



## RESEARCH PAPER

### Utilization of Meta-discourse Markers in Theses: An Analysis of Abstracts and Conclusions

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## ABSTRACT

The present study aims to explore the use of meta-discourse markers in abstract and conclusion sections of 20 theses submitted by M. Phil English students of Qurtuba University D. I. Khan, Pakistan. Meta-discourse markers in communication and academic writing have become the chief concern in recent years. This research utilizes Hyland's model of meta-discourse markers that help to create an understanding for readers to explore the genre, social and contextual backgrounds of text in the domain of academic writing. The mixed-method approach was used to explore the most frequent meta-discourse categories as well as the deeper meaning behind the construction of language. The exploration came in the form of sentences and examples to negotiate the non-native writers' use of meta-discourse. It was found that the members who have gone through the treatment of language approach were in a situation in fostering their insight with regards to lexical collocation. The implications of this research extend beyond a mere exploration of linguistic nuances; understanding how meta-discourse functions in the context of the abstract and conclusion sections can offer valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by authors to convey the significance of their research and summarize key findings.

## KEYWORDS

Abstracts, Academic Writing, Conclusions, Meta-Discourse Markers, Scholarly Discourse, Theses

## Introduction

Academic writing comprises different sorts of genres (e.g., books, research articles, dissertations, and theses). In general, every genre has its functions and classification in relation to academic writing. The present study defines the genre as the comparison between different theses abstracts and conclusions. The information and use of classification has high significance since successful academic writing requires utilizing the proper manner for targeted discourse analysis of a particular community. Because of its significance, there has been a developing interest in the idea of genre and discourse analysis over the past decades. Researchers' legitimate language to impart in unambiguous conditions. Unlike language is utilized for initiating through talking, composing, and perusing. Meta-discourse markers are often referred to as linguistic devices, containing a fundamental component of language that gives expressions to guide and shape reader or listener about understanding of mental processes and engagement with written and spoken discourse. These linguistic elements play a pivotal role in the structure and

interpretation of textual communication. Meta-discourse markers handle a diverse classification of linguistic expressions, such as transitional words, discourse connectors, and hedges. It is strategically employed to convey various communicative intentions and textual functions to enhance the understanding of sequence in thoughts to convey the exclusive messages in the domain of any genre. (Hyland, 1998, Crismore, Markkanen, & Steffensen, 1993). The aid of meta-discourse markers in the domain of academic writing has given expressions of interest in recent years. Metadiscoursal markers are defined as devices to captivate the shape of thinking and arguments to meet the requirements of the targeted audience. In the academic domain, meta-discourse markers are justified tools for signaling stance, producing argumentative cohesion, and functioning knowledge transfer (Hyland, 2005).

It enables the writers to focus on discourse markers like words certainty ("Certainly, "Definitely"), provide strong evidence ("For example," "In support of this"), prefer alternative notions ("Despite," "Nevertheless"), and provide audience expectations ("In conclusion," "Turning to the next section"). Consequently, an inquisitive and in-depth analysis of meta-discourse markers is paramount for linguists and academic writers as it delineates the importance of effective scholarly communication in any speech. Meta-discourse Markers after momentarily taking a sight at the characteristics of academic discourse,

On the other hand, interpersonal meta-discourse includes the way the author expresses their contentions and how they anticipate that the readers should comprehend and acknowledge them. The synopsis of these two kinds alongside the sub-classes for every academic area is given below in Table 1 and Table 2.

**Table 1**  
**Connotations of Interpersonal Meta-discourse Markers**

Category	Characteristic	Examples
Hedges	Express partial commitment to the truth-value of the text	May/Might/Perhaps
Certainty Markers	Express total commitment to the truth-value of the text	Undoubtedly/certainly
Attributors	Refer to the source of information	As x has stated/ y says that
Attitude Markers	Express the writer's effective values towards text and readers	We need to understand/unfortunately/it is absurd that/ I feel that
Commentaries	Help to establish reader-writer rapport through the text	We all know this/it affects us/dear reader

**Table 2**  
**Connotations of Textual Meta-discourse Markers**

Category	Characteristic	Examples
Local Markers	Express semantic relationships between discourse stretches	And / in addition / or / however / but / therefore / as a result / finally / to conclude
Sequences	Mark particular positions in a series	Firstly / secondly / on the one hand...on the other hand
Reminders	Refer back to previous sections in the text	As mentioned earlier / we now return to
Topicalisers	Indicate topic shift	In terms of HIV prevention/ with regards to politics

Code glosses	Explain, rephrase or exemplify textual material	This (as we know) / prevention: it is challenging / but vital / in other words / for example / for instance
Illocutionary markers	Explicitly name the act the writer performs	I propose / I intend to
Announcements	Refer forwards to future sections in the text	As will soon be explained

The evaluation of meta-discourse within research theses is a multidimensional endeavor with profound applications. This study highlights the following procedure. Hyland (2005) discussed that meta-discourse markers possessed the power to engaging readers by measuring the writer's intentions, aiding them in analyzing the text and maintaining their interest. A well-weaving meta-discourse analysis can enhance a deeper connection between the author's notions and the reader's understanding. This research paper explores an integral part of meta-discourse in research theses, analyzing the insights of Hyland (2010) and other researchers in the field of discourse analysis. It explores language dispositions by intellectually examining the presence and effectiveness of meta-discourse markers within a multi-faceted set of theses. This study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of how meta-discourse markers influence the understanding, sequence, and convincing power of communication in the domain of academic writing in different academic theses proposed by university candidates.

### Literature Review

Meta-discourse markers elaborate the communication by putting a sight on the devices like hedges, attitude markers, and boosters that are important to give the explicitly in the academic discourse. These devices serve to provide the connection between the audience and the author as well as the enhanced message packed in the received and delivered information.

In this regard, Hyland (2005) emphasizes the role of establishing the position of readers by using meta-discoursal makers in the text that help in expanding the meaning and organization of the text. Furthermore, these markers offer to use guidance in response to the audience through the text and meaning conveyed in proper communication with attitudinal resources. In the procedure of this paper researcher elaborated to propose a model to guide the readers by enhancing the text typologies and taxonomies in academic writing. Metadiscoursal markers are the factors in the text that give expressions on the text organization. This kind of approach in the proposed model gives discourse community by providing actual and linear meaning in the domain of gesture language.

Swales (1990) delineates the role of meta-discourse markers in academic writing to establish the credentials and credibility in engaging the discourse community. This proposed methodology by the researcher provides significance between various academic disciplines. These discourse markers reflect the messages in humans by enhancing the message, formal, and informal dispositions for tackling the text sequence. This kind of sequence can form cultural societies in fostering subjectivity and objectivity for the students to tackle the situation in native and non-native speakers.

Hyland (2001) found the dispositions in the categories of meta-discourse markers in humanities theses to use these linguistics devices in different academic writing. These various theses reflect the explicit markers and provide the need to foster transparency to focus the writer's voice in the text. All kinds of theses where the meta discoursal makers

are used to give impression usage and claims for conveying enhanced meanings. Non-native speakers need accurate fluency in using these markers because the focus of writers is conveyed in the whole world. This study supports the present study in providing a comparison between different theses for catering to the tables and sequences.

Biber and Finegan (1989) gave variation in the different departments such as natural sciences and social sciences theses by comparing meta-discourse markers. Moreover, this kind of comparison provides the delineation of cross-cultural disciplines for enhanced meanings and typologies. This study presented the contents and contexts in different meanings for scholarly communication. The communications through the voices can be functioned in different departments via discourse analysis. This discourse analysis sheds light on the methodologies and procedures to get the in-depth meaning from the taxonomies of the studies. The most important thing is to give the impression in language composition. The compositions can be clarified through perverseness and cohesion.

Mauranen (1993) evaluated the Finnish and English scientific communications in texts and explored that Finnish authors did not use fewer markers because of the non-native competency. As compared to Finnish Authors, English authors used more discourse markers in academic writing. According to this analysis, the formation of meta-discourse markers can be analyzed that different cultural and linguistic backgrounds are intensely involved in the formation of language making. That is why these kinds of comparisons can evaluate the dispositions for further differences and there is the need to take command of the aspects. These commands are required for non-native learners because their traditional method of learning English as well as accurately using the devices is the most perplexing but innovative work in academic writing. The present study is also a comparison in evaluating the stances to provide clarity, cohesion, and sequence in the thoughts of the students of the English department from Qurtuba University Pakistan.

Yang's (2010) research paved the way to support the present study in academic writing by giving the aspects of meta-discoursal markers. This study observed the parameters of the genre of theses of Master students. In this instance, the observation was embarked on the journey to explore the linguistics devices in the different sections of the thesis. The study found that the categories of meta-discoursal markers are more frequent in the section of literature reviews because it is the portion where a researcher needs to obtain maximum insight and in-depth meaning covered in the author's voice. On the other hand, the discussion section may also cover the emphasis on the contribution of meta-discoursal markers.

Yazdani (2017) tends to explore the differences and functions in the usage of meta-discoursal markers between the areas of Persian and English online headings. This research sheds light on the variations used in the writings. This kind of writing in communication expounds on the nature of native and non-native use of meta-discourse markers. This type of difference is very compulsory to know in the previous research. Because the dispositions of language according to culture and the author's thoughts on any piece of writing are related to the concerned departments. This study has shown that the Persian field's use of meta-discoursal markers in academic writing is more frequent than in English writers. Moreover, this study supports the present study in the notions to get the content specified with reader and writer employment.

Ho (2016) analyzed how the Hong Kong government used meta-discourse markers to convince individuals to acknowledge schooling plans by collecting 12 records connected with the public authority. The review embraced Hyland's (2005) model of meta-discourse and utilized the Harmony capability of Scribe 6.0 to break down the corpus for the

utilization of meta-discourse markers. The outcomes show that the public authority utilized meta-discourse to engage logos, ethos, and emotion to convince Hong Kong individuals to acknowledge the drives. The investigation discovered that there was a distinction in the recurrence of the purpose of interactional and intelligent meta-discourse markers and that "the noticed contrasts in the recurrence of the purpose of meta-discourse can be an impression of the essayists' evaluation of the need to convince their readers to concur with or acknowledge their perspectives or ideas" (p. 10).

## **Material and Methods**

This research is both qualitative and quantitative. The mixed-method approach is used to maintain the reliability and validity of this research. For the exploration of language patterns, the quantitative approach cannot alone give the essence of evaluation. Therefore, the use of discourse institution of qualitative approach was also compulsory to highlight the hidden motives of academic texts written by researchers. Antconc is a seven-instrument program that permits a researcher to inspect the results of KWIC (keyword in context). This program is utilized to gather the frequencies of certain designated information. Moreover, it assists with examining the text electronically as far as finding the language designs through conscious recurrence rank. The present study intends to investigate the disciplinary contrasts used in genre structures and meta-discourse components by Pakistani Qurtuba University researchers of English department students. As it is important to distinguish a few strategies with the end goal of text-based and meta-discourse evaluation, involving countless techniques for text-based investigation of entire theses is compulsory. The structure requires looking at every stance of the thesis writing composed at which the language works.

This study centers around a bigger part of the area of linguistics by holding the linguistics hypothesis to investigate and assess the metadiscoursal markers in the university theses. The primary reason for this exploration is to find out the discourse markers to make a distinctive comprehension to readers of social and cultural comparison experienced by MPhil students at the University. Along these lines, the Evaluation hypothesis can best explain the assessing examples of any text. The structure of the evaluation hypothesis helps in this exploration to recognize, elaborate, and, lexical decisions by understanding the covered-up discourses used by the students in their studies. This study explores the functioning dispositions of the linguistics devices that contain the 20 different theses in the form of 20 different cognitive capabilities. This research completes the elaboration and metadiscoursal markers to attend to the demeanor of the text furthermore, the social hypothesis of this present study.

Being a member of the Department of English Qurtuba University DIK Pakistan, the researcher herself is part of the research study. The sample for experimentation is selected from the students of the same department being taught by the professors. The non-native Pakistani 20 M. Phil students of the English department (Literature & Linguistics) are selected as the sample of the study. The same level of study is treated as a controlled group for the present study.

As far as the ethical requirements of the research are concerned, all the participants were asked to give their consent to the researcher to use their uploaded material as the required data for corpus compilation to be used for the research study. A consent form was prepared in which the participants were familiarized with the research aims and data collection procedures. The data collected for the present study was comprised of the data obtained from the research theses administered to the selected sample of the study. After concluding the categories order of the meta-discourse markers, the next stage of

investigation is to look at the distinction between the markers utilized by different students of the university in their theses.

## Results and Discussion

Keeping in view the present study, this study has planned meta-discourse markers that have been organized into two classes: one was Textual classification and the second was Interpersonal class. For every classification, the arrangements of Meta-discourse markers have been arranged by utilizing two sources i.e., first and foremost, the elements of textual and interpersonal meta-discourse markers have been taken from textinspector.com and second from Hyland's book as well. Because of the diverse nature of markers, a limited and frequent list has been generated to be analyzed from the theses. After refining the list of meta-discourse markers, the two lists of textual meta-discourse and interpersonal meta-discourse have been generated.

**Table 3**  
**Frequency distribution of Meta-discourse markers**

<b>Text Type</b>	20 Academic Theses
<b>Chosen Extracts</b>	Abstracts and Conclusions
<b>Word Type</b>	21747
<b>Word Tokens</b>	22053
<b>Total Meta-discourse markers</b>	1752

The result of the quantitative-based question is presented in Table 3 which shows the meta-discourse resources in the form of statistical measurement. The total frequency of the meta-discourse category found in text is the number 1752. Text type in the genre has been selected in the form of theses by choosing the abstracts and conclusions. For the data collection, the text was divided into the total word type, token, and word length. Therefore, the results obtained in Table 3 elucidated the nature of text in terms of the meta-discourse category to explore the evaluative stance in the form number and distribution. This kind of evaluation sheds light on the clear distribution and clarifies the nature of refined research.

**Table 4**  
**Frequency and percentage distribution of two categories**

<b>Two categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Textual MM	1334	76.1
Interpersonal MM	418	23.8

Table 4 presents the total frequencies and percentages of two categories of meta-discoursal category. The result obtained from this tabulation has given the total share of the meta-discourse subsystem in the text. So, the share of the Textual meta-discourse category with the respective distribution of 1334 and a percentage of 76.1 occupied most of the text as compared to the Interpersonal meta-discourse category with percentages. Further, the results showed that the frequency of occupied after the portion. The share of subsystem textual meta-discourse in the results occupied the major portion with the number. Consequently, the results show that most of the text is determined by the postulations of meta-discoursal subcategories. The results of the second research question were composed in a different section. Different sections were demonstrated in the form of tables to represent the frequencies of each meta-discoursal type and sub-type. The different subtypes were associated with different semantical choices. Because of the broad spectrum of meta-discoursal theory, all the types and sub-types cannot be elucidated. Therefore, the targeted evaluative resources are composed of different attributes of discourse resources. The different attributes are accompanied by the three types and subtypes in the system.

Those attributes were examined with different semantic targeted choices in frequencies and percentages. Such arrangement might give the disposition that genre approaches centre around either semantic or contextually relevant components. Nonetheless, as indicated by Flowerdew (2002), it doesn't imply that linguistics approaches are relevant components and nonlinguistic methodologies are not relevant to contextual things. That's what the fact is "The linguistics methodology looks to the situational setting to decipher the linguistics and discourse structures, while the frequencies and percentages of devices might focus on the message to decipher the situational setting" (Flowerdew, 2002). To answer the second research question the results were obtained in the following tables below.

**Table 5**  
**Distribution of Textual Meta-discourse Markers**

<b>Textual Meta-discourse</b>	<b>Specifications of Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Logical Connectives</b>	(Lexical relation) And/but/therefore/similarly/ Equally/furthermore	1,124	84.2
<b>Frame Markers</b>	(discourse shifts) So far/to conclude/overall/	28	2.09
<b>Endophoric Markers</b>	(information of above category) See/ discussed below/ discussed above/noted/later	56	4.19
<b>Code Glosses</b>	(help to enhance the meanings) Such as/known as/defined as/in other words	17	1.27
<b>Evidentials</b>	(source of information) According to/established/points to/believe/show	109	8.17

Table 5 describes the results function the purpose and dispositions elaborated in the 20 different theses. From the final results, it is clear that logical connectives (and, but, therefore) are being used more by non-native speakers of the English language. The reason behind this is that students don't have the training to use and link their thoughts through proper channels. After logical connectives, Evidentials (according to, said, suggest, believe) are being used more in the category of TMM. Apart from these two categories highlight the notions of meta-discourse markers used by the students of the English department from Qurtuba University Pakistan.

Since the communicative intention is viewed as a particular component of the research, genre analysis in the form of different theses investigations starts with the total linguistics categories to attain a better understanding. Then comes the investigation and translation of the primary and linguistic elements serving the accomplishment of this informative reason. Such an analysis is typically taken in an action-step design, first presented by Swales (1981, 1990). A move analysis can essentially be characterized as a piece of a message that can be partitioned into steps like all the TMM categories are presented in frequencies and percentages. By accomplishing a specific informative capability, each move adds to the general reason for the classification and gives reasonable meaning.

"Choices about the arrangement of the classifications are made based on linguistics proof, appreciation of the text, and comprehension of the assumptions that both the overall research analysis and the specific discourse analysis. The identification of the meta-

discourse analysis markers and steps can be availed by the examination of lexical-syntactic elements with which those moves and steps are related.

**Table 6**  
**Distribution of Interpersonal Meta-discourse Markers**

Interpersonal Meta-discourse Markers	Specification of Categories	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Hedges</b>	(writer's full determination toward statements) Almost/apparently/assume/ Maybe/essentially	42	10.0
<b>Emphatic Markers</b>	(Emphasize on message) Always/actually/in fact/ Obvious/must/indeed	38	9.0
<b>Attitude Markers</b>	(express propositional attitude) Admittedly/interestingly/I agree/have to	42	10.0
<b>Relational Markers</b>	(express relationship with the reader) Determine/let/consider/ Imagine	14	3.3
<b>Person Markers</b>	(relationship with the reader) We/me/I/our/she/he	282	67.4

Table 6 indicates the value of interpersonal meta-discourse in the evaluation of theses. These markers are potentially used in the material of researchers who utilized the form to connect the text's relation with the reader. In the present study, this table shows how the researchers in their theses used different categories with limited specifications because all the analysis sheds light on the exploration that Textual meta-discourse markers are more frequent than Interpersonal meta-discourse markers. This study represents the mental schemas of different researchers who utilized these linguistic markers in their studies. This kind of corpus-based frequency and percentage evaluation expresses the value of text and content. The mental schemas are represented in the way that M. Phil students of Qurtuba University utilized more frequently the Person markers in their research which shows that they take an instance to elaborate the notion through the characters of the genres (novel, newspaper, essays, poems). As discussed above because of the broad spectrum of meta-discoursal markers not every bit of category can be discussed. The targeted composition terms were not evaluated in the text because it was not necessary to assess for it is associated with the assessment of objects.

## Discussion

The section of the introduction explores research theses that make a piece of indispensable information and illuminate the readers and persuade them about the value of their item. The blend of meta-discourse markers as linguistics devices uncovered how disciplinary and cross-culture have controlled the options of these researchers. One might say that every move of the basic segments found in current research deliberately settled how it has been focused on by various disciplinary 20 different theses standards. The presentation areas of exploration propositions of different fields start fully on portraying that the research domain in the present study is critical, intriguing, and important for the exploration and hypotheses for the significance of the present study. Apart from that, this study recommends that different authoritative examples be utilized by the researcher to find out the linguistics resources. It could be suggested that this study aims to show



different elements like the discourse area utilizing the kind and disciplines/resources in which the classifications have delicate disciplines.

Given the recently referenced classification, it is found that the students utilized a few textual and Interpersonal markers in their composition. To reach its core, it is important to discuss the different classifications of meta-discourse markers found in this study based on the extraction of 20 theses. That extraction would be in the form of sentences to show the distinctive features of meta-discourse resources. Presently, the move is to look at the meta-discourse markers. There are two sorts which have turned in the light of this research, specifically textual and interpersonal meta-discourse.

### **Conclusion**

The present study reports the finding and their implications of metadiscoursal markers utilized in theses. This exploration of meta-discourse markers in theses comes with constraints that must not be overlooked. The study had an English-centered approach, and further research can expand this focus to investigate markers in other languages. Furthermore, the comprehensive analysis may not fully embody the advances in academic writing practices that have unfolded over the years. By delving into the intricate world of meta-discourse markers within abstracts and conclusions of theses, this study provides valuable insights for scholars, educators, and practitioners striving to enhance their comprehension of effective academic communication. This exploration bridges the gap between quantitative and qualitative analyses while also taking into account disciplinary nuances, resulting in a foundational investigation. As a result, our journey into meta-discourse markers within theses has uncovered not only their prevalence but also their dynamic role in shaping scholarly discourse.

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