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EXPLORING METADISCOURSE IN ALBANIAN DOCTORAL DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS USING HYLAND TAXONOMY

Metadiscourse elements help construct the relationship between the writer and the reader in academic texts. The present study is a comparative, corpus-based examination of the usage, types, and distribution of interactive and interactional metadiscourse features in Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts. Adopting Hyland's (2005a) metadiscourse framework, we analyzed a corpus of 50 dissertation abstracts (25 from the natural sciences and 25 from the philological sciences) randomly selected from the University of Tirana repository. The findings demonstrate that, in both disciplines, writers employ interactive metadiscourse features far more extensively than interactional ones. Within the interactive category, transitions and frame markers are the most prevalent devices, while in the interactional category, hedges and self-mentions occur most frequently. This predominance of interactive markers suggests an emphasis on guiding readers through the text and ensuring coherence, whereas interactional markers that directly engage readers are comparatively scarce. These findings provide insights for contrastive rhetoric, corpus linguistics, and academic writing pedagogy, and they underscore the importance of raising writers' awareness of metadiscourse usage in doctoral research writing.

Keywords: metadiscourse; doctoral dissertation abstracts; Hyland taxonomy; corpus analysis; cross-disciplinary.

1 INTRODUCTION

Metadiscourse is commonly defined as the set of linguistic devices that writers employ to "explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes to both their material and their audience" (Hyland & Tse, 2004, p. 156). Such devices (e.g., transition words, hedges, self-mentions) have been established as a crucial aspect of academic writing (e.g., Ädel, 2006; Hyland, 2004b, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004). In the context of doctoral dissertation writing, understanding how metadiscourse is used in abstracts can provide valuable insights into how writers structure their research and engage their audience. Prior studies across educational contexts highlight the importance of metadiscourse at various levels: for instance, Letsoela (2014) examined metadiscourse features in undergraduate student writing, and Özdemir and Longo (2014) analyzed thesis abstracts in different cultural settings. These works underscore the need to explore metadiscourse in diverse genres and languages, including less-studied contexts such as Albanian doctoral writing.

This study aims to investigate the use of metadiscourse in Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts, employing Hyland's taxonomy as the analytical framework. Hyland's model categorizes metadiscourse into two broad functional groups: interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse refers to features that help organize the discourse and guide the reader (e.g., transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, code glosses), thereby ensuring clarity and flow. Interactional metadiscourse, on the other hand, comprises features that allow the writer to

engage with the reader on a more personal or evaluative level (e.g., hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, engagement markers). These resources enable writers to express stance and involve readers in the argument. Hyland's taxonomy has been widely used in genre-based metadiscourse studies (Hyland, 2005a), and its distinction between interactive and interactional elements provides a useful lens for analyzing dissertation abstracts (Arboleda, 2022).

Prior research has shown that the deployment of metadiscourse varies according to multiple factors, including disciplinary conventions, research paradigms, and cultural or linguistic backgrounds. For example, disciplinary differences in metadiscourse use have been documented (Cao & Hu, 2014; Hu & Cao, 2015), and publishing context or audience can also influence writers' metadiscursive choices (Lafuente-Millán, 2014). According to Ädel (2006), much of the existing literature has focused on disciplinary differences in metadiscourse (comparing how different fields use these devices) rather than differences between genres. This suggests a need for more research examining genre-specific uses of metadiscourse. Indeed, research on academic metadiscourse has largely concentrated on expert writers in research articles (RAs) (e.g., Hyland, 2004a). Only recently have researchers begun turning their attention to student writers' texts, such as theses and dissertations (Lee & Casal, 2014). One reason for the relative paucity of studies on metadiscourse in master's dissertations and doctoral theses is the practical challenge of their length and complexity, which can deter extensive analysis (Bunton, 2002).

Moreover, student writers of doctoral dissertations often face different communicative objectives and audience expectations compared to published researchers. They may rely on general academic writing guides (usually aimed at research article authors) when composing their dissertations. However, doctoral dissertations and research articles differ in important ways: graduate students and expert authors have different purposes, target audiences, and institutional requirements (Paltridge & Starfield, 2007, p. 67). Previous studies have documented specific challenges faced by doctoral writers, for example, difficulties in writing the Discussion of Results section (Bitchener & Basturkmen, 2006) and a lack of readily available instructional resources for certain parts of the dissertation (Lee & Casal, 2014). While comprehensive guides exist for writing introductions and literature reviews (e.g., Swales & Feak, 2004), there is limited support for crafting abstracts and discussions in dissertations. This study seeks to address part of that gap by examining how Albanian doctoral dissertation writers employ metadiscourse in their abstracts, and by comparing usage patterns across two distinct disciplines (natural sciences and philological (humanities) sciences).

Research Question: How do the usage patterns of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers compare in Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts (across natural science and philological science disciplines)?

Based on the literature, our hypothesis is that interactive metadiscourse markers will be more frequently employed than interactional markers in dissertation abstracts. This expectation is consistent with findings from prior studies of academic writing (Hyland, 2004b, 2005a) which observed that writers often prioritize organizational clarity over interpersonal engagement.

2 RESEARCH METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Corpus Selection and Criteria

This study examined metadiscourse features in the abstracts of Albanian doctoral dissertations in two disciplines: natural sciences and philological sciences. Focusing on disciplines from both the sciences and the humanities also allows for a preliminary cross-disciplinary comparison. We constructed a corpus of 50 dissertation abstracts (divided into two sub-corpora of 25 each for the two disciplines) retrieved from the University of Tirana's online dissertation repository. All dissertations were written in Albanian and completed between 2016 and 2021, ensuring relative contemporaneity. Each selected dissertation had an abstract of approximately 300–400 words (around one page), providing a roughly uniform length for analysis. Dissertations outside the specified time frame or disciplines, or those lacking a substantial abstract, were excluded from the

sample. The abstracts were chosen using simple random sampling from the repository's listings of dissertations that met the above criteria. We acknowledge that this corpus may not be fully representative of all Albanian dissertations; however, it is sufficient to observe general patterns and provides a basis for comparison with studies in other contexts.

Metadiscourse Model and Analytical Framework

Among the several theoretical models of metadiscourse available (e.g., Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore et al., 1993; Bunton, 1999; Hyland, 2005a), this study adopted Hyland's (2005a) model of metadiscourse as the basis for analysis (see Table 1 below for an overview of this taxonomy). Hyland's framework was chosen for several reasons. First, it is a genre-based model developed from an empirical analysis of a large multidisciplinary corpus of academic texts, making it well-suited for examining genre-specific features in dissertations. Second, Hyland's taxonomy clearly delineates interactive and interactional resources, aligning with the aims of the present research. Third, using this model allows our findings to be readily compared with a number of recent studies that have also employed Hyland's categories to analyze student and expert writing (e.g., Lee & Casal, 2014; Kawase, 2015; Alharbi, 2021). By using a common framework, we can more easily discuss whether the patterns observed in Albanian dissertation abstracts mirror or diverge from those reported in other languages and genres.

Table 1. Hyland's (2005a) metadiscourse taxonomy (adapted from Hyland, 2005a, p. 49).

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive (help guide the reader through the text)		
– Transitions	express semantic relations between propositions	<i>in addition, but, thus, and</i>
– Frame markers	refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	<i>finally, to conclude, my purpose is</i>
– Endophoric markers	refer to information in other parts of the text	<i>as noted above, see Fig. 2, in Section 1</i>
– Evidentials	refer to information from other texts (citations)	<i>according to X, [Y] states that...</i>
– Code glosses	elaborate or explain propositional meanings	<i>namely, e.g., such as, in other words</i>
Interactional (involve the reader in the text)		
– Hedges	withhold writer's full commitment to statements	<i>might, perhaps, possible, about</i>
– Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	<i>in fact, definitely, it is clear that</i>
– Attitude markers	express writer's attitude or evaluation	<i>unfortunately, surprisingly, I agree</i>
– Self-mentions	explicit references to the author(s)	<i>I, we, my, our</i>
– Engagement markers	explicitly build relationship with reader	<i>consider, note that, you can see that</i>

Hyland's model provided us with an established list of metadiscourse features for each category. Before analysis, we prepared a checklist of Albanian equivalents or typical realizations of these features (e.g., common Albanian conjunctions for transitions, evidential phrases for citations). This list was refined based on examples from the corpus. It is worth noting that some metadiscourse items (like first-person pronouns for self-mentions or certain transition words) are easily identifiable, whereas others require interpretation in context (e.g., distinguishing an attitude marker from a similar literal expression). Using Hyland's taxonomy as a guide ensured that we applied consistent criteria when identifying instances of each metadiscourse type in the texts.

Analytical Procedures

Each dissertation abstract (and, where available, the introduction section) was first extracted from the PDF or Word document and converted to plain text. We focused primarily on the abstract section for this study, since the abstract provides a concise, self-contained summary of the research and is theorized to contain a high density of rhetorical devices, including metadiscourse markers. The texts were analyzed using a combination of automated corpus tools and manual inspection. We utilized LancsBox X corpus analysis software (Brezina, 2018) to assist in concordance searches and frequency counts of the metadiscourse items. Essentially, we searched the corpus for occurrences of the words and phrases corresponding to each category in Hyland's model. The software facilitated counting how many times, for example, transitional conjunctions or first-person pronouns appeared. Each instance was examined in its sentence context to confirm its role.

For each abstract, we tallied the frequencies of interactive and interactional markers and their subcategories. We then aggregated these frequencies across the two disciplinary subcorpora and also in the corpus as a whole. Simple descriptive statistics (raw counts and percentages) were used to summarize the data. Given the corpus size, we did not perform complex statistical tests; instead, our analysis is largely qualitative and interpretive, focusing on illustrating typical uses of metadiscourse in the texts. We extracted example sentences from the abstracts to demonstrate how each type of metadiscourse marker is used in practice. These examples were translated from Albanian to English for reporting in this paper.

In what follows, we present the results for interactive and interactional metadiscourse features in turn. To facilitate understanding, we include tables and figures that summarize the frequency of each category. Figure 1 provides an overview of the total counts of interactive vs. interactional markers in the entire corpus. Subsequently, Table 2 and Table 3 detail the breakdown of subcategories (interactive and interactional, respectively), and we discuss notable patterns with illustrative examples. All examples from the data are labeled with an Example number for reference.

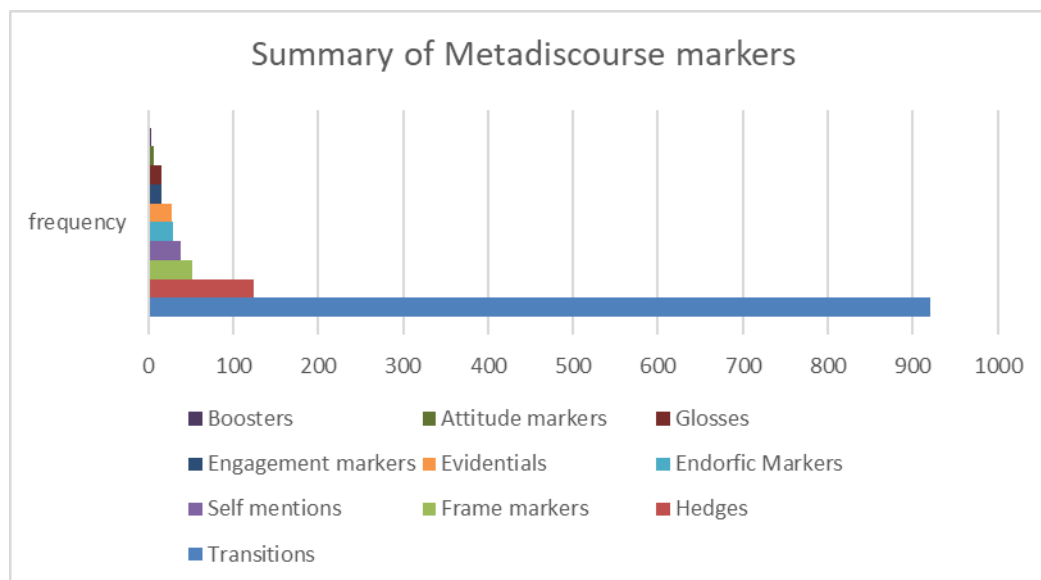
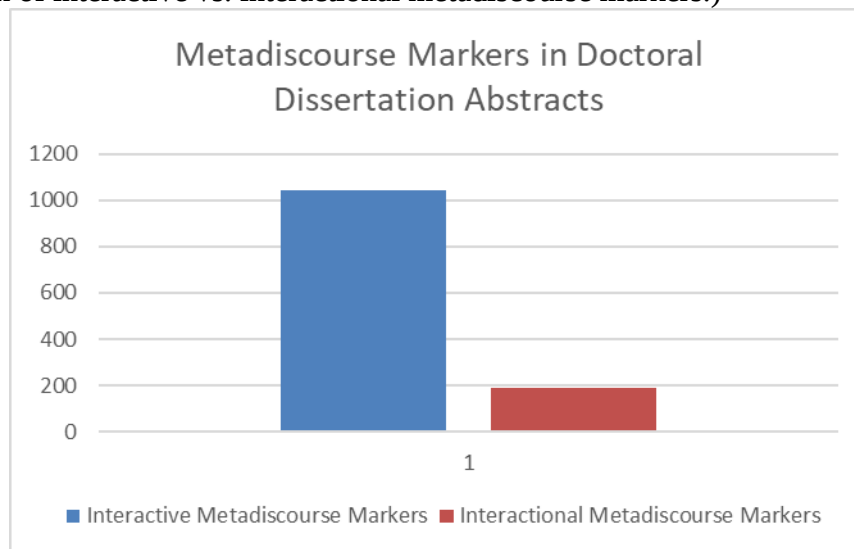
3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address the research question, we first compare the overall frequency of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. As hypothesized, the analysis reveals a significant preference for interactive markers over interactional markers in Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts. Table 2 below shows the overall counts: the corpus contains a total of 1,043 interactive metadiscourse instances versus 189 interactional instances. In other words, about 85% of all identified metadiscourse elements serve interactive functions, while only 15% serve interactional functions. This substantial disparity is visualized in Figure 1, which makes clear that interactive resources heavily dominate the metadiscourse landscape of these abstracts.

Table 2. Overall frequency of metadiscourse markers in 50 Albanian dissertation abstracts.

Type of Metadiscourse	Frequency (Count)
Interactive Metadiscourse Markers	1043
Interactional Metadiscourse Markers	189

Figure 1 (below) provides a bar chart representation of this overall distribution, highlighting the stark difference in frequency between the two categories of markers. (Figure 1 about here: Overall distribution of interactive vs. interactional metadiscourse markers.)



The dominance of interactive metadiscourse suggests that dissertation writers place great emphasis on guiding the reader through the text, ensuring that their presentation of research is well-structured and coherent. Interactive markers help manage the flow of information and make the complex content of the dissertation more accessible. Conversely, the relatively scarce use of interactional markers indicates that these writers engage less frequently in overt interaction with the reader or explicit expression of stance. This trend likely reflects the formal and objective tone that is highly valued in academic writing, especially in a dissertation context. Authors appear to prioritize informational clarity and structural guidance over personal commentary or direct reader engagement.

There are several possible reasons why interactional markers are less frequent in our Albanian corpus. One reason may be the broader academic conventions in Albanian scholarly writing, which, similar to many academic cultures, emphasize objectivity and researcher detachment. Doctoral candidates may be consciously avoiding strong evaluative language or direct address of the reader in order to maintain a serious and formal tone. This restraint is evident, for example, in the minimal use of boosters (words that express certainty) noted later in our results. Additionally, as novice researchers, dissertation writers might feel less authority or confidence to insert themselves explicitly into the text (e.g. through self-mentions or attitude remarks), resulting in a preference for a more neutral and report-oriented style. Similar tendencies have been observed

elsewhere. For instance, in a cross-linguistic analysis of English and Spanish engineering theses, Spanish writers (who come from a more Latin rhetoric tradition) also showed differences in the degree of interpersonal engagement, but overall, both groups relied heavily on interactive devices to organize their chapters. Cross-cultural studies of thesis abstracts (e.g., Özdemir & Longo, 2014) likewise report variation in interactional metadiscourse, often attributing it to cultural expectations of writer-reader relationship. Our findings support the notion that in many research genres, writers foreground organizational clarity over interpersonal interaction. Nonetheless, it is important for students and instructors to recognize that interactional elements (like hedging or attitude markers) also play a key role in academic argumentation, as they allow writers to signal nuance, evaluation, and engagement with the reader.

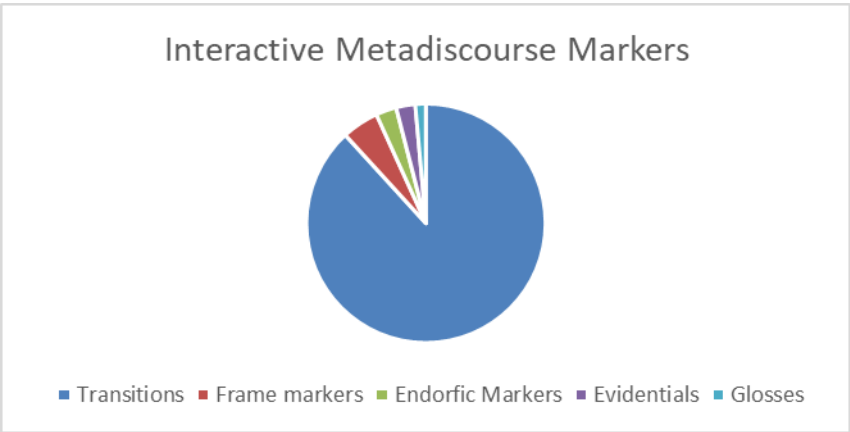
Overall, the prevalence of interactive metadiscourse features in these abstracts underscores their crucial role in academic communication. This is particularly important given that dissertation abstracts must concisely convey complex research to an audience that may not have immediate context for the work. In contrast, interactional markers – while less common – contribute to the nuanced presentation of the author’s stance and the reader’s involvement. In the following sections, we examine each category in more detail, illustrating how Albanian dissertation writers employ these metadiscourse resources.

3.1 Interactive Metadiscourse Markers

Interactive markers help to organize propositions and guide readers through the text. In our corpus, five subcategories of interactive metadiscourse were analyzed: transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses. Table 3 presents the frequency of each subcategory in the 50 abstracts (summing occurrences across both disciplines).

Table 3. Frequency of interactive metadiscourse subcategories in the corpus (50 abstracts).

Transitions	920
Frame markers	52
Endorfic Markers	29
Evidentials	27
Glosses	15
	1043



As Table 3 shows, transitions (conjunctive devices connecting clauses and sentences) are by far the most frequently used interactive features, accounting for the vast majority of interactive metadiscourse instances. This makes sense, as transitions are essential for linking ideas and maintaining a logical flow in any piece of academic writing. By contrast, other interactive features like endophoric markers (which point to other parts of the text) and evidentials (which cite external sources) appear at much lower frequencies in abstracts, likely because abstracts are concise

summaries with fewer internal cross-references and citations than full papers. Code glosses (brief explanations or restatements) are also relatively rare in the abstracts. Below, we discuss each subcategory with examples from the corpus to illustrate their use.

Transitions

Transition devices such as *dhe* (“and”), *por* (“but”), and *megjithatë* (“however”) occur extremely frequently, reflecting their role in ensuring cohesion. We counted a total of 920 transitions in the corpus, highlighting that on average an abstract contains many conjunctive links. The most common transition words were the simple conjunctions “*dhe*” and “*edhe*” (which both mean “and”/“also”), with 630 and 162 occurrences respectively. This high frequency indicates that authors heavily rely on additive transitions to link sentences and clauses. Transitions signal relationships between ideas – addition, contrast, result, etc. – and they help readers follow the progression of arguments or descriptions of research. The abundance of transitions in these abstracts suggests that writers are making a concerted effort to present information in a coherent, logically connected manner. For example:

Example 1: “Teoria e propozuar nga Smith (2015) është gjerësisht e pranuar, dhe ka ndikuar shumë studime të mëpasshme.” (The theory proposed by Smith (2015) is widely accepted, and it has influenced many subsequent studies.) – Here the transition *dhe* connects two related statements, indicating addition/continuation of thought.

Example 2: “Eksperimenti solli rezultate të rëndësishme; megjithatë, nevojiten kërkime të mëtejshme për të konfirmuar këto gjetje.” (The experiment yielded significant results; however, further research is needed to confirm these findings.) – The transition *megjithatë* signals a contrast, preparing the reader for a caveat following a positive result.

The prolific use of transitions in our corpus is consistent with the expectation that abstracts will tightly weave together the motivation, methods, results, and conclusions of a study. This finding mirrors observations by Hyland (2005a) and others that transitional markers are among the most common metadiscourse features in academic prose.

Frame Markers

Frame markers are words or phrases that explicitly signal text organization or speech acts (e.g., in summary, first, conclusion). In our data, frame markers are much less frequent than transitions (52 instances in total), but they play an important role in structuring the abstract and guiding the reader through different parts of the content. Common frame markers in Albanian abstracts included terms like *përfundim* (“conclusion”) and *qëllimi* (“the aim”). These markers often appear when authors outline the purpose of the study or begin concluding remarks in the abstract. For instance, the word *përfundim* or the verb *përfundoj* (“to conclude”) is used by some authors to explicitly signal the final part of the abstract where conclusions or implications are stated. One example from the corpus illustrates this:

Example 3: “Për të përfunduar, rezultatet sugjerojnë një korrelacion të fortë midis variablave.” (To conclude, the results suggest a strong correlation between the variables.) – Here the phrase *Për të përfunduar* acts as a frame marker, indicating that the sentence is a concluding statement of the abstract.

Example 4: “Qëllimi i këtij studimi është të eksplorojë ndikimin e mediave sociale mbi sjelljen e të rinjve.” (The aim of this study is to explore the impact of social media on youth behavior.) – In this sentence, *Qëllimi* (“the aim”) signals the section of the abstract where the author is stating the purpose or objective of the research, functioning as a frame marker that sets up the context for what follows.

These frame markers help readers navigate the abstract’s structure. In Example 3, the author explicitly flags that they are about to summarize or conclude, which prepares the reader for a high-level takeaway of the study. Notably, the content of Example 3, “the results suggest a strong correlation between the variables,” shows how writers use frame markers to integrate their key findings into the narrative. By saying “To conclude, the results suggest...,” the writer both signals the end of the abstract and underscores an important result. In terms of academic writing

instruction, encouraging doctoral students to employ frame markers like “In conclusion” or “The aim is...” can improve the readability and organization of their abstracts. Even though frame markers are infrequent, their correct use can markedly enhance the clarity of an abstract’s structure.

Endophoric Markers

Endophoric markers refer the reader to other parts of the text or to visuals (e.g., as shown in Table 2, as mentioned above). In dissertation abstracts, one might not expect many endophoric references because the abstract is supposed to stand alone. Indeed, we found only 29 instances of endophoric markers. These occurred typically in contexts where the abstract mentioned the structure of the thesis or pointed to details given elsewhere (perhaps in the introduction or main body). For instance, an abstract might say “Siç u përmend më parë...” (“As mentioned earlier...”) to connect back to something already stated in the abstract or assume knowledge of the thesis content. This is somewhat unusual, as abstracts usually do not have an “earlier” to refer to, being self-contained; such usage might reflect the author summarizing the thesis structure (which is more relevant in an introduction than an abstract). Nonetheless, here are examples of endophoric markers from our data:

Example 5: “Siç u përmend më parë, studimi përdori një qasje të përzier metodash.” (“As mentioned earlier, the study employed a mixed-methods approach.”) – This implies the author had perhaps already indicated the methodology and is reiterating it, which might occur if the abstract is somewhat long or if the author is emphasizing a point.

Example 6: “Për detaje të mëtejshme, shihni Tabelën 2 më sipër.” (“For further details, refer to Table 2 above.”) – This example is notable because it directs the reader to a table, presumably in the full dissertation, not in the abstract. It’s possible that the author included a reference to a table in the abstract, which might be a slight deviation from typical abstract conventions.

Endophoric markers like *siç u përmend më parë* create internal coherence by linking parts of the text. In an abstract, their presence might indicate the author’s attempt to ensure the abstract flows logically (Example 5 ensures the methodology mentioned is tied back to something already stated). Since abstracts are short, the limited use of endophoric markers is not surprising. In a full dissertation, we would expect a much higher frequency of these devices to navigate between chapters, sections, figures, etc.

Evidentials

Evidentials are references to source information from other texts, essentially citations or attributive phrasing (e.g., “According to X...”, “Y (2018) found that...”). We identified 27 evidentials in the abstracts. Many of these were instances of the word *sipas* (“according to”) followed by an author name or source, or simply parenthetical citations of prior studies. Dissertation abstracts often include 1–2 citations if the authors mention theoretical underpinnings or previous work, but they don’t usually have extensive literature review content. Our finding of 27 evidentials across 50 abstracts suggests that roughly half of the abstracts included at least one reference to prior research or external information. For example:

Example 7: “*Sipas Johnson (2018), ky fenomen është vërejtur në kontekste të ndryshme.*” (“According to Johnson (2018), this phenomenon has been observed in various contexts.”)

Example 8: “*Të dhënat, siç raportohet nga Lee (2020), tregojnë një rritje të rëndësishme të efikasitetit.*” (“The data, as reported by Lee (2020), indicate a significant increase in efficiency.”)

In both examples, the authors integrate a citation into the abstract. This is typically done to either provide background (Example 7 gives credence to the existence of the phenomenon under study) or to compare the dissertation’s findings with known results (Example 8 suggests the findings align with Lee (2020)). Evidentials thus serve to ground the dissertation in the scholarly context, demonstrating that the author is aware of relevant literature and that their study is building on or relating to existing knowledge. Using evidentials in an abstract can strengthen its academic credibility, but authors must balance this with the need to keep abstracts concise and focused on their own work. The presence of evidentials in our corpus indicates that some Albanian dissertation writers do situate their research within a broader scholarly conversation even at the abstract stage,

which is commendable. It provides a hint of the literature or prior research, thereby framing the significance of the study.

In terms of function, evidentials contribute to establishing the academic rigor of the abstract. This aligns with the function of evidentials in Hyland's model: to attribute and support arguments with external evidence. Even though abstracts do not allow for detailed literature reviews, a well-placed evidential (like "According to X...") can succinctly signal the theoretical or empirical backdrop of the research.

Code Glosses

Code glosses are brief explanatory notes or reformulations that help clarify the writer's intended meaning (e.g., restating an idea in simpler terms, providing examples such as "i.e.," or "for example"). These were the least frequent interactive devices in the abstracts, with only 15 instances found. This low number is expected; abstracts are compact and usually written in a straightforward manner, leaving less room for parenthetical explanations or elaborate restatements. When code glosses appeared, they often took the form of e.g. (p.sh. in Albanian) to give an example, or phrases like "me fjalë të tjera" ("in other words") to rephrase a point.

An example from the corpus might be an author explaining a technical term briefly:

(No direct example text was provided in the data for code glosses, likely due to their rarity. A constructed illustration: "Studimi përdor analizën kauzale (d.m.th., përcaktimin e shkak-pasojës)" which means "The study uses causal analysis (that is, the determination of cause and effect)." Here, "d.m.th." is an Albanian abbreviation for "that is," serving as a code gloss to clarify "causal analysis.")

In this hypothetical example, the code gloss d.m.th. (short for domethënë, "meaning" or "that is") provides an immediate explanation of the preceding term. Code glosses like "for example" or "in other words" help ensure that readers from various backgrounds can understand critical terms or concepts. Their infrequent use in our corpus suggests that the dissertation authors largely assumed the audience's familiarity with the terms used in the abstract or chose to keep the abstract streamlined without additional clarifications. Nonetheless, when used, code glosses are an effective way to elaborate on complex ideas, thus enhancing reader comprehension.

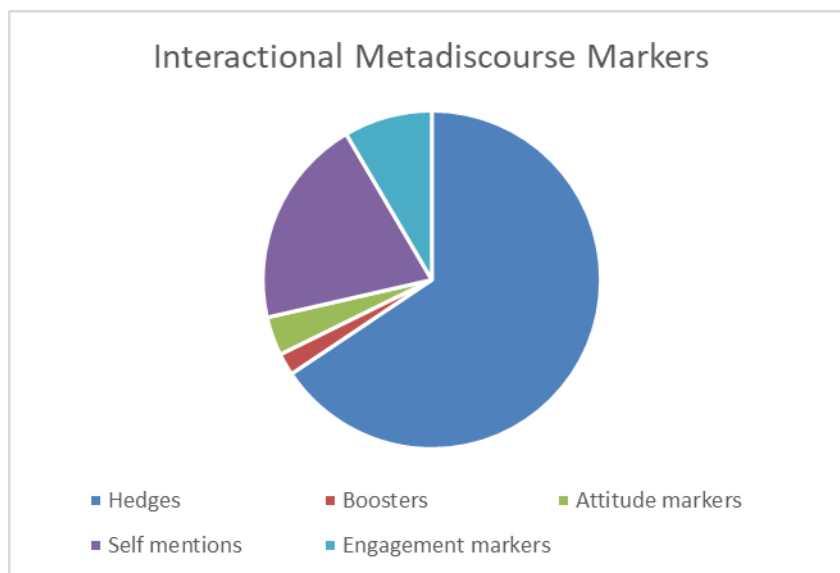
In summary, interactive metadiscourse markers in Albanian dissertation abstracts are heavily dominated by transitions, with frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses playing supporting roles. This mirrors what is often seen in other academic genres: transitions provide the skeleton of the argument's flow, while the other devices contribute to clarity and structure on a smaller scale. The clear preference for interactive devices confirms our hypothesis and reflects an overarching concern for clarity, coherence, and logical organization among the writers. These results echo findings in other languages; for example, in a comparative study of metadiscourse, Alharbi (2021) also found that interactive features were more frequent than interactional ones in both research articles and student dissertations. Our contribution here is documenting that this pattern holds in Albanian academic writing as well.

3.2 Interactional Metadiscourse Markers

We now turn to interactional markers, which engage the reader and convey the writer's personality, stance, or invitation to dialogue. While these markers are less abundant in the abstracts, they provide insight into how Albanian doctoral writers manage interpersonal aspects of their communication. The interactional category includes hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Table 4 presents the frequencies of these subcategories in the corpus.

Table 4. Frequency of interactional metadiscourse subcategories in the corpus (50 abstracts).

Hedges	124
Boosters	4
Attitude markers	7
Self-mentions	38
Engagement markers	16
	189



As shown in Table 4, hedges are by far the most common interactional metadiscourse devices in the abstracts, whereas boosters and attitude markers are extremely rare. Self-mentions and engagement markers occur at moderate levels. This distribution suggests that when Albanian dissertation authors do employ interactional features, it is primarily to soften claims or indicate uncertainty (hedging) and to a lesser extent to position themselves in the text or address the reader.

We will discuss each subcategory with examples to illustrate their use and the nuance they bring to the abstracts.

Hedges

Hedges are words or phrases that allow writers to present their claims with caution or tentativeness, thereby withholding full commitment. Common hedging expressions include terms like *mund* (“might”), *ndoshta* (“perhaps”), *i/e mundshëm* (“possible”), and qualifying adverbs like *relativisht* (“relatively”). In our corpus, hedges account for 124 instances, making them the dominant interactional device. This indicates that despite the overall low presence of interactional markers, authors frequently choose to hedge certain statements in their abstracts. Hedges are important in academic writing as they reflect a measured tone, acknowledging that results or interpretations are not absolute. For example:

Example 9: “Gjetjet mund të sugjerojnë një lidhje të mundshme midis variablave.” (“The findings might suggest a possible link between the variables.”) – Here the author uses *mund* (“might”) and also the phrase *të mundshme* (“possible”) to double-hedge the suggestion of a relationship. This means that the link is not stated as a certainty, leaving room for alternative interpretations or the need for further confirmation.

Example 10: “Është e mundur që rezultatet të jenë ndikuar nga faktorë të jashtëm.” (“It is possible that the results were influenced by external factors.”) – In this sentence, *është e mundur* introduces the idea that external factors may have influenced results, without definitively claiming they did.

By hedging, the authors avoid over-generalization and recognize that their study has limitations or that the evidence has degrees of uncertainty. This is a hallmark of good academic practice, especially in a dissertation abstract where claims should not overshoot what the data can support. The heavy use of *mund* (might) in our corpus – 97 occurrences of *mund* alone were counted – shows that authors commonly phrase their conclusions in a cautious manner.

This aligns with Hyland's (1998b) observation that hedging is a fundamental feature of academic discourse, as it helps mitigate the strength of claims and invites readers to consider the claims as plausible rather than definite. By doing so, writers demonstrate awareness of the complexity of research and avoid appearing overly confident. In the context of dissertation abstracts, this also reflects a possible influence of academic norms where students may be encouraged (or feel safer) to not claim too much. It could also be strategic: by hedging, the author preempts criticism by showing humility and openness regarding their findings.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the frequent hedging in these abstracts indicates that Albanian doctoral writers are adopting an appropriate academic tone. For instructors, it might be useful to highlight examples like 9 and 10 to show how one can discuss significant findings ("a strong correlation" or "influence on results") while still using language like "might" or "possible" to remain judicious. This approach bolsters the credibility of the author, as it shows they are not overstating what their study can claim.

Boosters

Boosters are the opposite of hedges; they are words that emphasize certainty or conviction, signaling that the writer is confident in what they are saying (e.g., "indeed", "undoubtedly", "clearly"). In our data, boosters are exceedingly scarce, only 4 instances in total were identified. This is not surprising given the predominance of hedging; it appears that the dissertation authors rarely make emphatic, unqualified statements in their abstracts. The limited use of boosters suggests a deliberate avoidance of strong assertions, likely to maintain a tone of objectivity. The one Albanian booster that did appear a few times is *padyshim* ("undoubtedly" or "without a doubt"). An example:

Example 11: "Dëshmitë padyshim mbështesin hipotezën." ("The evidence undoubtedly supports the hypothesis.")

Example 12: "Rezultatet qartësisht tregojnë një përmirësim të rëndësishëm të performancës." ("The results clearly indicate a significant improvement in performance.") – Here *qartësisht* ("clearly") functions as a booster, emphasizing the author's confidence in the improvement observed.

In Example 11, the author is making a strong claim: that the evidence undoubtedly supports the hypothesis. This is a bold statement for a dissertation abstract, and it stands out precisely because boosters are otherwise rare. Example 12 uses "clearly" in a similar boosting manner. The near absence of such boosters across the corpus indicates that most authors chose to phrase their conclusions more cautiously (as we saw with hedges) or just state results without evaluative adverbs.

The restraint in using boosters reflects the formal tone of academic writing. Overusing boosters can make a text sound argumentative or overconfident, which might be viewed as a lack of critical distance. Hyland (2005b) notes that boosters are used to signal certainty and authority, but they must be used judiciously (321800-Article Text-746053-1-2-20250127.docx). In our case, the dissertation writers seem to err on the side of caution, perhaps reflecting their status as students presenting their work to examiners. They might feel that strong claims could invite more scrutiny or be seen as overstepping, whereas hedged claims are safer. Culturally, it might also be that the academic norm in Albanian science writing is to be modest in claims.

When boosters like *padyshim* are used (Example 11), it likely indicates that the author had very compelling data or a strongly confirmed hypothesis, giving them confidence to use such language. In any event, the scarcity of boosters aligns with the earlier discussion that interactional engagement is generally toned-down in these abstracts. The authors' primary aim is to communicate

their research findings and significance in a straightforward way, without overtly persuading or asserting their stance beyond what is necessary.

Attitude Markers

Attitude markers are words that express the writer's feelings, attitude, or value judgment about a proposition (e.g., “unfortunately”, “importantly”, “surprisingly”). We found only 7 instances of attitude markers in the corpus. This low frequency suggests that dissertation abstract writers seldom explicitly convey emotions or evaluative judgments, sticking mostly to neutral reporting language. However, a few did use words like *fatkeqësisht* (“unfortunately”) or *çuditërisht* (“surprisingly”) to comment on aspects of their research or results. For example:

Example 13: “Kjo qasje është fatkeqësisht e kufizuar nga disa pengesa.” (“This approach is unfortunately limited by several constraints.”) – The use of *fatkeqësisht* signals the author's negative evaluation of the limitations, indicating regret or disappointment about them.

Example 14: “Rezultati është çuditërisht i ndryshëm nga ai që pritej.” (“The outcome is surprisingly different from what was expected.”) – Here *çuditërisht* conveys the author's surprise regarding the result, an attitude toward the finding.

These markers give a subtle insight into the author's perspective on their work: Example 13 shows a critical stance acknowledging limitations (perhaps anticipating a concern from readers), and Example 14 shows the author aligning the reader with their sense of surprise at an unexpected result. While limited in number, attitude markers can help humanize the academic text and guide the reader's interpretation (e.g., “this was an unexpected finding” or “this aspect is regrettable but true”).

The sparing use of attitude markers is in line with maintaining a largely objective tone. Doctoral writers might be cautious about inserting their personal feelings overtly, as dissertations are expected to be impersonal. However, when used as in the examples, these markers actually serve a rhetorical purpose: they prepare the reader for something about to be stated (a limitation or an odd result) and cue the reader on how to feel about it (unfortunate, surprising). This can enhance the reader's understanding – knowing that a result was surprising suggests it deviated from hypotheses, which is scientifically noteworthy information.

Overall, the presence of a handful of attitude markers indicates that while not common, some evaluative language is present in Albanian abstracts. It is likely used to emphasize points the author finds important, whether they are limitations or interesting outcomes. Attitude markers, used judiciously, can increase the engagement level of an abstract by conveying why a result is significant (e.g., it's surprising or noteworthy) or by transparently addressing limitations.

Self-Mentions

Self-mentions are references to the author(s) of the text, typically through first-person pronouns (I, we, my, our) or possessive adjectives. In a dissertation context, the author might use “I” or “we” (if writing in a group or using the academic “we”) to describe actions or decisions in the research. We found 38 instances of self-mentions in the abstracts, which is a moderate number. In many academic fields, especially the sciences, it is common to write in an impersonal style (avoiding “I” or “we”) even in dissertations, though this has been changing with more acceptance of first-person usage. Our results suggest that Albanian dissertation writers do use first-person plural quite often (e.g., *ne* for “we”) to describe their methodology or findings. For example:

Example 15: “Ne kryem një analizë të hollësishme të të dhënave.” (“We conducted a thorough analysis of the data.”)

Example 16: “Në studimin tonë, ne gjetëm një korrelacion të fortë midis variablave.” (“In our study, we found a strong correlation between the variables.”)

In these examples, the authors explicitly present themselves as the actors: performing the analysis, finding the correlation. Using “we” (*ne*) or “our” (*tonë*) establishes an authorial presence. It can convey a sense of involvement and responsibility for research actions and outcomes. Hyland (2001) emphasizes that self-mention is a key element of authorial identity (321800-Article Text-746053-1-2-20250127.docx) – by referring to themselves, writers position their voice in the

discourse community and claim ownership of the work. In a dissertation, using “we” might be a conventional way to sound less personal (the plural can be seen as the modest or formal form, even if the dissertation has a single author, they often use “us” to refer to themselves and the reader or to speak on behalf of the research community).

The frequency of first-person plural in our corpus suggests that many authors are comfortable with an inclusive style of writing (or have been instructed to write that way). This style can make the text feel more collegial and inclusive, as if the author is guiding the reader through the research together. It can also be a simple way to avoid passive voice; saying “We analyzed the data” is more direct and clearer than “The data were analyzed,” and it does not diminish the scientific objectivity when done in moderation.

It’s interesting to note that none of the abstracts used “I” (first-person singular) from what we observed; all self-mentions were plural “we.” This could reflect a preference for the authorial “we” in academic Albanian writing, which is common in many languages where the singular might seem too egocentric or informal for academic prose.

In terms of reader engagement, self-mentions primarily assert the presence of the author rather than involving the reader, but they do indirectly engage by giving a sense that the author is speaking directly to the reader about what we (author + reader) are considering. This subtle rhetoric of “we” can pull the reader into the process (“we found a strong correlation” implies the reader is sharing in the revelation of this finding).

Overall, self-mentions in these abstracts serve to establish ethos – the credibility and identity of the author as a researcher who actively did things (analyzed data, found results, etc.). This contrasts with a completely impersonal style and arguably makes the abstracts more readable and personable without sacrificing formality.

Engagement Markers

Engagement markers are devices that directly address or involve the reader, often through imperatives or questions or asides (e.g., “Consider the following,” “Note that...,” “you can see...”). They explicitly build a relationship with the reader by guiding them on how to think or respond. We found 16 instances of engagement markers in the corpus. These typically manifested as verbs in the imperative form or phrases encouraging the reader’s attention. Examples include Albanian phrases like “vini re” (“note that”) or “konsideroni” (“consider”). For instance:

Example 17: “Konsideroni shembullin e mëposhtëm për të kuptuar konceptin më mirë.” (“Consider the following example to understand the concept better.”) – The imperative *Konsideroni* directly invites the reader to engage with an example, creating a moment of interaction in the text.

Example 18: “Vini re që gjetjet janë në përputhje me kërkimet e mëparshme.” (“Note that the findings are in line with previous research.”) – Here *Vini re* (“note that”) is used to draw the reader’s attention to an important point, actively involving them in acknowledging a particular observation.

Engagement markers like these are a way for the writer to dialogue with the reader even within the constraints of the abstract. Example 18 is more straightforward: the author explicitly points out the consistency of the findings with prior research, almost as if anticipating a reader’s thought (“why do these results matter?” or “how do they compare?”) and answering it by saying “note that it aligns with previous studies.”

The use of engagement markers, while not frequent, suggests that some authors adopt a more reader-aware stance. By using phrases like “note that,” they ensure the reader doesn’t miss a critical implication. This is a rhetorical strategy to emphasize certain information. Hyland (2005b) argues that engagement markers help to establish a connection with readers by acknowledging them and guiding them through arguments. In our data, *vini re* and *konsideroni* serve exactly that purpose.

In Albanian academic writing, as in English, overuse of imperatives or addressing the reader can be frowned upon if it breaks the formal tone. However, when used sparingly, it can effectively highlight key points. The few instances in our corpus seem well-placed to ensure the reader’s attention is directed appropriately. This contributes to clarity and emphasis, which is crucial in an

abstract where space is limited.

In summary, the interactional metadiscourse markers found in the Albanian dissertation abstracts reveal a careful balancing act by the authors. Hedges are frequently used, indicating that writers are cautious and mindful of not overstating their findings – a practice that strengthens the academic integrity of their claims. Boosters are used very rarely, reflecting a tendency to avoid absolute statements. Attitude markers appear occasionally, adding a hint of the author's evaluation (especially when noting limitations or unexpected findings). Self-mentions are relatively common (mostly in the form of “we”), establishing an authorial voice and presence without being overly personal. Finally, engagement markers are present in a limited but strategic way, guiding the reader to pay attention to specific points or consider further details.

These findings on interactional metadiscourse align with established patterns in academic writing: scholars often need to project confidence in their work while also displaying humility and openness to interpretation. The Albanian dissertation writers here largely project caution and let the strength of their evidence speak, rather than using language to bolster their claims. This could be influenced by disciplinary norms as well; for example, the natural sciences abstracts might hedge more and use fewer attitude markers compared to humanities ones, or vice versa. Although our analysis did not find stark differences between the two disciplines in terms of these counts (both subcorpora showed similar trends), minor disciplinary variations could exist (which could be explored in a larger study).

Comparatively, in other languages' academic writing, studies have noted differences in how authors use interactional resources. For example, Spanish academic writers might use more engagement markers or self-mentions in some fields than Anglo-American writers. Our data provides a snapshot for Albanian: it seems to lean toward a style with moderate self-mention and low engagement markers, somewhat similar to the “Anglo-American scientific style” which is traditionally impersonal and cautious. This might reflect the influence of international academic writing norms on Albanian scholars or the training they receive.

Overall, the presence of interactional metadiscourse, though limited, enriches the abstracts by making them more than just dry summaries. Hedges ensure claims are credible, attitude markers and engagement elements add clarity and emphasis, and self-mentions build a connection between author and text. By understanding and utilizing these markers effectively, future Albanian dissertation writers (and academic writers in general) can enhance the clarity and persuasive power of their abstracts. In academic writing workshops, for instance, instructors could use these findings to show how careful wording (like choosing between “might indicate” vs. “indicates”) can change the tone and reception of one's claims.

Before moving to the conclusion, it is worth noting that our findings align with those of similar genre studies in other languages. For example, Alharbi (2021) found that in both research articles and master's theses written in English, interactive markers predominated, and hedges were the most common interactional subcategory. Lee and Casal (2014) observed cross-linguistic differences in how Spanish vs. English thesis writers used metadiscourse in their Results/Discussion chapters, but both groups showed a need to balance factual reporting with interpersonal commentary. Our study extends this knowledge to the context of Albanian, showing a comparable pattern of interactive dominance and selective use of interactional features. These cross-language comparisons suggest that certain metadiscourse practices may be widespread across academic cultures (like hedging claims), while others might be more language-specific.

4 CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTION FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The comparative analysis of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts provides several insightful patterns about academic writing in this context. The findings confirm a predominant use of interactive metadiscourse markers – such as transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code glosses – which collectively enhance the clarity, coherence, and readability of the abstracts. Frequent transitions (e.g., “dhe” for

“and” and “edhe” for “also”) ensure a logical flow and smooth progression of ideas, while frame markers (like “përfund” meaning “to conclude”) explicitly signal the organization of the discourse. Endophoric markers and evidentials contribute to internal cohesion and academic rigor by guiding readers through the text (e.g., referring to earlier parts of the work) and by attributing information to credible sources, respectively. Although code glosses are used sparingly, their role in elaborating or clarifying complex concepts remains important when they do appear.

On the other hand, interactional metadiscourse markers – including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers – play a more limited but critical role in shaping the interpersonal dimension of these abstracts. The strategic use of hedges (such as “mund” – “might”) reflects the authors’ caution and awareness of the limitations of their research, allowing them to present claims tentatively and thereby aligning with the norms of scholarly modesty. The restrained use of boosters indicates a preference for a measured, balanced presentation of findings over absolute certainty, which helps maintain credibility. Attitude markers (like “fatkeqësisht” – “unfortunately” or “çuditërisht” – “surprisingly”) convey the authors’ evaluations of particular aspects (be it a limitation or an unexpected outcome), subtly guiding the reader’s interpretation of these points. Self-mentions (using “we”/“our”) establish the authors’ presence and authority within the text, fostering a sense of ownership and also, interestingly, a sense of partnership with the reader in following the research process. Engagement markers (e.g., “konsideroni” – “consider [this]” or “vini re” – “note that”) actively involve the reader by drawing their attention to specific elements, thereby creating a modest dialogue and enhancing the overall approachability of the text.

These analyses underscore the importance of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in constructing effective and persuasive academic discourse, even in a brief genre like the abstract. The Albanian dissertation writers in our sample demonstrate an awareness of academic writing conventions: they ensure their abstracts are well-organized and easy to follow (through interactive markers) and also appropriately cautious yet communicative about their stance (through interactional markers). By understanding and employing these markers strategically, authors can significantly improve the clarity, coherence, and engagement factor of their academic writing.

However, it is important to acknowledge the limitations of the present study. The corpus was relatively small (50 abstracts) and drawn from only two broad disciplines. While this provided manageability and a clear scope, a larger sample encompassing more fields (e.g., social sciences, applied sciences, etc.) would enhance the generalizability of the results. Additionally, our analysis was primarily descriptive. Future studies could incorporate statistical analyses (such as log-likelihood or chi-square tests) to determine whether differences in frequencies (between categories or between disciplines) are significant. Another limitation is that we focused only on abstracts; an interesting extension would be to examine other dissertation sections (introductions, conclusions, etc.) to see if metadiscourse usage varies within the dissertation genre.

Future research could expand the dataset to include more disciplines and even compare Albanian dissertation abstracts with those written in other languages (for example, English-language abstracts by Albanian scholars or abstracts from dissertations in neighboring regions). Such comparative work would help determine which observed patterns are genre-universal and which might be culture- or language-specific. For instance, do Albanian writers hedge more or less than their English counterparts? Do certain languages encourage more self-mention in academic writing than others? Comparative studies (cf. Lee & Casal, 2014, on English vs. Spanish; or Hu & Cao, 2015, on paradigm differences) can shed light on these questions. Investigating cross-linguistic and cross-cultural metadiscourse patterns can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of academic writing conventions around the world and inform the teaching of academic writing in multilingual settings.

From a practical perspective, the insights from this study can inform academic writing instruction for graduate students and novice researchers. The clear preference for interactive markers suggests that teaching should continue to emphasize organizational tools – students should be trained in effectively using transitions and signposting language to improve the flow of their writing. At the same time, the nuanced use of interactional markers observed here can be turned into

teaching points: for example, workshops can illustrate how to appropriately hedge claims, how to introduce one's work (using self-mentions) without sounding too informal, or how to highlight a significant result or limitation using an attitude marker in a single sentence. Specifically, writing tutors could show students how a sentence like "The results prove X" might be better framed as "The results suggest X," or how adding a phrase like "note that" can help draw the reader's attention to a key implication.

Moreover, awareness of metadiscourse can help students in critical reading as well. Institutions in Albania (and elsewhere) aiming to improve the academic writing skills of their doctoral candidates might integrate findings such as these into their curriculum. For example, our findings that boosters are used very sparingly could be a discussion point on why that is the case, leading to deeper insight into academic tone and authorial voice.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the growing body of literature on metadiscourse by providing evidence from Albanian doctoral dissertation abstracts. Despite the linguistic and contextual uniqueness of Albanian academic writing, the dissertations studied exhibit metadiscourse patterns that resonate with those found in other languages and genres: a strong leaning on reader-guiding features and a careful, audience-aware deployment of engagement features. These findings not only enrich our understanding of academic writing practices in under-researched contexts but also have practical implications. They reinforce the idea that effective scholarly communication – whether in English, Albanian, or any language – relies on a judicious mix of organizational clarity and interpersonal tact. Future studies should build on this work by broadening the scope and by examining how these features evolve with changes in academic norms. Ultimately, by continuing to explore metadiscourse across languages and disciplines, we can better prepare the next generation of scholars to write in ways that are both clear and compelling, thereby enhancing the accessibility and impact of their research.

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Ірена Кані. Дослідження метадискурсу в албанських авторефератах докторських дисертацій з використанням таксономії Хайланда. Елементи метадискурсу формують взаємозв'язок між автором і читачем. У цій науковій статті представлено порівняльне корпусне дослідження використання, типологізації і розподілу інтерактивних та інтерперсональних метадискурсивних засобів в анотаціях до албанських дисертацій. У дослідженні застосовано теоретичну модель Кена Хайланда. Для аналізу за допомогою програмного забезпечення LancsBox X випадковим чином було обрано п'ятдесят дисертацій з природничих і філологічних наук. Результати засвідчили, що автори частіше вдавалися до використання інтерактивних засобів метадискурсу, ніж до інтерперсональних. Серед інтерактивних засобів найпоширенішими виявилися переходи та рамкові маркери, тоді як серед інтерперсональних – засоби вираження нечіткості (хеджування) та самозгадки. Отримані результати можуть бути корисними для контрастивного аналізу, корпусної лінгвістики та текстуального аналізу.

Ключові слова: метадискурс; анотації до дисертацій; таксономія Хайланда; корпусний аналіз; міждисциплінарний підхід.

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