown in Fig. 4.

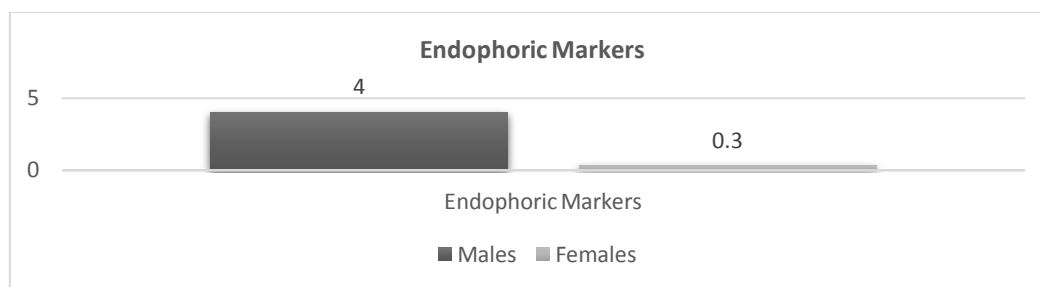


Figure 4. Frequency of Endophoric Markers in the Corpus

Though this result is in agreement with many results of some previous studies (Alsubhi, 2016; Davaei, 2013), it was not surprising due to the genre conventions (opinion essay) that do not require referring to information in other parts of the text, and the short nature of such essays in which the word count was approximately between (250-500) words. According to Hyland (2005), endophoric markers are largely a feature of hard disciplines writings such as science and engineering texts. They are usually used to mark the correlation between visual data and verbal information in order to make the content more explicit.

E. Differences in Evidential Markers

The quantitative analysis indicated that the use of evidential markers was quite low in both groups' essays with only about (0.5) token per 1000 words for both genders of students as shown in Fig. (5).

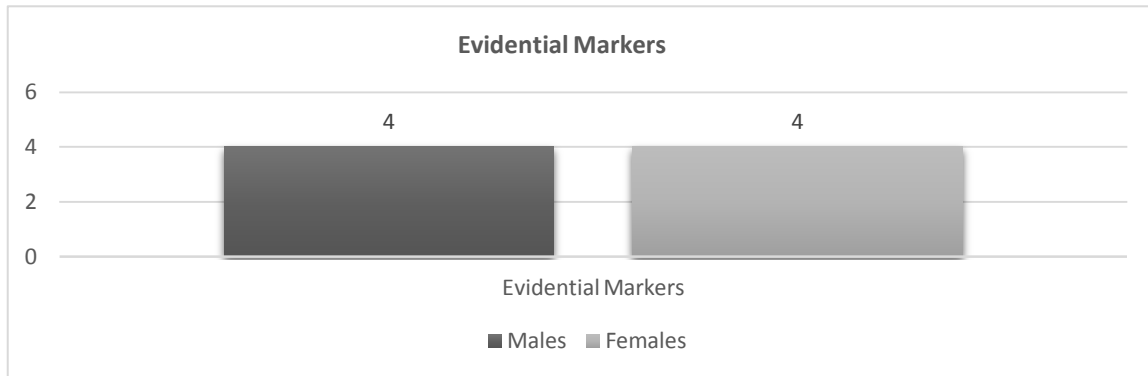


Figure 5. Frequency of Evidential Markers in the Corpus

This finding is compatible with the findings of Alsubhi's (2016) study which revealed similarity in using evidentials between man and women writings. On the other hand, Davaei (2013) come to a conclusion that evidentials were the second frequent subcategory in discussion/conclusion section of articles written by male and female writers.

The low use of evidentials in both groups could be justified by considering the genre of text they were asked to write, opinion essay, that writers are not in imperative necessity to refer to other markers to express their opinions. Whereas other different genres such as research articles always have the need to use evidentials as sources to support their arguments.

F. Differences in Code Glosses

The results of the quantitative analysis regarding code glosses showed that male and female students showed a slightly different tendency in employing code glosses in their texts, as shown in Fig. 6.



Figure 6. Frequency of Types of Code Glosses in the Corpus

The analysis showed that the mean of code glosses in male essays was ($m= 2$) while it was ($m= 4$) in the female students' texts. The obtained result is in line with the findings of Pasaribu's (2017) study, where male participants exceeded females in using interactive metadiscourse markers in EFL academic essays except for code glosses and evidentials in which female writers showed higher application. On the other hand, Tse and Hyland (2006) analysed male and female writers' application of metadiscourse markers in academic books in three areas Philosophy, Biology, and Sociology. Although the general result indicated that the similarities were more than differences, there were some gender preferential uses of metadiscourse identified such as the female higher frequencies of transitions and code glosses. According to them, this finding suggests that being concerned with reader's direct understanding of the text, female writers focus on using straightforward and explicit exposition in their writings (Tse & Hyland, 2006). This disagreement between the two studies can be justified by considering the genre and authors of the texts; two different genres of academic opinion essays written by undergraduates and opinion columns written by experienced columnists may not be the same in this case.

A Chi-Square test was run to determine the importance of male and female students' different application of code glosses. Statistical results, as shown in Table (4), revealed that p -value is $0.031 < 0.05$, Chi-square analysis also has revealed that the difference in code glosses employed by male and female students is enough to be significant.

TABLE 4.
RESULTS OF CHI-TEST OF FEMALE AND MALE STUDENTS' USE OF CODE GLOSSES

P	df	Test Statistic	P-Value	N of valid cases	Level of Significance
0.05	9	18.422	0.031	61	16.92

Regarding the subcategories of code glosses, male students deployed a higher proportion of reformulation devices (11 times), whereas females tended to show a more frequent use of exemplification devices (33 times) than male students as in the examples below.

Examples from Females' essays

"Here, we can take benefits from English literatures by translating known English plays *such as* Shakespeare's."

"*For example*, Saudi airlines it is a good place to work in as translator."

Examples from Males' essays:

"When you take your degree from languages and translation college you will be proficient in translation and literature. *That means* you can join education jobs or you can find jobs that need translation."

"This allows colleges' graduates to be able to work in many fields such as business or media. *This means* that graduates of the college are not limit to specific jobs."

This result inclines with Pasaribu's (2017) result which asserted that female students "were heavy users of examples." (P.10). Pasaribu's research had multiple dimensions and much broader objectives and findings than the current paper, as it addressed the use of all meta-discourse markers by both genders. It concluded with overall equality between genders in using discourse markers. "... The study indicated that both groups share similarities, in which they employed more interactive markers than interactional markers. Both genders were heavy users of transition markers which help them connect ideas in the discourse..." (P.9). Hence, finding a female preference for using more 'examples' is not a substantial finding of the Pasaribu research to be used as evidence for the current findings.

A possible explanation of this result can be as follows: The females' frequent use of code glosses suggests that they were able to provide additional information, by explaining, elaborating, exemplifying or rephrasing a stated idea, to clarify the intended message enough for the reader (Hyland, 2005). That could be attributed to the fact that women's language is characterized by a supportive and cooperative style (Tannen, 1994). In other words, female students were inclined to reflect the reader-friendliness of their texts and to show a reader-oriented attitude wherever they felt that the reader might be facing difficulties in understanding a certain idea or to make sure that the reader grasps what the writer intended to get across by applying code glosses.

V. CONCLUSION

The major aim of the present study was to explore the influence of gender on the interactive metadiscourse choices of EFL male and female students by examining metadiscourse markers in a sample of academic essays. Through the analysis of subcategories of interactive metadiscourse markers in a corpus of (60) opinion essays written by Saudi EFL male and female students, it was found that there was a significant difference between the two genders in terms of making use of interactive metadiscourse markers namely transitions, frame markers, code glosses. On the other hand, the qualitative analysis showed that the nature of cultural, social and psychological composition of male and female students played a crucial role in determining the type and frequency of metadiscourse markers. Also, it was revealed that gender was not the only factor that affected the metadiscourse choice of male and female students. Some of other factors such as the cultural and genre-type factors might have huge influence on interactive metadiscourse marker employment. In other words, metadiscoursal choices are highly influenced by the discourse genre and the context.

For example, low application of evidentials and endophorics in the present study can be attributed to the genre-type of 'opinion essays' where writers write freely depending on their personal experiences to strengthen their claims. Opinion essay genre does not require citation and references from other resources as in scientific researches. According to Hyland (2005), citation tended to be a feature of hard-science knowledge. In some other genre-types, metadiscourse choices are heavily influenced by disciplinary considerations rather than gender (Hyland, 2012). For example, in Tse and Hylands' (2008) study, female philosophers tended to use more interactive features than male and were particularly heavy users of transition markers. Whereas in Biology, the study reported broad gender differences as males used more transition markers.

Findings drawn from the present study hopefully can provide useful insights and important implications for interventionist methods to teach EFL learners to enhance their metadiscoursal proficiency and to use metadiscourse markers more effectively taking into account the effect of gender factor. Furthermore, the instruction of metadiscourse markers requires an investigation of variables affecting the acquisition of discourse markers, such as the explicit and implicit teaching of them and the effect of input enhancement and output tasks on their acquisition according to gender-type of the students.

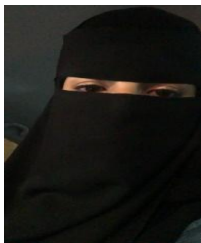
Finally, researchers can expand upon the findings of this study through the following considerations:

- Similar studies may examine gender differences in using discourse markers in other types of essays and with students at varying levels of language proficiency, to obtain a more in-depth understanding of discourse markers use.
- Further studies could also examine larger samples to improve the generalizability of the present findings.

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