

## Analysis of Interactive Metadiscourse in Chinese Students' IELTS Writing

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**Abstract.** IELTS Writing testis considered as the most difficult part of IELTS exam. That's why research interest always focuses on the analysis of the linguistics feature of students' IELTS compositions. Analysis of linguistic features in students' IELTS compositions is a good way to analyze and enhance students' writing ability. In this essay, Hyland's (2005) interactional model of metadiscourse was adopted to analyze 20 students' IELTS writing to explore the linguistic features of students' writing. A research is designed to analyze and explore the differences in the application of metadiscourse markers in students' composition and model essay templates and then based on the research results, marked variations are found across students' writing and model essays in terms of interactive metadiscourse markers. In the final part, the author suggests more interactive textual metadiscourse markers should be used by students to make their writing more organized and coherent.

### Introduction

IELTS is an international standardized test of English language proficiency for non-native English language speakers. It is one of the major English-language tests in the world. In 2017, over 3 million tests were taken in more than 140 countries, making it the world's most popular English language test in the world. In recent years, IELTS is gaining popularity in China with more and more people taking this exam. The writing test is considered as the most difficult part of IELTS. That's why research interest always focuses on the analysis of the linguistics feature of students' IELTS compositions.

Among the different linguistic features are the use of linguistic metadiscourse features Based on the theory of metadiscourse provided by Hyland (2005), this research focused on interactive metadiscourse markers used by Chinese student to create a well-organized essay.

Hyland divided metadiscourse markers into two broad dimensions: interactive and interactional markers. The former helps writers organize propositional content and displays the extent to which the text is produced metadiscursively. The latter deals with the approaches that are used by writers to conduct interaction by intruding and commenting on their argumentations (Hyland, 2005: 49–54). However, metadiscourse usage is expected to be varied and distinctive (Hyland, 2005: 143). Meta discourse markers are an important benchmark to analyze metadiscourse usage and the linguistic features in academic essays. Metadiscourse markers, especially interactive ones contribute to the effective organization of language in essay writing.

This thesis mainly explores the important roles of interactive metadiscourse markers in ETLTS writing.

### Categories and Functions of Interactive metadiscourse Markers

Based on the theory of metadiscourse provided by Hyland (2005), there are five categories of interactive metadiscourse markers, namely: transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses. Each category and its functions are explained below.

As defined by Hyland (2005), transition markers refer to conjunctions and adverbial phrases that aid readers to make pragmatic connections between different parts in essay development. Transition markers are usually conjunctions: such as, furthermore, equally, in the same way, thus, therefore, however in addition, what's more, similarly, likewise, correspondingly, on the other hand, in

summary, never the less, etc.

The second category of interactive metadiscourse markers are frame markers. Their functions cover labeling, sequencing, announcing and altering the direction of arguments so as to clarify the topic for readers. Usually writers can utilize them as indicators of the schematic structure of a text, for instance: First, then, next, 1/2 and a/b, etc., are sequencers; to conclude, in sum and in the brief introduction are labels; I suggest here, my purpose is, the paper explores, I hope to argue that and there are several reasons why are goals announcer, etc.

The third category of interactive metadiscourse markers are endophoric markers. Endophoric Markers refer to expressions which signal the connection of information presented in the different parts of the text. These markers help readers to better grasp writers' intended meanings. See Table 1 or Table 2, refer to the next part and as is mentioned above, etc are expressions of endophoric markers.

The fourth category are evidential markers which represent evidences taken from sources out of the essay. These markers help writers build up the authority and support their positioning and opinion. Evidentials also contribute to achieving persuasive functions of arguments. Evidentials are exemplified by expressions such as someone states that . . . and according to the survey, etc.

The final category is code glosses, which are markers that equip readers with extra information so they can be acquainted with the writers' intended opinions. Writers could convey meaning by describing, elaborating, paraphrasing and restating their arguments. This category includes phrases as follows: in others words, that is, this can be defined as, for example, that is called, etc

## **Procedure and Data Analysis**

The current study was carried out through the following steps: data was obtained from a small subset of the writing corpus – 40 English essays of the similar topic (20 IELTS compositions written by students and another 20 model essays written by official examiners). The use of interactive markers (transition markers, code glosses, frame markers, endophoric markers, and evidential) is analyzed.

All the data were then analyzed in search of interactive metadiscourse markers electronically through a text searching analysis. The cases of the five categories of metadiscourse markers were carefully analyzed individually and manually in order to be certain about their functions in IELTS writing. Finally, to control topic variation and also to allow comparison across corpora of the same topic, the articles of similar topic were selected in the research.

## **Result of the Study**

Results showed that there are some similarities and differences in the application of metadiscourse markers in students' composition and model essay templates. Both groups employed all types of metadiscourse markers, but the students used the fewer of metadiscourse markers to connect different parts of their writing, compared with model essays. (Mohse&Chan&Tan, 2013)

According to the findings, in terms of the interactive domains of metadiscourse, fewer metadiscourse markers like transition markers, frame markers evidential markers and code glosses were found in compositions written by students compared to those model essays written by examiners. As far as the distribution of metadiscourse markers is concerned, the findings revealed that transition markers were most commonly used by students and by examiners. Based on analysis, transition markers acted as the leading category, with a total of 78 cases in model essays, compared with a total of 56 in students' IEITS compositions. The second most frequently-used category of interactive metadiscourse markers was frame markers, with a total of 66 cases found in model essays, compared with a total of 45 in students' composition. Endophoric markers were used 32 times in model essays as the third most used category while evidential markers were ranked in the third positions in students' compositions, totaling 34 cases found in students' compositions. Finally, it was found that amongst the interactive metadiscourse markers, code glosses had the lowest frequency of use not only in model essays (22 cases), but also in students' compositions (10 cases).

As the detailed status of each category are discussed above, the results indicated that interactively recognized metadiscourse markers (especially transition markers and frame marker) were used more frequently in model essays templates than compositions written by students. Hyland's (2004) claims that the significance of metadiscourse elements as textual devices lies in their close relation with the contexts to organize writing content.

In brief, this means many native-English speakers or examiners used more interactive textual metadiscourse markers to make their writing more organized and coherent while students are more interested in free-writing style. Therefore, this study leads to the conclusion that if students could be trained to use interactive textual metadiscourse markers to form logical structure of an essay as effectively as the native-English speakers or examiners, their writing would be significantly improved.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to find out the effect of using metadiscourse markers on improving students' writing skill. Analysis of the study enabled us to arrive at the following conclusion: students fail to employ metadiscourse markers in their writing to make their essays more organized and persuasive. They must be made aware of the important roles that metadiscourse markers play in writing to improve their writing score and their writing skills in particular. Therefore, Metadiscourse markers should be taught explicitly in writing classes as a means to enhance students' writing ability. (Alireza & Mohammad, 2007)

To provide instruction on metadiscourse markers, the teacher may introduce one category of metadiscourse markers each session through sufficient explanations and examples. Learners maybe encouraged to produce metadiscourse markers in a free writing task to have a good grasp of that specific category.

The research into metadiscourse markers is useful in itself. Nevertheless and no doubt, there were confinements that limited the reliability of the results since the corpus was small and limited to only 40 essays. Therefore, it is recommended that the findings of this study should be considered as a starting point for further investigation

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