



Writer–Reader Interaction: Investigating Interactional Metadiscourse in Advertisements from Arab Universities

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ABSTRACT

Nowadays, universities heavily rely on digital marketing and social media to recruit more students and to generate interest in their schools. Digital marketing and online advertising constitute a kind of interaction between writers and their potential readers. This paper explores how such an interaction is achieved by investigating a wide range of linguistic resources that writers use to express their stance toward the content in the text and toward the reader. A corpus of 80 academic advertisements from 38 universities, totaling approximately 2,118 words, was compiled and analyzed using Hyland’s (2005b) interactional metadiscourse. The corpus was searched manually for all categories of interactional metadiscourse, and all the reported cases were examined in context to ensure their validity. The results revealed a statistically higher frequency of engagement markers than stance markers. This extensive use of engagement markers, particularly directives and reader pronouns, is a strong indicator of a high degree of interactivity, personalization, and reader consideration. Universities use these engagement features to position themselves and their students in the world of academia and in the context of interaction, where they can successfully focus students’ attention, acknowledge their presence, and guide them toward achieving mutual goals.

KEYWORDS

Discourse analysis, advertising discourse, stance, engagement, persuasion, effective writing

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1. Stance and Engagement (Writer–Reader Interaction)

Many recent studies have addressed how writers convey their stance and establish a connection with their readers in different types of discourse. This concept of writer–reader interaction has been explored using different terms: *evaluation* (Hunston, 2004; Hunston and Thompson, 2000), *appraisal* (Martin, 2000; Martin and White, 2005; White, 2003), *stance* (Biber, 2006; Gray and Biber, 2012), and *metadiscourse* (Hyland, 2005b; Hyland and Tse, 2004). All these terms build on a Bakhtinian view of text as a dialogue with readers (Hyland, 2014). Influenced by the idea of writer–reader interaction, Hyland (2005b) posits a model of interactional metadiscourse that embraces two main categories: namely, *stance* and *engagement*.

Hyland sees stance and engagement as the two pillars of the metadiscursive model and are “two sides of the same coin” (Hyland, 2005b: 176). Stance refers to the writer’s textual “voice” or community-recognized personality. It is “an attitudinal writer-oriented function and concerns the ways we present ourselves and convey our judgments, opinions, and commitments” (Hyland, 2014:4). Engagement, on the other hand, is an alignment function that addresses the ways in which writers rhetorically recognize the presence of their readers to actively pull them along with the argument, include them as discourse participants, and guide them toward interpretations (Hyland, 2014). The importance of stance and engagement “lies in the fact that we take care to design a text for particular participants so that, as far as possible, it meets the rhetorical expectations and information needs of the readers” (Hyland, 2014:6).

The framework of stance and engagement has been investigated in various contexts: academic discourse (Hyland, 2005a/b; Hyland, 2008; Dafouz-Milne, 2008; Gillaerts and Van de Velde, 2010; Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; McGrath and Kuteeva, 2012; Marković, 2013; Moini and Salami, 2015), academic spoken discourse (Yang, 2014), job postings (Fu, 2012), economic texts (Mauranen, 1993), and media and

advertising discourse (Cook, 1992; Ewald and Vann, 2003; Fu, 2009). To my knowledge, little or no attention has been given to the investigation of interactional metadiscourse in higher education advertising. Thus, this study explores the use and frequency of interactional metadiscourse in higher education advertisements (ads) and examines the role of stance and engagement features in terms of constructing persuasive messages that entice students to join academic programs. It is hoped that this will broaden the scope of discourse analysis and plant the seeds for many future research studies.

2. Higher Education Marketing and Online Advertising

Internet, social media, and other digital marketing techniques offer higher education institutions ideal opportunities to market and promote their programs and courses. Recently, universities and colleges have relied on these various online marketing tools to reach the highest number of prospective students. Due to increasing competition, educational institutions have come to realize that they need to market themselves more aggressively to recruit and retain students (Newman, 2002). Advertising on social media is probably the most trendy and successful channel of communication used to engage prospective students. Although university websites offer a base for visitors and users, social media’s collaborative and interactive nature provides an ideal extension for relational marketing activities (Constantinides and Stagno, 2012). It seems that social media plays an important role in influencing and affecting future students’ choices with regards to area of study and university. Through social media platforms, universities can easily present potential students with information about programs, academic degrees, admissions, alumni, careers, and any related topics of interest.

Social media advertising has proven to be an essential tool for communicating factual information about universities and colleges: “Given that students flock to social media platforms en masse and use them to conduct extensive research on colleges and universities,

universities and colleges are increasingly incorporating these technologies to reach different students" (prospective, current, and alumni) (Waite and Wheeler, 2020:7). Social media advertising allows universities and colleges to share educational content, establish trust among students, and boost their reputation. It integrates various features, such as assigning the correct target group of consumers, a high possibility of interaction, demographic targeting, and engaging and urging actions. It is because of these ads that many visitors to official social media accounts become enrolled students.

3. Corpus and Approach

The present corpus includes 80 academic ads, totaling approximately 2,118 words. The ads were collected online from the official websites and social networking sites of 38 universities and colleges in ten Arab countries (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon, Qatar, Tunis, and Morocco) throughout 2019 and 2020. Most of these ads were retrieved from the official social media accounts of these universities, especially Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook. Analysis of interactional metadiscourse, stance, and engagement features was carried out manually, and all the reported results were contextually examined to ensure they functioned as interactional markers. All frequency counts were normalized to a common basis, per 1,000 words, to allow for direct comparison between results of different metadiscoursal features. Furthermore, a chi-square test was run to examine whether there were any statistically significant differences in the use of stance and engagement markers.

The analysis was quantitatively oriented, based on the Hyland (2005b) model of interactional metadiscourse (which is discussed in detail in the following section). This model was chosen because it seems suitable for the purpose of the study, which mainly concerns investigating writer–reader interaction in advertising discourse, and the model also best suits the relatively short nature of the texts of ads. The Hyland (2005b) model is a comprehensive taxonomy of interactional metadiscourse that identifies both writer- and reader-oriented metadiscourse, in which both types create and maintain connections with readers. In addition, this model clearly delineates stance and engagement features, whereas the functions of these features may overlap in other metadiscursive taxonomies. More importantly, the Hyland (2005b) model is considered to be one of the most groundbreaking contributions in the field of discourse analysis, and his work on metadiscourse is among the most applied theoretical frameworks in recent research: "Ken Hyland is possibly the metadiscourse researcher par excellence in contemporary research" (Aguilar, 2008:86).

4. Model of Analysis

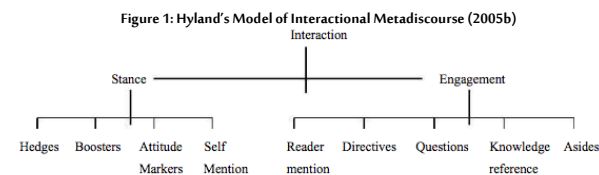
Hyland (2005b) views discourse as a form of interaction between writers and readers that is accomplished through the means of stance and engagement, and he provides a comprehensive taxonomy of interactional metadiscourse, which embraces the following two key categories.

Stance refers to the "writer-oriented features" of interaction and concerns the ways writers comment on the accuracy of a claim, the extent to which they show their commitment to it, or the attitude they want to express about a proposition or to the reader (Hyland, 2005a).

Engagement refers to the "reader-oriented features" of interaction and is "an alignment dimension where writers acknowledge and connect to others, recognizing the presence of their readers, pulling them along with their argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainties, including them as discourse participants, and guiding them to interpretations" (Hyland, 2005b: 176).

The key resources of stance and engagement, through which

interaction is realized, are summarized in Figure 1, and more details about their features are given in the Findings section.



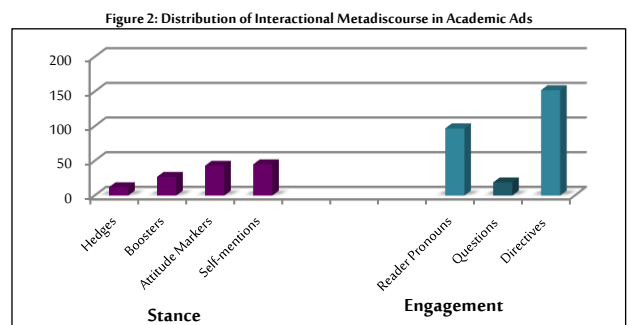
The concept of interaction in written discourse is achieved through the key ways in which writers position themselves in their texts to show their attitudes toward the propositional content and toward their readers. As illustrated in Figure 1, the interactional model of metadiscourse involves two main perspectives (the writer and the reader), and interaction is realized by means of stance and engagement markers. Stance encompasses the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. These linguistic realizations of stance reflect writers' competence in terms of constructing authorial "voice," conveying their attitudes, and establishing effective communication. However, engagement, which is the other form of interaction, comprises the use of reader pronouns, directives, questions, knowledge references, and personal asides. These features seek to establish a connection with the presumed readers to affirm solidarity, influence their thinking, and address their needs and expectations. Together, stance and engagement resources show how writers draw on a vast range of linguistic resources to make a clear stance, engage with readers, facilitate dialogic relationships, and ultimately successfully create effective persuasive discourse.

5. Findings

Analysis of the data revealed many occurrences of interactional metadiscourse in higher education ads. Overall, 395 metadiscourse tokens (186 per 1,000 words) were found in the corpus. Remarkably, the data showed that "engagement markers" were used more frequently than "stance markers," and directives dominated the frequencies (see Table 1 and Figure 2 for more details). The following sections outline the different frequencies of stance and engagement features, including a detailed analysis of their resources.

Table 1: Overall Frequency of Interactional Metadiscourse in Academic Ads

| Feature | Raw Occurrences | Per 1,000 | Percentage |
|-------------------|-----------------|------------|---------------|
| Stance | 127 | 60 | 32.15% |
| Hedges | 12 | 5.66 | 3.03% |
| Boosters | 27 | 12.74 | 6.83% |
| Attitude Markers | 43 | 20.30 | 10.88% |
| Self-mentions | 45 | 21.24 | 11.39% |
| Engagement | 268 | 126 | 67.84% |
| Reader Pronouns | 97 | 45.79 | 24.55% |
| Questions | 19 | 9 | 4.81% |
| Directives | 152 | 71.76 | 38.48% |
| Total | 395 | 186 | 100% |



A chi-square test was used to test the significance of the difference between the frequency of stance and engagement features. In Table (2), the chi-square value ($\chi^2 = 4.334$) is meaningful at the α level (α

= 0.05) with a degree of freedom of 1 (DF = 1). This indicates a highly statistically significant difference between stance and engagement features, with engaging devices tending to occur more frequently than stance features in higher education ads.

Table 2: Chi-square Test of Stance and Engagement Features
Level of Significance = 3.84

| P | DF | Test Statistic | P-Value | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------|----------|-----------------|
| 0.05 | 1 | 4.334 | 0.037358 | $\chi^2 < 3.84$ |
| No. of Valid Cases | 395 | | | |

5.1. Stance Features in Academic Ads

Stance features mainly operate in the evaluative dimension of interactional metadiscourse resources, and they concern the ways the writer presents himself or herself and conveys his or her judgments and commitments toward the propositions in the text. The data showed that stance resources do not frequently occur in the corpus. Self-mentions are the most frequently used category in higher education ads, which means the writer explicitly refers to the potential students and expresses his/her attitude and evaluation toward the universities and the academic programs it offers. Hedges and boosters were used scarcely due to the high objectivity of the texts. The following sections present a detailed analysis of the resources of the interactional metadiscourse of stance.

5.1.1. Hedges

Hedges are devices that indicate the writer's decision to withhold complete commitment to a proposition, which allows information to be presented as an opinion rather than as an accredited fact (Hyland, 2005b). Writers use hedges to show their lack of commitment to the proposition's truth value (Ädel, 2006). The data revealed relatively few uses of these downtoners (n = 12). This result is expected since the use of hedges can influence an advertisement's persuasiveness. Though rare, hedges were used to soften the tone of the proposition and express a more rational meaning (Example 1):

- (1) Your Future can Start Right here and now.
AUD graduates are among the most employable in the world.

5.1.2. Boosters

Boosters express the writer's full commitment to propositions. They emphasize certainty and construct rapport by marking involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience, including taking a joint position against other voices (Hyland, 1999a). The data showed that boosters are not commonly used in academic ads. Notably, 27 (12.74 per 1,000 words) lexical items served as boosting devices. Most of these boosters were realized by the adverbial *now*. It is often the case that the adverbial booster *now* co-occurs with imperatives that provide emphasis and play a supportive role in reinforcing the interactionality of the text (Example 2):

- (2) Do you want to do a Master or PhD in Germany? APPLY NOW.
Yes, You Can Get A Job Through Social Networking.
AUD is definitely your best choice!

5.1.3. Attitude Markers

Attitude markers allow writers to express their attitudes toward propositions. They denote the writer's attitude toward the desirability of an action or event or to mark his/her attitude toward social factors of obligation, responsibility, and permission (Ädel, 2006). According to Hyland (2005a: 53), "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, sentence adverbs, and adjectives." The analysis revealed 43 (20.30 per 1,000 words) attitude markers in the data, most of which were adjectives that were generally used in comparative or superlative forms. Notably, most adjectival attitude markers were used to indicate the excellence of the university and the type of education it is offering. The writer uses words such as *best*,

big, new, unique, wide, extensive, highly qualified, productive, and brightest to describe the status of the university or college and the quality of its education (Example 3):

- (3) AUD is definitely your best choice!
Discover Education city. Your path to the future. Join us to learn more about our unique academic programs and admission process.
When it comes to education, we look at the big picture.

5.1.4. Self-mentions

Self-mentioning refers to the degree of explicit author presence in the text, which is measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives: *I, me, mine*, exclusive *we* (excludes the addressee from the reference), *our*, and *ours*. (Hyland, 2005a). Data showed that almost all self-mentions were realized by the first-person plural form *we*, its possessive adjectives *our* and *ours*, and its object form *us*, which occurred 45 times. In contrast, the first-person singular form *I* and its possessive cases were completely absent. The results further show that the first-person plural form *we* and its corresponding forms are mainly exclusive uses. *We* is used by the writer as the representative of the university or the school, and *our* is used to refer to its academic programs (Example 4):

- (4) Join us on our path towards a sustainable future!
We Are Engineers. We Are Achievers. We Are Innovators. We Are The Future. We Are Kuwait University.
Come explore our programs and tour the campus.

5.2. Engagement Features in Academic Ads

Interaction metadiscourse is largely achieved in the data using engagement markers. Engagement markers were far more frequent in higher education ads that were employed to bring readers to the text, focus their attention, point out what is particularly important, include them as discourse participants, and encourage them to engage with the topics of the ads. In this study, engagement is realized using three categories: *directives*, *reader pronouns*, and *questions*. Directives were the most frequent category used as a discourse strategy to direct students to particular lines of thoughts and actions. Reader pronouns ranked second, and questions came third. All these categories contributed to the interactionality of the text and built a relationship with the reader. The following sections present detailed analysis of these categories of engagement of interactional metadiscourse.

5.2.1. Reader Pronouns

Engagement appears in the data in the use of reader pronouns that explicitly address readers. Reader pronouns are perhaps the most explicit way that readers are brought into a discourse, and this is realized using the first-person plural form inclusive-*we* and the second-person reader mention *you*. Indeed, *You* and *your* are the clearest ways a writer can acknowledge the reader's presence (Hyland, 2005b). The data indicated that the reader pronoun *You* and its possessive cases occurred approximately 97 times (45.79 per 1,000 words). It is notable that the reader mention pronoun *you*, particularly its possessive *your*, occurred the most frequently, whereas the first-person plural form inclusive-*we* and its possessive cases were rare. Grammatically speaking, the data further showed that the possessive determiner *your* occurred 58 times and is often used as the object of the clause in many ads (Example 5):

- (5) Achieve your dreams with Effat University.
Enrich your college experience. Your assignments shouldn't be chores anymore.
Increase your employability, fulfill your interests, and equip yourself with multidisciplinary skills.
Tell your story. Follow your passion.

Moreover, *you* was found to occur in the initial position and in

questions and statements designed to emphatically address the reader. Below are some examples (Example 6):

(6) You mean the world to us. Over 66,000 alumni and 115 countries and counting!

Do *you* want to pursue graduate studies?

5.2.2. Appeals to Shared Knowledge and Personal Asides

Appeals to shared knowledge refer to explicit signals that ask readers to recognize something as familiar or accepted. They seek to position readers within apparently naturalized boundaries of disciplinary understandings (Hyland, 2005b). In a similar fashion, personal asides allow writers to address readers directly by briefly interrupting the argument to offer a comment on what has been said (Hyland, 2005b). The data showed that neither of these engagement features ever appear in the academic ads under study and that these two subcategories of engagement metadiscourse were totally missing in the corpus.

5.2.3. Directives

Directives are utterances that instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way that is determined by the writer (Hyland, 2005a). They are “complex rhetorical strategies writers can use to manipulate a relationship with readers and indicate the ways they are intended to follow the text” (Hyland, 2002a: 218). Directives are signaled mainly by imperatives, modalities of obligation addressed to the reader, and predicative adjectives expressing judgments of necessity/importance (Hyland, 2005a).

The results revealed 152 directives overall, most of which were imperatives directing the addressed audience to perform an action or to provoke thoughts, and there were a few examples of predicative adjectives. The most common directives in these ads included *apply*, *register*, *visit*, *check*, *enquire*, and *join*.

Directives can be classified into three main categories, according to the principal form of activity they direct readers to engage in: *textual*, *physical*, and *cognitive* (Hyland, 2002a). Table 3 shows the distribution of these acts in the data.

Table 3: Types of Directives

| Directives | Textual | Physical | Cognitive |
|------------|---------|----------|-----------|
| Ads | 8 | 46 | 98 |

First, *textual acts* are used to refer the reader to another part of the text or to another text (Hyland, 2002a). The data showed that directives of textual acts instruct readers to external sources. Below are some examples (Example 7):

(7) *Scholarships provide financial assistance, personal guidance, a wide seminar program and access to the world-wide KAS network. Deadline: 26 April 2020, for more information please visit: www.ksa.de/jordan.*

SEIZE THE OPPORTUNITY. The ECU is the choice of the brightest students who seek a chance for diverse education. Call us on 19436 or visit our website: <http://www.ecu.edu.eg> to know more details.

Second, *physical acts* are used to instruct the reader to perform a real-world action, such as visiting the campus, filling out an application, or meeting faculty members (Example 8):

(8) *Come explore our programs and tour the campus.*

Discover Georgetown. Wednesday November 6, 2019. 4:45 p.m. Come and meet your future fellow students and faculty and talk to representatives of our admission office.

Do you want to pursue graduate studies? Join us at the graduate studies open house. Meet the dean and the faculty. Learn about our multidisciplinary programs. From our 6 colleges. Discuss admission requirements. Explore academic and search opportunities. And more. November 27, 2019 6 p.m. Register now.

Finally, *cognitive acts* are used when the reader is required to note, concede, or consider some aspect of an argument (Hyland, 2002a). The data revealed that cognitive acts were the most frequently used directives, which explicitly requested students to consider and think

about their future and the universities’ programs (Example 9):

(9) *Dig deeper into your dreams and deeper into yourself and believe that anything is possible, and make it happen.*

Get onboard. Connect to your future.

Learn how to utilize social networking sites to enhance your job or internship search. Maximize your online persona and highlight key skills that can attract potential employers.

5.2.4. Questions

Questions are also used in higher education marketing as engagement devices. Questions are a key strategy of dialogic involvement because they invite engagement and bring the interlocutor into an arena in which they can be led toward the writer’s viewpoint (Hyland, 2002b). The results revealed 19 questions in the data that functioned as engagement markers, and most of these questions were rhetorical questions that were used to elicit students’ attention and to make them think and gain insights. These questions arouse interest and encourage students to consider their choices (Example 10):

(10) *Scholarship Award competition. Up to the challenge? Ready to compete and test your engineering mind?*

How does your life experience shape your career?

Interested in gaining extensive Islamic knowledge but not interested in taking exams?

6. Discussion

A central aspect of successful higher education marketing is the creation of persuasive texts that employ certain rhetorical features in which interaction is achieved and a proper relationship with readers is established. This study has explored the presence of interactional metadiscourse, stance, and engagement markers in academic advertising discourse, which has revealed that these markers are employed extensively in this genre. More specifically, the data showed that engagement markers were used more frequently than stance markers and that directives dominated the frequencies. Directives were by far the most frequently used interactional feature, where in most cases prospective students were strongly urged to act or think in a certain way. Most of these directives were imperatives within the cognitive category, and they all called for an immediate response from the students, inviting them to interact with the ad. These direct explicit instructions were employed to convince the reader to join the university’s academic programs. They were both forceful and tempting, which reinforced the purpose and persuasive nature of advertising discourse. The far more frequent use of directives in higher education ads further proves the high interactionality of these texts since they serve as real instructions that are oriented toward prospective students. This study shows that directives are forceful engaging devices that create solidarity with readers, which aligns with previous research by Hyland (2002a) and Fu (2012).

In addition to directives, interaction and reader engagement were achieved in the corpus using reader pronouns, which ranked second in terms of frequency. The increased use of second-person pronouns (*you*, *your*) was the most explicit and direct way to address prospective students, personalize the discourse, and establish a friendly atmosphere with the target audience. This study showed that the use of *your* is almost ubiquitous in the corpus and is a prominent feature of advertising discourse because it highly appeals to students’ emotions. Through phrases such as *your future*, *your dreams*, *your success*, *your career*, *your dream job*, and *your life*, in which *your* is used as a keyword that explicitly acknowledges students and involves them in the persuasion process, these ads are deeply reader-oriented which attract education seekers and convince them to apply. The

collocation of directives and reader pronouns in higher education ads helps create a more personal relationship with readers by involving them as participants in the actions the writer seeks to highlight.

Questions were another engaging feature that were used to encourage the reader to explore the programs in the ads. Despite their limited occurrence, questions in the ads, which were mostly rhetorical, arouse students' interest, establish a dialogue, and encourage them to think and consider the topic of the ad. They were used as a means of linguistic persuasion, which can create the impression of interpersonal communication (Janoschka, 2004). In addition, questions have direct appeal because they bring the second person into a kind of dialogue with the writer, which other rhetorical devices do not have to the same extent (Webber, 1994: 266).

Stance features, namely, hedges and boosters, do not enjoy a high frequency of occurrence in higher education ads. These ads show a tendency to use fewer devices to strengthen or weaken the writers' claims, which is basically due to the high level of accuracy required of the information presented in the ads. In other words, writers are requested to present correct and precise information about the universities and their programs, and accordingly, there is no need to use devices that upgrade or downgrade the true value of the propositions. The rare occurrences of hedging and boosting devices also reflect the objectivity of the texts. This result aligns with similar genres, such as job postings and popularizations, which rarely use these stance devices (Fu, 2012; Hyland, 2005a). According to Hyland (2005a: 99), "the elimination of hedges and boosters in popularizations adds to the significance and newsworthiness of the subject, glamorizing material for a wider audience."

Despite the limited use of hedges and boosters, self-mentions and attitude markers were frequently used in the data. Self-mentions were the most frequently used stance resource in these ads. The results revealed that almost all self-mentions were realized by the first-person plural form *we* and its possessive cases, which represent the higher education institutions. The use of the first-person plural form *we* is an effective discourse strategy that is used in recent advertising (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990). The extensive use of *we* and its corresponding cases, especially *us*, in the ads reinforces the role of universities as a reference of authority and power, "creates an impressive familiarity between the students and the university and reflects the university's voice" (Bano and Shakir, 2015:138). This finding echoes previous research that has reported the extensive use of personal pronouns, as was found in Hui (2009), Teo (2007), and Bano and Shakir (2015).

With a similar distribution, attitude markers were also frequently used in the ads. The data showed that most of these attitude markers were adjectives used to emphasize the excellence, originality, uniqueness, and type of education that these universities offer. Using these stance features, writers succeeded in highlighting the qualities of university programs that promote and appeal to the emotions of prospective students: "Emotional appeal is an important means of persuasion and an advertising goal" (Janoschka, 2004:20). The appeal to the reader's emotions rather than reason is clearly reflected in the strong reliance on interactional metadiscourse in advertising discourse. Indeed, many persuasive techniques have been employed in ads, such as the use of engagement markers, repetition, emotional appeal, and rhetorical questions, all of which play a key role in the production of effective messages in ads and make them highly persuasive.

7. Conclusion

This study explored the use of stance and engagement markers in higher education ads from 38 universities. The study revealed plenty

of interactional metadiscourse resources in these ads and provided evidence that metadiscourse is "discourse universal" (Mauranen, 2010: 21). Using Hyland's (2005b) model of interactional metadiscourse, also revealed 395 metadiscourse tokens (186 per 1,000 words) in the corpus. The results confirmed a significantly higher proportion of engagement features in the ads. The fact that there are more engagement features than stance features in higher education ads reveals that the writer has placed a major consideration of the prospective student in this advertising discourse 'Because metadiscourse places a consideration of the reader' (Hyland, 2005a: 10). In other words, higher education ads are excessively appellative, informative, persuasive, and reader-oriented texts. In addition, the study unveiled some of the prominent features of the genre of higher education advertising discourse and showed how the use of interactional metadiscourse plays an important role in reader consideration. One of the distinctive features of this advertising discourse is the ubiquitous use of reader pronouns (*you* and *your*) and self-mentions (*we* and *us*). *You* is used to show a harmonious relationship and establish a personal rapport between the university and its students, whereas *we* is used to represent the university and reflect a sense of authority and the university's determination to convey a welcoming approach to students. In addition, the overwhelming use of directives is employed to achieve persuasive purposes, gain solidarity with students, and influence them positively. Universities, using these guided instructions, want prospective students to think and consider the offered programs and then to act and enroll.

Finally, higher education advertising discourse can be acknowledged as a socially mediated persuasive interactive discourse that achieves effective communication through linguistic features that address the needs and interests of a potential audience. This discourse is a promoting language in which writers employ recognized ways to offer academic programs and initiate social engagement that prospective students find promising, appealing, and persuasive.

This study has shed light on interactions in advertising discourse and showed how writers use stance and engagement devices to anticipate and understand their readers' academic interests and expectations. Thus, the ads control how students respond to the offered programs and support their decisions to enroll in these universities.

Biography

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Dr. Al-Subhi is a graduate of University College Cork, Saudi assistant professor. She is a PhD holder in Applied Linguistics (2017). She has an MA in Applied Linguistics from Umm Al-Qura University (2009) with first class honors. She has also received another master's degree from University College Cork with first class honors (2013). She has participated in international conferences in Italy, Spain, and Cyprus. Her research interests lie in the areas of language and gender, discourse analysis, media research, and cross-cultural studies.

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