

A Corpus-Based Metadiscursive Analysis of Subjectivity in Academicians' Blogs on Politics

Une analyse métadiscursive, fondée sur un corpus, de la subjectivité dans les blogs politiques d'universitaires

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Abstract ;(not more than 10 Lines)

The study of attitude markers (AM) has increased in academic discourse, proposing the role of subjective stance and authorial proposition in text formation (Aijmer, 2005; Hyland, 2005). The domain of blogosphere utilizes AM to reflect on author's subjective standpoint. Despite the identification of AM for the purpose of constructing subjective propositions, there is a need to study the degrees of subjectivity employed in the text. This research has investigated fifty political blogs written by Pakistani academicians in English. Based on a corpus study, this research has explored degrees of subjectivity through functions of AM. The study concludes that AM vary in degrees of subjectivity depending on the functions utilized in discourse and hence are further classified into 'highest' through function of 'evaluation', 'less higher' through function of 'newsworthiness' and 'low' through function of 'commitment'. This research can help academic writers present their subjective stance effectively using AM.

Article info

Received 09/10/2025
Publication 12/06/2026

Keyword:

- ✓ *Metadiscourse*
- ✓ *Attitude Markers*
- ✓ *Genre Analysis*
- ✓ *Discourse*
- ✓ *Subjectivity*

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1. Introduction

Since the inception of metadiscourse, the role of authorial context and subjective standpoint has become a dominating factor in the process of text production (Bhatia, 2004; Hyland, 2005). The two variables influence and condition writer's stance when communicating with a certain reader. Taking into account Bakhtin's (1986) theory of dialogic utterances, writing is itself a dialogic process as the writer attempts to respond to an existing active audience. Because of reader's shared knowledge of activities, writers tend to consider a range of disciplinary contextual factors when producing a text. In communicating with a presupposed audience's behavior, authors tend to exert their subjective opinions so as to speak directly to the reader. The stance of the writer has come to be associated with Hyland's (2005) theory of metadiscourse.

Pakistani academicians' blogs on politics in English is a specific social genre in which a purposive use of certain type of text within an existing socio-pragmatic context has drawn attention for further investigation (Bhatia, 2004; Eggins and Martin, 1997). The understanding of a text based on a specific socio-cultural context cannot be thus possible without taking into consideration the pragmatic processes involved. In specifically targeting the Pakistani academicians' use of blog writing, a distinctive culture may use similar genres, however, create different variations. Miller (1984) uses the term 'social' for genre because it concerns language use within a context- social structure is created and sustained through recurrent human actions. Hence, part of inducing subjectivity in blog writing can be considered as a possible means of operating within a social structure where authors tend to reveal their personality to the reader ; to create a sense of affiliation or dominance of opinion *per se*.

A body of research has studied the role of attitude markers (AM) in text production (Aijmer, 2005; Ostman, 2011). However, what distinguishes the present study from previous works is its primary focus not only on identifying the use of AM in Pakistani academicians' blogs on politics written in the English language, but also to explore the functions of AM used within a larger sociopragmatic genre, i.e., while AM reflect author's personal opinion, the choice of an expression as a metadiscursive AM has a broader function to serve than only reflecting personal stance.

1.1. Significance of the Study

By closely examining the contextual use of AM, this research can help authors in realizing the degree of subjectivity they wish to reflect in texts as well as help readers better understand the functional purposes of AM with reference to the genre of academic blog writing. Exploring the use of AM that actively incorporate a subjective voice of an author for a certain function in academic discourse is therefore a crucial element that needs significant attention. By identifying the functions of AM in blog writing, this research will help in broadening the perspective of subjectivity in the field of metadiscourse. In addition, it will also help in enlarging the domain of genre studies by incorporating political blogs written by academicians as a branch of metadiscourse.

1.2. Research Problem

The use of AM in Pakistani academicians' blogs on politics in English has become a recurrent mode of inducing author's affirmation and validity to the constructed text (Aijmer, 2005; Hyland, 2005; Ostman, 2011). Despite Hyland's (2005) construction of a list of AM denoting subjectivity/authorial stance, there is a need to identify degrees of subjectivity involved as well as an understanding of their functions. A possible reason of this problem is the general consideration of AM as generic terms for the identification of authorial stance. Hence, taking a closer look into AM in the discourse of blog writing to reconnoiter their functions can say more about degrees of subjectivity.

1.3. Research Questions

1. What are the functions of Attitude Markers that show author's subjectivity towards the text and its content?
2. What functions of Attitude Markers differentiate the degree of subjectivity of one expression over the other ?

1.4. Overview of Metadiscourse and Blog Sphere

The development of blogosphere in the twenty-first century with its varied themes and manifestations has engendered a new form of content writing (Martin and White, 2005). The term 'blog' initially emerged as a publication tool and became a multifaceted phenomenon with a new ground of expression and a forum of communication. Drenzer and Farrell (2008) define blogging as a webpage which comprises of online commentary with minimal to no external editing. As they state, the domain of blogging has become of crucial significance as witnessed to have increased its rate from 8 to 72 million from March, 2005 to Mar, 2007. Blogosphere has thus become a cultural, business and a political phenomenon (Lovink, 2013; Russell and Echchaibi, 2009).

1.5. Definition of a Blog: Analysis and Scholarly Perspectives

Several researchers have been constantly investigating the normative structures, functions, effects and outcomes of blogging. A study by Drenzer and Farrell (2008) on the empirical and normative questions raised in a blog's content suggests that blogs happen to be the staple of political commentary, legal analysis and celebratory gossip. Blogs can also be quintessential platforms for political campaigns and promotions. Daille, Dubreil, Monceaux and Vernier (2011) rather define blogging as an ideal resource for the constitution of Sentiment Analysis. Taking a corpus-based approach, the researchers have analysed the linguistic structures in the light of Evaluation and Appraisal Theory. They found out that blogs comprise of a heavy bundle of lexis that reflect sentiments of the subject and personal opinions on the subject. The involvement of sentiments in blog writing certainly calls into question the role of AM which are considered as primary means of inducing subjectivity.

Martin and White (2005) and Quirk et al. (1985) studied blogs from a similar perspective and found out that blogs are rich with writer's personal views and attached sentiments in content writing. This point has further been verified by Fievet and Turrettini (2004) who claimed that the personality, style and opinion of the blogger are quintessential elements in the interest of the

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blog. Likewise, the present research has a similar objective i.e., to explore the subjective stance of the writer in blog content. However, while other researches focus on primarily identifying the sentiments of writers, the present study further illustrates the functions of metadiscursive expressions in viewing personal stance and their degrees of subjectivity.

Gopinath, Chintagunta and Venkataraman (2013) studied the effect of writing content in pre and post blog volume, blog valence on the performance of 75 movies in the US. They reached to a similar conclusion to that of Godes and Mayzlin (2004) and Stephen and Galak (2012) who found out that blogosphere is a consumer-generated and a word-of-mouth business. In claiming that, the researchers have validated the idea of the role of linguistic expressions involved in persuading the audience towards a distinctive entity. They claimed that some blogs may be more popular and credible than others. Hence, of crucial importance is to reconnoiter the levels of persuasion, information content, etc., in addition to volume and valence. However, in their research the focus has been on persuasion through blog content rather than persuasion through authorial stance. One question could be raised as to whether persuasion through ideational value is more effective than persuasion through interpersonal value or vice versa.

Chau and Xu (2012) have similarly defined blogging as a 'business intelligence' community i.e., an online media that provides content and feedback on several bog topics. They investigated business blogs that provide a feedback on various companies and products. Their conclusion was based on the fact that the lexical choice of the blogger plays a crucial role in shaping the views of the audience towards a certain phenomenon. Several other researchers have conducted similar analysis on the choice of lexis and techniques for boosting opinion and sentiments and found out that since blogshpere varies from individual's perspective to a collective unit, it will always have an identical function of boosting personal opinion and sentiments (Abbasi et al., 2008; Lee et al, 2008).

Fessakis, Dimitracopoulou and Palaiodimos (2013) carried a research based on Interaction Analysis on groups of students collaborating through online blogging. Basing their theory on learning by design, they analysed the schematic structures of blogs in instigating an education culture within the blogging community. Downes (2004) has further affirmed the idea of using social softwares for educational purposes as bloggers reflect on their texts, engage in writing for significant time and trigger long dialogue. A similar idea was established in Chen et al. (2005) research which strongly emphasized on the importance of the integration of blogging with learning portfolio approach as several blogging techniques such as brainstorming, problem solving etc., could be fruitfully utilized in educational settings. Although their research is more pedagogically oriented, their idea can prove fruitful if studied from the perspective of schematic and rhetoric organization of blogs. From the above discussion, we may conclude that language plays an essential role in persuading and shaping the minds of the audience towards a certain perspective.

1.6. The Art of Rhetoric

The art of rhetoric carries potential for research on metadiscourse. Aristotle (2018) defines rhetoric as the faculty of observing in any means the art of rhetoric. The art of rhetoric- being

assigned a special position- enables the reader to observe a mode of persuasion within any subject matter. According to Aristotle (2018), human beings' abilities to put their arguments forward, to defend them and attack other's arguments have always been through the medium of rhetoric. The art of rhetoric is threefold and comprises of (i) 'ethos' which refers to the ability of evincing a personal character in order to make the speech look credible (ii) 'pathos' which refers to the ability of stirring the emotions of the reader (iii) and 'logos' by which the author provides a logical argument to strengthen the power of his/her claim and make it as truthful as possible. Aristotle's (2018) theory is crucial to this research as we explore Attitude Markers that fall under the category of 'ethos' to find the level of subjectivity in blog content.

According to Hyland (2005), academic language consists of quintessential persuasive and interactive elements which project author's relation with the text as well as to the reader. One way of looking at the evaluative nature of political blogs is through metadiscourse. Metadiscourse is a set of self-reflective linguistic repertoire which may refer to the writer, the text, or the reader (Tse & Hyland, 2004). These linguistic expressions tend to show a social engagement between the writer, the reader and the context within an academic discourse and also signal an author's subjective stance reflecting his/her opinion and attitude.

The function of discourse markers has been viewed differently by discourse analysts. Metadiscourse markers are generally of two types: (i) textual metadiscourse markers which focus primarily on the coherence and cohesion of a text (ii) and interpersonal metadiscourse markers which reflect the stance and attitude of the writer. Sanford (2012) uses the term metadiscourse to assert on the idea that writing and speaking are more than an exchange of information, facts, and figures. The effective use of metadiscourse instigates coherence and a sense of holistic meaning in the text.

Hayisama (2015) has studied the theory of intercultural rhetoric in Thai and Malaysian students' writings. She found out that their writings were characterized by a distant-relationship between the writer and the readers as well as a minimum amount of writer-involvement in the texts, which were the preferred rhetorical styles of interaction of both Thai and Malaysian students. From a sociocultural point of view, this rhetorical style mirrors the oriental style of text interaction within their community. This study aids lens to the present research so as to identify author's choice of interaction and degrees of subjectivity involved in blog writing to better understand the conventions of metadiscourse.

In general, while several researchers have validated the fact that blog writing and bloggers tend to induce opinions, sentiments and logics to validate the existence of the self (Lovink, 2013; Martin and White, 2005; Russell and Echchaibi, 2009), this field still requires further investigation. The use of Attitude Markers as an evidence of author's stance in blog content has a persuasive effect of shaping readers' views towards a certain phenomenon. However, the rationale as to why authors tend to prefer the use of one Attitude Marker over another as well as the degree of subjectivity involved by employing an Attitude Marker needs further investigation. In this regard, this research studies the metafunctions of Attitude Markers in academic political blogs to highlight the frequency of Attitude Markers in texts and their derived functions.

2. Conceptual Framework on Metadiscourse

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Continuous scrutiny of the term *subjectivity* ranging from the old Greek rhetoric discourses to the present world's definition of the term (Crismore, 1989; Hyland, 2005) has surprisingly led to its construction as a rather slippery and broad term. In this regard, a conceptual framework is established to bring forth a detailed analysis of subjectivity as well as degrees of subjectivity involved in academic discourse. Therefore, Hyland's theory of Interactional Attitude Markers as metadiscursive will be considered as a main theory. Further, in order to investigate the functions of Attitude Markers and degrees of subjectivity involved, this study lends notions of subjectivity from Descartes (1985) and Bouzet (1951).

2.1. *Metadiscourse*

The notion of subjectivity or subjective stance is held crucial in the theory of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005). Metadiscourse is generally defined as an interaction between the author of the text with the text as well as with the perceived reader. In other words, it is an author's attempt to guide the reader's understanding of the text through discursual features. More specifically, metadiscourse denotes a way of understanding language in use where a range of discursual features are used to reflect on how authors interact in the text to shape the reader's perception of the text.

Of crucial understanding to metadiscourse is the purpose of communication. In the process of communicating with readers, authors generally reflect their personalities, attitudes and assumptions toward a certain context as they wish to create a more reader-friendly text to further engage with the audience and create a degree of mutability. Metadiscourse is a framework for understanding communication as a social engagement where authors signal their attitude not only towards the content but the audience of the text as well. Writing is therefore never neutral; it is rather embedded with several interests, perspectives, positions and values.

The discursive practice of establishing oneself in the text, engaging and persuading as well as establishing a choice of preference towards a certain assumption are key elements of interactional attitude markers (Hyland, 2005). Since the current study is based on exploring subjectivity, thus Hyland's (2005) list of Attitude Markers will be taken as a sample to investigate the frequency of Attitude Markers and their communicative function. Attitude Markers are generally used to express personal relations and attitudes towards a certain phenomenon (Brown and Yule, 1983; Jakobson, 1960). More specifically, it denotes the use of language to talk about one's experience and projection of sentiments towards a certain assumption. Attitude Markers are identified by exploring how authors of texts manage social relationship within the text. The degree of social engagement is determined on how an author assesses who the reader is, whether the reader is known or unknown, the number of the readers as well as the status of the reader in relation to the author.

2.2. *Self and subjectivity*

Self and subjectivity are also defined as self-reflectivity. The term self-reflectivity is also referred to as conscious, ego, soul, subject, person or moral agent. Descartes (1985) rather prefers the term *cogito* or 'I' rather than 'self' to denote *subjectivity*. However, in the light of Hyland's

interactional metadiscourse elements, the ‘I’ is defined as a ‘Self-Mention’ rather than an Attitude Marker. Considering Descartes’ philosophy of the ‘I’ as he justifies that the ‘I’ is the subject of consciousness; *‘cogito ergo sum – I think therefore I am’*, the ‘I’ rather appears to have a tendency of being an Attitude Marker as the author intends to put forth his/her view and subjective stance towards a certain proposition. The definition of Descartes’ ‘I’ as an Attitude Marker seems justifiable as he says “*what is a thing which thinks? It is a thing which doubts, understands, affirms, denies, wills, refuses, which also imagines and feels*” (Cottingham, 1998, p. 10). Considering these actions to be done by the ‘I’, they certainly make the ‘I’ appear more than a Self-Mention. The reference of the ‘I’ therefore makes it perform two functions: (i) self mention (ii) and attitude marker. In this study, the role of the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘my’ are explored with reference to Attitude Markers’ employment.

A subjective perspective is identified as to the extent to which a speaker wants to provide the listener with subjective comments and evaluations on the event. Rather than providing the reader with propositional content, a subjective stance informs the reader or addressee that the speaker has an attitude towards the expressed proposition. The proposition is thus embedded within a higher level construct of attitude.

Two further theories of subjectivity are of pertinent importance: Wilson and Sperber’s (1990) theory of Explicature as well as Bouzet’s (1951) theory of Enunciation. According to Wilson and Sperber’ (1990), the explicature of an utterance is constructed by enriching the logical form linguistically encoded in a way that it expresses a higher level of explicature; a description of attitude towards a proposition. Attitude Markers have been identified with higher-level explicature (Ifantidou, 1999; Wilson and Sperber, 1990). On the other hand, Bouzet (1951) identifies two kinds of enunciative elements: (i) neutral attitude (ii) and assertive attitude through which the author identifies himself/herself with the text. However, having a neutral attitude or assertive attitude brings into question the degrees of subjectivity of Attitude Markers. In this regard, the degree of subjectivity will be scrutinized on the basis of the function involved which Bouzet (1951) characterizes as:

1. Commitment: a speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition.
2. Newsworthiness: a speaker’s estimation of newsworthiness of proposition.
3. Evaluation: the affective evaluation of the speaker towards the proposition in negative or positive terms.

2.3. Methodology

The current study is based on a mixed method approach to metadiscourse analysis. For the quantitative analysis, a corpus based technique is adopted to quantify the frequencies of the occurring Attitude Markers. The list of AM is taken from Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy with a slight addition of few linguistic expressions in the list. Concerning the qualitative discussion, as this study attempts to further identify the functions of AM and degrees of subjectivity, Hyland’s (2005) concept of metadiscourse as well as Bouzet’s (1951) categorization of subjectivity establish the conceptual framework for the current study.

2.4. Corpus Compilation

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A corpus compilation comprises of data selection, cleaning and finally generating a corpus. Cleaning data is of great significance as it helps corpus users achieve better results and avoid ambiguity. Initially, additional spacing was cleaned through Text Cleaner as used in the website www.textcleanr.com/. Once the texts were cleaned, they were run through MetaPak software (Abbas et al., 2017) for further analysis.

2.5. Corpus Analysis

A corpus can be defined as a collection of texts which is stored in an electronic database (Kennedy, 1998). The purpose of creating a corpus is to acutely identify and measure the frequencies of attitude markers as well as to carry an effective metadiscursive study.

2.6. Rationale

The rationale for specifically selecting AM is due to its major role in building the perception of the author towards their texts. Since the discourse of blogs is largely based on author's view about the text, AM hence cannot be ignored.

2.7. Tools

Metapak (Abbas et al., 2017) is a developed corpus software which is exclusively built for the studies of metadiscourse. At the initial stage, the software identifies all occurring instances of a searched category (attitude markers in the current study). Moving forward, the results are manually mapped in two categories i.e., metadiscursive or non-metadiscursive expressions. Next, the frequency of the identified metadiscursive expressions is provided by the tool. The results are then discussed quantitatively as well as qualitatively.

2.8. Texts

For the current research, 50 blogs were gathered from the Express Tribune and The News online newspapers written in English. These blogs are written by Pakistani academicians on politics. Hence, they are considered as part of academic discourse. The texts were purposively selected from September, 2018 to February, 2019.

2.9. Results and Discussion

This section presents the results of AM employment in political blogs written by academic politicians.

3. Quantitative Results: A Visual Overview

The result shows that the total occurrence of Attitude Markers in a corpus of 50,000 words is 162. Despite Hyland (2005) claiming the pronoun 'I' and 'my' as Self-Mention metadiscursive practices, the result of the study shows that the pronouns 'I' and 'my' have a high capacity of being metadiscursive AM. As the figure below shows, the highest frequent AM occurrence is the pronoun 'I'. This rather validates the tendency of the pronoun 'I' to be considered as performing two metafunctions: Self-Mention and AM. In this study, the 'I' has only been looked at from an Attitude Marker perspective. The second most frequent AM is the word 'important' with total 16 occurrences. This may signify the prototypicality of the word 'important' as a metadiscursive genre feature of political blogs where bloggers' most indulging attitude is towards projecting 'newsworthiness'. The third frequent AM with 10 occurrences is the word 'my'. The fourth two

frequent AM with seven occurrences are ‘expected’ and ‘unfortunate’ which reflect that ‘evaluation’ of news is less considered by bloggers- within the range of the selected data. The fifth frequent AM with 5 occurrences is the word ‘undoubtedly’. Other AM with 3-1 occurrences are as shown in Figure 01 below.

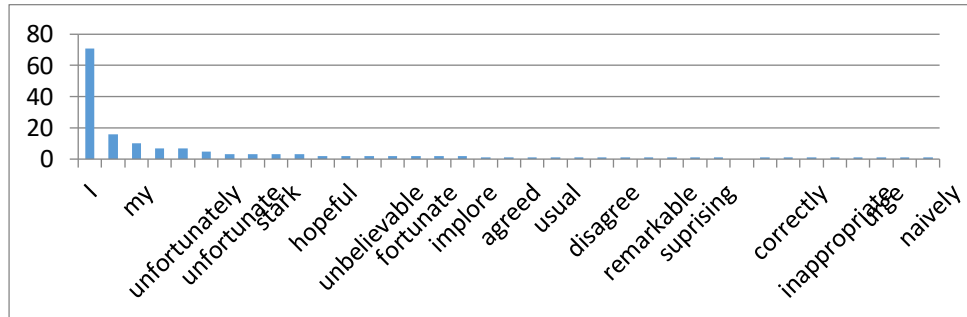


Figure 1: Frequencies of Attitude Markers

3.1. Degrees of Subjectivity

Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy of Attitude Markers certainly benefits researchers by identifying the usage of personal/subjective stance in an academic context. However, what is equally important is to reconnoiter the functions of AM as metadiscursive and their significance in text production. The three functions below given by Bouzet (1951) will be taken as a model to analyse Hyland’s (2005) taxonomy of AM.

- **Commitment: a speaker’s commitment to the truth of the proposition:** this could be realized using AM such as *truly, appropriate, truthfully* etc.

Use of ‘undoubtedly’

- ‘*This move from Pakistan is **undoubtedly** a diplomatic masterstroke*’
- ‘*It was **undoubtedly** an honour for our country to host such an astounding international event*’
- ‘***Undoubtedly**, my faith as a Muslim has become firmer than ever*’.

One may examine that the writer is trying to show his/her attitude towards the proposition as most truthful and real. In this regard, the pragmatic context of the use of ‘undoubtedly’ reflects a degree of commitment towards the proposition presented. Yet, what makes it an AM is the reflection of the author’s personal choice to stay committed towards the proposition. In this regard, the author through his commitment to the proposition also reflects a degree of reliability for showing a certainty in his/her attitude towards the proposition.

Use of ‘agree’

- ‘***I agree with the second point** of view as I think Imran needs to show some responsibility when speaking about his country*’

Use of ‘disagree’

- ‘*I must completely **disagree with the resolution** and the insane hero-worship of Imran by the impressionable PTI fan club*’

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In these two instances above, one may examine that the terms 'agree' and 'disagree' are explicit AM that while they show a high level of explication of attitude, they also reflect commitment towards the proposition. Hence, an author who conforms to or rejects a proposition, he/she can be identified with the function of committing towards the proposition.

Use of 'expectedly'

- *'What actually happened on the morning of February 26th is **expectedly much different** than how India is portraying it.'*

The use of the word 'expectedly' as an AM also shows the author's degree of commitment towards the proposition. The use of 'expectedly' is only possible when the writer already has a tendency to believe or reject the proposition. Using the word 'expectedly', the author rather defines his/her position towards the proposition as if it has had a prior background of probability so as to show his/her commitment as if it was bound to happen. Above all, he/she also takes his/her reader into believing in the proposition stated because the term suggests an already established probability of committing to the information. Similar function can be seen in the use of the word expected where the author not only shows his/her commitment towards the proposition but also creates a reader-friendly context to reveal the audience's similar commitment towards the proposition.

Use of the word 'expected'

- *'Increasing taxes on high-income **earners was pretty much expected** and required'*
- *'**As expected**, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) leadership is going out of its way to explain the "real" meaning of their leader's latest verbal gaffe'*

Use of the word 'correctly'

- *'As **Hamza Shehbaz correctly identified**, there is pressing need for legislation'*

In similar context, the word correctly, used as an AM, shows a high degree of commitment towards the proposition. While the word 'correctly' may show a high explication of commitment towards the proposition, the word 'sincerely' in the example below may be more implicit in its commitment. Nevertheless, the word sincerely itself reflects an attitude of fidelity and affinity towards the proposition as well as writer's attitude, hence, is regarded as an AM carrying a function of commitment.

Use of the word 'sincerely'

- *'Thus, at the very core, **I sincerely hope** that the government is willing to take actions'*

From the examples mentioned above, one may realize that the use of AM for the function of 'commitment' towards information reflects a low degree of subjectivity as the author tends to only show their belief or disbelieve in the proposition presented. In this regard, it is unlikely that the author would wish to emphasize on how they perceive the text as their main purpose is to only show commitment to proposition.

- **Newsworthiness: a speaker's estimation of newsworthiness of proposition:** this could be realized using AM such as *significant, crucial, pertinent, etc.*

Use of the word 'important'

- *'However, **the most important event** of the year took place on July 25th, as the PTI'*
- *'**It is important to view** this issue as a nuanced, rather than a black and white one.'*

The word 'important' can be regarded with a high explication of attitude towards newsworthiness. As the term denotes, 'important' is an Attitude Marker that reflects the writer's choice of giving credibility or higher position to a proposition as seen in the example above. By using the word 'important' to describe the event, the writer also constructs certainty in the proposition to further persuade the reader to believe in the credibility of the information.

Use of the word 'essentially'

- *'**Essentially, this allows** the government to 'tighten its belt' a bit'*
- *'The party may have been founded by the patronage of a dictator, **but it has essentially built the perception**'*

Using the word essentially in the examples above, the author provides the reader with a degree of certainty towards the proposition to further illustrate his/her attitude as reflecting newsworthiness. When the writer writes 'Essentially, this allows the government' he/she not only reflects their subjective remarks, but also constructs the proposition as worthy of being mentioned; a proposition –information- that is fundamental or crucial. Hence what 'allows the government to tighten its belt' is an essential factor, therefore, reflects *newsworthiness*.

Use of the word 'remarkable'

- *'**These are remarkable steps** taken in regard to healthcare reforms'*

In similar context, the word 'remarkable' reflects writer's attitude towards the proposition with a degree of newsworthiness. The word 'remarkable' gives a high degree of explication of newsworthiness as the writer clearly puts his/her subjective estimation of newsworthiness of proposition. One may realize that the use of AM for the function of Newsworthiness reflects a higher degree of subjectivity involved as compared to the function of 'commitment' to proposition. One possible reason could be due to the author's choice of responding to a certain proposition such as using the term 'remarkable'.

- **Evaluation: the affective evaluation of the speaker towards the proposition in negative or positive terms:** this could be realized using AM such as *unfortunately, amazingly, etc.*

The exploration of evaluation through AM is an interesting study in this corpus. In fact, most of the AM reflect writer's use of AM as evaluation of proposition. From the studied corpus, I may categorize writer's evaluation in two categories:

- **Ideational evaluation with low degree of sentiments involvement**

An AM may certainly not be one if it does not involve writer's subjective view on the proposition. In this case, the writer involves his/her attitude to evaluate the proposition but without involving strong sentiments that may trigger the reader to realize writer's full take on the

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proposition. The writer may wish to show his/her evaluation – which is the purpose of blog writing- yet without fully investing his/her sentiments. Examples can be seen below:

Use of the word 'interesting'

- *'It will be interesting to see what happens next.'*
- *'What is interesting is the amount of alarmism generated'*

Use of the word 'usual'

- *'The usual yet bizarre view that emerged in America'*

Use of the word 'personally'

- *'I personally think it was an exercise in sycophancy and glorification'*

Use of the word 'naively'

- *'Perhaps naively, I continue to hope that sanity prevails'*
- *Ideational evaluation with high degree of sentiments involvement*

Use of the word 'unbelievable'

- *'the fact remains that right now PTI's performance reeks of an almost unbelievable level of incompetence'*

Use of the word 'unfortunately'

- *'At the core of it all, unfortunately, nothing much changes'*

Use of the word 'unfortunate'

- *'It is unfortunate that in this case, the victim's lack of immediate identification of the convict was only reconciled'*

Use of the word 'dramatic'

- *'the response had to be bigger and more dramatic as well, primarily to appease the domestic audiences'*

Use of the word 'surprised'

- *'What surprised more was Chaudhry's response, as instead of being contrite'*

Use of the word 'shocking'

- *'Now it wouldn't be shocking if they jailed people for singing Atif Aslam's songs'*

Use of the word 'curious'

- *'Then there was the curious case of Prime Minister's Special Assistant Zulfi Bukhari.'*

Use of the word 'remarkably'

- *'How common people viewed these events is also remarkably different.'*

One may realize that the use of AM for the function of evaluation is more likely to reflect a high degree of subjectivity. One possible reason could be due to a high involvement of author's idiosyncratic assumption and perception of the text. An evaluation is generally highly subjective in nature as it reflects how one author wishes to comment on a certain text. Hence, while the general function of a blog is to convey an ideational metafunction, the involvement of sentiments through evaluative AM makes the text rather more attitudinal and subjective.

- The Pronoun 'I' and 'my' as Subjectivity-Intensifiers

According to Hyland (2005), the role of pronouns in metadiscourse is defined as Self Mention as they denote the presence of the author in the text. However, in this study, the role of 'I' and is identified to be more than Self Mention. Two contrasting notions, yet almost similar functions can be identified with the use of the pronoun 'I' as seen in the corpus. Example 1 and 2 show the metadiscursive practice of 'I' as Self Mention whereas example 3 and 4 show the use of 'I' as AM intensifiers:

- *'It was 10:00am **when I found out** that the talk had somehow slipped his mind'*
- *'**I am hopeful** that every commercial building owner will welcome wheelchair users'*
- *'**I personally think** it was an exercise in sycophancy and glorification '*

Collocating the pronoun 'I' with an AM e.g. 'hopeful' or 'personally' situates the pronoun 'I' as an AM intensifier because on one hand it proposes author's personal opinion as they put the proposition in subjective remarks through the words 'personally' or 'hopeful' while also stressing on the subjective proposition as being entirely 'voiced' by the author. Hence, the more an author adds self-mention to the subjective proposition constructed, the higher the intensification of the AM.

Similarly, the pronoun 'my' also performs dual functions. Its metadiscursive practice can be a Self Mention as well as an AM intensifier. Example 1 and 2 reflect the use of 'my' as Self Mention whereas example 3 and 4 reflect the metadiscursive employment of 'my' as AM intensifier:

- *'I was waiting at the traffic signal in my car and something **about her caught my attention.** '*
- *'**my experiences over** the years at the Allama Iqbal Airport alone have left me enraged and sad.'*
- *'**In my view**, the launching of this initiative is a step in the right direction'.*

4. CONCLUSION

In general, this research has explored the use of AM in Pakistani academicians' blogs written in English to find out the contextual variations and functions of AM to strengthen the epistemology of AM in Metadiscourse and the notion of Subjectivity.

As this research addresses the continuous use of AM that may hinder the validity of text, we may conclude that AM are not used extensively but variedly. As Figure 1 indicates, the frequency of AM is relatively low in a total number of 50,000 words. However, we may reconnoiter the degrees of subjectivity in AM with high intensity of subjectivity involved such as 'unfortunately' or 'curious' which provide a transparent view of author's attitude towards the proposition. Hence,

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as shown in the discussion above, the functions of AM reflect degrees of subjectivity involved in the text: 'commitment' with a lower degree of subjectivity, 'newsworthiness' with a higher degree of subjectivity, and 'evaluation' with the highest degree of subjectivity involved.

This research also concludes that the use of pronoun 'I' and 'my' is not strictly categorized under the heading of Self-Mention. Instead, the use of pronouns with AM rather broadens its scope as *subjectivity intensifier*. Hence, if Self-Mention pronouns are collocated with AM to denote 'commitment' to the proposition, the intensity of subjectivity in 'commitment' is augmented due to the double use of subjectivity intensifiers. Although Hyland (2005) provides a useful list of AM, however, the choice of employment of a certain AM for a specific function needed further investigation. This research therefore gives us an insight into the functions of AM and degrees of subjectivity.

Although the result of the study is confined to a relatively small data, it certainly has a potential to be expanded in order to strengthen the argument based on the proposition that AM not only reflect author's subjective stance towards the proposition but also define the functions of AM which Halliday (1994) categorizes as an 'interpersonal' metafunction of language. In a nutshell, the use of AM in academic discourse explains more about its role and function. One implication of this research concerns the role of cultural context in determining what AM to be used in variation. Moreover, since this research targets academic writing of blogs, the identification of functions of AM as well as degrees of subjectivity opens a new lens to further research the variations of Attitude Markers the discourse of blog writing and how they could be further compared with the choice of employment of AM in other academic discourses.

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