



INTERACTIONAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF MALAYSIAN AND SOUTH KOREAN NEWSPAPER ARTICLES ON ONLINE LEARNING DURING COVID-19

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Abstract:

Metadiscourse has been broadly studied in genres such as academic papers, textbooks, essay and speeches. In contrast, little attention has been given to the study of metadiscourse on online newspapers. The objective of this study is to identify the interactional resources used by a Malaysian and a South Korean authors in their online newspaper articles. Interactional resources are commonly used in news writing as its elements are focus on engaging and interacting with the readers. The instrument used to examine the interactional resources in the two articles is Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse. Based on the findings of the study, the usage of the self-mentions' element was absent in both articles. However, the usage of the other interactional resources such as hedges, boosters, engagement makers and attitude makers were fairly distributed throughout both articles. This is because the authors aimed to be informative on the situation of the topic; thus, they did not include their personal takes in the articles. This study also revealed that the South Korean author used more interactional resources compared to the Malaysian author. The results and findings of this study may contribute to the necessary knowledge for authors in exploring the usage of interactional resources in online newspapers.

Keywords: metadiscourse, interactional resources, online newspaper, writing style

1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Study

Discourse analysis is not only done on academic writings such as journals, but also on business writings such as speeches, and personal writings such as blogs. Discourse

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analysis, according to Ali (2016), is the language evaluation either in spoken or written form that can be done on the continuity, consistency, clause relations and text structures. According to Kuhi & Majood (2014), the author needs to consider the impact and influence they have over their audience as what they project have meanings that will be interpreted by different people. This is where the study of metadiscourse is practical as it can provide the comprehension on the interactional features of written works (Fu & Hyland, 2014). As mentioned by Hyland (1998), authors use metadiscourse to guide their readers so they could understand their writings while having a professional display as they persuade thus why it is largely utilised in persuasive writings.

Online learning is becoming more popular among learners. Online learning is utilising technologies to access the process of knowledge gaining and teaching (Abaidoo, 2014). As analysed in the article by Rozana (2020), it was found that although online learning has been practiced by many institutions in Malaysia for quite some time, these institutions along with the academicians still have some worries and believe that Malaysia is not ready to conduct full online learning that can benefit all students. Some of the benefits are productive to students who prefer self-regulated learning, flexible in terms of time and location, and gives more opportunities to those who are unable to move around (Gilbert, 2015). However, Choi (2020) believed that physical classes are better. Most of the academicians also believe that it is best if schools and institutions can be opened as soon as possible. Radović-Marković (2010) also felt that sometimes online learning requires motivation on the part of the learners.

Often writers embed messages in their text and only experienced readers are able to understand what was said by the writer. According to Aboulalei (2019), through analysing interactional discourse, readers can detect the authors' confidence, hesitance, and traits that can lead to understanding the articles on the next level. However, by abusing the use of interactional discourse can also lead to confusion and misunderstanding of the message that is trying to be delivered.

2. Statement of Problem

Metadiscourse is used in writing so writers can express more than just words in their writing. Good writers consider the expectations of their readers to involve them in the reading development and affect their understanding of the produced discourse (Tavanpour, Goudarzi, & Farnia, 2016). According to Shafique, Anwar & Shahbaz (2019), metadiscourse plays an essential role in engaging with readers. Anwardeen, Ong, Gabriel & Kalajahi (2013), also agreed that the accurate usage of metadiscourse will help writers to convey the intended message of the writing content more efficiently to the readers.

However, sometimes the use /abuse of certain strategies may confuse the audience. According to Khopitak (2016), it may not really be the writers' language proficiency, that is the cause of misunderstanding of messages in texts. Sometimes the wrong use of metadiscourse strategies conveys messages different than was intended to

the audience Siddique, Mahmood & Iqbal (2018) said that sometimes writers use strategies that are not reader-friendly.

Online newspapers are read by different types of audience. Often, messages get misunderstood by different categories of audience. Why is that so? The use of metadiscourse is successfully used by writers to convey not only the message, but also their writers' attitude and feelings. According to Tajeddin & Alemi (2012), one type of metadiscourse which is interactional discourse is used in writing, this discourse shapes the interaction between the writer and a reader. To encounter the issues on the usage of metadiscourse markers in online newspapers, this paper explores into the usage of interactional discourse markers by a Malaysian and a South Korean online newspaper authors about online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

2.1 Objective and Research Questions

Generally, this study explores the use of metadiscourse in online newspaper articles. Specifically, this paper only looks at interactional discourse. In addition to that, this study compares the use of interactional discourse in online newspaper articles from Malaysia and South Korea. Specifically, the study is done to answer the following questions:

- a) How can the interactional discourse strategies of Malaysian online learning newspaper article be described in terms of Hedges, Boosters, Attitude Markers, and Engagement Markers?
- b) How can the interactional discourse strategies of South Korean online learning newspaper article be described in terms of Hedges, Boosters, Attitude Markers, and Engagement Markers?
- c) How does the use of interactional discourse in online learning materials by Malaysia and Korea differ from one another?

3. Literature Review

3.1 Online Newspaper Articles

Online newspapers have been an emerging source of information which is more reachable to the public as compared to print media. (Koundal & Mishra, 2018 & Speakman, 2011). Article news can appear in pop-ups or as an advertisement to when someone is surfing the internet (Višňovský & Radošinská, 2017). According to Johnson (2019), as of 2018, more than two-thirds of individuals in Great Britain were either reading or downloading online news, newspapers and magazine and these numbers were more than three times the share of online readers as compared to 2007.

In 2019, 44 per cent of Malaysians consumed news from Malaysiakini on a weekly basis, while 9 per cent preoccupy themselves with the online news from News Straits Time weekly (Hirschmann, 2019). From this, it can be said that reading news from online newspapers is becoming a trend (Ravi, 2020). According to Timuçin (2010) and Aboulalei, (2019), tabloids tend to use more non-core vocabularies in their reporting. Therefore, the language used in these papers is more involved and biased than those of the broadsheets.

However, non-core vocabulary is words that are not commonly used in daily conversations, and this can be difficult for readers to comprehend. If writers can craft a story that speaks to their intended audience's interest and correctly anticipates their reactions, it is considered successful (Robinson, 2019). Language style of news writers is a factor to keep a piece of news interesting and engaging with the readers.

3.2 Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse is the self-reflection statements used to show interactional meanings in a text to help the author give a perception and engage with readers (Hu & Cao, 2011). In simpler words, it is a method to assist the authors in expressing themselves in their work. On the other hand, referring to Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi (2017), metadiscourse is communicative purpose of a language as well as the significance of the relations between the author and their audience in a text. This translates that in their viewpoint, metadiscourse is how an author reaches out to their readers and the importance of doing so. Metadiscourse is practical as it can provide the comprehension of the interactional features of written works (Fu & Hyland, 2014).

In other words, metadiscourse analysis can help readers understand why authors use certain words and what is the purpose of their writings. As according to Faridah, Mohamed, & Wan (2019), some metadiscourse categories such as hedges, boosters, and engagement markers can be used to hint the author's interactional strategies in their purpose so the readers could come up with their own assumptions. Metadiscourse is also an inseparable part of communication where it allows people to engage with others, takes on roles, as well as expresses and understands evaluations and feelings (Amiryousefi & Rasekh, 2010). The elements of metadiscourse have characteristics which link to communication and getting a message across. According to Hyland (2005), there are five categories of interactive resources that are transitional markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential markers and code glosses. In addition to that Hyland (2005) also categories interactional resources as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers.

3.3 Past Studies

This research is about studying the hedges and boosters elements used in the English and Jordanian newspaper articles. It was written by Al-Ghoweri & Al Kayed (2019). The research was conducted by selecting 60 economic newspaper articles. The method used was a mixed method where the articles were analysed qualitatively to detect the elements of hedges and boosters used, and then qualitatively by counting and calculating the elements to be compared to each other. The purpose of the study is to study the comparison between the frequencies of hedges and boosters elements used in the newspaper articles of both languages. The number of hedges and boosters used were then manually counted and calculated from each article in both languages separately. The findings show that English economic articles used modal auxiliaries and approximates most, while Arabic economic articles used approximates and lexical verbs

most. On the other hand, for boosting devices, English articles used amplifiers most, whereas Arabic articles used emphatics most. However, both languages barely used universal pronouns. The implication of the study concludes that language does play a role in using these interactional resources devices.

Next, Ali & Azirah (2019) investigated the type of attitude markers that are frequently used to enhance evaluation in the review articles, as well as to analyse their functions in the different analytical sections of the review articles. The method of the study was qualitative as to analyse how the elements affect the review articles. The data were randomly selected corpus of thirty-two review articles. Findings revealed how the authors professionally communicate with their readers to clarify their evaluation through attitude markers and express importance, limitations and gaps, compare and contrast, and praise and criticise the developments of a research in applied linguistics. The implication of this research is that the findings can be drawn on in EAP courses for novice writers to facilitate their achievement in academic writing.

Mameghani & Ebrahimi (2017) analyse the use of attitude and engagement markers in the native English students' presentations to see the effects of the usage of these elements of interactional discourse to the listeners and how it engages them to the student's presentation. The research used both qualitative and quantitative methods where the scripts of the presentation of eleven students were transcribed, and the frequency of attitude and engagement markers were tabulated. Using Hyland (2005) taxonomy as the instrument, the research focused on only attitude markers and engagement markers used by eleven speakers during their presentations of different topics. The data found were then analysed and tabulated according to Hyland's (2005) taxonomy for discussion. The study discovered that students mostly use engagement markers and fewer attitude markers when presenting a topic with an aim to be informative. They do not feel that there is an urge to express themselves as much on the informative topics.

The study by Demir (2017) investigated whether there was statistically significant difference between native and non-native of English writers in terms of the number of boosters and lexical diversity of boosters. It also studied on the competence of these writers in using the boosters collate with their fluency in academic writing. A qualitative method was used to find the distribution of lexical boosters and used to explain the findings of the statistics from the statistic results. The documents for analysis of this study are 200 articles written in English by Anglophone and non-Anglophone writers. The findings presented statistics of the distribution of lexical boosters and followed by statistics on the distribution of booster diversity. The study concluded that Anglophone writers are prone to write their academic texts with a greater lexical variety in boosters and less in modals when compared to non-native writers as they are more lexical competent.

4. Material and Methods

This chapter discusses the methodology used in this research paper which is divided into six parts. It starts with an introduction, then it presents the research design, the sampling, the research instrument, the data collection method and ends with the method of data analysis.

4.1 Design-qualitative-document analysis

For the purpose of analysing the data qualitatively, document analysis and textual analysis were conducted where the articles written by a Malaysian and a South Korean author were read carefully to detect the occurrences of the interactional resources. The interactional resources found were then categorised according to their categories that are hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and engagement markers based on the framework outlined by Hyland (2005). Self-mentions category was excluded as it was not used by the authors of both articles. On the other hand, a quantitative method was used for analysis where the interactional resources detected and categorised were manually counted and calculated separately. This is to find the frequencies of occurrences of each element used in both articles to be compared between each other. Both methods were used in studying the data in order to be able to analyse this research as thoroughly and as best as it could.

4.2 Sample

The documents chosen and used for this study are two online newspaper articles which were published in Malaysia (Rozana, 2020) and South Korea (Choi, 2020) and they were written by a Malaysian and a South Korean authors respectively. The source of the article published in Malaysia is from News Straits Times, whereas, the source of the article published in South Korea is from Hankyoreh. The two articles discussed the same topic that is on the online learning situation in both countries during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1: Interactional Discourse

Main Category	Sub-Category	Function & Characteristic	Example
Interactional Resources	Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	might; perhaps; possible; about
	Boosters	Emphasize certainty or close dialogue	in fact; definitely; it is clear that
	Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly
	Self-mentions	Explicit references to author(s)	I; we; my; me; our
	Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	consider; note; you can see that

Source: Hyland, 2005.

The instrument (Table 1), is taken from Hyland (2005). This paper analyses only interactional discourse thus, the space provided for interactive discourse is excluded.

With reference to the table, there are five sub-categories of interactional metadiscourse that are hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Hyland (2005) also provided spaces for description and examples for each sub-categories to ease the process of analysis.

4.3 Method Data Collection

The data was retrieved from two online newspaper websites; News Straits Time and Hankyoreh. News Straits Time is a Malaysian online newspaper and Hankyoreh is a South Korean online newspaper. Both articles were chosen carefully in order to fulfil the research objective and research questions of this study.

4.4 Method of Data Analysis

To achieve higher reliability in the manual analysis of this research, two independent coders from a local university examined and coded the newspaper articles in terms of interactional resource features. Both the researchers and the intercoders conferred on the individual codings made and reached an agreement in cases when markings differed. Frequency and percentage counts were used to analyse the data.

This study was analysed using Hyland's Metadiscourse Taxonomy (2005) as a guide where all the examples provided for each sub-category of interactional resources were fully understood and explored.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Introduction

The findings are presented based on the research questions. In addition to that, the findings are categorized into (a) qualitative for research questions 1 and 2, and (b) quantitative findings for research question 3.

5.2 Interactional Discourse Strategies of Malaysian Online newspaper Articles

Answer to RQ 1: The interactional discourse strategies used in the Malaysian online newspaper article.

(i) Hedges

[1] "*But for now, I believe it is **possible** to carry out teaching and learning online...*"

[2] "*...or create a simulated environment for practice, wherever **possible**, as a contingency plan to cater for the MCO period...*"

[3] "*...the implementation of online learning **would** have manageable downloads...*"

[4] "*...This is because not all of our students **may** have high-end laptops, or computers...*"

[5] "*If you're slow in responding to the forum, they **may** not be that interested in it*"

Based on the excerpts included above, the bolded words are concluded as hedges because they are believed to possess the traits of hedges. Some traits of hedges are to refuse to commit, to show uncertainty, to be open for alternative opinions, or to be more

subtle in giving viewpoints (Hu & Cao, 2011). Excerpts 1 and 5 show the sentences contain hedges because the author seemed like she wanted to appear to be subtle in voicing out her statements. In excerpt 2, the author used hedges because the person she quoted was in the rush of thoughts as she was giving situation elaboration thus why she was not specific, so she chose to withhold commitment. In the excerpts 3 and 4, the author implemented hedges because she was uncertain about the specificity of the statements.

(ii) Boosters

[6] "...**the only** option available for students to resume learning is to go online"

[7] "This not only **ensures** the safety of students and staff..."

[8] "...but also addresses the issue of education continuity for students, **especially** during the Movement Control Order (MCO)"

[9] "...there is **definitely** no online teaching to replace those components"

[10] "...experience in organizing an annual e-Learning week in the past will help **ensure** minimal interruptions..."

Referring to the given excerpts above the bolded words are said to be boosters because they were used to show that the author was certain and to convince the readers of her view as what boosters should do (Al-Ghoweri & Al Kayed, 2019). In excerpts 6, 8 and 10 the author used the boosters in the sentences to show that she was confident in stating the facts about the situations. Excerpts 7 and 10 contain boosters because the author wanted to convince the readers of the statements that she has provided in the sentences.

(iii) Attitude Markers

[11] "With the Covid-19 situation **disrupting** classes and activities on campus..."

According to the excerpt provided above, the bolded word is considered as attitude marker because it fits the function as according to Ali & Azirah (2019), the purpose of boosters is to help express the writer's stand and opinion about the topic they write. In the excerpt, it can be seen that the author thinks the COVID-19 situation is causing troubles to the educational activities as the word she chose shows negativity and not neutral.

(iv) Engagement Markers

[12] "But **how** prepared are higher education institutions to offer online learning at a large scale?"

Based on the excerpts given above, the bolded word is counted as engagement marker because it suits the purpose as mentioned by Sahragard & Yazdanpanahi (2017), to help the authors to use appropriate words to acknowledge, negotiate, and connect with the readers. As can be seen from the excerpt, Rozana proposed a hypothetical question to make her article seems more inviting and shows that she included the readers as well while writing.

5.3 Interactional Discourse Strategies in the South Korean online newspaper

Answer to RQ 2: The interactional discourse strategies used in the South Korean online newspaper article.

(i) Hedges

[13] “While many have argued that the lower grades of elementary school are **less conducive** to online classes using PCs and smart devices...”

[14] “...with remote learning and concerned over the fact that the academic calendar -- including the university entrance examination date -- have **yet to be finalized**.”

[15] “This **suggests** it plans to begin in-person classes based on the circumstances for different regions, schools, and classrooms, with others added over time.”

[16] “Regarding the timeline for when it **might be possible** to have concurrent in-person classes...”

[17] “In addition to the **considerable** chaos expected in schools in the **near future** as online classes begin without **adequate** preparations...”

The words bolded in the above excerpts are hedges as they withhold the author’s full commitment to statements (Hyland, 2005). The samples of hedges bolded above in excerpts 14, 16 and 17 show that the author refused to give definite stands because he had doubts on the outcome of the discussed topic. The hedges used in excerpts 13 and 17 show that the author did not want to be too specific, so he opts for open dialogue concept.

(ii) Boosters

[18] “In addition to the considerable chaos **expected** in schools in the near future as online classes begin without adequate preparations...”

[19] “If online classes end up being too difficult to continue over the long term, attention will **inevitably** focus back...”

The words bolded in the above excerpts have elements of boosters that create emphatics impressions towards the readers (Demir, 2017) and portrays the author’s certainty (Hyland, 2005). Both bolded words show that the author is confident with the stance and to give assurance to the readers to make the article trustable and worthy. The author also gave a solid look into the situation in both excerpts by using the boosters in bold.

(iii) Attitude Markers

[20] “MOE further announced plans to develop teacher capabilities, including the identification of **outstanding** examples from among the 490 online class...”

[21] “With remote learning adopted as a **desperate** measure with little preparation, **profound** concerns have also been voiced.”

[22] “in the remote class capabilities and conditions of individual schools, students, and teachers could **exacerbate** education **inequality**.”

[23] “questions are being raised about whether it’s **even** possible to hold online classes, or whether it’s appropriate for children to **be exposed** to smartphones”

[24] *“If online classes end up being **too difficult** to continue over the long term...”*

The above words in bold are marked as attitude makers as the words express the author’s position on the content of the article (Abdul-Qadir & Shakir, 2015). For instance, the word bolded in excerpt 20 shows the author’s appraisal of the situation. As for the words bolded in excerpts 21 and 22 show that the author is being critical and is concerned with the situations described respectively. In excerpts 23 and 24, the author styled to emphasise that he is sceptical about the solutions provided about the current happenings.

(iv) Engagement Markers

[25] *“**Rather than** having all schools nationwide begin classes on the same date...”*

[26] *“**On that basis**, some are predicting the online classes will follow a timetable...”*

[27] *“**In the case** of early elementary schools, questions are being raised about whether it’s even possible to hold online classes...”*

[28] *“**In response**, MOE said it was “considering various approaches...”*

Engagement markers are part of interactional resources where the author engages with the readers as participants in the discourse (Mameghani & Ebrahimi, 2017). The engagement markers in the above excerpts let out the feel of wanting the readers to be involved in the article by making them feel linked and by prompting the readers to think about the statements given in the article.

5.4 Difference in the use of Interactional Discourse between Malaysian and South Korean

Answer to RQ 3: The difference in the use of interactional discourse between the Malaysian and the South Korean online newspaper articles

Table 2: Differences in the Use of Interactional Discourse between Malaysia and South Korean online newspaper articles

Main Category	Sub-Category	Code	Frequency (Malaysia)	Percentage (Malaysia)	Frequency (Korea)	Percentage (Korea)
Interactional Resources	Hedges	In-Tn (H)	11	55%	24	55.8%
	Boosters	In-Tn (B)	7	35%	2	4.7%
	Attitude Markers	In-Tn (AM)	1	5%	13	30%
	Engagement Markers	In-Tn (EgM)	1	5%	4	9%
	Self-Mentions	In-Tn (SM)	0	0%	0	0%
Sub-Total			20	100%	43	100%

Table 2 above shows the number of frequencies and percentages of the interactional resources analyzed from a Malaysian and a South Korean newspaper articles respectively. The two articles are from News Straits Time (NSTP) written by Rozana Sani for Malaysia and The Hankyoreh written by Choi Won-hyung for South Korea. The theme for both articles is how their respective countries manage and handle their online

education during the COVID-19 pandemic. As can be seen in the above table, hedges is the highest content of interactional resources sub-category compared to others that are by 55% in the Malaysian article and 55.8% in the South Korean article. Next, with reference to the table above, boosters is ranked as the second highest frequency of sub-category that is by 35% in the Malaysian article while in the South Korean article, boosters is the lowest interactional resource that is by 4.7%. Moreover, the number of attitude markers appeared in the South Korean article is higher with the frequency of 30% compared to those that appeared in the Malaysian article which is 5%. As for the engagement makers, the Malaysian article has a frequency of 5% while in the South Korean article, engagement markers appeared at 9%. Lastly, the sub-category self-mentions was not used by both authors of the Malaysian and South Korean articles. To conclude, both articles share a fair range or frequency of the usage of interactional resources except for self-mentions as the issue discussed in the articles might not be appropriate to use it. It can also be seen that the authors are aware of the functions of interactional resources as they implemented quite various of them in their articles and thus help give better reading experience to the readers.

6. Conclusion

6.1 Summary of Findings and Implications

From the findings presented, it can be concluded that the most used interactional resources sub-category by the Malaysian author was Hedges and followed by Boosters. There were two least used sub-categories by the same amount which were Attitude Markers and Engagement Markers. On the other hand, for the South Korean author, the most utilised element was also Hedges, followed by Attitude markers, then Engagement Markers and lastly, the least applied element was Boosters. From the findings, several similarities can be seen between the two authors such as they both utilised Hedges the most and they both did not use Self-Mentions in their articles. This can be interpreted as both of them not wanting to be held against their words, as well as both of them prioritise more in informing their readers about the topic than involving themselves in their writings. This tallies with the findings in the research done by Al-Ghoweri & Al Kayed (2019) where the English articles they analysed used modal auxiliaries and approximates most. Meanwhile, the obvious differences between the elements used by the two authors was how Boosters is the second most frequently used by the Malaysian author, but it was the least used by the South Korean author. However, while Engagement Markers was the second most frequently used by the South Korean author, it was the least used by the Malaysian author. This shows that the Malaysian author was very confident with what she presented while the South Korean author hinted his opinions about the issue more through his tone. These varieties in usage might have happened because it reflects the distinct views and morals that people have (Ramoroka, 2017). From the findings, some interesting facts discovered was that the high usage of hedges is common among Asians as they are said to be more polite, as well as not much research has been done to study

English newspaper articles written by all authors with English as their second language. Furthermore, it is also found from the findings that among the types of hedges, modal auxiliaries were what they used the most in both articles.

6.2 Suggestions for Future Research

This study is limited to only explore the interactional resources of metadiscourse in online newspaper articles. Due to time constraint, this study did not cover on interactive resources. Therefore, there is a considerable potential for future research in this area to explore the interactive resources of metadiscourse used in online newspaper articles to have a wider insight into the usage of metadiscourse by online newspaper authors. Interactive resources can boost writer's attempt to guide their readers in their intended direction and achieve a writer's persuasive goals. If interactive resources were understudied there would not be balance with the usage of metadiscourse elements in online newspapers. Further investigations on both interactional and interactive metadiscourse can also be proposed to be studied on articles written by authors with English as their native language. The small number of analysed online newspaper articles for this study can also be expanded in the future by analysing more items from both countries. The comparison of the usage of metadiscourse in online newspaper articles can also be extended in those from countries of other continents such as in Africa, Australia, Antarctica or Europe. Such comparison study might result in showing varieties of usage of metadiscourse between authors of different cultural background. The study of both interactional and interactive resources may help in understanding the style of language that authors use in their writings. It is hoped that this study will help both current and future writers to identify their personal style of writing and to experiment with the usage of metadiscourse in their texts.

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