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Editorial note:

Faculty of Humanities Teaching and Learning Colloquium 2025 (T&L Colloquium 25) hosted by the Faculty of Humanities, North-West University, South Africa took place in Rustenburg, South Africa, from September 9-11, 2025, with a rich and stimulating programme filled with inspiring keynotes, contributed papers, workshops and panels. This bi-annual colloquium brings together educators, researchers, students, policymakers, and community practitioners. The main theme of T&L Colloquium 25 was “Reimagining the Future of Humanities Knowledge and Pedagogy: Decoloniality, Technology and the Social Justice Imperative.” This special issue of the *Journal of Contemporary Society And Education (JCSE)* contains Thirteen (13) selected papers presented at T&L Colloquium 2025. Selected contributions come from within and outside of South Africa and address a wide range of issues in humanities, decoloniality, technology and the social justice.

The introductory contribution by Tshifhiwa Ignatia Mashau provides an overview of research findings and trends related to the colloquium’s focus on the role of digital humanities and technology in supporting decolonial scholarship. The author’s article which titled “Decolonising digital health promotion in African higher education institutions: A justice-oriented literature review” develops a Digital Health Justice Framework to guide equitable and culturally responsive digital health promotion in African HEIs. A research article by Eyitayo Francis Adanlawo and Mpho Chaka follows with a discussion of emerging career pathways that foreground wellbeing and sustainable development, positioning humanities graduates as key contributors to sustainable and ethical futures. The authors identify novel professional opportunities in sectors including community engagement, policy development, and social innovation. They advocate for an expanded employability paradigm that integrates humanistic knowledge with sustainable development goals, underscoring the vital role of humanities disciplines in shaping resilient, inclusive societies.

The article by Nurain Aboo Mohammed evaluating the use of QR codes as a form of assessment in teaching and learning. The author confirms the potential of QR codes as both a useful and effective medium for assessment in educational settings. Samuel Chukwudi Agunyai and Victor Ojakorotu article “Analyzing the effect of the disconnection between the curriculum and Africa’s indigenous Knowledge on effective learning” argues that Africans’ realities still encompass indigenous knowledge on various levels that can be incorporated into the continent’s school curricula.

Other articles include: Examining the Impact of Digitalization and Inequality Post Covid -19 In Africa by *Phuti Ignatius Moloto and Rosinah Pillay*; The Omitted Conversation: Incorporating Teacher Union Scholarship for A Transformative Educational Agenda Within the Educational Landscape. Thembinkosi Zwane Trevor, David Matsepe; Examining factors behind an achieving institution: A scenario of secondary schools in Limpopo Province by Ngwako Solomon Modiba; Assessing the role of the COVID-19 catch-up recovery programme on learner performance in EFAL by Vele RJ, Tshikota and TM Badugela; Entrepreneurial Education and Sustainable Entrepreneurship Advancing Sustainable Development Goals in South Africa Through Small Businesses by Lazarus, M. and Beharry-Ramraj,

A; Mitigating Grammatical Ambiguity In English Prepositional Phrases At Dzindi Circuit Secondary School, South Africa by Farisani Thomas Nephawe; Exploring the Usage of Metadiscourse in Research Proposals Written by Honours Students by Mzamani Steven Khosa and Ernest Kwesi Klu; and Population Ethics and its implication for Developing Countries by Onwe Peter S. and Kelechi Johnmary Ani. Policy Windows and Missed Opportunities: An Institutional Analysis of How Teacher Unions Influence (or fail to influence) National Educational Policy Formulation by Zwane Thembinkosi Trevor, Matsepe David.

Editor,

Prof. Mpho Chaka

North-West University, South Africa.

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EXPLORING THE USAGE OF METADISOURSE IN A RESEARCH PROPOSAL WRITTEN BY HONOURS STUDENTS FROM A SELECTED UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Academic writing is not only about presenting information and research findings but also about guiding readers through arguments and engaging them in the text. One important linguistic resource that helps writers achieve this is Metadiscourse. Hence, this paper explored the usage of Metadiscourse in research proposals by university students. Both qualitative and quantitative design methods were used. The students' proposals served as a data-collection instrument. The participants were 10 university students. The results show that the students used both interactive and interactional Metadiscourse in their research proposals to guide readers through their arguments and enhance overall clarity. Overall, the findings highlight the importance of Metadiscourse in academic writing, particularly in research proposals, as a means to facilitate understanding and foster connections between the writer and the reader.

Keywords: *coherence, interactional Metadiscourse, interactive Metadiscourse and Metadiscourse*

1. INTRODUCTION

Academic writing involves more than just sharing information and research results; it also requires directing readers through arguments and actively involving them in the content. One important linguistic resource that helps writers achieve this is Metadiscourse. Hyland and Tse (2004) describe Metadiscourse as the linguistic features that authors employ to structure their writing, convey their opinions, and engage with their audience. Pearson and Abdollahzadeh (2023) assert that in research proposals, effective use of

Metadiscourse is especially important because writers must clearly explain their research plans, justify their significance, and persuade evaluators of the study's value. According to Pearson and Abdollahzadeh (2023), students' inability to use Metadiscourse in their proposals may result in unclear communication, leading to misunderstandings about their arguments and intentions. This can weaken the overall persuasiveness of their proposal and may confuse readers, who might struggle to follow the logical flow of ideas. Hyland (2010) posits that the lack of

Metadiscourse can lead to a more impersonal tone, resulting in the audience's complications to engage with the text. Consequently, students might miss out on the opportunity to establish a strong connection with their readers, which is crucial for effective communication and argumentation in academic writing.

According to Gezezin and Bas (2020), many student researchers struggle to use Metadiscourse appropriately in research proposals. This study aims to explore how Metadiscourse is used in research proposals and to identify the dominant types and functions of Metadiscourse features. According to Yea et al. (2020), understanding these patterns can help improve academic writing instruction and support students in producing clearer and more persuasive research proposals. Gezezin and Bas (2020) claim that research proposals serve as a blueprint for planned research and play a crucial role in academic approval processes. Evaluators often judge proposals not only on content but also on clarity, coherence, and persuasiveness. Metadiscourse helps writers achieve these qualities by organising ideas and establishing a relationship with readers.

Yea et al. (2020) claim that since research proposals have a persuasive and anticipatory nature, the use of Metadiscourse in this genre may differ from that in completed research reports. In proposals, the author strategically employs Metadiscursive elements to guide the reader's understanding, frame the importance of the research, and establish the intended outcomes. This includes using markers to engage the audience and to indicate the writer's stance, bolstering credibility.

Farahani and Mohemmed (2018) posit that Metadiscourse in proposals often emphasises the proposed methodology and the significance of the research question, aiming to convince reviewers of the

project's relevance and feasibility. In contrast, completed research reports typically use Metadiscourse to summarise findings, highlight implications, and reflect on the research process. Thus, understanding these distinctions in Metadiscourse can enhance communication effectiveness in both document types.

1.2. Objectives of the Study

The primary goals of this research are to:

- Identify the types of Metadiscourse used in research proposals.
- Determine how students use Metadiscourse in their research proposals

1. 3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This research aims to address the following questions:

- What types of Metadiscourse features are used in research proposals?
- How do students use Metadiscourse in their research proposals?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

According to Hyland and Tse (2004), Metadiscourse refers to the linguistic elements writers use to organise their texts, signal their attitudes, and interact with readers. It is commonly categorised into two main types: interactive Metadiscourse, which helps organise the text (e.g., transitions, frame markers), and interactional Metadiscourse, which involves the writer's stance and engagement with readers (e.g., hedges, boosters, engagement markers).

According to Haruna et al (2018), effective use of Metadiscourse improves readability and reader comprehension. A

Study by Livingstone (2019) indicates that experienced writers use Metadiscourse strategically to guide readers and project authorial identity.

2.1. Interactive Metadiscourse

According to Alqahtani et al. (2020), an interactive Metadiscourse is a key element of communication that helps guide the reader's understanding and engagement with the text. It includes features such as transitions, emphasis, and commentary that clarify the author's intentions and structure. Alqahtani et al. (2020) claim that using interactive Metadiscourse enables authors to create a conversational tone, inviting readers to participate in the dialogue and think critically about the material presented. This aspect of writing not only enhances clarity but also fosters a connection between the author and the audience, ultimately making the content more accessible and engaging. Examples of interactive Metadiscourse include phrases such as "as you can see," "let's consider," and "on the other hand," which help maintain narrative flow and help readers navigate complex ideas.

2.2. Interactional Metadiscourse

According to Hyland (2010), Interactional Metadiscourse is a framework for analysing how speakers and writers organise their communication to guide the audience's understanding and engagement. Musa et al. (2019) claim that it shows the writer's attitude, opinion, and relationship with the reader, engaging the reader and showing how confident or cautious the writer is.

This can include elements such

Hedges – show uncertainty (may, might, seems, possibly).

Boosters – show certainty clearly (definitely, it is evident that).

Attitude markers – show feelings or judgment importantly (unfortunately, surprisingly).

Self-mentions – refer to the writer (I believe, we argue, the researcher suggests) and

Engagement markers – involve the reader (note that, consider, you can see)

According to Istiani and Puspita (2020), interactional Metadiscourse elements are very important in writing because they enhance clarity and guide readers through the structure of the argument. Gillaerts and Van de Velde (2010) indicate that using these elements enables writers to effectively signal important points, indicate relationships between ideas, and provide cues that help readers navigate complex information. This contributes to a more engaging and coherent reading experience.

Additionally, Ghahremani and Biria (2017) claim that Metadiscourse can bridge cultural differences in communication styles, making it easier for a diverse audience to understand the text. It helps establish a connection between the writer and the reader, facilitating a more interactive and participatory approach to content consumption. Moreover, Estaji and Vafaeimehr (2015) claim that incorporating Metadiscourse elements can improve the overall persuasiveness of the writing, as they allow the writer to articulate their stance and anticipate reader responses. Overall, these elements are essential for effective cross-cultural communication and successful academic writing. Understanding these nuances can reflect broader social and linguistic practices and enhance cross-cultural communication.

2.3. PREVIOUS STUDIES

Numerous studies have examined this subject. For example, Akinseye (2023) conducted a study with undergraduate students in Nigeria to explore their use of

Metadiscourse in writing. The findings indicated that transitional markers, frame markers, and code glosses emerged as the most commonly used interactive markers in academic compositions, whereas evidential and endophoric markers were utilized less often. A separate research project by Zakaria et al. (2018) found that Arab writers showed a stronger preference for interactive markers (919 occurrences) than for interactional markers (592). This indicates that the use of interactive Metadiscourse (60.8%) was significantly higher than that of interactional Metadiscourse (39.2%).

Furthermore, Pasaribu et al. (2022) conducted a study of Indonesian EFL students investigating the use of Metadiscourse in their writing. The results reveal that the use of interactive discourse markers in students' writing remained low in quantity. The transition markers were the most dominant found in the text, followed by frame markers, code gloss, endophoric markers, and evidential respectively.

The study also highlighted that many students struggled to effectively integrate these Metadiscourse elements into their writing, which can impact the coherence and clarity of their arguments. The authors noted that the limited use of interactive markers might stem from a lack of awareness or understanding of their importance in guiding readers through the text.

2.4. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study uses an established Metadiscourse model, pioneered by Hyland (2005), to classify Metadiscourse features into interactive and interactional categories. By employing this framework, the research aims to analyse how writers engage with their readers and structure their texts effectively. Interactive Metadiscourse comprises elements that guide readers through a text, such as

transitions, signposts, and frame markers. These components clarify the structure of the content and help the reader follow the author's argument. Conversely, interactional Metadiscourse highlights the author's role in the communication process. This category includes strategies such as hedges, boosters, and attitude markers, which indicate the writer's perspective, emphasize specific points, or express caution. The research offers insights into how often these Metadiscourse features appear in students' research proposals and their effectiveness, revealing ways for students to improve reader engagement and understanding.

3. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH APPROACH

This study adopts a qualitative approach to explore how the students use Metadiscourse in their research proposals. The researchers collected qualitative data from students' research proposals to understand the meanings and contexts in which Metadiscourse elements were used.

3.2. SAMPLING

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. This nonprobability sampling technique was used in accordance with Larsen's (2023) postulation that it allows the researchers to select participants based on specific characteristics or qualities relevant to the study. In this study, all 10 students whose proposals were approved by the University's review committee were sampled.

3.3. DATA COLLECTION/ RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

The study used document analysis as its data collection instrument. According to Sankofa (2023), document analysis in a research study is a systematic evaluation of various documents to extract meaningful information and insights relevant to the

research question. The document in this study was the students' research proposals

3.4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The study used a case study research design. This research design enabled the researchers to conduct an in-depth exploration and a comprehensive examination of how the students use Metadiscourse in their research proposals. This was in line with Berman et al. (2020), who argued that a case study design is a methodological approach that allows for an in-depth exploration of a particular instance or phenomenon in its real-life context.

3.6. DATA ANALYSIS

The study used thematic analysis to analyse data. Following Lochmiller's (2021) guidelines for thematic analysis, the researchers first coded the proposals for instances of Metadiscourse based on Hyland's (2005) taxonomy. These codes were then grouped into the overarching themes of 'interactive' and 'interactional' Metadiscourse to answer the research questions. This approach was particularly useful for gaining insight into participants' experiences and understanding the implicit meanings within their narratives.

4. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

This section focuses on the discussion and results. The aim is to identify the type of Metadiscourse students use and how they use it in their research proposals.

4.1. DISCUSSION

The students' extracts are written in italics and bolded

Participant 1

Extract 1

'Furthermore, this study aims to explore the various dimensions of its subject

matter by employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies.'

The participant's use of the interactive Metadiscourse element "furthermore" indicates a deliberate strategy aimed at guiding the reader through the progression of ideas. This choice suggests an awareness of the importance of coherence in argumentation, as "furthermore" clearly signals the addition of relevant information while reinforcing the logical connections between points. The participant correctly used the Metadiscourse element; furthermore, which effectively enhances the text's overall coherence. By using this term, the author not only provides supplementary information but also underscores the significance of previous arguments, which is crucial to building a persuasive narrative.

According to Alqahtani and Abdelhalim (2020), the strategic application of Metadiscourse elements, such as "furthermore," is essential for maintaining reader engagement and clarifying relationships between claims. This evaluation supports the idea that the participant's choice is not only appropriate but also aligned with best practices in constructing compelling arguments, thereby contributing to a more engaging and persuasive discourse.

Extract 2

'This study may contribute to a deeper understanding of how students use grammatical and lexical cohesion in their English essays.'

The participant correctly used the interactional Metadiscourse "may" to express possibility and tentativeness in their arguments, highlighting the flexibility of claims made during discussions. This is a correct usage because the interactional Metadiscourse 'may' allows speakers to express uncertainty and invite dialogue, fostering a more collaborative discussion

environment. According to Farahani and Mohemmed (2018), this strategic use of language not only enhances the clarity of their arguments but also demonstrates a thoughtful approach to discourse that accommodates differing opinions. Overall, the use of such Metadiscursive elements enriches the conversation and promotes a more nuanced understanding of the subject matter. This indicates that modal verbs are not just important for grammar; they also significantly impact how communication unfolds.

Participant 2

Extract 3

‘However, the current study investigates the role of Metadiscourse in academic writing, focusing on how authors guide readers through their arguments.’

The participant used the transition, however, as an interactive Metadiscourse element, correctly signaling contrast and drawing attention to a shift in perspective. This strategy enhances coherence within the text and also clarifies the author's stance on differing viewpoints. According to Khedri et al. (2013), using interactive Metadiscourse invites the reader to engage more deeply with the text, as it creates a dialogue-like quality that encourages active participation. By signaling the addition of new information, "however" encourages readers to consider how each piece fits into the broader context of the discussion, promoting a more thorough understanding of the topic at hand.

Extract 4

‘It appears that learners struggle with the correct usage of the simple past tense; hence, this study focuses on the usage of the simple past tense.’

The participant used interactional Metadiscourse in the sentence above to guide the reader's understanding. However, hedges can become problematic when used

in a section where the writer must establish a strong need for the study (e.g., justification, problem statement). In the above statement, the interactional Metadiscourse was used inappropriately as it is used in a section where the student must *establish a strong need* for the study (e.g., justification, problem statement). A research proposal should convincingly show that the problem exists. Using “it appears” might lead the reader to question whether the author truly knows learners struggle or is merely guessing.

Participant 3

Extract 5

‘In contrast to previous studies that primarily focused on the quantitative aspects of the data, this research emphasizes the importance of qualitative insights.’

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse "in contrast to" to highlight significant differences in the findings, suggesting that a more nuanced understanding can be achieved by considering diverse perspectives. The interactive Metadiscourse was appropriately used because it not only emphasizes the distinctions between contrasting viewpoints but also encourages the audience to engage critically with the material. The participant is also using this discourse marker to aid in guiding the reader through the argument, making the transitions between ideas smoother and reinforcing the overall coherence of the presentation

Participant 4

Extract 6

“Therefore, the current study investigates the impact of Metadiscourse markers on reader comprehension and engagement”.

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse marker ‘therefore’ to signal causal relationships and guide the reader

through the logical progression of the argument. The participant correctly used the interactive Metadiscourse 'therefore' because it effectively connects premises and conclusions, clarifying the thought process and reinforcing the argument's structure. Additionally, the use of such markers enhances reader engagement by providing signposts that highlight critical points within the text. When readers encounter these markers, they are more likely to follow the author's reasoning and retain the information being conveyed.

Extract 7

'It is evident that EFAL learners face challenges in using the simple past tense in their English essays.'

The participant used the interactional Metadiscourse "it is evident" to assert a shared understanding among readers of the difficulties these learners encounter. This Metadiscourse is appropriately used, as it helps bridge the gap between the writer and the audience, reinforcing collective recognition of the challenges faced. By employing this phrase, the participant encourages readers to reflect on their own experiences and perspectives, fostering a sense of community and shared insight.

Furthermore, the use of such Metadiscourse signals confidence in the argument being presented and invites the audience to engage more deeply with the content. It establishes a common ground, suggesting that the issues discussed are not only relevant but also observable by anyone familiar with the context. This approach enhances the persuasiveness of the writing and encourages readers to be more receptive to the forthcoming analysis and solutions proposed for these challenges.

Participant 5

Extract 8

This proposal is structured as follows: introduction, literature Review, methodology, expected outcomes, timeline, budget and conclusion

The participant employs interactive Metadiscourse, using phrases like 'as follows' to clearly guide the reader through the content and enhance understanding. This interactive Metadiscourse is appropriately used in the sentence because it creates a roadmap for the reader, helping them to anticipate the structure and flow of the information presented. The participant used it to foster engagement, as readers can mentally prepare for the upcoming points or sections.

Extract 9

'This study investigates how the first additional language learners use adjectives in their English essays.'

The phrase "this study investigates" is an interactional Metadiscourse element. The participant appropriately utilised this element, as it serves as a crucial focal point in signalling the study's purpose and engaging the reader. The participant invites the audience into the discourse and emphasises the ongoing inquiry into the specific challenges encountered by first additional language learners. It establishes a connection with the reader, encouraging them to consider the research's relevance and significance. *It provides a framework for interpreting the subsequent findings and discussions.*

Participant 6

Extract 10

'The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of various teaching methods on student engagement and learning outcomes in a classroom setting'.

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse, 'the purpose of', in the research proposal to clearly delineate the goals of their research. The participant appropriately used this element to engage

the reader more effectively. The participant used this approach to help guide the audience through the rationale for the research, making it easier for them to understand the study's significance and implications. It fosters a connection between the researcher and the audience, allowing for a more immersive and comprehensible exploration of the research topic. Through this technique, the participant underscores the relevance of their work within the broader academic context, demonstrating a thoughtful consideration of how their findings may contribute to ongoing discussions in the field.

Participant 7

Extract 11

'In the next section, the methodology is discussed, providing a clear framework for how the research was conducted.'

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse phrase "in the next section" to guide the reader through the narrative, establishing a roadmap for the discussion ahead. This phrase is correctly used to emphasise the organisation of the content, helping to signal shifts between topics and reinforcing the logical flow of the information. By using this expression, the participant enhances the clarity and cohesion of the write-up, allowing readers to anticipate what follows and understand the relationships among the various components of the methodology. According to Yea et al. (2020), this approach highlights the importance of clear communication in academic writing, ensuring that the audience remains engaged and informed throughout the document.

Participant 8

Extract 12

'This chapter concludes by outlining the key findings of the study and their implications for future research.'

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse, 'concludes by,' to indicate to the readers that they are summarising the critical elements discussed throughout the chapter. The participant correctly used this element to guide the audience to the final thoughts, reinforcing the significance of the research outcomes. It further allows for a seamless connection to the subsequent sections, where recommendations and broader impacts will be explored. By employing such language, the author enhances clarity and guides readers through the logical progression of the argument.

Participant 9

Extract 13

'According to Smith (2020), students use different writing skills to achieve their intentions.'

The participant used the interactive Metadiscourse "according to" in the research proposal to guide the reader and establish credibility. This phrase is correctly used, allowing the writer to engage the reader more effectively, signalling transitions and emphasizing key points throughout the document. This technique fosters a clearer communication of ideas, enhancing overall comprehension and making it easier for the audience to follow the argument's progression. Furthermore, the use of such interactive strategies demonstrates the participant's awareness of their audience, indicating a thoughtful approach to academic writing.

Participant 10

Extract 14

'Research by Brown and Lee (2019) indicates that the use of interactive Metadiscourse in academic writing plays a crucial role in facilitating reader understanding and engagement.'

The participant employed the interactive Metadiscourse marker ‘indicates that’ to guide the reader through their argument effectively, signalling important information and helping to create a clear connective thread between ideas. The participant appropriately used this element to foster a more interactive reading experience, enabling the audience to navigate the text's arguments more easily. As such, the strategic use of Metadiscourse is essential for effective communication in scholarly contexts.’

Extract 15

‘This study seeks to address a gap that is relevant to educators and learners.’

The participant used the interactional Metadiscourse marker ‘this study seeks to’ to guide the reader through the research objectives clearly and effectively. The participant correctly used this element to establish a direct connection with the audience, enabling them to understand the research's purpose and its contribution to the existing body of knowledge. Gezezin and Bas (2020) argue that this approach not only enhances the clarity of the study but also encourages reader engagement by outlining the specific goals and anticipated outcomes.

4.2. RESULTS

The analysis of the students’ research proposals revealed that both interactive and interactional Metadiscourse features were used throughout their writing. The results respond directly to the study’s two research questions. The findings demonstrate that students frequently used a wide range of formal interactive Metadiscourse markers, such as transitions (e.g., however, therefore, in contrast to), frame markers (e.g., as follows, in the next section, concludes by), and evidentials (e.g., according to, indicates that). This indicates that students are becoming more adept at organising their writing and guiding their

readers through their arguments. Furthermore, the use of these markers indicates that students can engage with the content more deeply, reflecting a greater awareness of their audience. They can clarify relationships among ideas and enhance the coherence of their texts. Additionally, the employment of evidentials illustrates that students can support their claims with credible sources, which is a critical component of academic writing.

The results also revealed that students used interactional Metadiscourse markers, including hedges (e.g., *may, it appears*), boosters (e.g., *it is evident*), self-mentions (e.g., *this study investigates, this study seeks to*) and engagement markers (e.g., *note that*, although not directly found, similar devices were used). These elements enabled students to express their stance, convey degrees of certainty, and interact with readers by inviting participation and establishing credibility.

Furthermore, the results also show that most students used Metadiscourse appropriately and strategically, especially in structuring arguments, indicating purposes, signposting upcoming sections and presenting transitions between ideas. This indicates a good awareness of audience needs and the role of Metadiscourse in facilitating coherence.

However, one notable challenge emerged: inappropriate hedging. For instance, Participant 2 used “*it appears that*” in the justification section, a part of the proposal where certainty is required. This aligns with concerns raised by Pearson and Abdollahzadeh (2023) that poor use of Metadiscourse may weaken clarity and persuasiveness. Overall, the findings reinforce Hyland (2010) and Haruna et al. (2018), who stress that effective Metadiscourse enhances readability, engagement, and coherence. Moreover, the results are consistent with studies such as Pasaribu et al. (2022), which found that

EFL students use both interactive and interactional Metadiscourse, though not always consistently

5. CONCLUSION

The study set out to identify the types of Metadiscourse used in students' research proposals and to examine how these features were employed. The findings reveal that students use a wide range of both interactive and interactional Metadiscourse markers, indicating emerging competence in academic writing. Interactive Metadiscourse (e.g., transitions, frame markers) is used more frequently and effectively, helping students guide readers and create coherent argument structures. Interactional Metadiscourse, such as hedges and boosters, is generally used correctly, though some students misuse hedges in contexts requiring assertiveness. Students demonstrate a growing awareness of academic audience expectations, using Metadiscourse to build credibility, signal purpose, and enhance engagement. The research confirms prior scholarship (e.g., Hyland, 2010; Pearson & Abdollahzadeh, 2023) that Metadiscourse is essential in shaping clear, persuasive, and reader-friendly research proposals. While students show competency, the isolated instances of misapplication highlight the need for further guidance and instructional support.

6. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are proposed:

6.1. For Academic Writing Instruction

- Integrate explicit instruction on Metadiscourse into academic writing courses to help students understand the functions and importance of these linguistic features.
- Provide targeted lessons on when to use hedges and boosters,

especially in sections requiring strong justification or certainty.

- Use authentic examples from approved research proposals to model effective Metadiscourse usage.

6.2. For Student

- Students should practice identifying and analysing Metadiscourse in academic texts to deepen their understanding of how writers guide readers and express their stance.
- Students should revise their proposals with attention to hedging, ensuring that uncertainty markers are not used inappropriately in argument-building sections.
- Students should continue using interactive markers such as therefore, in contrast, and as follows to maintain clarity and coherence.

6.3. For Supervisors and Writing Support Units

- Provide feedback focusing specifically on Metadiscourse in early drafts to ensure students learn to refine their stance and structure.
- Develop checklists or writing guides that highlight common Metadiscourse markers and their appropriate functions.

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