A REVIEW OF METADISCOURSE

Chen Chen

School of Foreign Languages and Literature, Lanzhou University, Lanzhou, China

ABSTRACT: *Metadiscourse is often called "discourse about discourse". Since Harris first put forward the term metadiscourse in 1959, metadiscourse has become a research hotspot in the field of discourse analysis, language teaching, and pragmatics. The classification of metadiscourse is mostly based on Vande Kopple's classification. This paper introduces the definition and classification of metadiscourse.*

KEYWORDS: metadiscouse, classification, metadiscourse

INTRODUCTION

Since Harris first put forward the term metadiscourse in 1959, metadiscourse has become a research hotspot in the field of discourse analysis, language teaching, and pragmatics. It is popularly known as "discourse about discourse". Crismore (1989) believes that there are two levels of verbal communication: primary discourse and metadiscourse. Primary discourse expresses propositional information about the topic; Metadiscourse tells readers how to understand and comment on propositional information about the topic. This paper mainly discusses the definition and classification of metadiscourse.

DEFINITION OF METADISCOURSE

Harris (1959) puts forward the concept of metadiscourse, but he only puts forward and briefly illustrates it as a linguistic resource aiming at understanding language use and guiding receivers. Williams (1981) defines metadiscourse as "discourse about discourse" and argues that metadiscourse does not involve proposition information. Until then, metadiscourse has been generally accepted and used (Vande Kopple, 1985; Crismore, 1989).

In the study of metadiscourse, the representative scholars are mainly Vande Kopple, Crismore and Hyland. According to Vande Kopple (1985) metadiscourse is a linguistic rescource that does not add propositional information but can indicate the existence of the writer. Hyland (1998) believes that meta-discourse refers to a set of mechanisms that embody various features of discourse, such as the organization of discourse, the writer's views on discourse content, and the prediction of readers' attitudes. Hyland and Tse (2004) put forward that metadiscourse can be understood in a narrow sense and in a broad sense: the narrow sense emphasizes the function of metadiscourse to organize discourse; The broad sense is that metadiscourse embodies the writer's method of using language and rhetoric. Hyland (2005) propose that metadiscourse is a term for

negotiating interpersonal meaning in a discourse that helps writers express their views and establish interactions with readers in a certain discourse community. Crismore (1983) regards metadiscourse as the writer's invasion of the text, explicitly or implicitly instructing readers how to understand the text and how to see the writer. Crismore et al. (1993) redefines metadiscourse as a linguistic component in oral or written discourse that does not add any propositional content but helps listeners or readers organize, interpret, or evaluate the known information.

Although the above definitions of metadiscourse are different with different emphasis. The definition proposed by Hyland (2005) which suggests that metadiscourse is the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer to express a viewpoint and engage with readers is accepted by most people.

CLASSIFICATION OF METADISCOURSE

Classification of metadiscourse is mostly developed on the basis of Vande Kopple's classification. This paper mainly discusses the classification models of Vande Kopple (1985), Crismore et. al. (1993), Hyland (2005).

Vande Kopple (1985), whose categorization consists of seven kinds of metadiscourse marker divided into textual and interpersonal types:

Textual metadiscourse
Text connectives - used to help show how parts of a text are connected to one another. Includes sequencers (first, next, in the second place), reminders (as / mentioned in Chapter 2), and topicalizers, which focus attention on the topic of a text segment (with regard to, in connection with).

Code glosses - used to help readers to grasp the writer's intended meaning. Based on the writer's assessment of the reader's knowledge, these devices reword, explain, define or clarify the sense of a usage, sometimes putting the reformulation in parentheses or marking it as an example, etc.

Validity markers - used to express the writer's commitment to the probability or truth of a statement. These include hedges (perhaps, might, may), emphatics (clearly, undoubtedly), and attributors which enhance a position by claiming the support of a credible other (according to Einstein).

Narrators - used to inform readers of the source of the information presented - who said or wrote something (according to Smith, the Prime Minister announced that).
Interpersonal metadiscourse

Illocution markers - used to make explicit the discourse act the writer is performing at certain points (to conclude, I hypothesize, to sum up, we predict).

Attitude markers - used to express the writer's attitudes to the prepositional material he or she presents (unfortunately, interestingly, I wish that, how awful that).

Commentaries - used to address readers directly, drawing them into an implicit dialogue by commenting on the reader's probable mood or possible reaction to the text (you will certainly agree that, you might want to read the third chapter first).

Crismore et al.'s attempts to impose order on the various functions of metadiscourse are an improvement on Vande Kopple's:
Textual metadiscourse
Textual markers
Logical connectives - show connections between ideas (therefore; so; in addition; and)
Sequencers - indicate sequence/ordering of material (first; next; finally; 1, 2, 3)
Reminders - refer to earlier text material (as we saw in Chapter one)
Topicalizers - indicate a shift in topic (well; now I will discuss ...)

Interpretive markers
Code glosses- explain text material (for example; that is)
Illocution markers - name the act performed (to conclude; in sum; I predict)
Announcements - announce upcoming material (in the next section ...)

Interpersonal metadiscourse
Hedges - show uncertainty to truth of assertion (might; possible; likely)
Certainty markers - express full commitment to assertion (certainly; know; shows)
Attributors - give source/support of information (Smith claims that ...)
Attitude markers - display writer's affective values (I hope/agree; surprisingly)
Commentary - build relationship with reader (you may not agree that …)

According to Hyland (2005), it is not accurate to divide metadiscourse into textual metadiscourse and interpersonal metadiscourse. They divide metadiscourse into interactive metadiscourse which guides readers through the text and interactional metadiscourse which involves readers into the text. This model sees metadiscourse as comprised of two dimensions of interaction, the interactive dimension and interactional dimension. The interactive dimension "concerns the writer's awareness of a participating audience and the ways he or she seeks to accommodate its probable knowledge, interests, rhetorical expectations and processing abilities" (Hyland, 2005: 49). The interactive metadiscursive resources help the writer to organize discourse and to guide the reader through the text. The interactional dimension "concerns the ways writers conduct interaction by intruding and commenting on their message" (Hyland, 2005: 49). The interactional metadiscursive resources help the writer to evaluate and engage, express solidarity, anticipate objections, and respond to an imagined dialogue with the reader.

Interactive metadiscourse
Transitions - express relations between main clauses (in addition; but; thus)
Frame markers - signal discourse acts, sequences or stages (finally, to conclude)

84

Endophoric markers - refer the reader to information in other parts of the text (noted above, in the next paragraph)

Evidentials - refer to information from other texts (according to X, Y suggested)
Code glosses - elaborate propositional meanings (such as, that is)
Interactional metadiscourse

Hedges - withhold commitment and open dialogue (may, perhaps)
Boosters - emphasize certainty or close dialogue (certainly, it is clear that)
Attitude markers - express writer's attitude to proposition (surprisingly, unfortunately)
Self-mentions - refer explicitly to author (I, my, and exclusive we)
Engagement markers - explicitly build relationship with reader (please note that, consider, and inclusive we)

CONCLUSION

This paper discusses the definition and classification of metadiscourse. Since all discourse involves the interaction between writer and reader. The interpersonal model of metadiscourse proposed by Hyland (2005) is widely accepted in the existing field. This paper sheds light on the definition and classification of metadiscourse. Future research can apply the interpersonal model of metadiscourse to examine research ariticle, newspaper or other genres.

References

Hyland, K. (2005). *Metadiscourse: Exploring Interaction in Writing*. London: Continuum.

Hyland, K., & Tse, P. (2004). *Metadiscourse in academic writing: A reappraisal. Applied Linguistics, 25* (2), 156-177.

Crismore, A. (1983) *Metadiscourse: What is it and How is it Used in School and Non-school Social Science Texts.* Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois.

Crismore, A. (1989). *Talking with Readers: Metadiscourse as Rhetorical Act*. New York: Peter Lang.

Crismore, A., Markkanen, R., & Steffensen, M. (1993) Metadiscourse in persuasive writing: a study of texts written by American and Finnish university students. *Written Communication, 10* (1), 39-71.

Vande Kopple, W. (1985). Some exploratory discourse on metadiscourse. *College Composition and Communication, 36*, 82-93.

Williams, J. M. (1981). *Ten Lessons in Clarity and Grace* (2nd ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.