Interaction Markers in the Written Output of Learners of English: The Case of Gender

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Abstract

Employing stance and engagement markers can clearly indicate writers' intentions and opinions in the text. The present study was conducted to examine Iranian EFL learners' use of interaction markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship in their written tasks. This study involved 14 male and 16 female participants, who took a writing task after being evaluated for their language levels. The tasks were anonymously coded and scored by two raters, and a checklist was developed for keeping a record of the frequency of stance and engagement markers. The differences between the two sets were investigated by t-test and Mann Whitney U test. The mean age of participants (ranging from 19 to 30 years) was 20.60±1.01. The male and female participants were highly similar in their language levels; however, they had used stance and engagement markers differently, i.e. the frequency of engagement markers (221 cases) exceeded that of the stance markers (99 cases). T-test revealed no significant difference in their using stance markers; however, there was a slight difference in their use of engagement markers. A conclusion is made: the participants did use stance and engagement markers differently. They used the reader-oriented markers more than the writer-oriented markers. No significant difference in the performance of male and female participants was observed in using stance markers but there was a slight difference for engagement markers.

Key words: Interaction Markers; Stance; Engagement; Writing Instruction; Gender.

Introduction

Basically, writers and speakers project their personal feelings and judgments in what they produce through interaction markers. They can adopt imperative, emotional, sympathetic, cordial or distanced roles in relation with the readers; the writer may intend to teach or instruct something to the reader; they can highlight their role in the text or keep it encrypted by the use of, say, passive roles. The relationship between writer and reader can manifest in different ways in writing. Keeping distanced with the readers or getting close to them, speaking out the words or keeping them in passivization and many other relations can be seen in the written tasks, which all appear in the form of words and expressions, constructions and metadiscourse. In sum, the writer's intention of how to present themselves can appear terms of words and expression, as well as constructions and metadiscourse.

Over the last decade, much research has been conducted on the writer's identity, mostly based on research articles (e.g. Hyland, and many other similar studies) and daringly very little in classroom or educational tasks. Also, many research studies have been conducted in L1 and L2 contexts; however, the present study is almost unique in that it is done in an EFL context; also, a distinguishing factor is its use of classroom tasks rather than research articles, as data sample. Based on the interpersonal interactive factors and their use by male and female Iranian EFL writers, the present study indicates how they manifest their presence and how their identities are constructed in written tasks. Based on Hyland's (2005b) model for the interaction between writers and readers, two major elements of stance and engagement were investigated: Stance (hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mention) and engagement markers (reader pronouns, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions).

Gender and Writing

The issue of gender cannot be ignored in mastering language skills but the number of studies on *gender and writing* seem to be fewer than those on *gender and speaking*.

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However, investigations of differences between males' and females' writing have been done in different settings. Some research focused on L1, and some on L2. The age of the participants of earlier studies varied from children to adults. The types of writing that were investigated were occasionally different from one study to another. Therefore, below a short review of research on gender differences in writing English as either first or second language will be presented.

Studies on gender differences in ESL writing are extremely rare, but even with informal writing tasks such as SMS texts, researchers have found significant differences between males' and females' lexical and morpho-syntactical choices, where females have been more skillful in writing complex, long and lexically dense messages than males (Rafi, 2007). In her summary of language and gender in second and foreign language education, Sunderland (2000) only cited one research project on gender in ESL writing, conducted by Morris (1998), where gender differences were investigated at a junior college in Quebec, Canada; it was revealed that female ESL writers tended to outperformed the men because their essays showed a much higher level of adherence to guidelines than the men's, and that the evaluation grid richly rewarded this adherence; however, women's and men's texts were found to be of comparable quality as regards accuracy and readability (Morris, 1998). A major shortcoming of Morris' (1998) study is that she did not strengthen her study by considering the common characteristics of academic writing, which include syntactic complexity, presenting thesis statement, and or-

ganizing arguments. The shortcomings of her study was considered in a study by Waskita (2008), who found differences between male and female writing in syntactic complexity, means of integrating cited information, the way of presenting the thesis statement and organizing arguments. However, no idea is presented why males did less well than the females (Waskita, 2008). However, the generic features of task were found to have no significant effect on the performance of L2 the learners in terms of accuracy, fluency, and complexity (Kuhi, Salimi & Shafaei, 2012).

In the **EFL** context of Iran, Yazdani and Ghafar Samar (2010) found convincing evidence that different strategies were employed by males and females in encoding the relation between writer and reader at sentence, paragraph and text levels; however, the difference in the use of specifiers by either gender was not significant; also, pronouns in nonnative females gained higher frequency of usage.

The Theoretical Framework

The present study is theoretically supported by, and is in line with Hyland's (2005b) model of interaction, where he proposed a working model for the interaction between writers and readers (Figure 1). He maintains that the purpose of writing is not only producing some texts or explaining an external reality, but also constructing and negotiating social relations with the readers. The interaction in academic writing mainly involves two major elements of stance and engagement (See Figure 1 below)
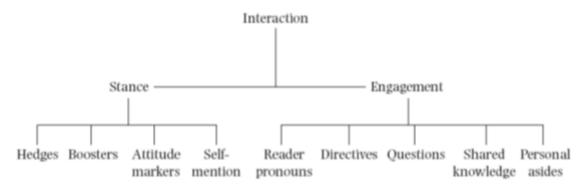

Figure 1. Key resources of academic interaction

Stance Markers

The first component of Hyland's (2005b) model of interaction (i.e. stance) can be considered as a backbone to the representation of the writer's stance in the written texts. Over the past years, researchers have referred to the issue of stance using different names such as 'evaluation' (Hunston, 2004; Hunston & Thompson, 2000), 'intensity' (Labov, 1984), 'evidentiality' (Chafe & Nichols, 1986), 'hedging' (Hyland, 1996), and 'stance' (Barton, 1993;

Beach & Anson, 1992; Biber & Finegan 1988; Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Although researchers have used different names, they all have actually followed the same goal. They aimed to investigate the ways in which writers and speakers project their personal feelings and judgments in what they produce. As can be seen above (Figure 1), writers attempt to project their position in the texts through the following elements:

Hedges

Hyland (2005b) defines hedges as devices like ***possible,***

might and *perhaps*, that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact. In research articles, he states, all statements are evaluated and interpreted through a prism of disciplinary assumptions; accordingly, writers must calculate what weight to give to an assertion, attesting to the degree of precision or reliability that they want it to carry and perhaps claiming protection in the event of its eventual overthrow (Hyland, 1998).

Boosters

Restated in Hyland (2005b), boosters are words like *clearly, obviously* and *demonstrate*, which allow writers to express their certainty in what they say and to mark involvement with the topic and solidarity with their audience. They function to stress shared information, group membership, and engagement with readers (Hyland, 1999). Boosters can therefore help writers to present their work with assurance while effecting interpersonal solidarity, setting the caution and self-effacement suggested by hedges against assertion and involvement.

Attitude Markers

According to Hyland (2005b), attitude markers indicate the writer's affective, rather than epistemic, attitude to propositions, conveying surprise, agreement, importance, frustration, and so on, rather than commitment. While attitude is expressed throughout a text by the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location, and so on, it is most explicitly signaled by attitude verbs (*e.g. agree, prefer*), sentence adverbs (*unfortunately, hopefully*), and adjectives (*appropriate, logical, remarkable*). By signaling an assumption of shared attitudes, values and reactions to material, writers both express a position and pull readers into a conspiracy of agreement so that it can often be difficult to dispute these judgments.

Self-mention

Self-mention refers to the use of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives to present propositional, affective and interpersonal information (Hyland, 2001). Presenting a discoursal self is central to the writing process (Ivanic, 1998), and writers cannot avoid projecting an impression of themselves and how they stand in relation to their arguments, their discipline, and their readers. The presence or absence of explicit author reference is generally a conscious choice by writers to adopt a particular stance and disciplinary-situated authorial identity.

Engagement Markers

In addition to expressing their positions in what they write, writers are also required to bring the potential readers into their text. As Hyland (2005b) explains, writers can involve the readers in their writing by making use of one or more of these five elements:

Reader Pronouns

Reader pronouns are perhaps the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse. *You* and *your* are actually the clearest way a writer can acknowledge the reader's presence, but these forms are rare outside of philosophy, probably because they imply a lack of involvement between participants. Instead, there is enormous emphasis on binding writer and reader together through inclusive *we*, which is the most frequent engagement device in academic writing. It sends a clear signal of membership by textually constructing both the writer and the reader as participants with similar understanding and goals. Also, *you* carries a more encompassing meaning than rhetorically focusing on an individual reader, seeking instead to engage with readers by recruiting them into a world of shared experiences (Hyland, 2005b).

First Person Pronoun and Authorial Identity

Tang and John (1999) developed a continuum of the pronoun 'I', first introducing the various roles identified for the first person pronouns within academic essays, and next ordering these roles along a continuum in terms of the degree of authorial power. A powerful authorial presence can mean that the writer displays a high level of authority within the text, where 'authority' has elements of both its common meanings of 'a right to control or command others' and 'knowledge or expertise in a particular field' (Tang & John, 1999).

Inclusive First Person Pronoun

While students may avoid the expression *you*, they have no such misgivings about *we, us, our*, and *ours* (Hyland, 2005b). These are far more common and contribute to the fact that reader pronouns represent almost a quarter of all engagement devices in the student corpus. In addition to claiming solidarity, these devices also set up a dialogue by weaving the potential point of view of readers into the discourse, thereby anticipating their objections, voicing their concerns, and expressing their views. Thus, *we* helps guide readers through an argument and towards a preferred interpretation, often shading into explicit positioning of the reader

Personal Asides

According to Hyland (2005b), *personal asides* allow writers to address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said. While asides express something of the writer's personality and willingness to explicitly intervene to offer a view, they can also be seen as a key reader-oriented strategy. By turning to the reader in mid-flow, the writer acknowledges and responds to an active audience, often to initiate a brief dialogue that is largely interpersonal. As we can see, such comments often add more to the writer–reader relationship than to the propositional development of the discourse.

Appeals to Shared Knowledge

Hyland (2005b) refers to a*ppeals to shared knowledge by which writers* seek to position readers within apparently naturalized boundaries of disciplinary understandings. The notion of 'sharedness' is often invoked by writers to smuggle contested ideas into their argument, but here I am simply referring to the presence of explicit markers where readers are asked to recognize something as familiar or accepted. Obviously readers can only be brought to agree with the writer by building on some kind of implicit contract concerning what can be accepted, but often these constructions of solidarity involve explicit calls asking readers to identify with particular views. In doing so, writers are actually constructing readers by presupposing that they hold such beliefs, assigning to them a role in creating the argument, acknowledging their contribution while moving the focus of the discourse away from the writer to shape the role of the reader.

Directives

Based on Hyland's (2005b) definitions, *directives* instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer. They are signaled mainly by the presence of an imperative (like *consider, note*, and *imagine*); by a modal of obligation addressed to the reader (such as *must, should*, and *ought*); and by a predicative adjective expressing the writer's judgment of necessity/importance (*It is important to understand* ...).

Questions

Questions, in the Hyland's (2005b) framework, are the strategy of dialogic involvement *par excellence*, inviting engagement and bringing the interlocutor into an arena where they can be led to the writer's viewpoint. They arouse interest and encourage the reader to explore an unresolved issue with the writer as an equal, a conversational partner, sharing his or her curiosity and following where the argument leads. Over 80 percent of questions in the corpus, however, were rhetorical, presenting an opinion as an interrogative so the reader appears to be the judge, but actually expecting no response. This kind of rhetorical positioning of readers is perhaps most obvious when the writer poses a question only to reply immediately, simultaneously initiating and closing the dialogue.

The Present Study

The present study was conducted to examine Iranian EFL learners' use of interaction markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship in their written tasks. Two distinguishing features can be considered worthy of attention in the present study. *First*, the participants were *students* of English; however, almost all earlier studies were conducted on the written products of *scholarly authors* (e.g. Hyland 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2004, 2005a, 2005b, 2008; Taki & Jafarpour, 2012; Waskita, 2008), mainly researchers and academicians writing in English. *Second*, the data were collected through a writing task assigned as part of a course in writing, and the written tasks were essays written by a group of *learners*; however, almost all earlier studies focused on scientific articles published in scholarly journals which are certainly different from tasks in the present study as well as being peer-reviewed.

The difference between written tasks and articles can be summarized as follows. *First of all*, articles are long enough (often exceeding 3000 words) to provide ample time and opportunity for the author to maneuver in using markers of interaction freely. However, learners' tasks are far shorter (250 to 350 words; mean word count being 267 words in the present study); accordingly, the novice writer as a learner cannot find a chance to show her/his expertise in language style. In other words, the learner must try to complete a task in a deadline with maximum speed to meet the instructional demands of the teacher. The *second* difference can be related to the nature of the two types of written outputs. The article is intended to be read by a colleague of almost equal status (Hyland, 2001); the audience is then someone who can be considered as an active dialogue partner in the written discussion. However, learners may not be able to consider teachers as a live partner of a short essay, where there might be not enough space to turn it into a dialogic text. This may account for the differences of the results of the present study with those conducted earlier on journal articles.

Methods and Materials

This study, focusing Iranian EFL learners' use of interaction markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship in their written tasks, involved a group of male and female EFL learners in a major university in Iran. The partici-

pants were evaluated for their language levels by taking the Quick Oxford Placement Test (2001); also, they were given a 30-minute writing task so that they were evaluated for their writing levels too. Totally, there were 14 male and 16 female participants, who were selected by simple and convenient sampling from the population of learners.

They were given another writing task and the written tasks were anonymously coded and scored by two raters. Also, a checklist was developed (as in Table 1) for keeping a record of the frequency of the stance and engagement markers based on the Hyland's (2005b) framework (Figure 1). The resulting frequencies (i.e. the number of hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions as stance markers; as well as reader pronouns, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions as engagement markers) were compared to answer the first research question (*i.e. How do Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship?*).

In order to answer the second research question (*i.e. Do male and female Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers differently?*), the frequencies were compared by gender (*i.e. male and female*). This phase was intended to see if male and female participants used stance and engagement markers differently or similarly.

Data Collection Instruments

Multiple data collection methods were used to provide comprehensive and useful information, and to increase the validity of the findings. The relevant data were collected via the following:

(1) **Background Questionnaire:** A simple researcher-made questionnaire was given to the participants mainly to obtain information about their age, gender and previous experience in English learning;

(2) **Placement:** Quick Oxford Placement Test (2001) was used to assign the participants into similar language ability levels according to the OPT manual. The test is an objectively-scored 60-item multiple-choice test;

(3) **Test of Written English:** A writing topic was obtained from the TOEFL website, and given to the participants at the beginning of the course to obtain a record of their writing ability. The written tasks were anonymously coded and photocopied, and were holistically scored by two raters using Wang and Liao's (2008) rating scale (also modified by Choorchaei et al. 2010). This task was used in assigning the participants into corresponding levels;

(4) **The Main Writing Task:** Another writing task was given to the participants as the major task (*Appendix 1*) to be completed at home so that they have enough time to produce a task at their best. Then, the frequency of interaction markers were counted and analyzed with reference to the model of interaction (Hyland, 2005b).

Raters

There were three raters, for each task, with experience of teaching ranging from 15 to 25 years. In a two-hour training session, the raters came to a common understanding of how to rate the tasks by Wang and Liao's (2008) rating scale in order to achieve consistency in scoring.

Data Analysis Procedure

RQ One: *How do Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship?*

After considerations for their levels and groups, the participants' written tasks were counted for their frequency on the basis of the researcher-made checklist of stance and engagement markers (Hyland, 2005b). Two sets of frequency counts were obtained for each component (i.e. stance and engagement markers); here, the total number of participants regardless of their gender was considered and the frequency counts were added up to obtain a frequency count for stance markers, and another for the engagement markers.

RQ Two: *Do male and female Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers differently?*

Also, the total occurrences of the two types of markers render two sets of frequency counts on the basis of gender (groups of male and female participants). In order to see if males or females separately use (stance and engagement) markers differently, t-test analysis was used; the result indicated whether males or females used one type of markers more frequently than the other. The differences between the two sets were investigated by t-test and Mann Whitney U test. Differences in gender performances were shown for examining the effect of gender on their performance.

Results

There were 16 female and 14 male participants in the study. The mean age of female participants were 20.1875±0.75 years, and that of male participants was 21.0714±2.81382. In sum, the mean age of participants (ranging from 19 to 30 years) was 20.60±1.01032. The participants were homogeneous as for their language ability levels as decided by the Quick OPT (2001). In other words, there was almost no significant difference between girls and boys' OPT scores (p=0.975). In other words, the two groups were highly similar in their language levels.

Research Question One

In order to answer the first research question (*i.e. How do Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship?*), the following table was developed on the basis of the statistical analysis of the relevant data.

Interaction								
Stance markers				Engagement markers				
Hedges	Boosters	Attitude markers	Self-mentions	Reader pronouns	Directives	Questions	Shared knowledge	Personal asides
38	21	11	29	147	37	28	6	3
99				221				

Table 1. Frequency of markers of interaction in the written samples of the participants

As can bee seen in Table 1, the participants have used stance and engagement markers differently. In other words, the frequency of engagement markers (221 cases) exceeded that of the stance markers (99 cases).

Research Question Two

In order to answer the second research question (*i.e. Do male and female Iranian EFL learners use stance and engagement markers differently?*), two different tables were drawn first: Table 2 for summarizing the frequency of stance markers used by male and female participants, and Table 3 for engagement markers.

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	SD	Standard Err. Mean

Table 2. Frequency of Stance markers in the written samples of the participants

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Stance	Equal variances assumed	.295	.591	-.615	28	.543	-.81250	1.32029	-3.51699	1.89199
	Equal variances not assumed			-.601	22.962	.554	-.81250	1.35150	-3.60854	1.98354

Stance					
	Female	16	3.1875	2.97139	0.74285
	Male	14	4.000	4.22497	1.12904

Table 3. T-test (Independent Samples Test) for performance and gender

The presented data indicate an apparent difference in the participants' use of stance markers; however, to see the difference from a statistical perspective, a t-test was run (See Table 3 below).

T-test revealed that there was no difference in the performance of male and female participants in using stance markers (including hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions). The great value of p=0.543 further indicated that both males and females used these markers quite similarly.

To see the details of variances of stance markers (including hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions), see Table 4 below, which provides the ranks obtained through Mann Whitney U test.

	Gender of participants	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Hedges	female	16	16.62	266.00
	male	14	14.21	199.00
	Total	30		
Boosters	female	16	15.22	243.50
	male	14	15.82	221.50
	Total	30		
Attitude markers	female	16	15.53	248.50
	male	14	15.46	216.50
	Total	30		
Self-mentions	female	16	14.59	233.50
	male	14	16.54	231.50
	Total	30		

Table 4. *Mann Whitney U test analysis of stance markers*

To present a profile of the engagement markers, the same procedure was conducted to investigate how they were used by the participants of the study (See Table 5 below).

Variable	Gender	N	Mean Rank	Sum of ranks
Engagement	Female	16	15.09	241.50
	Male	14	15.96	223.50

Table 5. *Frequency of Engagement markers in the written samples of the participants*

As it can be seen in Table 5, there is a small difference in the performance of male and female participants in using engagement markers (including, reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides). However, Mann Whitney U test indicated that the difference was not significant (p=0.790). To see the details of variances of engagement markers (including, reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides), see Table 6 below, which provides the ranks obtained through Mann Whitney U test.

	Gender of participants	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Reader pronouns	female	16	15.38	246.00
	male	14	15.64	219.00
	Total	30		
Questions	female	16	14.41	230.50
	male	14	16.75	234.50
	Total	30		
Shared knowledge	female	16	16.25	260.00
	male	14	14.64	205.00
	Total	30		
Personal asides	female	16	15.47	247.50
	male	14	15.54	217.50
	Total	30		
Engagement	female	16	15.09	241.50
	male	14	15.96	223.50
	Total	30		

Table 6. Mann Whitney U test analysis of engagement markers

Discussion

The main goal of this study was to explore (1) how Iranian EFL learners used stance and engagement markers in balancing the reader-writer relationship, and (2) whether male and female Iranian EFL learners used stance and engagement markers differently or not. The results indicated that the male and female participants had used stance and engagement markers differently, but there was no significant difference in using stance markers; however, there was a slight difference in their using engagement markers. Also, they used the reader-oriented markers more than the writer-oriented markers. Below, the results will be discussed with reference to some earlier studies.

Stance and Engagement Markers

The results showed that the participants did use stance and engagement markers, but their usage was observed to be different. In other words, the frequency of engagement markers (221 cases) exceeded that of the stance markers (99 cases). For further information, stance markers high-

light the position of the writer in the text, and engagement markers are used to bring in the reader to follow the course of written material (Hyland, 2005b). Therefore, it apparently seems that the participants have used the reader-oriented markers more than the writer-oriented markers, though the difference might be not significant. This finding can be considered from a cultural viewpoint too. In other words, earlier studies (such as Kaplan's 1966 notion of 'cultural thought patterns') used to assign a writer-oriented pattern of discourse for oriental people. However, the present study is not in line with Kaplan's conception; the result might have been affected by the English culture and courses the participants had taken, or the result might need further investigation too.

As stated before, the stance markers (including hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions) are related to constructing an image of the writer in the text. Less usage of stance markers can be attributed to a number of facts. First, the Persian context as an oriental culture seems to have kept the oriental nature of keeping the audience at a distance; accordingly, the Persian learners might have been affected by their L1 culture to have used stance markers in their written products. Second, they might have been suffering from instruction disadvantages. Finally, this might

have happened just unconsciously for unconceivable grounds.

Also, the use of engagement markers (including reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides) in the written tasks, which was more than twice as the stance markers, is a sign of bringing the reader to join the stream of the written task (Hyland, 2001). The use of reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides is associated with the effort of the writer to give the task a feel of dialogic nature. For instance, Hyland (2005a) considers second person you (and your) as the most obvious way of referring to readers. The participants in the present study were also familiar with the use of such markers.

Interaction Markers and Gender Effect

The statistical analyses revealed no significant difference in the performance of male and female participants in using stance markers (including hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions). Also, it was observed that both male and female writers used stance markers quite similarly; in other words, their written samples were more similar than different. As for engagement markers (including reader pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides), Table 5 shows a small difference in the performance of male and female participants; however, the difference was not significant (Table 6). Earlier studies have reported different performances by male and female writers (e.g. Tannen, 1996). For instance, Yazdani and Ghafar Samar (2010) found that pronouns are of higher frequency of usage in non-native female writing but not in the written samples of male EFL learners; however, they did not find any differences between male and female writers' use of pronouns and specifiers.

The similarity of performance by both male and female participants can be related to two major reasons. First of all, the two groups were homogeneous as for their language levels (as determined by Quick OPT, 2001). Second, the participants belonged to the same class who had spent previous writing courses (Grammar I, Grammar II, and Paragraph Writing) together. In other words, their earlier similar experiences might have affected their progress in writing. Although there might be found excuses and apparent reasons for differences or similarities, the gender-related research consists of unique complexities. For instance, in a research on gender-related patterns in ESL classroom discourse, Tannen (1996) rightly contends that gender-related patterns merge with all other dynamics of language behavior including ethnic, class, regional, and age differences, which all affect speaking styles, along with such influences as sexual orientation, professional training, and individual personality (p. 341). Despite such a complexity, she recommends further investigation of gender-related

patterns of classroom discourse to enrich the understanding of the dynamics of a TESOL classroom (p. 343). However, to make up for this effect, it might be reasonable to choose a population of wider variance in future studies.

Conclusions

The present study can be considered as an elementary step in turning the attention of teachers, students and writing materials developers toward the dialogic nature of writing (Thompson, 2001; Shomoossi, Ketabi, & Eslamirasekh, 2012). In fact, most writing courses start with the writing mechanism and grammar, and mostly fail to continue to lead the novice writer to advanced stages, including interactive writing (Shomoossi, 2010). The importance of establishing social relationships in academic arguments can also be considered, since social and institutional differences underlie production and reception of academic communication (Kuhi & Behnam, 2011). Accordingly, some implications can be conceived for the results.

First, present books prepared for writing instruction focus mainly on grammatical aspects, sentence writing, cohesion and coherence, punctuation, and writing mechanism, often leaving the major part (i.e. interaction and the role of the writer and reader in developing a logical progression of the text) to the end where the learner is either exhausted or concerned with issues other than writing.

Second, this overemphasis on writing basics, which cannot be considered unimportant, can influence the assessment too. Scoring checklists (either holistic or analytical) are mainly based on basics of writing, and learners target their writings to meet the standards of such checklists. In short, the present study highlights a big gap in writing instruction and assessment. In other words, books and assessment instruments need to take interaction (stance and engagement) markers into consideration.

Finally and more specifically, the results must be of some interest for the community of EFL teachers of English who wish to revise their writing instruction methods. For instance, in the Iranian context of English writing instruction, teachers can start emphasizing interactional models of writing instruction as soon as learners have mastered their elementary writing courses such grammar courses. This can be strengthened in ***Advanced Writing, Essay Writing, and Letter Writing***. Writing instructors can analyze sample texts in class for raising the learners' consciousness. Writers should take the responsibility of how they portray readers, or how they engage the readers in their work.

The study could have been optimized if an experimental design could be adopted; the effect of training an experimental group compared with a control group can make a more robust research, which was not possible for the present study. The possibility of a larger sample size and a well-designed qualitative study may help strengthen

the generalizeabiltiy of the results since qualitative studies have been shown to appropriately complement the findings from a quantitative study.

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Space Programs and Basic Needs

Some people think governments should spend as much money as possible exploring outer space (e.g. traveling to the moon and other planets). Other people disagree, and think governments should spend this money for our basic needs on Earth. Which of these two opinions do agree with and why? Use specific reasons and details to support your position.

Appendix One

TWE topic assigned to obtain a record of the participants' performance on interaction markers

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