

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CORPUS DESIGN: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF METADISOURSE MARKERS IN EFL MASTER'S THESES

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Abstract. *This paper explores the methodological foundations of a corpus-based investigation into metadiscourse markers in EFL master's theses. The key focuses of the study include its validity and reliability, the techniques employed for data analysis, the analytical framework, and the selection of the corpus. The main theoretical basis for the research was Hyland's model of interpersonal metadiscourse. To analyze a specialized corpus of EFL master's theses, AntConc software was utilized. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were employed to examine the frequency and communicative functions of metadiscourse markers within academic discourse.*

Keywords: *metadiscourse, corpus linguistics, EFL academic writing, academic discourse, Hyland's model, master's theses.*

Introduction

Metadiscourse has become one of the central concepts in discourse analysis and academic writing research. Academic writing involves not only the presentation of information but also interaction between writers and readers. Through metadiscourse markers, writers organize texts, guide readers, express attitudes, and establish credibility in academic communication.

The growing role of English in international education has increased interest in EFL academic writing and rhetorical practices. Many researchers have examined how non-native English writers construct academic discourse and employ metadiscourse resources in their texts.

Corpus linguistics has significantly influenced modern metadiscourse studies because it enables systematic analysis of authentic language use. Corpus-based approaches provide empirical evidence regarding linguistic patterns in academic discourse.

The methodological underpinnings of a corpus-based analysis of metadiscourse markers in EFL master's theses are the main focus of this study. The study examines discourse structuring and writer-reader interaction in academic writing and is based on Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse.

The research design, corpus selection, analytical framework, analysis techniques, and study reliability are all intended to be described.

Methods

A corpus-based methodological approach that combines quantitative and qualitative analysis is used in this study.

Selection of Corpora

The corpus is made up of real English-language master's theses in EFL. The texts were gathered from academic databases and university libraries.

- the texts had to be master's theses;
- the theses had to be written by EFL students;
- the texts had to belong to linguistics or related fields.

Prior to analysis, the chosen theses were processed and transformed into text format. To maintain consistency, non-linguistic components like references, appendices, and tables were removed.

Hyland's interpersonal metadiscourse paradigm is used in this investigation. This paradigm states that metadiscourse consists of:

resources that are interactive; interactive resources.

Interactive tools aid in structuring discussion and directing readers through the content.

These consist of code glosses, evidentials, frame markers, and transitions.

Interactional resources engage readers in dialogue and convey the writer's position. These consist of self-mentions, hedges, boosters, and engagement markers.

Techniques for Analyzing Data

- Both qualitative and quantitative approaches were used.

The focus of the quantitative analysis was:

- distribution patterns, category comparability, and the prevalence of metadiscourse indicators.

- AntConc software was used to perform frequency counts.

Qualitative Evaluation

The focus of the qualitative analysis was:

reader-writer interaction; rhetorical devices; and contextual interpretation.

To find out how metadiscourse indicators work in academic discourse, concordance lines were analyzed.

Validity and Reliability

Reliability was guaranteed by:

genuine corpus data; methodical analysis techniques; corpus software utilization; contextual marker verification.

Validity was upheld by:

utilizing Hyland's framework; coordinating goals and techniques; combining quantitative and qualitative analysis.

Results

- Because authors largely relied on organizational markers to frame academic discourse, interactive resources were increasingly common.

- The most common transition markers were "however," "therefore," and "in addition."

These markers helped academic writing be coherent and logically organized.

- Hedges and boosters were frequently employed as interactional resources. Boosters stressed certainty and persuasiveness, whereas Hedges stressed caution and intellectual civility.

- AntConc software made it possible to systematically identify contextual functions and metadiscourse patterns in real academic texts.

Discussion

The study's conclusions support the notion that metadiscourse is crucial to EFL academic writing and has a major impact on discourse organization and writer-reader interaction. In their master's theses, EFL writers actively use both interactive and interactional metadiscourse resources, according to the investigation. The widespread use of interactive metadiscourse markers, especially transitions like "however," "therefore," and "moreover," is one of the main conclusions. These markers enhance coherence in scholarly discourse by establishing logical connections between concepts.

The abundance of interactive materials indicates that EFL writers place a high priority on textual arrangement and intelligibility. Significant utilization of interactional resources, particularly hedges and boosters, was also seen in the study. In accordance with standard academic writing conventions, hedges including "may" and "perhaps" were used to convey caution and avoid absolute certainty. Boosters also assisted writers in emphasizing key points in the discussion and strengthening their arguments.

These results corroborate Hyland's theory that academic writing is interpersonal as well as informational. In order to arrange information, direct readers, and establish an academic position within discourse, writers employ metadiscourse.

The outcomes also show how successful corpus-based methods are for conversation analysis. AntConc software allowed for the systematic analysis of metadiscourse indicators and the identification of frequency patterns in real academic writings.

Because knowledge of metadiscourse resources may aid EFL students in enhancing coherence, clarity, and rhetorical effectiveness in academic writing, the study also has educational importance. The creation of texts that are more reader-focused and suitable for academic settings may benefit from explicit teaching on metadiscourse.

Nevertheless, the study advances corpus-based studies of EFL writing and offers insightful information about the usage of metadiscourse in academic discourse.

Conclusion

This article explored the methodological foundations of a corpus-based examination regarding metadiscourse markers in master's theses within EFL contexts. The focus of the study was on aspects of validity and reliability, analysis methodologies, the analytical framework, and the selection of the corpus.

The findings indicated that Hyland's interpersonal model, combined with corpus linguistics, provides an effective framework for analyzing metadiscourse in academic texts. The outcomes highlighted the importance of both interactive and interactional resources in organizing discourse and promoting engagement between the writer and reader.

In summary, by presenting a systematic framework for the analysis of academic discourse, this research contributes to the fields of corpus linguistics, metadiscourse research, and academic writing studies in EFL contexts.

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