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Research paper



An Analysis of Interactional Metadiscourse in Public Speaking: A Case Study in English Speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan

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Abstract

Public speaking is an act of presenting a speech to an audience with the goal of altering attitudes, actions, and sentiments, and to leave them inspired by words and impressed by meanings[1]. In general, speakers add metadiscourse markers into their speech to make it comprehensible to the audience rather than a mere exchange of information. This study principally investigated interactional metadiscourse markers used in the English speeches of Mr. Tshering Tobgay, the Honourable Prime Minister of Bhutan, delivered to international audiences on a variety of different topics. The present qualitative descriptive research focused on textual analysis using the metadiscourse model of Hyland[2] and the Appraisal theory of Martin and White[3]. The results of the study showed attitude markers ranked the highest followed by engagement markers, self-mentions, boosters, and hedges. Moreover, the study also revealed that the topics of his speeches influenced the use of the interactional metadiscourse markers of the speaker. In general, this study highlighted elements of metadiscourse markers used by the leader of the country in delivering public speeches. The present study contributed to the existing body of literature related to metadiscourse analysis, especially of spoken texts. The information from this research can be of benefit to language learners, teachers and speakers in general, who are passionate about developing speaking skills.

Keywords: *Interactional Metadiscourse; Appraisal Theory; Public Speaking; Bhutan's Prime Minister*

1. Introduction

English is widely perceived as a global language and its importance in international communication is unquestionable. In many countries, the English language is spoken either as a second language or foreign language in addition to the country's first language. In Bhutan, English is spoken as a foreign language. However, the importance of English language is more than merely a means of foreign language communication, as it is used as an instructional language in teaching different subjects in schools, colleges, and training institutes except for the national language subject, Dzongkha, which is taught in Dzongkha, thus maintaining bilingualism. Different education guidelines stated that English is a "language of instruction"[4-7] in Bhutanese educational institutions, and is used alongside the national language. Specifically, the main purpose of giving parallel importance to English alongside Dzongkha is to boost students to attain proficiency in both languages.

Bhutan is a linguistically diverse country where its people speak 19 different languages[8]. "In Thimphu, the capital city, every language of Bhutan can be heard"[8]. The English language is taught and learned in a multilingual society thus, in such a context, it is extremely difficult to maintain oral proficiency in speaking the English language by Bhutanese learners. Other than a handful of students in the capital city and some from other cities in Bhutan, the majority of students, including university students, do not possess acceptable oral fluency. Therefore, a pending issue that needs to be addressed is the development of oral fluency in speaking English in Bhutan.

A significant way of developing oral fluency in speaking English is through the practice of public speaking. Yee and Abidin[9] mentioned that public speaking practices helped students to build confidence in promoting ideas that they like to share with people. For example; students who worked on public speaking lead to a development of their overall oral fluency, and they know how to speak in front of their audiences, as well as what to speak about[10]. Therefore, students who could overcome public speaking anxiety could be motivational speakers in any situation. A confident public speaker can develop a sound environment altering attitudes, actions, and sentiments[1]. According to Iberri-Shea[11], the advantage of public speaking is not only the development of oral fluency but also the other three language skills (listening, reading, and writing), enhanced cognitive skills, and progress in learning. In addition, the delivery of comprehensible messages is another important feature of public speaking. Generally, speakers add linguistic materials called metadiscourse in their texts to convince their audiences. Hyland[2] believed that metadiscourse guides speakers' perception of texts to listeners in a particular situation. As public speaking helps to develop confidence in English speaking skills, this study aimed to understand these practices, with a focus on providing information about the features of metadiscourse used in speeches of a country leader in delivering comprehensible messages in a variety of situations.

One of the foremost reasons for selecting speeches for this study was because metadiscourse studies on written texts outnumber

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spoken texts. The body of research studies on written texts examined in recent years covers text types like textbooks[12], student-produced texts[13], research abstracts[14], research articles[15], and newspapers editorials[16]. In contrast, the prevailing body of studies found in spoken texts are political speeches[17], thesis defense[18], speaking ability of English language learners[19], academic lectures[20], and other generally inspiring speeches[21]. These studies on spoken texts revealed that metadiscourse is clearly not a feature that speakers can dispense with when they deliver speeches. Mauranen[22] stated that there are distinctive characteristics of language in our speech which deserve close attention from linguists. Therefore, other studies in spoken texts are encouraged and deserve more comprehensive research investigations.

The main reason for selecting English speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan was that Mr. Tshering Tobgay was elected as the Prime Minister in the second democratic election in 2013. Being a leader of the country, he delivered many speeches in English to different international audiences and his speeches and talks became well-known both within the country and abroad. For example, in the Kathmandu Post, Shakya[23] reflected, "Mr. Tshering Tobgay's TED talk has now received 2 million views. He represents a country whose population is just 800,000. This means that his TED talk has two and a half times more views than there are people in his country". For Bhutanese people, he is the leader of the country and an exemplary speaker. The researcher found that his speeches were delivered in an influential and convincing style to convey information in international forums.

1.1. Research Questions

The present study investigated how interactional metadiscourse markers were employed in English speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, delivered on a variety of different topics to international audiences. This study used the following questions:

i. What interactional metadiscourse markers are used in Mr. Tshering Tobgay's speeches?
ii. Do the interactional metadiscourse markers used in Mr. Tshering Tobgay's speeches differ when he gave speeches on different topics?

2. Theoretical framework

In this study, the researcher analyzed English speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, with a special focus on interactional metadiscourse. Hyland's model of metadiscourse recognized two kinds of interaction: interactive category and interactional category. Hyland[2] mentioned that interactive metadiscourse supports writers or speakers to organize propositional content to make texts coherent, whereas interactional metadiscourse involves readers or listeners in the interaction, and indicates the writer or speakers' perspective towards the propositional content. Likewise, Hyland[24] stated that interactive metadiscourse helps in the systematic organization of discourse to anticipate reader or listeners' knowledge and reflect their explicit assessment guide that can be recovered from texts, whereas interactional metadiscourse concerns the writer or speaker's effort to control the level of personalities in texts and establish suitable relationships with interlocutors in the discourse.

In interactional metadiscourse, writers or speakers are concerned with ways to communicate[2] as interactional markers allow writers or speakers the expression of a textual voice. Further, Hyland[24] noted that interactional metadiscourse focuses on the interaction of the participants and seeks to display the writer or speakers' personality, a purpose consistent with the norms of the disciplinary community. Therefore, as it is primarily interactional metadiscourse markers that are involved in fostering the speaker-audience relationship and maintaining the personage of the author in a particular community, this study mainly focused on investigating the speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan, relating to the ways he employed interactional metadiscourse markers in his delivered speeches. The interactional metadiscourse model of Hyland[2] consists of five markers; 'hedges', 'boosters', 'attitude markers', 'self-mentions', and 'engagement markers'.

In addition to an interactional model of metadiscourse by Hyland[2], this study also included the Appraisal theory of Martin and White[3]. The Appraisal framework "is an analytical approach to explore, describe and explain the ways a language is used to evaluate, adopt stances, construct textual personas and manage interpersonal positioning and relationships"[25]. There are three main domains in Appraisal theory; attitude, engagement, and graduation. This study used one domain (attitude) of the Appraisal theory because attitude markers in the interactional model can be further broken down into three regions of feeling in the Appraisal theory. It can be feeling of affect (emotional reactions), judgment (assessing the behavior of people), and appreciation (evaluation of the value of people/things)[3, 26]

3. Research method

This study presents a qualitative descriptive research focused on content analysis. In this study, the researcher was interested in investigating interactional metadiscourse markers used in English speeches delivered to international audiences on a variety of different topics. A purposive sampling technique was used to collect data. The Office of the Prime Minister and Cabinet website was the primary source of materials for the data collection. After reading the topics and content of each speech, the researcher separated them into three categories according to the audience. Mr. Tshering Tobgay delivered eight speeches to national audiences, fifteen speeches to international audiences, and fifteen speeches to mixed audiences (consisting of national and international audiences together).

The Prime Minister's speeches ranged between 323 and 3,811 words, which indicated a considerable difference in lengths. Speeches were therefore further categorized into four different groups based on the word range; group 1: less than 1,000 words, group 2: between 1,000-2,000 words, group 3: between 2,000-3,000 words, and group 4: more than 3,000 words. There were six speeches in group 1, four speeches group 2, four speeches group 3, and one speech in group 4. In this particular study, the researcher selected the second group with four speeches between 1,000 and 2,000 words (total: 5,816 words) as in this category, the Prime Minister delivered his English speeches to international audiences on different topics (Speech 1: Connecting Asia and the World; Speech 2: Poverty Alleviation; Speech 3: Deeper Integration for Peace and Prosperity; and Speech 4: Benefit of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). The English speeches used in this study were rated by three raters including the researcher.

Since the length of each speech was still unequal, frequencies of raw figures of markers in each speech were standardized per 1000 words to find differences in use of interactional markers among the speeches. The interactional model of metadiscourse by Hyland[2] was used to investigate the probable differences in the use of interactional markers with an emphasis on attitude markers from the Appraisal theory by Martin and White[3] in the English speeches of the Prime Minister. As resources of metadiscourse sometimes perform more than a single function, the analysis was carried out manually in an effort to gain more accurate results. Besides the qualitative investigation, this study also employed the Pearson Chi-Square statistical analysis.

4. Result and discussion

This study explored how interactional metadiscourse markers are employed in the English speeches of the Prime Minister of Bhutan in performing an interactional function of making the speeches more convincing, comprehensible, and interesting for the audience. The findings which emerged signified that Mr. Tshering Tobgay used on a variety of interactional metadiscourse markers in his English speeches. The following table I presents the frequency distribution of interactional metadiscourse markers found in the different speeches.

Table I: frequency distribution of interactional markers in the different speeches

Interactional Markers		Speeches								Total	
		Speech 1		Speech 2		Speech 3		Speech 4			
		Raw no.	Per 1000 words	Raw no.	Per 1000 words	Raw no.	Per 1000 words	Raw no.	Per 1000 words	Total raw no.	Total per 1000 words
Hedges		90	49.7	68	59.2	34	26.1	60	38.6	252	173.6
Boosters		145	80.1	114	99.3	107	82.1	66	42.5	432	304.0
Attitude Markers	Affect	41	22.6	25	21.8	29	22.3	26	16.7	121	83.4
	Judgement	47	26.0	32	27.9	68	52.2	71	45.7	218	151.7
	Appreciation	63	34.8	33	28.7	62	47.6	63	40.5	221	151.7
Self-Markers		232	128.1	60	52.3	133	102.1	43	27.7	468	310.1
Engagement Markers		119	65.7	68	59.2	174	133.5	100	64.4	461	322.8
Total		737	407.0	400	348.4	607	465.8	429	276.1	2173	1497.3

In order to address the first research question, the findings indicated 1497.3 interactional metadiscourse markers in total from the four selected English speeches. Among the interactional markers, attitude markers (386.8) had the highest rank followed by engagement markers (322.8), self-mentions (310.1), boosters (304.0), and hedges (173.6).

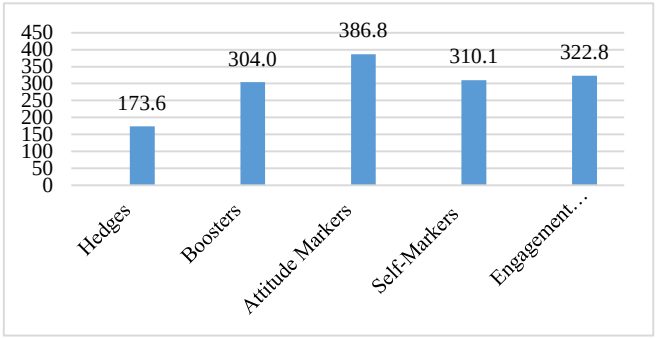


Fig. 1: Frequency distribution of interactional markers per 1000 words

Likewise, to address the second research question, the researcher investigated the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers used in the four different English speeches. From the total number of markers (1497.3), the speaker used the maximum number of markers in speech 3 (465.8) followed by speech 1 (407.0), speech 2 (348.4), and speech 4 (276.1).

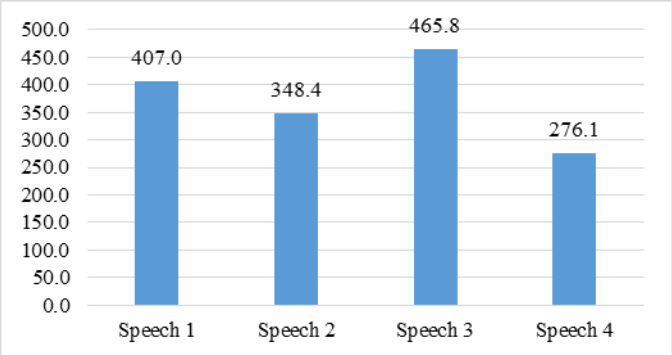


Fig. 2: Frequency distribution of interactional markers in the different speeches per 1000 words

The Pearson Chi-Square statistical analysis confirmed that although the interactional metadiscourse markers used in the speeches differed, they did not significantly vary as shown in table II below.

Table II: Statistical result of interactional markers in different speeches

	Speech (1-4)	
Interactional Markers	**Pearson Chi-Square**	**Sig.**
Hedges	12.00	0.213
Boosters	12.00	0.213
Attitude Markers	12.00	0.213
Self-Markers	12.00	0.213
Engagement Markers	12.00	0.213

In the following section, the researcher analyses and explains the use of interactional markers used by the Prime Minister of Bhutan while delivering English speeches to international audiences.

Attitude Markers were the highest markers used in the English speeches in this study. These markers express the writer's viewpoint, influence, and attitude to the proposition[2, 15]. Attitude markers are also considered as a language of evaluation.

According to Appraisal theory, attitude can be in the form of affect (emotional reactions), judgment (assessing the behavior of people), and appreciation (evaluation of the value of people/things)[3, 26]. For example;

Affect$^{(A)}$*;*
Being thoroughly intimidated$^{(A)}$ by all the entrepreneurial … *(Speech 1: Paragraph 2)*
I am happy$^{(A)}$ to inform this important gathering … *(Speech 2: Paragraph 12)*

An attitude of affect showed emotional reaction to behavior and it can be 'happy/unhappy', 'secure/insecure', or 'satisfied/dissatisfied', showing positive or negative values[26]. In the above examples, the resource 'intimidated' showed a negative affect attitude, whereas the resource 'happy' showed a positive affect attitude of the speaker.

Judgment$^{(J)}$*; and*
We know that as a tiny$^{(J)}$ country, our actions may have minimal$^{(J)}$ impact in the world. *(Speech 3: Paragraph 7)*
… Urban-rural divide poses a big challenge$^{(J)}$ for almost all countries. *(Speech 4: Paragraph 10)*

In the work of Martin and White[3] and Humphrey, Droga and Feez[26], an attitude of judgment evaluates behavior and it can be either 'social esteem' or 'social sanction'. The speaker presented judgmental social esteem resources like 'tiny' and 'minimal' to show feelings of insecurity and how Bhutan may be incapable of making a great impact to the world being a small and landlocked developing country. The speaker also presented resources of social sanction 'big challenge' and 'ignore' in the above examples to tell the truth about migration and the poverty problem that many countries face in the modern world.

Appreciation$^{(App)}$*;*
I am here as a friend and admirer of a smart and sophisticated$^{(Ap)}$ Singapore. *(Speech 1: Paragraph 3)*
But, it is our human resources that is our greatest$^{(Ap)}$ and most precious$^{(Ap)}$ asset. *(Speech 3: Paragraph 11)*

Appreciation is an attitude of evaluating the value of people/things[3, 26]. In examples, the speaker used appreciation resources of reaction 'smart and sophisticated' to appreciate the nature of Singapore. Likewise, the speaker casts off appreciation resources of valuation like 'greatest' and 'precious' considering human resources as a valuable asset for any type of development.

As attitude markers express the interpersonal relationship between text producers and listeners, it would be useful for teachers to include attitude markers into their instruction for classroom teaching-learning processes to make their instruction more convincing. Attitude markers would not only benefit teachers, but as Kuhi,

Asadollahfam and Anbarian[20] prompted, students can contribute their ideas and react critically to texts.

Engagement markers are devices used by speakers or writers to address listeners or readers specifically to emphasize on their attention or include them as communication members[2]. Through the use of engagement markers, speakers explicitly address listeners, focusing them as discourse audiences with two purposes.

First, writers or speakers use pronouns and interjections in acknowledging to sufficiently meet the prospects of readers or listeners [2].

> … our warmest felicitations to you**(EM)** on your**(EM)** election as … *(Speech 3: Paragraph 3)*
> … we**(EM)** must remind ourselves**(EM)** that an equitable pattern of growth and development is our**(EM)** cherished objective … *(Speech 4: Paragraph 12)*

The use of personal pronouns like 'you', 'your', 'we', and 'ourselves', as engagement resources depict face-to-face conversations and reduce the social distance between speakers and audiences to create the effect of a friendly relationship. In the given examples, the speaker employed audience pronouns explicitly to bring audiences into the discourse. There are other ways that speakers may address audiences using interjections like 'by the way' or 'you may notice', which can be understood as the speakers' invitation to listeners in the interaction. However, these types of engagement resources were not found in the speeches of Mr. Tshering Tobgay.

Second, speakers rhetorically involve audiences in a discourse indicating questions and obligatory modals [2].

> So, what next? **(EM)** *(Speech 1: Paragraph 20)*
> … we must**(EM)** come together in the strength of small societies … *(Speech 1: Paragraph 28)*
> Our region should**(EM)** exert itself to fulfill… *(Speech 3: Paragraph 9)*

Getting speakers and audiences involved in a discourse through the speaker asking questions to listeners will remind audiences often to understand the propositions in the text. The speaker's use of questions in a text is a way of verbally positioning listeners to draw their attention to a discourse. Likewise, obligatory modals are other engagement resources found frequently used in combination with personal pronouns to magnify the impact of persuading and informing audiences about a text. In the above examples, the speaker used engagement makers to make his presence felt and to involve listeners in the discourse to understanding the same goal.

Self-mention markers are first-person pronouns in the form of subjective, objective, or possessive adjectives in propositions. It is the indication of the presence of speakers in texts. According to Hyland[27], "the presence or the absence of explicit author reference is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and a contextually situated authorial identity". How often speakers get involved with their audiences is judged by the number of self-mentions present in texts. In the English speeches of Mr. Tshering Tobgay, the researcher found that texts were dominated by personal pronouns that signified either as self-mention markers or engagement markers. For example;

> I**(SM)** would also like to share my**(SM)** views on the … *(Speech 1: Paragraph 4)*
> … who gave us**(SM)** the legacy of Gross National Happiness … *(Speech 2: Paragraph 11)*
> We**(SM)** know that as a tiny country, our**(SM)** actions may have … *(Speech 3: Paragraph 7)*
> Bhutan**(SM)** is a small … the essence of the Bhutanese**(SM)** identity. *(Speech 1: Paragraph 22)*

Self-mention markers in the above examples highlighted the speaker's obligation for the argument in texts. The speaker presented self-mentions in two groups; first-person singular and first-person plural. First-person pronouns in singular forms were used to build an honest and sincere personage of the speaker himself in making his statement in the proposition more credible, whereas first-person pronouns in plural forms were used to represent the speaker's personal identity or represent his country to audiences. Besides personal pronouns, the speaker also mentioned 'Bhutan' and 'the Bhutanese' in his discourse introducing his country and people to the audiences listening to him. When the Prime Minister used self-mention resources, he "claims an equality with his audience"[2] in drawing speaker-listener relationships and strengthening credibility in the discourse. The result of self-mention markers employed by the speaker in this study is not in line with the findings of Sari[21] who found self-mention resources were the most frequently used marker in her study. However, the result of this study showed more frequencies in the use of first-person plural pronouns which is in line with the findings of Markus[17].

Boosters are the indicators which allow speakers to emphasize certainty and closed choices[2]. Moreover, "boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by making involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, taking a joint position against other voices"[28]. For example;

> We have certainly**(B)** made a strong connection between … *(Speech 1: Paragraph 20)*
> I am confident**(B)** that he will utilize his rich experience … *(Speech 3: Paragraph 5)*

Boosters permit speakers to display their authorization fully in emphasizing their claim and reaching similar conclusions as their listeners. In examples taken from the speeches of the Prime Minister, boosters portrayed decisiveness, certainty, and confidence, adding credibility to his speech, and persuading and convincing his listeners. Moreover, boosters displayed a strong obligation to establish his confident image with robust self-promotion, to build solidarity with his audience whilst delivering arguments and in achieving a convincing appeal.

Hedges are interactional markers that indicate the writer's withholding obligation to a proposition[2]. They usually show the speaker's lack of commitment or uncertainty toward the content of the text. Some excerpts taken from different speeches containing examples of hedges are;

> If I may**(H)** offer some**(H)** optimism from a Buddhist perspective, our spiritual masters would**(H)** probably**(H)** say that the current trend can be good … *(Speech 1: Paragraph 10)*
> … we are talking about**(H)** the nearly**(H)** 870 million people in the world who suffer from chronic undernourishment, mostly**(H)** in developing countries. *(Speech 2: Paragraph 6)*

The speaker used hedges to create positions of negotiation to express his viewpoints in alternative voices. Mai[29] said that when speakers show uncertainty in their claim, it reveals that speakers are building up a humble and cautious face in achieving the credible appeal of the discourse. In the examples shown above, 'may' and 'would' are auxiliary verbs used by a speaker to express possibility or uncertainty in polite ways and making statements less direct. Unlike boosters, used when reasoning with more certainty, hedges like 'some', 'probably', 'about', 'nearly', and 'mostly' are portrayed as statements of suggestion by the Prime Minister. In his speeches, hedges were not as frequently used in comparison to other markers, and are used the least of all, contradicting the findings of Dafouz-Milne[30], Hyland[31], Hyland and Tse[32], and Moghadam[33]. A possible reason for this difference is that the texts used in these studies were written, while the texts used by the researcher were transcripts of speeches, i.e. spoken language. The main purpose of Mr. Tshering Tobgay's speeches was to convey spoken messages and convince his audiences. He would therefore be more direct in his manner of speaking, consequently using fewer hedges.

5. Conclusion

The use of interactional metadiscourse in Mr. Tshering Tobgay's speeches connected with and informed his audiences in an interactive, clear, and elaborated direction that interlocutors' desire for a meaningfully accomplished discourse. The findings from this study provide insights and information related to the features of public speaking and interactional metadiscourse markers available in public speeches.

This study firstly contributed to the existing body of literature related to metadiscourse analysis, especially of spoken texts using interactional markers. This study would help future researchers who are interested in exploring interactional metadiscourse markers used in the spoken texts of world leaders, teachers' instruction in classrooms, students' oral presentations, and other public speeches.

Secondly, it may encourage students to develop their skills of speaking in front of peers, teachers, and social gatherings. Learning to speak is a productive and an indispensable means of everyday interaction. The Prime Minister used interactional metadiscourse markers in varying frequencies maintaining speaker-listener interaction in the particular speaking community. Ahour and Maleki[19] said that the use of metadiscourse significantly improved foreign language learners' English-speaking ability. Therefore, the use of metadiscourse would enhance the effectiveness of the speaking ability of students in their classroom presentations, extempore speeches, and debates.

Thirdly, when applied to the classroom, the researcher found that interactional discourse markers may be used by teachers to facilitate student understanding. [Sadeghi and Javanmardi[34]] mentioned the use of metadiscourse benefited teachers to facilitate the understanding of texts in their lectures. The speeches of the Prime Minister presented interactional markers that facilitated the comprehensibility of texts. Interactional markers can be of value in changing difficult or dry texts into coherent and reader-friendly materials[2, 32, 35]. Moreover, speakers' employment of metadiscourse resources and explicit guidance means that listeners spend less time in attempting to understand the information presented in the discourse.

Finally, the Prime Minister judiciously used interactional metadiscourse markers in organizing texts consciously to have a positive effect on the audiences. Good speakers should express their opinions to the speaking community with a logical organization of language via non-verbal skills to communicate with their interlocutors.

Suggestion for future study

The results of this research might have been affected by a number of limitations. It is difficult to identify the limits of interactional metadiscourse resources as they are closely connected with a particular context. It is a partially unclear term as "no taxonomy or description will ever be able to do more than partially represent a fuzzy reality"[2]. In some cases, the same word could serve more than one function, which makes the analysis more demanding.

In the analysis of spoken texts, it is possible to encounter more interactional metadiscourse resources than the examples given in the appendix of Hyland[2] because speakers involve listeners in the interaction and indicate their perspectives towards the propositional content.

While this study was conducted on the speeches of one speaker on a variety of different topics to international audiences, future researchers could expand the study of metadiscourse on speeches by analyzing different speakers whilst maintaining the same topic. Likewise, future scholars might also conduct similar studies on spoken texts by teachers and students in the classroom teaching setting and involving learning processes with the use of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse.

Moreover, the size of the data used in a study is also an essential part of the interpretation of the findings. Studying a larger size of texts could find metadiscourse markers occurring more frequently, which could provide improved and more reliable results. Future researchers could conduct studies with larger quantities of data to find more reliable differences in the use of metadiscourse markers.

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