



**International**  
**SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
**STUDIES JOURNAL**



SSSjournal (ISSN:2587-1587)

*Economics and Administration, Tourism and Tourism Management, History, Culture, Religion, Psychology, Sociology, Fine Arts, Engineering, Architecture, Language, Literature, Educational Sciences, Pedagogy & Other Disciplines in Social Sciences*

**Vol:5, Issue:43**  
sssjournal.com

**pp.4886-4893**  
**ISSN:2587-1587**

**2019**  
sssjournal.info@gmail.com

Article Arrival Date (Makale Geliş Tarihi) 08/08/2019 | The Published Rel. Date (Makale Yayın Kabul Tarihi) 15/09/2019  
Published Date (Makale Yayın Tarihi) 15.09.2019

## **METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN NIGERIAN NEWSPAPERS EDITORIALS: A BOND BETWEEN TEXT-PRODUCERS AND READING COMMUNITY**

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**Article Type** : Research Article/ Araştırma Makalesi

**Doi Number** : <http://dx.doi.org/10.26449/sss.1757>

**Reference** : Bedu, M.A. (2019). "Metadiscourse Markers In Nigerian Newspapers Editorials: A Bond Between Text-Producers And Reading Community", International Social Sciences Studies Journal, 5(43): 4886-4893.

### **ABSTRACT**

This paper attempts to investigate the philosophy of using metadiscourse markers in four different editorial texts of two Nigerian newspapers, and reports both their qualitative and quantitative distributions and extent of contribution to rendering the writers' communicative intentions to the readers. Recent research findings indicate that Metadiscourse is central to pragmatic construal which provides writers with appropriate means constructing adequate co-texts and assumptions to influence readers' understandings of both the text and their attitude in the text content. Accordingly, this paper assumes that metadiscourse markers linguistically encode clue on how text-producers try to instruct and direct their audience (readers) so that both the discourse and the writer's stance be clearly understood by the reading community.

**Keywords:** Newspaper discourse, Metadiscourse markers, Textual metafunction, Interpersonal metafunction

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

For several decades, it is undeniable fact that written communication involves cooperative activity between authors, text and readers in which meanings are constructed and shared among language users (Bara, 2010). It is also established that language users in written discourse utilize self-reflexive linguistic resources to comment, guide and persuade their readers to take cause of action(s) as end result of the information being presented in the communicative discourse (Hockett, 1977:173). This self-reflexive linguistic mechanism makes especially addressers to refer themselves not only as experiencers in the world, but also as communicators, while referring to both the topic of discussion and the situation of communicating in the discourse (Adel, 2008). The self-reflective linguistic features, which are called 'metadiscourse markers' function to reflect not only the representation of writers' perception through language but their authorial commentary and road map for the readers to follow discussion in the written text and at the same time, help them to encode and decode the message that contained the reflected author's views and guidance for the audience (Kaplan, 1966; Crismore, 1983; Dafouz-milne, 2008).

As Metadiscourse markers are elements that introduce the author's linguistic and rhetorical manifestation in the information being presented in the text (Hyland, 2005), they have proven to be useful for text analysis as they explain how language users (writers) try to instruct and direct their audience (readers) through a discourse so that both the discourse and the writer's stance is understood (Dafouz, 2003).

There are many examinations of metadiscourse markers from wide range of perspectives since its studies took off some decades ago (Vande Kopple, 1985; Beauvais, 1989; Crismore et al., 1993; Hyland 2004). However, very little has explicitly been focused on metadiscourse markers in newspapers' editorial discourse (Dafouz, 2008). This paper therefore attempts to investigate the philosophy of using metadiscourse markers in four selected editorial texts of the two English-speaking newspapers in Nigeria,

and reports their qualitative and quantitative distributions and the extent of their contributions in rendering the writers' communicative intentions to the readers.

## 2. DATA

Nigerian press is one of the most vibrant presses on the African continent which suggests Nigerians are voracious readers of approximately 300 daily and weekly national and local newspapers and magazines published in English and other Nigerian languages (Momoh, 1986; Research and market report, 1996). Recent statistic also shows that there is an array of boisterous English-speaking National dailies, 57 in 2003, both daily newspapers and magazines (Ojo, 2003).

As observed in Adebani (2013) that Nigerian media landscape especially the print media, beclouds with politics of northern and southern press dichotomy, the study therefore randomly draws on a corpus of 8 news editorials; four each from two highly circulated national dailies: *Leadership* and *The Nation* newspapers from northern and southern parts of Nigeria respectively for analysis in this study.

## 3. MODEL OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS

Metadiscourse markers can be of many types and forms; therefore, there are numbers of taxonomical classifications of metadiscourse markers that have been proposed (Crismore et al., 1993; Vande Kopple, 2002; Hyland 2004). Most of these taxonomies have made use of two of the three metafunctions of language of Halliday (1994): interpersonal and textual levels of language neglecting ideational metafunction.

From Hyland's (2004) notion, metadiscourse markers encode both interactive and interactional resources as they do not add propositional content, but rather signal the presence of the author in the text. This paper therefore assumes that metadiscourse markers are central to pragmatic construct that provide writers with a mean to constructing appropriate contexts and alluding to share their assumptions about world to influence readers' understandings of both the text and their attitude in the text content. And at the same time, they are primarily concerned with the linguistic features of reflexivity as indicated in the introductory part of the paper.

To gain a clear distribution of metadiscourse markers in the selected corpora, the research adopts the two major classes: textual metadiscourse markers and interpersonal metadiscourse markers as they explicitly help to organize the discourse, engage the audience and signal the writer's attitude in the selected texts so as explain their frequencies from qualitative and quantitative approach in facilitating interactions between the text-author(s), the text content and the readers of the Nigerian newspaper editorials.

### 3.1 Textual Metadiscourse Markers

Textual metadiscourse markers refer to devices that allow the recovery of writer's intention and preferred ways to guide textual organization of the discourse for easy interpretation of propositional meanings in the texts. Under the systemic functional linguistic perspectives, these linguistic features are basically treated for their textual functions (Halliday and Hasan, 1976). In the present assumption, metadiscourse markers further demonstrate that their functions beyond textual metafunction in ensuring a coherent text by relating individual propositions to each other and to other texts (i.e., organization of discourse) to interpersonal functions by involving references in which a writer utilizes to "guide, direct and inform his imagined readers about the content of the text" (Crismore 1989:64).

Metadiscourse markers in this category perform six broad functions as identified in the data:

#### 3.1.1 Logical connectives

These refer to metadiscourse markers that are principally conjunctions utilized by the newspaper editorial writers to bind two structures together in a systematic way to help readers interpret pragmatic connections between 'succession of events' within the sentence or inter-sententially by providing connectivity between the various segments in the text in some cases for "elaboration" purpose (Fairclough 2003:89). These conjunction cohesive devices have been classified into following:

**Additives:** They serve as elaborative devices to guide the readers what follows in the text is additional information as you can see in the following examples:

- The Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) recently raised an alarm over the influx of used tyres into the country and called on the Federal Road Safety Corps (FRSC) to step up its operations to check the

trend. SON was vehement that the predisposition of motorists to buy and use these tyres was dangerous..... (Leadership text ii line 2)

- In addition to this, there ought to be concerted efforts by all agencies concerned, including SON and the Nigeria Customs Service, to see to it that the importation of already used tyres into the country is checked. (Leadership text ii line 2)
- Mercifully, no lives were lost but many people were injured. Similarly, many houses, cars, shops and other property were burnt. (The Nation text 1)
- An oil price gone bust with nigh prospects of imminent recovery; an environment of rising expectations of infrastructure renewal, particularly of power and transportation, job creation, poverty reduction and security of lives and property. Add these to a virtually collapsed power sector; a downstream petroleum industry sector in crisis; suffocating industrial environment defined by infrastructure deficit, high interest rates and other inclement policies of government; unprecedented youth unemployment reckoned in staggering 50 percent; the horizon would seem entirely, bleak. (The Nation text 4)
- In the same vein, the government must find the will to address the issue of access and costs of funds. (The Nation 4).

**Adversatives:** They are linguistic features utilized by the news editorial writers to signal contrastive opinion/point of views so as to make the readers understand that the issue(s) to be followed in the text has contrary proposition to the preceding one. Consider:

- The argument for the insistence on this obnoxious act of insubordination is that it promotes transparency and eliminates favouritism and nepotism. But this argument fell flat on its face with the tragedy the Nigerian Immigration Service (NIS) recruitment exercise of 2013 turned out to be. (Leadership text 1)
- It is therefore high time the Federal Government began to consider modernisation of our rail system to enable us move fuel by rail. When this is done, we would have succeeded in substantially reducing the number of tankers on our roads, thereby reducing the risks they constitute to other motorists. This, however, is the long term solution. In the interim, we must do everything to ensure the safety of road users generally since we appear stuck with the trailers, at least for now. (The Nation text 1)

**Causal:** These linguistic features are utilized by the authors of editorial text to instruct their imagined readers that the successive events preceded by the causal markers such as *because*, *consequently*, and *thus* are expressing cause, reason, consequence and purpose in text. For example:

- Deliberately, the Federal Civil Service Commission and other government manpower recruitment and training institutions like the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON) and Centre for Management Development (CMD) are sidelined just because a few individuals in influential positions are bent on maximising their graft propensities. (Leadership 1)
- The young ones are the most vulnerable as they are exposed to the fury of the Plasmodium parasite responsible for transmitting the deadly ailment that claims the lives of about 600,000 young ones in Africa every year because they are yet to come up with the immunity required. The high mortality rate made malaria the leading killer disease in the continent and thus a major challenge to all – governments, employers, workers, civil society groups, medical authorities, scientists, families, traditional authorities and the general public.

**Sequencers:** These mark chronological tie between various successive events. The editorial text authors utilize the metadiscourse markers, in particular, to position different arguments in series to guide readers on how they present these different arguments based on their priorities. These markers are expressed by words such as *first*, *secondly*, *then*, *the next*, *afterward* and *after that*, among many others. To exemplify this consider the following excerpt:

- This incident re-emphasises the dangers on roads across the country and as such should serve as a wake-up call to the Federal Road Safety Commission (FRSC). We need the FRSC to take note of the following urgent steps to check road accidents in the country that are caused by traffic rules violation. First, the commission needs to do more in enlightening road users. It is true that the FRSC is doing a lot to reduce road crashes across the country, but there are gaps to be filled. Secondly, the agency can

introduce motorized patrols so that it improves visibility on major roads and highways. **After that**, stiffer penalty should be introduced for traffic offenders and the law should be implemented in totality.

### 3.1.2 Endophoric marker

These types of markers are expressions which refer to the other part of the text. Consider:

- In 2013 the current Emir of Kano Alhaji Sanusi Sanusi as then Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) wrote to the President Goodluck Jonathan over the failure of the NNPC to report its transactions in line with the law. The avalanche of events **from that development** eventually led to his removal from office.

### 3.1.3 Topicalizers

They explicitly indicate some type of topic shift to the reader so that the argumentation can be easily followed. Writers achieve such metadiscourse functions through words that can instruct the readers to focus attention on a particular phrase as the main topic of the paragraph or whole section e.g., as for, with regard to, in this, in connection to, etc. consider the following example:

- **In that circular**, the commission reminded them of its provisions which stated that no agency of government should request applicants for any job in the public service to pay application fees or buy scratch cards for whatever purpose. (Leadership 1).
- **In this short term**, we expect the new administration to move swiftly to get the nation back to work. Part of the tragedy of a nation that claims to generate an abysmal 6,000Mw of electricity is that barely 1,000Mw is actually available for distribution. (The Nation 4).

### 3.1.4 Code gloss

These refers to the writer's act of supplying additional information to ensure the reader is able to recover the writer's intended meaning, either by explaining, comparing or expanding what he said. Code glosses are mechanism employed by the writer to help readers grasp the appropriate meanings that reflect the writer's predictions about the reader's knowledge-base or ability to understand text content are introduced by phrases like 'for instance/example'

- Oxfam, an international relief agency, said this much when it stated that international companies who do business in the continent cheated Africa out of \$11billion in 2010 alone. It went on to say that in that year, these companies avoided paying tax on income of \$40billion through a practice called trade mispricing, whereby a company artificially sets the prices for goods or services sold between its subsidiaries to avoid taxation, with corporate tax rates averaging out at 28 per cent. **In this instance**, the 28 per cent adds up to the said \$11billion. (Leadership newspaper).
- **This sort** indulgence only thrives when the political society does not respect the values of honesty and accountability and allows a few to fatten on the miseries of the majority.

## 3.2 Interpersonal metadiscourse Markers

Interpersonal metadiscourse markers signal readers to the writer's attitudes towards both the propositional information in the text content and the readers that involved in the communication situation, thus contributing to a writer-reader relationship. Metadiscourse markers under this functional model are essentially interactional and evaluative and express a writer's perspectives. In newspaper editorial discourse which formed the data of the study, these socially defined functions are achieved via identified five subcategories in my data.

### 3.2.1 Hedges

These types of markers are utilized to express full or partial commitment to the truth-value of the text content as regard to the tone of statement of the author's degree of certitude, authority, ability and usability which are indicated by number of modal verbs such as epistemic verb (*may/might/must*), probably adverbs (*probably/possible, maybe and perhaps*), temporal adverb (*sometimes, often*), quantifier (*most, some*), and epistemic expressions (*it is likely*) that mark reluctance to the present or evaluative propositional information categorically (Holmes, 1988; Hyland, 1996).

- Sensitisation **must** also be carried out in this regard, to educate motorists on which tyres to buy and which not to buy. In addition to this, there **ought** to be concerted efforts by all agencies concerned,

including SON and the Nigeria Customs Service, to see to it that the importation of already used tyres into the country is checked. (Leadership 2).

- Though the rash of xenophobic upwelling in South Africa recently **may** have subsided, it seems the scourge is still latent, alive and well in parts of Africa (Nation iii line 3)

### 3.2.2 Certainty markers or emphatics

These imply certainty and emphasize the force of the proposition which are not only conveying the extent of the writer's commitment by the strength of the statements in the text content, but must also the face needs of readers (Myers 1989). Emphatics mark as in *undoubtedly*, *clearly* and *certainly*, *obvious*, *definitely* and *of course* etc.

- .... it is **imperative** that the FRSC takes the charge from SON **seriously** and steps up advocacy against the use of substandard tyres. Leadership 2
- The message **must go out clearly** that Nigeria would not stand for any affront from any country. That a policeman in uniform would act in such a violent manner that the person was a diplomat or a Nigerian should be a cause for worry for the Nigerian authorities (The Nation 3).

### 3.2.3 Attributors

These refer to the source of information. These markers perform double function in the text: they mention explicitly the source of the information (Bedu, 2017), while at the same time using these references of authoritative value with persuasive goal to accept the facts in the text.

- **Oxfam, an international relief agency, said** this much when it stated that international companies who do business in the continent cheated Africa out of \$11billion in 2010 alone. It went on to say that in that year, these companies avoided paying tax on income of \$40billion through a practice called trade mispricing, (Leadership 3)
- The sad tale of Nigerian diplomat, Mr. Noah Ichaba, makes the case for an urgent, inter-governmental action. Ichaba, **according to reports**, was brutalised in broad daylight on a Saturday morning in the heart of the capital city of Bata. (The Nation 3).

### 3.2.4 Attitude markers

These metadiscourse markers express the writer's affective attitude to textual information in a more varied way than hedges, conveying surprise, obligation, agreement, and importance and so on. Linguistically, these markers can adopt the form of deontic verb (must, have to..), attitudinal verb (surprisingly), adjectival constructions (it is difficult, impossible ) and cognitive verb (I think, I feel, I believe)

- Even at that, it is our opinion that the fight is not only imperative but also **immensely** urgent, if the haemorrhaging must be stopped and the country saved from its self-inflicted anaemia. The buccaneers, wherever they may exist, **must** be told that the day of reckoning is here. (Leadership 4)
- The administration **must** find the way and means to extirpate them. This **of course** means instituting effective controls and equipping the military to effectively police the nation's exclusive economic zones. (The Nation 4).

### 3.2.5 Relational markers

These elements are linguistic devices that the text-producer utilizes to explicitly address readers either by selectively focusing their attention or by including them as participant in the text situation. These markers focus more on reader through naming or using second person pronoun, imperatives, and question forms among others.

- **Nigerians** may not be interested in which agency is responsible for what, as long as safety standards are enforced and accident statistics considerably reduced. (Leadership 2).

## 4. QUANTITATIVE ANALYSIS

As we mentioned earlier, the corpus on which this paper is based on four opinion articles each from two English-speaking Nigerian newspapers: *Leadership newspaper* and *The Nation newspaper*. Overall, there are 7, 200 words accounts in the eight texts that formed the data of this study with 4,136 words in *The Nation* and the text length of *Leadership* is 3,064 words. In the coding quantitative analysis of the metadiscourse markers was carried out manually rather by computer for validity reason, categorized all

occurrences of the markers based on the identified categories discussed above in order to aggregate their distributions in which the text-authors utilized to express their viewpoints and direct the readers so both the text and writer's stance are understood.

On a general scale, the quantitative analysis of the comparative data reveals that the frequency use of the markers was remarkably similar across the two newspapers. Though, The Nation used a slight high number of textual metadiscourse markers than *Leadership*. As for the interpersonal metadiscourse markers, the four texts drawn from *The Nation* indicate low frequency than as *Leadership* indicated in table (3) below:

**Table 3:** General distributions of metadiscourse marker in the data

Category	Leadership newspaper samples					The Nation newspaper samples				
	I	II	III	VI	Total	I	II	III	VI	Total
Logical connectives	4	3	6	6	19	12	11	14	13	50
Sequencers	-	-	2	1	3	-	4	2	3	9
Endophoric markers	-	2	1	2	5	2	3	3	4	12
Evidential markers	1	-	2	-	3	7	6	4	5	22
Topicalizers	-	1	-	-	1	2	-	3	4	9
Code gloss										
<b>Textual Total</b>	5	6	10	9	30	6	10	9	8	33
Hedges	2	3		4	9	4	5	7	6	22
Certainty markers/ emphatics	1	5	2	5	16	6	4	6	8	24
Attributors	1	2	4	3	16	8	5	7	5	25
Attitude markers	-	5	5	2	16	4	2	6	9	21
Personal markers	2	8	6	9	30	11	9	5	7	22
Relational markers	-	4	2	3	12	5	2	6	9	22
<b>Interpersonal Total</b>	6	4	5	4	19	3	4	6	4	17

A glimpse at table (3) confirms that the frequencies of interpersonal metadiscourse markers by the two group of data is 241 higher than textual metadiscourse elements that is 208 in both the two newspapers as shown in table (4) and (5). Though, these proportions of the metadiscourse markers are almost alike instead of being identical. However, there are needs for more validity check since the total word accounts in each newspaper's samples vary.

**Table 4:** Total frequency of Metadiscourse markers in *Leadership* newspaper

Leadership Newspaper	Total metadiscourse Markers	Textual	Interpersonal
Sample i	11	5	6
Sample ii	10	6	4
Sample iii	15	10	5
Sample iv	13	9	4
Total	49	30	19

**Table 4:** Total frequency of Metadiscourse markers in *The Nation* newspaper

Leadership Newspaper	Total metadiscourse Markers	Textual	Interpersonal
Sample i	9	6	3
Sample ii	14	10	4
Sample iii	15	9	6
Sample iv	12	8	4
Total	50	33	17

#### 4.1 Quantitative findings

A correlation coefficient is a statistic that can provide summary of the strength and the direction of the relationship between the variables (Bachman, 1990). Bachman (1990) says the performance of variables of two or more peers of data can be evaluated using a correlation coefficient in order to ascertain the level of correlation among sample data. The study therefore intends to investigate the relation between the two newspapers in order to identify where there is either strong or weak relationship between them in using metadiscourse markers.

I adopt Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient using the following equation from Bachman (1990) as in the following equation:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum xy}{N(s_x)(s_y)}^1$$

The calculation of the Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient obtained from the above equation in for data is illustrated in the figure (5) below:

<i>Leadership</i>	X	$\bar{X}_x$	$X-\bar{X}_x$	<i>The Nation</i>	Y	$\bar{X}_y$	$Y-\bar{X}_y$	$(X-\bar{X})(Y-\bar{Y})$
Sample 1	11	12.25	-1.25	Sample 1	9	12.5	-3.5	4.375
Sample 2	10	12.25	-2.25	Sample 2	14	12.5	1.5	3.375
Sample 3	15	12.25	2.75	Sample 3	15	12.5	2.5	6.875
Sample 4	13	12.25	0.75	Sample 4	12	12.5	0.5	-0.375
Mean( $\bar{X}_x$ ): $\frac{\sum X}{N}$ therefore $\frac{49}{4} = 12.25$				Mean( $\bar{X}_y$ ): $\frac{\sum y}{N}$ therefore $\frac{50}{4} = 12.25$				<b>Sum: 14.25</b>
SD <sub>x</sub> : $\sqrt{\frac{\sum(x)^2}{N}}$ therefore $\sqrt{\frac{14.4375}{4}} = 1.8998$				SD <sub>y</sub> : $\sqrt{\frac{\sum(y)^2}{N}}$ therefore $\sqrt{\frac{23}{4}} = 2.3979$				

**Table (5)** Applying the equation in (1) to our quantitative analysis in table (5), the result of correlation coefficient of the two newspapers is indicated below:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{14.25}{4(1.8998)(2.3979)} = 0.7820 \approx 0.782$$

The correlation coefficient value of the frequencies of metadiscourse markers from quantitative analysis in the eight selected corpuses from two newspapers where ( $r_{xy} = 0.782$ ,  $P > 0.01$ ) shows strong relationship between the two newspapers. This is justified in the distribution of metadiscourse markers based on the quantitative analysis of the data that suggests that *The Nation* newspaper editorial writers use 50 metadiscourse markers considerably share the same range of frequencies with their counterpart of *Leadership* Newspaper with 49 as the total frequency of the metadiscourse elements.

Furthermore, the high frequency of 19 interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the leadership newspapers as against 17 in *The Nation* newspaper suggests little significant difference between the two newspapers to justify how the writers of the both *Leader* newspaper and *The Nation* newspaper editorials place more attention on interactive pragmatic mechanisms in developing the relationship between them and the readers in interpreting the texts in accordance to the authors' intentions.

The quantitative findings on the interpersonal markers imply that the *Leadership* newspaper editorial writers have more interested in using interpersonal metadiscourse markers by making their presence more explicit in the text in convincing their audience community which make their editorial texts shorter when compared with that of *The Nation* newspaper.

While at the same time, the quantitative distributions of textual metadiscourse markers in the paired newspapers still show marginal disparity between *The Nation* newspaper that has total of 33 markers and 30 for *Leadership* newspaper. Such differences confirm more strongly that *The Nation* newspaper that has lengthy editorial texts employs relatively higher textual metadiscourse markers to not only creating and organizing cohesive texts but also orienting and guiding the readers to understand the texts.

## 5. CONCLUSION

The qualitative and quantitative discussions show that the interpersonal and textual metadiscourse markers used in the selected editorial articles are crucial rhetorical devices that are utilized by the editorial writers to not only engage and influence readers but also direct and signal to them the propositional content and organization of information of the texts for their easy understanding and interpretation of the discourse.

<sup>1</sup> The various notations in the equation stand for the following values:

X= the value for the X variable

Y= the value for the Y variable

$\bar{X}_x$  = the mean for the X variable

$\bar{X}_y$  = the mean for the Y variable

$s_x$  = the Standard Deviation (SD) for the X variable

$s_y$  = the Standard Deviation (SD) for the Y variable

N= the number of the paired values for the X and Y variables (often the number of participants)

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