

## Metadiscourse Markers in Academic Oral Presentations: A Corpus Analysis

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### Abstract

Academic Oral Presentation (AOP) is a key academic genre for undergraduates. In order to present effectively knowing the linguistic features such as metadiscourse markers is very crucial. The objective of this study is to investigate the type of metadiscourse markers used in AOPs in the English Language (EL) and discipline based (DB) classes. The study adopted Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of metadiscourse to analyse forty group AOPs in both the EL and DB courses. Findings of the study show slight variations across courses in the use of the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers. Results of this study may help novice undergraduates to be aware of the linguistic features used in AOPs. The implications of the study are genre awareness of the AOP can help students to present effectively. Further recommendation given are conducting mock presentations and other activities to make students aware of the linguistic features, flow of the AOP genre, and how the AOP genre is conducted within their discipline.

**Keywords** : Metadiscourse Markers, Academic Oral Presentations, Corpus Analysis

### Introduction

Academic oral presentation (AOP) is an important oral genre for students at the tertiary level. When academic oral presentations (AOPs) are evaluated and graded, the task is challenging (Hadi et al., 2019) and there is anxiety (Kho and Ting, 2021, Grieve et al, 2021). Students are afraid of getting evaluated by examiners and have trouble remembering their points which causes anxiety too (Shahar and Abdul Raof, 2021). In the context of ESL, in order to produce grammatically correct sentences, students struggle in memorising their points, and end up reading wholly from their powerpoint slides (Maktiar, 2019). As in any other genre, there are specific linguistic features which are pertinent for effective oral presentations. Linguistic features in conference presentations that have been analysed include the use of active voice,

discourse markers, boundary markers and self-mentions (Rowley-Jolivet, 2002; Webber, 2005, Lee, 2009). The presence of such linguistic features typifies a more interactive spoken genre which involves managing information and engaging with a live audience. In order to present effectively knowing the linguistic features that will realize the rhetorical moves of the AOP is very crucial. Awareness of the linguistic features will help undergraduates acquire skills and knowledge in oral presentations which could serve to be less face threatening to the presenters and to provide them with the necessary components that AOPs should have. In AOPs, speakers have to engage and interact with their audience. Thus, the study of the linguistic features is significant among tertiary level students in order to present effectively. The linguistic elements examined in previous oral genre studies include metadiscourse markers in lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015), text structuring (Thompson, 2003), signalling transitions in OPs (Anthony et al, 2007; Kibler et al 2013,), interpersonal features in lectures (Lee, 2009; Morell, 2007), academic conference (Thompson, 2003), and stance in academic speech (Yang, 2014). The linguistic elements such as metadiscourse markers have to be used by undergraduates to help them organize their points and help listeners comprehend information better. The linguistic features enable undergraduates to present convincingly. Therefore, the present study addressed this gap by investigating the linguistic features that realise the moves that are prevalent in the AOP genre in both the English language and discipline-based courses. The linguistic features examined are the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers which include frame markers, transitions, endophoric markers, evidentials, code glosses, hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions and engagement markers.

### **Literature Review**

In any oral or written genre, a presenter or writer needs to know the suitable linguistic expressions and effective strategies used to make their audience or readers understand the flow of the text. As Kanoksilapatham (2005) states, genre analysis can help explain rhetorical aspects but a register-based or corpus-based analysis can shed light on linguistic choices within the discourse. In AOPs, how presenters move from one slide to another can confuse the audience (Anthony et al, 2007). In this regard, the choice of linguistic expressions can ensure smooth and clear AOPs. In addition, corpus-based studies have shown that non-native speakers have a tendency to present in a more formal style, with many linguistic features similar to academic writing (Zareva, 2009, 2011). In another study, Zareva (2013) claims where AOPs are concerned, giving successful and convincing oral presentations from a public speaking view than a linguistic one has been considered more important. Research on linguistic expressions in AOPs is scarce (Zareva, 2009; Yang, 2014), hence it is important to conduct analysis of the linguistic features as it is useful in providing information on the linguistic expressions that realize the rhetorical moves of AOPs. Students need more specific language guidelines (Barrett & Liu, 2016), and as shown in the literature, few studies have investigated linguistic features in AOPs among ESL learners.

### **Previous Studies on Linguistic Features in Spoken Genre**

Previous studies that have investigated linguistic features in the oral genre include Rowley-Jolivet and Carter-Thomas (2005), Thompson (1994), Weissberg (1993), Cheng (2012), Zareva (2009, 2011, 2016), Yang, (2014), Fernandez-Polo (2014, 2017) and, Lee and Subtirelu (2015). These studies looked at formulaic expressions, lexical bundles, metadiscourse markers,

stance, clauses, passive structures, personal pronouns, adverbials, multi-word verbs and transition signals.

In the literature, studies on metadiscourse and spoken genre looked at classroom lessons, university lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015; Lee, 2009; Thompson, 2003), academic student presentations (Magnuczne Godo, 2006), academic speech (Yang, 2014) and metadiscourse in relation to vocabulary level (Correia et al., 2015). A number of studies have also investigated linguistic features in spoken genres across disciplines (e.g. Lee & Subtirelu, 2015; Iberri-Shea, 2009). As evidence, Lee and Subtirelu (2015) compared the use of metadiscourse in EAP classrooms and university content-area lectures. Their study adopted Hyland's (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse. They found that there is a strong link between the use of metadiscourse and the context and content of teaching and learning. In the research, metadiscourse markers were found to be used differently across the two disciplines. There was greater use of metadiscourse in the EAP classrooms as compared to the content-area lecturers. This corroborates with Khedri et al.'s (2015) study on RA abstracts who also found variations in the use of interactional metadiscourse markers between two disciplines.

Magnuczne Godo (2006) also worked on the interactive strategies employed in academic student presentations among English major college students. The study found significant differences in the use of interactive and dialogic elements between effective and less effective presentations. The effective presenters applied more interactive and dialogic elements while the less successful presenters used less metadiscourse markers. In another study, Correia et al., (2015) investigated the use of metadiscourse and its relation to lexical levels. In their study, they found that non specialists have problems identifying some metadiscourse acts. The study further showed that as more difficult vocabulary is used or the topic of the talk is complex, there are lesser assumptions made about what the audience know. Metadiscourse markers help the listener organise and evaluate information in a presentation (Crissmore et al., 1993).

Iberri-Shea (2009) investigated language variation in university student public speech between two disciplines. In her study of 102 classroom presentations in Business Administration and Education disciplines she concludes that public speech could help improve language learning in the disciplines. Additionally, Wang and Slater (2016) highlighted the importance of cohesive devices to establish cohesion in texts. They conclude that the use of 'so' can be used to imply 'as a result', 'therefore' but mostly as a 'filler' or 'transition' to the next mini-topic. Cheong (2012) examined use of stance expressions and other linguistic devices to fulfil various metafunctions in oral presentations. This study involved six participants and findings showed that students relied greatly on stance expression and employed stronger stance markers. Likewise, Yang (2014) examined stance and engagement markers in academic conferences. The study of 44 presentations by NNS shows how presenters used personal pronouns, hedges and imperative forms to deliver their presentation coherently. In the local context, Wan Hassan (2014) conducted a study on 20 academic group presentations among polytechnic students to investigate the beginning and end of the academic presentations in English language class. The group presentations consisted of 17,159 tokens. The findings revealed students had linguistic problems such as lack of transitional markers used. The study suggests that students need scaffolding and the role of the lecturer in providing sufficient support or guidelines.

### Metadiscourse Markers in AOPs

Another major linguistic feature in genre analysis is metadiscourse markers, where studies have been conducted in various written and oral discourse. The term 'metadiscourse' which simply means 'talk about talk' (Hyland, 2005; 2010) is also referred as 'metatalk' (Schiffrin, 1980) 'meta-text' (Mauranen, 1993), and 'discourse reflexivity' (Mauranen, 2010). Many studies have been conducted on metadiscourse in written genre that focused on various areas such as abstracts in RA (Hyland & Tze, 2004; Samraj, 2005; Chan & Ebrahimi, 2012), written academic text (Vande Kopple, 1988; Crismore, 1989; Mauranen, 1993), theses and dissertations (Hyland, 2004). However, not much research has investigated the use of metadiscourse in academic oral genres such as, AOPs. Metadiscourse studies in oral genre include EAP lessons and university lectures (Lee & Subtirelu, 2015; Yaacob, 2013), text structuring (Thompson, 2003), signalling transitions in OPs (Anthony et al., 2007; Kibler et al., 2014), interpersonal features in lectures (Lee, 2009; Morell, 2007), academic conference (Thompson, 2003), stance in academic speech (Yang, 2014), and interactive strategies in students' academic presentations (Magnuczne Godo, 2006). Evidence suggests that metadiscourse features benefit listeners who can comprehend information presented (Bu, 2014; Hyland, 2005). Therefore, exploring metadiscourse features in undergraduates' AOPs is needed to help them be better presenters.

For Mauranen (2001) the role of metadiscourse is more crucial in spoken genre than written genre as managing spoken interaction is greater in 'real time' in front of audience. Metadiscourse markers help speakers communicate their ideas effectively to their audience. Metadiscourse is a 'self-reflective method that the writer or speaker makes use to negotiate interactional meaning in a text, assisting the speaker to express a viewpoint and engage with audience as members of a particular community'. (Hyland, 2005, p.37). Hence, it plays a crucial role in organising the discourse, engaging the audience and signalling a speaker's attitude. Fa-gen (2012) describes metadiscourse as a commonly used term that refers to an interesting and new approach to conceptualize interactions between text producers and their texts and between text producers and users. Some refer to metadiscourse as features of rhetorical organization. However, scholars seem to declare this term as being fuzzy as shown in the literature (Swales, 1990; Hyland, 2005; Fa-gen, 2012) and thus, it is difficult to define its boundaries or in other words which text features are to be considered metadiscourse. Hyland (2005) asserts that metadiscourse is connected to interaction which means that metadiscourse should be identified in terms of functions.

Metadiscourse markers based on Hyland's (2005) model are categorized into two main types, which is as interactive and interactional markers. He states that genres incorporate metadiscourse markers to relate to the audience. For Vande Kopple (1985), the function of metadiscourse markers is to help speakers and writers convey attitudes towards their spoken or written text. The speakers in oral presentations can only be convincing if they apply strategies that will attract the audience. These strategies include applying interactive and interaction markers (Hyland, 2010). Adel (2010) and Hyland (2010) claim that metadiscourse markers function similarly in spoken and written discourse. Based on Hyland's (2005) taxonomy, the interactive markers help guide the reader through text by the use of transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses. The interactional markers are more personal and concern the "writer's effort to control the level of personality in a text and establish a suitable relationship to his or her data, arguments and audience, marking the degree of intimacy, the expression of attitude, the communication of commitments, and the extent of reader involvement" (Hyland, 2010, p.128). Interaction

markers include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mention and engagement markers. The table below summarizes the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers.

**Table 1:**  
**Hyland's (2005) Model of Metadiscourse Markers**

Category		Function	Examples
Interactive (Help to guide listener through the text)	Transitions	Indicating transitions between clauses	And/ furthermore / similarly/ thus/ therefore/ likewise
	Frame Markers	Signal text boundaries	First/ then / finally/ to conclude
	Endophoric Markers	Referring to information from other parts of the text	As noted above.../See figure...
	Evidentials	Introducing evidence/ideas from other sources	According to .../
	Code Glosses	Clarifying ideational content	In other words / that is/ namely
Interactional (Involve the listener in the text)	Hedges	Withhold commitment or views/ mitigate the force of statements	Possible/ might/ seems/ perhaps, believe
	Boosters/Emphatics	Express certainty/increase the force of propositions	Obvious/clearly/ demonstrate
	Attitude markers	Express author's affective attitude to the information conveyed	Agree/prefer/should/ need/ unfortunately
	Self-mentions/ Person Markers	Explicit references to the author	I/ the authors/ we/ the study claims/our/ ours
	Engagement markers/Relational Markers	Explicitly involve readers in the text	Consider/ you can see that/ we/ you/let's/ take a look

Speakers or writers depend on metadiscourse markers to show organization and explicitly direct the audience to follow through the discourse (Thompson, 2003; Hyland, 2005). Following conventions of the discourse community, by using metadiscourse markers does not necessarily mean communication is successful. Nevertheless, metadiscourse markers are important linguistic features in AOPs. By using appropriate discourse markers such as, '*to sum up*' and '*on the other hand*', it will provide greater fluency of the speech.

To fill the research gap, the present study investigated how metadiscourse markers are used in undergraduates AOPs and the similarities and differences of their usage between the English language and discipline-based courses.

### Research Objectives

1. To identify the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in the AOPs
2. To examine the similarities and differences in the use of the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers between the English language and discipline-based courses AOPs?

### Research Questions

1. What are the common interactive and interactional discourse markers in the AOPs?
2. What are the similarities and differences in the use of the interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers between the English language and discipline-based courses AOPs?

### Methodology

#### Sample

The study involved third year undergraduates from a public university in Malaysia. The undergraduates involved in the present study were the same for both the EL and DB AOPs, with a total number of 90 undergraduates for all the 40 group AOPs. The AOPs were conducted in groups of three to four members. The courses chosen were core courses of the faculty and the English language course which required undergraduates to perform AOPs.

#### Instrumentation

Metadiscourse markers were identified based on Hyland's (2005, 2008) categorization of verbal expressions metadiscourse. To determine the use of metadiscourse markers in the present study, the concordancing tool Wordsmith V.5 (Scott, 2008) was used to find the frequency of metadiscourse markers used in the two corpora, one of the English Language (EL) and the other from the discipline-based (DB) courses. The Wordsmith tool programme was used for all the 40 group AOPs. The two types of metadiscourse markers identified were interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers. Following the corpus-linguistic analysis to retrieve the metadiscourse markers, a manual analysis of each metadiscourse marker was done to ensure irrelevant examples were excluded as some may be used as fillers as noted in a previous study by Wang and Slater (2016).

#### Data Collection

The corpus of 40 group AOPs contained 94, 888 tokens as shown in the table 2 below.

**Table 2:**  
**Number of Tokens in EL and DB AOPs**

Course	Number of AOPs	Tokens
English language course (EL)	20 AOPs	34,745
Discipline based courses (DB)	20 AOPs	60,143
TOTAL	40 AOPs	94,888

As shown in the table 2 above, although the number of tokens for EL AOPs and DB AOPs were not the same, the differences of the size of the corpora will not affect the findings of the study as the linguistic features have been normalised per 10,000 words. The duration of the EL AOP

was between 20 to 30 minutes while for the DB AOPs it was between 20 minutes to 75 minutes.

## Results And Discussion

### Transitional Markers

Transition markers are used to show relations between main clauses such as 'in addition', 'furthermore', 'thus' and 'in conclusion'. Based on Riley et al (2007), there are six categories of transitions. The six categories of transitions are : addition (e.g. and, besides, furthermore, in addition, moreover), showing cause-effect relationships (e.g. so, because, due to, in order to), showing chronological relationship between ideas (e.g. first, so, then, next), consequence (e.g. therefore, hence, consequently, accordingly, as a result), comparing ideas and contrasting ideas(e.g. but, yet, however, in spite of, in contrast to this, nevertheless, not, on the contrary, whereas). Some researchers consider non-verbal transitions such as pausing, switching from audience to slides but these are not the focus in the present study.

All six categories of transitions were found in all the AOPs. The findings revealed that both English language AOPs and discipline-based AOPs contain a high frequency of transitions. The most common adding transition was '*and*' and it occurred very frequently in all the AOPs. Other adding transitions used were '*also*', '*in addition*', '*moreover*', '*besides*' and '*furthermore*'.

Examples of transitions used are as shown below:

***In addition***....err....*the consultants ....err....should provide....err....written materials to the customer like a pamphlet, brochure or magazine to the customer to make the customer visible with the service provided (DB4)*

***Moreover*** *we hope this proposal will be accepted to overcome the problem that our company facing (EL2)*

***Other than that*** *we get profit from purchase of smart card with the price of twelve ringgit for each registered card ... err...**besides** ...err... we also get refund from the reload card (EL9)*

The cause and effect transitions that were most commonly used in the AOPs was 'so', 'because', 'due to', 'in order to'. The following examples illustrate the use of this transition.

*The transparency through this punch cards system may occur. This is **because** the system may lack in terms of safety for example the public administrators can ask ... err...their colleague to punch on behalf of them ... err...if they come work late (DB13)*

*So...err...under this concept **due to** the issue arising regarding on transparency and accountability results so OBB takes place to improve the transparency and accountability(DB15)*

Chronological transitions 'So' also was used as a chronological transition marker, similar to a filler, for example, 'so in a nutshell...', 'so next is the pre-project stage'..., .

***So in a nutshell or as a conclusion*** *the new public management can be concluded as deliver the scriptures of the traditional model along with creativity and flexibility in order to achieve new efficiency and better customer service (DB2)*

Illustrating transitions are phrases or expressions used to refer to the visuals or slides. Most common was as shown below:

***These are*** <pointing to slide> *some of the examples of .....(EL2)*

*Okay .... **These are the pictures** of examples of furniture arrangements....err.... for our project. The bunk bedroom is ..... each room six beds... (EL8)*

*Okay if you look towards the ...err..... to the slide...err.... for the current objective actually FRIM has their objectives ...err.... regarding the general objectives and the operational objectives which is nine general objectives and five operational objectives (DB9)*

*And in the ... err...slide....err...there is terminology in career development (DB12)*

*There are five as you can see at your slide, there are five elements that need to be considered by the organisation in order to enhance the good feedback from the employees (DB12)*

Contrasting transitions were frequently used in all AOPs such as illustrated below.

*Although yes training and capacity is very important especially in developing country such as Malaysia...err...you know in Malaysia we do have the skills or the knowledge of ICT like the developed country ...err...so the lack of ICT skills ...err...that hinder the process or the successful of the ICT infrastructure in the local authorities...(DB18)*

*So in order to achieve this integration strategy in order to answer the objective three and four, we think ICT Strategic Program Plan whereby the ICT Strategic Plan Program is focusing on development of more technology advancement in Malaysia and also in Asia and you know identity and also forecasting the market in order for us to know the trend, in order for us to be relevant in order to ensure Malaysian market is still relevant in the global market (DB9)*

Based on the findings, the frequency of transitions used in the EL AOPs was almost the same as the DB AOPs as shown in Table 3. The frequency rate was 503 items per 10,000 words for the EL AOPs while for the DB AOPs it was 527 items per 10,000 words. There was overuse of transitions such as, 'and', 'so' and some were used just as fillers between section and slides. Too often the same transitions were used indicating lack of linguistic competence. Discourse markers such as 'okay', 'next', 'then' were the main transition markers between the slides or sections of the AOPs. As Anthony et al. (2007) contend some speakers use such transitions only as fillers and not meaningfully as discourse signals.

Frame markers

Frame markers are used to signal text boundaries, indicate topic shift or have elements of schematic text structure. The most frequent frame markers were 'next', 'first', 'before', 'okay'. Examples of frame markers used in the AOPs are as shown below:

*Okay. I will explain more about the problem statement (EL1)*

*Before we go further on our proposal I would like to give you a general history on our organization (EL12)*

*Now we proceed to the next point...err...which is the professional socialization (DB 3)*

*First we will go through the first role of ....err..... first role of management in the career development. (DB12)*

Based on the findings, as shown in Table 3, the frequency of frame markers for the EL AOP was higher than the DB AOPs (224 items per 10,000 words versus 145 items per 10,000 words). Some presenters haphazardly use frame markers such as 'okay', 'next', 'now'. For example, frame markers 'now' and 'next' are used to indicate sequence and 'topic shift' but these were overused and used as fillers which is redundant and not necessary. Sometimes the visuals which display the title heading are indicators to the audience of the next topic (Guest, 2018).

Endophoric Markers

Endophoric markers or referential expressions are used to refer to the other parts of the texts. The following excerpts illustrate the use of such markers.



*As I mentioned just now there are coordinators who will do some activities with the children. The resort also will conduct some beach games (EL2)*

*Okay... this is the tentative programme [speaker refers to PPT slides] (EL3)*

*Okay this is The Melium Group Boutique [shows pictures]. This is ....., President of The Melium Group... okay this is the hall we have chosen ... Royal Chulan Ballroom ...after that we will make new design like this [speaker points to picture] . This we want to make people feel like international fashion show. Okay then this is The Melium Group products ... [speaker points to pictures] and this is the garment for show for men and women. (EL3)*

*Here are some pictures. You can see our sketch of the covered car park and walkway. (EL5)*

*In terms of organisation system ...err...like I said before depends on the committee or department that is responsible in.....achieving this strategic plan objectives such as data security department like I said before information management department and also electrical and electronic department and ICT section (DB7)*

*So .....err.....second question about training right? Government has made a lot of training. So .....err..... when the....when the.....err..... problem happen ...err.....as I said before the challenges of effectiveness and efficiency is resistance to change (DB10)*

Overall endophoric markers were less frequent as it is an oral genre where the speaker faces the audience and as such, can easily point out to the slides or pictures without using endophoric markers. For example, as shown below:

*Okay. I will continue with the SWOT analysis of FRIM (DB 9) [speaker looks at slide]*

*Okay according to ....err..... strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats .....it is a tool which allows organization to look at the direction of the organization....err..... (DB7)*

*Okay under the SWOT analysis we have covered strength, weaknesses of FRIM which is the first strength physical resources okay (DB9)*

Overall, as shown in table 3, the frequency rate of endophoric markers was low at 12 items per 10,000 words for the EL AOPs and 9 items per 10,000 words for the DBAOPs.

#### Evidentials

Evidentials are very important in academic writing as the writer needs to provide evidence to support a claim. On the contrary, evidentials are less frequent in classroom AOPs unlike conference presentations. The findings of this study show that the use of evidentials was higher in discipline based AOPs than English language AOPs. As shown in table 3, the frequency of occurrence of evidentials for the EL AOPs and DB AOPs was 2 items per 10,000 words and 18 items per 10,000 words respectively. There was a marked difference in the use of evidentials in both corpora. This is because the undergraduates are expected to use the evidentials to demonstrate their scholarly knowledge. As Lee and Subtirelu (2015) pointed that disciplinary content includes knowing key scholars and this was evident in the findings of this study. The following examples illustrate the use of such markers.

*According to Gilbert 1992, new public management is the entire collection of tactics and strategies that seek to enhance the performance of the public sector. [DB2]*

*According to Fred R. J.B. a mission statement is more than a specific vision. Our current mission is to deliver science-based innovations and solutions meeting forestry needs for today and tomorrow [DB 9]*

*Err.....from...according to Kivisto 2005 strategy implementation is also defined as the manner in which an organization should develop, utilize, and amalgamate organizational structure, control systems, and culture to follow strategies that lead to competitive advantage and a better performance [DB9]*

*According to French and Marsden 1998 effectiveness and efficiency means that the process and institutions produce results that meet the need of society while making the best use of resources including natural resources, ensuring the protection of the environment as well as sustainability [DB10]*

#### Code Glosses

In order to make the audience understand the oral presentation, speakers will use code glosses to explain something that may be confusing to audience. Hyland (2009) refers to code glosses as exemplifications. Example of code glosses are, 'in other words', 'that is', 'what I mean to say', 'I mean' and 'like'. In the present study, as shown in the findings (refer table 3), code glosses were more frequent in discipline-based AOPs compared to English language AOPs. The frequency rate of the use of code glosses for the EL AOP was 23 items per 10,000 words compared to 83 items per 10,000 words for the DB AOPs. This could be due to the content or topic of presentation as in the discipline based AOPs there were definitions and concepts that needed to be exemplified to make the audience comprehend better while in the English language the task was simple and straightforward where it was just reporting on a proposed project. There was no explanation of theories, concepts and definitions although there was elaboration of points. The following examples show the use of code glosses in the AOPs.

*Err...the distribution policies by the government will be focused on ensuring quality and opportunity for all. So **this means** ...err...government should reduce the poverty not based on races but all races they need to consider (DB10)*

*Last but not least is activity performance ...err..... activity performance **means** ... **what I mean here** ....err.... we don't know how much, how large the convenient store, what type of food we want to sell at convenient store and ....err...how much ....err...how much the price we want to charge to our customer because of our .....hmm..... that we have difficulty to complete to.....err.....propose this project (EL13)*

*Furthermore smart reader awards received ISO certifications ....err.... **it means** ...err.....they have one organisation of ISO is **means**....err.... by having this certification it means ....err.... smart reader has good quality in their services **is means** its' made their organization successfully ...err....successfully deliver their service and make the customers loyal with the organisation (DB3)*

*They provide transport logistic ...err.....counter collection and payment agency for ....err.... arrange of finance, financial transaction **such as** ...err..... payment, insurance and unit trust. (DB5)*

*For contingency plan is ....err..... diversify financial resources through coordinate donations, endowment from corporations, the agencies or individual **which means** need to...err.....hike their income by...by collaborating with other corporate agency. (DB6)*

*Okay the differences between new and current vision is it has the word 'class' between world and leader .... Class means ready to have standard in FRIM because to obtain ....err... the standard of world leader....err.... they might have to ....have standard that have been ....err....prescribed ....**for example** they should produce quickly research findings that have high value (DB9)*

*Firstly ...err.... **the reason why I say** the public complain bureau or PCB is actually ineffective ... in the non-government body because they have practice the non-corrective measure we practice and that **means that** the PCB was actually was applying the corrective ....err...the corrective action (DB11)*

*Okay the significance of the training centre as ...err...I told you is to increase reputation of our services. **It means that** we want to be...err...our service to be more professional and also to make our company is ranked high service standards in Asian brands and also to make sure shipping management can...err...run smoothly. That is the significance why we plan to build the training centre (EL18)*

#### Self-Mentions

Self-mentions or personal pronouns are the most important category of interactional markers and show degree of explicit speaker's presence by use of first-person pronoun and possessive adjectives such as 'I', 'we', 'us', 'my', 'mine', 'our', 'ours'. The frequency rate of personal pronouns or self-mentions in the EL AOP was 296 items per 10,000 words whereas for the DB AOP it was 133 items per 10,000 words. The undergraduates in the English language class presented on proposed projects in which they had to convince the audience. This may be the reason why self-mentions were high in frequency. However, the discipline-based AOPs were on topics related to their core subjects which all seem to be on presenting facts and thus minimize the use of self-mentions. On the whole for both groups of AOPs self-mentions were used extensively. This is expected in spoken discourse as language of conversation has a high frequency of pronouns (Biber et al., 1999). Among the self-mentions personal pronouns, "we", "our" and "I" were more frequently used. Among the self-mentions personal pronouns "we", "our" and "I" were more frequently used. The following excerpts illustrate the use of self-mentions.

*However **we** found that current vision in FRIM ....err.... they have ....err... time frame ....err....**we** reject the idea to have time frame ....so....err.... because ....err.... it should be ....err.... long term ....long run term (DB9)*

*Err.... okay ....err.... **we** subscribe [substitute] the word by 2020 and because vision statement might change year by year because of that **we** come out with a new vision which is 'to be a world class leader to produce research publications in Tropical Forestry Research and Development for the global society' (DB9)*

*Err ... the major profit **we** obtain is from JCorp workers because **we** focus on them and they are **our** regular customers (EL9)*

*Okay **our** hope is that we can make our company be known in business world for the best care for the employees. For us great employees will produce great production (EL6)*

*My opinion.....err..... It is just my own opinion.....err the working hour does not affect punctuality itself because punctuality is from the people.....err....how they manage their time. If they appreciate their time they will be punctual. For me complete eight hours working in government and six hours at Finland does not affect the punctuality of civil servants.....for me punctuality reflect .....err.....reflect from the attitude of the people itself (DB 13)*

As mentioned above, the pronoun 'we' was the most common and it actually refers to the speakers themselves as collectively a group or include others (audience). Besides, the use of 'we' or 'I' also projects self in their AOP as well as to gain personal credibility. The speakers tried to interact with the audience and attract their attention by using personal pronouns like 'we' to establish a closer rapport with the audience. Linguistic features such as transitions, frame markers and hedges are essential in conveying information towards audience in AOPs. These linguistic elements ensure coherency in AOP. For AOPs, personal pronouns are important just as it is for academic writing. In short, the findings in this study showed personal pronouns were the most frequent in the AOPs for both disciplines.

### Hedges

Hedges are used to present information based on speaker's personal opinion and allow audience to disagree with the speaker (Hyland, 2005). In other words, hedges are used to withhold commitment or views by the speakers in the oral presentations. Hedges are mainly expressed lexically in the form of modals expressing possibility (e.g. can, could, might, maybe), semi-auxiliaries, (e.g. seems, appear), probability adverbs (e.g. likely, perhaps, possible, probably), verbs (e.g. suggest, propose), words expressing speaker's personal involvement (e.g. I think, In my opinion, I believe) and words expressing quantity, degree, frequency and time (e.g. almost, somewhat, always, a little bit). As shown in the findings of this study there was minimal use of hedges. The frequency of hedges was double in the discipline-based AOPs though. The following excerpts illustrate the use of hedges in the AOPs.

*I **think** within the job training itself...its already include all employees other than the top of the company (DB2)*

*So I **believe** without the supervision of the top managers....I **believe** these employees with the job training that they handle...ah...can make their own decisions as well and they can construct their own way how to handle the customers. The top management will handle critical situation (DB2)*

*Okay. The expected failure is that the money that is used for this programme **may** decrease if ...err... the borrowers does not pay the financial loans provided by PTPTN. (DB6)*

*This objective also **seems** to be realistic as it shows the PTPTN needs to achieve ... (DB6)  
Err.....**seems** that the job and responsibility that is to be covered by FRIM is too complex....err....there must be have a delegation power (DB9)*

*And lastly we **believe** that with the existence of the convenient store our company will become more productive [EL13]*

*So for me I **think** it is not enough time to ....err... another three months and half to fully complete without any error because .....err.....because safety first for our employees (DB12)*

*We **believe** that this project will give a lot of benefit to the all staff in Bailandho Insurance company (DB12)*

*It **seems** the information will be saved in one data and will be arranged using the alphabets for example the implementation of Human Resource Information Managing System or known as HRMIS (DB13)*

***In my opinion** next challenge of OBB is lack of understanding of whole concept. This is because understanding of Public Managers especially those who conducted program under this OBB has low level of understanding and acceptance of this updated system. (DB15)*

The frequent hedges used in the AOPs were in the form of modals 'may', 'maybe', 'could', 'would' and 'might'. Other hedges used include 'seem', 'think', 'believe', 'mainly', 'a little', 'a little bit', 'generally', 'sometimes', 'likely', 'perhaps' and 'possible'. Hedges were used in all the samples although frequency of use was higher in the DB AOPs as shown in Table 3.

### Boosters

Boosters are used by speakers to express certainty in what they say and show involvement with the audience and like hedges, are important in oral presentations. Examples of boosters include 'clearly', 'obviously', 'demonstrate', 'actually', 'really', 'certainly', 'must', 'never', 'no doubt', 'show', 'well known', 'of course' and 'definitely'. Based on the findings, as shown in table 3, there was higher frequency of boosters employed in the DB AOPs compared to the EL AOPs (106 items versus 85 items per 10,000 words). The frequency of the usage of boosters is higher in the discipline-based AOPs probably because the speakers are presenting facts which they are certain about to make their claims more convincing. In the AOPs these expressions of certainty were mainly in the form of adverbs such as 'actually', 'always', and the modal verb 'can', 'must', 'should' and 'know'. Other boosters to show certainty were like 'clearly', 'really' and 'even if'. The following are examples of boosters used in the AOPs.

***Actually** ....err....this program not only focuses on cooperation with the Immigration Department as ..... (name of previous presenter) has told you we have cooperation from the police and the banks (DB 6)*

*So it **clearly** shows this system ... is not strong enough to measure the punctuality for our public administrators (DB 9)*

*So the practice of the feedback system at MPJ is **really** good due to the awareness that they get from the individual employees about the career development crucially needs in the organisation (DB12)*

*The implementation ...ah... the expectation of the implementation is ... we expect that once we build a nursery, we **can** solve the employee problem and reduce their stress (EL4)*

*Management **should** explore opportunity currently available as well as in the future concerning career roles of their employees and formulate plan in the future for progressive and dynamic manner (DB12)*

### Attitude Markers

Attitude markers convey surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration of speaker's attitude to the information presented. Examples of attitude markers include 'agree', 'prefer', 'should', 'need', 'unfortunately' and 'remarkable'. They show interactivity between the speaker and audience. Based on the results of the present study as shown in table 3, there was a very low frequency of attitude markers used by the speakers. Additionally, there was little difference between the DB AOPs and EL AOPs (14 items versus 4 items per 10,000

words). The very low frequency rate of attitude markers may be due to the fact that the AOPs were classroom-based presentations and the audience were their course mates so the speakers did not convey their opinion or take a stand on the information presented. They speakers were just presenting information as part of their assessment and their major concern was to get that information delivered to the audience. Furthermore, metadiscourse markers are not necessarily realized verbally only (Thompson, 2003). The non-linguistic forms such as gesture, facial expression and tone of voice are also used to convey attitude (Hyland, 2005). Hence this could be one possible explanation for the very low occurrences of attitude markers in this study. Examples of attitude markers based on the findings are such as:

*Then the last point for ...ah...ah....for the influence of NPM purpose is cost deduction..... cost deduction is **important** to ensure the survival and to maximize the revenue of the organisation (DB1)*

*Err...the corruption **must** be eliminated because it can destroy our country and our....err...harmony because although the corruption is look like...err...small thing...err...it can make a big impact ... err... give a big impact to the country (DB10)*

*So the technology give an impact as well towards the execution because **hopefully** for people like in Sabah and Sarawak who are from the rural community like the indigenous people so how FRIM itself wants to communicate with them so that they clearly understand what we want to execute because the indigenous people are directly dependent on the forest resources and the ecosystem ...because they are more likely do their job regarding the forest itself (DB9)*

*We know that because.....knowledge of Science and Mathematics, everything we learned from college now days we can...we **have to** find it in learning the language in English language (DB7)*

### Engagement Markers

Engagement markers explicitly address readers or listeners to focus their attention or include them. Engagement markers common are such as 'consider', 'note', 'you can see that', 'you', 'your', 'think about' and 'imagine'. In this study, the most common engagement markers were the second person pronouns 'you' and 'your'. An unexpected result in the present study is the very few occurrences of engagement markers although they are essential in oral genres. The use of personal pronouns 'you' and 'your' is the way to connect with the audience. As Hyland (2005) claims these personal pronouns acknowledge the audience and thus are unavoidable in face-to-face situations like the AOPs. Nevertheless, results revealed very low frequency of such markers in both the EL AOPs and DB AOPs with a frequency of 41 items per 10,000 words and 30 items per 10,000 words respectively. This means there is no distinct variation between the two types of AOPs. The results indicate that there was little engagement or interaction with the audience. This possibly could be due to presenting facts which are difficult, inability to paraphrase facts in their own words, too much information or facts to be presented in the duration of presentation which may minimise the use of engagement markers, less time after presentation for question and answer session and lack of confidence. Examples of engagement markers used are as shown below:

*So in Sparkleen....ah...**we can see that** there is a backstage and front stage of ....ah.... staff for example we can see in the delivery service where there is a picking up of clothes and sending clothes to the laundry. So ...ah....from this...ah...by .this service given by Sparkleen, **we can see that** every employee will play their own role (DB2)*

*Okay if you look towards the ...err....to the slide...err....on the left for the current objective actually FRIM has their objectives...err...regarding the general objectives and the operational objectives (DB9)*

*So before we start our presentation, I would like to show you a video (DB10)*

*Right...so do you think the PPSMI is very important for the students? So what do you think? Is that good to be abolished about this policy? So do you..... every one of you here agree with the PPSMI right? (DB17)*

*You can see here that capability and capacity of the MPSJ officers is increased after the implementation of e-government (DB20)*

Linguistic features such as transitions, frame markers and hedges are essential in conveying information towards audience in AOPs. These linguistic elements ensure coherency in AOP. For AOPs, personal pronouns are important just as it is for academic writing. The findings in this study showed that transitions and self-mentions or personal pronouns were the most frequent in the AOPs for both corpora. The following table shows the distribution of the linguistic features in the AOPs per 10,000 words.

**Table 3:**  
**Frequency analysis of linguistic features in the AOP**

Metadiscourse Markers	EL AOP		DB AOP	
	Raw No	*Freq	Raw No	*Freq.
Transitions	1748	503	3168	527
Frame Markers	779	224	875	145
Endophoric Markers	41	12	55	9
Evidentials	6	2	109	18
Code Glosses	81	23	497	83
Hedges	55	16	224	37
Self-Mentions/Personal Pronouns	1030	296	802	133
Boosters	297	85	636	106
Attitude Markers	14	4	85	14
Engagement Markers	142	41	181	30

\*Frequency per 10,000 words

As shown in Table 3 above, the interactive metadiscourse markers overall has a higher frequency of use compared to interactional metadiscourse markers for both EL and DB AOPs. The findings corroborate with other studies by Amaal and Noorzan (2017) and Yang (2014). The most common interactive metadiscourse marker was 'transition' for both disciplines. This differs from Wan Hassan's (2014) study where there was lack of transitional markers used among students. The second most frequently used interactive marker was the frame marker for both disciplines although the frequency occurrence was higher in the EL AOPs. Lee and Subtirelu (2015) reported differences across two disciplines in the use of metadiscourse markers in EAP and content-area lecturers. Frequency use of code glosses was higher in the DB AOPs as the content or subject matter of presentations was more difficult and thus required further clarifications to make the content easier for the audience to comprehend. Based on the findings the frequency of the interactional markers of self-mention and engagement markers clearly indicated that English language AOPs tend to use these markers more than the discipline based AOPs. For both attitude markers were the least significant among the other interactional markers. For AOPs self-mention is important just as it is for

academic writing as found by Yang (2014) in his study. The findings in this study showed self-mention were the most frequent interactional metadiscourse markers in the AOPs for both disciplines.

Metadiscourse markers are essential in conveying information towards audience in AOPs. The metadiscourse markers ensures coherency in AOP. The findings of this study showed that overall, both disciplines used all the metadiscourse markers. However, the types of metadiscourse markers and distribution differed between the English language AOPs and discipline-based AOPs. This indicates that metadiscourse markers are used more frequently in the discipline-based AOPs although some studies have shown otherwise. A noteworthy point is that this phenomenon could be due to the nature of the oral task as well as the duration of the presentation. In the present study the duration of the presentation for AOPs in the discipline-based class was longer compared to English language AOPs.

Studies on the use of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers in written text have shown interactive metadiscourse markers to be more common. Pooresfahani et al (2012) in their study found that writers employed interactive metadiscourse markers more than interactional metadiscourse markers. Likewise, this study has shown interactive metadiscourse markers were more frequent in both disciplines although this is an oral genre.

### **Conclusion And Recommendations**

To conclude, this study demonstrated that English language AOPs contained less metadiscourse markers compared to the discipline-based AOPs. There are differences because of the way speakers present their arguments and construct knowledge (Hyland and Bondi, 2006). Formulaic expressions play a pertinent role in production of spoken language (Biber, Conrad and Cortes, 2004; Wray, 2008). Mastery of these fixed expressions is important to make speech sound natural. Hesitators such as 'err', 'ah', 'umm' as shown in the findings are used by speakers to pause or hesitate in the middle of the AOP while signalling the wish to continue speaking.

As this study has revealed analysis of use of linguistic features in AOPs can provide a better understanding of how this genre is conducted. Students must have content material or knowledge of their field as well as grammatical competence to deliver their AOPs (Yu and Cadman, 2009). Academic oral presentations are not like academic writing as the speakers are under pressure to deliver their points as well as deal with audience within the time frame given (Yang, 2014) which makes this task challenging especially for the undergraduates who are still considered novices in their discourse community. Aziz et al., (2022) concur that English presentations are always challenging among tertiary ESL learners mainly due to grammatical errors, forgetting what to say and not having the confidence in public. Razawi et al., (2019) also noted that the flow of oral presentations is interrupted if there is insufficient oral practice.

Since the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) is focusing on enhancing oral communication and presentation skills among university students, future researchers can further explore the AOP genre or other spoken genres and the linguistic features needed. In addition, future studies can further investigate how to help novices in their profession to improve their presentations skills in various oral genres such as conferences, speeches, viva, and project presentations for both academic and future employment purposes. It is important to prepare students with impressive oral presentations skills which are highly valued in today's competitive world as Le (2021) claims students are still struggling with oral presentation despite its importance. In short, future studies can investigate the type of activities suitable



for students to have confidence and assess the effectiveness of such activities. It is recommended that mock presentations be conducted as it may probably reduce anxiety level and boost confidence among students especially when they are being evaluated by examiners.

To sum up, this study contributes to the dearth of research of AOPs in the English language and discipline-based classes which is needed as this genre has received little attention (Adel, 2023; Zareva, 2009). This study also contributes to a better understanding of how metadiscourse markers are used in AOPs across various courses. This study provides a pedagogical contribution to the AOP genre as it highlights the differences in the use of the metadiscourse markers in the EL AOPs and DB AOPs. As there are similarities and differences of the linguistic features in the EL and DB AOPs, the identification of the metadiscourse markers may be beneficial for the undergraduates as they will be able to transfer the linguistic knowledge as Biber et al. (1999) claim they can be used frequently by different speakers in different situations. Thus, this can shed light on how students transfer their knowledge in different settings and requirements.

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