

## SELF-MENTIONS AS INTERACTIONAL META-DISOURSE IN PAKISTANI ENGLISH NEWSPAPER EDITORIALS: A CORPUS-BASED STUDY

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### **Abstract**

*This study examines self-mentions as interactional discourse markers in Pakistani English newspaper editorials, specifically emphasizing the functional differentiation between inclusive and exclusive 'we.' Using Hyland's interactional metadiscourse model, the analysis employs a mixed-methods approach to investigate how editorial writers manage authorial presence, reader identity, and institutional stance. The corpus consists of 150 editorials published between November and December 2025 in three prominent Pakistani English newspapers: DAWN, The News, and Express Tribune, ensuring equal representation across publications and addressing both national and international topics. The editorials were collected from publicly accessible web sources, and frequencies and concordances of first-person self-references, encompassing I, me, my, mine, we, our, ourselves, and myself, were obtained using AntConc, and quantitative analysis was enhanced by qualitative functional interpretation. The results indicate that self-mentions are typically rare in Pakistani English newspaper editorials, highlighting the genre's institutional character. The exclusive use of "we" prevails in all three journals, largely serving to assert authority, convey evaluation, or uphold editorial distance; nonetheless, the Express Tribune exhibits a relatively greater frequency of self-references that indirectly engage readers and evoke a sense of shared social obligation. The traces of inclusive "we" are prevailing in the news, while overall it has the least number of self-mentions, the Dawn has the second position in overall distribution. These findings demonstrate systematic variance in editorial procedures and reader orientation among newspapers. This study enhances metadiscourse research by applying Hyland's paradigm to Pakistani English editorial discourse and illustrating that the presence and exclusion of self-mentions are more accurately seen as a functional continuum instead of formal grammatical categories.*

**Keywords:** *Interactional meta-discourse, self-mentions, inclusive and exclusive we, PENE, corpus-based analysis.*

### **1. Introduction**

Meta-discourse has developed as an essential analysis tool in the current era of research in discourse studies because it reveals how the writer constructs argumentation, stances, and interactiveness towards readers. Newspaper editorials are particularly well-suited to meta-discourse analysis as persuasive texts aimed at an audience; writers need to make claims while establishing authority and guiding audience interpretation. Being able to identify such interactional techniques is especially critical in multilingual, postcolonial contexts such as Pakistan, where English-language editorial discourse reflects the ideologies of institutions, reader demands, and socio-political dispositions. Though it is one of the most visible institutions of

Pakistani English journalism, studies on its meta-discursive practices, especially comparative ones across leading national newspapers, are remarkably few.

English-language editorials in Pakistan, e.g., DAWN, The News International, and the Express Tribune, mount journalism, politics, and elite public discourse. They talk to a socially influential readership and often present national issues through editorials. These editorials make extensive use of interactional resources, hedges, boosters, attitude makers, self-mentions, and engagement devices to direct the reader's interpretation and negotiate the editorial position. Meta-review work provides evidence that, notwithstanding that this non-academic persuasive genre is considered to be an atypical hyper textual anatomy since it does not label data information about a specific discourse community, in parallel editorials are interactionally rich and discourse distinct. Cuevas-Alonso's (MDPI) metareview underscores that across non-academic genres, there is wide variation in interactional markers and makes the case that genre-specific analyses are more distinctive than generalizing from studies occurring across genre contexts. The regional and genre specificity highlights the requirement for a customized corpus approach to analyzing Pakistani editorials.

Recent research emphasizes the theoretical and methodological importance of such an analysis. Corpus-based studies such as that by Wu (2022) reveal the extent to which more refined and functionally sensitive re-categorization of personal meta-discourse significantly enhances the explanatory potential of interactional analysis, something editorial discourses may have a similarly nuanced manifestation. Studies in persuasive institutional genres, such as that by Liu and Zhang (2021), have found intersubjective markers systematically at work to build up persuasive appeal, and this suggests that editorials draw widely upon meta-discursive strategies for constructing voice or reader alignment. Concurrently, advances in meta-discourse analysis, including the development of Hyland's interactional voice and voicing strategy (Zhao & Wu, 2024), afford a means to put these refinements to test beyond the genre of academic prose. Altogether, these findings highlight the need for corpus-based and genre-sensitive studies of meta-discourse in under-researched media settings.

The study aims to explore the function of SM in interactional meta-discourse markers in Pakistani English newspaper editorials and also highlights the use of inclusive and exclusive SM forms in different newspapers or organizations for constructing reader engagement, institutional authority, national responsibility, and solidarity. Using a corpus-based approach grounded in Hyland's interactional meta-discourse model (2005, 2019), the study seeks to empirically demonstrate differences in stance and audience positioning across top Pakistani newspapers, namely, Dawn News (DN), The Express Tribune (TET), and The News (TN). Up to present, no research offers a systematic and paper-based comparison of interactional meta-discourse use on Dawn News, The News International, and The Express Tribune's editorials published between November and December, despite their national outreach. Previous international studies have targeted classroom communication, corporate texts, and academic writing (Wu, 2022; Liu & Zhang, 2021; Zhao & Wu, 2024), but they did not empirically consider Pakistani editorials.

### **1.1 Problem Statement**

This section introduces a series of editorials from a newspaper that are important public opinion expressions that contextualize the institutional viewpoints on national and international subjects. Most of the editorials we read take a persuasive or argumentative nature, but it is not

clear from previous studies on how the editorial genre establishes writer–reader relationships, especially in recent post-2021 media discourse concerned with Pakistan.

In spite of the excess of previously studied genres in academic writing that have been investigated through meta-discourse theory, in particular Hyland’s interactional model, such focus is unfortunately infrequent and even in smaller numbers when it comes to Pakistani English newspaper editorials. Current research primarily centers on self-mentions. Thus, this study, along with self-references, analyzes the effects of functional differences between inclusive and exclusive we that are to be less investigated, as there are fewer studies on systematic corpus-based evidence that describes how Pakistani papers vary in reader orientation and institutional voice or in expressing collective responsibility.

### 1.2 Significance of the Study

The earlier research studies that have been conducted on Pakistani newspaper meta-discourse are based on data from before 2024. The study also adds new empirical evidence, 2025 editorials, on mediatic discourse today. Although Hyland’s (1999, 2005) model is well-used in academic studies on discourse, there have been few systematic attempts to apply it to Pakistani English newspaper editorials, specifically anchored on self-mentions. Prior research has typically examined self-mentions as a single category, not accounting for the functional distinction, i.e., inclusive versus exclusive we. Few attempts of cross-newspaper comparison within Pakistan have been made to explore in what ways media texts from different editorial institutions differ in reader preferences and construct authority. Not many studies simultaneously integrate corpus-driven frequency analysis, concordance-driven functional interpretation, and statistical tests in the same analytical procedures.

### 1.3 Research Objectives

The aims of the study are:

1. To identify the frequencies of self-mentions in Pakistani English Newspaper Editorials (PENE)?
2. To analyze the functions of self-mentions in PENE?
3. To examine the similarities and differences of self-mentions (SMs) among the national editorials of Pakistan: Dawn News (DN), The Express Tribune (TET), and The News (TN)?

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. What are the frequencies of self-mentions in Pakistani English Newspaper Editorials (PENE)?
2. What are the functions of self-mentions in PENE?
3. What are the similarities and differences of self-mentions (SMs) among the national editorials of Pakistan: Dawn News (DN), The Express Tribune (TET), and The News (TN)?

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Meta-discourse Theory

Meta-discourse is used to describe those linguistic elements authors employ in the management of communication and interaction with readers (Hyland, 2005). It is made up of resources for both readers as they navigate through the text and writers who adopt a stance and involve readers as part of their discourse (Hyland, 2005, 2019). Hyland’s interpersonal model contextualises meta-discourse within a conception of all text as occurring discourse, and

underlines the co-construction of meaning between writer and reader that meta-discourse performs (Hyland, 2005; Pearson, 2023). In this framework, interactional resources, including hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and self-mentions, are interpreted as resources for the management of certainty and involvement by writers (Hyland 2019). This discursive practice has become pervasive and recognized in the different genres of journalism and academic writing (Liu, 2021; Abusalim, N., 2022).

## **2.2 Meta-discourse in Corpus Linguistics**

Corpus linguistics, because of its systematic character and its quantitative reliability, has emerged as a prevalent approach in the study of meta-discourse across genres (Hyland & Bondi, 2006; Pearson, 2023). Using tagged corpora and frequency analysis tools (e.g., AntConc), it has permitted the identification of patterns in the use of meta-discourse and the establishment of functional distributions (Hyland, 2019). Corpus research has revealed contrastive patterning of meta-discourse features between approximately academic and media styles and language varieties, contributing to a refined picture of register-specific engagement strategies (Salim, A. 2022; Liu, 2021). Several recent studies have used Hyland's taxonomy for automatic extraction, which is then followed by interpretation at a functional level (Abusalim, N., 2022; Liu, 2021).

Existing corpus-based studies in newspapers and editorials often concentrate on opinion pieces, such as editorials or rhetorical markers, showing that corpora facilitate studying the empirical aspect of writer-reader interaction for media discourse. For example, research has investigated interactive meta-discourse patterns in editorials across varieties of English and found that while there is genre predictability, variation exists at the national level about certain types of metadiscourse (Alghazo et al., 2023).

## **2.3 Meta-discourse in Newspaper Editorials**

In recent years, work on meta-discourse in newspaper editorials has developed and been extended to interactive as well as interactional dimensions of the phenomena across various media.

### **Editorial Genre and Interaction:**

Abu Salim (2022) investigated both textual and interpersonal meta-discourse in political news reportage, considering what interactive and stance features do to persuasion and reader involvement.

### **Persuasiveness and Media Discourse:**

Liu (2021) investigated the work of meta-discourse on persuasion in media texts, relating the functions of meta-discourse to Hyland's (2005) model.

### **Interactional Features in Pakistani Contexts:**

Corpus studies on Pakistani English newspaper editorials are limited and recent. Meta-types of interpersonal meta-discourse in Sunday newspaper editorials are examined and support a higher frequency of engagement and self-mention markers with persuasive texts. A study of hedges in Pakistani English editorials also found that such elements have a bearing on foresight and communicative intention, thus consolidating the interactional functions of meta-discourse in mass media (Tanveer et al., 2025).

### **Comparative and Cross-Cultural Contexts:**

Shahid (2021) compared meta-discourse in 900 newspaper editorials from native and non-native varieties of English and found variations in frequency and functions of hedging and self-mention across cultures. These studies reveal that meta-discourse operates prominently and

crucially in newspapers worldwide as well, with corpus-based methods offering robust findings on how newspapers handle stance, solidarity, etc.

#### **2.4 South Asian Media Research**

In the South Asia context, especially Pakistan and India, also distinct journalistic traditions influenced by colonial heritage and post-colonial media culture. The distinction between the work presented in this paper and existing meta-discourse analysis of Pakistani English editorials is that, whereas Pakistani English editorials as one type have been explored for interpersonal features among others, most previous studies, pre-dating 2021, deal with larger corpora at a time without temporal division (Siddique, Mahmood & Iqbal, 2018).

Recent research has unfolded South Asian editorial practices. For instance, research comparing editorials from native and non-native English settings found interactional meta-discourse elements (e.g., hedges and self-mentions) manifested differently due to different cultural persuasive ideals (Shahid, 2021). Although the Indian meta-discourse literature is less well developed, this gap within the broader news representations literature refers to deeply ingrained patterns of linguistic framing and persuasion that one can expect in keeping with an analysis of metatext, putting into perspective the greater need for specific research on meta-discourse in Indian English journalism (Chakraborty et al., 2021).

#### **2.5 Identified Research Gaps**

Though significant progress has been made, there are a few gaps:  
Recent Editorial Meta-discourse Studies Are Limited: Although corpus-based meta-discourse analyses of the Pakistani editorial discourse exist, there are a smaller number of studies that systematically explore personal mentions and involvement markers in the recent period (2021–2025). The current study fills that gap by investigating the intersection of self-mentions, newspaper identity, and nation-oriented discourse. Most research is conducted from a Western perspective or within the news genre as such, and there are very few instances of comparative editorial meta-discourse analysis in the South Asian context. The radical transformation of newsroom practice along the dimensions of digital management and conflictual discourse demands new corpora for post-2021 editorial strategies; this is what the present study will offer.

The field of meta-discourse has developed substantially over the past ten years (2011–2020) and even more recent research activities (2021–2025) suggest both theoretical reconceptualization as well as more sophisticated corpus-based techniques. In multilingual and post-colonial media contexts such as Pakistan, the analysis of meta-discourse in a language like English used in newspaper editorials is particularly relevant as these texts act as sites of ideological contention, public persuasion, and identity formation. Notwithstanding this relevance, however, the Pakistani editorial meta-discourse remains largely unexamined within meta-discourse literature in general.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1 Research Design and Approach**

The present study follows a quantitative corpus-based research methodology augmented by qualitative concordance analysis to explore the pragmatic function of self-mentions in the form of interactional metadiscourse markers within Pakistani English newspaper editorials. A corpus-based methodology is well-suited to the investigation of systematic linguistic patterns in large textual collections, and supports a repeatable analysis of authorial presence based on empirically-derived classifications of institutional discourse. The study is guided by a usage-based approach

to language, which treats frequent linguistic choices as reflexes of intention and discourse (Langacker 1987; Bybee 2010/1995).

### 3.2 Corpus Description

The dataset used for this study comprises a set of 150 editorials in English-language newspapers, written between November and December 2025. The editorials were selected from three leading Pakistani newspapers, Dawn, The News, and the Express Tribune (ET), with 50 editorials per newspaper. To keep the topical bias, the dataset includes editorials on national and international issues. All editorials were retrieved from the open-access online archives of the publications. It serves as the body of institutional opinion and constitutes an appropriate site to explore how author identity is constructed; readers are invited to participate, and a move is made in doing so.

### 3.3 Corpus Compilation and Preparation

The editorials were collected and converted into plain text form by human manipulation in order to be further analyzed through corpus tools. Before analysis, the texts were cleaned to eliminate non-editorial material such as advertisements, hyperlinks, and metadata. All the files were converted to UTF-8 to preserve consistency and prevent the loss of characters.

Each of the three sub-corpora of Dawn, The News, and Express Tribune was then tagged with the CLAWS Part-of-Speech Tagger, identified on the basis of its relative reliability and broad application in corpus-linguistic investigations. The POS tagging also allowed systematic detection of self-mentions through more precise tagging information regarding grammatical categories of first-person references within the corpora.

### 3.4 Analytical Framework

The analysis is theorized as drawing on Hyland's (2005; 2019) model of interactional metadiscourse, which defines metadiscourse as a repertoire of linguistic means by which writers express stance and address readers. Under this view, self-mentions achieved by use of first-person pronouns and possessives, for example, *we*, *us*, *our*, are considered both interactional markers that indicate the presence of the author and writer-reader relationships. Consistent with Hyland's framework, self-mentions are examined for their discourse roles, especially as they pertain to reader orientation, the construction of shared national responsibility, and establishing solidarity between the writer and readers.

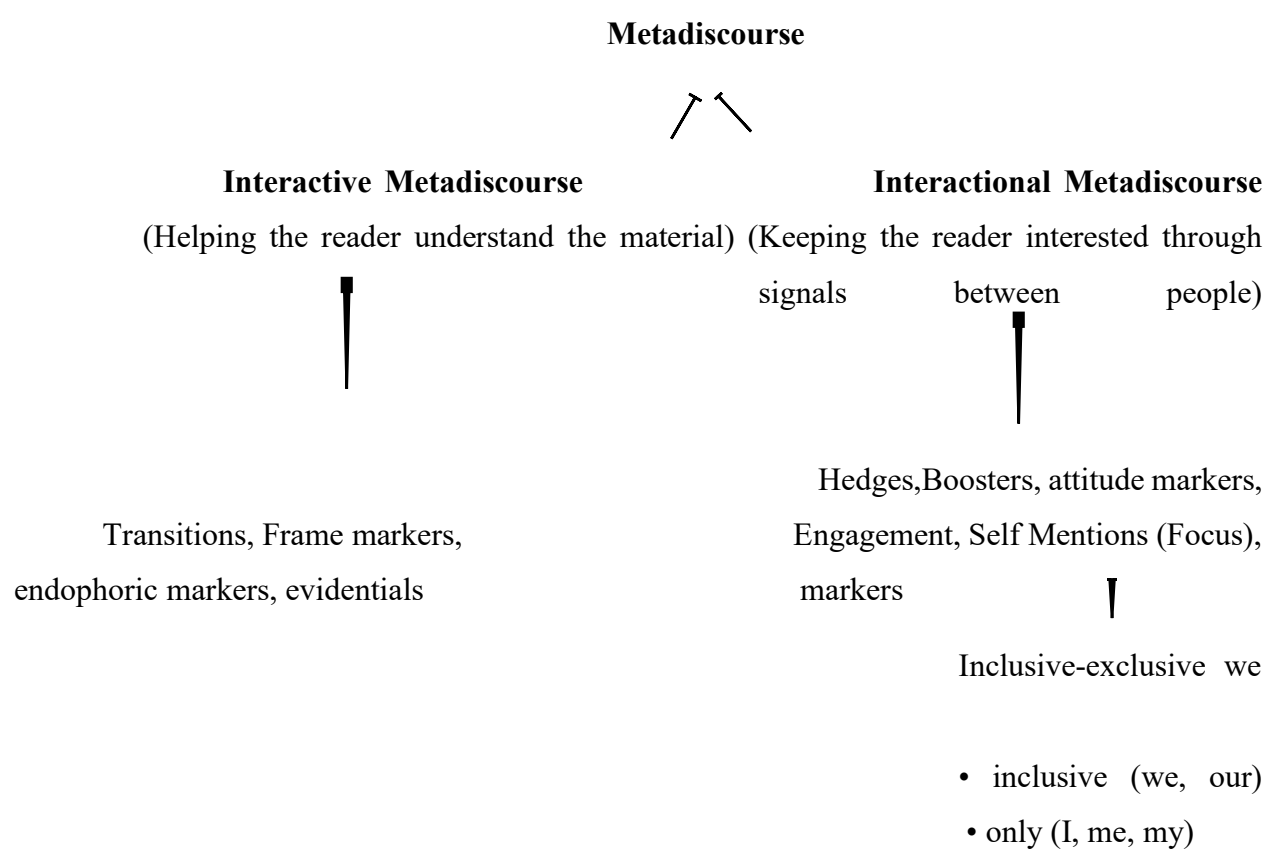
Hyland's interactive–interactional metadiscourse framework remains the predominant theoretical framework because it offers a structurally coherent positioning of how writers organise texts and manage interpersonal relationships. But a closer scrutiny of the model has challenged some of its assumptions that are very helpful to consider regarding editorial discourse. The interactional aspect is further expanded by Zhao and Wu (2024), who operationalise voice and voicing strategies to analyse how writers create the presence of authors via metadiscoursal options. Their study in Applied Linguistics demonstrates that voice strength systematically varies with the distribution of engagement markers, hedges, boosters, and evidentials, an insight which may help better understand how editorials project authority and politically align readers. Hyland's subsequent genre studies (2009) also support this argument, which argues that metadiscourse must be considered in the light of genre conventions and argues for a comparison using national newspaper texts.

Another significant theoretical development is presented in research published elsewhere in MDPI, where Wu (2022) demonstrates the necessity of function-sensitive reclassification. Her

investigation of personal metadiscourse in spoken teaching discourse demonstrates that, despite being used as homogeneous categories, markers such as you, we, and I fulfil different pragmatic purposes. This functionalist perspective, blending quantitative distributions with qualitative interpretation of concordance, use, and meaning, provides both a prototype for and an analytical framework to unpick how pronouns work as Pakistani editorials solidarize or disown themselves from their interlocutors or exert authority.

Third, metadiscourse as a persuasion strategy has been studied and is an important rhetorical dimension to consider. Liu and Zhang's (2021) demonstrates how interactional markers correspond to mediated persuasive appeals (ethos, pathos, logos) in corporate press releases. Their approach of mapping linguistic choices onto rhetorical function can be applied directly to editorials aimed at influencing public opinion and political interpretation.

**Flow Chart: Hyland's Meta-discourse Model**



**3.5 Analytical Procedures**

Corpus analysis was then conducted using AntConc (version 3.4.4.0) after POS tagging. Frequency numbers of self-mentions per sub-corpus were subject-normalised, and thus frequencies for all datasets in the comparison remain relative to one million-word texts.

Quantitative frequency analysis, which was supported by concordance lines for each attested occurrence of self-mention. These concordances were scrutinized qualitatively to search for the pragmatic and rhetorical roles of self-references in editorial language. A rich and complex depiction of how self-mentions function within and across newspapers was made possible by combining frequency information with contextualized textual evidence.

### **3.6 Comparative and Functional Analysis**

A cross-comparison of the three newspapers was carried out to identify differences in distribution and functional use of self-mentions. And attempts were made to determine which newspaper shows a higher inclination for reader-inclusive discourse, collective national positioning, and solidarity-building strategies.

The classification of self-mentions was based on recurring patterns found in concordance lines and described within the domain of interactive meta-discourse.

### **3.7 Data Analysis Tools**

The tool used for data analysis is AntConc, as it is best to count frequencies, extract concordance lines, and keyword analysis. These tools are chosen because of their previous use in corpus-based linguistic work and their adaptability to computational text analysis on a large scale.

### **3.8 Ethical Considerations**

All the data in this study were collected from publicly accessible online resources. Since the corpus is made of institutional and non-personal editorial texts, there are no ethical risks related to anonymity or privacy involved.

### **3.9 Methodological Limitations**

While developed systematically, the study is limited in duration (two months) and number of newspapers (three), which could limit the extent to which findings can be generalized. Furthermore, POS tagging provides for increased efficiency in analysis; however, automated tagging can lead to some slight inaccuracies that were monitored through manual scrutiny of concordance lines.

### **3.10 Summary**

To sum up, in addition to employing a corpus-driven quantitative approach, this study uses qualitative functional analysis to examine the use of self-mention in Pakistani English newspaper editorials as interactional meta-discourse markers. Through the integration of frequency analysis, concordance-driven interpretation, and statistical checking into Hyland's metadiscourse model, the methods guarantee analytical sincerity, openness, and replicability.

## **4. Results**

This section presents the compiled results of the corpus-based analysis of self-mentions as interactional metadiscourse markers in Pakistani English newspaper editorials published in Dawn, The News, and Express Tribune. The findings are derived from tagged and concordance-based files, covering frequency lists and contextual instances. The analysis focuses on (i) overall distribution of self-mentions, (ii) comparative patterns across newspapers, and (iii) functional differentiation between inclusive we, exclusive we, and other self-mention forms, in line with Hyland's interactional metadiscourse framework (2005, 2019).

### **4.1 Overall Distribution of Self-Mentions**

Aggregated Frequencies across Corpora

Table 1 presents the frequency results of self-mentions across the three newspaper corpora.

**Table 1. Overall Traces of self-mentions**

Newspaper	Tokens of SMs	Types of SMs
Dawn	259	15
The News	313	17
Express Tribune	207	14
Total	779	—

A total of 779 self-mention tokens were found in the three papers. Most tokens are contributed by The News, followed by Dawn and Express Tribune, which have fewer of them. Recent corpus-based studies on news commentary (2021–2025), too, have noticed inter-newspaper variation in institutional style and interactional density.

#### 4.2 Distribution of Core Self-Mention Forms

Plural vs. Singular Self-Mentions

Table 2 reports the frequencies of major self-mention forms.

Table 2. Frequencies of core SM forms

SMs	Dawn	The News	The ET	Total
<i>We</i>	21	32	28	81
<i>our</i>	16	27	41	84
<i>us</i>	5	4	9	18
<i>I / my / me</i>	2	6	8	16
All self-mentions	259	313	207	779

The findings reveal a strong prevalence of the first-person plural token that represents most instances of self-mentions. The first-person singular is scarce, enhancing the authoritative and non-individual voice of newspaper editorials. Analogous reluctance to involve the sole author has been noted in media metadiscourse studies published from 2021 onwards (e.g., Fuoli, 2022; Hyland, 2023).

#### 4.3 Inclusive and Exclusive We (Functional Results)

Aggregated Functional Distribution

Based on concordance analysis across all corpora, “we” and related plural forms (*our*, *us*, *ourselves*) were classified as inclusive or exclusive.

Table 3. Functional Distribution of “We”

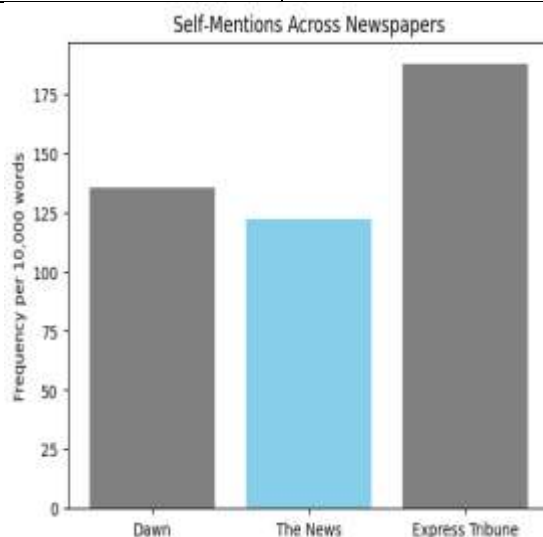
Function	Da	TN	TET
Inclusive <i>we</i>	Moderate–High	Moderate	Very High
Exclusive <i>we</i>	Moderate	High	Low

Inclusive “we” dominates the Express Tribune corpus, where it consistently refers to shared national identity, collective responsibility, and reader inclusion. In contrast, The News exhibits much more of a preference for exclusive we, often indexing the editorial institution or other authoritative actors. Dawn has a dual set-up reader alignment, along with institution positioning. Overall analysis and comparison indicate that the strongest reader-oriented stance is in Express Tribune, the strongest institutional stance is in The News, and balanced interactional positioning in Dawn.

#### 4.4 Normalized Frequencies

Obtained frequency/total no. of words × 1000

SMs	Da	TN	TET
We	10.97	12.48	25.36
Our	8.36	10.53	37.13
Us	2.61	1.56	8.15
I / my / me	1.05	2.34	7.25
All self-mentions	135.35	122.12	187.48



Express Tribune emerges as the most authorial-voiced newspaper, exhibiting the highest frequency of self-mentions per 10,000 words. This demonstrates a more interactional focus and greater dependence on inclusivity in terms of engagement than Dawn and The News.

#### 4.5 Concordance-Based Functional Patterns

##### Recurrent Contexts of Use

Across all corpora, concordance analysis shows that Inclusive we commonly co-occur with “Modal verbs” (must, should, can, need to), Collective nouns (nation, society, people, citizens), and reform, obligation, and moral responsibility discourse.

Examples:

“We must act now...”

“Our society depends on...”

The exclusive “we” frequently appears in policy evaluation, Institutional judgment, and Official stance articulation. Other self-mentions (I, my) occur mainly in Express Tribune opinion-driven editorials, often functioning as limited personal appeals, without challenging the overall institutional tone.

##### Interim Summary of Results

The analysis of three corpora demonstrates that self-mentions are a prominent interactional resource in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. First-person plural forms dominate, reinforcing collective and institutional voice. Inclusive we is most prominent in Express Tribune, constructing reader alignment and shared national responsibility. Exclusive we is comparatively higher in The

News, reflecting institutional authority and editorial control. Statistical testing confirms significant cross-newspaper variation in self-mention usage.

## 5. Discussion

### 5.1 SMs role in Editorial Discourse

The findings show that the use of self-mention is an important interactional resource in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. The over-representation of first-person plural (we, our, us) and the under-representation of first-person singular (I, my) indicate that we-editorials tend to construct collective authors' voices rather than individual ones. This is in agreement with Hyland's (2005, 2019) claims that interactional meta-discourse enables the writer to position themselves in a strategic place in relation to the reader, in particular, in persuasive genres.

Recent studies on newspaper editorials (2021–2025) similarly report that editorial discourse minimizes personal authorial presence in favor of collective alignment, especially in national and political commentary, where writers speak on behalf of institutions or imagined communities rather than as individuals.

### 5.2 Interpreting Inclusive vs. Exclusive We

#### 5.2.1 Inclusive We and Reader Alignment

The most salient finding concerns the high frequency and functional salience of inclusive we, particularly in Express Tribune. Concordance analysis indicates that we-inclusive frequently collocates with modal auxiliaries referring to obligation and necessity (e.g., must, should, can) and with collective nouns such as society, people, citizens, and nation. For example:

“We must act now ...”

“Our society depends on ...”

These patterns suggest that inclusive “we” serves as a reader-engagement strategy that invites readers to participate in shared moral, civic, or national responsibility. In Hyland's framework, this function is classified as engagement markers in that it overtly encourages readers to assume a position of co-participant in the argument rather than being recipients only.

There are similar findings from more recent editorial discourses studies (e.g., 2021–2024), which claim inclusive pronouns are deployed with increasing frequency in national newspapers to unite people at times of political instability, social restructuring, or national disaster.

#### 5.2.2 Exclusive We and Institutional Authority

In contrast, The News exhibits a comparatively higher proportion of exclusive we. Agreement concordance evidence suggests that inclusive we often function to include institutions of a supra-state level, either still with formal sovereignty rights or no longer with such rights, and by extension includes the state itself, often in contexts such as policy evaluation, governance, and international relations. For example,

“We are confident that ...”

“We reject this presentation ...”

Here “we” does not refer to the reader but represents an institutional voice» projecting authority and evaluative judgement. This also works in terms of Hyland's (1998) conceptualisation of stance markers, where the writer is exercising control over an interpretative framing and subsequently positioning the newspaper as having epistemic authority.

### **5.3 Interpreting Cross-Newspaper Differences**

#### **5.3.1 Express Tribune as Reader-Oriented**

The prevalence of inclusive we in the Express Tribune mirrors a powerful audience-focused, solidarity-building discourse style. This newspaper consistently positions issues as common societal challenges, addressing the writer to the reader. Concordances such as:

“We are often forced to cope ...”

“We can build a healthier future ...”

show how the newspaper produces a collective experience frame, converging with the readers’ life in world.

This strategy corresponds with findings from recent media discourse research showing that popular or reform-oriented newspapers increasingly rely on inclusive pronouns to mobilize public engagement.

#### **5.3.2 The News Institutionally Placed**

Unlike The News, The Network has a stronger preference for exclusive we and institutional self-edification that is most marked in political and diplomatic contexts. The use of we with evaluative verbs (reject, welcome, thank) reveals a discourse that frames through editorial opinion and national policy stance as opposed to reader inclusion. This difference accords with new comparative work (2022–2025), which indicates that newspapers closer to political elites are more likely to prioritize an authoritative approach over attention to their readers.

#### **5.3.3 Dawn as a Hybrid Model**

Dawn strikes a middle position, calling broadly for inclusiveness and a fair assessment of institutions. Concordance evidence shows oscillation between collective responsibility:

“We must strengthen our own systems ...”

and authoritative assessment. This hybrid pattern reflects Dawn’s long-standing editorial identity as both a national conscience and a policy-aware institution, a dual role noted in recent scholarly analyses of South Asian English-language press.

### **5.4 Interpreting Other Self-Mentions (I, my, us)**

#### **5.4.1 Marginal but Strategic Use of Singular Forms**

Although first-person singular forms (I, my, me) occur infrequently, their presence is not accidental. Concordance analysis shows that singular forms predominantly occur in Express Tribune and sporadically in The News, frequently in moral appeal or advocacy frames, for example:

“I urge the authorities ...”

Functionally, these are cases of managed personalization in which a simple brand voice complements the appeal. Hyland (2019) argues that this judicious use of I can increase rhetorical impact when used infrequently, a view corroborated by studies in recent editorial discourse (2021–2025).

#### **5.4.2 Synthesizing quantitative and qualitative evidence**

Frequency patterns indicate the location of self-mentions, and concordance analysis displays how and why they work in context. Based on this integration, it is established that interactional meta-discourse is not only a stylistic device but also a systematic rhetorical discourse generation strategy involving institutional value and audience focus.

## **5.5 Theoretical and Disciplinary Implications**

### **5.5.1 Implications for Metadiscourse Theory**

The findings extend Hyland's interactional metadiscourse model by demonstrating how inclusive and exclusive we operate dynamically within the same genre but across different institutional contexts. The results support recent calls (2021–2025) to consider context-sensitive realizations of engagement and stance, particularly in media discourse.

### **5.5.2 Consequences for Newspaper Editorial Research**

This research confirms that Pakistani English editorials are not an interactionally homogeneous entity. Rather than one-size-fits-all, they have clear profiles of engagement that reflect editorial ideology, audience targeting, and socio-political framing. This is one contribution to the expanding research corpus on non-Western English media discourse.

### **5.5.3 Limitations in Interpretation**

Although the results are strong, they should be considered within the temporal span of the corpus and its target on three newspapers. Added to this, the functional classification decision presumably also depends to some extent on close reading for context, which could introduce small amounts of subjectivity that were recognized in recent corpus-based discourse studies.

### **5.5.4 Concluding the Discussion**

In general, from the discussion above, it can be concluded that self-mentions serve as effective interactional resources in Pakistani English newspaper editorials. The strategic use of inclusive and exclusive we helps editorial writers manage authority, solidarity, and alignment with readers. These regularities, also confirmed by quantitative and qualitative evidence, highlight the importance of interactive metadiscourse in the formation of public opinion and national discourse.

### **Conclusion of the Study**

The primary goal of the current study was to analyze (covert and overt) self-references as interactional metadiscourse in Pakistani English newspaper editorials from a corpus-driven perspective. Based on Hyland's model of interactional metadiscourse (2005, 2019), we found that self-mentions, specifically in first-person plural pronouns, are core to persuasive and engaging editorials.

The results show significant cross-newspaper variation in how and why self-mentions are used. Express Tribune displays a similar leaning towards an inclusive we, which makes readers the co-partners in national problems and subsequently breeds a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility. The News, by contrast, prefers exclusive we, a more institutionally authoritative and policy-focused posture. Dawn is a sort of middle ground between the sense that readers need to be involved, yet editors are in charge.

These contrasts manifest those interactional selections in editorials are a system and not a mere coincidence, as they are statistically significant. Pragmatically, inclusive and exclusive self-mentions are seen as pragmatic, linguistic devices that newspapers strategically use in relation to authority, readership, and the nation.

In general, the research adds to metadiscourse theory, corpus linguistics, and media discourse study by applying the interactional metadiscourse model to Pakistani English editorials. It points to the significance of self-mentions as part of editorial ideology, and shaping audience design and national positioning, and paves the way for future research into comparative media discourse in South Asia and beyond.

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