



A CORPUS-ANALYSIS OF META-DISCOURSE MARKERS IN POLITICAL BLOGS OF PAKISTANI NEWSPAPERS

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ABSTRACT

The study investigates the use of meta-discourse markers in political blogs. Specifically, it examines the frequency and distribution of interactive meta-discourse markers to express writer stance and engage readers, and compares the relative prominence of interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers within the selected blogs. The study adopts a corpus-based mixed-method design to investigate the use of meta-discourse markers in political blogs. The data sample for the study consists of twelve (12) political blogs published in The Express Tribune and The News of Pakistani English newspapers. The paper employs Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of meta discourse as the guiding framework to examine organisational discourse, stance expression, and reader engagement among bloggers. It was found that interactive markers are more frequent, including transitions, frame markers, code glosses, and endophoric markers, and therefore emphasise their importance in argument structuring and directing the reader in the process of understanding political talks. Interactional markers such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers are also popular in bloggers' attempts to express evaluation, persuasion, and interpersonal involvement. The comparison shows stylistic differences in the newspaper blogs, with the News blogs employing more regularly than the Express Tribune. The paper concludes that for successful political blogging combination of textual structuring and interpersonal interaction is necessary, offering essential insights into discourse practices in Pakistani English print media.

Keywords: Meta-discourse, Interactive markers, Interactional markers, Political blogs, Corpus linguistics, Pakistani newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the analysis of language has focused more on how language is used in the real world, rather than on intuitive or prescriptive approaches to grammar and meaning. Biber et al (1998) opine that this change has given rise to a quick-branched development of corpus linguistics. The methodological tool examines large volumes of electronically stored texts containing authentic language to detect systematic patterns of language use. According to McEnery and Hardie (2012), corpus linguistics allows the researcher to use quantitative methods, such as frequency and distribution analysis, and to engage in some qualitative interpretation,



providing a strong empirical basis for discourse analysis. The discourse of the media (especially newspapers) has been one of the interesting areas of corpus linguistics. Previous studies have shown that meta-discourse analysis is functional across various genre categories, including academic texts (Hyland, 2004), opinion pieces (Fu and Hyland, 2014), and news texts (Bednarek, 2006). The study of different corpora has revealed that meta-discourse markers are essential in shaping persuasion, credibility, and ideological stance. Little attention has been paid to political blogs in Pakistani English newspapers, despite the accumulating body of research on media discourse, particularly through corpus-based applications of the meta-discourse theory.

Pakistan's English-language newspapers, such as The Express Tribune and The News, play an essential role in the media industry. The two newspapers have an active online presence and frequently publish political blogs and opinion pieces that explore national governance, politics, and leadership, as well as policy issues and international affairs. These blogs have large audiences and engage in political discussion. As persuasive and evaluative forms of language, the diction of these political blogs will provide valuable insights into how Pakistani journalists and commentators use linguistic strategies to structure their arguments and communicate with their audiences. Though of utmost significance, the Express Tribune political blogs and The News political blogs are under-researched from a corpus linguistic and meta-discursive perspective. The majority of research on Pakistani media discourse has focused on news coverage or editorials and has been primarily qualitative. Empirical corpus-based studies investigating the application of meta-discourse markers in political blog writing. Therefore, to fill this gap, the current paper conducts a corpus-based examination of interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers in selected political blogs published by The Express Tribune and The News (thenews.pk). Based on Hyland's (2005) meta-discourse framework. Accordingly, the study aims to achieve the following objectives;

- To identify and categorise meta-discourse markers used in political blogs published in *The Express Tribune* and *The News* based on Hyland's (2005) framework.
- To examine the frequency and distribution of interactive meta-discourse markers in the selected political blogs using a corpus-based approach.
- To analyse the use of interactional meta-discourse markers in expressing writer stance and engaging readers in political blog discourse.
- To compare the relative prominence of interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers in the political blogs of the two newspapers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Research on Meta-discourse has received considerable attention in linguistics for its role in guiding the reader, assuming the writer's position, and structuring discourse. According to Hyland (2005), meta-discourse is the means writers use to control the content of their texts and their relationship with the audience. Research by Hyland (2004) and Adel (2006) indicates that academic writers consistently employ interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers to achieve coherence and persuasion. Fu and Hyland (2014) underline that interactive markers, i.e., transitions, frame markers, and code glosses, are used to organize arguments and explain the relations between the ideas. In contrast, interactional markers, i.e., hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers, enable the writer to express stance and to interact with the readers.



Biber et al. (1998) and McEnery and Hardie (2012) provide examples of corpus-based analyses of academic writing that show the regular use of these markers within particular disciplines and reveal patterns that depend on the rhetorical objectives and requirements in different disciplines. Fairclough (1995) underlines that over the recent years, the field of meta-discourse research has grown to include not only academic writing but also the spheres of media and reporting. Fowler (1991) explains that the discourse of newspapers, especially in opinion columns and political blogs, provides a valuable venue for exploring meta-discourse because these forms of writing are persuasive and reader-focused.

According to Bednarek (2006) and Richardson (2007), newspapers do not simply report but also actively create ideology through lexical and syntactic choices, framing, and rhetorical means. Khan (2019) notes that in the Pakistani setting, political columnists position themselves as thorough in their use of stance markers to convince readers and demonstrate authoritarian confidence. As Ahmad (2017) remarks, meta-discourse has been extensively researched in international media, but Pakistani English newspapers have not been well studied, especially regarding the political blogs. According to Rehman and Hussain (2020), meta-discourse markers of interactivity prevail in Pakistani opinion, which is used to structure complex political rhetoric. Interactional markers are more evident in the evaluative and persuasive parts.

Ali and Iqbal (2018) also show that engagement markers, self-mentions, and boosters are prevalent in the editorials of Dawn and other national newspapers to enhance their persuasive appeal. Butt and Khan (2016) also found the same, politically charged texts are heavily dependent on interactional resources to establish the authority of the writer and engage readers. On the one hand, Bednarek (2010) states that digital journalism becomes increasingly reliant on meta-discourse markers that ensure coherence and attention to the online dimension for the audience. To support this argument, Ahmed and Jamil (2021) demonstrate that online news articles and political blogs extensively utilise the elements of reader engagement as a means to target online readers. According to Richardson (2007), political blogs, especially, are not similar to traditional print editorials because this form of blog writing takes a more interactive, direct approach to readers and invites them to interpret the information. Together, Richardson (2007) and Ahmed and Jamil (2021) note that the digital genre of political blogs emphasises interactive means to maintain reader engagement and persuasive power. Baker et al. (2008) also assert that the practices have attracted long-term scholarly attention in the fields of corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis.

According to Richardson (2007), political blogs and opinion pieces have a unique place in newspaper narratives, enabling writers to exercise greater freedom in evaluation, stance, and persuasion than in reporting hard news. Adel (2006) supports this assertion by arguing that meta-discourse is an interpersonal act, as writing is a social and interactive process rather than a neutral transmission of information. Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model is among the most popular for analysing meta-discourse, particularly in discourse- and corpus-based research. Hyland categorises meta-discourse markers into two general sets: interactive and interactional. There are interactive meta-discourse markers that structure the text and guide readers through the argument by signalling transitions, information order, and meaning explanation (e.g., however, firstly, in other words). Interactional meta-discourse markers allow writers to frame their position, convey appraisal, and engage readers through hedges, boosters, attitude, self-mentions,



and engagement (e.g., may, clearly, I argue, you can see). The given model is especially suitable for examining persuasive genres, including political blogs, as writers must build arguments and establish a relationship with readers simultaneously. Within political discourse, previous research (Raza et al., 2025) has shown that politicians often use hedging as a rhetorical strategy to balance persuasive intent with diplomatic politeness, enabling them to convey uncertainty or refrain from making definitive commitments in sensitive situations. In a similar vein, Gill et al. (2025) conducted a genre analysis of the inaugural addresses of Donald Trump and Joe Biden, revealing various rhetorical and structural techniques utilised in political communication.

On the whole, meta-discourse studies have examined academic writing and editorials, but little is known about Pakistan's newspapers' political blogs, especially regarding a systematic corpus study. It is the gap that makes the current research significant, and the researcher sought to investigate the interactive and interactional levels of meta-discourse markers in political blogs across two newspaper sites: The Express Tribune and The News, to make contributions to media discourse studies and applied corpus linguistics.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a corpus-based mixed-method design to investigate the use of meta-discourse markers in political blogs. Biber et al (1998) explain that a corpus-based approach allows for the systematic identification, classification, and analysis of linguistic patterns across extensive collections of texts, offering reliable quantitative insights based on frequency data. Similarly, McEnery and Hardie (2012) argue that corpus linguistics also supports qualitative interpretation by examining linguistic features in their contextual use, making it particularly suitable for discourse-oriented studies. The study specifically focuses on interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers as defined by Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model.

Data Collection

The data for this study comprises 12 political blogs published on *The Express Tribune* and *The News (thenews.pk)*. Selection criteria included: Texts must be political in nature, discussing governance, policy, elections, or political issues. Blogs must be written in English. Texts must have precise publication dates and identifiable authors to ensure authenticity and traceability. Only recent posts (from 20 January 2026 to 25 January 2026) were included to ensure relevance and comparability. Each blog was downloaded from the respective newspaper's official website. Advertisements, navigation menus, comments, and other non-textual elements were removed to ensure clean, analyzable text.

Corpus Compilation

A specialised corpus was created comprising the twelve selected blogs. The corpus was prepared in plain text format to facilitate analysis in corpus tools. The total corpus size is approximately 10,500 words, which is suitable for focused qualitative and quantitative investigation in journalistic discourse (Baker et al., 2008).

Analytical Tools and Procedure

Data analysis was conducted using AntConc (version 4.1.0), a widely used corpus analysis software in linguistic research. The analysis procedure included: Frequency analysis is used to identify the most commonly used meta-discourse markers across all texts. Concordance analysis examines the context in which markers occur, allowing interpretation of their interactive or



interactional function. Through categorisation, each marker was classified according to Hyland's framework. Ambiguous cases were discussed and agreed upon by the researcher to ensure reliability. The analysis combined quantitative and qualitative methods: Quantitative Analysis: The frequency and distribution of interactive and interactional markers were calculated to determine patterns of use in political blogs. Qualitative Analysis: Selected examples of markers were analysed to illustrate how writers structure arguments, express stance, and engage readers. This step provides insight into the rhetorical and interpersonal functions of meta-discourse in political blogs.

Ethical Considerations

All blogs were accessed from publicly available sources on official newspaper websites. Proper acknowledgement of authors and sources was maintained to respect intellectual property. No personal data beyond authorship and publication details were collected.

FINDINGS

The paper evaluated 12 political blogs from the Express Tribune and The News to examine the application of both interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers. Findings of the research include the following:

4.1. Identification and Categorisation of Meta-discourse Markers

In this study, the researcher sought to identify and classify meta-discourse markers in 12 political blogs published in the Express Tribune and *The News*, using Hyland's (2005) *interpersonal model*. It turned out that the authors use a great variety of meta-discourse markers that could be organised into two groups: interactive and interactional, with some sub-types.

4.1.1. Interactive Meta-Discourse Markers

Interactive meta-discourse markers are linguistic words that assist writers in structuring, directing readers, and aiding understanding. Their primary focus is on the composition and direction of the discourse, which allows readers to navigate an argument. The sub-types that were identified in the corpus were as follows:

- a. **Transitions:** Transitions signal logical associations among ideas, such as contrast, addition, or cause-and-effect. The patterns that were observed in the corpus were as follows:
 - i. Contrast/Comparison: When giving conflicting opinions or when considering different political points of view, contrasts are used, for example, in comparison. Comparisons are like, such as, in contrast, etc. Comparisons are made between the strategies or the performance of parties.
 - ii. Addition: Terms employed to present more evidence or defence of a political statement, e.g., moreover, further, in addition, etc.
 - iii. Cause-effect: To show the implication of political actions or political policies, e.g., hence, because of this.

The most common interactive indicators in both newspapers were transitions, which indicate that writers had to demonstrate coherence in their intricate arguments (Hyland, 2005; Biber, Conrad, and Reppen, 1998).



- b. Frame Markers:** Frame markers are used for discourse organisation, e.g., sequences, introductions, and conclusions. Frame markers that have been identified are:
- i. Introducing or signalling stages: In this part, the terms now " and " next - were employed to direct the reader through the process of argumentation. Frame markers help readers discern how the argument will be presented and shape the flow of the discussion (Fu & Hyland, 2014).
 - ii. Sequencing: Firstly, secondly, finally, etc., enables writers to structure points logically.
 - iii. Conclusions: To wrap up sections or statements, these words are generally used to provide a summary of what has been covered. For example, in short, in conclusion, shortly, in sum up, etc.
- c. Endophoric Markers:** Endophoric markers are other sections of the text that lead readers. Writers use these endomorphic markers in the corpus, as stated above, see below, and refer to the table to show that previous information or subsequent material is essential. Such indicators are comparatively rare but necessary for linking various sections of a blog and maintaining unity and self-referencing.
- d. Code Glosses:** The phrase refers to the code glosses, which explain concepts in the text. Some examples were provided in the corpus: namely, that is, etc., are repeated words used to paraphrase complex political statements or to explain statistics and policy points. The language is used to provide readers with an understanding of complex political arguments, and code glosses help them better understand them. It is constructive in opinion-based blogs where several arguments are made.

4.1.2. Interactional Meta-Discourse Markers

Interactional meta-discourse markers are language elements that enable authors to portray position, interact with readers, and control interpersonal relationships. In contrast to the interactive markers, the interactional markers address the relationship between the writer and the reader rather than the instructions in the form of the structure. The corpus was found to contain the following sub-types:

- a. Hedges:** Hedges are applied to claims to reduce them or to show uncertainty, so that writers do not have to state something controversial, and avoid a lack of credibility. The regular hedges to be found in the corpus were: may, might, could, possibly, likely. The latter markers tended to be used to predict, discuss policy consequences, discuss election outcomes, or express caution about projecting subjective or potentially controversial information (Ali and Iqbal, 2018; Khan, 2019).
- b. Boosters:** Boosters are some certitude, mightiness, or significance of a statement. Boosters that were seen in the corpus include: clearly, undoubtedly, indeed, obviously. These signs are considered when authors intend to support the main arguments or emphasise the importance of political events. Boosters lend authority and convince readers of the writer's evaluative position.
- c. Attitude Markers:** The attitude markers express an emotional judgment or an emotional analysis of the content. Some examples from the corpus include: "fortunately," "surprisingly," "importance," and "sadly." They represent the writer's acceptance, reaction, or evaluation of what



is happening in politics, and they also enable the audience to see the writer's opinion as events unfold (Bednarek, 2010).

d. Self-Mentions: The self-specifications of the writer are clearly mentioned. These were: I suggest, I believe, we believe, in my view, I argue. Self-mentions emphasize authority, position a writer as an experienced commenter, and record subjective assessment in persuasive content.

e. Engagement Markers: Engagement markers directly interact with the reader who thinks, analyses, or reacts to arguments. Some of the examples observed are: consider, it is clear that, you can see, note that. These indicators allow the reader to engage in the discussion, increase their interactivity, and identify with the writer's views (Rehman and Hussain, 2020; Ahmad, 2017).

4.2. Frequency and Distribution of Interactive Meta-Discourse Markers

Interactive meta-discourse cues control the reader and structure the text. The subtypes studied in this paper were: Transitions, Frame Markers, Code Glosses, and Endophoric Markers. The Express Tribune and The News, along with 12 political blogs, were used to count their appearances.

Table 1: Frequency of Interactive Meta-Discourse Markers

Sub-Type	Express Tribune	The News	Total
Transitions	78	92	170
Frame Markers	70	62	132
Code Glosses	28	26	54
Endophoric Markers	15	11	26
Total	191	191	382

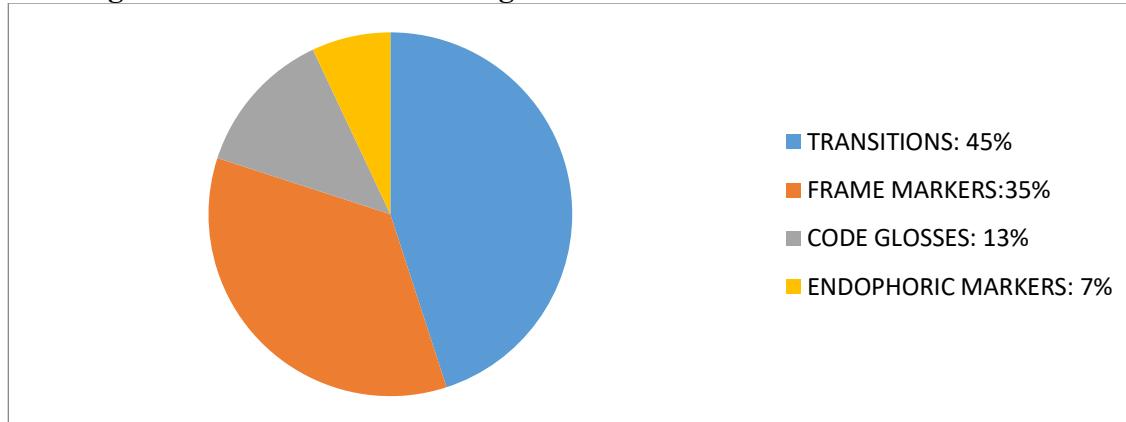
Table 2: Distribution of Interactive Markers by Blog

Blog ID	Newspaper	Transitions	Frame Markers	Code Glosses	Endophoric Markers	Total
B1	Express Tribune	12	10	6	3	31
B2	Express Tribune	18	12	4	2	36
B3	Express Tribune	10	16	6	4	36
B4	Express Tribune	9	10	4	4	27
B5	Express Tribune	11	7	5	1	24
B6	Express Tribune	18	15	3	1	37
B7	The News	24	11	5	3	43
B8	The News	13	10	6	1	30
B9	The News	12	9	7	1	29



B10	The News	13	10	4	2	29
B11	The News	15	11	4	1	31
B12	The News	15	10	1	3	29

Figure 1: Pie Chart – Percentage of Interactive Meta-Discourse Markers



The statistics show that political bloggers are always willing to use interactive features to guide readers through complex political discourse. Transitions, as the prevailing genre, are used to support opposing perspectives, hint at implications, and offer identity. Frame markers offer structural support, presenting arguments sequentially and providing conclusions. Endophoric markers and code glosses are not common; however, they are essential for explaining complex political information and for supporting the information mentioned before. The blogs in two newspapers differ in their distribution, which means their stylistic preferences vary slightly: The News is more focused on logical flow and has more transitions. At the same time, the Express Tribune is more concentrated on sequencing and summarising using frame markers.

4.3. Frequency and Distribution Interactional Meta-Discourse Markers

The interactional meta-discourse markers enable authors to reveal their personal position, critique facts, and involve readers directly (Hyland, 2005). The following sub-types developed in this research were being analysed: Hedges, Boosters, Attitude Markers, Self-Mentions, and Engagement Markers. Their occurrences were tabulated in the twelve political blogs of The Express Tribune and The News.

Table 3: Frequency of Interactional Meta-Discourse Markers

Sub-Type	Express Tribune	The News	Total
Hedges	60	50	110
Boosters	40	45	85
Attitude Markers	35	30	65
Self-Mentions	20	15	35
Engagement Markers	25	35	60
Total	180	175	355

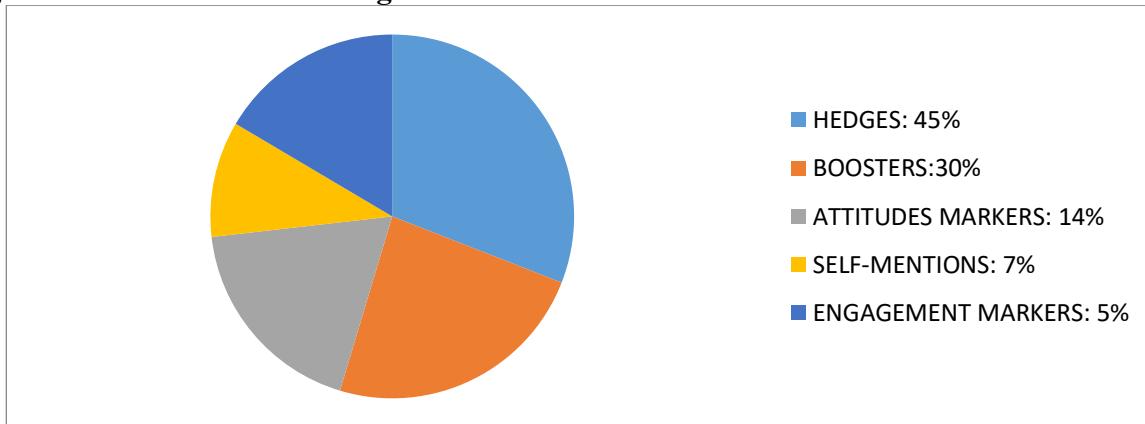
Table 4: Distribution of Interactional Markers by Blog

Blog	Newspaper	Hedges	Boosters	Attitude	Self-	Engagement	Total
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ID				Markers	Mentions	Markers	
B1	Express Tribune	10	7	7	4	3	31
B2	Express Tribune	11	5	5	3	4	28
B3	Express Tribune	9	8	5	3	5	30
B4	Express Tribune	10	6	7	2	3	28
B5	Express Tribune	10	8	6	4	6	34
B6	Express Tribune	10	6	5	4	4	29
B7	The News	6	9	5	2	6	26
B8	The News	9	8	4	3	7	25
B9	The News	8	7	6	3	5	26
B10	The News	8	7	5	2	5	25
B11	The News	10	8	5	2	6	24
B12	The News	9	6	5	3	6	23

Figure 2: Pie Chart – Percentage of Interactional Meta-Discourse Markers



The review shows that meta-discourse cues of interactional character are essential for stating the writer's position and inviting the audience to engage in discussion on political blogs. Hedges help writers moderate their claims, minimizing the risk of overstating, especially when dealing with unpredictable political consequences. Boosters are authoritative and confident, focusing on key points and supporting credibility. Attitude markers express evaluative judgments and enable writers to convey their opinions or responses to political activity. Self-mentions also signal the writer's presence, and engagement markers directly draw the reader into an interactive relationship that promotes reflection. The way these publications are distributed has stylistic differences: The News blogs are more interested in the active involvement of the reader and the presentation of authority, whereas Express Tribune blogs are more inclined to take a cautious position and show differences in the editorial policy and the choice of rhetorical tricks.

4.4. Comparison of Interactive and Interactional Meta-Discourse Markers

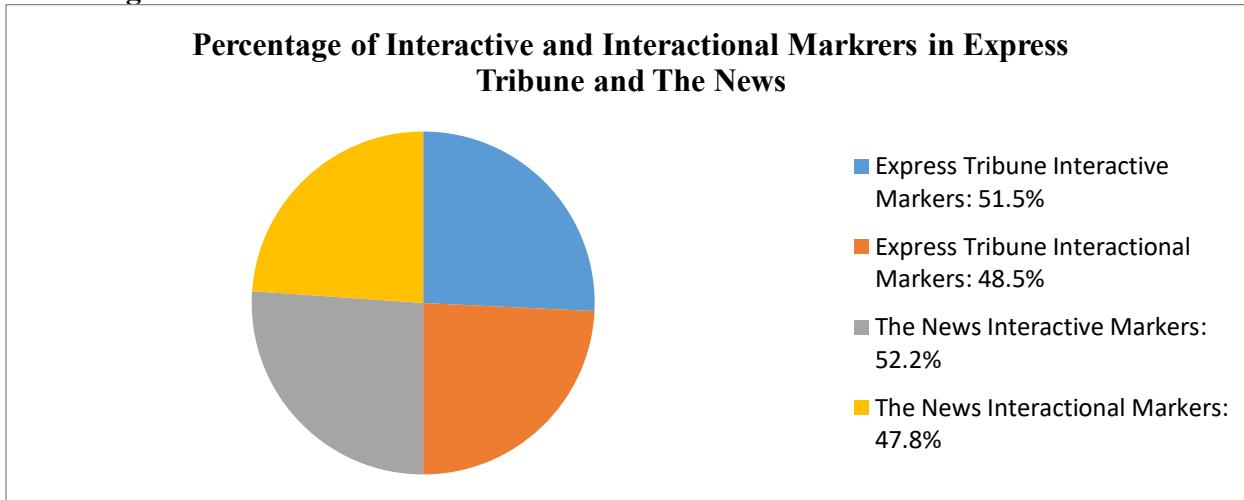
This part is a compilation and comparison of the general frequency and distribution of interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers in the political blogs chosen to establish the predominance of the two. This comparison shows the level of structural direction and reader/stanced involvement in the communication, balanced by the writers.



Table 5: Comparative Distribution by Newspaper

Newspaper	Interactive	Interactional	Total
Express Tribune	191	180	371
The News	191	175	366

Figure 3. Pie-Chart Of Interactive and Interactional Meta Discourse Markers



The comparative analysis shows that both interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers serve complementary roles in the political blogs. Interactive markers occur slightly more often and indicate the need to organise argumentation, relate ideas, and guide readers through complex political arguments. The near equivalence of the interactional indicators, however, is a sign of the significance of the writer's position, conviction, and involvement with readers, which are key factors in the opinionated style of political blogs.

DISCUSSION

The study examined 12 political blogs in Express Tribune and The News, showing that the authors use both interactive and interactional meta-discourse markers extensively to accomplish a variety of communicative objectives. The findings confirm Hyland's (2005) theoretical basis, which holds that interactive marks structure the text and direct the reader, while interactional marks are tied to the writer's position and appeal to the readership. The use of interactive markers, primarily transitions and frame markers, and their dominant role also points out the significance of organising political arguments. Relativising words like however, therefore, and on the other hand were widely employed to relate opposing standpoints, express cause and effect relationships, or provide corroborating evidence. Biber et al, (1998) recognise that textual coherence and the support of textual understanding in complex discourse require transitions. Similar trends are highlighted by Fu and Hyland (2014), who reveal that transitions assist writers in linking ideas and providing readers with orientation along the lines of the argument. The results of the current research are consistent with these assertions, as transitions became one of the most common interactive meta-discourse markers in both newspapers. This frequency suggests that political bloggers need to maintain logical flow and coherence when dealing with



complex political issues. The results substantiate this opinion, indicating that only the presence of interactive markers can provide coherence. In contrast, the presence of interactional markers enables the writers to position themselves, demonstrate evaluation, and involve readers. A balance is essential in the field of political blogs, where authors must manage complex information while also convincing viewers.

CONCLUSION

The current research examined the application of interactive and interactional states of the meta-discourse markers in writing across 12 political blogs in The Express Tribune and The News using a corpus-based method. Hyland (2005) suggests that meta-discourse helps writers structure texts and establish relationships with readers. The results indicate that political bloggers use both types of meta-discourse strategically to achieve textual coherence and interpersonal interaction. It is the assumption that Bednarek (2010) makes that interactional meta-discourse markers play a central role in positioning and persuasion. This assertion is confirmed in the current paper, as hedges, boosters, engagement markers, attitude markers, and self-mentions enable bloggers to express evaluation, exert authority, and engage the audience. A combination of qualitative discourse analysis and a corpus approach may offer better insights into how authors negotiate stance, ideology, and audience involvement in political discourse. Finally, the research establishes that political blogging is an effective process that requires a delicate balance between interactive and interactional meta-discourse as a prerequisite of coherent and persuasive content. These linguistic strategies not only help one obtain a better understanding of media texts but also provide practical advice to anyone who wants to inform, persuade, and establish contact with the readers in politically controversial situations.

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