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## METADISOURSE FUNCTIONS IN ENGLISH AND PERSIAN SOCIOLOGY ARTICLES: A STUDY IN CONTRASTIVE RHETORIC

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### ABSTRACT

This study on contrastive rhetoric reports on metadiscourse functions in sociology articles in Persian and English. The results have revealed a higher number of metadiscourse elements in the English texts. Among the different metadiscourse elements used, text connectors are the most frequently employed in both languages. Modality markers are the second most frequent in both languages although the English writers used nearly twice the number of these markers. Overall, it is found that the frequency of textual metadiscourse markers is greater than the interpersonal markers in both language samples. It was further revealed that the Persian writers of sociology texts are less interested in explicitly orienting the readers and some of the main points in an article, especially in the concluding section, are left for the readers to infer. This, we believe, is the result of less reliance on academic writing in the educational system of the country. Instead, the Iranians are largely encouraged to employ a flowery language and rhetoric to decorate their writing in their school years which makes them less attentive of their readers.

KEYWORDS: Metadiscourse; rhetoric; Persian; English; sociology texts.

### 1. Introduction

Since its inception in 1966 by Kaplan, contrastive rhetoric has been developed as a theory and research to examine different discourses and rhetorical uses of languages, and contrastive rhetoric analysts have suggested ways in which second language writers and readers need to adjust to write and read in English. Rhetorical use of language, which involves proper linguistic choices, refers to the act of convincing and orienting an audience of one's arguments. The effectiveness of these choices lies in their cognitive and cultural values to a community.

Kaplan (1966: 16), inspired by the Sapir–Whorf hypothesis, stressed that “writers with different linguistic and cultural background are likely to organize their paragraph

differently presumably because they tend to organize their thought differently". Therefore, a non-native learner, in order to produce a more acceptable piece of writing, should learn, beside the system of the L2 writing, conventions which operate on discourse and text level and which are the result of an L2 speaker's culture and thought patterns. He further (1984: 14) contends that the main concern of contrastive rhetoric is the notion that speakers of different languages use different devices to present information, to establish relationships among ideas, and to show centrality of one idea as opposed to another to select most effective means of presentation.

## 2. Background

In his pioneering study, Kaplan (1966), believing in how an individual's worldview and perceptions of the self can be represented through language, analyzed the organization of paragraphs in about 600 ESL student essays. After making the link between the cultural thought patterns and language, he points out to what he considers the erroneous assumption "that because a student can write an adequate essay in his native language, he can necessarily write an adequate essay in a second language" (Kaplan 1966: 3). Kaplan claims that "the foreign-student paper is out of focus because the foreign student is employing a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violates the expectation of the native reader" (Kaplan 1966: 4). Believing that an ideal English paragraph is linearly organized, he analyzed the samples of ESL students' writings and found that those samples reflect the culture-specific thought patterns of the student writers. He illustrates these thought patterns in the form of a now-famous diagram.

The diagram below (Figure 1), Kaplan maintains, displays the extensive parallel constructions in Semitic group such as Arabic, an "indirect" approach to the topic in the Oriental group, and frequent digression in Romance and Slavic groups (Kaplan 1966: 19). He also illustrates English paragraph structure in a straight line meaning that English paragraph is very much linearly organized.

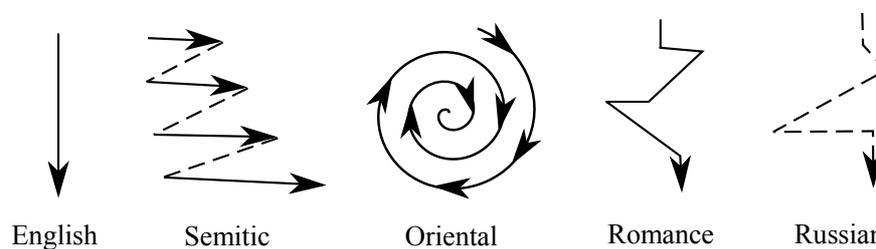


Figure 1. Thought patterns of different nations (from Kaplan 1966: 15).

Although this illustration is now often criticized for being too simplistic, for it is overgeneralizing and also because it assumes English rhetorical model to be “straight”, Kaplan’s hypothesis is still given consideration because it points out the nature of these rhetorical variations across cultures. Leki (1991: 123) notes that although the work of Kaplan is “exploratory” and to some extent “more intuitive than scientific”, it is “valuable in establishing contrastive rhetoric as a new field of inquiry”.

Clyne (1981, 1984) studied two different writing tasks from English-speaking and German-speaking subjects. The studies provided clues for Clyne to conclude that German discourse is less linear than English. While English scholars pay more attention to formal discourse, their German counterparts pay more attention to the content of the discourse. These contrastive studies give us better insights into writing styles in different languages than do the ones by Kaplan (1966) and others that investigated the texts in a common second language because they compare the original texts written by professionals, not just student essays in a second language.

Hinds (1987), by evaluating English and Japanese texts, claims that while English uses a writer-responsible rhetoric (i.e. it is the duty of the writer to make his/her text clear to the reader), Japanese uses a reader-responsible rhetoric (i.e. it is the duty of the reader to understand what the writer has intended to say). In other words, a reader- or writer-responsible rhetorical tradition depends on the degree that the reader or the writer involved in making inferential activity in comprehending the text.

Indrasutra (1988), cited in Noor (2001: 264), investigated 60 essays written by American and Thai students and found out that Thai students focused on mental status more than American students did. She supports this by arguing that Thai students are more influenced by religious beliefs than American students. The essence of the concept of genre, as now used in applied linguistics, ESP and rhetoric, is an emphasis on the primacy of communicative purpose and the ways in which communicative needs shape or influence rhetorical structures (Holmes 1997: 322).

### 2.1. On metadiscourse

Due to the definitions presented for the genre, some researchers tried to classify different types of texts into different genres. Consequently, research articles (RAs) of academic writing were recognized as a genre by some researchers (Swales 1990; Mauranen 1993; Connor 1996; and Valero-Garces 1996). Valero-Garces (1996: 281) notes that “the universal character of academic literature derives, in my view, from the fact that academic papers belong to the same genre”. On the same ground, a research paper can be said to constitute a genre within the scientific world with different conventions across different disciplines. These conventions are, nevertheless, realized through rhetoric.

From whatever perspective we look at genre and rhetoric, metadiscourse conventions are of prime importance in the organization of a text. Vande Kopple (1985: 83) believes that metadiscourse is the linguistic material which “does not add propositional

content, but rather signals the presence of the author” in the text. Mauranen (1993: 8) and Valero-Garces (1996: 282), taking nearly the same stance, refer to it as certain elements in the text that go beyond the propositional content. Hyland (1998: 438) suggests that metadiscourse is those aspects of the text which “explicitly refer to the organization of the discourse or the writer’s stance towards either the content or the reader”. More recently, Vande Kopple (2002: 92), who has worked considerably on metadiscourse and based his idea on Halliday’s (1973) taxonomy of macrofunctions of language, defines it as the elements in text that “convey meaning other than those that are primarily referential”. Metadiscourse is, therefore, a crucial rhetorical device for writers for it allows them to engage and influence readers in ways that conform to the norms of a discipline, values and ideology of a community, thus expressing textual and interpersonal meanings in a way to be credible and convincing to the audience of that community (Hyland 1999: 5; 2005: 18).

Fuertes-Olivera et al. (2001) state two different approaches that are currently found in the literature on metadiscourse. On the one hand, linguists such as Mauranen (1993) and some others limit the notion of metadiscourse to Halliday’s textual metafunction of language. They concentrate on analyzing text features that play a textual organizing role. On the other hand, scholars such as Vande Kopple (1985) and Hyland (2005) take a more comprehensive view which includes not only text-organizing elements but also interactive elements such as the expressions of the author’s attitudes and certainty, usually associated with Halliday’s interpersonal metafunctions.

A variety of metadiscourse taxonomies have so far been proposed. Metadiscourse elements can be classified according to their meaning, forms and function. Vande Kopple (1985) gives a mainly functional classification based on Halliday’s (1973, 1985) macrofunctions of language. Halliday (1973: 58) has shown that when people use language, they usually work towards fulfilling three macrofunctions, by trying to provide expressions of their experience, to interact with their audience, and to organize their expressions into cohesive discourses whose addressees can make coherent sense of. In other words, he asserts that people communicate with messages that are integrated expressions of three different kinds of meaning, which he calls ideational, textual, and interpersonal. Elements in ideational set are concerned with the expressions of our experience, “both of the external world and of the inner world of our own consciousness” (Halliday 1973: 58). Elements within the textual set have “an enabling function, that of creating text, which is language in operation as distinct from strings of words or isolated sentences and clauses” (Halliday 1973: 58). Finally, elements within the interpersonal set are concerned with “language as mediator of role” including the expressions of our own personalities and personal feelings as well as forms of interaction with our participants (Halliday 1973: 58).

Accordingly, Vande Kopple (2002: 114) believes that primary discourse fulfills Halliday’s ideational function and metadiscourse serves Halliday’s interpersonal and textual functions of language. Therefore, he suggests two main categories for metadiscourse; textual and interpersonal (see below). Textual metadiscourse, sometimes called meta-

text, serves the function of organizing the text and directing the reader. Interpersonal metadiscourse is employed to develop the relationship between the reader and the writer and to add the writer's personal belief and degree of commitment towards an ongoing proposition. In his classification, Vande Kopple (1985) distinguishes between seven subcategories of metadiscourse, four of which belong to textual functions and three others to interpersonal function. The textual ones are: (a) text connectives including conjunctions, sequence markers, etc. (e.g. *because, first, next*, etc.); (b) code glosses, to help readers grasp the meaning of words, phrase, or idioms (e.g. *x means y*); (c) action markers or illocution markers which are indicators of discourse acts (e.g. *to illustrate this, I hypothesize that, to sum up*, etc.); and (d) narrators (e.g. *according to, as, and so on*). The interpersonal function includes: (a) modality markers, to assess certainty/uncertainty of propositional content and the degree of commitment (e.g. *obviously, clearly*, etc.); (b) attitude markers, to reveal the author's attitudes toward the propositional content (e.g. *surprisingly, I find that...*, etc.); and (c) commentaries to draw readers into an implicit dialogue with the author (e.g. *you may not agree that..., believe me...*, and the like).

Moreover, Crismore and Fransworth, cited in Valero-Garces (1996: 283–284), expanded Vande Kopple's taxonomy by including interactive elements into it. Their schema, in addition, distinguishes between tactical metadiscourse (preview, tactical enumeration, topic shift, review, conclusion and forecast) and lexical metadiscourse (limiters, hedges, emphatics, evaluatives, formulators, appeals, directives and asides). Crismore et al. (1993) and then Hyland (1999, 2005) adopted the same major textual and interpersonal categories and presented different taxonomies under the assumption that metadiscourse is an open category to which new items can be added to meet the needs of the situation (Vande Kopple 1985: 83). Mauranen (1993) adds another taxonomy to these classifications. He takes textual metadiscourse (metatext) as his concern and divides it into four categories: (a) text connectors like *however, first, last*, etc.; (b) reviews like *as previously mentioned, we noted above that*, etc.; (c) previews such as *we show below that, it will be discussed later that*, etc.; and (d) action markers like *I assume that, for example*, etc. These categories, which will be expanded below, are adopted as the textual metadiscourse part of this study. Mauranen investigated the rhetorical differences between texts written by academics with different cultural backgrounds (Anglo-American and Finnish) with respect to metadiscourse use in economics research articles. The results indicate that Anglo-American writers use more metadiscourse than Finnish writers do. She concludes that Anglo-American writers are more concerned with guiding and orienting the readers than Finns (Mauranen 1993: 16).

In 1996, Valero-Garces, following the same approach, conducted a study on the cultural differences between texts in English by Spanish and Anglo-American authors in terms of frequency and preference of use of metadiscourse in economic RAs. Based on the results, he came to agree with Mauranen (1993) on the intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of writers within the same genre. He also concludes that Anglo-American writers show more interest in guiding and orienting readers in the process of

interpretation and that they are more prevalent and explicit in the text than Spanish authors when writing in English (1996: 292).

Moreno (1997) conducted another study on metadiscourse in Spanish and English scientific texts. She examined the use of cause-effect relationship in business and economic RAs by native writers of the two languages. The results showed that both language samples used cause-effect expressions with similar frequency. She concluded that it is the writing conventions of the RA genre, not the English and Spanish different writing cultures that govern the writers' strategies in using cause-effect relations in texts (Moreno 1997: 171, 174).

Following Moreno (1997), the present study aims at investigating academic RAs in Persian and English using some selected categories and types of metadiscourse in order to find out how the rhetorical systems of the two different languages can differ.

### 3. Methodology

Based on Mauranen (1993) and Connor's (1996) beliefs, we started with the fact that RAs can be taken as a genre. Moreover, in order to narrow it down, all RAs were selected from sociology, a general discipline which allows the researchers a better interpretability of the data as compared to other disciplines.

The samples were selected randomly from among tens of articles in the two languages in consultation with the informants and professional academics at the Sociology Department of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz, a city in the South West of Iran. According to the experts in the field, the academic journals selected were the most widely-read ones in sociology (see the list below). The ten English RAs we finally selected randomly, from among our preliminary selection of thirty articles, had been written by English authors with Anglo-American dominance. The decision regarding names was reached by the guidance of some scholars in the field of sociology. The same process was taken for selecting the Persian sample. The English journals were *American Journal of Sociology*, *British Journal of Sociology*, *Sociological Perspectives*, *American Sociological Review* and *Social Force*. For the Persian journals, we selected *Social Science Quarterly of Allameh Tabatabayee University*, *Shiraz University Journal of Social Science and Humanities*, *Mashhad University Journal of Literature and Humanities*, *Tabriz University Journal of Literature and Humanities*, *Sistan-Baluchestan University Journal of Humanities*, and *Birjand University Journal of Literature and Humanities*, all being Iranian journals.

#### 3.1. Instrumentation

This study makes use of metadiscourse, a micro-level feature of text rhetoric, as a means to examine and investigate the rhetorical features and strategies in the two languages.

Among the metadiscourse classifications cited earlier, the present study is limited to Vande Kopple's (1985) classification in which Review and Preview come under the main type of Text Connectors. Based on Mauranen (1993) and Valero-Garces (1996), these two subtypes are regarded as two main types in the present study, due to the fact that they are important elements in organizing the text by referring to the same text. All types of metadiscourse used in this study are exemplified below under two main categories.

### 3.2. Data collection

All occurrences of metadiscoursal elements of the five types mentioned above were counted in the two text pairs. A rigorous analysis was conducted with consideration of the functional meaning. In other words, all articles were traversed in search of metadiscoursal markers, and the frequency of the occurrence count was not mechanical but functional, due to the multifunctionality of some metadiscoursal markers which need to be classified differently according to context in which they occur. The problem of multifunctionality is persistent mainly with modality markers. To give an example, in the sentence *It can be said that he can speak English*, the word *can* seems to have two different functions in its two occurrences in the same sentence. The first one is used as a metadiscoursal marker which belongs to the subtype of "hedges", but the second occurrence of the same word is used in a different functional way. It is used to mean that he has 'the ability to speak English', where it does not function as a metadiscoursal marker. Accordingly, based on the most likely interpretation of a word in a particular context, one has to make decision on the function that the writer intended to use a particular item (Salager-Mayer 1994: 154). The criterion for selecting which and to what extent a marker can be labeled a metadiscourse, a few (applied) linguists who had been involved in teaching such course in the department were consulted.

### 3.3. Procedure and data analysis

In nearly all contrastive studies, the fundamental question is how to establish the common platform that guarantees the comparability between languages. In this study, in order to meet the homogeneity between the two corpora, a sample of two parallel series of sociology RAs in English and Persian were randomly selected from the two language samples. The selection of journals in both languages as well as the articles was made in consultation with some expert informants at the Department of Sociology at Shahid Chamran University. Then, the above-illustrated model of metadiscourse schema which was adopted from Vande Kopple (1985) and Mauranen (1993) was applied into the corpus. In order to identify metadiscourse markers as precisely as possible, a rigorous contextual and functional analysis was performed. Afterwards, the number of metadiscourse devices was recorded in each RA and in each language corpus separately. The

metadiscourse devices recorded in the samples were thus classified according to the five above-mentioned types. To determine how metadiscoursal elements were distributed within the two languages, the number of metadiscourse markers per category was computed to show the total number of metadiscourse markers in each sample.

Following Crismore et al. (1993), the present study used a line-density analysis approach in order to measure the amount and the distribution and types of metadiscourse markers used in the two samples. In order to find how the frequency of occurrence of the five types of metadiscourse is significantly relevant in both samples, the Chi-Square non-parametric statistical test was used, for which the alpha value was set at 0.001.

#### 4. Results

All occurrences of metadiscoursal markers were counted and categorized under the following five types in both language samples of Persian and English: (1) text connectors; (2) reviews; (3) previews; (4) action markers; and (5) modality markers. Following Hyland (1998, 1999, 2005), the present study considered the approximate number of words in each sample in order to reach an idea about how much of the texts was metadiscourse. Then, in the same line, the number of metadiscourse was computed per 1000 words to compare the proportions in texts of the same sizes, since the two samples of text are inevitably of unequal sizes (61,333 words for the Persian texts vs. 71,359 words for English).

In general, the quantitative analysis of this study indicates different frequency use of metadiscourse in the research articles of sociology with an average of 372 occurrences per paper in English (about one metadiscourse in every 19 words), and an average of 253 occurrences per paper in Persian (about one in every 24 words). Table 1 below presents the number of occurrences of metadiscourse markers per category and type within the two corpora. The number of metadiscourse devices per 1000 words is also presented for each category and type as well as for the total metadiscourse markers used in the two samples in order to help us make sound decisions about the variations.

A glimpse at Table 1 reveals that the Persian texts have employed fewer metadiscourse than the English texts (2532 occurrences in the Persian sample versus 3720 occurrences in the English sample). The English texts also have a higher proportion of metadiscourse markers in each category and type. More noticeably, text connectors are the most frequently used metadiscoursal elements in the two languages. However, there seems to be a great difference in using these devices between the two corpora (the issue will be attended to in the discussion section below). Previews, reviews and action markers turned out to appear far less than the other metadiscoursal types in either language. Further, previews and reviews seem to occur with the same ratio in both samples. Modality markers are the second most frequent category for both types of texts. Yet, it is more likely to exit a great difference in making use of these elements between the two languages. That is, the English writers used modality markers about two times more of-

Table 1. Occurrence of metadiscourse markers per category and type in Persian and English texts.

Categories and types	Persian (per 1000 words)		English (per 1000 words)	
Text connectors	1562	(25.5)	1944	(27.2)
Action markers	82	(1.3)	157	(2.2)
Reviews	59	(1.0)	85	(1.2)
Previews	40	(0.7)	53	(0.7)
Textual total	1743	(28.5)	2239	(31.3)
Modality markers				
Hedges	649	(10.6)	1291	(18.1)
Emphatics	140	(2.3)	190	(2.7)
Interpersonal total	789	(12.9)	1481	(20.8)
Total	2532	(41.4)	3720	(52.1)

ten than the Persian writers. What can be seen from the results in Table 1 is that the writers of both languages use a relatively limited numbers of action markers in their writings.

Generally, the collected data confirms that the frequency co-occurrence of textual metadiscourse markers is more than that of interpersonal elements for both languages, but as it will be shown in Table 2, their proportions within each language sample vary. In order to make a more valid comparison and more reasonable judgment about the occurrences of metadiscourse in major categories and in different types within each language, the proportion of each category and type is presented in the form of percentage of the total number of metadiscourse in each language sample. Table 2 below presents the occurrences of metadiscourse markers per category and type in a ranked order with their proportions as the percentage of the total number of metadiscourse markers within each language sample.

Table 2. Ranked metadiscourse on categories and types (% of the total).

Language metadiscourse	Total no. of Persian items		Total no. of English items	
Categories				
Textual metadiscourse	1743	(68.84)	2239	(60.19)
Interpersonal metadiscourse	789	(31.16)	1481	(39.81)
Subcategories (types)				
Text connectors	1562	(61.69)	1944	(52.26)
Hedging	649	(25.63)	1291	(34.70)
Emphatics	140	(5.53)	190	(5.11)
Action markers	82	(3.24)	157	(4.23)
Reviews	59	(2.33)	85	(2.29)
Previews	40	(1.58)	53	(1.42)
Total	2532	(100)	3720	(100)

Of the two main categories, the Persian writers use textual metadiscourse more than twice more often than interpersonal markers (whereas this proportion is not relevant for the English texts). The results show that the English writers are more interested in using interpersonal metadiscourse than the Persian writers. Of the subcategories (types) studied in the present study, text connectors comprise more than half of all metadiscourse used in the Persian texts while the text connectors in the English texts account for about half of all markers. This confirms the Persian writers' interests in using text connectors rather than any other types of metadiscourse.

Hedging, which is the second most used metadiscourse in both languages, makes up one fourth of the total in Persian while the same type is one third of the total markers in the English texts. Based on this, the importance of hedging devices in English academic texts becomes evident. The other four types, which make up a small proportion of the total markers used in both languages, seem to be used with approximately similar proportions.

One interesting point, despite the discrepancy in the use of these elements in the two languages, is that the ranked order of all types of metadiscourse used in the two samples is the same (see Table 2). This might mean that, although the writers in the two languages may have different strategies in using some types of metadiscourse due to their cultural differences, they somewhat follow the same disciplinary culture and write within a unique framework identified by the genre. In order to make a sound comparison and a valid judgment about the use of metadiscourse between the two languages, Table 3 below presents the proportions and the computed Chi Squares.

Table 3. Total occurrences and proportions of the main categories and the computed Chi Squares. P: Persian; E: English;  $\chi^2$ : Chi Square; DF: degrees of freedom;  $\alpha$ : alpha.

	Persian		English		$P\chi^2$	$E\chi^2$	DF	$\alpha$
Textual	1743	(2.84)	2239	(3.14)	7.1710	6.4449	2	0.05
Interpersonal	789	(1.29)	1481	(2.08)	64.547	55.478	2	0.001
Total	2532	(4.13)	3720	(5.21)	44.302	38.770	1	0.001

Table 3 indicates that the percentile proportion of metadiscourse markers of the total running words in the Persian sample is less than that in the English sample (4.13 percent vs. 5.21 percent). It can also be seen from Table 3 that the Chi Squares computed for both of these proportions are far more than the critical Chi Squares (see Appendix 2 for the Critical Chi Square) with one degree of freedom and at 0.001 probability ( $\alpha=0.001$ ). This indicates that there are significant differences between the frequency of use of metadiscourse in the two languages, with English using more metadiscourse than Persian. Table 3 further reveals that there are also significant differences in occurrences of textual and interpersonal categories of metadiscourse between the two languages that confirm more strongly the stated differences.

To see whether there were significant differences between the Persian RAs with regard to metadiscoursal use, four randomly-selected pairs of the Persian RAs, with the approval of our statistical counselor, were compared and analyzed and their Chi Squares were computed as a tentative model. Two pairs turned out to be significantly different while the other two pairs indicate no significant differences in using metadiscourse (see the results at Appendices 1 and 2). Moreover, it is worth noting that investigation of the rhetorical variations between writers of the same national culture needs an individual specific study.

Generally, the results show that although the Persian professional writers follow convention and values of the same local as well as disciplinary culture in their research paper writings, they may sometimes use some types of metadiscourse differently. Therefore, the fact is that the choice of metadiscourse markers may sometimes be affected idiosyncratically.

## 5. Discussion

RAs, as specific forms of language use and social interaction, both represent particular processes of production and interpretation, and link to the social practices of the communities and institutions within which they are created. This linkage is thought to be realized through rhetoric within the text. Since metadiscourse is assumed to be one micro level feature of rhetoric, we might expect, then, that metadiscourse variations in RAs of various languages will reflect different rhetorical systems of those languages. Further, metadiscourse variations will anticipate that their use will contain clues about how the texts are produced and what purposes they serve. Metadiscourse is grounded in the rhetorical background of writers, and it is sensitive to their perceptions of audience, both of which are affected markedly by the cultural, social and educational heritage of writers.

It is clear that the use of metadiscourse to explicitly signal text organization, evaluate its contents and persuade readers is important in academic writing, especially in RAs. While different cultural backgrounds of writers have been found to influence the types and number of metadiscourse used (Mauranen 1993; Valero-Garces 1996), it is also evident that metadiscourse is a universal feature of professional rhetorical writing. The results of the present study contribute evidence to support the same views; that is, different cultural background leads to using different rhetorical strategies in writing. More interestingly, they also indicate that all these differences occur within a unique general rhetorical framework which may be identified by the genre or the disciplinary conventions and values. To speculate on the reasons for the variations and inconsistencies found in our samples under survey, the following relevant discussions are presented.

### 5.1. Textual markers

Through textual metadiscourse, writers try explicitly to make their presence felt in the text, to give guidance to readers with respect to how the text is organized. Their use de-

depends on the knowledge relationships between the readers and writers as well as the writers' assessment of what needs to be made explicit to audience. It, therefore, represents the presence of the audience in the text. All of these will markedly be affected by the rhetorical background of writers.

A comparison of the texts from Persian and English academic RAs written by native speakers shows that these two groups of texts manifest certain different rhetorical preferences. Writers of Persian sociology RAs employ relatively fewer metadiscourse devices than the Anglo-American sociologists, which can indicate that the former group is less likely interested in explicitly organizing the texts and orienting the readers. The main theses and conclusions are largely left for the readers to infer, and less explicit guidance is provided to help the readers in understanding the texts.

The figures in our results imply that a kind of implicitness is characteristic of Persian rhetorical strategies. In contrast, Anglo-American writers are more interested in using overt textual metadiscourse through which they guide and persuade readers and make their presence more explicit in the texts. The question is, why, then, do Iranian writers write and argue differently from Anglo-Americans? A more plausible answer that can be speculated is that different cultural thought patterns of both groups can be the reason for the differences in writing rhetorical systems. This outcome strengthens the contrastive rhetoric hypothesis. The cultural thought patterns which are believed to affect rhetorical strategies in writing are constructed by and originated from various factors. One of these constructing factors may be the writers' viewpoint to science, communication and their readers, which may play an important role in the way of constructing discourse. No doubt all these standpoints, which are almost always realized in texts through the writers' rhetorical strategies, are constructed by the norms, values and conventions by which the writers' writing cultures have been formed. More simply, a Persian writer may view science or scientific findings as a phenomenon which should be stated in an argumentative style not explicit enough to the reader. This may result in employing an implicit way of communicating the findings whereas scientific writing, as believed, requires a more modest style of writing. As far as the audience is concerned, it can be claimed that Persian writers' superior view of themselves as compared to their readers may encourage them to present themselves more implicitly and leave the readers to struggle to infer the messages.

A further factor for constructing cultural thought patterns seems to be the background educational systems of the writers. In the Iranian educational system, less emphasis is put on the structure of writing in composition classes and the structure is overlooked in the expense of sparing content (Shokouhi 2007). This is what many previous generations of school-goers have experienced. Many of the teachers who had not received education in writing composition were involved in the teaching of it in high school. The teacher would assign a topic, which was generally a very broad one, to the students without training them on how to structure their writing. In the next class session, some students were randomly selected to read their compositions to the rest of their classmates and the teacher, without paying attention to the particularities of the

written text, rated the student as “good”, “moderate” or “not so good”. The same student received little training at the university, too. As a consequence, it seems what is being said is more important to the writer and his reader than how it is being said. Accordingly, it may be claimed that, based on the results of the present study, Persian writers pay not much attention to the organization and structure of discourse. Their main concern may be to convey their messages while Anglo-American writers are not only interested in the structure and organization of a text but also in the content of their discourse. Making use of more metadiscoursal devices to organize the texts through which they guide and orient readers in interpreting the texts can be considered a clue of success to imparting information to their readers (see real examples from our data in the discussion sections that follow for a clearer presentation).

## 5.2. Text connectors

Text connectors help show readers how parts of texts are connected to one another and how the texts are organized (Vande Kopple 2002: 95). They construct the major part of textual metadiscourse used in the corpus. Writers use text connectors to guide readers through making the text more cohesive. They refer to items, particularly conjunctions, which help readers interpret pragmatic connection between ideas by signaling additive, resultative, contrastive and temporal relations in the writers’ thinking.

The frequent use of text connectors in the English texts indicates Anglo-American writers’ interests in producing more cohesive texts, which, according to Hinds (1987), can be a sign of a writer-responsible rhetoric. That is, an English writer provides statements and clues in the texts so that the reader can piece together the logic that binds the discourse together, whereas in Persian, land markers may be absent or weak and it is the responsibility of the reader to determine the relationships between any part of discourse and the discourse as a whole.

Of course, both of these preferences for rhetorical strategies seem to reflect very different notions of politeness. The implicit Persian rhetoric could be constructed as being polite by its treatment of readers as intelligent human beings, to whom nothing much needs to be explained. Saying too obvious things may seem to be scornful to the reader. Using implicit language, however, might have the danger of becoming bold, so the writer may be seen as presenting himself as superior to the reader, showing his/her own wisdom, and leaving the reader to struggle with the ideas.

The explicitness of Anglo-American rhetoric leaves less room for readers’ own interpretations. It seems to be more concerned with readers’ interests in providing them with more information and guidance. On the other hand, it also conveys a certain impression of authority by viewing readers as ones to whom everything must be clarified to understand. Both of these strategies, however, have a positive and a negative interpretation. However, it is likely that the typical strategy in each culture is perceived as the positive, polite one, and the non-typical – as the negative, impolite one.

The three major types of text connectors, as discussed above, are review, preview and action markers. Reviews are “reminders” of what has been said above in the text whereas previews are indicators to what is forthcoming in the text. Action markers, on the other hand, introduce an action when the writer switches from one action to another if he feels the action has significant or surprising implication to his reader. Take the following respective examples for these three markers in English and Persian from our data: examples (1a) and (1b) are “reviews”, (2a) and (2b) – “previews”, and (3a) and (3b) – “action markers”.

(1a) **As we saw earlier**, however, personal and altruistic fears are not entirely independent of one another.

(1b) **همانطور که ملاحظه شد** طبقه متوسط از گستردگی برخوردار است و اقشار متنوعی دارد.

‘**As was considered**, the middle class enjoys a dispersal and has variety of sub-classes’.

(2a) **In the section that follows**, I address this apparent contradiction of such movies for migration in light of micro, macro and transitional outlooks.

(2b) **در این قسمت**، نتایج بدست آمده از کار تحقیقاتی به شکل توصیفی مورد تجزیه و تحلیل قرار گرفته است.

‘**In this section**, the results are analyzed descriptively’.

(3a) **I hypothesize that** parental factors other than parents’ housework performance may have a direct influence on children’s housework allocations.

(3b) **لذا پیشنهاد می‌شود** پوشش شبکه سوم سیما در روستاهای کشور افزایش یابد.

‘**Then, it is suggested that** the coverage of channel three on TV should be extended to the rural areas’.

The ‘review’ and the ‘preview’ markers are relatively low in number in both English and Persian in this study, indicating unfavorability of the two types by the writers whose data are analyzed here. This could be due to the specificity of the genre under investigation, its values and conventions, rather the writing culture. Action markers, on the contrary, are used about twice as many as the ones employed by Persian writers. Despite the double frequency of the English texts, the number of these markers, like the other two markers above, was low in both Persian and English. The double size by the English writers can suggest Anglo-American writers’ interests in guiding and orienting

the readers and their inclination to propose solutions to problems or directions towards a resolution.

### 5.3. Interpersonal metadiscourse

#### 5.3.1. Modality markers

Interpersonal metadiscourse (which in this study is limited to modality markers to assess certainty or uncertainty to the propositional content and the degree of commitment to the assessment) is an indicator of attempts made by writers to create an interaction with their readers and express their own truth-value judgments about the ongoing propositions. In other words, it contributes to writer-reader relationship by means of hedges, emphatics and different other types of markers. It is an effective device for writers to persuade and convince readers of their statements. Since the genre of RA has intrinsically a persuasive nature, there is the likelihood that interpersonal markers in general, and modality markers in particular would comprise a noticeable proportion of metadiscourse markers used in the studied RAs. As can be seen from Table 2 above, modality markers make up 31.16 and 39.65 percent of all metadiscourse used in Persian and English RAs respectively. Such large proportions emphasize that modality markers play a crucial role in RAs as persuasive discourse. Nevertheless, as the collected data indicate, there seems to be a significant difference in using this type between the two language samples, with English using far more than Persian. The possible reasons will be discussed and interpreted below with respect to two subtypes: hedges and emphatics.

#### 5.3.2. Hedges

These are items such as *it is possible, it seems that, perhaps, it is suggested*, etc., and similar counterparts in Persian which engage the reader in the interaction and allow room for discussing alternative viewpoints, but they may convey a sense of vagueness, tentativeness and hesitation to make the sentences more acceptable to the readers (see examples below). In other words, the use of hedging devices is essential for two reasons: a) it allows claims to be made with caution, modesty and decency, as pointed out by Leech (1983) to bring about a sense of self-dispraise and b) it helps claims to be stated diplomatically. That is to say; it leaves room for discussing and presenting alternative ideas.

- (4a) این گونه برنامه ها معمولاً بر اساس معیارهای زندگی شهری تهیه شده اند  
و ممکن است اثراتی در گرایشهای روستائیان داشته باشند.

‘These kinds of programs have usually been prepared on the basis of urban life and **it is likely to** have impacts of rural life’.

- (4b) The industrial mix at the time of the shock **would presumably** affect educational attainment at that time.

Scientific writing, it is argued, uses a style of writing which projects modesty and objectivity. Argumentative arrogance is not well regarded by the scientific community whereas modesty and cautiousness are. As Myers (1989: 5) puts it, researchers' have to present themselves as "the humble servant of the discipline". On the other hand, the more scientific writers use hedges to tone down their statements, the less they are likely to be attacked by their colleagues and competitors. In this respect, both Persian and English professionals followed the same principles, using high proportions of hedging elements in their writings.

Although hedges are the second more frequent type of metadiscourse used in both samples, the proportions of these devices signal a significant difference between the two languages, with English using far more hedges than Persian (1291 vs. 649). This difference can be related to the writers' different cultural backgrounds which are constructed by different values, conventions, beliefs and attitudes. English as the dominant language of science throughout the world provides a ground for its writers in science to follow scientific writing conventions, one of which is the tremendous use of hedging devices. Persian, on the other hand, which enjoys tremendous engagement in literature and poetry rather than science, seems to be affected by the descriptive nature of the humanity disciplines. Therefore, in the Iranian educational system literary writing like narrative is encouraged and practiced while expository texts or scientific writing is skirted in writing classes.

### 5.3.3. Emphatics

Although emphatics, unlike hedges, are known to imply certainty and emphasize the force of the propositions, as in clearly, it is obvious, of course, indeed, our text analysis revealed that emphatics used in the samples do not always emphasize assertions about the plausibility and thoroughness of the findings as they may provoke a negative defensive reaction in readers. Conversely, they are mostly used to show the writers' humility and the insufficiency. The other issue to be discussed is that writers must present themselves as servants of the discipline while asserting individual claims in scientific writing. The point which sounds important and relevant here is the phenomenon of politeness. Myers (1989), applying Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness, argues that hedges can be better understood as positive or negative politeness strategies. Myers demonstrates that the same social variables that affect outcomes in everyday social interaction, i.e. social distance, power difference, and rank of imposition, exist in academic writing which lead to similar outcomes; i.e. similar politeness strategies. In scientific writing which is also an interaction and communication between writers and readers, any academic knowledge claim, as Myers believes, is a threat or Face Threatening

Act (FTA) to readers who are mostly researchers in the field because it infringes on their freedom to act. Therefore, writers should try to save readers' negative face. Since writers and readers are more likely to be of the same positions; they may be colleagues, professionals and scientists, and more importantly members of the same academic community, writers' attempts should be not to threaten the readers' negative face. The hedges as mitigating devices, therefore, tone down the claims being made in that "the readers are still allowed to judge for themselves" (Myers 1989: 16). By using more hedging devices, writers assure their readers that they do not intend to impede their freedom in presenting alternative ideas.

- (5a) *بی گمان* نگرش دموکراتیک و توسعه ای که در این مقاله مطرح گردید در چارچوب فرهنگ و ارزشهای اسلامی است و می تواند از بعضی جنبه ها با نگرش دموکراتیک و توسعه ای جهان غرب تا حدودی متفاوت باشد.

'**No doubt** the democratic and developmental view raised in this article is within the frame of cultural and Islamic values, and it can be somewhat different from the views taken in the west'.

- (5b) **Of course**, the findings of the present study will need more investigations and refinements.

The relatively low and same frequencies of emphatics used in the two samples indicate that this metadiscoursal subtype may not be affected by the cultural variations of the writers. Rather this may be controlled by the requirement of the genre or the disciplinary culture.

## 6. Conclusion

The data in this study has revealed that the Persian rhetorical system differs significantly ( $69.277 > 20.515$  at  $\alpha=0.001$  and  $DF=5$ ) from the English rhetoric as far as sociology texts in journals are concerned. One chief reason could be the culture difference manifested in writing conventions. Moreover, different metadiscoursal choices employed by some Persian writers of sociology texts can indicate the different rhetorical strategies employed by these writers. The choices, we assume, are affected by the writers' rhetorical norms and conventions acquired through their individual experiences in writing courses. The findings in this study suggest that the teachers engaged in teaching writing courses to Persians at various levels from high school to university should emphasize the objective conventions of expository writing so that the students grasp the idea that different genres require different styles.

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## APPENDIX 1

Occurrence of all metadiscourse categories, types and subtypes per text in Persian and English.

	T.C.	R.	P.	A.M.	H.	E.	Tex. M.	Int. M.	Total M.	Run. Wds.
PT.1	110	1	3	4	51	10	118	61	179	4815
PT.2	192	1	**	5	60	22	198	82	280	5306
PT.3	116	1	1	12	42	5	130	47	177	4890
PT.4	154	5	2	5	81	15	166	96	262	5936
PT.5	150	8	26	5	53	14	189	67	256	7936
PT.6	281	2	4	15	134	21	302	155	457	9104
PT.7	161	12	5	14	63	13	192	76	168	6048
PT.8	160	3	6	4	58	19	173	77	250	5586
PT.9	100	5	10	10	44	8	125	52	177	5896
PT.10	128	2	2	8	63	13	140	76	216	5780
<b>PT. Total</b>	<b>1562</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>649</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>1743</b>	<b>789</b>	<b>2532</b>	<b>61333</b>
ET.1	170	4	9	9	155	16	192	171	363	7548
ET.2	172	2	8	10	93	25	192	118	310	7080
ET.3	224	8	17	24	147	10	273	157	430	7476
ET.4	155	1	11	10	100	9	177	109	286	6792
ET.5	150	10	7	20	118	14	187	132	319	6162
ET.6	245	2	3	28	110	9	278	119	397	8604
ET.7	150	2	1	7	115	10	160	125	285	5868
ET.8	252	11	15	12	166	46	290	212	502	8569
ET.9	273	11	9	21	180	21	314	201	515	6348
ET.10	153	2	5	16	117	30	176	147	323	6912
<b>ET. Total</b>	<b>1944</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>157</b>	<b>1291</b>	<b>180</b>	<b>2239</b>	<b>1481</b>	<b>3720</b>	<b>71359</b>

Key to Appendix 1:

PT: Persian text; ET: English text; T.C.: Text connectors; R: Reviews; P: Previews; A.M.: Action markers; H: Hedging; E: Emphatics; Tex. M.: Textual metadiscourse; Int. M.: Interpersonal metadiscourse; Total M.: Total metadiscourse; Run. Wds.: Running words.

## APPENDIX 2

Table 1. Metadiscourse occurrences and proportions of types and subtypes and the computed Chi square.

	P(%)		E(%)		P% <sup>2</sup>	E $\chi^2$	DF	$\alpha$
T.C.	1562	(61.69)	1944	(52.26)	13.748**	9.3828**	1	0.0K0.05
P.	40	(1.58)	53	(1.42)	0.1373	0.0937	1	0.80>0.05
R.	59	(2.33)	85	(2.29)	0.0059	0.004	1	0.95>0.05
A.M.	82	(3.24)	157	(4.22)	2.3047	1.5729	1	0.20>0.05
H.	649	(25.63)	1291	(34.70)	24.179**	16.502**	1	0.001
E.	140	(5.53)	190	(5.11)	0.8008	0.5465	1	0.50>0.05

\*\* denotes significant difference.

P.: Persian; E.: English;  $\chi^2$ : Chi Square; DF: degrees of freedom;  $\alpha$ : alpha; T.C.: Text connectors; P.: Previews; R.: Reviews; A.M.: Action markers; H.: Hedges; E.: Emphatics.

Table 2. Total metadiscourse occurrences and the computed Chi Squares for some selected pairs of P.Ts.

Compared pairs	T.1	T.2	<i>T</i>	DF	$\alpha$
P.T.6 & P.T.7	460	268	19.475**	5	0.002O.05
P.T.1 & P.T.3	179	173	7.456	5	0.189>0.05
P.T.4 & P.T.10	262	216	2.363	5	0.797>0.05
P.T.8 & P.T.9	250	177	12.197**	5	0.032O.05

\*\* denotes significant difference.