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Interactional Metadiscourse Markers Used in Opinion Articles of Rappler on Charter Change

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abstract

The study aimed at identifying interactional metadiscourse markers utilized in the opinion articles of Rappler on charter change. Following the framework of Interpersonal Metadiscourse Model proposed by Hyland in 2005, three (3) opinion articles were selected to be examined and analyzed in the lens of Corpus- Assisted Discourse Analysis. Accumulated the highest metadiscourse markers present in the 3 opinion articles are the Engagement articles with 69 frequencies with 9 metadiscourse markers which fulfills the process of negotiation. Attitude Markers acquired 1 occurrence which has the lowest frequency among all metadiscourses. These interactional metadiscourse markers identified paved the understanding of using metadiscourse markers to express the opinions, stance, and the usage of these markers to attain persuasive goals.

1. Introduction

Writing can be a definite system for interpersonal communication that utilizes various styles of language. It develops self expression and individual progress as it allows people to gather, refine, share, and preserve knowledge and understanding (Graham, 2006 as cited in Alqahtani 2020). Hyland (2005) concluded that writing is never just neutral; it allows engagement in that they realize their interests, positions, and perspectives and values that they enact on them. An author who aims to explain the meaning of a text must take into account its social influence and the impact of the text once it is interpreted by the audience. The interaction that happens between the writer and the reader in a text is an crucial aspect in attaining in communicative purposes in discourses (Akbarpour, & Sadeghoghli, 2015).

Newspaper is a sociocultural activity wherein the author summarizes and critiques events of importance to the public (Abdollahzadeh, 2007). According to Van Dijk (1988) opinion articles as one of subgenres of persuasive text aiming to persuade and convince the readers through the writing. This undertaking demands the author to write persuasively and requires them to play it safe to maintain, or oppose a stance, or raise awareness towards a critical and controversial issue. To this end, they utilize metadiscourse to organize their texts and convey their personality, credibility, and consideration of the reader. Media discourse, predominantly defined as a language used in regard to context, is a crucial part of the process of shaping public perceptions on a certain issue.

Metadiscourse is a method or concept used commonly in discourse analysis that defines the writer's way of communicating with their readers. It involves the writers and the readers to the process of comprehension and involvements (Hyland, 2005). Writers often utilize metadiscourse markers to direct their readers and display an appropriate professional persona in order to persuade their readers, as such metadiscourse is an important feature of persuasive writing (Hyland, 1998). Therefore, using metadiscourse markers in written forms can be an effective strategy to connect and interact with the readers. In the words of Mina and Biria (2017) the elements of meta-discourse are rhetorical tools that allow the writer to get the attention of the audience.

This aligns with the study of De Matta et al. (2024), which highlighted how TikTok English teaching videos, though multimodal and spoken, utilize pragmatic and implicature-rich strategies that contribute to second language acquisition among elementary learners. Their findings emphasize how real-world and digital discourse alike can reflect communicative strategies such as hedging, boosting, and audience engagement. Likewise, Pontillas (2024), in his study on synchronous online classroom interactions, illustrated how teachers subtly exercise power and control using rhetorical devices like affirmations and rhetorical questions. His critical discourse analysis revealed that, while such interactions appear participatory, they often reinforce traditional power dynamics within digital educational spaces.

The present study focuses on the inquiry of the use of metadiscourse in opinion articles discussing the stances and perspective of certain individuals on charter change. For months, this issue of amendments or revisions in the 1987 Philippine Constitution or in short term as Charter Change (Cha-Cha) has been the content of opinion and editorial articles. There are 2 changes that can happen in the process of Cha-Cha. One of these is the amendments that refer to changes that do not affect the overall structure and basic principles of the Constitution and the revisions that are changes that involve alterations in the structure (Gavilan, 2018). This kind of issue is often featured in opinion articles where the author aims to potentially enact change whilst informing and educating readers using their opinions.

This study aims at understanding the functions of metadiscourse through investigating these media discourses. This can provide insights into how these articles are constructed to shed light and offer clear understanding into different stances and personal ideologies that corroborate some circulated facts about important issues in the country Philippines.

2. Method

This section comprised the detailed research method employed in this study. It discusses research design, the object of the study, method of collecting data, method of analyzing data, and the method of presenting result analysis.

2.1 Kind of Research

The present study employs qualitative research design. Qualitative research focuses on understanding social phenomena and providing rich verbal descriptions of setting,

situations, and participants. Qualitative research deals with data in the form of pictures or words rather than statistics and numbers (Punch, 2013). The technique of quantifying the findings was also utilized in order to highlight the possible similarities and differences in using metadiscourse markers, as advocated by Maxwell (2010) as cited in Jomaa (2019). Social studies is an example of a dominant field that utilizes a qualitative approach in order to interpret and analyze the entities in the study of human and society (Bebis et al, 2024).

2.2 Data Collection

Upon researching various news outlets releasing opinion articles on charter change, Rappler has the most number of opinion articles tackling charter change in the Philippines. The researcher found out that Rappler has a section called *Voices* which is composed of contributions from readers of all backgrounds, persuasions, and ages; analyses from advocacy leaders and subject matter experts; and reflections and editorials from Rappler staff. Rappler is the home not only to news, features, and in-depth pieces, but also to views from a diverse range of voices – input straight from the mouths of the marginalized, critiques from subject matter experts, personal observations from passionate readers of all backgrounds, and more (De Leon, 2020). Rappler from the words rap and ripple is a Manila-based digital media company that is popular for investigating the power of social media and exposing corruption as well as human rights violations.

The methodology of the study begins at finding the corpora of the study. The researcher chose three (3) opinion articles as the subject for analysis which are uploaded online on the website of Rappler that is available for the public. Upon collecting the data for the study, the researcher set a criteria for selection of data.

These are as follows:

- a. The articles should be purely opinion articles.
- b. The articles are posted in the official news website of Rappler.
- c. The opinion article should be written in English.
- d. The selection is limited only to the relevant topic in the study which is charter change.

Upon the selection of data for analysis of the present study, the three selected opinion article about charter change are as follows:

1. The conspiratorial cast of characters for charter change released on February 21, 2024 written by Dean De La Paz.
2. This isn't about the charter change released on February 11, 2024 written by Joseph Nathan Cruz.
3. What is needed is culture change, not charter change released on February 19, 2024 written by Melba Padilla Maggay.

2.3 Data Analysis

A Corpus-Assisted Discourse Analysis was utilized in determining the frequency of the Metadiscourse Markers present in the 3 opinion articles. Analysts adopt this tool and

method of Corpus Linguistics (CL) to investigate the linguistic patterns in a huge amount of corpora. It is a way to organize large amounts of data and reveal repeated patterns that are not visible to the naked eye. Pragmatic analysis is utilized to contextually examine and analyze the metadiscursive implications of each metadiscourse present in the opinion articles. Using both the quantitative corpus techniques with more qualitative methods have a good methodological synergies (Baker et al., 2008; Baker and Levon, 2015) and approaches such as the corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) (Partington et al., 2013) that disclose more nuanced linguistic patterns and representation of media.

Interpersonal metadiscourse theory of Hyland (2005) is the main theory that will facilitate the interpretation and analysis. The method of analysis will begin at finding the interactive metadiscourse markers at the selected opinion articles then quantifying the occurrences of metadiscourse markers through corpus analysis software. A soft copy of the three opinion articles from Rappler will be run through the Antconc Application Software. The software programme AntConc, devised by Laurence Anthony, Director of the Centre for English Language Education at Waseda University (Japan), is a corpus analysis toolkit that helps find out and count the occurrences of the specific words. The aim of the study is to investigate the interactional metadiscourse markers used in opinion articles then analyzing these markers to uncover the functions of each marker in the selected opinion articles of Rappler on charter change.

3. Results and Discussions

The study is in pursuit of identifying the interactional metadiscourse markers used in the opinion articles of Rappler and investigating the functions of these metadiscourse markers in the process of persuading the readers. The study chose to look into the three opinion articles from the online website of the news outlet Rappler. The interactional metadiscourse - a subcategory of metadiscourse proposed by Hyland (2005) will be the focus of the study.

In the words of Hyland (2005) this resource features that involves the readers and the writer form an opportunity for the reader to participate in the discourse through informing them about the writer's stance towards the propositional information and the readers themselves.

I. The conspiratorial cast of characters for charter change

One among the three opinion articles from Rappler is the article written by Dean De La Paz titled *'The conspiratorial cast of characters for charter change'*, posted on February 21, 2024. Moreover, below are the interactional metadiscourses present in each article.

Table 1. Hedges in Opinion Article 1

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Hedges	might	4
	apparently	1
	should	8
	could	1
	rather	1
TOTAL	5	15

There are five hedges including ***might, apparently, should, would, could,*** and ***rather*** that are used in the first opinion article presented. The writer used these hedges with the intention to convey the negative stance or the disappointment of the writer towards the government officials that were being talked about in this article. Hedges present the subjectivity of the position of the author by allowing information to be presented as their opinion rather than a usual fact that may result for the opinion to be open for negotiation (Hyland, 2005). Although it implies subjectivity, it establishes an opinion which guides the reader on which stand to take. This establishes a stance and opinion that discourages the reader to take side on the amendments of the constitutions.

*His apparently bogus PI complete with its monetary come-ons and signatures **should** not have even sparked a discourse farther than a firm “No!” as soon as a conspiracy to castrate the Senate became evident.*

*Let’s name a few that should have been on a legislator’s reading list. They **could** have simply read, learned, and done the math to determine the level of liberalization our Constitution already allows.*

These findings can also be seen in the research conducted by Nugroho (2020) where the researcher investigates the similarities and differences between American and Indonesian writers that incorporate metadiscourse markers; they used hedges found in opinion articles to convey writers’ personal point of views.

Table 2. Attitude Markers in Opinion Article 1

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Attitude Markers	expected	1
TOTAL	1	1

As per the search for attitude markers that is used to express the attitude or emotions of the writers towards the proposition, there are 1 occurrence of the marker *expected*. The writer used the word ***“expected”*** to show frustration and discontent. The author presents an opposing act that suggests the right move for the concerned people. Through the author showing dissatisfaction, this strengthens the position of the author on the issue being presented. This can be seen in the excerpt below:

*At the Executive Branch – which should have been a source of checks and balances following the three-branch democratic ideal envisioned by the Constitution – as **expected**, rather than firm leadership from which we might derive some recourse, on these issues, instead we are treated to characteristic double-speak and uncertainties complicated by undemocratic and overarching dynastic kissing-cousin relationships that serve as unknown factors.*

Table 3. Boosters in Opinion Article 1

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Boosters	always	1
	realized	1
TOTAL	2	2

Moreover, two boosters are used in this opinion article. These boosters are the markers ***always*** and ***realized***. These two were used to emphasize the certainty of the author. This marker shows the author's strong commitment towards his/ her written article. The utilization of the metadiscourse ***always*** implies the claim of the author about gradual opposition to changing the constitution. This statement solidifies the presented argument of the author. The metadiscourse ***realized*** established the credibility as it is supported by statistics. This contributes to the provision of facts that reinforce the arguments.

*the opposition to constitutional tinkering has **always** been on a slow gradual burn albeit by the time this is published the groundswell should by now be massive even as one branch of government remains rabidly bullheaded in shoving it through while another plays characteristically ambivalent, unsure, and uncertain.*

*They would have **realized** that the old economic proposals to open to 100% foreign equity land ownership, mass media, advertising, education, the foreign practice of professions plus foreign direct investments (FDI) in critical economic multipliers have all substantially been overtaken by globalization, domestic developments in the economy, and the statutes.*

Ardhianti et. al (2023) concluded in their study titled "Hedges and Boosters in Student Scientific Articles within the Framework of a Pragmatic Metadiscourse" that the use of boosters amplifies the strength of assertions.

Table 4. Engagement Markers in Opinion Article 1

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Hedges	we	14
	our	6
	let's	1
TOTAL	3	21

Engagement markers ***we*** garner a total of 14 which is the highest frequency of all the markers in the first article, ***do not*** have 2 occurrences, ***let's*** have 1, and 6 occurrences for the marker - ***our***. These markers are used by the author to form a relationship with its reader. The use of the metadiscourse ***we*** and ***let's*** indicates the inclusion of the reader in the text. As Hyland (2001) states, the use of inclusive we is the most explicit way to bring readers into the discourse participants. This also builds connection that implies that this issue is not just about the author but it also affects the reader. Through this, the author may persuade the reader to be on his side. Below are some of the excerpts.

***We** lost critical democratic safeguards in 2022 and ironically the institutions we relied on to protect and accurately count our collective desires remain potent roadblocks if and when a true and honest people's initiative (PI) develops from genuine grassroots.*

***Let's** name a few that should have been on a legislator's reading list.*

Likewise, in the study of Yuvayapan et al. (2021), they concluded that the writers utilized these engagement markers to probably guide readers to evaluate the interpretations through their lens. Rhetorical strategy such as this has two aims: lessening the risk of readers' objection to the claims and receiving the readers' approval, and getting a place as a member of the discipline (Yuvayapan et. al, 2021).

II. This Isn't About Charter Change

Moving on to the second opinion article, a total of 18 interactive metadiscourse markers were found in the second article. These 18 markers include 5 hedges, 9 boosters, 2 engagement markers and 2 self-mentions. Metadiscourse markers present in this article.

Table 5. Hedges in Opinion Article 2

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Hedges	should	1
	would	5
	would not	1
	perhaps	1
	about	6
TOTAL	5	14

The use of hedges in this article is to show uncertainty, possibility, and negativity. These hedges create politeness and ambiguity for the writers to pursue the readers (Siddique, 2018). Examples of hedges present in the article are **should**, **would**, **usually**, **would not**, **perhaps** and **about**. These offer the possibility of the climate and the process surrounding the issue. Moreover, the use of **would not** aid in presenting possible outcomes if the government removes a certain part of the constitution. Establishing a possibility might reinforce arguments that support the opposition of changing the constitution. This might be seen in the following excerpts:

Perhaps, the political climate can change sooner or later so that the charter change process can be initiated with more credibility and in a manner that is truly more democratic. But for now, we cannot help but subject charter change to a realistic apprehension of historical contingency, knowing that the future is in our hands but not totally.

They point to the fact that removing economic restrictions from the Constitution **would not** actually accomplish much if the administration continues to fail in fixing all the other challenges that make the Philippines unattractive as a destination for foreign direct investments.

The study conducted by Ardianti (2023) also implies the same implications of hedges. Modal verbs such as perhaps and would (not) are used to express one type of epistemic meaning: probability.

Table 6. Self Mention in Opinion Article 2

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Self Mention	I	4
	my	1
TOTAL	2	5

Hyland (2001) states that authors cannot entirely refrain from presenting themselves in the text. Self-mention metadiscourse markers are also found in this article. These markers represent the presence of the author in the discourse. This can be realized through the words *I* and *my* in the second article. The use of self-mentions impose

And the reason for my observation that the contending camps are not speaking the same language is that while charter change proponents choose to focus on structural, economic issues, their opponents are more concerned about another issue altogether, the issue of power.

I can't say whether or not our politicians are aware of it, but they share the same language with the communists they routinely take shots at. It is a messianic rhetoric that pegs a utopian ideal on a central idea, whether the revolution or charter change. And because of this, they share the same weakness – a lack of sufficient respect for historical contingency.

Self mentions have different purposes. The researcher evaluated these 2 metadiscourse markers and came to the conclusion that it is used to elaborate an argument and present claims. Moreover, self mentions in a corpus-based study of self-mention markers in English research articles through the investigations of Firdaus et al., (2021) revealed that this metadiscourse also functions to detail an argument and exhibit results.

Table 7. Boosters in Opinion Article 2

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Boosters	think	1
	really	2
	always	2
	actually	1
	find	1
	of course	2
	truly	2
	indeed	1
	find	1
TOTAL	9	13

A number of boosters found in the second opinion article. These 8 interactional metadiscourse markers are *think, really, always, actually, find, of course, truly* and *indeed*. These boosters have the function of demonstrating a strong assertion. It helps the author to establish a definition or a claim. The boosters utilized in the article shows conviction and confidence in a claim. These aids on strengthening the effect of the opinion

article in making decisions that concern their stand on the issue. Some of its examples are presented below.

*we **assume** to be factual the assertion that charter change will fix the economy, then it would indeed make charter change an attractive proposition. Logically, we cannot achieve certain targets no matter how hard we work if the structures that frame our efforts are ineffective and inefficient.*

*Logical prophecies routinely go wrong. This is because logic can only be **truly**, 100% effective when it has access to all relevant factors.*

The study of Herminingsih et al., (2023) investigates the boosters in the Abstract sections of Multidisciplinary Sciences Journal Articles, they concluded that the writers' purpose of boosters is to communicate the writer's objectives with surety and conviction.

Table 8. Engagement Markers in Opinion Article 2

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Engagement Markers	we	8
	our	12
TOTAL	2	2

Engagement markers such as *we* and *our*, as per observation, implies that the author wants to grab the attention of the reader or to address them. Sometimes these markers are also used to include the readers in the discourse. In the context of the article, these engagement markers such as ***we*** and ***our*** are used to encourage the readers to immerse themselves into the discourse and establish political action. The use of *we* also indicates the opportunity of considering if this implies a positive effect on the country. This can be seen in the following excerpts.

*Logically, **we** cannot achieve certain targets no matter how hard we work if the structures that frame our efforts are ineffective and inefficient.*

*But if, for the sake of argument, **we** assume to be factual the assertion that charter change will fix the economy, then it would indeed make charter change an attractive proposition.*

In this case the writer employed the use of *we* and *our* to bring the reader to the text and reduce the risk of possible negation and objection of the writer's ideologies from the readers. Their experiences with texts enable them to predict their readers' reactions to the arguments (Hyland, 2005a). In the same vein, the research of Yuvayapan et. al (2021) revealed the same results and implications.

III. What is needed is culture change, not charter change

In the third article titled What is needed is culture change, not charter change, various interactional metadiscourse are evident. There are 15 metadiscourse markers found. The

presence of the different metadiscourse markers in the third article contributes to the organization of the text.

Table 9. Hedges in Opinion Article 3

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Hedges	sometimes	1
	almost	1
	mostly	1
	seems	1
	mainly	1
TOTAL	5	5

Hedges are frequently used in this third article. These hedges are sometimes, almost, mostly, seem and mainly that have 1 occurrence each. The use of sometimes, almost, mostly, and mainly serves as markers that withhold full certainty of the content. While on the other hand, seem holds possibility and tentativeness (Siddique et al. 2018). The utilization seems to signal that the statement is based on the observation and interpretation of the author. This suggests that the author displays a sarcastic voice. Alos, the usage of **mostly** narrows the scope of the reason behind the breakdown of trust.

*Some analysts have decried the fact that we **seem** to lack what the Europeans call “a sense of the commons,” that public space which is acknowledged to be for the good of all and hence owned as an area of common concern.*

*This breakdown of trust is **mostly** accounted to the lack of a positive experience of institutions that can hold their own against the onslaught of unofficial pressures.*

Table 10 . Self Mention in Opinion Article 3

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Self Mention	my	2
TOTAL	1	2

The self-mention in this article has the same function as the self-mention in the second article. The marker shows the presence or inclusion of the author in the discourse. The use of my in the third article expresses strongly the sense or opinion of the writer. The authors seemed to have a strong preference to express their “affective values- their attitudes towards the propositional content and/or readers rather than a commitment to the truth-value” (Crismore et al., 1993 as cited in Mavadat Saidi et al, 2021)

***My** own sensing is that we do not divide our social space between “public” and “private,” but between “loob” and “labas,” between whether you are seen to be part of the sakop, or taga-loob, or outside of it and hence beyond the sphere of the group’s sense of responsibility. We do have strong solidarities, but only within that narrow space bounded by the affairs of those who immediately belong to us, like our families, friends, and cronies.*

Table 11. Boosters in Opinion Article 3

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Boosters	actually	1
	know	1
	find	1
	found	1
	obvious	1
TOTAL	5	5

Similar to the previous opinion article, this third article employed a number of boosters that intends to emphasize certainty of the author. Some of these boosters are actually, know, find, and highly.

*We all **know** that while we have a democratic system installed, what actually operates is an intricate network of shifting alliances based on patronage and clan loyalties.*

*This shows that fundamental change can only happen when the existing culture and structures make it possible. Without such a context, a Constitution will remain just a piece of paper that can be thrown aside when **found** to be technically inconvenient by those in power.*

Table 12. Engagement Markers in Opinion Article 3

Category	Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency
Engagement Markers	we	27
	our	17
	us	1
	you	1
TOTAL	4	46

The interactional metadiscourse markers such as do not, we, us, and our belong to the subcategory of engagements. In this article, these markers indicate the negotiation. It is a marker that is used to construct a connection or communicate with the readers. The metadiscourse we, our, you, and us shows inclusion. This is also the same in the research conducted by Tikhonova et al., (2023), this inclusion helps the authors to reduce the distance between them and the reader, addressing the reader directly.

***We** do have strong solidarities, but only within that narrow space bounded by the affairs of those who immediately belong to us like our families, friends, and cronies.*

*The move to change the Constitution through such contrivances as a “People’s Initiative” is reflective of the informal pressures that the operative culture bears down on **our** formal systems. It shows the vulnerability of **our** institutions before the bulldozing power of personal interests, particularly when current power holders have a grasping need to hold on to power at any cost.*

We need a common frame for understanding and interpreting our own past, for defining who we are and what we stand for as a nation'

4. Conclusion

This study focused on analyzing the usage interactional metadiscourse markers present in 3 opinion articles of Rappler on Charter Change. This prompts for additional study on how metadiscourse contributes to the rhetorics of writers in imposing various opinions and stands regarding Charter change. The three opinion articles presented are in the umbrella of Charter Change in the Philippines. However, all authors of these three articles also talked about the issues concerning and associated with the issue.

The study revealed that there are a total of 44 interactional metadiscourse markers present in the 3 opinion articles. The most number of interactional metadiscourse markers in 3 articles, with 16 frequencies, was hedges. Whereas, the least number is an attitude marker with 1 occurrence.

This study concludes that Interactional Metadiscourse markers contribute to the overall purpose of the article. This serves to articulate the author's position or viewpoint on the issue by presenting claims, supporting information, and relevant clarifications. It facilitates the reader's critical evaluation by enabling the accumulation of well-founded justifications, thereby supporting informed personal judgment on the presented issue.

This study will be beneficial in the process of understanding the proper usage of interactional metadiscourse markers in opinion articles in online news outlets. This may provide knowledge about metadiscourse markers in their role on how the author communicates, persuades or gives information to the readers. Lastly, Editorial articles in the study on Metadiscourse Markers may also be considered for future studies.

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