Metadiscourse in Research Article Genre:

A Cross-Linguistic Study of English and Hausa

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Abstract

The aim of conducting this study came from a need to explore contrastive study in using metadiscourse features between English and Hausa in research article genre. This study investigated what metadiscourse features are frequently used across two languages in research article genre. A sub-corpus of ten research articles was compiled from each language. The study adopted Hyland's (2005) typology of metadiscourse features. The results of the study show that there are certain commonalities and differences in using the features across the languages. In terms of similarity, both groups of writers typically used all categories of metadiscourse features. They are almost having a similar frequency of boosters and attitude markers. On the other hand, writers from Hausa research article typically had a high frequency of self-mention, whereas writers from English had a low frequency of the feature. One remarkable feature in Hausa sub-corpus is the use of proverbs and idioms. This study recommends raising awareness of students in relation to linguistic and social conventions of their disciplines.

Keywords: English, corpus, Hausa, metadiscourse, research article

1. Introduction

This paper aims to contrastively analyse research articles written and published in English and Hausa by native speakers of Hausa language in discipline of applied. The rationale for this is to explore whether there are discursive and rhetorical cross-cultural differences in the expression of interactional metadiscourse across the two languages. This could provide possible different rhetorical conventions, which may shed more light on the practices and shared knowledge among different languages within similar discipline.

The social view of writing argues that writing is a collaborative effort between the writer and the reader, who are engaged in dialogic interactions with a text on the basis of their shared knowledge and experiences to interpret the text (Kuhi & Mojood, 2014). This suggests that the construction of meaning of a text lies between the shared knowledge and practices of both the writer and the reader. Therefore, writers must take into account their readers' social influence and any possible impact on the readers. One of the ways to achieve this is the use of metadiscourse. The concept of metadiscourse has been defined by many scholars. For Hyland (2005) metadiscourse are persuasive linguistic markers that writers typically use to direct readers, as well as showing professional persona aiming at persuading the readers. Chrismore et al. (1993) view the term as features of textual organization. Swales' (1990) perception of metadiscourse is influenced by the work of Halliday's (1994) systemic functional approach on the textual, ideational, as well as expressive meaning of a text.

This study considers metadiscourse as discourse markers that writers typically employ to interact with readers, including guiding the readers, persuading them, as well as expressing writer's persona. In this study, I adopt Hyland's (2005) and Hyland & Tse's (2005) framework of metadiscourse where it has been categorized into two main categories: interactive and interpersonal. The former is concerned with features that are used to organize informational content in order to project target audience aims at providing coherent and convincing ideas, such as *however, in contrast, furthermore, finally, in addition* etc. The latter is concerned with features that writers typically use to express their perspectives towards both readers and informational content, such as *possible, perhaps, I, my, suggest, indicate, in fact* etc.

Many research studies have been conducted focusing on contrastive rhetorical analysis between English and other languages involving different genres and contexts. For example, Kuhi & Mojood (2014) focus their research on editorials in newspaper genre between English and Persian. They found that genre conventions play a significant role in choosing metadiscourse markers. Their study revealed that there are certain similarities between the two languages. However, the results show some differences which might be as a result of the linguistic and cultural backgrounds of both groups of editorialists. Dafouz (2008) also investigates both textual and interpersonal linguistic markers in newspaper genre across two languages: English and Spanish, the British, The Times and the Spanish El Paı´s. The study indicates that both interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers are found in both categories of the sub-corpus but with varying frequencies.

In another set of study, Mur-Duenas (2011) examines interpersonal linguistic markers in research articles across two languages: English and Spanish in Business Management discipline. This study finds that there are significant differences in terms of frequency of interpersonal markers across the two languages. It concludes that linguistic and cultural contexts of publication could play significant role in choosing rhetorical conventions by the authors. Sanz (2006) looks at self-mention features in research article abstracts between English and Spanish. The results reveal that English authors typically used firmer and stronger authorial position than their Spanish peers. Swales & Bonn (2007) also look at metadiscourse in English for academic purposes research article abstracts across two languages: English and French. In the same vein, Mur-Duenas (2007) finds significant differences in terms of using self-mention between English and Spanish authors in research article in the discipline of Business Management. He finds that English authors are having a high frequency of self-mention than the Spanish authors. Similarly, Mur-Duenas (2010) investigates attitudinal markers in Business Management research article genre in two different socio-cultural contexts: local Spanish and international America. The study finds that both two sub-corpora had a similar frequency of attitudinal markers. It indicates that both groups of writers typically shared common values and disciplinary practices of their discipline. Dahl (2004) investigates textual metadiscourse in three languages (English, French & Norwegian) and three disciplines (Economics, Linguistics & Medicine). The results of the study suggest that language variable plays significant roles that English and Norwegian demonstrate similar patterns by having a high frequency of metatext in economics and linguistics than French. However, with regard to Medicine the findings show that there is a similar pattern across the three languages in terms of having a low frequency of metatext. Bal-Gezegin (2016) examines interpersonal metadiscourse in academic book reviews across two languages: English and Turkish. The finding indicates that the interpersonal markers had a high frequency in English than Turkish. One of the remarkable differences is the use of hedging. Similarly, Bondi (2009) examines reporting framework in book reviews written in both English and Italian. These previous studies analysed metadiscoure across many disciplines, contexts and languages. However, a contrastive study of metadiscourse between English and Hausa has not been conducted. Therefore, this study seeks to address the following questions:

1.   What interpersonal linguistic markers are frequently used in English and Hausa research articles?
2.   Are there any similarities and differences in using interpersonal markers between English and Hausa research articles?

2. Corpus and Methods

In order to conduct this study, a separate corpus was compiled for each category of research article (English and Hausa). Ten research articles were chosen from each language. All the research articles selected were peer-reviewed and indexed. They were published between 2015 and 2018. The rationale for choosing those years is to have relatively recent publications aiming at showing current usages of the said metadiscourse. I accessed all the research articles online via my university website.

As mentioned above, I adopt Hyland's (2005) category of metadiscourse because it is robust, as well as very explicit. In this study, my analytical interpersonal linguistic markers are: hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions.

Hedges refer to features where writer does not fully commit him/herself to the informational content presented in his/her work, such as *may, suggest, possible, postulate, might, seem, probable, nearly*, etc. (Hyland, 2005)

Boosters on the other hand, are linguistic markers through which writers typically express their absolute commitment to the proposition presented in their work, such as *clearly, certain, of course, indeed, prove, find, show, indicate, demonstrate, confirm, conclude, assert*, etc. (Hyland, 2005)

Attitude markers are features which show writer's affective evaluation of proposition or informational content, such as *unfortunately, agree, surprisingly, interestingly, importantly, even*, etc. (Hyland, 2005)

Self-mention features refer to explicit reference to author in his/her work through the use of personal pronouns, such as *I, we, my,* and *our.* (Hyland, 2005)

Having selected the chosen RAs on the said website, I converted each RA into a text file, after deleting, title page, abstract, images, figures, tables, content page, acknowledgement page, and footnote. I then developed a sub-corpus for both languages: English Research Article Corpus (ERAC) and Hausa Research Article Corpus (HRAC). I used AntConc concordance software (2018) to conduct the analysis. I first generated the Wordlist of each sub-corpus. I then did a context-based sensitive analysis since some items could have different meanings and word class. I then recorded each identified item and its function on the basis of my analytical framework. I then compared and contrasted the results between the sub-corpora by calculating the frequencies of the interpersonal markers per 1000 words.

3. Results and Discussion

As mentioned above, this study investigates metadiscourse features across two languages. The results show that all the writers across the two languages used all categories of metadiscourse features. It also indicates that there are certain commonalities and differences in using the features.

Table 1. Distribution and percentages of interactional metadiscourse features in English and Hausa

Metadiscourse features	*English*		*Hausa*	
Interactional	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Hedges	606	66.3	506	36.1
Boosters	218	23.9	214	15.3
Self-mention	38	5.6	640	45.6
Attitude markers	52	4.2	42	3.0
Totals	914	100	1402	100

As can be seen in table 1 above, the results of the distribution and percentages of interactional metadiscourse features across the languages show that there are differences in terms of their percentages in using the metadiscourse features. For example, in terms of hedges, English language has the highest percentage of 66.3, whereas Hausa language has 36.1 per cent. On the other hand, booster had 23.9 per cent in English language and it has 15.3 per cent in Hausa language. In contrast, self-mention is the highest in Hausa language with 45.6 per cent as against 5.6 per cent in English. In terms of attitude markers, both languages have a low percentage while English has 4.2 per cent and Hausa has 3. This finding corroborates with findings of Dafouz (2008) and Mur-Duenas (2011) that both groups of writers typically used all the features but with varying degrees and frequencies. One notable feature of the result is the use of self-mention feature in Hausa language had 45.6 per cent and English had only 5.6 per cent. This could be explained by what Mur-Duenas (2011) indicates in his finding that linguistic context might be the reason. Unlike English, Hausa language writers who are frequently using self-mention 'I' in its discourse and at times you cannot understand a discourse if 'I' is not mentioned. For example:

 [Ni ina ganin abin ya kawo hakan shi ne, abin da masu hikima ke cewa 'karamin sani kukumi ne' domin duk wanda   ya fahimci ma'anar   (Muhammad, 2016:1)]

 [I think the causes can be associated with what scholars are saying… (Muhammad, 2016:1)]

Having discussed the findings of the study in relation to the distribution and percentages of metadiscourse features, I now turn to discuss the frequency of the features per 1000 words.
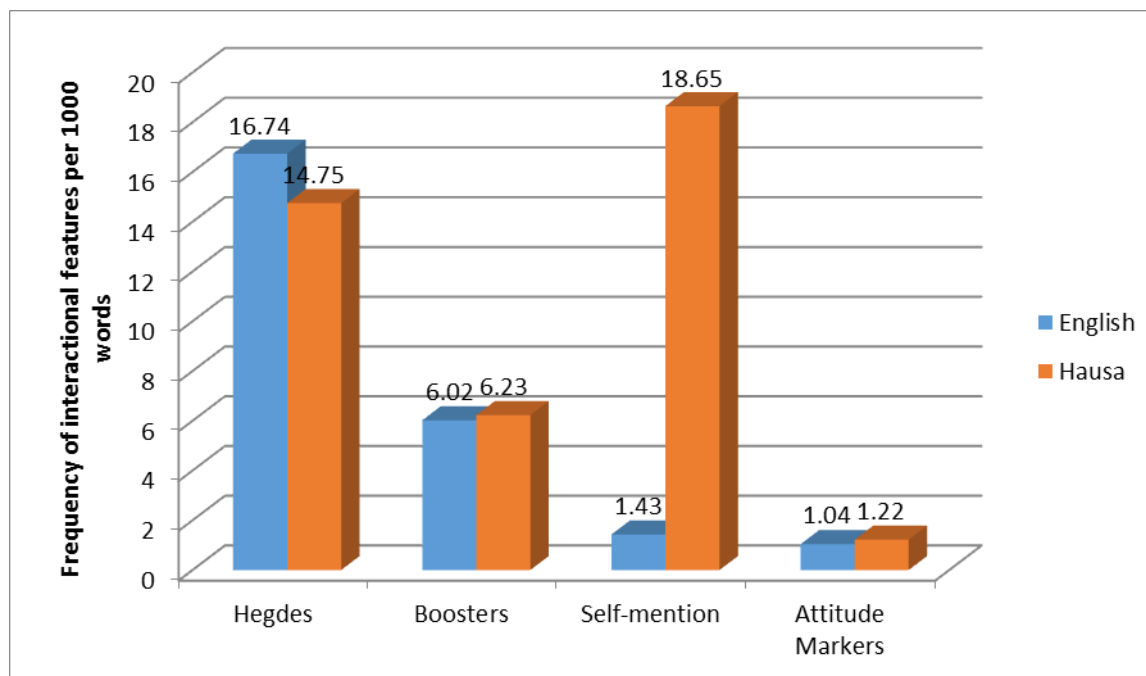
Figure 1. Frequency of interaction features per 1000 words in English and Hausa

The figure 1 above, shows the frequency of metadiscourse features per 1000 words across the languages. As can be seen English has a frequency of hedges of 16.74 times and Hausa is having a frequency of 14.74 times. This indicates that both groups of writers typically used hedges in almost similar frequency per 1000 words. This finding corroborates Mojood's (2014) finding that some languages could have some similarities in using the metadiscourse features as evidenced in this study, the use of hedges. Similarly, the frequency of boosters across the two languages show some kind of similarity that English had 6.03 times and Hausa had 6.23 times. However, there is a wide gap between English

and Hausa languages in terms of the frequencies of self-mention, while English is having 1.43 time per 1000 words and Hausa is having 18.65 times per 1000 words. This corroborates Mur-Duenas' (2007) finding that there is a significant difference in using self-mention between English and Spanish in research article. In terms of attitude markers, the results also show that both groups of writers had almost similar frequency that English is having 1.04 time per 1000 words and Hausa is having 1.22 time per 1000 words. Some example from the sub-corpora are:

  [Ba ko tantama abin a **bayyane yake** a kan kalubalen da wannan tafiya take fuskanta.]

[No doubt, it is **clear** there is a challenge…]

[Gaskiya ne, daga cikinsu akwai wadanda ke da ilimin nazarin harshe da kuma wa]anda kawai sha'awa ta ja su (Newman, 1991: 10)]

  [Indeed! among them some are linguists who were just developed an interest… (Newman, 1991: 10)]

The author uses boosters simultaneously to affirm his total commitment to the proposition.

 [Ga abin da Abubakar   (2006: 13-14)   yake cewa kan koyarwa cikin Hausa:]

[Abubakar (2006: 13-14) says that …]

This is an example of the use of hedge by an author, here the author does not commit himself to the informational content but rather report what someone says.

[Ba mamaki, wannan shekarar ma (2014)   Hausa cikin Hausa   ta sake samun wasu littafai da kumi-kuminsu]

[Unsurprisingly, this year (2014) Hausa language acquires some books…]

This is an example of attitude marker from the Hausa sub-corpus.

One remarkable finding from Hausa sub-corpus not mentioned above is the use of proverbs and idioms in academic writing, unlike in English language. In Hausa academic writing proverbs and idioms can be used. For example, in this study there are instances that proverbs and idioms are being used in Hausa:

[Wannan yanke hukunci da aka yi bai haifa mana da mai ido ba don kuwa a madadin a sami ci gaba, sai ci baya ake gani, an dunfari yin ~atar-~akatantan.]

[This judgement does add fuel to the fire…]

This is one of the many instances of using proverbs or idiomatic expression in Hausa sub-corpus. It is clear that linguistic and social conventions of Hausa language influence writers to use them, whereas social conventions or practices of the discipline of applied linguistics might not allow the use of idioms and proverbs; even though both groups of writers are native speakers of Hausa language.

4. Conclusion

This study investigated the use of metadiscourse across two languages in research article genre. The results as discussed above show that there are some similarities and differences in the use of metadiscourse features. In terms of similarities both groups of writers typically used all the four categories of metadiscourse but with varying frequencies, and in some instances they are having almost similar frequency such as boosters and attitude markers. On the other hand, there are some differences in the use of metadiscourse across the languages particularly self-mention features that Hausa language had a high frequency of 18.65 times per 1000 words, whereas English had a frequency of 1.43 times per 1000 words. Another remarkable difference is the use of proverbs and idioms in Hausa language, whereas such occurrences are not found in English. This foregrounds the notion that disciplinary practices might constrain or influence our construction of a text.

5. Teaching Implication

The findings of this study could be used for EAP/ESP teachers in designing course materials by taking into account the disciplinary practices of both languages. The study could also raise the awareness of academics of Hausa language from both disciplines in identifying the social and linguistic practices of both disciplines. Furthermore, textbook writers could develop textbooks in accordance with the practices of each discipline, as well as its linguistic practices.

6. Further Study

This study focused on only two disciplines and involving small number of articles from both languages. There is a need to conduct further research involving many disciplines and having a large corpus across the languages, which could provide more insight on the linguistic and social practices of both languages.

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