# Writer-reader Interaction by Metadiscourse Features

## English-Persian Translation in Legal and Political Texts

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To my beloved home country, IRAN
to which I much owe



روستای واشقان
استان مرکزی / ایران

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# Contents

# Abstract

Metadiscourse features are the elements by which interactions between writer and reader and between speaker and audience are constructed, established, and directed. These features as the writer- reader interaction (s) belong to the second level of meaning and have no relation with the content of the message as the first level of meaning. Considering this dichotomy, the objective of this parallel corpus-based study was to quantitively and qualitatively compare the distribution of metadiscourse features as well as analyzing writer-reader inter-action of written discourse in translating legal and political texts from English into Persian. For this reason, a wide range of different steps were taken. First, for classifying and analyzing metadiscourse features, Hyland's model (2005) which is divided into two sub-categories of interactive and interactional meta-discourse features was used. Then, for analyzing and extracting metadiscourse features, Sketch engine corpus software was utilized as the corpus tool. Next, for extracting and analyzing the metadiscourse features in the corpus of the study, the ELRA (European Language Resources Association) parallel corpus as well as a second do it yourself (DIY) parallel corpus were utilized as the data gathering sources. These two corpora were combined into one corpus in order to compile a unified, large, balanced, representative, and uni-directional parallel corpus of English and Persian language pairs in legal and political texts aligned mostly at sentence and paragraph levels. In line with the parallel corpus, a second Persian monolingual corpus was created which functioned as the reference corpus. This monolingual corpus was compiled so that the metadiscourse features of the English corpus as well as their translations into Persian could be compared with those of the non-translated original texts in Persian language.

Once the corpora were compiled and ready for analysis, the Persian mono-lingual reference corpus was, manually, analyzed, and scrutinized line by line in order to detect any single token of metadiscourse features. After that their dis-tribution and frequency were analyzed and calculated by using Sketch engine corpus software. The tokens of metadiscourse features were classified based

on Hyland's model. Then, the same process was done for the English-Persian parallel corpus. In the final stage, the instances of metadiscourse features were compared in a three-dimensional model. The metadiscourse features of the Persian language (reference corpus) were analyzed to see how they were used in Persian language. They were then compared from English into Persian to see how they were used and distributed in English texts and in their Persian translations. In the final stage, metadiscourse features of the English-Persian corpus were compared with those of the Persian monolingual corpus to see how these features were used in English language, in Persian translated language and in Persian non-translated original language.

The results of this comparison revealed that in terms of type-token ratio, the Persian language ratio was 77, 15 which meant that the Persian monolingual corpus had relatively a high level of linguistic complexity. In addition, the type-token ratio of the English corpus was 89, 19 which was more than that of the Persian monolingual corpus. This ratio showed that the English corpus had a lower number of repetitions and a more lexical density when compared to the Persian monolingual corpus. However, the type-token ratio of the Persian translations was 91,12, which means that Persian language like the English corpus and unlike the Persian monolingual corpus had a high level of lexical density and lower number of repetitions.

In terms of metadiscourse features distribution, the quantitative results of this study revealed that the English corpus had more tokens of metadiscourse features as compared to that of Persian translations. In addition, the corpora of both English and Persian had more interactive metadiscourse features than interactional metadiscourse features. This inclination towards interactive metadiscourse features was similar to Persian monolingual corpus. Moreover, the quantitative analysis demonstrated that in both corpora and in the interactive category, transitions, frame markers and code glosses were the most applied metadiscourse features; whereas in the interactional category, boosters, self-mentions, and hedges were the most used metadiscourse features.

The qualitative analysis of the concordance lines, however, illustrated that in translation from English into Persian, there were traces of implicit change, deemphasis change, disinformation change, and invisibility change (four types of changes) as not all of the metadiscourse features had been translated. Finally,

it can be said that although both English and Persian languages belong to the writer-oriented category of languages, due to the heterogeneous distribution of metadiscourse features from English to Persian, the interaction between writer and reader in the process of translation from English into Persian in legal and political texts changed; meaning that the translations into Persian language had more propinquity towards a more reader-oriented language. The results of this study are hoped to be found useful for researchers and scholars in such fields as translation studies, corpus-based translation studies, corpus linguistics, text analysis as well as contrastive linguistics.

# 1    Background and Purpose

## 1.1    Introduction

As people communicate, either in spoken or written modes, their interactions include features by which they can organize their texts or speech as well as expressing their own attitudes towards the text and speech or the receiver(s) (Hyland, 2001). In this sense, it is argued that texts (as one mode of communication) are records of "dialogue between the writer and the reader in that the writer enacts the roles of both participants in the unfolding dialogue" (Thompson, 2001, p. 60) and are usually produced at two levels of meanings; that is to say, a propositional content meaning level and a writer-reader interaction level (Hyland, 2005; Flowerdew, 2011 & 2015; Herriman, 2014). On the propositional content level, the author will supply the needed information about the subject matter and refer to the events and states of matters which are all transformed by him in the text (Hyland, 2018). In other words, on this level, meaning refers, mostly, to information in external reality and such aspects of text as actions, events or the intentions which are all depicted in the text and which can be attested, denied, confirmed, argued or even doubted (Halliday, 1994). However, on the interactional level – which is the second level of meaning – the author does not add anything to the subject matter and/or content; instead, he makes interaction with the prospective receiver(s) of his message. Indeed, on this level of meaning, authors/speakers represent themselves in the text and facilitate the communication between authors and the prospective readers or audience (Latawiec, 2012).

Vande Kopple (2002) supports this notion of binary text construction; putting forward the idea that texts are organized at two levels. In other words, "On one level we expand ideational material. On the levels of metadiscourse, we do not expand ideational material but help our readers connect, organize, interpret, evaluate, and develop attitudes towards that material" (p. 93). The level on which the interaction between writer and reader is established and depicted is literally called metadiscourse or metadiscoursal. Indeed, it is on the

level of metadiscourse (interaction) that the author exploits devices to assist the readers to "organize, classify, interpret, evaluate and react to such material" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 83).

In the same line, such other scholars as Crismore (1989), Hyland, (2005) and Herriman, (2014) point to the fact that there are two levels of discourses or meanings construction as primary and secondary. The primary level is concerned with the subject matter or propositional content in which the content and the state of the affairs is constructed; whereas, in the second level, the aim is to establish the relationship between the writer and the reader or between the speaker and the audience. This claim is supported by a quotation from Boggel (2009) who puts forward the claim that "metadiscourse provides valuable means and strategies … as it helps to clarify textual organization, to make overt the author's presence in the text and to interact with the intended readership or audience" (p. 1).

In the second level of meaning, the writer-reader or metadiscoursal level, the writers and speakers interact with their intended readers and audience (Hyland & Tse, 2004; Grosman, 2011). As a matter of fact, it is on this level that the interaction between the writer and the reader is made and the writer establishes the interaction with the readers; "explicitly guiding them through its structure and organization, commenting on the writing process itself or expressing their opinions and beliefs concerning its content" (Herriman, 2014, P.1). In other words, on this level, the writer does not expand the content meaning level; instead, he goes beyond the subject matter and tries to account for the readerships' expectations (Boggel, 2009).

These two levels of meanings are constructed and related to each other by the notion of metadiscourse features (Hyland, 2005). Indeed, metadiscourse refers to "the ways writers refer to the text, the writer and the reader to organize the propositional content of the text, help readers understand the text, and persuade readers to accept their arguments" (Williams, 2010, p. 73). In other words, the main function of metadiscourse features is to guide and assist the prospective readers or listeners in how to interpret the propositional content (Flowerdew, 2015). To further elaborate the notion of metadiscourse, it is defined as "discourse about discourse and refers to the author's linguistic manifestation in a text to bracket the discourse organization and the expressive

implications of what is being said" (Hyland, 1999, p. 5). To put it differently, metadiscourse features are the rhetorical devices by which the author represents his presence in the text and guides the reader in the communication (Hyland, 2017).
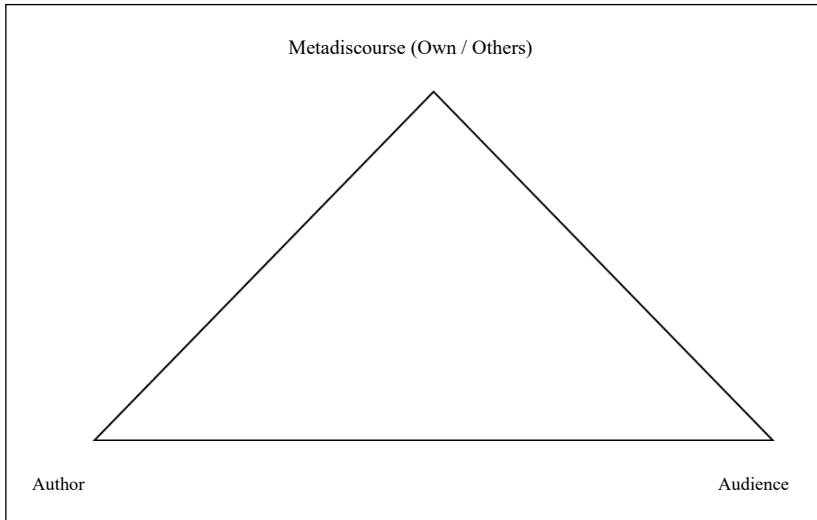
Metadiscourse (Own / Others)

Author                                                                    Audience

**Figure 1.1:** A metadiscourse model of author and audience interaction (Crismore, 1989)

Metadiscourse is defined by Ädel (2006) as "text about the evolving text, or the writer's explicit commentary on her ongoing discourse" (p. 2006). Metadiscourse features as the essential parts of any text production (Hyland, 2005) indicate that interaction and communication are more than the mere exchange of information between the sender and the receiver; instead, they involve the personalities, idiosyncrasies and personality traits of the communicators as well as communication modes (Hyland, 2005) and are used to demonstrate the writer's reaction to the text as well as constructing the writer-reader interaction (Asghar, 2015). These features refer mostly to those aspects/elements of language which are beyond the subject matters (Nasiri, 2013) and are used by the writers to help the acceptability and comprehensibility of the text for the reader.