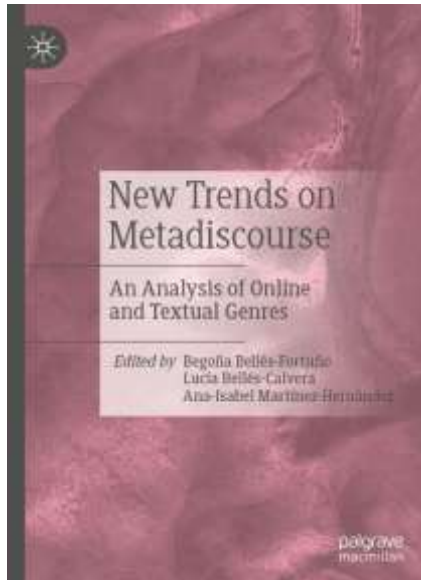


BOOK REVIEW



METADISCOURSE REVISITED: MAPPING CHANGES ACROSS TRADITIONAL AND NEW GENRES

Begoña Bellés-Fortuño, Lucía Bellés-Calvera and Ana-Isabel Martínez-Hernández (Eds.). NEW TRENDS ON METADISCOURSE: AN ANALYSIS OF ONLINE AND TEXTUAL GENRES (2023), Palgrave Macmillan. 262 pp., ISBN 978-3-031-36689-5 (HBK); ISBN 978-3-031-36692-5 (PBK); ISBN 978-3-031-36690-1 (EBK).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-36690-1>

225

Over the last two decades, metadiscourse has become an established concept associated with an analytical framework for studying interaction in academic and non-academic texts (Hyland & Jiang, 2022). The volume *New trends on metadiscourse: An analysis of online and textual genres* is a welcome new addition to the substantial body of research on metadiscourse in the field of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). It comes with the ambition to reconceptualise the metadiscourse framework in the context of the transformations academic and professional communication practices are undergoing following the rise of digital and social media (D'Angelo & Consonni, 2020). The studies included in the book adopt various perspectives, such as cross-disciplinary and generic variation, persuasion strategies, identity construction and learning progression, to provide a snapshot of a spectrum of traditional and hybridised digital genres co-existing in our culturally diverse multimodal environment.

All studies in the volume align with Hyland's (2005) integrative interpersonal model of metadiscourse and combine the quantitatively oriented "thin" approach with the essentially qualitative and data-driven "thick" approach (Ädel, 2023) to the analysis of interactive resources centred on text organisation and interactional resources casting an authorial voice and engaging with the audience. The chapters not only address a variety of metadiscursive categories and academic and professional genres but also enrich their research methodologies by drawing on insights from corpus linguistics, genre analysis, pragmatics and discourse analysis.

The opening brief introduction by the editors voices their commitment to contribute to the study of metadiscourse in academic and non-academic settings by depicting “the new communication scenario” (p. 2) in the digital age. The nine chapters are conveniently organised in two parts: the first explores metadiscourse in three written (brief reports, case reports and essays) and two oral (lectures and conference presentations) academic genres, and the second focuses on metadiscourse in four non-academic digital genres (posts on Twitter, management statements, travel blogs and online podcasts).

Two of the chapters in Part I focus on metadiscourse in the oral academic genre of lectures. Sarah Khan and Marta Aguilar-Pérez’s study (Chapter 2) combines quantitative and qualitative methods, including ethnographic techniques, to contrast the frequency and functions of rhetorical questions in engineering lectures by a lecturer delivering the same content in L1 Catalan and English as a medium of instruction (EMI). The authors attribute the lower occurrence of rhetorical questions in EMI lectures to the lecturer’s reduced confidence in elaborating explanations when speaking in English. Yet their study shows that irrespective of the language of performance, the skilful use of discourse organising and interpersonal functions of rhetorical questions contributes to making information explicit and accessible to students while showing “a student-oriented attitude on the part of the lecturer” (p. 33). The closing chapter of Part I (Chapter 6) also presents a contrastive study of EMI lectures, in this case delivered by Chinese and L1 English lecturers. Dongyun Zhang and Diyun Sheng’s corpus-based analysis of the whole spectrum of metadiscourse resources in Chinese university MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses) on digital academic platforms reveals intercultural differences in metadiscourse practices. Despite being constrained by the brevity of MOOCs, L1 English lecturers use more interactive and interactional metadiscourse to enhance the intelligibility and interactivity of their talks whereas Chinese lecturers tend to prioritise content. Overall, both studies indicate that the use of metadiscourse in academic lectures is affected by contextual factors, such as the use of English as an academic lingua franca, the cultural background of the lecturer, and the onsite or online mode of presentation of the lecture.

Adopting a contrastive approach, Chapter 3 investigates the distribution patterns of stance resources in American and Russian presentations at cell therapy conferences. Galiya Gatiyatullina, Marina Solnyskina, Roman Kupriyanov and Elzara Gafiyatova’s corpus-based analysis combining quantitative and qualitative approaches reports significant differences in the occurrence of hedges and attitude markers, the former being more frequent in Russian and the latter in American presentations. The distribution of stance resources across the rhetorical structure of conference presentations is also marked by cross-cultural variation, especially in the Results and Conclusions sections where American presenters tend to adopt a more cautious stance than their Russian colleagues who are more assertive and present arguments more explicitly.

Identity construction is addressed in Chapter 4 by exploring metadiscourse choices across two medical genres – brief reports and case reports. Sabiha Choura's contrastive analysis shows that the distribution of metadiscourse resources is motivated by different generic conventions. The importance of engaging with the audience and anticipating possible criticism in both genres characterised by a low degree of generalisability of results is evidenced by the predominance of interactional over interactive metadiscourse. Yet brief reports display more metadiscoursal resources than case reports and show a preference for interactive over interactional markers, as the author's argumentation seeks to overcome the lack of well-developed scientific evidence. In contrast, the narrative character of case reports and authorial expertise explain the higher use of interactional metadiscourse intended to create stronger audience engagement. The theoretical implications emerging from Choura's study evidence that genre variation in metadiscourse can be revealed by fine-grained context-sensitive analysis of lexicogrammatical realisations of metadiscourse resources.

Chapter 5 addresses the potential of metadiscourse to enhance persuasion by exploring attitude markers and hedges in argumentative essays written by multilingual learners in three languages – Catalan, Spanish and English. Despite some differences in their learning trajectories, the two metadiscourse markers show similar trends across the languages with attitude markers declining and hedges increasing in frequency. Irregularities in the developmental patterns of attitude markers across the languages seem to relate to differences in their sociolinguistic status. In contrast, the steady progression in the use of hedges reflects their importance in academic discourse and their similar treatment across all languages of instruction. Apart from bringing useful insights for effective teaching practices, Sofía Martín-Laguna's findings point to the need for research into the impact of various sociopragmatic dimensions on interpersonal meanings expressed by specific metadiscourse categories.

María José Luzón's study (Chapter 7) serves as a bridge between the first part of the book devoted to academic discourse and the second focusing on non-academic genres. It explores the role of tweets from the Twitter accounts of three scientific organisations in disseminating scientific knowledge to wider audiences. It addresses the under-researched issue of how various semiotic resources are combined in the space-constrained genre of tweets to tailor scientific knowledge to the needs of diversified audiences and engage the public in societal action. A significant methodological contribution of Luzón's study is the extension of Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse to include various semiotic devices, such as pictures, emoji and visualisations, performing textual and interpersonal functions. Based on a content analysis of her Twitter corpus, Luzón identifies three communicative functions of tweets: to inform, to encourage interaction and to call to action, which have been found to differ in their frequency of occurrence reflecting the organisations' specific missions. Her multimodal analysis of metadiscourse in the corpus shows a correlation between the choice of metadiscourse resources, the purpose of the tweets and the affordances and conventions of the genre. Thus, due

primarily to text size constraints, interactive discourse is scarce, while the persuasive potential of interactive metadiscourse, especially engagement, makes it essential for achieving the purpose of the genre. Luzón concludes, “textual and visual metadiscourse are strategically combined [...] to persuade the readers to access more information, to influence their understanding of and attitude towards content, to engage them in interaction and to prompt them to take specific actions” (p. 185). All in all, Luzón’s study proves that a framework to analyse metadiscourse on Twitter, and digital genres in general, should consider all resources contributing to multimodal meaning-making.

Persuasive communication strategies realised by interactional metadiscourse in corporate annual reports of renewable energy companies are the focus of Chapter 8 by Maria Cristina Urloi and Miguel F. Ruiz-Garrido. This study blends Hyland’s (2005) conceptualisation of metadiscourse with Biber’s (2006) stance framework to compare patterns of stances, modal verbs, and pronouns in CEOs’ reports and chairmen’s letters. Despite the small frequency differences, the authors point to important variations in the communication strategies applied by executives and chairmen. Chairman’s statements are characterised by a higher degree of subjectivity related to expressing personal opinions, value judgments and politeness through attitudinal stances. In contrast, executives strive to persuade readers using an epistemic stance to display objectivity, clarity and confidence in the firm’s performance and prospects. The study also indicates that both types of managers show signs of intentional distancing from stakeholders tentatively associated with efforts to project an internal corporate image of integrity. Overall, this chapter evidences the persuasive power of metadiscourse in business settings.

In Chapter 9 Giuliana Diani takes an intercultural perspective to the analysis of interactional metadiscourse in the “diary-like”, personal genre of the travel blog. By combining conveniently text and corpus analytical perspectives, she studies the frequency of occurrence and functions of subjectivity markers, self-expressions and engagement markers in travel blogs by Anglo-American and Italian travellers describing popular Italian tourist destinations. Diani’s analysis shows that through the manifestation of their identity Anglo-American and Italian bloggers seek to establish their credibility for future travellers who would read the blogs. Besides evaluating the journey to the tourist destinations as being or not being memorable, advisable or potentially desirable for other tourists, bloggers use engagement resources to create a rhetorical effect of closeness and achieve audience involvement. Thus, Diani’s findings suggest that in the case of the traveller’s blog, the communicative function of the genre generally overrides intercultural differences in the use of metadiscourse resources.

The final Chapter 10 by Syamimi Turiman and Siti Aeisha Joharry addresses the use of metadiscourse in the oral genre of podcasts. It applies corpus-based methods to identify the collocates of “I think” and “you know” in podcasts broadcasted by a Malaysian radio programme to analyse their pragmatic functions, which the authors relate to politeness considerations. In the podcast corpus, “you know” functions

primarily as an engagement marker signalling shared knowledge and appeal for agreement, while “I think” typically serves as a hedge. Both expressions have also been found to perform a text organising function: “you know” as a filler between arguments and “I think” as an utterance launcher. This points to the polyfunctionality of metadiscourse resources the interpretation of which is heavily context dependent.

Overall, despite the somewhat limited number of chapters, this volume manages to carve a representative picture of current research on metadiscourse in written and oral academic genres and newly emerging digital non-academic genres. Yet given the claim of the editors to depict a new communication scenario, the presence of new digital genres might be considered rather limited (Twitter posts, travel blogs, podcasts and MOOCs). Notwithstanding this limitation, the studies in the volume provide a useful overview of methods and approaches to the analysis of metadiscourse and bring new evidence supporting the view that research into metadiscourse should be informed by various analytical perspectives combining qualitative and quantitative methods (Ädel, 2023). The book promises to be a useful read for scholars and teachers interested in studying the adaptation of metadiscourse practices in different genres and social contexts. From the intended audience’s perspective, the inclusion of some recommendations for ESP practitioners addressing teaching and using in practice the persuasive potential of metadiscourse, multimodal resources, identity construction and miscommunication risks might have been a welcome addition to the volume.

[Review submitted 27 Jul 2024]

[Revised version received 10 Oct 2024]

[Accepted for publication 14 Oct 2024]

229

Reviewed by **OLGA DONTCHEVA-NAVRATILOVA**

Department of English Language and Literature

Masaryk University

Czech Republic

navratilova@ped.muni.cz

References

- Ädel, A. (2023). Adopting a ‘move’ rather than a ‘marker’ approach to metadiscourse: A taxonomy for spoken student presentations. *English for Specific Purposes*, 69, 4–18. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2022.09.001>
- Biber, D. (2006). The expression of stance in university registers. In D. Biber, *University language: A corpus-based study of spoken and written registers* (87–133). John Benjamins.
- D’Angelo, L., & Consonni, S. (2020). A tale of three waves: Or, concerning the history and theory of metadiscourse. *Ibérica*, 40, 13–34. <https://doi.org/10.17398/2340-2784.40.13>
- Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing*. Continuum.
- Hyland, K., & Jiang, K. (2022). Metadiscourse choices in EAP: An intra-journal study of JEAP. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 60, Article 101165. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jeap.2022.101165>