

Metadiscursive devices in EMI lectures conducted by non-native English-speaking lecturers: A case at Duy Tan university, Vietnam

Các phương tiện siêu ngôn ngữ trong các bài giảng chuyên ngành bằng Tiếng Anh của giảng viên không phải người bản xứ: Một nghiên cứu ở Đại học Duy Tân, Việt Nam

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Abstract

Universities worldwide have been rapidly utilising English-medium instruction (EMI) in the age of globalisation and internationalisation for its various benefits. Different aspects of EMI implementation have been studied, yet linguistic features of EMI lectures are still under consideration, especially in the context of Vietnam. Against this backdrop, the current study examined metadiscursive devices in EMI lectures conducted by a non-native English-speaking lecturer at Duy Tan University, a notable private university in central Vietnam, using the taxonomy developed by Dafouz & Perucha (2010). It was found that many MDs are employed in three different phases in their EMI classes, including: Discourse structuring, Interaction and Conclusion phases, aiming to improve the effectiveness of the lectures. The findings imply the importance of MDs in EMI academic lectures to enhance the effectiveness of content transmission and support students' comprehension, hence may contribute significantly to the development of EMI teacher training programmes.

Keywords: Metadiscursive devices; EMI lectures; non-native English speaking lecturer; Duy Tan university.

Tóm tắt

Các trường đại học trên toàn thế giới đang nhanh chóng áp dụng chương trình giảng dạy bằng tiếng Anh (EMI) trong thời đại toàn cầu hóa và quốc tế hóa vì những lợi ích khác nhau của nó. Các khía cạnh khác nhau của việc triển khai EMI đã được nghiên cứu, tuy nhiên các đặc điểm về ngôn ngữ của các bài giảng EMI vẫn đang được nghiên cứu, đặc biệt là trong bối cảnh ở Việt Nam. Trong tình hình đó, nghiên cứu này đã đề cập đến các phương tiện siêu ngôn ngữ (Metadiscursive devices) trong các bài giảng EMI do giảng viên không phải người bản ngữ thực hiện tại Đại học Duy Tân, một đại học tư thục danh tiếng ở miền Trung Việt Nam, bằng cách sử dụng bảng phân loại do Dafouz & Perucha (2010) phát triển. Người ta thấy rằng nhiều Phương tiện siêu ngôn ngữ được sử dụng trong ba giai đoạn khác nhau trong các bài giảng EMI, bao gồm: Cấu trúc diễn ngôn, Tương tác và Kết luận, nhằm nâng cao hiệu quả của bài giảng. Các phát hiện cho thấy tầm quan trọng của các Phương tiện siêu ngôn ngữ trong các bài giảng học thuật EMI để nâng cao hiệu quả truyền tải nội dung và hỗ trợ sự hiểu bài của sinh viên, do đó có thể đóng góp đáng kể vào sự phát triển của các chương trình đào tạo giáo viên EMI.

Từ khóa: Phương tiện siêu ngôn ngữ, bài giảng chuyên ngành bằng tiếng Anh, giảng viên không phải người bản xứ, Đại học Duy Tân.

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1. Rationale

In the age of internationalization, to prepare a better labor force for the country, EMI programs are conducted at many Asian universities, namely Korea (Kym & Kym, 2014), China (Zhang, 2021), Thailand (Tang, 2020), and Vietnam (Vu & Burns, 2014). In Vietnam, because of the inadequate English proficiency of students, the question of whether EMI programs are effective or not is regularly proposed.

Different factors of lecture discourse are considered to understand the comprehension of students in EMI classrooms, like speech rate, cultural differences, note-taking practices, listening strategies, and discourse organization. According to Pérez & Macià (2002), besides students' proficiency in English, metadiscursive markers are the key factors to be considered in affecting lecture comprehension.

When communicating, either in spoken or written mode, people use discursal elements by which they can construct, maintain, and direct their interactions to their receptive audience (Farahani & Kazemian, 2021). Metadiscourse is a cover term for words used by authors or speakers to show direction and goals in their spoken/ written text. In this sense, metadiscourse depicts the writer's or speaker's attempts to influence the text receiver's view (Hyland, 2005). In other words, metadiscourse allows the writer to "guide, direct, and inform" the reader on how he (the writer or speaker) intends the reader or listener to respond to the text content.

Various experimental studies have been conducted on students to test the efficacy of metadiscourse for lecture comprehension, concluding that metadiscourse enhances understanding in students with low English levels (Kuhi et al., 2014; Pérez & Macià, 2002). Existing studies have emphasized that

metadiscourse is essential in effective content communication in classes. Realizing the need to address these issues, the present study seeks to explore the use of metadiscursive devices in EMI lectures in the Vietnamese ELF context by studying the metadiscursive devices used by an EMI lecturer teaching at a reputable university in Vietnam.

2. Literature review

2.1. Metadiscursive devices

Metadiscursive devices (MDs) are words or phrases carrying the function of metadiscourse in texts, which are to organize the content, express speakers' attitude, provide evidence, connect the audience to the speaker, and, most importantly, ensure that there are smooth flows from one idea to the next (Cuevas-Alonso & Míguez-Álvarez, 2021). Although research on spoken academic metadiscourse still needs to catch up to its written counterpart, over the last 15 years, a large amount of research has been carried out with university lectures about how they are structured (Camiciottoli, 2004). The spoken genres studied include academic lectures (Perez Llantada, 2006), academic conference talks (Luukka, 1994; Thompson, 2003), and other spoken registers.

When compared across speech and writing, discourse markers differ in both form and function (Flowerdew, 1994). However, specifically, speech and writing are not two distinct categories. Degrees of 'writtenness' and 'spokenness' depend, among other factors, on the degree to which a text is planned or unplanned (Flowerdew & Tauroza, 1995). Lectures are spoken texts but have features generally associated with written text. Although they are not so carefully planned, lectures are more planned than spontaneous casual conversation (Flowerdew & Tauroza, 1995). Therefore, frameworks and models used to investigate written data can be re-applied when studying MDs in lectures.

Many metadiscourse taxonomies have been suggested by various linguists, namely Hyland (2005), Crismore (1984), and Kopple (1985). In this research, the framework suggested by Dafouz & Perucha (2010) is used to analyze the metadiscursive devices used in tertiary lectures. According to them, their framework could facilitate a more comprehensive degree of study.

2.2. Metadiscourse and EMI lectures

Lectures are considered an educational genre because their interest has been mainly in organizational features and discourse markers' role in lecture comprehension (Malavska, 2016). The metadiscourse is a frequent topic in investigations dealing with the comprehension needs of university students during lectures. Indeed, as lectures are "detailed and extended monologues" that impose "heavy cognitive demands" on the listeners, they are challenging to process, especially for L2 students (Lynch, 2011). MDs play an indispensable role in the monologic setting of university lectures. Previous studies on ELF agreed that communicative effectiveness depends more on the ability to use metadiscursive strategies than on formal language skills since native-speaker standards should not be used for ELF speakers (Broggini & Murphy, 2017).

There is a concern that 'English' used in EMI programs is only based on a native speaker model. But it is the reality that multilinguals who use English now share ownership of the language (Brumfit, 2001). The internationalisation of universities is thus going hand-in-hand with 'Englishisation' but Jenkins (2011) argues that English language policy makers have yet to consider the effects of the emergence of new varieties of English and the use of English as a lingua franca on language education policy (ELF). Universities and researchers must pay attention to the formation

of new English varieties and incorporate these developments into their language policy, especially when it comes to successfully implementing EMI courses.

However, studies on classroom metadiscourse are still far from enough, let alone EMI classes. Besides, the study on metadiscourse in teachers' discourse still needs to be improved. Accordingly, this paper aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of metadiscourse in spoken language in EMI lectures. For all the reasons above, an EMI lecturer is chosen as the participant of this study to be observed and examined to discover the use of MDs in EMI lectures.

3. Methodology

3.1. Data description

The data presented in this study is from a spoken corpus that comprises 8 EMI university lectures, with 5 hours 32 minutes English speaking time of the teacher (about 17,000 words). The lecturer participating in this project is Indian and has worked at a well-recognized institution offering EMI programs in Central Vietnam. According to Kachru's (1985) three circles of the English language, India uses English as a second language. India contains a significant proportion of the world's speakers of English as a second language. According to a national survey in 1997 (Graddol, 2003), there were around 186 million English speakers in India. Considering the popularity of Indian English in Vietnamese settings, especially in information technological aspects, studying EMI lectures conducted by Indian lecturers could bring new helpful insights into improving the quality of these programs.

The English proficiency of the lecturer is sufficient for tertiary lecturers, and he has taught various EMI courses for more than five

years. The students in this EMI class are fourth-year students majoring in Computer Science. Their English is not clearly identified because they do not take any English entrance exam before the course. All the lectures are recorded in their naturalistic conditions in May and June 2022.

3.2. Data analysis

3.2.1. Procedures

The recorded videos were listened to carefully and transcribed manually: 5 hours and 32 minutes were carefully transcribed to around 17,000 words. The use of metadiscourse

markers was extensively examined repeatedly and got double-checked by another researcher.

3.2.2. Classification of metadiscursive devices

The taxonomy chosen for this study is suggested by Dafouz & Perucha (2010), which is suitable for analyzing metadiscursive devices in multilingual lectures. Based on other frameworks, to build a more comprehensive taxonomy, one more component, "Attitude marker," is added to this one in the Interaction phase.

Table 1: Phase analysis and its relation to metadiscourse categories and functions (Dafouz & Perucha, 2010)

Phases	Metadiscourse category	Function of metadiscursive devices	Examples
Discourse structuring phase (DS)	Openers	Signal the formal beginning of a class	<i>Today, we are going to talk</i>
	Sequencers	Mark particular positions within a series	<i>First, then, next,</i>
	Topicalisers	Indicate introduction of new topics/ topic shifts	<i>Another concept</i>
	Prospective markers	Refer forwards to future topics/ sections in the lecture/ other lectures	<i>We will see later</i>
	Retrospective markers	Refer backwards to previous topics/ sections in the lecture/ other lectures	<i>As I mentioned before</i>
Interaction phase (INT)	Questions	Request student participation/ check comprehensions	<i>Who can answer this?</i>
	Commentaries	Direct address to the audience/ Inclusive expressions	<i>Remember; you know; We all know;</i>
	Apologetic comments	Apologize for some lack/ deficiency	<i>I have to apologize for...; sorry</i>
	Contextual comments	Comment on situational features or aspects outside the actual content of the lesson	<i>We are going to be recorded today; Is it too hot...?</i>

	Attitude markers	Express the speaker's opinion and attitude towards the propositional information	<i>I agree, surprisingly, unfortunately</i>
Conclusion phase (C)	Closing markers	Indicate the formal closing of the lecture	<i>I will finish here</i>
	Recapitulation markers	Summarize the main ideas in the lecture	<i>Today we saw</i>
	Prospective markers	Refer forwards to future topics to be dealt with in other lectures	<i>Tomorrow we will cover</i>
	Retrospective markers	Refer backwards to the previous topics/sections of the lecture	<i>What we learned today was</i>

4. Findings & Discussions

The taxonomy adapted from the one suggested by Dafouz & Perucha (2010) reveals the types, frequencies, and use of MDs in EMI lectures conducted by a non-native English-speaking lecturer. In general, there are 668

metadiscursive devices identified in the data, among which devices for the Interaction phase occupy the highest proportion (310), followed by the Discourse structuring phase (328), and the phase that consists of the fewest MDs is the Conclusion (30).

Table 2: Overview of Metadiscursive devices used by the Lecturer in 8 lectures.

Discourse structuring phase	Frequency (5 hours 32 minutes)	Metadiscursive category	Frequency (5 hours 32 minutes)	Metadiscursive category	Frequency (5 hours 32 minutes)
Openers	22	Questions	56	Closing markers	7
Sequencers	52	Commentaries	196	Recapitulation markers	3
Topicalisers	142	Apologetic comments	5	Prospective markers	13
Prospective markers	45	Attitude markers	68	Retrospective markers	7
Retrospective markers	49	Contextual comments	3		
Total	310	Total	328	Total	30

4.1. Discourse structuring phase (DS)

Regarding the distribution, DS markers are mainly found at the beginning of the lectures. However, they also appear throughout the lessons, such as Sequencers and Topicalisers, to guide the audience or to refer to Prospective and Retrospective information in other parts of the lectures or other lectures.

Topicalisers (DS-T) are the most popular MD used in the lectures. DS-T is employed throughout the lesson, from the introduction to the conclusion phase, to assist the lecturer in structuring their classes. The lecturer used 142 DS-Ts to mark the new topics and points in his four recorded lectures. Particularly, the lecturer often used DS-T when he changed the slides. He asked students to look at the slides while employing the DS-T to guide them about what they had to do next. The structure "Now I will + tell/ show" was a prevailing DS-T found in the data collected from the lecturer.

(1) *Now I will tell you how to assess a software process, a business model, how to improve the process. So please listen carefully to me.*

The adverb "now" is used in almost all DS-Ts here to signal that a new topic will be introduced. DS-Ts account for 45.8% (142 out of 310) of all MDs used in this phase by the lecturer.

Openers (DS-O) are the least common MDs used in the DS, only 22 out of 668 times in total, which is 3.3%. This type of MDs is always used at the beginning to help illustrate the structure and main content of the lesson. The lecturer tends to repeat this device a few times to introduce the lesson before beginning. Therefore, students can understand the lecture's main content more clearly.

(2) *"Today we will be discussing ISO, very important, and I can say if you want to discuss ISO, I can even discuss ISO for one year,..."*

The lecturer uses 52 **Sequencers** (DS-S), 45 **Prospective markers** (DS-P), and 49 **Retrospective markers** (DS-R) compared to other markers.

The use of sequencers was found to be in correspondence with the teacher and student talking time. For example, about 52 DS-S were identified in his eight classes, mainly monologues. He tended to employ DS-S mainly in the introduction part of the lesson, trying to provide an overview structure of the class before going into details.

(3) *First of all, we have to understand the basics of Six Sigma. OK, I will tell you, after that, the strategy, then some cost of quality... I will tell you one by one later.*

DS-Ps refer to future topics or sections in the lecture or other lessons. Overall, in DS, Prospective markers comprise 45 of the total MDs used.

(4) *"OK, after that, I will tell you the strategy, then some cost of quality, and how much it takes to maintain quality. I will tell you one by one later."*

Regarding distribution, the lecturer employs DS-Ps throughout the lessons but mainly at the class's beginning or end. DS-Ps employed by him predominantly follow the structure: "I will show/tell..." together with adverbs of time: *after that, later, tomorrow, then, etc.* This combination helps distinguish the "I will show/tell" structure from the Topicalisers (DS-T).

DS-Rs are reminders of previously presented materials in the lecture or other lectures. In those lectures, the use of these devices is quite similar to Prospective markers, which is 49 MDs.

(5) *"So I have told you what a firewall is."*

(6) *"And I have told you in all classes that we're not here to discuss the development, ..."*

These markers are used throughout the lectures to remind students about the knowledge they have learned earlier. The quantity of DS-Rs used does not fluctuate significantly. He maintains a certain number of DS-R in his lectures.

4.2. Interaction phase (INT)

In this study, the lecturer employed more interactional MDs than DS MDs, indicating his attempts to be more evaluative and convey his perspective. Of all the three phases, the Interaction phase has the most MDs, with 327 devices.

Questions (INT-Q) proposed by lecturers fulfill two functions. Firstly, they seek to activate students' thinking skills and participation; then, they aim to check students' comprehension. Some examples of Questions asked in studied lectures are:

(7) *"What is a firewall, everybody? I can tell you. I will show you some demonstrations..."*,

(8) *"Do you know what happened? Your ID and password will be..."*,

All the lectures are monologues, and there is rarely or no interaction between the lecturer and students in his classrooms. Most of his questions tend to attract students' attention instead of checking their knowledge or comprehension. His questions also aim to lead to a new point in his lecture, which means here they function as Topicalisers.

Commentaries (INT-C) help to establish a connection between speakers and listeners by directly addressing the audience or using inclusive expressions. Among the 5 types of MDs employed by the lecturer in this phase, INT-Cs are the dominating ones with 196

times. He uses many INT-Cs when delivering his lectures as well as giving examples. Following are some examples of commentary expressions:

(9) *"Remember, team performance only depends on..."*

(10) *"And we all say, it is the first line of defence."*

The popularity of INT-C in these lectures can be attributed to his lectures primarily being monologues. With the abundance of commentaries, these lectures appear to contain less theoretical but practical knowledge, which can help simplify the lectures for students.

Apologetic markers are used to apologize for some deficiencies in the speech of lecturers, such as the lack of foreign language proficiency. This is the only device the lecturer seldom uses in his lectures, only five times. The lecturer uses apologetic markers to express his attitude and emphasize the critical information related to a specific situation.

(11) *"I'm sorry to inform you that none of the restaurants of Vietnamese cuisine are iso certified."*

(12) *"In fact, we need to cover it practically but I'm sorry that we can't because you're all starters..."*

Attitude markers (INT-A) express the speaker's opinion and attitude toward propositional information. Nearly 21% (68 out of 328) of MDs used by the lecturer in this phase are INT-A, distributed relatively equally among his lectures. The lecturer usually expresses his opinions and evaluation of the content he will deliver later. Some commonly used INT-As are:

(13) *"Even you know, I'm very proud to inform you this: Even in Hong Kong, ..."*

(14) *"So this lecture will be very easy, very simple."*

Besides emphasizing the significance of the information that he is going to present, the lecturer sometimes expresses his evaluation and opinions about the content, *"This surprising information,"* and *"This lecture will be very easy."* The lecturer also uses Self-mentions, which is also a type of interactional metadiscourse, to tell his stories or express his feelings to engage the students in his lectures: *"I'm very proud to inform you," "I'm very happy," "I don't like Capstone."*

Contextual markers (INT-CT) deal with situational features or aspects outside the actual content of the lesson, such as the weather and the context. In all classes the researcher has attended, he barely employs contextual markers to talk to his students during the lesson about another subject.

4.3. Conclusion phase

Almost all classes have **Closing markers (C-C)** to indicate the formal closing of the lectures.

(15) *So I've just completed the lectures about...*

(16) *So, that's it for today.*

C-C markers can be viewed as a minor part of the Discourse structuring phase because it helps organise the structure of the last part of the lectures. These devices help students recognize the lesson's ending and pay attention to the instruction for further reading, practice or the consolidation of the lesson.

Recapitulation markers (C-R) are used to summarise the main ideas in the lecture. The lecturer does not always provide a summary part for students. He sometimes repeats some prominent points of what he has just lectured.

(17) *"Now look at this everybody, the last slide for all of you today. Please see this. ...Remember, team performance only depends on team leader performance. If the team leader*

is not strict, not on time, ... then let me tell you, the project will fail. Remember that. That's all about the lesson."

There are also **Prospective markers (C-P)** and **Retrospective markers (C-RT)** in this phase. These two markers are similar to those in the Discourse structuring phase; therefore, to distinguish from the DS-P and DS-R, I only consider C-P and C-RT, used in the Conclusion phase, when the lecturers summarize the lesson and prepare for the next ones.

In this phase, C-P markers are used to signal the content or work of future classes:

(18) *"I will show you on Thursday."*

(19) *"Next time, fix your problems and bring your project for me to check."*

C-RT markers are easily confused with Recapitulation markers, where lecturers summarise the main points of the lessons for students.

(20) *We've talked previously about what we mean...*

(21) *From what you have learnt earlier, ...*

The Conclusion phase is the one that has the fewest MDs. The lecturer only spared a little time for the consolidation part, as presented in the Findings.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

The lecturer in this study is a non-native English-speaking lecturer who has to use English in an ELF context where English is not the students' first language. He employs many metadiscursive devices to organize the lectures and engage the students more. Interactional MDs are utilized regularly to involve students in the lesson. However, because his lectures are mostly monologic and still lack other interactive activities, students whose insufficient English language proficiency may find it challenging to catch up with their lessons.

Due to the limited corpus size (5 hours and 32 minutes) and the participation of only one, the study's reliability is limited, despite its capacity to provide novel insights on MDs in EMI lectures. Future studies can assemble a more extensive corpus to reinforce the findings. On the other hand, most prior studies on MDs, whether in written or spoken registers, are descriptive studies that characterize and describe the usage of MDs in text organization and comprehension facilitation. Therefore, an additional empirical study is required to explore the impact of MDs on listening comprehension and how lecturers might more effectively utilize these devices when presenting lectures.

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