

A Contrastive Study of Metadiscourse in English and Persian Editorials

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The original impetus for this cross-linguistic study came from a need to explore the effect of cultural factors and generic conventions on the use and distribution of metadiscourse within a single genre. To this end, the study as a contrastive rhetoric research, examined a corpus of 60 newspaper editorials (written in English and Persian) culled from 10 elite newspapers in America and Iran. Based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, both interactive and interactional metadiscourse resources were analyzed. The results disclosed that genre conventions had a determining role in the writers' choice of some metadiscourse resources that contributed to some similarities in the use and distribution of metadiscourse resources across English and Persian data. In addition, some differences were found between two sets of editorials which were attributed to cultural/linguistic backgrounds of both groups of editorialists. The interactional category and attitude markers proved to be the predominant metadiscourse category and subcategory in newspaper editorials genre. Overall, the findings suggested that metadiscourse has a decisive role in the construction of persuasion in newspaper editorials genre.

Keywords: Metadiscourse, Interactive Resources, Interactional resources, Newspaper, Editorials, Culture, Contrastive Rhetoric

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The social view of written communication suggests that the text is a site where the writer and the reader are engaged in dialogic interactions based on shared interpretive practices. Fowler (1991) considers the text as co-produced by writer and reader, negotiating the nature and significance of a piece of language, on the basis of their more or less shared knowledge of the world, society and language itself. In a similar vein, Hyland (2005) rightly contends that writing is never neutral but always engaged in that it realizes the interests, the positions, the perspectives and values of those who enact them. Therefore, an author who articulates meaning must consider its social influence and the impact that it has on those who interpret the meaning, the readers who are the audiences for the communication. Metadiscourse is one of the main means which allows the author to accomplish this. It involves writers and their readers in mutual acts of comprehension and involvement (Hyland, 2005).

Metadiscourse is related to the ways the authors project themselves into their texts to mark their attitudes towards the content and their readers (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Writers use metadiscourse to direct their readers and display an appropriate professional persona in order to persuade their readers, as such metadiscourse is an important feature of persuasive writing (Hyland, 1998a). Thus, persuasive writings can be regarded as the prime objects for metadiscourse investigations.

Mass media as the crucial presenters of culture, politics, and social life, are flooding the world with message (Bell, 1991). Van Dijk (1996) considers the media as the forum where public discourse is conducted, a discourse which does not reflect the world and its reality neutrally but helps to interpret, organize and classify this reality. Van Dijk believes that media power is generally persuasive because it has the potential to control the mind of readers or viewers. Among these powerful rival forms of mass media, the newspaper, as the first form of mass media able to disseminate news to many people at one time, still remains a powerful source of news and information and serves as an influential medium in informing people about what is happening around the world and extending their knowledge and deepening

their knowledge. Newspapers not only serve an informative purpose in our modern societies, but also educate by going beyond main facts in the in-depth analysis of columns, commentaries and editorials (Shams, 2005). It is, mostly, the editorial that gives a newspaper the opportunity to comment, give views on and draw conclusions from the day's events and thereby address its readership directly (Reah, 1998).

Many authors, tacitly or explicitly, appreciate the fact that newspapers form a genre (e.g., Bell, 1991; Fowler, 1991; Bhatia, 1993; Shams, 2005). Abdollahzadeh (2007) considers newspaper genre as a sociocultural activity in which the writer summarizes and critiques events of importance to the public. This painstaking activity demands writers to look persuasive and requires them to play it safe to maintain, or oppose a stance, or raise awareness towards a critical and controversial issue. To this end, they utilize metadiscourse to organize their texts and convey their personality, credibility, and consideration of the reader (Abdollahzadeh, 2007).

Moreover, it is generally accepted that "writing is a cultural object" (Moreno, 1997, p.5). According to Robert Kaplan's (1966) contrastive rhetoric, language and writing are cultural phenomena. A direct consequence of this idea is that each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it (Connor, 1996). Contrastive rhetoric holds the notion that "speakers of different languages use different devices to present information, to establish relationships among ideas, and to show centrality of one idea as opposed to another to select most effective means of presentation" (Kaplan, 1984, cited in Shokouhi & Talati Baghsiahi, 2009, p.536). Thus, it seems that metadiscourse use will vary cross-culturally in different genres. Ansary and Babaii (2009) consider newspaper editorials as a particularly interesting genre to study cross-culturally because they found them persuasive, public and probably representative of both local cultures and ideological proclivities.

To put it in a nutshell, there might be differences in the rhetorical pattern of the same text written in different languages. Referring to the fact that the means of doing persuasion differ across genres, Hyland (2005) points out that editorials use

metadiscourse in their own ways to persuade the readers through argument. Therefore, it seems that there should be a particular genre convention in terms of the use and distribution of metadiscourse belonging to editorials genre. On the other hand, thanks to the finding of contrastive rhetoric, it can be claimed that metadiscourse use will vary in editorials written in different languages. Thus, cross-linguistic research on metadiscourse in editorials genre would yield interesting results.

Review of Literature

Studying metadiscourse is already a consolidated research strand, and there is a rich vein of research done in this area. However, it appears that research on metadiscourse is mostly conducted on genres other than newspaper genre, including research articles (e.g., Hyland, 1996a, 1996b, 2001a; Valero-Garces, 1996; Dahl, 2004), textbooks (e.g., Hyland, 1994, 1999, 2000 a; Kuhl & Behnam, 2010), and dissertations (e.g., Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2004; Hyland & Tse, 2004), company annual reports (Hyland, 1998b), casual conversation (Schiffrin, 1980), and advertisements (Fuertes-Olivera, Velasco-Sacristan, Arribas-Bano & Samaniego-Fernandez, 2001). However, only very few metadiscourse studies set newspaper genre as their research corpus (Dafouz, 2003, 2008; Le, 2004; Abdollahzadeh, 2007; Noorian & Biria, 2010). To the knowledge of the researchers, the only study that sought to study metadiscourse use cross-linguistically in English and Persian newspaper editorials is Abdollahzadeh (2007). Regrettably, there seems to be a dearth of research on metadiscourse use in newspaper editorials in general and cross-linguistic research on metadiscourse in particular.

The need to fill the gap that exists in the studies on metadiscourse was the original impetus for the present research. The study intended to investigate this prospect and determine predominantly used metadiscourse categories and sub-categories in English and Persian newspaper editorials and to examine the probable differences and/or similarities in the distribution and use of metadiscourse resources in these texts. As such, the present study is one of the few studies which explore a comprehensive

range of metadiscourse markers across English and Persian in a single genre, and to date, it appears to be the only one that addresses the whole range of metadiscourse in Persian and English newspaper genre.

Theoretical Background

The concept of metadiscourse, according to Hyland (2005), was first introduced by Zelling Hariss “to offer a way of understanding language in use, representing a writer’s or speaker’s attempts to guide a receiver’s perception of a text” (Hyland 2005, p. 3). However, it was neglected during 1960s and 1970s. Later in the 1980s, as a reaction to a strong emphasis on the propositional aspect of language, metadiscourse resurfaced and gained attention and become the subject of the study for some scholars (e.g. Williams, 1981; Vande Koppel, 1985; Crismore, 1983). Hyland (2010) came to appreciate that metadiscourse emerged as a corrective to earlier views of language which considered language as primarily a propositional and expository mode of representation where the function of communication was to match words to ideas.

Indeed, the study of metadiscourse reminds us that statements simultaneously have an orientation to the world outside the text and an orientation to the readers’ understanding of that world through the text itself. In other words, as Hyland (2010) asserts, language is not simply used as a means of conveying information about the world; it also acts to present this information to our readers/listeners through the organization of the text itself, and engage them as to how they should understand it. Seen in this way, metadiscourse equips writers/speakers with a means of conceptualizing communication as social engagement.

Metadiscourse is a fuzzy term which does not have a clear-cut definition. Consequently, several definitions have been proposed by scholars in the field of metadiscourse since it was coined. Williams (1981) considered metadiscourse as “writing about writing, whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed” (Williams, 1981, p. 226). Williams further argues that metadiscourse intends to guide rather than inform readers. Vande Koppel (1985) also provided a definition of metadiscourse as

discourse that writers use not to expand referential material but to assist the readers connect, organize, interpret, and develop attitudes toward that material. For him metadiscourse is “discourse about discourse or communication about communication” (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 83). Similarly, Crismore (1983) advocate seeing metadiscourse as “the author’s intrusion into the discourse, either explicitly or non-explicitly, to direct rather than inform, showing readers how to understand what is said and meant in the primary discourse and how to ‘take’ the author” (Crismore 1983, p. 2). Later in 2005, Hyland defines it as “the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with readers as members of a particular community” (Hyland, 2005, p. 37). Although, there are some differences in the way different scholars have defined metadiscourse, but there is a common thread in these definitions, and it is the idea of considering metadiscourse as concerning meanings other than propositional ones.

Moreover, metadiscourse is essentially an open category (Hyland, 2005) which can be realized in numerous ways. Therefore, a variety of metadiscourse taxonomies have been proposed by researchers in the field (e.g. Vande Kopple, 1985; Beauvias, 1989; Crismore, Markkanen & Steffensen, 1993; Hyland, 1998a, 1999; Dafouze, 2003; Hyland & Tse, 2004, and Adel, 2006). Influenced by Halliday’s (1994) Systemic Functional approach to language, researchers in the area of metadiscourse commonly consider two main categories for metadiscourse, namely textual and interpersonal. This dual categorization of metadiscourse is reflected in most of the taxonomies of metadiscourse. However, Hyland and Tse (2004) explicitly rejected the strict duality of textual and interpersonal functions found in much of the metadiscourse studies (e.g., Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland, 1998 a, 1999). They assert that “all metadiscourse is interpersonal in that it takes account of the reader’s knowledge, textual experiences, and processing needs and that it provides writers with an armoury of rhetorical appeals to achieve this” (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 161). Considering all

metadiscourse as interpersonal, Hyland (2005) propose a theoretically robust and analytically reliable model of metadiscourse which is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1

Hyland's Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse (2005, p. 49)

Category	Function	Example
Interactive	Help to guide the reader through the text	Resources
Transitions	express relations between main clauses	in addition; but; thus; and
Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally; to conclude; my purpose is
Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	noted above; see Fig; in section 2
Evidentials	refer to information from other texts	according to X; Z states
Code glosses	elaborate propositional meanings	namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
Interactional	Involve the reader in the text	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

Hyland's (2005) model comprises two general types of metadiscourse: interactive and interactional metadiscourse. According to Hyland (2005), interactive resources are those features that are used to organize propositional content in ways that "a projected target audience" is likely to perceive as coherent and convincing. On the other hand, interactional resources are those features that involve readers and create opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by informing them about writer's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves.

The Present Study

Contrastive studies are of particular importance for the understanding of cultural particulars as well as linguistic universals. Pery-Woodley (1990) believes that contrastive approaches not only show a particular practice as specific to a group but also they allow the identification of universals. In other words, a contrastive stance is both a superlative way of gaining precise descriptive knowledge about individual languages and cultures and at the same time invaluable in general understanding of language-based communication (cited in Connor, 1996, p. 6). Thus, contrastive analysis of metadiscourse- a linguistic phenomenon which provides a framework for understanding communication as social engagement (Hyland, 2005) - in different genres across different cultures and languages would be of a prime importance.

Bhatia (1993) points out that the existence of a wide variety of genres within a newspaper (such as headlines, news reports, sports reports, editorials, etc.) makes the language of newspaper attractive. Amongst this genres, editorials might be the most appropriate to serve as the data for a contrastive analysis of metadiscourse. In addition, the study of editorials, more than other genres such as research articles and theses, might shed illuminating light on some marked cross-cultural similarities and differences and give interesting insights because the rhetorical patterns of one's native culture-linguistic system are likely to be more pronounced in texts such as editorials than in research articles and theses (Ansary & Babaii, 2009).

Having seen from such a perspective, a cross-cultural or cross-linguistic study of metadiscourse in English and Persian newspaper editorials would yield very interesting and invaluable insights into the metadiscourse area.

Method

Corpus

The corpus of this study was a set of English and Persian data composed of 60 newspaper editorials (30 written in American-English and 30 in Persian). As in the case of other comparative and contrastive studies, ensuring the comparability of the two corpora of the study is of primary importance. Many discourse analysts (e.g., Dafouz, 2003; Thompson, 2001; Hyland, 1999) point out that the topic of a text may influence the type and frequency of metadiscourse categories found in the text. Therefore, in order to meet this comparability requirement, the editorials in both groups were selected from a diverse and different range of topics including social, political, economic, cultural, and world events: that is, editorials of two languages were matched in terms of topics.

The data collection for our research consisted of retrieving a large portion of editorials from the electronic version of elite and influential American-English and Persian newspapers in the United States and Iran through the internet. Based on the research aims, it was determined that there had to be several newspapers serving as the database for the study. In more precise terms, the editorials of different newspapers are quite diverse in their styles or textual strategies (Fowler, 1991; Shams, 2005); therefore, in order to reduce stylistic influence of editorialists and newspapers in the analysis, an extended scope of data -10 newspapers (5 in English and 5 in Persian) - were selected. English newspapers include *The Los Angeles Times* (latimes.com), *The New York Times* (nytimes.com), *USA Today* (usatoday.com), *Washington Post* (washingtonpost.com), and *The Washington Times* (washingtontimes.com). Persian newspapers are *Afarinesh* (afarineshdaily.ir), *Iran* (iran-newspaper.com), *Jomhourie Eslami* (jomhourieslami.com), *Keyhan* (keyhnnews.ir), and *Mardomsalari* (mardomsalari.com).

Adel (2006) believes that cultural conventions differ not only across different languages, but also they tend to be different across varieties of English. Hence, in order to avoid the potential effects

of this factor on the results and findings of the study, only American-English newspapers were included in the data.

In order to ensure that diachronic changes do not affect the selected editorials, only editorials published in the period between two first months of 2012 (January and February) were included in the sample. Bearing in mind the afore-mentioned variable involved in the writing of the texts, namely topic, altogether a corpus of 60 editorials, 30 in English and 30 in Persian was culled from the selected editorials for a close contrastive analysis. The whole corpus amounts to 41753 words (15564 English and 26189 Persian).

Procedure and Analysis

After retrieving editorials from newspaper web sites and selecting the ones which compose the corpus of the study, first they were converted into word format in order to have accurate word counts of each set of data and the corpus in general. Then, the items considered to be metadiscourse were identified and categorized in the texts based on Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse, however, the analysis was not limited to predetermined search items; other possible realizations frequently occurring in the analyzed text were also taken into account. Given the highly contextual nature of metadiscourse and the fact that a particular form can serve either a propositional or metadiscoursal function (Hyland, 2004; 2005), a context-sensitive analysis of each marker was carried out.

After analyzing the data, a quantitative analysis was conducted to determine the frequency of different types of metadiscourse categories and to compare and contrast the two sets of data. Since it was not possible to have texts with exactly the same length, the results were standardized to a common basis by applying 1000-word approach (elements per 1000 words) to compare the frequency of occurrence.

Results

The quantitative analysis revealed that overall incidence of metadiscourse resources in two groups of editorials- English and Persian editorials- was similar. Interactional resources in both sets of corpus outnumbered the interactive ones. In more precise words, both English and Persian editorials contained more interactional resources (64.61% and 61.83% respectively) than interactive resources (35.39% and 38.17% respectively). Interestingly, both groups did not differ much in terms of utilizing these resources; the English group with 72.6 per thousand words frequency of interactional resources exceeded the Persian group (66.56 per thousand words frequency of interactional resources) only minimally, and the Persian group with 41.08 per thousand words frequency of interactive resources outnumbered the English group (39.77 per thousand words frequency of interactive resources) with only a minor difference.

Table 2
Categorical Distribution and Percentages of Metadiscourse Resources in English and Persian Editorials

Metadiscourse Resources	English		Persian	
	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency
Interactive				
Transitions	19.50	21.91	26.32	28.33
Frame markers	0.63	0.71	3.09	3.32
Endophoric markers	0	0	0.21	0.23
Evidentials	6.46	7.26	4.51	4.85
Code glosses	8.80	9.89	4.04	4.35
Total	35.39	39.77	38.17	41.08
Interactional				
Hedges	19.84	22.30	9.68	10.42
Boosters	10.92	12.27	14.54	15.66
Attitude markers	27.56	30.97	29.77	32.04
Self-mentions	0.17	0.19	1.35	1.45
Engagement markers	6.12	6.87	6.49	6.99
Total	64.61	72.6	61.83	66.56
Totals	100	112.37	100	107.64

As tabulated above (Table 2), the subcategory of transitions, among the sub-categories of interactive resources, was the most frequently used resources in both groups of editorials. In the case of the English corpus, transitions (21.91 per thousand words) are followed by code glosses (9.89 per thousand words), evidentials (7.26 per thousand words), and frame markers (0.71 per thousand words), whereas in the Persian corpus, evidentials (4.85 per thousand words) appear in the second position in interactive category, followed by code glosses (4.35 per thousand words), frame markers (3.32 per thousand words), and endophoric markers (0.23 per thousand words) which were absent from the English group.

Following are some examples of the sub-categories of interactive resources found in the English and the Persian data studied. The Persian examples are transcribed into Roman characters, and literal translations are given for them.

Transitions:

(a) **Furthermore**, scientific publication is increasingly moving to the Internet, expanding accessibility. (*The New York Times*, 5 January 2012)

(b) اما بخش دیگری از این دلایل به مسائل روانشناختی و اجتماعی برمیگردد.

(*Afarinesh*, 16 February 2012)

[**ammâ** baxše digari az in dalâyel be masâele ravânšenaxti va ejtemâ'i barmigardad]

[**But** another part of these reasons goes back to the psychological and social issues.]

Frame Markers:

(a) **Then**, in 2010, it fell off again, with just 21% of eligible voters ages 18 to 24 showing up, compared with more than 60% for voters 65 and older. (*USA Today*, 9 February 2012)

(b) و سومین نکته اینست که همبستگی امت اسلامی ایجاب میکند مسلمانان سایر کشورها نیز با مردم افغانستان همراهی کنند و به محکوم کنندگان بی حرمتی به قرآن کریم بیبوندند.

(*Jomhourie Eslami, 26 February 2012*)

[**va sevvomin nokte in ast ke hambastegi ommate eslami** ijâb mikonak mosalmânâne sâyere kešvarhâ niz bâ mardome Afghânestân hamrâhi konand va be mahkumkonandegâne bihormati be qorâne karim bepeyvandand]

[**And, the third point is that** the solidarity of Islamic nation demands Muslims of other countries accompany with the people of Afghanistan too, and join the condemners of profanity to holy Quran.]

Endophoric Markers:

(a) No example was found.

(b) اکنون به بند اول این نوشته باز میگردیم و پاسخ این پرسش را به قضاوت میگذاریم که آیا خیزش یکپارچه و همزمان مردم آمریکا و کانادا در ۸۰ شهر بزرگ این دو کشور، از همان پیچ بزرگ تاریخ که حضرت آقا نزدیک بودن آنرا خبر داده و ۲ ماه بعد دشمنان تابلودار اسلام و انقلاب در اجلاس راهبردی آتلانتیک بر آن تاکید ورزیده بودند، حکایت نمیکند؟! (*Keyhan, 6 January 2012*)

[aknun be **bande avvale in nevešte** bâzmigardim va pâsoxe in porseš râ be qezâvat migozârim ke âyâ xizeše yekpârçe va hamzamâne mardome Âmricâ va Kânâ dâ dar 80 šahre bozorge in do kešvar, az hamân piçe bozorge târixî ke hazrate âqâ nazdik budane ân râ xabar dade va 2 mâh ba'd došmânene tâblodâre eslâm va enqelâb dar ejlâse râhbordie Âtlântik bar ân ta'kid varzide budand, hekâyat nemikonad]

[Now, we go back to **the first paragraph of this text** and judge the answer of the this question whether the unified and simultaneous rise of people of America and Canada in 80 big cities of these two countries does not indicate the same big turn of the history that Holiness had announced its proximity and 2 months later Islam's and the Revolution's outright enemies had emphasized it in Atlantic's strategic summit?!]

Evidentials:

(a) **From Israel's point of view**, because Mr. Obama is facing a tough re-election challenge, he might be compelled to

back its play on Iran rather than appear weak and ineffective.
(*The Washington Times*, 8 February 2012)

(b) گزارش ها نیز نشان می دهد که ارزش سهام در پنج بازار اصلی
اروپا طی سال ۲۰۱۱ میلادی روند کاهشی داشت. (*Jomhourie Eslami*,
1 January 2012)

[**gozârešhâ niz nešân midahad** ke arzeše sahâm dar panj
bâzâre aslie orupâ teyye sale 2011 milâdi ravande kâheši
dâšt.]

[**The reports also show** that the value of stocks in the five
main markets of Europe had a decreasing flow during the year
2011 AD.]

Code Glosses:

(a) **In other words**, in return for tangible actions on the part
of the United States, the Taliban is willing to make some
promises that can easily break later. (*The Washington Times*, 4
January 2012)

(b) به عبارت دیگر سرمایه گذاران ایرانی در خارج از کشور، واردات
کنندگان و مسافران متقاضی ارز هستند. (*Jomhourie Eslami*, 14
February 2012)

[**be ebârate digar** sarmâyegozârâne irâni dar xârej az
kešvar, vâredâtkonandegân va mosâferâne motaqâzie arz
hastand]

[**In other words**, Iranian investors in outside of the country
are importers and passengersdemanding currency.]

Concerning interactional category, the results uncovered that
attitude markers appeared in the first position in both English and
Persian editorials, though the Persian group exploited these
resources slightly more than the English group (32.04 vs. 30.97 per
thousand words). However, the two groups differed in the use of
second most frequent sub-category of these resources. This
position was allocated to hedges (22.30 per thousand words) in the
English corpus, followed by boosters (12.27 per thousand words),
while boosters (15.66 per thousand words) were the second most
frequently utilized interactional resource in the Persian data,

followed by hedges (10.42 per thousand words). It is worth noting that, engagement markers and self-mentions were respectively in the next positions in both groups of editorials. However, the Persian group slightly outnumbered its English counterpart both in the use of engagement markers (6.99 vs. 6.87 per thousand words) and self-mentions (1.45 vs. 0.19 per thousand words). Some clear examples of interactional resources in the studied corpus are provided below:

Hedges:

(a) **Probably** it is one feature of U.S. capitalism that makes our system more flexible and capable of “creative destruction” than Europe’s. (*The Washington Post, 11 January 2012*)

(b) شاید از این راه سود کلانی نصیب دولت شود اما به واقع این افزایش قیمت دلار فاتحه ای بر فعالیت تولید کنندگان و فعالان اقتصادی می باشد.
(*Afarinesh, 5 January 2012*)

[šâyad az in râh sude kalâni nasibe dolat šavad amma bevaqe in afzâyeše qimate dolâr fâtehei bar fa’liate tolid konandegân va fa’lâne eqtesâdi mibâšad]

[**Maybe** the state gets immense profits through this way, but in fact this increase in the price of dollar is an end to the activity of producers and economic activists.]

Boosters:

(a) A Times investigation has **revealed** that more than 1,400 people over the last five years were wrongfully incarcerated. (*The Los Angeles Times, 1 January 2012*)

(b) درحقیقت رشد اقتصادی به معنای رشد مجموعه فعالیتها یا اقتصاد ملی است که نتیجه تبعی آن ایجاد شغل و کنترل معضل بیکاری است.
(*Iran, 19 February 2012*)

[**dar haqiqat** rošde eqtesâdi be ma’nâye rošde majmu’e fa’âliathâye eqtesâde melli ast ke natije taba’ie ân ijâde šoghl va kontorole mo’zale bikâri ast]

[**In fact**, economic growth means the growth in a set of national economic activities and its incidental consequence is the creation of job and control of unemployment problem.]

Attitude Markers:

(a) **Not bad**, if every athlete got a degree. (*USA Today*, 12 January 2012)

(b) **متاسفانه** آنچه که این روزها بعضا در فضای رسانه ای و موضعگیری برخی سیاسیون مشاهده می شود روندی بر خلاف مصالح و منافع ملی است. (*Iran*, 15 January 2012)

[**mota'ssefâne** ânçe ke in ruzhâ ba'zan dar fazâyê resânei va moze'girîe barxi siâsiyun mošâhede mišavad ravandi barxelâfe masâleh va manâfe'e melli ast.]

[**Unfortunately**, what is sometimes observed these days in media sphere and some politicians' positioning is a procedure against the national interests and benefits.]

Self-mentions:

(a) If it survives a vote in the Senate, **we** hope it will be vetoed by Gov. Robert F. McDonnell (R). (*The Washington Post*, 6 February 2012)

(b) پرسش **نگارنده** از حقوقدان عزیز، تقدیم بودجه کشور به مجلس است. (*Mardomsalari*, 26 February 2012)

[**porseše negârânde** az hoquqdâne aziz, taqdime budje kešvar be majles ast]

[The question of **writer** from dear jurist is the presentation of budget of the country to the parliament.]

Engagement Markers:

(a) **Think of** the exchanges like a virtual mall dedicated to health insurance. (*The Los Angeles Times*, 8 February 2012)

(b) **به دقت به صورت مسئله توجه کنید:** "ایران در موقعیتی قرار گرفته است که از یک سو مورد فشار تبلیغاتی غرب قرار دارد و یک سو خود را پرچمدار نهضت بیداری اسلامی می داند که بنیان گذار آن حضرت امام خمینی (ره) می باشند." (*Afarinesh*, 5 February 2012)

[**be deqqat be surate mas'ale tavajjoh konid:** "Îrân dar moqe'iatî qarâr gerefte ast ke az yek su morede tablighâte gharb qarâr dêrad va yek su khod râ parçamdâre nehzate

bidârie eslâmi midânad ke bonyângozâre ân hazrate emam Xomeyni (rezvan ollâh ta'âlâ elayh) mibâšand".]

[Pay attention to the appearance of the issue carefully: “Iran is located in a position in which it is ,on the one hand, under the propagandizing pressure of the west and on the other hand, knows itself the bearer of the Islamic awakening movement whose founder is Holiness Imam Khomeyni (paradise of almighty God to him)”.]

Figure 1 depicts all these significant details in a more tangible way.

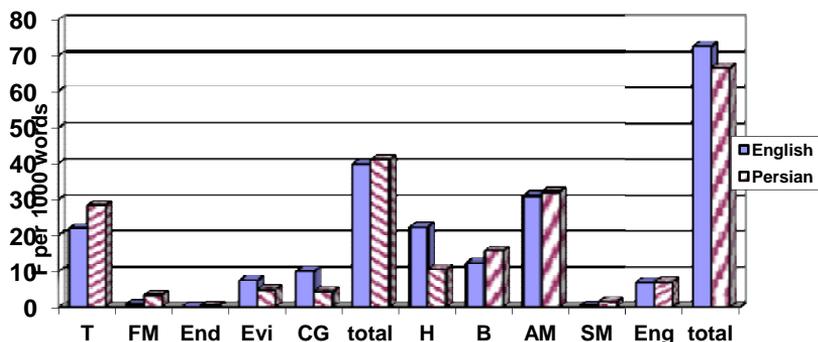


Figure 1. Categorical Distribution and Percentages of Metadiscourse Resources in English and Persian Editorials

Discussion

The results of the study showed that editorialists of both sets of data used metadiscourse resources in their articles. This preliminary finding shows that editorialists in both languages were apparently aware of the significant role of metadiscourse in persuasive writings (Hyland, 2005). Both groups used metadiscourse to explicitly signal text organization, evaluate its contents and persuade their readers.

In both groups, interactive metadiscourse category, that is, explicit signals of the relationship between ideas and the organization and clarification of ideational material, was used less frequently than interactional resources which are considered as

central aspects of reader–writer dialogue (Abdollahzadeh, 2010). Moreover, both groups used these features almost with the same frequency and did not differ much. This shows that for both English and Persian editorialists, the relationship that is to be established between the writer and reader overrides comprehensibility of text and guiding the reader through the reading process.

This finding might be attributed to the genre conventions of editorials in general. Although the editorialists in the two languages may have different strategies in using some sub-types of interactive metadiscourse due to their cultural differences, with regard to the interactive category in general, they somewhat follow the same disciplinary culture and write within a unique framework identified by the genre. However, one fact that may explain the underuse of interactive category compared to interactional category in both groups is that the cultural norms of both groups conformed to the norms and conventions of editorials genre. In other words, the results suggest that, in newspaper editorials, interacting with readers is more important than text organization.

As regards the most frequent sub-category of metadiscourse, the results uncovered that attitude markers form the most frequent metadiscourse strategy both within interactional category and metadiscourse resources in general (in both English and Persian corpus), confirming their role in persuasive texts. According to Hyland (2005), attitude markers provide an opportunity for writers to signal an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, thereby express a position and suck readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to disagree such opinions. The writer's personal feelings, agreement and disagreement, commitment or distancing towards the propositional material of the text and to the reader reflect textual persona that proves to be a persuasive tool in the eyes of the reader (Dafouz, 2003, 2008). In this way, these devices assist writers in accomplishing their main goals in persuasive writings, i.e., persuading their readers.

The findings, therefore, indicate that both set of writers in the genre of editorials were aware of the persuading power of these

metadiscursive devices and attached prime importance to their use in their writings. Moreover, approximately similar distribution of attitude markers across Persian and English languages shows that these markers played a decisive role equally in American and Iranian editorials' attempt in persuading their readers regardless of their cultural or linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, one may conclude here that the heavy use of attitude markers is expected to be an inherent characteristic of editorials genre.

With regard to interactive metadiscourse, the result of this study can be compared with those of similar metadiscourse studies carried out by Faghih and Rahimpour (2009) and Shokuhi and Baghsiahi (2009) in research articles genre. In their studies, they found that, in the case of academic writing, the reverse seemed to be applied. Both their studies showed that Iranian and English academic writers employed interactive metadiscourse more than interactional one. Perhaps it is the genre conventions that contribute to such a contradiction. This might suggest that metadiscourse resources can be used differently in different genres. We might say that the reasonable explanation for this difference across these two genres, according to Le (2004), is that editorials, compared to academic texts, are much shorter in length (and thus they do not need to contain many endophoric markers or frame markers), have a content which can be exposed with less complexity (less need for code glosses), and as the acknowledged position of the newspaper on a specific issue, may express opinions in a much more personal manner than academic texts (which should be reflected in the use of person markers). As such, it is expected that editorials might contain more interactional resources than interactive ones.

Interactional metadiscourse is a feature of overtly argumentative and persuasive genres (Hyland, 2005), therefore, it is not surprising to find that it makes up a larger portion of metadiscourse resources in editorials genre. Similarly, Dafouz (2003) highlighting the explicit persuasive nature of interpersonal (interactional in Hyland's category) metadiscourse, states that interpersonal metadiscourse "construct a textual persona that appears attractive, convincing and reliable to the reader" (p. 33).

Hence, the findings suggest that the American and Iranian editorialists opt for the use of more interactional metadiscourse than interactive to gain acceptance and solidarity with their readers in order to persuade them (the chief aim of every editorialist).

Regarding interactional category, the finding of this study is in consonance with those of Khabbazi Oskouei (2011). In her comparative study of interactional metadiscourse in British-English and Persian magazine editorials, she found that both British and Iranian groups of editorialists tend to interact with their readers employing similar amounts of interactional metadiscourse (with a minor difference). Khabbazi stated that editorialists in her study used interactional metadiscourse as persuasive devices, that is, to present their opinions in the most effective way, and to persuade their readers to accept their opinions as presented in the editorials.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study revealed that the predominant metadiscourse category in editorials genre was interactional category, and the predominant metadiscourse feature was attitude markers – a subcategory of interactional category.

The overall findings from the study indicate that metadiscourse resources play a key role in the construction of persuasion in newspaper editorials. The final aim of editorials is to convince the audience. It was shown that writers chose to convince their readers by means of logical (interactive metadiscourse) and emotional (interactional metadiscourse) strategies. These findings also suggest that metadiscourse is an important device for communication with readers in both cultures. Moreover, the findings lend support to the idea that metadiscourse is not the unique feature of English language, but it is also a rhetorical feature of languages other than English.

Regarding similarities, both English and Persian writers proved to put premium on the establishment of relationship with the readers more, relying less on textuality. That is, they employed interactional category more than interactive one. This indicates that in a persuasive genre like editorials, interactional metadiscourse

plays a key role in persuading the readers. The findings were also interesting in that they revealed some similarities between two groups with regard to the use of some subcategories of metadiscourse. For instance, attitude markers were shown to be the most frequent subcategory in both sets of editorials. Frame markers, self-mentions and endophoric markers were respectively three less frequent subcategories in both groups. These similarities can be attributed to generic conventions, i.e., editorials genre characteristics that seem to exhibit a certain uniformity across languages. In other words, although the precondition of acting within the same genre would not guarantee using the same preferred amount and type of metadiscourse cross-culturally, the similarities found between two groups of data showed that genre conventions entail the specialist writers have some preferences close to each other.

Despite a relative uniformity of newspaper editorials in terms of metadiscourse use imposed by requirements and conventions of the genre, some significant intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of American and Iranian editorialists were found. For example, the results showed that use of transitions, hedges, boosters, code glosses, evidentials, and frame markers differed across two languages which were apparently marking a cultural variation.

Overall, the findings of the study uphold the idea put forward by many scholars (e.g., Crismore et al., 1993; Mauranen, 1993; Valero-Graces, 1996; Dahl, 2004; Adel, 2006; Dafouz, 2003, 2008) that metadiscourse use is likely to vary across languages and cultures. More interestingly, they also indicate that all these differences occur within a unique general rhetorical framework, i.e., genre.

Decades of research in contrastive rhetoric have offered beneficial insights and understandings for scholars, teachers, and students about the forms, contents, and contexts that shape different types of texts across a variety of cultures (Pak & Acevedo, 2008). The present study, as a contrastive rhetoric research, has taken a step in the direction of cross-linguistic/ cross-cultural analysis of metadiscourse in newspaper genre. It is hoped

that this study would give significant insights into the teaching of English as a foreign language in general and the teaching of writing in English in particular. The study will be beneficial for EFL students and their teachers in analyzing, understanding and correcting their intercultural linguistic problems in writing. The findings of the study can also be beneficial for translation area (both for teachers and students in translation courses and professional translators), as they clearly show how two languages differed rhetorically in the use of metadiscourse.

As with any other studies, the present study is limited and as a result there is considerable potential for future research in this area. The relatively small number of the analysed editorials was one of the limitations of the study. Another practical problem of the study was the determination of metadiscourse markers in Persian corpus. Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse is originally presented in English language, but it is appropriately applicable in other languages. However, applying an analytical framework, which is originally presented in English, into Persian language and the fact that there are only few metadiscourse studies dealing with the Persian language made the analysis of the Persian data a complex and time-consuming process.

Other studies also can be done to (dis)confirm whether the predominant metadiscourse features reported in this study for English and Persian newspaper editorials are maintained in newspaper editorials written in other languages. Furthermore, the research outlined in the present study will, we hope, encourage an extension of research into the effect of making language learners' aware of the existing similarities and/ or discrepancies in the use of metadiscourse in their writings in English. Considering that rhetorical devices are used differently across languages and cultures, it also seems that the study of the variations that metadiscursive resources may experience in the process of translation from English into Persian or other languages could be another area of investigation.

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