

# A study of Interactional Metadiscourse Features in Texts Written by Undergraduate students at the University of Botswana.

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## Abstract

In recent years there has been an increased emphasis on the interpersonal function of metadiscourse features in academic texts. This means that research on writing in academic contexts began to focus on the rhetorical features, such as interactional metadiscourse, that writers use to present their voice in writing. These developments in academic writing have also considered the socio-cultural context in which specific genres are produced. Using a multiple-methods approach to genre analysis, this article compares students' use of interactional metadiscourse features to present voice in two undergraduate courses, Media Studies and Primary Education at the University of Botswana. A total of 40 student essays were analysed. Interviews with students and lecturers in the two departments were also done to understand the socio-cultural context in which the essays were produced. The comparison of interactional metadiscourse features in the two corpora indicated that interactional metadiscourse markers were present, but that there were variations in the use and distribution of these features by the learners. Contextual information shows that such variations reflect the different values and beliefs about academic writing of the discourse communities that students belong to. These values and beliefs can be problematic for EAP tutors who have to prepare students for writing in the various disciplines in L2 contexts.

Keywords: Voice, Metadiscourse, Academic Writing, English for Academic Purposes.

## 1.0 Introduction

Over the last decade there has been a shift in the way academic writing is perceived based on the view that writing is a social and communicative engagement between the writer and the reader and that writing is not entirely voiceless and impersonal. As a result of this social view of academic discourse, there has been an increasing interest in the study of metadiscourse as a tool which can be used to explore the interactive nature of texts. Work in this area has examined the interpersonal dimension of academic writing especially the use of personal pronouns in writing (Kuo 1999, Sheldon 2009, Tang and John 1999, Lafuente Millan 2010,) and other interactional features in academic writing like hedges and attitude markers (Hyland 1998, 2005b, Luzon 2009; Mur Duenas 2010).

Because metadiscourse has received significant attention as an important rhetorical feature of academic writing which can affect the communicative ability of the writer, this study aimed

at extending research in the use of interactional metadiscourse features and how students use these features to present a textual voice. Hyland (2005) argues that awareness of metadiscourse features can be advantageous to students because it provides them with resources that they can use to express a stance towards their propositional information. It also provides students with devices that can be used to construct a dialogue with the readers. This can help students to effectively engage in a dialog with their audience and therefore make essay writing more interactional.

Accordingly, this article presents a corpus based study of the use of interactional metadiscourse features by students in two different departments, Media Studies and primary Education, at the University of Botswana. A comparison of students' writing in the two disciplines will be done in order to see how each group used interactional resources in their writing. . The study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Are there any differences in the use of interactional metadiscourse features between the writing produced by Media Studies and Primary Education undergraduate writers?
2. Are there any patterns about where in the text interactional metadiscourse features occur more frequently? For instance, can we find evidence that certain features are more frequent either in the introduction, body or conclusion of the essay and does this vary by corpus.
3. What factors influenced the choice of interactional metadiscourse features by the students in both Media Studies and Primary Education.

### **1.1 Developing a model of analysis:**

The analytical framework for the study of interactional metadiscourse has been shaped by different typologies. This paper uses Tang and John's (1999) taxonomy of first person pronouns which suggest that the degree of author explicitness in the text depends on the role that the writer has adopted. It has also been shaped by a taxonomy proposed by Hyland (2005) for the analysis of interactional metadiscourse features.

Hyland (2005a) developed a framework for analyzing interactions in written texts. The framework is a metadiscourse model which builds on earlier models of metadiscourse particularly Thompson and Thetela's model (1995) and Vande Kopple (1985). Hyland (2005:37a) defines metadiscourse as a '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'. This definition

harmonizes well with Ivanič and Camps' (2001) definition of voice as the 'expression of the writer's own views', as it views the writer as having a point of view. The definition also recognizes writing as a social activity where there is interaction between the writer and the reader.

Hyland's framework tends to draw insights from the systemic functional description of language which sees language use as performing three macro-functions (Vande Kopple 1985; Hyland 2005a). Halliday (1994) calls these the ideational, interpersonal and textual functions. The ideational function is concerned with the 'propositional content'; the textual function is concerned with how language is used to organize the text and the interpersonal function is concerned with "use of language to encode interaction, allowing us to engage with others, to take on roles and to express and understand evaluation and feelings" (Hyland 2005:26a).

Hyland's framework consists of two dimensions of interaction; the interactive and the interactional dimensions. The interactive resources help the writer to organize propositional content to make it coherent. These features are transition markers, frame markers, endophoric markers, code glosses and evidential. Interactional resources allow the writer's expression of a textual 'voice'. These resources are self-mention, hedges, boosters, attitude markers and engagement markers. The interactional resources involve the reader in the argument and indicate the writer's perspective towards the propositional content (Hyland 2004). Hyland develops Halliday's idea of tenor in that he relates it to the notion of writer voice and writer positioning. Hyland points out that interactional resources relate to the 'tenor of the discourse, concerned with controlling the level of personality in a text' (Hyland 2004:168).

Self-mention 'refers to the degree of explicit author presence in the text' (Hyland 2005:53a). This can be realized by the use of first person pronouns and the possessive adjectives 'I, me, my, our, mine and us'. Other features that can be used to 'self-mention' are 'the author, the writer, the author's and the writer's'. Hedges are resources that writers use 'to recognize alternative voices and viewpoints and so withhold commitment to the proposition' (Hyland 2005:52a). According to Hyland hedges allow the writer to present information as an opinion or a plausible reasoning rather than a fact. Examples of hedges are 'in my view, in my opinion, likely, and tend'. Other resources available are boosters. Unlike hedges boosters help writers to express with certainty what they have to say. Examples are 'indeed, certainly and defiantly'. Engagement markers are used by writers to explicitly address the readers and engage them in the dialogue. This can be done by the use of inclusive 'we, our, and us', and reader pronouns 'you and your', and the question mark. Hyland (2005: 365b) points out that 'the most obvious indication of a writer's dialogic awareness occurs when he or she overtly refers to readers, asking questions, making suggestions and addressing them directly'. The last interactional resources are attitude markers. Hyland (2005:53a) points out that they

‘indicate the writer’s affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to proposition’. Examples are unfortunately, interestingly and fortunately.

Although Hyland’s model was useful for coding purposes, there were limitations to this model which must be highlighted, hence the model needed to be modified to suit the type of academic writing and the context of this study.

Metadiscourse is a functional category and can be realized in a variety of linguistic features (Adel 2006). Some features are sometimes used to perform different functions and as such there are inevitable overlaps which make the categorization of metadiscourse challenging (see section 4.3.1.1 for examples). Hyland (2005) also points out that metadiscourse items may play different functions in different texts or can at times be used to perform two functions at the same time. Although Hyland’s model provides a useful starting point for the analysis of interactional metadiscourse features by providing a list of items that can potential function as metadiscourse features, this multifunctionality of metadiscourse features means that “metadiscourse cannot be regarded as a strictly linguistic phenomenon at all , but must be seen as a rhetorical and pragmatic one” (Adel 200: 27).

Hyland (2005:58) makes it clear that “no taxonomy or description will ever be able to do more than partially represent a fuzzy reality”. This is because the taxonomies provide explicit surface features which can be identified in a text. What a classification like this can do is to “only approximate the complexity of natural language use” (Hyland 2005:59). This means that in the identification and classification of metadiscourse items we cannot rely only on overt surface features but equally importantly we can also draw on multiple factors which might help us capture the writer’s intentions. We cannot regard textual features as ends in themselves.

Therefore for the identification of potential features that perform a metadiscoursal function, sometimes I had to move beyond looking at the explicit textual features to work with the textual context in order to justify that a particular feature performs a particular metadiscoursal function other than the one specified in the taxonomy. The identification and labelling of metadiscourse features was based on the co-textual effects or impression the writer creates as

he/she writes. Adel (2006:25) emphasizes the importance of context in labelling items by pointing out that “although some forms are basically inherently metalinguistic, we still cannot classify a linguistic form as metadiscourse without taking the context of each particular instance into consideration”.

## **The study**

### **2: Context**

The study was undertaken in two departments at the University of Botswana, the Department of Media Studies which is in the Faculty of Humanities, the Department of Primary Education which is in the Faculty of Education. The Department of Media Studies offers the Bachelor in Media Studies Degree (BMS). The program introduces students to the world of electronic and print journalism. It opens career opportunities in journalism, both print and electronic as well as script writing, advertising and public relations. The Department of Primary Education runs in-service programmes for teachers who have been in the field for some time and who have had training up to Diploma level. The department offers a Bachelor’s Degree in Education (Bed Primary). It also offers a Bachelor of Educational Management programme for improving educational management. The students in both departments were in their third year of study.

### **3: Methodology**

The methodology used in this study is both linguistic and contextual and is influenced by genre analysis from ESP, SFL and some aspects of New Rhetoric tradition with emphasis on the socio-cultural and institutional contexts in which the genre is produced. The study relied on textual analysis of use of interactional metadiscourse features using Hyland’s model (2005) and Tang and John’s (1999) taxonomy of possible identities behind first person pronouns in academic writing. The contextual data in the form of interviews was used to help in the interpretation of the corpus data and in order to understand the socio-cultural context in which the essays were produced. Studying the academic essay in this way provides useful insights into the norms, epistemologies, values and beliefs of the disciplines under study.

#### **3.1 Collection of texts and interview data**

The study reported here was part of a broader study that examined several aspects of EAP writing. Students who consented to participate provided handwritten copies of their course assignment (see appendix 1 for essay prompts). These were transcribed and saved in text format. The texts used in this study were not written for research purposes but were genuine and natural texts that were written by students as part of their assessment.

Interviews were conducted with 14 students and tutors in the two departments. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed using Nvivo 7.

The table below gives a summary of the texts used and the size of each corpus.

**Table 1 showing the data used and size of the corpora.**

		<b>Corpus Size in words</b>	<b>Number of texts</b>
<b>L2 undergraduate writing</b>	Media Studies Texts	33 825	20
	Primary Education Texts	36 572	20

### **3. Analysis of the data**

I read the essays several times and for each possible instance of interactional metadiscourse feature I had to make qualitative decisions to label it as an interactional metadiscourse feature. Frequency analysis of these linguistics items was conducted by manual counting. In a small number of cases where features performed more than one metadiscourse function, both functions were counted, reflecting the analytical procedure used by Intraraprawat and Steffesen (1995) in metadiscourse analysis.

In order to validate the results that I got from the initial analysis of metadiscourse features, I used the program Wordsmith Tools 5 (Scott 2008) to analyze the essays. Using the Concord tool, I did a reverse check, where I started with a list of features I identified in the initial analysis, Hyland's (2005a) published list of interactional metadiscourse items investigated in his study, Mur Duenas (2010) list of attitude markers as a starting point for this analysis. Once I had identified features that were considered interactional metadiscourse features, the corresponding features were searched for using the Wordsmith Tools 5 Concord tool. The

concordance provides a list of all occurrences of the search words in a corpus together with the context in which they occur.

The results from the Wordsmith programme provide statistical information such as how many instances a particular feature appears in the whole corpus (raw frequency) and the frequency of use of each feature per 1000 words (mean). To determine whether the differences in use of interactional metadiscourse features by the different groups were statistically significant; t-tests were done to compare the means of the different features.

## **4. Results and discussion**

### **4.1 Comparison of use of interactional metadiscourse features by Media Studies and Primary Education students**

The quantitative results presented here sought to answer the first two research questions. The table below gives a summary of the results for the two corpora being compared here. The results reveal observable differences across the two corpora. As the table below indicates, students in both disciplines used all categories of interactional metadiscourse features but used them sparingly (see appendix 2 for the list of interactional features identified in this corpus).

A comparison of the two corpora shows a higher incidence of occurrences of interactional metadiscourse features in Media Studies essays compared to Primary Education essays. For instance the results indicate that Media Studies students used slightly more self-mention than Primary Education students. A similar pattern emerges with the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers and engagement markers, with Media Studies students using notably more interactional metadiscourse features than Primary Education students. However, the t-tests for independent samples results showed no significant differences in the use of these features in the two corpora.

#### **Table 2 Frequency distribution of interactional metadiscourse features for Media Studies and Primary Education writing per 1000 words**

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	Self mention		Hedges		Boosters		Attitude markers		Engagement markers	
	n	f/1000	n	f/1000	n	f/1000	n	f/1000	n	f/1000
<b>Primary Education</b>	29	0.78	32	0.86	16	0.45	2	0.06	9	0.24
<b>Media Studies</b>	40	1.18	49	1.45	36	1.33	9	0.27	14	0.42

## 4.2 Use of self-mention

A look at usage of self-mention in both Media Studies and Primary Education essays shows that students do use first person pronouns though in small numbers. The first person pronoun I was the most common author reference in Media Studies essays, with 39 instances of the use of this pronoun and only 1 instance where the writer used another form of self-mention.

The use of self-mention by Media students was prevalent in the introductory section of the essays and students used the first person pronoun more frequently in conjunction with the least powerful functions of ‘I as the guide of the essay’ and ‘I as the architect of the essay’, where students showed the structure of the essay or indicated commitment to the proposition. Below is a typical example,

1. I will focus on discussing women as a social group, paying particular attention on how they are or have been represented in media (BMS 302-3).

I found 14 essays where students were not present as agents of their writing in Media Studies essays. This strategy was used more frequently in the introduction to signpost or to provide an overall structure of the essay. The extracts below exemplify this use;

2. Secondly this essay will discuss whether or not it is possible to receive unbiased news due to ownership of various media. Thirdly, this paper will touch on how globalization of mass media affects the average citizen (BMS 302-11).

3. The argument first gives a brief analysis of functions of art in an African society. It will then explore ways in which the artistic value is diminished or enhanced if used for purposes other than the intended function (BMS 410-11).

The table indicates 29 instances of use of self-mention in the Primary Education corpus. Although students explicitly used the first person pronoun “I”, they also tended to use other

forms of self-mention such as the writer, and the researcher. This seemed to be a common feature of this corpus. The extracts below show examples of how the students used these in their essays;

4. By the above citation the researcher believes that if pupils are aware of the above description of a good citizen...(EPS 200-3).
5. The writer (of the essay) was convinced that the national principles played an important role in this regard (EPS 200-1)

The other form of self-mention which was used in this corpus was the use of the first person plural we which was used to exclude the readers from the text. There were 3 instances of the use of the exclusive pronoun we in this corpus and these came from the same essay. Extract 6 below comes from the introductory paragraph.

6. In this argument we shall indicate how the environmental challenges caused by these activities... (EPI 442-13).

It is interesting that the use of other forms of author reference phrases the writer, the author or the researcher and the exclusive we occurred in Primary Education essays while essays for Media Studies explicitly used the first person pronoun 'I' as author reference. As Adel (2006:86) observed, "this strategy is probably used to increase the objectivity and 'detachment' of the writer of the text" Adel (ibid) also suggests that "one reason for writers to refer to themselves in the third person is that it gives a formal impression" (p.86).

The use of first person pronouns in the argument stage of the essays was comparatively low in both corpora. Students used the first person pronoun to guide the reader through the text where they made a claim and supported it with evidence, or introduce a countermove, or refer to a proposition made earlier. An example is provided below,

7. I believe "othering" is the reason for conflict in the world (BMS 401-1).

The findings about the use of first person pronouns is in congruent with what Hyland (2002b) and Tang and John (1999) found that many second language writers seem uncomfortable with using first person pronouns and when they used them they downplayed their authorial identity to the least powerful functions, like guiding the readers through their writing. Hyland's (2002b) and Tang and John's (1999) observations were that L2 students in

their study used the first person pronouns mainly in “non-controversial contributions, such as stating discourse goals ...” (Martinez 2005: 175).

Tang and John (1999) also argue that students can be intimidated by using the first person pronoun to originate ideas and opinions because it would appear that they are ‘aligning themselves with textbook writers and lecturers in terms of their right to be ‘authors’... students feel insecure about the validity of their claims, seeing themselves to be at the lowest rungs of the academic ladder’ (Tang and John 1999:S34). This also tends to support a previous study done by Read et al. (2001) that students lack the confidence to present their voice ‘as they feel they are not able to challenge the opinions of ‘established’ academics’ (p.394).

### **4.3 Use of engagement markers**

Both Media and Primary Education Students used engagement markers sparingly in their essays. The use of the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ and rhetorical questions was common. Students’ use of these features indicated that they were aware of the need to engage in some sort of dialog with their readers. Inclusive pronouns ‘help the writer construct dialogism between themselves and the audience by establishing the presence of the readership in the text, and making the discourse reciprocal’ (Harwood 2005: 347). The rhetorical questions also add a dialogic element to students’ writing. Below is an example,

8. The museum has an influential role to play in the society. How does it use the components of various ethnic groups to define the national heritage? This has to be done by making sure that various ethnic groups are represented (BMS 401-11).

The writers anticipated the reactions of the readers and they continued to address them. The use of rhetorical questions was common in the argument stage of the essays.

In the two examples below the writers draw the reader into the text by using the inclusive pronoun ‘we’ so that the reader may be persuaded to see the writer’s viewpoint.

9. First, we must look at the definition in context (BMS 302-12).

10. In a nutshell, we can conclude that women in the media are in a stereotypical, often sexist and usually impossible way (BMS302-3).

#### **4.4 Use of Hedges, Boosters and attitude markers**

The use of hedges was common in the argument stage in both corpora where students hedged their claims. The example below typifies this.

7. Due to these perceptions of viewing certain foreigners' traditions as ungood or weird, Batswana tend to distance themselves from them (BMS 401-10).

Media Studies students tended to use more hedges than Primary Education students.

I counted 16 instances of boosters in Primary education corpus and 36 instances in Media Studies corpus and these appeared in the argument and conclusion stages of the essays and students tended to use these to express certainty, show conviction and belief about a certain point they were making.

Attitude markers were very uncommon in these corpora with only 2 instances of use of attitude markers in Primary Education corpus and 9 instances in the Media studies corpus.

#### **4.5 Perspectives from the lecturers and students**

The third research question sought to find out what factors influenced the choices students made in use of interactional metadiscourse features, particularly in the use of personal pronouns or self-mention. The interview data proved useful in highlighting the values, practices as well as tutor beliefs about students' writing and academic conventions. The interview discussion centered on the use of personal pronouns as this is an important feature associated with establishing a strong authorial presence (Clark and Ivanić 1997).

Some Media Studies lecturers emphasised the need for the writer to interact with the readers as something they would value in writing. Informants were concerned that some students were very distant from their writing. One interviewee gave this illustration to emphasise how a writer can interact with the reader,

'This essay is about this and when writing this essay I will do this and that...'

He argues that this would help the writers to launch the readers into their writing. He also pointed out that he wants his students 'to associate with their work' and not say 'the researcher' or the 'writer'. One informant further mentioned that he values an essay that has 'character'. He said that this is where 'the writer not simply narrates incidents from a distance but is walking with the reader so that the reader can see the writer in the text'.

Primary Education interviewees held different views about the use of personal pronouns in students' writing. For instance, one participant commented that 'somewhere we had a debate on that issue and some people were saying there is nothing wrong with using first person. That was within this department. People hold different views'. He however does not discourage students from using first person pronouns because they have to state what they feel in the first person if it is a question that requires them to state their point of view.

This was similarly the case with participants from Department of Media Studies. One participant pointed out that '...there is some variety within the department. We have had debates within the department and there are some people who feel very strongly that the 'I' should be removed... I don't feel that'.

Informants' responses suggested largely that the use of the first person pronoun "I" was unacceptable in academic writing. Responses like, 'that it is not academic', 'it is not allowed', and 'it is not professional' were common. One participant argued that ,

'...yes they have personal opinions on some of those things but really at the level where we are now, they cannot say those things with authority. I have always encouraged them to say, 'one would'...'

He says writing this way takes the "blunt personal thing out" and therefore is acceptable in academic writing. One informant also suggested that instead of writing 'I believe media in Botswana is very racist', she would prefer that the students write "media in Botswana seems to be portraying this as...". She raised an interesting by drawing on her own experiences of academic writing. She argued that 'it is the kind of thing I do for my academic papers, where there is some level of detachment...'

This view was also reported by students in the interviews. One of the students from the Department of Primary Education said this, 'but when it's a general essay I don't have to use 'I think that...' I can say 'one may think that...' . Another informant also from the same department commented that 'you will talk about 'the researcher did this...' We don't use the

'I'. Students were quite rigid about this view in their responses and were adamant that it was an appropriate practice of essay writing.

Hyland (2002: 1095b), commenting on this argument expresses concern that 'conventions of identity are notoriously uncertain. On the one hand impersonality is seen as a defining feature of expository writing... and many textbooks and style guides advise students to avoid personal intervention... However other textbooks encourage writers to make their own voice clear through the first person.' This indicates no clear direction on whether students should use or not use first person pronouns. Students are largely dependent on their tutors for advice but there is seemingly conflicting advice given by tutors on the use of the pronouns. As a result this compounds the problem of use of self-mention by student writers.

## **5 Summary of results and Pedagogical Implications**

This study investigated the use of interactional metadiscourse features in the two corpora. The study has revealed how the two groups of students differ both in their use of interactional metadiscourse features. The textual analysis did not only reveal how students used these resources in their writing but equally importantly revealed variations in use in two disciplines at the same university. Thus this research contributes to writing researchers' understanding of the range of interactional metadiscourse features utilized by University of Botswana undergraduate writers in two different disciplines in constructing textual voice.

Overall the quantitative analysis of interactional metadiscourse features of Media Studies and Primary Education students' writing examined in this study indicates that students do use metadiscourse in their writing to interact with their audience and engage them in a dialogue. The results contribute to support the view that interactional metadiscourse is a universal feature of academic writing (Crismore et al. 1993) and that academic writing is not completely impersonal (Hyland 2002b). Furthermore the research has indicated that students' awareness to interact with their audience can be overridden by disciplinary conventions, beliefs and values about academic writing as seen from the interviews with the experts' informants .

The results of this study suggest pedagogical implications for the teaching of the preparatory EAP writing course at the University of Botswana. The analysis has helped to illuminate our understanding of how students use interactional metadiscourse features in their writing, and what influences their choices. The findings can inform the design of the EAP writing course so that we incorporate the teaching of this in our EAP courses. Issues of audience, interaction and understanding the dialogic nature of academic writing, and presentation of voice in writing can be included in the EAP writing course. We notice that students used a limited

range of linguistic resources to position themselves, to interact with the readers and to present their voice in writing. Students could therefore benefit more from explicit teaching about the different categories and functions of interactional metadiscourse features available.

For instance, depending on the rhetorical situation, students could decide whether to use interactional resources available to them to make explicit their perspective towards propositional information. Students could be made aware that the presentation of author voice is marked by linguistic features such as hedges, boosters, engagement markers, attitude markers, and self-mention. Students could be made aware of the discourse functions of the first person pronoun and how students could use the first pronoun 'I' (and at what point in the text) to make themselves visible as well as assert themselves into the text. Students could be made aware that texts are crafted out of other texts and that writers need to reflect both their voice and voices of those they have borrowed from and they need to be made aware of resources available to them to do so.

Interactional metadiscourse has been recognized to be an important feature of academic writing. Camiciottoli (2003:29) point out that "metadiscourse allows written texts to take on some features of spoken language (e.g. personal pronouns to establish an 'I-you' relationship) and thus become more 'reader friendly'". Hyland (2005:178a) outlines some possible contributions that metadiscourse can make to a text. Some of these are;

- i. It provides a context in which to place propositional information.
- ii. It injects a human presence into a written text and so makes students more attentive and engaged with a text.
- iii. It increases the persuasiveness of a text.
- iv. It highlights writer uncertainties and makes readers aware of the subjective interpretation of truth.
- v. It helps show the author's position on the propositional information in a text.
- vi. It shows readers that the writer recognizes their needs and is seeking to engage them in a dialogue.

Although this study does not focus on the relationship between the use of interactional metadiscourse and the quality of writing, other research seem to suggest that it can be an important feature of good ESL and L1 writing (Intraprawat and Steffensen 1995). In their study, Intraprawat and Steffensen analyzed the use of metadiscourse in L2 persuasive essays written by English as second language university students. Half of the essays had received good ratings and the other half had received poor ratings. The good essays showed greater

variety in the use of metadiscourse and more metadiscourse than poor essays. Good essays had a higher percentage of interpersonal metadiscourse whereas poor essays had a higher percentage of interactive metadiscourse features. They concluded that ‘metadiscourse is a facet of written text that varies with overall quality of the essays. Better essays include a wider range of forms and more of them’ (Intraprawat and Steffensen 1995: 268).

Abdi (2002) argues that the use of interpersonal metadiscourse is an indicator of the attempt made by the writer to reach their audience. He argues that ‘the more interpersonal the nature of the metadiscourse markers used in a text, the more the writer of the text intends to achieve these goals’ (Abdi 2000:142).

From my experiences of the teaching of the writing module in the EAP course at the University of Botswana, a lot of attention and emphasis in the teaching of essay writing skills is usually on the interactive metadiscourse features that help writers to organize propositional information such as transition markers. Metadiscourse features which have an interpersonal function are rarely taught in the EAP course. Thompson suggests that the reason for this bias in teaching could be that ‘interactional signals are typically less frequent and less overt in academic text’ (2001: 73).

Although lecturers from the two departments held different views particularly about the use of personal pronouns, this study proposes the inclusion of interactional dimension into the EAP writing course as students may benefit from their teaching. It is important to complement the teaching of interactive metadiscourse features with the teaching of interactional metadiscourse features and awareness of audience in writing. In the light of the results found I would like to argue that ‘issues regarding how much metadiscourse or writer/reader visibility to employ in writing are far from self-evident, but need more explicit attention in the ESL classroom’ (Adel 2006:200).

Hyland (2005a) argues that awareness of metadiscourse features can be advantageous to students because it provides them with resources that they can use to express a stance towards their propositional information. It also provides students with devices that can be used to construct a dialogue with the readers. This can help students to effectively engage in a dialog with their audience and therefore make essay writing more interactional.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Assignment questions for Media Studies and Primary Education

#### 1. Media Studies Department:

##### Course: BMS 302- Gender, Sex and Ethnicity in Media.

- a) Discuss the media treatment of one social group of your choice. What factors or contexts do you feel are relevant for understanding the ways in which this group is, or has been represented?
- b) Do media images and messages only reflect the world, or do they also create it? Clearly they do both. But many studies demonstrate that media messages do not reflect the world as it really is. There are far more people of color, disabled people, non-heterosexuals, seniors and poor people in the real world than we see on TV or in the movies. Media portrayal of women often leaves much to be desired, especially women in advertising. Discuss with reference to both print and broadcast media.
- c) “Gender based restrictions on media representations in Africa constitute a form of neo-colonialism which are contrary to African cultural traditions”. Explain, with evidence, whether you agree or disagree with this quotation.
- d) What is now called “globalization” would not be possible without mass media. Communication through modern technology has the potential to spread democracy. But corporate control of media production simultaneously threatens the ability of citizens to receive unbiased news to have their own messages heard. Discuss.

##### Course: BMS 401-Imaging Africa.

- a) To what extent does the national museum of Botswana conform to stereotypes about Africa and to what extent does it provide an alternative Afro-centric view of Botswana?
- b) If an ancestral mask or a traditional foot stool is taken from its original context and function (e.g. to an art gallery) is its artistic value enhanced or diminished?
- c) In what ways do African artists / media practitioners provide a „counter narrative“ to colonial/neo colonial imaging of Africa with respect to disaster?
- d) “Othering” is a natural human instinct. It only becomes dangerous when it is used for the purpose of social exclusion”. Debate this quotation by applying it to specific examples of Botswana imaging non Botswana.

## 2. Primary Education Department:

### Course: EPI 442 – Environmental Education Conservation Strategies

- a) Discuss using elaborate examples how indigenous knowledge can contribute towards sustainable use of the environment and its resources.
- b) Discuss how gender related activities contribute to natural resource depletion. In your discussion indicate how the environmental problems caused by such activities could be solved.
- c) Using examples in Botswana and elsewhere how local communities can be an instrument in conserving the environment.

### Course: EPI 200 –Introduction to Social Studies

Let's talk: primary schools pupils views on the usefulness of Social Studies in making good citizens in Botswana.

### Appendix 2: A list of lexical features used by students as interactional metadiscourse features

Self –mention	Hedges	Boosters	Engagement markers	Attitude markers
The researcher	It would appear	One Clear	Yes	Its seems
I	Tend (s)	evidence	?	unreasonable
My	Tended	It is Indeed true	We (inclusive)	It will seem absurd
We (exclusive)	Seem (s)	Indeed	Us (inclusive)	I completely agree
The author (s)	Likely	In fact	You	Fortunate
The writer (s)	Suggest (s)	Clear		Importantly
	Often	Clearly		Interesting
	May	Surely		Interestingly
	Might	Certainly		Unfortunately
	mainly	Evident		Prefer
	Perhaps	Obviously		
	Seemingly	True		
	Apparent	Really		
	Apparently	definitely		
	Claim			
	Probably			
	Possible			
	quite			
	I think			
	I believe			
	In my opinion			
	In my view			