

## An Analysis of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in Urdu Journalistic Writings

Haroon Shafique<sup>1</sup> Dr. Behzad Anwar<sup>2</sup> Muhammad Shahbaz<sup>3</sup>

### Abstract

*Interactional metadiscourse markers are the self-reflective linguistic expressions that make the writers more powerful in interaction (Hyland, 2004). This study applies Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction on journalistic writings of Urdu. A corpus of Urdu newspapers has been compiled for this study. Antconc 3.2.4w (2011) has been used for getting the frequency of interactional devices. The compiled corpus is analyzed to draw the results by using Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction as a theoretical grounding. The results show that hedges are the interaction markers with the highest frequency in Urdu newspaper writings. The frequent use of hedges suggests that the writers offer their readers some space to negotiate with the viewpoint which highly attracts the readers towards the author's ideas. The results also exhibit that the news writers of Urdu prefer to manipulate the viewpoint of their readers by their judgments when they use stance markers.*

**Key Words:** Interaction Markers, Journalistic Writings, Urdu Corpus, Stance Markers, Engagement Markers, Hyland's Model

### Introduction

We use language to share our ideas and experiences which is the key purpose of communication. The language can be analyzed through discourse analysis "method for analyzing the ways that specific features of language contribute to the interpretation of texts in their various contexts" (Barton & Stygall 2004, p. 57). The prime aim of the present study is to explore interactional metadiscourse markers used in Urdu journalistic writings. The previous researchers mainly investigated interaction markers in one language i.e. English, Arabic, Chinese etc. (Hyland, 2009; Fu & Hyland, 2014), comparative languages (Yazdenmehr et al., 2013, Zarei & Mansoori 2011), academic discourse (Crismore, 1989; Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 199,2000,2005a; Jalilfar & Alipour, 2007; Ivani, 1998), and research writing (Hough, 2006; Abdollazadeh, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> Lecture, Department of English University of Lahore Gujrat Campus

<sup>2</sup> Assistant Professor Department of English, University of Gujrat

<sup>3</sup> Assistant Professor Department of English GC Women University Sialkot

This research is unique in its perspective for many reasons; firstly, interactional metadiscourse devices have been analyzed in the Urdu language and a list of all the interaction markers used in Urdu journalistic text has been compiled. Secondly, this research differentiates stance and engagement markers and explains their role in a text. No such research is available on Urdu journalistic discourse. This genre of discourse regarding interaction markers has not been examined yet. This study tries to fill this gap by providing the analysis of interaction markers in Urdu.

### **Research Questions**

- What are the most frequent interaction markers in Urdu and what kind of impact they can create on the minds of the readers?
- Why are certain types of interaction markers preferred in Urdu journalistic writings?

### **Literature Review**

Harris (1959) introduced the term metadiscourse to offer some other ways to understand the language. Metadiscourse is an important link between a text and the context in which it is used because it points to the reader's expectations for certain forms of interaction and engagement. It brings into light the dialogic role of discourse by revealing authors' understanding through the way he/she addresses readers and their needs.

After Harris (1959), the concept of metadiscourse was developed by some other scholars (Kopple, 1985; Crismore, 1989). Kopple (1985) thinks metadiscourse as style lists and presents many kinds of metadiscourse. His idea towards metadiscourse i.e. "discourse about discourse" intends to direct the text receivers by the text producers rather presenting information only.

Metadiscourse has been an area of immense interest for the researchers in the past few years. Previous researches mainly investigated interaction markers in one language, comparative languages, academic discourse and research. Interaction markers are very important in academic writing because they show the awareness of the writers regarding their position within the academic community. These interactional devices support the writers and authors to show their academic authority (Rahimivanda & Kuhi, 2014). In a research carried out by Jalilfar and Alipour (2007), pre-intermediate EFL students were analyzed when they were exposed to interaction markers in classroom by the EFL teacher. For this study, 90 students were selected and divided into three different groups. A pretest was conducted and the students were provided with instructions of interaction markers. After the instructions, post test was conducted. The difference

between the performance of the groups before pretest and after post test revealed explicit change in the group who was provided instructions of interaction markers. The group with instructions used more interaction markers and thus had more persuasive test samples. The research suggests that the communicated abilities of the students can be enhanced by the use of interaction markers in classroom.

In another study carried out by Kuhl and Piran (2014), the samples of 80 EFL learners in 5 advance classes were selected. The number of participants in each class was 14-17 with the age of 16-24 years. All the participants were female with bilingual background i.e. Turkish and Persian. The data were collected through observation method of data collection and a voice recorder was used to record the data. The researchers included discussion sessions for the data and each discussion session lasted for 30-45 minutes. Three sessions were conducted for recordings. A total number of 900 stance markers and 245 engagement markers were found in the analyzed data. The results also showed that boosters are the most occurring stance markers while questions are the most occurring engagement markers. The research revealed that the awareness of appropriate use of interaction markers can be very useful for the EFL learners. If the EFL learners want to be more and more persuasive in their discussion, they have to utilize these interaction markers in the same way the native speakers do.

The domination of the English language in the world of academia has attracted researchers to publish their valuable works in English international databases (Flowerdew, 1999). Owing to this tendency, a great appeal for mastering the article writing emerged to convey the findings of the research as clear as possible to the world. Attarn (2014) analyzed interaction markers in ESP articles written by native and non-native writers of English published from 2000 to 2011. The analysis is based on corpus of 15 Persian-written and 15 from English-written research articles. The results revealed that all the interaction markers are significant in frequency in Persian writers of English as compared to English writers other than hedges.

Another interlingual study was conducted by Sultan (2011) to analyze the differences between the researchers of Native English and Arabic. 70 research articles from native English writers and Arabic writers were taken and the portion of data discussion was analyzed to see the differences of interaction markers. Chi square test was used to see the differences of interaction markers. The results revealed that other than self mentions, all the interaction markers were frequent in number in Arabic research writers of English. The research also proved that the Arab writers pay excessive attention to the formal aspects of the text.

A study conducted by Hyland (2008) analyzed to check what kind of interaction markers make a text more and more persuasive and how these interaction markers vary with respect to different disciplines. For this study, 240 research articles were taken that consist of 1.4 million words. The corpus was chosen to represent the cross section of research writing. Three research papers were taken from ten renowned journals of each field. The sub corpora were searched for 320 productive items (interaction markers) to see the frequency and their difference in all the disciplines. The first result that the concordance software showed was that the stance markers were used by the research writers in all fields more than engagement markers. The results also showed that every 30th word out of 1000 words was a stance marker while every 6th word out of 1000 words was engagement marker. That makes it very clear that the focus of all the researchers is to convince and persuade the readers towards their proposition.

The role of gender in the use of interaction markers was examined by Kuhi et al. (2012). Fourteen (14) male and 16 female EFL learners were assigned a written task to check their language level and difference in the use of interaction markers. A checklist was developed for keeping the record of stance and engagement markers. The concordance results showed that the participants use engagement markers more than stance makers. On the whole there was no significant difference in the use of interaction markers as the stance markers in both genders were used similarly but female participants of EFL used more engagement markers. Hence, the results suggested that the EFL Iranian learns in general and Female Iranian EFL learners in particular are more reader oriented in their writing than being writer oriented.

Another study conducted by Fu & Hyland (2014) investigated interactional markers in two genres of journalistic discourse i.e. popular science and opinion articles. This research aimed to see how interaction markers find a way to contribute to the success of journalistic genres. A list of all potential interactional devices was generated and the corpus was checked against that list by using PowerGrep software. The quantitative results suggested that the interaction markers used in opinion articles are double in number. Stance markers were used more in both genres as compared to engagement markers. The research also suggested that the authors structure their interactions so differently contributing to the distinctiveness of each genre.

### **Research Methodology and Data Collection**

This research is based on corpus which comprises text from two Urdu newspapers. In this study data has been analyzed qualitatively. Qualitative research describes phenomenon through words and these words enhance the

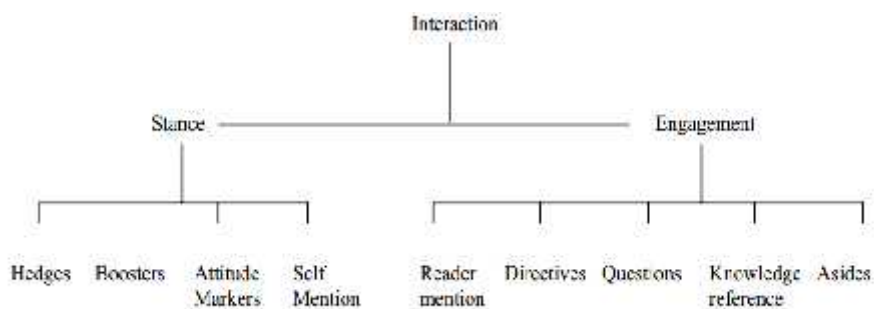
understanding of phenomenon. The use of Interactional markers in Urdu journalistic writings has been described by using qualitative approach. However, the frequency of Metadiscourse markers has been identified with the help of corpus. The data has been collected from Urdu daily ‘Jang’ and ‘Nawa-e-Waqat’ for the period of three months (April 1, 2015 to June 30, 2015) from columns and editorial sections. Two newspapers, selected for this study, have been chosen very carefully by keeping in mind the criteria suggested by Nwogu (1997). Both the newspapers are representative, well-reputed and easily accessible. However, the fourth criterion is set by the researchers i.e. circulation. The compiled corpus meets all the four criteria.

The data is copied from the websites of the newspapers in “html” form and converted into “.txt” file to make it readable for the software. The encoding of the file is altered from ASCII to UTF-8 to make Urdu script readable for software as Antconc is not compatible with Urdu files in standard settings.

The software Antconc extracted the metadiscourse markers from the newspaper corpus. Interaction markers have been identified by using the concordance tool. The concordance results have been saved in a .txt Notepad file. The function of interaction markers are analyzed in the sentences. The stance and engagement markers are then checked manually to see whether they work as interaction markers or not.

### Theoretical Framework

In this study, Hyland’s (2005a) model of interactional metadiscourse is applied as theoretical grounding which analyzes the interactional features of discourse. The following figure shows the Hyland’s (2005a) model of interaction:



**Figure 1.1: Hyland’s model of Interaction (2005a)**

#### Stance Markers

Their aim of stance is to explore the ways in which the writers highlight their opinions and judgments. It deals with writer oriented features of interaction and expresses different kinds of opinions, personal feelings and assessments that sometimes include attitude of the writer towards the information (Hyland, 2005a).

### **Hedges**

Hedges are the devices that show the writers' choice to withhold a commitment to a proposition and allow information to be offered as an opinion rather than accredited fact. They involve readers as participants in their respect, modesty or deference for the views of other people (Hyland, 2005a).

### **Boosters**

For Hyland (2005b), boosters allow the writers to convey their certainty in their statement. The other function of boosters is to stress group membership, share mutual information and engagement with the readers (Hyland, 1999).

### **Attitude Markers**

Attitude markers in a text indicate the writer's effective, rather than epistemic, attitude towards propositions when he conveys, agreement, surprise, frustration, importance, and so on (Hyland, 2005b). By using these markers, the writers express a position and as well as pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement to make it difficult for the readers to dispute these judgments.

### **Self-mention**

Self-mention in a text refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present affective, propositional and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001). According to Ivanic (1998), presenting discursual self is central to writing.

### **Engagement Markers**

Other than stance, there are certain ways in which writers bring their readers into the discourse to acknowledge their presence. The writer pulls the readers into discourse at critical points, predicts possible objections and guides them to the particular interpretations with directives, questions and references to shared knowledge. In addition, the writers are also required to bring the potential readers into their text. As Hyland (2005b) explains, the

writers involve the readers in their writing by making use of one or more engagement markers.

### **Reader Pronouns**

Perhaps the most explicit way in which the readers are brought into discourse is reader pronouns “You” and “your” are actually the clearest way to acknowledge the presence of reader by the writer. Other than sharing solidarity, this device weaves potential point of view of the readers into discourse and hence anticipates the objections and voices the concerns (Hyland, 2005b).

### **Directives**

Directives instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way suggested by the writer (Hyland, 2005a). They are signaled mainly by the presence of an imperative (like consider, note, and imagine), by a model of obligation addressed to the reader (such as must, should, and ought), and by expressing writer’s judgment of importance.

### **Questions**

Questions are the dialogic involvement strategy, inviting engagement and bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they are led to the writer’s viewpoint. They give rise to the interest and encourage the reader to explore an unresolved issue with the writer as an equal conversational partner, sharing his or her curiosity and following where the argument leads (Hyland, 2005a).

### **Appeals to Shared Knowledge**

Readers are brought to agree with the writer by building on some kind of implicit contract between the writer and the reader, but often these constructions of solidarity involve explicit calls as well (Hyland, 2005b). In doing so, the writers actually construct readers by presupposing that they hold such beliefs, acknowledging their contribution shape the role of the reader.

### **Personal Asides**

Personal asides allow writers to address audience directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a remark or comment on what is said. Personal asides communicate something of the author’s personality and willingness to intervene explicitly for offering a view (Hyland, 2005b).

## **Data Analysis and Discussion**

### **Stance Markers**

The following stances markers have been discussed with examples in this section:

### **Hedges**

وہ سعو دیمطالبات کو کسی حد تک پورا کر سکتا ہے

(17 April 2015, J)

مجھے لگتا ہے کہ ہر بعض بہتر کر کے فوج کو ایکنیجنگلز نا پڑے گی

(19 April 2015, N)

تمام سرگرمیوں کا ایک کیلنڈر تیار کر لیا گیا ہے اور ممکنہ طور سے بچنے کے لئے سابقہ

(1<sup>st</sup> May 2015, J)

In the above examples, the writers used the hedges ,کسی حد تک, ممکنہ مجھے لگتا ہے, to present their statements as an opinion rather than an accredit fact. Such a usage shows writer's stance. By doing so, the writer gives space to the readers to dispute his opinion as he presents his stance in his example with uncertainty (Hyland, 2005a).

### **Boosters**

یہ مسئلہ بھر پور طریقے سے اٹھانے کی ہر ممکن کوشش کی جائے

(18 May 2015, N)

پاکستان یون کے بارے میں  
2009ء ہی میں متحرک و فعال کردار ادا کرتے ہوئے مکمل سے آگاہ ہونا چاہیے تھا

(21 April 2015, N)

پاک فوج پوریمہارت سے دہشتگردوں کی بیخ کنی میں مصروف ہے

(2 June 2015, J)



In the above examples, the boosters **مکمل**, **بھرپور**, have been used by the writers to present their statements with assurance to influence the readers. They stress their viewpoint by using a booster which makes this proposition an accredit fact rather than his opinion (Hyland, 2005a).

### Attitude Markers

مگر ابو بیسیاسی حلقے بہ احتمال رکھتے اور اندیشہ محسوس کرتے ہیں

(22 April 2015, N)

حکومت نے اس یہ معاملہ حل نہ کیا تو حالات بہت خراب ہو سکتے ہیں

(4 June 2015, N)

پاکستان کی کارکردگیوں کے ورلڈ ریکارڈ اور پھر بنگلہ دیش میں انتہائی مایوس کن رہی

(24 May 2015, J)

An attitude marker can be seen where the writer shares his feeling of surprise with his readers to present his stance. The use of **مایوس کن**, **اندیشہ خدانخواستہ**, as an attitude marker makes the readers think about the statement. The writers express the feeling of surprise and pull the readers into discussion for agreement to make the readers unable to dispute the opinion of the author (Hyland, 2005a).

### Self Mentions

میری بیوی نے مجھ سے پوچھا کہ آج سویرے سویرے کہاں جا رہے ہو

(1<sup>st</sup> April 2015, J)

اس بات کا ذکر میں نے اپنے گزشتہ کالم میں بھی کیا تھا

(11 June 2015, N)

میرے خیال میں جب کوئی نیکر نیل صدر پاکستان بنتا ہے تو وہ بیسیاسدانوں سے بڑا بیسیاسدان -

(5 June 2015, J)

In the examples **مجھ سے**, **میرے**, **میری**, **میں** are self mentions have been used by the writers to engage the readers. The function of self mention is in line with Hyland's (2001) view of self mentions. The above examples show that the writers present themselves central to discourse to make their statements affective for the readers.

## Engagement Markers

The following engagement markers have been discussed with examples in this section:

### Reader Pronouns

مقدمتیکارروائیمینسٹرفتاری عدالتینظامکیایکبنیادی خامی ہے۔

(25 April 2015, J)

جو کشمیر سے متعلقہ نذرین کانفرنس کے رہنما بے پناہ بے باقیانہدے رہے ہیں ہمیں بھیاپنا حصہ بھر پور ۔

(3 May 2015, N)

کیا کو نہیں لگتا کہ تمام حکومتی و ذیر اپنا کام بخوبی سرانجام دے رہے ہیں ۔

(10 June 2015, J)

In these examples, three reader pronouns can be observed which highlight the writer's way of expressing commonness and shared experience with the readers to make the statement more credible. Here , and ہمیں are the reader pronouns used by the writers.

### Directives

بچے دار شخص کو اور سبکچھ کرنا عشق نہ بن کرنا ۔

(12 April 2015, J)

پاکستان کو باجگزار خیال نہ کریں یاد رکھیں دوست خرید نہ بننا سکتے ۔

(7 May 2015, J)

کسی کا کوئی مطلب ہی نہیں ہے۔ سروے کر کے دیکھیں صرف ایک سوال اپنی پڑھی لکھی یوتھ سے ۔

(18 May 2015, N)

The writers direct the audience indirectly and move them to accomplish a common goal (Hyland, 2001). The directives, دیکھیں, یاد رکھیں, and دیکھیں used by the writers show their intention to engage the readers. The writer instructs the readers to see things in a way determined by the writer (Hyland, 2005a).

### Questions

جسٹو جو انقیات کو بوڑھینسلپر تر جیددیگنی ہے، کیا وہملک کو سنبھال پائے گی

(13 April 2015, N)

ہم کلیدیاہمیت کے امور سمیت بہت سے کامتساہل، تاخیر اور بے دلی سے کیوں کرتے ہیں؟

(1 May 2015, J)

اہل ہوس مدعی بھی منصف بھی کسے وکیل کریں کس سے منصفی چاہیں۔

(24 May 2015, J)

The writers in the above examples make the audience a casual partner by questioning the readers (Hyland, 2005b). By asking a question the writer gets attention of the readers and hence engages the readers. Here the questions **کیوں، کیا، کسے** are asked by the writers to make the readers curious.

### Shared Knowledge

سب جانتے ہیں کہ حکومت کی کارکردگی ان دو سالوں میں کیا رہی ہے۔

(18 May 2015, N)

آپ کو تو کہ حکومت نے رواں سال کے آغاز سے ہی۔

(2 June 2015, J)

ظاہر ہے کہ انتہا پسندی صرف مدرسوں ہی میں نہیں بلکہ نجینئرنگ جیسے مضامین میں ڈگری دینے والے اعلیٰ۔

(4 April 2015, N)

The writers sometimes bring the readers to agreement by quoting some shared knowledge (Hyland, 2005a). The writer in this example explicitly acknowledges that the writer and readers share mutual knowledge. The writers also identify the viewpoint of the readers when they mention .  
ہیں،

### Personal Asides

حویلیان سے خنجر ابتکر یلوے کیپٹری (منصوبہ منظور ہو چکا ہے)۔

(19 April 2015, J)

چودھر یصاحب سے پوچھا تھا کہ پتوے (90) فیصد سے زیادہ۔

(22 May 2015, N)

کیانوید مختار صاحب نے حکیم حانق ( ماہر اور کامل طبیب) کے طور پر کراچی کو مثال۔

(7 June 2015, N)

In Personal asides the writer stops during the argument and comments in parenthesis for the ease of his readers to engage them (Hyland, 2005b). The writers in these examples interrupt the argument for offering a comment which serves as a personal aside as is evident in the above mentioned examples when the writer asserts (منصوبہ منظور ہو چکا ہے), (90), (مابراور کاملطیب).

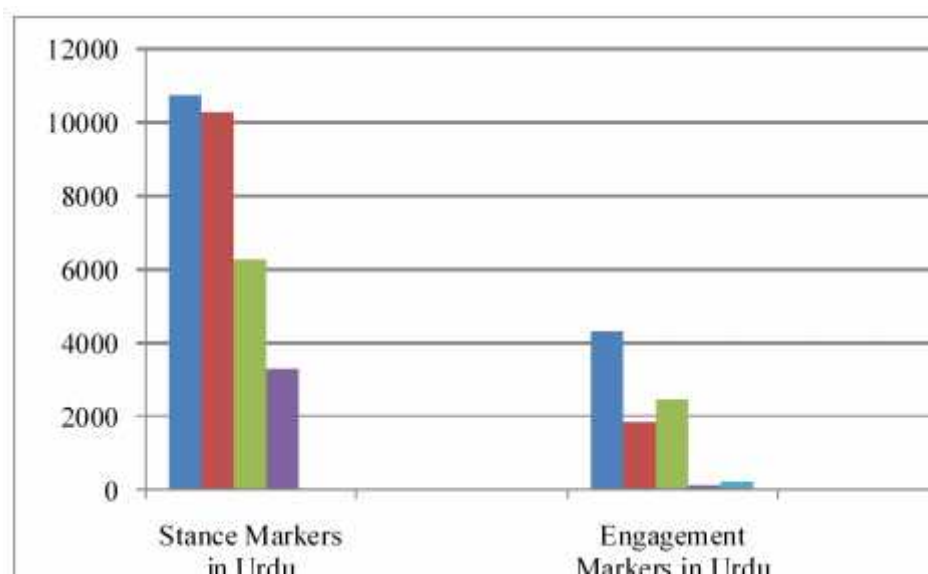
### Statistical Analysis of Metadiscourse Interaction Markers

Interaction Markers in Urdu								
Stance Markers				Engagement Markers				
Hedges	Boosters	Attitude Markers	Self Mentions	Reader Pronouns	Directive	Question	Shared Knowledge	Personal Asides
10737	10288	6277	3288	4302	1838	2484	116	207
30590				8947				
39537								

**Table: 4.1 Interaction Markers in Urdu**

The table given above highlights the frequencies of interaction markers including stance and engagement markers to show how differently stance and engagement markers are used in Urdu newspaper writing. The accumulative frequency analysis exhibits that stance markers are used with higher frequency than engagement markers in Urdu corpus. Thirty thousand five hundred and ninety (30590) stance markers are used in Urdu while eight thousand nine hundred and forty seven (8947) engagement markers are used in Urdu corpus. The accumulative results suggest that stance markers i.e. hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self mentions are comparatively used higher to highlight the writer's stance towards the viewpoint to make it more attractive for the readers than engagement markers i.e. reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides in Urdu discourse. In engagement markers, the most occurring marker is reader pronoun with the frequency of (4302) words while the least used engagement markers are shared knowledge. The results also reveal that writers prefer to project their judgments, ideas and viewpoint rather considering the readers as active participants of the text. This is how the writers make the Urdu journalistic discourse more argumentative and convincing for the readers.

### Graphical Representation of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers



**Figure: 4.1 Graphical Representation of Stance and Engagement Markers in Urdu**

The figure shows that the writers use more stance markers in Urdu journalistic discourse. In Urdu, twenty one thousand (21000) more stance markers are used by the writers as compared to engagement markers. It suggests the importance of stance markers. This writer oriented approach is preferred by the journalistic writers of Urdu which projects the information provided by the writers and conveys it with authenticity. The news writers of Urdu manipulate their ideas by using stance markers.

### Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal many important facts. The study highlights interactional metadiscourse markers used in Urdu newspaper writings. All the stance and engagement markers have been extracted from corpus. Stance and Engagement markers i.e. the subcategories of interactional metadiscourse show variation in their usage. The results exhibit that stance is the dominating category of metadiscourse markers. Hedges in this study, serve as the most occurring stance markers while reader pronouns are the engagement markers with the highest frequency. The findings of this study show that hedges are the most occurring Interaction markers in Urdu corpus which depicts that the uncertain statements are the core feature of journalistic discourse. The research also suggests that imposition of ideas and judgments of the writers are more important than engaging the readers for the journalistic writers of Urdu.

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