PAKISTANI TED TALKS: A CORPUS-BASED COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF INTERACTIONAL METADISCOURSE MARKERS ACROSS GENDER

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Abstract

This research aims to investigate the use of interactional metadiscourse features such as attitude markers, boosters, engagement markers, hedges, and self mentions by male and female speakers in the Pakistani TED Talks. The research objectives include identifying the interactional metadiscourse markers and their frequencies, examining their functions, and analyzing the similarities and differences between male and female speakers in the content. The data was gathered from a corpus of ten TED Talks (five delivered by male speakers and five by female speakers) sourced from YouTube. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach within a descriptive framework, the analysis employs Hyland's (2005) model of metadiscourse markers, categorizing these features into interactional and interactive dimensions. Findings reveal that both genders strategically use these features to persuade and engage their audiences while expressing passion for their topics and influencing listeners' perspectives. Notably, female speakers exhibit higher frequencies of self-mentions and hedges, indicating a tentative tone aimed at fostering personal connections and enhancing engagement, while males show a tendency to use boosters and attitude markers, demonstrating a greater focus on personal evaluation and assertiveness. This results of the study contribute to a deeper academic understanding of language use in Pakistani English, contribute to discussions on gendered language, and serve as a practical resource for improving communication skills in Pakistani academic and digital settings.

Keywords: Metadiscourse features, Interactional Metadiscourse Markers (IMMs), Pakistani TED Talks, corpus-based, gender variation, spoken discourse

INTRODUCTION

Metadiscourse is crucial in crafting persuasive and effective communication, particularly during oral presentations like TED Talks. As a form of spoken discourse, it significantly reveals how speakers build meaning through real-time interactions, incorporating contextual elements, intonation, and non-verbal cues that shape listeners' comprehension and engagement. This study examines the distribution and use of interactional metadiscourse features, such as self-mentions, engagement markers, hedges, attitude markers, and boosters. It focuses on how these features are utilized by male and female speakers from Pakistan in TED Talks. The research aims to provide insight into the spoken discourse created by these speakers, particularly in terms of how they engage their audience and express their attitudes and stances. Carter and McCarthy (1997) emphasize the value of analyzing spoken discourse to uncover "how individuals use language in

diverse, interactive settings" and its role in cultivating communicative competence that transcends textual insights. TED Talks, initiated as a conference on Technology, Entertainment, and Design in 1984 by Richard Saul Wurman and later co-founded by Harry Marks, have expanded to address global challenges, education, health, and beyond. Known for their concise and impactful delivery, TED Talks typically feature speakers from various fields, presenting their ideas in 18 minutes or less, tackling themes like social change, personal narratives, innovation, and historical awareness.

In our increasingly interconnected world, social media serves as a potent communication, learning, and influence vehicle, particularly in regions like Pakistan. Platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube provide a global forum for individuals to share ideas, foster discussions, and engage with diverse audiences. For Pakistani TED Talks, social media amplifies these messages, enabling them to cross geographic boundaries and resonate with both local and international viewers. This accessibility allows TED speakers in Pakistan to address critical societal issues, including education reform, technological advancements, and social change, while promoting community engagement.

Metadiscourse, often described as "talk about talk" (Williams, 1981, p. 40), serves as a vital tool that enhances the effectiveness of spoken language by facilitating clear communication. It represents a speaker's effort to engage and persuade the audience, making it a significant focus for English language learners aspiring to develop their communication skills. However, similar to their written discourse counterparts, Pakistani speakers encounter numerous hurdles in effectively utilizing metadiscourse markers (MMs) in public speaking contexts. This study specifically examines the use of interactional metadiscourse features (MFs) in Pakistani TED Talks to understand how speakers utilize these markers within the Pakistani context. The analysis will involve ten gender-balanced TED Talks (five by male speakers, five by female speakers), aiming to investigate the distribution and functional roles of these MFs in spoken discourse while comparing gender-specific usage patterns. The classification of MFs is informed by Hyland's (2005) framework, allowing for quantitative and qualitative insight into their usage in TED Talks across.Pakistan.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Metadiscourse is regarded as a crucial component in enhancing communicative skills in a language. Defined as discourse about discourse, Metadiscourse (MD) is a discourse about discourse and represents idea that writing, and speaking are more than just the exchange of information. Rather, they involve social acts between writers and readers or speakers and listeners (Hyland, 2005; Dafouz-Milne, 2008). According to Hyland (2005), metadiscourse consists of interactive markers that help organize discourse and direct readers through a text, as well as interactional markers that convey the writer's perspective and personally engage the reader. These characteristics are widely employed across various discourse forms to improve coherence, engagement, and clarity, acting as a conduit between the content of the text and the audience's understanding.

Recent studies have scrutinized a variety of metadiscourse aspects within differing contexts, focusing on its functional application and influence on audience engagement, clarity, and persuasiveness. This section summarizes research findings from the most recent studies to earlier ones, with an emphasis on metadiscourse markers in TED Talks, media discourse, textbooks, and cross-linguistic analyses.

Boginskaya (2024) investigated the deployment of code glosses as metadiscourse elements in TED Talks, revealing their effectiveness in making scientific concepts understandable to general audiences. The study noted a frequent usage of exemplification markers, scenario elaborations, and reformulation markers, which were instrumental in simplifying intricate topics. Utilizing Hyland's (2005) model and AntConc software on 80 TED Talk transcripts, the analysis demonstrated that TED speakers adeptly simplified abstract ideas for non-expert audiences.

Azlia (2022) examined interactional discourse markers in motivational TED Talks, particularly looking into gender-based differences in stance and audience engagement. It was found that female speakers often utilized stance and engagement markers to create a more expressive approach, while male speakers leaned toward direct markers for clarity. By employing #LancsBox 6.0 to analyze 49 TED Talk transcripts, the study concluded that the personal involvement of female speakers fosters stronger connections with audiences, whereas male speakers focus on clear topic delivery.

Ghafar, Shehzadi, and Tahir (2022) explored the frequency of metadiscourse markers in primary and secondary textbooks from the Punjab Curriculum and Textbook Board (PCTB) using AntConc for analysis. They discovered that interactive markers, such as transitions, were significantly more prevalent than interactional markers, with a total of 10,429 occurrences. This high frequency indicates that textbooks effectively incorporate these markers to enhance learning and engagement for young students. Siddique, Ahmad, and Mahmood (2021) analyzed boosters as metadiscourse features in Punjabi and Urdu, focusing on transliteration and functionality. Their study showed that boosters carried similar emphatic meanings across both languages despite structural variations, underlining the versatility of metadiscourse features across different cultural and linguistic landscapes.

AlJazrawi, AlJazrawi, and Mahmood (2021) examined interactional metadiscourse markers used in WHO speeches during the COVID-19 pandemic. The prominence of self-mentions and boosters helped to craft engaging and persuasive public health communications. Using Hyland's model and AntConc software, the research highlighted how these markers amplify the clarity and persuasive effectiveness of speeches.

Duwila and Probowati (2021) studied personal metadiscourse in TED Talks presented by British speakers, focusing on how pronouns facilitate discourse organization and audience connection. The study found the use of pronouns like "I" and "we" to exemplify points and engage listeners on a personal level. Farahani and Kazemian (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of metadiscourse in English-Persian translations of political TED Talks. Their findings revealed that interactional markers were more frequent, effectively maintaining audience engagement in both languages, even with minor translation adjustments. This suggests consistency in metadiscourse functionality across varying linguistic contexts.

Hamdi (2020) focused on topic-shifting discourse markers in TED Talks, employing a corpus-based approach to identify recurring markers such as "so," "now," and pauses that facilitate topic transitions. The findings indicated that TED speakers rely on these markers to enhance coherence and maintain audience interest throughout their presentations.

Tanveer, Arslan, and Mahmood (2023) examined boosters and self-mentions in columns from Pakistani English newspapers, uncovering how these markers contribute to persuasive discourse. The study found that male writers frequently used boosters and self-mentions to assert authority and cultivate inclusiveness. Rashid, Ali, and Abbas (2020) performed a comparative

analysis of metadiscourse in opinion articles from American and Pakistani newspapers. Results indicated that American articles employed more hedges to convey caution, while Pakistani articles favored direct language with more boosters, reflecting contrasting persuasive strategies. Abbas and Shehzad (2019) explored interdisciplinary variations of metadiscourse in Pakistani research papers within the soft sciences. The study employed a corpus-based methodology, using Hyland's (2005) model, and analyzed 52 articles across English, Education, and History. It revealed that Education articles predominantly used interactive markers, while English research displayed a greater frequency of interactional markers, suggesting varying rhetorical styles across disciplines. Limitations included the narrow focus on Pakistani soft sciences, recommending further research in other contexts for broader implications.

Shafique, Shahbaz, and Hafeez (2019) compared metadiscourse usage among native English and Pakistani researchers, aiming to understand its impact on academic discourse. The study highlighted that Pakistani writers favored interactive markers, while native English writers utilized more interactional markers, indicating a stronger ability among native speakers to engage readers through persuasive techniques. The research suggested the need for exploring diverse academic genres for generalized findings. Uicheng and Crabtree (2018) analyzed macro discourse markers in TED Talks, exploring how speakers signal ideas. The study assessed the impact of genre on marker distribution, identifying 82 distinct markers and confirming consistency in their usage across genres. The conclusions emphasized the value of macro discourse markers in aiding idea communication, notwithstanding the study's limitations regarding sample size.

Siddique, A. R., Mahmood, M. A., Akhter, N., & Arslan, F. (2018) in research paper titled "Hedges as Metadiscourse in Pakistani English Newspaper Editorials: A Corpus-Based Study" aimed to explore the function of hedges as markers of uncertainty in Pakistani English newspaper editorials (PENE) through a corpus-based approach. The purpose of study was to assess the frequency of hedges across different Pakistani newspapers and to classify these hedges into propositional and non-propositional markers. The researchers analyzed a corpus consisting of 1,000 editorials from Dawn, The Express Tribune, The News, and The Frontier, with 250 editorials collected from each newspaper online. For their analysis, the researchers utilized a framework categorizing hedges into expressions of uncertainty, conditional phrases, and impersonal expressions and reported speech. The results demonstrated that The Frontier exhibited the highest frequency of hedge markers, suggesting that its editors were more likely to convey uncertainty and allow for reader interpretation. However, a limitation of the study is its focus solely on Pakistani English newspapers, which could restrict the applicability of its findings to other contexts. Additionally, the specific size of the corpus may not encompass the full range of hedge usage in the Pakistani media landscape.

Siddique, Mahmood, and Iqbal (2018) studied metadiscourse in editorials from Pakistani English newspapers. The analysis focused on the contribution of metadiscourse markers to writer-reader interaction and persuasion. The research highlighted a predominance of interactive markers, particularly in The Frontier, indicating a strong reader-friendly focus. Limitations included the single-genre approach and lack of gender analysis, suggesting avenues for broader explorations in future research. Abbas, Mahmood, and Yasmeen (2017) investigated metadiscourse markers in Pakistani press reports, focusing on their role in establishing writer stance and aiding reader comprehension. The study revealed that metadiscourse markers constitute a significant portion of the corpus, with interactive markers more prevalent than

interactional ones. Limitations included the study's singular focus on Pakistani reportage, recommending comparisons with other media contexts.

Mahmood, Javaid, and Mahmood (2017) analyzed metadiscourse in argumentative essays by Pakistani undergraduate students. Their findings indicated a heavier reliance on interactional markers, particularly self-mentions and engagement markers, revealing areas for further instructional guidance on metadiscourse in academic writing. Limitations noted the singular focus on argumentative essays, advocating further investigation across various writing genres.

Correia, Eskenazi, and Mamede (2015) examined metadiscourse distribution in spoken language, focusing on TED Talks with respect to lexical complexity. The study found that topic management markers appeared independently of vocabulary complexity, while clarification markers were more frequent in complex segments, helping facilitate understanding across different vocabulary levels. Faiz Ullah and Dr. Maimoona Abdulaziz's (2023) study applies corpus linguistics to analyze grammatical cohesion in Lord of the Flies, focusing on how conjunctions create coherence within the text. Using Halliday and Hasan's (1976) model of cohesion, the study quantifies the frequency and distribution of conjunctions like "and," "but," and "so," employing AntConc 3.4.4 as the primary analytical tool. The findings emphasize how specific conjunctions support narrative structure, providing objective insights into William Golding's use of cohesive devices in the novel.

Jabeen and Rai (2011) studied discourse markers in British and Pakistani speech, aiming to highlight differences in their use between native and non-native speakers. They found British speakers used discourse markers more extensively, serving various communicative functions in Pakistani English. The study underscored that Pakistani English represents a distinct variety, with pedagogical implications for understanding its characteristics. Limitations included the narrow range of discourse markers analyzed, suggesting further investigation into a broader array of markers for comprehensive insights.

Despite significant research on TED Talks, there remains a lack of studies employing a corpus-based comparative methodology specifically in the Pakistani context. This research addresses that gap by applying a corpus-based comparative approach to Pakistani TED Talks, contributing to a global understanding of Pakistani English in media environments, enhancing comparative metadiscourse frameworks with context-specific data, revealing how Pakistani TED speakers utilize metadiscourse for audience engagement, and assisting educators in teaching effective discourse techniques tailored for diverse audiences.

Objectives
The objectives of this study are:
- To investigate the interactional metadiscourse markers present in Pakistani TED Talks.
- To identify the frequencies of these metadiscourse markers.
- To explore the functions of these markers and compare the results across male and female speakers in Pakistani TED Talks.

Research Questions
1. What metadiscourse markers are utilized by male and female speakers in Pakistani TED Talks?
2. How frequently do various interactional metadiscourse markers appear in Pakistani TED Talks?

3. In what ways do the functions of metadiscourse markers differ between male and female speakers in Pakistani TED Talks?

Significance

This research will deepen the academic understanding of language usage in Pakistani English, contribute to the discourse on gendered language, and serve as a practical resource for teaching communication skills in Pakistani academia. It aims to enhance global awareness of Pakistani English in media contexts, bolstering comparative metadiscourse frameworks with data specific to Pakistan. Additionally, it reveals how Pakistani TED speakers employ metadiscourse to engage their audiences, supporting educators in imparting effective discourse strategies tailored for diverse audiences. This study paves the way for future research on gender dynamics within Pakistani discourse settings.

Research Methodology

Employing a mixed-method approach, this research combines both quantitative and qualitative analyses to examine interactional metadiscourse markers in Pakistani TED Talks. Initially, ten TED Talks were transcribed from YouTube to form a textual corpus. The quantitative aspect involved using AntConc software to analyze data for numerical insights like frequency and pattern distribution of metadiscourse markers. Following this, a qualitative analysis contextualized these findings, investigating how these markers function in relation to different gender styles of discourse, thus enriching the quantitative data.

Research Type

The study employs a mixed-method approach, which combines quantitative and qualitative strategies to analyze interactional metadiscourse markers in the context of Pakistani TED Talks. According to Gay, mixed methods research combines both types of data to provide a fuller understanding of a phenomenon than either approach could achieve independently (Gay, 2012, p. 483).

Population and Sampling

The target population for this research encompasses all TED Talks given by Pakistani speakers, independent of gender, age, or subject matter, available on platforms like the TED website or YouTube. A purposive sampling method is used, selecting ten TED Talks with equal representation from male and female speakers, ensuring a tailored investigation of gender-based differences in interactional metadiscourse markers in Pakistani TED Talks.

Sample type and Sample technique

This study utilizes purposive sampling, selecting ten TED Talks by Pakistani speakers evenly split between genders. This method allows for a focused examination of interactional metadiscourse markers within a specific cultural and gender context, aligning with the study's aim of exploring language usage and engagement strategies in Pakistani TED Talks.

Sampling Criteria

The sampling criteria for this research stipulate that an equal number of TED Talks from male and female speakers (five each) be chosen to enable a comparative analysis of interactional metadiscourse markers. The focus is exclusively on TED Talks delivered by Pakistani speakers, which are primarily in English or contain significant English content, ensuring alignment with the metadiscourse framework. All selected talks are also publicly accessible on platforms like the TED website or YouTube.

Sample size

The sample size for this study comprises ten TED Talks (five from male speakers and five from female speakers) given by Pakistani speakers, sourced from YouTube to ensure balanced representation.

Data Collection

The data for this study has been collected randomly from Youtube specifically from the website of TED.

Tool for data analysis

Qualitative data was sourced from ted.com through a random sampling of five male and five female TED Talks. The primary analytical tool used was AntConc 3.4.4, known for its capabilities in corpus analysis. The corpus created included ten TED Talks, comprising 9,822 words from female speakers and 9,746 words from male speakers, compiled through various stages: initial transcription, corpus formation, and data organization, culminating in data preparation for analysis with AntConc 3.4.4.

Theoretical Framework

According to Hyland, there are two levels of metadiscourse: interactive and interactional. Interactive resources assist to guide the reader through the text (Thompson, 2001, p. 58), by establishing discourse in accordance with the writer's anticipation of the reader's knowledge and the assessment of what the reader can recover from the text. Interactive resources include such categories as code glosses, transitional markers, frame markers, endophoric markers and evidential markers. Interactional resources comprise hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers and self-mentions (Hyland, 2010). Hedges used in discourse, according to Hyland (2005), indicates the user's subjectivity so that the information is presented as an opinion rather than a fact. Unlike hedges, boosters highlight certainty. The use of boosters represents a confident voice and directness in assertion (Hyland, 2005; Carter & McCarthy, 2006). According to Hyland (2005), attitude markers are used to project and express writers' affective attitude in showing their idea of the topics and Self-mention markers are used to emphasize the authors' presence that occurs in personal narratives or experience.

Main Category	Sub-category	Description	Examples
Interactive Metadiscourse	**Transitions**	Express semantic relation between main clauses	In addition/ but/ thus/ and
	Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	Finally/ to conclude/ my purpose is to
	Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above/ see Fig./ in Section 2
	Evidentials	Refer to source of information from other texts	According to X, Z states (Y, 1990)

	Code glosses	Help readers grasp meanings	Namely/ e.g./ such as/ in other words
Interactional Metadiscourse	**Hedges**	Withhold writer's full commitment	Might/ perhaps/ possible/ about
	Boosters	Emphasize force or writer's certainty	In fact/ definitely/ it is clear that
	Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude	Unfortunately/ I agree to/ surprisingly
	Engagement markers	Build relationship with reader	Consider/ note that/ you can see that
	Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author(s)	I/ we/ my/ our

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results reveal detailed analyses of frequencies and proportions, highlighting the nuanced employment of interactional metadiscourse markers as defined by Hyland (2005), particularly among Pakistani speakers. Analysis of the ten transcribed TED Talks shows a significant trend in the use of self-mentions and boosters. This suggests that Pakistani TED speakers tend to emphasize their perspectives and strengthen their statements to engage audiences effectively. The frequent use of self-mentions indicates a desire for a personal connection with listeners, while the use of boosters, which convey certainty, signifies the speakers' confidence in their messages. This analysis further explores these findings, contrasts marker usage, and evaluates their impact on the delivery and effectiveness of the presentations.

Self-mentions:

Self-mentions, which involve the use of first-person pronouns (I, we, me, us) and possessive adjectives (my, mine, our), are critical for expressing personal involvement and authorial stance in the content. Hyland's (2005) framework on academic discourse highlights the strategic use of these markers to navigate the balance between asserting personal authority and engaging the audience. Within Hyland's model, the examples of self-mention can be viewed as tools that project the author's presence while fostering a relationship with the audience through inclusivity and personal engagement.

The first-person singular subject pronoun "I" was utilized 418 times by female speakers, showcasing a dominant individual narrative centered on the speaker's actions or views. This high occurrence reflects a strong authorial presence and consistent ownership of the text's ideas. The first-person singular possessive pronoun "my" appeared 162 times among female speakers, indicating personal attachment to the concepts discussed, albeit in a less direct manner than "I." This frequency displays a prominent personal investment in the research. The first-person singular object pronoun "me" was mentioned 91 times, suggesting a degree of passive involvement in the content. Meanwhile, the first-person plural subject pronoun "we" was used 87 times, signaling a shift towards inclusivity, although this remains secondary to the individual focus. The first-person plural possessive pronoun "our" was used 24 times across the results, indicating shared ownership or contribution. The use of "myself" and "us" as a first-person

singular reflexive and first-person plural object pronoun occurred only 13 times, suggesting a selective emphasis on personal reflection. Finally, the pronoun "mine" was mentioned only twice, indicating minimal emphasis on strong possessive language.

Self-mentions (Males)	Features	Frequencies
	I	401
	We	103
	My	86
	Me	67
	Our	34
	Us	11
	Mine	1
	Ours	1

In contrast, male speakers used "I" 401 times, suggesting a dominant individual presence as well. The first-person plural subject pronoun "we" occurred 103 times, indicating a focus on inclusivity. The first-person singular possessive pronoun "my" appeared 86 times, while "me" was used 67 times, reflecting passive involvement. The plural possessive pronoun "our" was mentioned 34 times and "us" 11 times, signaling shared ownership. Rarely utilized were "mine" and "ours," each appearing only once, suggesting minimal emphasis on strong possessive language.

Self-Mentions (Females)	Features	Frequencies
	My	162
	Me	91
	We	87
	Our	24
	Myself	13
	Us	13
	Mine	2
	I	418

A comparative analysis of self-mentions in TED Talks between female and male speakers reveals distinct linguistic patterns that reflect how each group establishes individual presence, ownership, and inclusivity in their discourse. According to Hyland's (2005) framework, the analysis highlights both similarities and differences in self-mention usage: Female speakers utilized "I" 418 times, showcasing a strong personal narrative and positioning themselves at the center of the discourse. Male speakers used "I" 401 times, indicating a slightly lower frequency of individual presence. Female speakers mentioned "my" 162 times, emphasizing personal attachment, while male speakers used it 86 times, suggesting a more reserved approach. The first-person singular object pronoun "me" was used 91 times by female

speakers, indicating passive involvement, whereas male speakers used it 67 times. Female speakers employed "we" 87 times, introducing inclusivity secondary to their focus on individual presence, while males used it 103 times, demonstrating a greater inclination towards inclusivity. The word "our" was used 24 times by females, indicating limited collective ownership, while it appeared 34 times in male presentations, suggesting a stronger sense of shared contribution. The use of "myself" and "us" appeared 13 times by female speakers, while male speakers used "us" 11 times and did not employ "myself," indicating a lower focus on reflexive self-reference. Lastly, "mine" was mentioned twice by female speakers, while male speakers used "mine" and "ours" just once each, reflecting an even lesser emphasis on possessive pronouns.

Boosters

According to Hyland's (2005) model, booster markers serve to convey certainty, emphasize the strength of an argument, and assert the author's confidence in their statements. The examples provided illustrate a deliberate rhetorical strategy using boosters to reinforce claims and increase the persuasive impact of the discourse. Previous research defines boosters as linguistic tools that authors use to highlight their conviction, amplify their assertions, and instill their statements with confidence and authority.

The findings indicate that the word "highly" appeared four times in TED Talks given by female speakers. In Hyland's framework, "highly" operates as a boosting adverb within academic discourse. This grammatical class, the adverb, serves to strengthen statements, adding emphasis to the author's claims and demonstrating a more robust degree of commitment or belief in their assertions.

Category	Example	Frequency
Boosters (Female)	highly	4

 Below are four instances of boosting adverbs from transcribed TED Talks:
Example 1
 "The kind of challenges that I'm going to face, it's **highly** unlikely someone else is going to face the same challenges."

Example 2
 "When you're there for someone, to hear them out, to create opportunities for them, to help them grow their dreams, those people speak of you **highly**."

Example 3
 "My very dear colleague and student, Mr. Jafar Gardezi, who is **highly** regarded by me, asked me to take time for this."

Example 4

"Before me, a **highly** respected scientist must have spoken about the fertility of the earth."

In each case, "highly" amplifies the speaker's expression of confidence, respect, or likelihood, in line with Hyland's theory on boosting adverbs that underline or enhance an assertion.

In male TED Talks, the booster "definitely" appears only once. This adverb of certainty communicates confidence and assurance in the statement, reinforcing a strong position. On the other hand, "highly" is used five times in male discourse. This degree adverb intensifies specific qualities or attributes, often highlighting the level of regard, respect, or probability linked to the subject.

Category	Example	Frequency
Boosters (Male)	Definitely	1

The word "in," which has a context-specific occurrence, may function as part of a fixed adverbial phrase, thereby amplifying emphasis related to location, time, or status:
Example 1
"And then an incident happened that I was **definitely** not prepared for."

Example 2
"I have so many ideas for this animation, and Japan is the only place that will **highly** understand what I want to do."

Example 3
"I also realized that the motivation levels **in** teachers were very low, let alone the students."

The use of "definitely" in the first example underscores the speaker's certainty about their lack of readiness for a specific event. In the second example, "highly" enhances the speaker's confidence in Japan's ability to grasp his animation vision. In the last example, "in" serves to specifically localize the motivational challenges within the group of teachers, thus adding context to the assessment.

Comparing the results reveals that both male and female speakers employ "highly" as a boosting adverb to express strong regard, respect, or probability, though males use it slightly more often (5 times compared to 4). This suggests a marginally greater inclination among male speakers to emphasize the credibility or significance of the topics discussed. Conversely, "definitely," which appears only once in male discourse, acts as a strong adverb of certainty, distinctly communicating confidence in a manner not reflected in female discourse.

Hedges

According to Hyland (2005), the use of hedges in discourse reflects the speaker's subjectivity by presenting information as opinion rather than fact and indicates their level of confidence. Holmes (1990) offers a different perspective, noting that hedges serve different functions for men and women; women often utilize hedges to express emotions and desires, while men typically use them to convey uncertainty and hesitation.

In female TED Talks, the term "about" is used 36 times, demonstrating a tendency towards approximation and generalization instead of making definitive statements. This frequent use provides flexibility in claims, allowing for alternative interpretations and a more inclusive understanding of the topic. The modal verb "would" appears 31 times, suggesting hypothetical scenarios or polite assertions, which softens the speaker's position and invites openness. "Could," used 10 times, indicates possibility without certainty, presenting options rather than firm conclusions. The term "may" shows up about 8 times, suggesting permission or possibility, while "might" is used only once, reflecting cautious speculation. Similarly, "normally" (once) conveys typical conditions with allowances for exceptions, while "perhaps" (once) introduces doubt, and "possible" (once) qualifies a claim as one of many options.

The frequent use of "about" (36) and "would" (31) in female speakers' discourse signals a strong preference for approximations and hypothetical considerations. Lower frequencies of "could" (10), "may" (8), and "might" (1) indicate a selective approach to uncertainty. Altogether, these hedges suggest a mindful, inclusive discourse style characterized by openness and exploration.

Hedges (Females)	Examples	Frequencies
	About	36
	Would	31
	Could	10
	May	8
	Might	1
	Normally	1
	Perhaps	1
	Possible	1

In contrast, male TED Talks feature "would" 26 times and "about" 25 times, both suggesting hypothetical assertions and generalizations. The term "could" is used 12 times, introducing potential without firm commitment. "Possible" appears 3 times to qualify statements, indicating a cautious approach. The less frequent "may" (2), "might" (2), and "perhaps" (2) denote selective caution and restrained uncertainty.

Hedges (Males)	Examples	Frequencies
	Would	26
	About	25
	Could	12

Possible	3	
May	2	
Might	2	
Perhaps	2	

Overall, the findings show that "would" (26) and "about" (25) are commonly used by men, while "could" (12) and "possible" (3) demonstrate a moderate flexibility in expressing potential. The less common hedges illustrate deliberate caution in their communication style. In comparing the hedging strategies between genders, both male and female speakers frequently use "about" and "would" to suggest flexibility and soften definitive statements. Female speakers exhibit a slightly higher usage of these terms, favoring a more generalized and inclusive tone, while male speakers balance flexibility with moderate confidence in their hedging, particularly using "could" and "possible" more frequently than "may" and "might." Overall, female speakers tend to adopt a more nuanced and deferential style, while male speakers display a confident but measured approach, aligning with Hyland's (2005) view of hedging as a strategic communication tool.

Attitude Markers(Male)	Examples	Frequencies
	Remarkable	1
	Unfortunately	1

Attitude-Markers

The speakers' involvement with their speeches and topics is evident through the use of attitude markers. As noted by Hyland (2005), these markers serve to convey the writers' emotional perspectives on the subjects they discuss. They manifest as verbs, adjectives, and adverbs that carry emotional connotations. In analyzing the use of attitude markers in TED Talks by male and female speakers, it was found that male speakers utilize terms like "remarkable" (once) and "unfortunately" (once), whereas female speakers do not use any at all.

According to Hyland's (2005) framework, these markers indicate either positive or negative

Engagement-Markers (Female)	Examples	Frequency
	Note that	2
	Consider	1
	you can see that	3

evaluations, thus revealing the speaker's emotional position and adding emphasis or empathy to their dialogue. Here are examples of attitude markers from the male speakers' TED Talks:

Example 1
"It is **remarkable** that people who elect the country's prime minister do not get any say in deciding any of the key issues related to higher education in this country."
The term "remarkable" here highlights the speaker's surprise and critique, emphasizing perceived limitations in decision-making surrounding education.

Example 2
"We, **unfortunately**, as parents, as teachers, consistently put negative labels on our students."
The word "unfortunately" expresses regret and points to a negative evaluation, demonstrating the speaker's disapproval of this common practice in educational settings.

In the first example, "**remarkable**" underscores the speaker's surprise and critique of educational decision-making. In the second example, "**unfortunately**" reflects regret and conveys the speaker's discontent with negative labeling in education.

The inclusion of these markers in male speakers' presentations indicates a tendency to express personal viewpoints, either by highlighting significant points or mitigating criticisms. In contrast, female speakers do not incorporate any attitude markers, suggesting a preference for a more neutral or objective tone that avoids overt expressions of approval or disapproval. This difference indicates that while male speakers might use attitude markers to subtly sway audience perceptions and emphasize key ideas, female speakers tend to adopt a more neutral evaluative stance, possibly to maintain a more detached and factual narrative in their talks.

Engagement Markers
Engagement markers are tools used to involve and position the audience in a discussion, facilitating appropriate interaction (Hyland & Jiang, 2016). These features encompass reader pronouns, appeals to shared knowledge, directives, and questions. In female speakers' TED Talks, markers such as "Note that" (occurring twice), "consider" (once), and "you can see that" (three times) reflect a unique method of engaging the audience, which contrasts with male speakers' Talks that lack these markers.

Here are the textual examples of the engagement markers from the female speakers' TED Talks:

Example 1
"**Note that** whenever Amma had to do any work or put the children aside, she played the Shri Devi's songs."

Example 2
"**Note that** the journey of that decision was entirely different from the decision I had made three years earlier."

Example 3
"**Consider** the fact that everyone's hardships and eases are different, so it's alright if someone has their life figured out at a different time than others."

Example 4
"**You can see that** I am still strong like my country and I'm still standing here as a Pakistani woman."

Example 5
 "**You can see that** everyone sitting here is very different, and it's alright."
Example 6
 "**You can see that** we often talk about superficial things but overlook more critical issues."
Hyland's (2005) framework indicates that markers like these help actively involve the audience, guide their attention, inspire reflection, and enhance the interactive character of the discourse. Phrases like "**Note that**" and "**you can see that**" foster a conversational approach, where speakers lead the audience's focus, thereby underscoring essential points. These markers encourage critical thinking and collaboration among listeners. Conversely, the lack of inclusion markers in male speakers' TED Talks may foster a sense of detachment. The use of these markers by female speakers highlights a more inclusive and audience-focused strategy, which actively promotes audience participation and emphasizes the communicative aspect of their presentations.

Conclusion
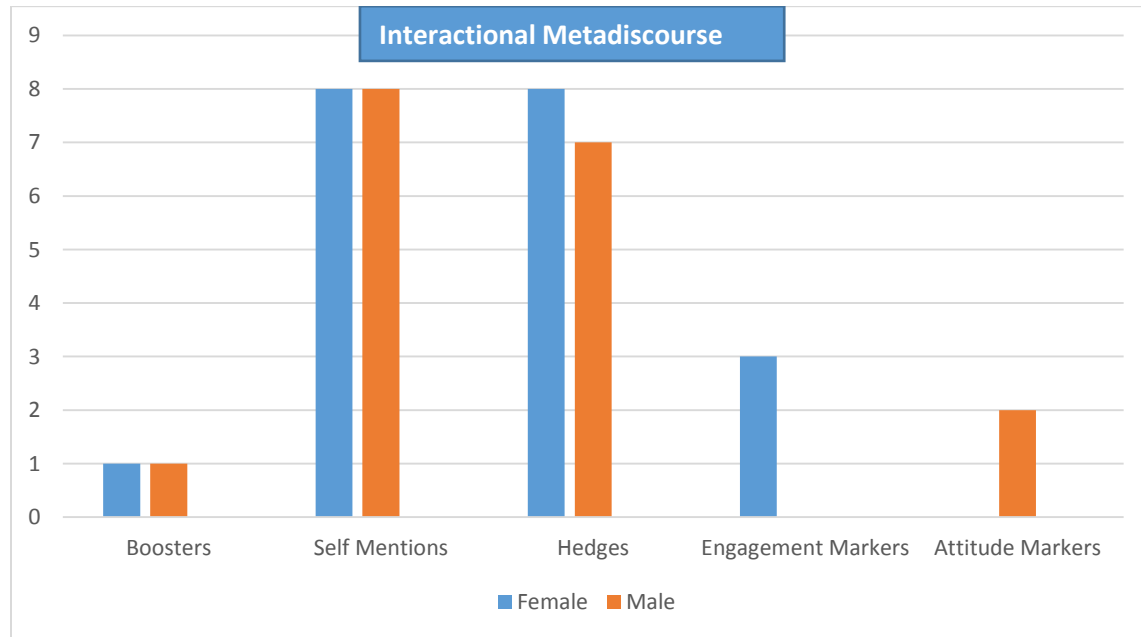
In conclusion, this analysis reveals notable gender-based differences in the application of metadiscourse markers among Pakistani TED Talk speakers. The examination of interactional metadiscourse markers between male and female speakers indicates distinct trends. Female speakers more frequently use self-mentions, which promote personal connection, and engagement markers that enhance audience interaction and focus. On the other hand, male speakers tend to demonstrate a more inclusive approach with self-mentions while selectively using attitude markers to express personal appraisals. Both genders utilize boosters and hedges, but female speakers employ hedges more often, suggesting a more cautious tone, while males exhibit slightly more confidence. This indicates a gender-based divergence in communication styles, with females leaning towards relational engagement and males favoring authoritative clarity. Overall, the findings highlight how gender shapes linguistic strategies in public speaking, revealing intricate approaches to establishing rapport, credibility, and assertiveness in TED

Talks. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of gender discourse patterns and sets the stage for further exploration of discourse across different cultures and contexts.

Limitations

This study analyzes just ten TED Talks—five featuring male speakers and five with female speakers—possibly restricting broader gender-related conclusions. Moreover, as it focuses solely on TED Talks, the results may not be applicable to other public speaking formats and may not be universally generalizable.

Delimitations

While there is potential for further investigation in this area, the current study is limited by time constraints and exclusively examines Hyland's (2005) interactional metadiscourse markers, omitting an exploration of interactive markers.

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