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RESEARCH PAPER

Interaction in Business Discourse: A Comparative Study of the Journalistic Stance in Pakistani English Newspapers

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
 Corresponding Author: moazzam.ali@uog.edu.pk	The current study explores the authorial presence in the journalistic business discourse by comparing the use of two interactional features of *hedges* and *boosters* in the business news-reports and the business columns. The data comprised the corpus of business news-reports and the business columns of 0.45 million and 0.65 million words, respectively. This corpus was drawn from four widely circulated Pakistani English dailies i.e., The Dawn, The Business Recorder, The Nation and The Daily Times. AntConc 3.4.4, a corpus tool, was used to identify total frequency occurrences of the lexical resources of *hedges* and *boosters*. The study also enlists and compares ten more frequently used expressions of hedges and boosters in the corpus to establish that the business columns are more interactive than the business news-reports. It is envisaged that the ESP syllabus designers and educationists may benefit from the findings of the study to develop effective teaching materials to improve the English communication skills of the business students

Introduction

Education Over the years, many scholars of discourse studies have keenly explored the rhetorical features of academic discourses to suggest the significance of such studies for developing syllabus and course materials for language teaching Nevertheless, a better understanding of the micro-level linguistic variations across different genres and registers has wider implications for different areas of human communication. Unfortunately, the language of business discourse has not been extensively studies to understand how business communication can be a form of social action in commercial domains of activity (Bargiela-Chiappini, Nickerson, and Planken, 2008). Moreover, the business discourse research has remained primarily concerned with the intercultural and critical aspects of the language used

by the business community (e.g., Chiappini, Nickerson & Planken, 2013), and the interest in the text-oriented, generic studies of the corporate discourse is a relevantly recent phenomenon.

Journalistic writings are not impersonal, as writers employ specific linguistic resources which mark their presence in the texts (see, Fu & Hyland, 2014; Lundell, 2014). The propositional content of a text can be invested by the use of rhetorical strategies and resources to interpersonally negotiate meanings. The "Interpersonal Model" by Hyland (2017) divides such communicative features as *interactive* and *interactional* dimensions of *metadiscourse*— a rhetorical system marking the attitudes of the writers "towards both the content and the audience of the text" (Hyland, 2005, p. 4).

Research exploring meta-discursive features in a text has, generally, focused on the use of lexical resources which help a writer to project his/her personality and mark the ideational meaning in the text (Hyland, 1998). In newspaper discourse, features of metadiscourse are used by the writer to take a stance and guide the reader to some targeted interpretation of the propositional content. Similarly, with an understanding that journalistic writings are a form of social engagement, differentially vying in the business news-reports and business columns, the current study aims at exploring how the journalistic stance is negotiated in the two selected registers of the business discourse of the Pakistani English newspapers. The study, specifically, explores the quantitative and qualitative differences in the use of *hedges* and *boosters* in the business corpus of the business news-reports and the business columns published in Pakistani English dailies. So, the following research questions direct the methods and analytical procedures of the study:

1. What rhetorical resources are employed by the writers to take the journalistic stance in the business discourse of Pakistani English newspapers?

2. How does the use of hedges and the *boosters*, comparatively, mark interactional meaning in the business news-reports and business columns published in Pakistani English newspapers?

Literature Review

Language use is a form of social engagement that involves the conventional use of linguistic resources and rhetorical strategies which are employed by a particular discourse community (Swales, 1990). Furthermore, the use of non-conventional linguistic practices might deprive the writer from seeking the membership of the discourse community (Hyland & Hamp-Lyons, 2002). The established ways of interaction within a discourse community are a part of social competence of the members who seek to participate in their discourse community. Similarly, the textual features of the journalistic genre are also determined and

controlled by the specific aims of the communicative event taking place within a discourse community and the writers of business news-reports and columns are expected to follow the conventions of the journalistic discourse community.

News-reports and columns are the two text-types of journalistic genre which carry certain overlapping but different communicative objectives. The difference in the communicative goals of these text-types, at linguistic level, regulate the use of linguistic features and, at social level, establish the writer as a member of different discourse communities (see, Abdi, R., Rizi, M. T., & Tavakoli, M. 2010).Taking care of social relationship in writing system is imperative because a text achieves its communicative objectives only when the writer has appropriately evaluated the reader's resources of interpreting it. This study comparatively evaluates the use of interactive linguistic features in the news-reports and columns by employing Hyland's (2005) framework of metadiscourse.

The term 'metadiscourse' was coined by Zellig Harris in (1959) to offer a way of understanding language in use and to guide a receiver's perception of a text (Hyland, 2005, p. 3). Metadisocourse refers to the self-reflective linguistic features that not only mark the knowledge territories of a genre but also allow the writer to interactively engage with the reader of the text (Hyland, 2005). Metadiscourse as a framework delineates communication as a form of social engagement (Bruce, 2003). It explicates how a writer exhibits his/her self in the text by opting for certain lexical choices and by modulating its propositional content. Use of metadiscursive features also ascribes credibility, authority and personality to the writer who negotiates the context of the communication in linguistic terms.

Halliday's (1994) notion of macro functions of the text consists of three meta-functions as ideational, interpersonal and textual. These metafunctions are theoretically related to the

Hyland's (2005) Interaction Model

Hyland's (2005) concept of metadiscourse. Thompson & Thetela (1995) and Thompson (2001), while discussing the textual interaction have made the distinction between interactional and interactive linguistic features which yield the ideational meaning in a text. The use of these lexicogrammatical features serve as an interface for the text and the context. Expounding upon the functional approaches of the text and context, Hyland (2010) has introduced a system of metadiscourse as comprising of interactive and interactional features that assist writers to take up positions and associate themselves with their viewers or audience in a certain context.

The following figure delineates the system of interaction into its categories and sub-categories. (See fig. 1 below).
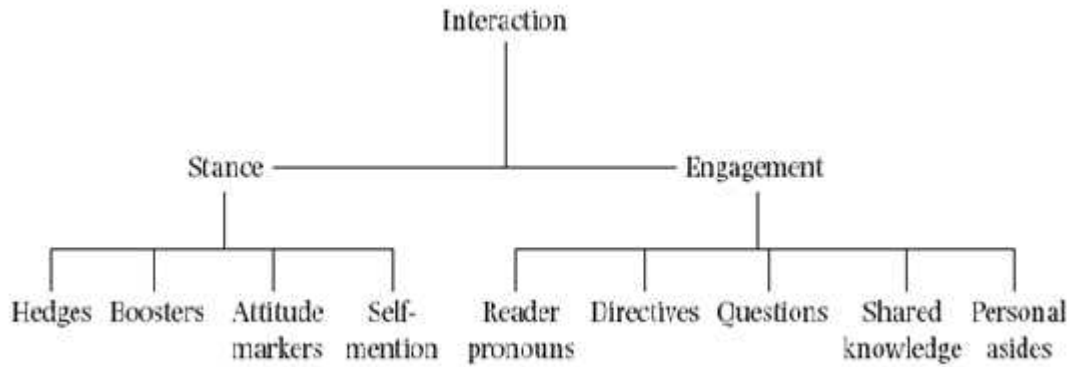
Fig. 1: Resources of Interaction (Hyland, 2005)

The model of interaction, according to Hyland (2005) is a system of metadiscourse features through with a writer negotiates his/her position and establishes a relationship with the audience. This model has two broader categories as Stance and Engagement. Both these categories are further divided into sub-categories. In the following, considering the focus of the study, we will only discuss Stance and two of its sub-categories, i.e., *hedges* and *boosters*.

Stance

The term stance is used for the strategies that an author uses to present themselves and state their thoughts and commitments. Stance is a system of lexicogrammatical means that mark a writer's positions in the text (e.g. Johnston, 2008 and Jaffe, 2009). Stance features are further categorized by Hyland (2005) into four sub-categories as a) *hedges*, b) *boosters*, c) *attitude markers*, and d) *self-mentions*. For the current study, the researchers have only studied how the use of *hedges* and *boosters* establish the journalistic stance in the business news-reports and business columns. According to Hyland (2005), *hedges* and *boosters* both establish 'balance' in a text and convey writer's "commitment to text content and respect for readers" (p. 53). So, the primary reason to delimit the scope of the study was to focus only on those systems of interaction that are used by the authors to express their commitment to the propositional content of the text. As attitude markers and self-mentions do not establish such commitments so these two sub-systems of Stance were not included in the study. As the focus of the study is the *hedges* and the *boosters*, so the following sections will focus only on these two sub-categories of Stance.

Hedges

Hedges are the words which are used to indicate the uncertainty towards a proposition in a text. According to Lakoff (1972), these are the linguistic resources which are used to make propositional content ambiguous and tentative. Slagar-

Meyer (1994) explains *hedges* as "understatements used to convey (purposive) vagueness and tentativeness, and to make sentences more acceptable to the hearer or the reader, thus increasing their chance of ratification and reducing the risk of negation". Hedges are generally used in the beginning of a sentence to caution the tentativeness of the proposition. Some typical examples of *hedges* are, "I believe", "I think", and "I mean".

Boosters

Boosters are the lexical resources which are used by the writers or speakers to indicate certainty in what they speak or write. It is indicated by the words like clearly, obviously, and certainly (Hyland, 2005). These resources are regularly used in constructing arguments. The use of booster markers is a kind of strategy to acknowledge the existence of different contradictory positions which are challenged by the author. Additionally, this feature also expresses the attachment and solidarity with the audience as the writer negotiates his position by voicing a particular point of view that shows the commitment to the propositional content of the text.

Material and Methods

The objectives of the study were achieved by applying quantitative approaches of data collection and analysis. Data was collected from the English dailies and later converted into text files for the corpus analysis to explicate how *hedges* and *boosters* are used as a means of establishing a stance in journalistic writings. The comparative analysis of the frequency occurrences established the quantitative differences in the use of *hedges* and *boosters* in business new-reports and business columns.

Data Collection and Sample Size

The researcher has collected data and developed the corpus from four Pakistani English business newspapers. These newspapers included, The Dawn, The Business Recorder, The Nation and Daily Times. The reason for this selection was their wide circulation in Pakistan. The data drom these dailies was collected only for the business news-reports and business columns published during the span of almost four months. The total size of the collected corpus was 1.1 million (See, table 1). To compile this data, first, the researcher copied the news-reports or columns on MS word document. Afterwards, images and hyperlinks were removed and cleaned data was saved in the form of ".txt" file type. The conversion to .txt format was necessary requirement for the analysis on the corpus tool (AntConc) used for the study. The scheme of the data is given below

Table 1
Distribution of Corpus

Newspaper	Publication Dates	Frequency of words

Daily times	01-01-2016 to 06-04-2016	307402
The Dawn	01-01-2016 to 17-04-2016	330079
The Nation	01-01-2016 to 17-04-2016	392356
Business Recorder	01-01-2016 to 14-04-2016	93873

Data Analysis Tool

The researcher has used "AntConc 3.4.4" to explore the occurrences of interactional metadiscourse features in the corpus. There are multiple options in the software to investigate the linguistic occurrences but the researcher has used only concordance and word-list. Concordance shows the frequency of examined word and the word list shows the frequency of words and word type as well. The other options that the software offers are concordance plot, cluster/N-Grams, collocates, keyword list and file view.

Data Presentation and Analysis

Hyland's (2005) interaction model provided the theoretical grounds for the selection of *hedges* and *boosters* as the markers of Stance in Pakistani newspaper business discourse. Hyland (2005) has identified an extensive but not an exhaustive list of possible lexical resources that mark *hedges* and *boosters* in the text. The researchers used the features of concordance and word-list to identify the frequency occurrences of these resources before the comparative analysis. The results are presented in the form of table and graphs as well. The details of the analysis are given below.

Hedges

As discussed earlier, *hedges* are the words which are used to indicate improbability towards the proposition. These are the words used to make things ambiguous. Hedges indicate the writer's decision to suppress the complete commitment to a proposition. The following table gives the top ten *hedges* in Pakistani business news-reports and columns.

Table 2
Top Ten Hedges in Pakistani Business Newspaper Discourse

Rank	Business News-Reports			Business Columns		
	Top ten Hedges	*Frequency Occurrence*	*Normalized frequency per million*	*Top ten Hedges*	*Frequency Occurrence*	*Normalized frequency per million*
1	Would	474	1185	May	502	838.34
2	About	330	825	About	471	786.57
3	Should	280	700	Should	320	534.4
4	May	205	512.5	Could	302	504.34
5	Around	186	465	Likely	201	335.67

6	Could	160	400	Almost	200	334
7	Almost	107	267.5	May be	142	237.14
8	Likely	103	257.5	Perhaps	139	232.13
9	Possible	63	157.5	Around	133	222.11
10	Suggest	55	137.5	Seems	120	200.4

The use of *hedges* indicates that writer is not fully committed to his argument and acknowledges the possibility of other challenging point of views. According to the table given above, the most widely used word in the category of *hedges* is "would" which has been used 474 times and the least used *hedges* is "suggested" which has been used 55 times in the corpus of business news. Similarly, the most widely used word in the category of *hedges* in the corpus of Pakistani business columns is "may" which has been used 502 times and the least used *hedges* in Pakistani business news is "seems" and its frequency is 120. There are some words which are common in the both categories e.g. about is at second number in news as well as in business columns. Similarly "should" is also at same rank in both corpuses. "May" is at the fourth number in business news and at first number in business columns.

Boosters

The following table presents the top ten *boosters* in the corpus of Pakistani business news-reports and columns.

Rank	Business News-Reports			Business Columns		
	Top ten Boosters	*Frequency Occurrence*	*Normalized frequency per million*	*Top ten Boosters*	*Frequency Occurrence*	*Normalized frequency per million*
1	Never	41	102.5	Actually	112	187.04
2	Clear	37	92.5	Never	110	183.7
3	Believe	36	90	Indeed	110	183.7
4	Establish	30	75	Always	97	161.99
5	Certain	28	70	Clear	93	155.31
6	Always	26	65	Must	86	143.62
7	Must	24	60	Of Course	85	141.95
8	Actually	21	52.5	Certain	70	116.9
9	Believes	17	42.5	Clearly	69	115.23
10	Believed	16	40	Estab-lished	50	83.5

The purpose of using boosters is to show the complete commitment towards the proposition. Boosters help their writers to present their argument with complete assurance. As shown in the most widely used booster in business news is "never" and the least used booster is "believed" and they have normalized frequency of 102.5 and 40 respectively. Furthermore, the most widely used booster

in business columns is "actually" and the least used booster is "established" and these have normalized frequency is 187.04 and 83.5, respectively.

The total number of *hedges* and *boosters* per million words in the business news-reports and business columns are given below in the table.

Table 4
Comparison for Hedges and Boosters in Pakistani Business Newspaper Discourse

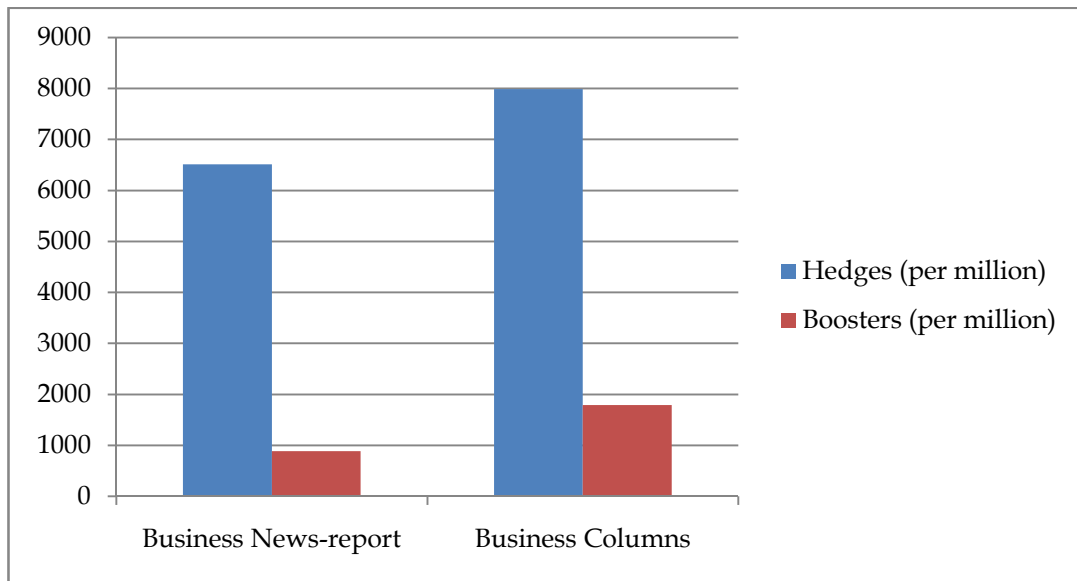| Stance Features	Business News-reports	Business Columns
Hedges (per million words)	6512.5	7987.61
Boosters (per million words)	882.5	1790.29

Fig 2: Comparison for Hedges and Boosters in Pakistani Business Newspaper Discourse

The above mentioned chart indicates that among *hedges* and *boosters*, *hedges* have been used more widely in business columns than in the business news-reports.

Results and Discussions

One of the reasons for having more lexical resources of *hedges* and *boosters* in business columns is that the writer while writing business columns gives some probable figures about the business market, according to their observations. Their tentative and calculated use of language requires a more frequent use of *hedges* and *boosters*. In fact, writing columns, writers cannot give the exact figures and rely upon their tentative opinions and tentative predictions which necessitate a frequent use of *hedges* and *boosters*. The pronounced use of *hedges* and *boosters* in business news columns, help the writer to establish solidarity with the audience at

interpersonal level.. On the other hand, in business news-reports, the writers are more inclined to state the fact as news. So, in news-reports the writers make little use of *hedges* and *boosters*. In the business news-reports writers convey the news so they do not become too interpersonal.

For business news-reports and news columns it is also obvious from the data that comparatively, writers prefer to use *hedges* more frequently the lexical resources of *hedges* than that of *boosters*. This shows that the writers of business news-reports and business columns both remain tentative in their stance and avoid emphatically present their arguments in their writings. This provides them an opportunity to establish a relationship with their readers in which readers are more autonomous and more responsible for making any monetary decision.

Conclusion

This study investigates the interactional metadiscourse features in the corpus of Pakistani newspaper business discourse. To explore the construction of *Business Knowledge* and social interactions in journalistic business discourse, two texts-types of business news-report and business columns were selected. The analysis of more than one million words data reveals that in the corpus of business columns, the authors take a more interpersonal stance as compared with the corpus of business news-reports. The communicative function of news-reports requires higher degree of objectivity from the writer, and, hence, the writers employ less frequent use of the lexical resources of *hedges* and *boosters*. There is a little research available on the use of interactional features in different registers of business discourse. Findings of this study can be substantiated, in future, with more studies in this area of inquiry. The current study provides a baseline data for the comparison of the findings with the other registers of Pakistani Journalistic English and business discourse. In future,, it is expected that with a large-size corpus comprising multiple registers of business discourse, one may better understand the role of establishing interpersonal writer-reader relationship.

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