

METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN INTRODUCTION SECTION OF MASTER THESES IN ENGLISH EDUCATION STUDY PROGRAM STUDENTS AT UNIVERSITY OF BENGKULU

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ABSTRACT

Metadiscourse refers to the language elements that writers or speakers use to organize, guide, and comment on their text, helping readers understand the structure and connect ideas. This study investigates the critical role of metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of master's theses, focusing on how these markers enhance clarity and organization, making the text more accessible and engaging. The research aimed to analyze the types and frequencies of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the introductions of theses by students in the English Education Study Program at Bengkulu University. A mixed-methods approach was employed to analyze 30 introduction sections. The findings show that writers predominantly use interactive markers, especially transitions (70.7%), evidentials (11.7%), and frame markers (8.3%), more than interactional markers like hedges (52.2%) and engagement markers (24.8%). The frequent use of transition markers suggests a focus on guiding readers through the text rather than direct engagement. These results underscore the importance of metadiscourse markers in creating a well-structured and persuasive introduction. Mastering these markers can significantly enhance the quality of academic writing. Future research could extend this analysis to other thesis sections or different academic contexts.

Keywords: *Interactional, Interactive, Introduction, Metadiscourse, Thesis.*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing the introduction section of a master's thesis is notoriously challenging, a sentiment echoed by many scholars including Azadnia et al. (2019), who assert that even native speakers find this task difficult. Swales suggests this difficulty stems from the necessity to present the right amount and type of material, ensuring readers grasp the research topic and its significance effectively. The introduction is crucial because it is the first part that readers encounter after the abstract, and their decision to continue reading often hinges on their impression of this section (Arsyad, 2013; Sari et al., 2023). Therefore, an engaging and convincing introduction is essential for motivating readers to explore the entire thesis. The primary purpose of the introduction is to entice the reader to delve into the complete thesis. Consequently, it must be written clearly,

concisely, and compellingly to capture and maintain the reader's attention (Pearson and Abdollahzadeh, 2023). An effective introduction should provide a comprehensive summary of the thesis, persuading readers of its value and encouraging them to read further. In essence, the introduction sets the framework and aims of the study, informing readers about what to expect from the subsequent sections. One of the strategies writers can use to craft an effective introduction is the incorporation of metadiscourse markers.

Metadiscourse refers to the commentary on a text made by its producer, either in writing or speaking, and is a widely used concept in genre analysis and language teaching (Hyland, 2023; Kustyasari et al., 2021). It plays a significant role in organizing texts and making them more understandable for readers. Metadiscourse is a key element of academic writing, helping writers create coherence and continuity in their texts. In academic writing, metadiscourse markers serve several crucial functions. They help writers to organize and present their intentions clearly, engage their readers, and lead them through the text, making it more connected and easier to understand (Agustinos et al., 2019). However, many writers struggle with the use of metadiscourse markers and other elements of academic writing. A considerable number of them lack an understanding of how to select appropriate language, ensure coherence and cohesion between paragraphs, and use metadiscourse markers effectively. According to Hyland and Tse (2004), metadiscourse involves various techniques used by writers to present their work coherently, engage readers, and convey their points of view. Metadiscourse is an exciting research topic that plays a crucial role in producing engaging and clear writing. It emphasizes that writing and speaking are more than just conveying ideational meanings and intents; they involve interaction and engagement with the audience (Amiryousefi & Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Marthalena, 2022).

Metadiscourse helps writers communicate effectively and build interaction with their readers, guiding them through the text and making it more accessible (Herriman, 2022). Hyland (2005) categorizes metadiscourse markers into two main types: interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse involves techniques that help readers understand the text, such as marking, summarizing, and highlighting key points. Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, refers to strategies writers use to engage their readers, such as introducing new ideas, summarizing main points, and organizing the text in a reader-friendly manner. The use of metadiscourse markers has long been a focus of academic interest in linguistics, discourse analysis, and composition studies. Researchers have explored how these markers function in creating and negotiating meaning within texts and how they convey the writer's opinion, intent, and stance. According to Hyland and Tse (2004), metadiscourse markers are crucial rhetorical devices that enhance text construction and author influence, facilitating readers' comprehension of the writer's intent and the connections between concepts.

Numerous studies have investigated metadiscourse markers. For instance, Geng and Wei (2023) analyzed their use and frequency in 100 research article abstracts from linguistic and literary journals, finding that transition markers were the most commonly used interactive markers. Saputra and Putri (2021) studied interactional metadiscourse in English undergraduate thesis introductions, identifying hedges as the most prevalent markers. Nawawi and Ting (2022)

analyzed interactional metadiscourse markers in political science research articles, finding boosters and hedges to be the most frequently used types. Marthalena (2022) examined metadiscourse markers in Indonesian applied linguistics journal articles, revealing that transition markers and hedges were the most commonly used interactive and interactional markers, respectively. Despite extensive research on metadiscourse markers in academic writing, studies focusing on their use in master's theses are limited. This study aims to fill this gap by examining the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of master's theses written by English postgraduate students at Bengkulu University. Understanding how these students use metadiscourse markers can provide valuable insights into improving academic writing quality at the postgraduate level. This research focuses specifically on master's theses in English education, a relatively underexplored area, and aims to enhance the understanding of metadiscourse usage in this context. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. What interactive metadiscourse markers are frequently found in introduction section of master theses in English at University of Bengkulu?
2. What interactional metadiscourse markers are frequently found in introduction section of master theses in English at University of Bengkulu?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic writing is a formal style used predominantly in higher education and scholarly discourse, distinguished by its precise word choice, logical structure, and focus on presenting information and arguments grounded in evidence (Jusslin & Widlund, 2024). Unlike creative or personal writing, which may embrace a more relaxed or expressive tone, academic writing deliberately avoids slang, contractions, and incomplete sentences. Its primary objective is to inform, analyze, and persuade the reader in a clear, structured manner (Hartley, 2008). The significance of academic writing lies in its role as the vehicle for clear communication in the scholarly community. It employs formal language, focusing strictly on the research subject while typically utilizing the third person to maintain objectivity (Fang, 2021). This detachment is crucial as it ensures that the discussion remains centered on the research rather than the individual conducting it. For instance, rather than stating, "I believe this method is effective," an academic writer would assert, "This method has proven effective," thereby removing personal bias and reinforcing the argument's validity.

Despite its sometimes complex and challenging nature, strong academic writing is indispensable because it allows readers to engage critically with the content. It is designed not just to present ideas but to do so in a way that facilitates deeper analysis and understanding. This is essential in educational settings such as high schools and colleges, where the development of critical thinking skills is a primary objective. Academic writing serves as a means for students and researchers to delineate their areas of expertise, establishing intellectual boundaries that are clear and well-defined. Attributes of this writing style include a formal tone, a focused discussion on the study topic, and the careful selection of appropriate terminology. The introduction section of a thesis is a crucial component of academic writing. It is the gateway to the research, providing a foundation that supports the entire thesis. Writing a compelling introduction is a

significant task for students, as it not only draws readers into the research but also gives them a wealth of information regarding the research's direction. According to Ting et al. (2022), the introduction is instrumental in helping readers understand the context and background of the research, thereby framing the discussion that follows. It captures the reader's attention by outlining the significance of the research topic and presenting it in a precise and succinct manner.

This section must be crafted with extra care, as it is the first piece of the research that readers encounter. Creswell (2023) emphasizes that a well-written introduction should pique readers' interest in the topic, motivating them to continue reading the rest of the thesis. If the introduction fails to clearly articulate the research's importance, readers may not feel compelled to engage with the subsequent sections. Therefore, the introduction not only sets the stage for the research but also serves as a justification for why the research is necessary. Manar and Dewanti (2023) define the introduction as a series of sentences that explain the reasons behind the research and discuss its significance. This explanation is vital as it positions the research within the broader academic discourse, highlighting gaps in existing literature that the thesis aims to address. For example, if previous studies have focused predominantly on urban education systems, a thesis that examines rural education could fill a critical gap, making the research valuable to both scholars and practitioners. The introduction also provides a roadmap for the reader, offering a preview of the structure and content of the thesis. Helmanda et al. (2022) suggest that a good introduction begins with a general background of the research topic, gradually narrowing down to the specific research questions or objectives. This approach allows readers to understand the broader context before delving into the specific issues the thesis addresses. By the end of the introduction, readers should have a clear understanding of what to expect in the subsequent chapters and how the research will contribute to the field.

Metadiscourse markers are linguistic tools that help writers convey their intentions and guide readers through the text. These markers are crucial in academic writing, as they enhance clarity, coherence, and engagement, making it easier for readers to follow and understand the argument. According to Salam El-Dakhs (2020), metadiscourse is categorized into two types: interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse focuses on organizing content to facilitate the reader's comprehension, while interactional metadiscourse manages the relationship between the writer and the reader. Interactive metadiscourse markers play a vital role in structuring the text. They include transitions, frame markers, endophoric signals, evidential cues, and code glosses (Hyland, 2017). Transitions, such as "therefore," "however," and "in contrast," help readers understand the logical connections between ideas, guiding them through the progression of the argument. For example, in a research paper discussing the benefits and limitations of a new technology, the transition "however" might be used to introduce a counterpoint, signaling to the reader that multiple perspectives are being considered. Frame markers, such as "first," "next," and "in conclusion," signal shifts in the topic or focus, helping readers navigate the document. These markers are particularly useful in longer pieces of academic writing, where the argument may be complex and multi-faceted. For instance, in a literature review, frame

markers can help organize the discussion of various studies, making it easier for readers to follow the analysis. Endophoric signals refer to references within the text, such as "as discussed earlier" or "see Figure 2," which help create coherence by linking different sections of the document. Evidential cues, such as "according to" or "based on," indicate the source of information, adding credibility to the argument. Code glosses, which include explanations like "in other words" or "for example," clarify the meaning of terms or concepts, ensuring that readers fully understand the writer's intent.

Interactional metadiscourse markers, on the other hand, manage the interaction between the writer and the reader. These markers include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers (Hyland, 2017). Hedges, such as "might" or "could," indicate the writer's caution in making absolute statements, reflecting the complexity of the argument. Boosters, such as "clearly" or "undoubtedly," emphasize the strength of the argument, conveying the writer's confidence. Attitude markers express the writer's evaluation of the information, while self-mentions, such as "I argue," explicitly position the writer within the text. Engagement markers directly address the reader, encouraging them to participate in the discourse. According to Salam El-Dakhs (2020), metadiscourse markers are essential for effective communication between the writer and the reader. They not only clarify the structure of the argument but also enhance the writer's credibility by demonstrating familiarity with academic conventions. Hyland (2017) adds that the strategic use of metadiscourse can make academic writing more engaging and persuasive, helping writers connect with their audience on a deeper level. In conclusion, academic writing, with its emphasis on precision, structure, and clarity, serves as a vital tool in scholarly communication. The careful construction of a thesis introduction and the strategic use of metadiscourse markers are key components that enhance the effectiveness of academic writing. By adhering to these conventions, writers can ensure that their work is both accessible and authoritative, contributing meaningfully to the ongoing academic discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative and qualitative approaches as outlined by Creswell (2023). Initially, quantitative research was conducted, and the results were then elaborated upon through qualitative analysis in an explanatory sequential mix design (Creswell, 2023; Marthalena, 2022). The study focused on 30 introduction sections from master's theses completed by students at the University of Bengkulu between 2022 and 2023. These theses were selected through random sampling from a total of 72 available theses, including 35 from 2022 and 37 from 2023. The sampled theses were chosen for their high quality and recognition by the academic community.

The primary instrument for data collection was a checklist of metadiscourse devices, adapted from Martalena's research instrument based on Hyland's (2005) taxonomy. This checklist included five categories of interactive markers (transition, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses) and five categories of interactional markers (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers). The choice of this instrument

was based on its proven validity and reliability, as well as its ability to facilitate comparisons with previous research.

Data were collected by obtaining and photocopying the introduction sections of master's theses from the University of Bengkulu Library. The researchers used the checklist to identify and record both interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers within these sections. The collected data were then analyzed by carefully reading each introduction section, categorizing the markers using the checklist, and entering the data into a matrix table for classification. The analysis determined the frequency and distribution of the markers, which were presented in percentage frequencies.

To validate the data analysis, an independent co-rater assessed 20% of the data, amounting to 6 randomly selected introduction sections. The co-rater's findings were compared with those of the researcher using Cohen's Kappa statistical analysis to measure the degree of agreement. Cohen's Kappa values were categorized as poor (<0.40), fair (0.40–0.59), good (0.60–0.74), or excellent (>0.75) (Kanoksilapatham, 2005), ensuring the accuracy and reliability of the research results.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

FINDING

The results addressed the research questions about the frequency of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of 30 master theses from the English Education Study Programme at the University of Bengkulu (2022–2023). Detailed findings are discussed below.

Inter-rater Reability

Kappa findings for comparing researcher and co-rater analyses of the introduction section are shown in the table below. The amount of the co-and rater's the researcher's agreement may be determined based on these findings.

Table 1. The Kappa findings Comparing of Researcher and Co-Rater

Metadiscourse markers	Rater	Co-rater	Score
Transition Markers	301	292	0
Frame Markers	21	21	1
Endophoric Markers	7	7	1
Evidential Markers	26	26	1
Code Glosses Markers	16	16	1
Hedges Markers	66	66	1
Booster Markers	2	2	1
Attitude Markers	20	20	1
Self-mention Markers	16	14	0
Engagement Markers	40	40	1
Cohen Kappa Value			0.79
Percentage of Agreement			79
Interpretation			Excellent

Based on Table 1, the findings indicated that 79% of the evaluation data between the researcher and co-rater matched. Therefore, the reliability and accuracy of the data between the researchers and the co-rater can be said to be achieved with a Kappa value of 0.79 or 79%, which indicates an "Excellent" level

of agreement. The differences in results between the rater and co-rater in transition markers and self-mention markers may be due to varying levels of attention during the analysis, leading to discrepancies. This is consistent with inter-rater reliability concepts (Hallgren, 2012) and cognitive load theory (Van Gog & Paas, 2008), which suggest that variations in attention and cognitive load can impact the consistency of ratings.

Interactive Metadiscourse Markers

The following data represent the interactive markers found in the introduction sections of master theses from postgraduate English education students at the University of Bengkulu for the years 2022-2023.

Table 2. Frequency of interactive Metadiscourse

Interactive Metadiscourse	Frequency	Percentage
Transition Markers	1.050	70.7%
Evidential Markers	174	11.7%
Frame Markers	123	8.3%
Code Glosses	93	6.3%
Endophoric Markers	45	3.0%
Total	1.485	100%

Table 2 shows the frequency of interactive metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of 30 Master's theses from the English Education Study Program at the University of Bengkulu (2022-2023). Transition markers were the most common, used 1,050 times (70.7% of all data). The second most used were evidentials, appearing 174 times (11.7%). Frame markers were used 123 times (8.3%), followed by code glosses at 93 times (6.3%). Endophoric markers were the least frequent, used only 45 times (3%). Examples include:

Transition markers

However, they face relatively fewer difficulties when it comes to composing abstracts and the methods section. (Thesis 1)

In Example, "However" is used to show a contrast, highlighting that despite facing difficulties in writing, the author found the abstract and method sections easier.

Evidential markers

Harmer (2007) **state that** the study is one of the important things in the educational process because no one could learn without motivation. (Thesis 17)

From the example, "state that" indicates that the statement is directly from Harmer's 2007 work, reflecting his direct opinion.

Frame markers

Then, students have doubts about the pronunciation of a word or sentence. (Thesis 8)

The frame marker "then" signals the next step in a sequence, showing that after the previous event, the student has doubts about pronunciation. This helps clarify the sequence of events for the reader.

Code glosses markers

In other words, the introduction section is crucial in writing and motivating readers to read the whole thesis.

The code gloss marker "In other words" clarifies or restates the importance of the introduction in writing and engaging readers. It offers a simpler explanation of the previous point, helping readers understand the concept better.

Endophoric markers

The method section of the critical section that readers **refer to** identify the procedure, instruments, design, participants, and other elements. (Thesis 1)
The endophoric marker "refer to" directs readers to the method section of the text to find details about the research procedures, instruments, design, participants, and other relevant elements.

Interactional Metadiscourse markers

The following data were interactional markers found in introduction section of master thesis in English education study program students at university of Bengkulu 2022-2023.

Table 3. Frequency of Interactional Metadiscourse

Interactional Metadiscourse	Frequency	Percentage
Hedges markers	397	52.2%
Engagement markers	189	24.8%
Self-mention	80	10.5%
Attitude markers	68	9.0%
Boosters	27	3.5%
Total	761	100%

Table 3 shows the frequency and percentage of interactional metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of 30 Master's theses. Hedges were the most frequently used, appearing 397 times (52.2%). Engagement markers followed, used 189 times (24.8%). Self-mention markers were the third most common, used 80 times (10.5%). Attitude markers appeared 68 times (9%), and boosters were the least common, used 27 times (3.5%).

Hedges

The guidelines on thesis writing provided by each university **sometimes** are worded differently from each other. (Thesis 1)

The hedge "sometimes" indicates that the statement isn't always true, allowing for variations and exceptions.

Engagement

Textbooks **should** strive to balance the representation of different cultures and ethnic groups so that students feel respected and represented. (Thesis 14)

The engagement marker "should" suggests a recommendation, implying that textbooks need to represent diverse cultures and ethnic groups to ensure inclusivity and respect for students.

Self-mention

The researcher discovers that the written or spoken text material is equally essential for the application. (Thesis 7)

The self-mention marker "the researcher" identifies the person conducting the research, establishing their role and credibility in the findings.

Attitude markers

The writer **hopefully**, this study could be useful for further writers as information and reference about the study toward the use of media based on ICT so that this study can be better and have more information about it. (Thesis 9)

The attitude marker "hopefully" expresses the author's hope that the study will benefit other authors by serving as a useful reference on ICT-based media.

Booster

This is **certainly** challenging but it is also an exciting opportunity to draw upon the translanguaging abilities of people in traditional market community. (Thesis 18)

The booster marker "certainly" highlights the author's strong belief in the statement, adding confidence and a positive tone about the challenge being an exciting opportunity.

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of master's theses from the University of Bengkulu. The focus was on identifying the most frequently used markers and their contribution to academic writing. The findings reveal that transition markers were the most prevalent, appearing 1,050 times or 70.7% of the total. This underscores their crucial role in ensuring coherence and guiding readers through the text. Evidential markers were the second most frequent, used 174 times or 11.7%, highlighting their function in providing and referencing sources to support arguments. Frame markers followed with 123 occurrences or 8.3%, helping to structure and organize the introduction. Code glosses and endophoric markers, used less frequently at 93 (6.3%) and 45 (3%) times, respectively, serve to clarify concepts and direct readers to specific parts of the text.

In the realm of interactional metadiscourse, hedges emerged as the most frequently used, appearing 397 times or 52.2%. This reflects the strategic use of hedges to express uncertainty and maintain objectivity in academic writing, aligning with Nawawi and Ting's (2022) findings. Engagement markers, used 189 times or 24.8%, indicate efforts to involve readers in the discourse, which supports Suhono and Haikal's (2018) view on their role in establishing a relationship between the writer and the reader. Self-mention markers were used 80 times or 10.5%, emphasizing the author's presence and contribution, while attitude markers appeared 68 times or 9%, reflecting the author's stance towards the content. Booster markers, the least frequent with 27 occurrences or 3.5%, highlight the author's confidence but are less emphasized compared to other markers.

The study's findings are consistent with previous research, such as Geng and Wei (2023), which also identified transition markers as the most frequently used in academic writing, emphasizing their role in maintaining coherence. The prominence of hedges aligns with Nawawi and Ting's (2022) results, showcasing their importance in managing academic rigor and objectivity. The study also confirms Hyland's (2005) assertion regarding the significance of evidential markers in establishing credibility. The lower frequency of code glosses and endophoric markers mirrors Geng and Wei's (2023) findings, suggesting these markers are supplementary compared to transitions.

The preference for transition markers highlights their effectiveness in ensuring a clear and organized presentation, which is critical in academic writing. The strategic use of hedges reflects a common practice of cautious language to preempt criticism and uphold objectivity. The lower frequency of booster markers may indicate a preference for a more restrained tone in academic writing, contrasting with the higher use of boosters in some other fields, as noted by Nawawi and Ting (2022). Overall, the study demonstrates the consistent application of interactive markers across disciplines and underscores the importance of understanding and using these markers to enhance the clarity and effectiveness of academic communication.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study sheds light on the use of metadiscourse markers in the introduction sections of master's theses in English at the University of Bengkulu. It highlights the crucial role of interactive and interactional markers in academic writing. Transition markers emerged as the most frequently used, underscoring their importance in ensuring text coherence and smooth communication. Evidential markers, which help in providing credible sources, followed closely, while frame markers played a significant role in organizing the text and guiding readers through its structure. Although code glosses and endophoric markers were used less frequently, they are vital for offering clarification and directing readers to specific concepts. The study also found that hedges were the most common interactional markers, reflecting the authors' efforts to manage uncertainty and adhere to academic conventions. Engagement markers, self-mentions, attitude markers, and boosters each contributed to various aspects of reader engagement and author stance. These findings highlight the importance of employing a balanced use of metadiscourse markers to enhance clarity, credibility, and reader engagement in academic writing.

The implications of this study suggest that writers need to be mindful of how they use metadiscourse markers to improve their writing. While the study provides valuable insights, it is limited to theses from one institution and focuses only on the introduction sections. Future research could broaden the scope by examining other parts of academic texts or comparing metadiscourse practices across different disciplines and institutions. Exploring how metadiscourse strategies impact reader comprehension and engagement could further refine understanding in this area. Overall, while this study offers foundational insights, there is significant potential for further research to deepen the understanding of metadiscourse use in various academic contexts.

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