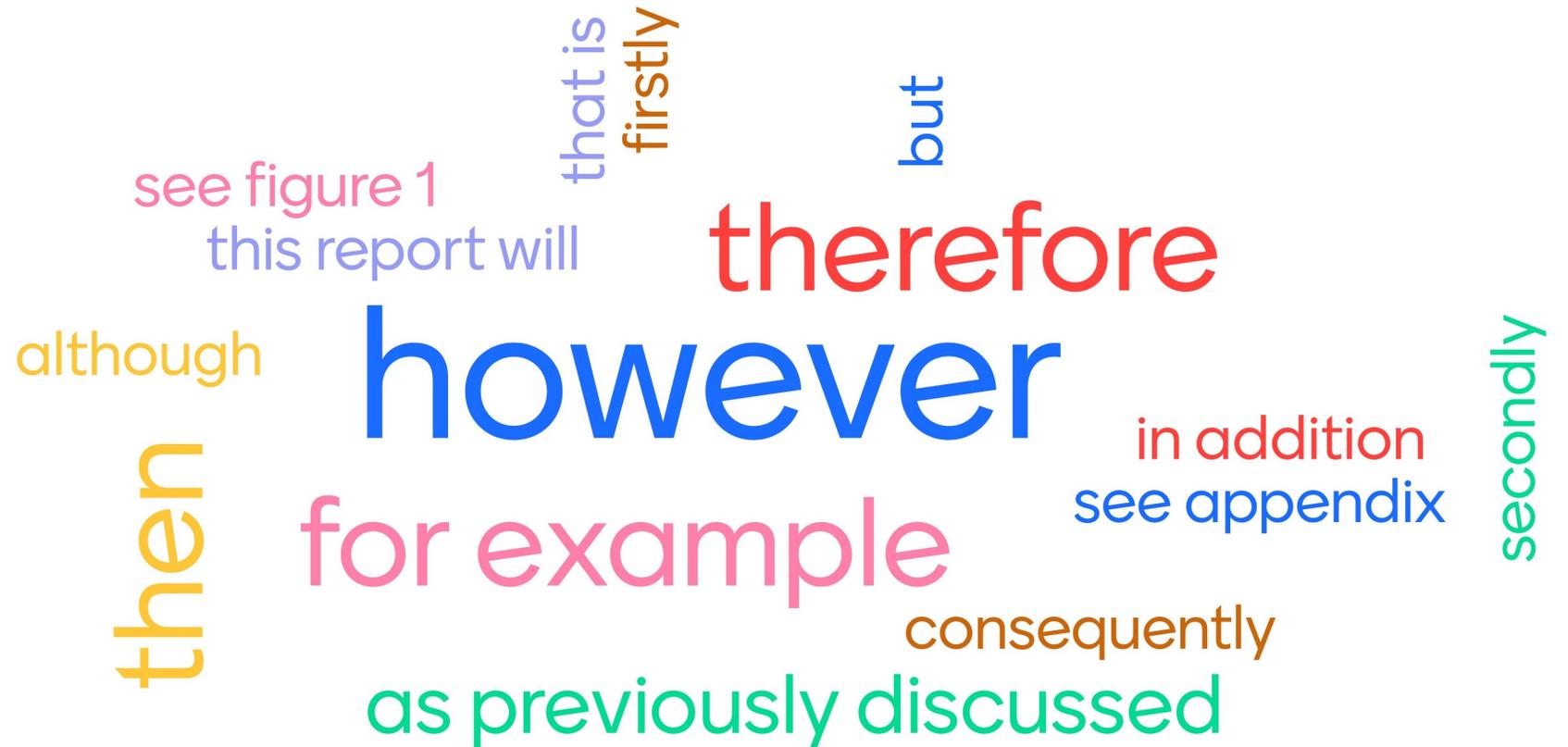


Should Learning Developers provide instruction in the use of metadiscourse?

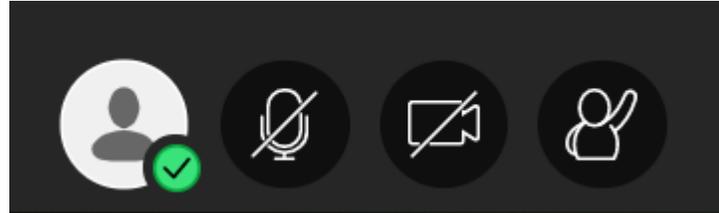


Sam King
Learning Development
Tutor

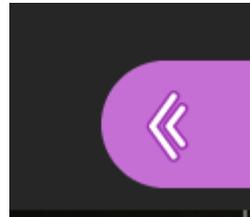
Poll - are you familiar with Blackboard Collaborate?

Key features of the virtual classroom

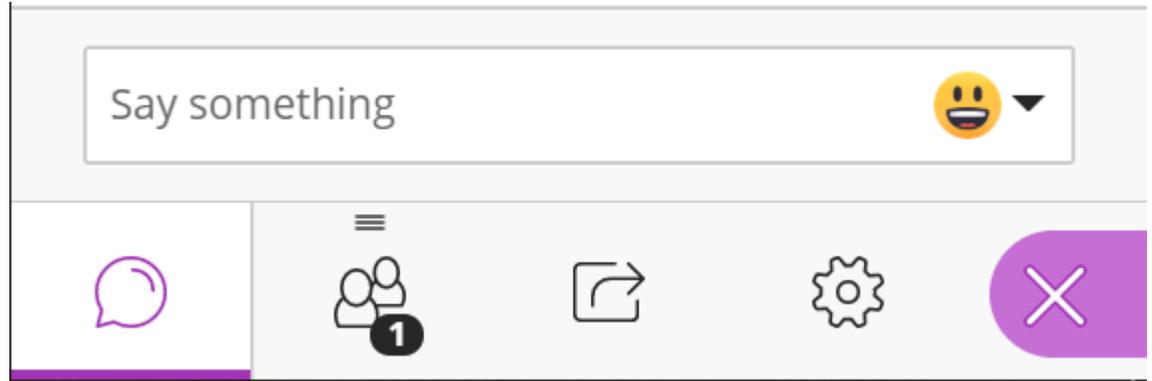
- Your controls



- Extra features



- Chat and audio settings



Session Overview

- **Why I conducted this study**
- **Metadiscourse- evidence from the literature.**
- **Details of the study**
- **Implications for LD practice**

What is metadiscourse?

On the [...] level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material but help our readers organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react to such material. Metadiscourse, therefore, is discourse about discourse or communication about communication.

Vande Koppel (1985, p83)

Metadiscourse markers [...] make a text “reader friendly”.

Cheng and Steffensen (1996, p154)

Why I conducted this study

EAP



LD

- Image from Brooklyn Museum [Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported](#)

Research involving non-native speakers of English on undergraduate EAP courses

...the good essays contained proportionally more total metadiscourse than the poor essays...

Intaraprawat and Steffenson (1995, p262)

...the good essays showed a greater variety of metadiscourse features within each category than the poor essays.

Intaraprawat and Steffenson (1995, p253)

Research involving undergraduate native speakers of English

The results of the analysis indicated that the experimental group benefited from instruction about metadiscourse: Students in the experimental group produced essays that received significantly higher grades than those in the control group. [...] These results suggest that teaching students to use metadiscourse may be an important way to improve their writing skills.

Cheng and Steffenson (1996, p149)

Cheng and Steffenson vs my students

Cheng and Steffenson	Students attending tutorials at UoN
Native speakers of English	Mostly native speakers of English
Timed essays and coursework	Coursework
Argument essays	Usually reports or problem-solution texts
Texts approx. 500 words	Texts approx. 2000 words
Dedicated writing class	Subject-specific

The study

A corpus analysis of interactive metadiscourse to answer the following research questions:

1. How do students develop their use of metadiscourse between their first and second years of university education?
2. Is there a relationship between metadiscourse use and writing success as measured by the grade an assignment receives?

Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of interactive metadiscourse

Category	Function	Examples
Transitions	Express semantic relation between main clauses	In addition; thus;
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences, or text stages	Finally; to conclude; my purpose is to
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above; see Fig.; in Section 2
Evidentials	Refer to source of information from other texts	According to X; (Y, 1990); Z states
Code glosses	Help readers grasp meanings of ideational material	Namely; e.g.; such as; in other words

The participants:

- 67 participants studying a health discipline contributed graded summative assignments from their first and second year of study.
- All participants were female and all were native speakers.
- Assignments were between 1500 and 2500 words in length

The methodology/methods:

- Corpus-based study using the computer software WordSmith Tools 5 (Scott, 2007)
- 4 corpora analysed

	No. of texts	No. of words
Level 4 essays	67	173,543
Level 5 essays	67	140,527
Higher-graded essays (65% and above)	34	76,824
Lower-graded essays (40% - 51%)	34	70,798

Data Analysis

About 75 different words or short phrases were searched for using WordSmith Tools 5.

Individual concordance lines were manually inspected to check that metadiscourse had been found. For example,

*“**Overall**, it is clear that there are many risks to Joanna’s pregnancy.”*

*“... must be given due consideration when assessing her **overall** wellbeing.”*

Typical concordance lines

1 and main article under the methods subheading. However a detailed methodological description within the
2 immediate relief if no abnormality is detected. However, a discussion of the findings should be
3 -based relationship with these families. There is however a duty to abide by the International
4 to be an appropriate number (Bluff, 2014, p.233). However, a limitation is that there was no
5 followed by a digital examination if appropriate. However, a transvaginal ultrasound measurement and fetal
6 Parahoo (2014). The abstract length is 152 words however according to Polit and Beck (2012) an abstract
7 34 weeks, 6 days (Local Trust Policy, 2018, p.7). However, accuracy of fFN testing can be affected
8 fetus has a constant supply of glucose however after delivery, the glucose concentration falls.
9 itiquing research such as Coughlan et al. (2007), however, all critiquing frameworks are designed to assist
10 type 1 and type 2 diabetes, (Li et al, 2014). However, all neonates can rapidly lose heat as
11 to make informed choices about infant feeding. However, although breastmilk is considered optimal (BAPM,
12 rough respiration, stools and urine (NICE, 2010). However, although encouragement should be given to feed
13 amount of glucose in the fetal blood. However, an excess amount of insulin may be
14 quotations to be published in the research, however anonymity was maintained (Holloway and Galvin, 20
15 of the neonates adaptation to extrauterine life. However approximately 2% of neonates will require treatme
16 the interviews to ensure accurate understanding. However as the notion of reflexivity was not
17 xcretion of bilirubin from the fetal circulation, however at birth the liver takes over bilirubin
18 ve, blood glucose monitoring can be discontinued, however, breastfeeding support should continue, (Local Tr

Findings from the corpus as a whole

- The most frequently used metadiscoursal features were code glosses and transition markers, which is consistent with previous research on both student and expert academic writing.
- Students showed strong preferences for a small number of lexical items e.g. *such as* for exemplification, *however* to mark contrast, and *therefore* to mark consequence. These preferences are stronger than found in other studies (see Gardner and Han, 2018; Yüksel and Kavanoz, 2018).

Findings from the corpus as a whole (continued)

- The frequency of endophoric markers and frame markers is low compared with some published studies. Several researchers (e.g. Bax et al., 2019) have linked the frequency of these features with text length and so this may not be unexpected.
- Frame markers were mainly used to announce the goals of the assignment. Only just over half the students explicitly signalled their conclusions with a marker such as *in conclusion*.

How do students develop their use of metadiscourse between their first and second years of university education?

- Overall, level 5 texts contained significantly more metadiscourse than level 4 texts ($p < 0.01$), although the magnitude of the increase was modest, from 80 items per 10,000 words to 100 items per 10,000 words.
- There was some evidence of the students broadening their lexical repertoire with more use of *i.e.* and *is where* for reformulations.
- More markers of contrast were used at level 5 but the preference for *however* remained.

How do students develop their use of metadiscourse between their first and second years of university education? (continued)

- Frame markers to announce goals and label stages were more frequent at level 5. Two-thirds of students marked conclusions explicitly.
- The announcement of goals was increasingly formulaic. This structure increased from 10% of assignments at Level 4 to 33% at Level 5:

This	essay/assignment	will	discuss/be discussing/look at/explore/highlight/explain ...
-------------	-------------------------	-------------	--

Is there a relationship between metadiscourse use and writing success as measured by the grade an assignment receives?

Only one statistically significant difference -

Reformulation was used significantly more in the higher-graded corpus.

- Technical terms were explained more (16 compared with 3)
e.g. Neonatal hyperbilirubinaemia '(jaundice)' is a common condition
- There were more specifications (8 compared with 4),
e.g. This is important as early feeding '(within the first hour of birth)' is essential

Conclusions

Students increase their use of metadiscourse as they progress from their first year to their second probably due to their increased exposure to academic writing/reading and feedback from their tutors.

There is little evidence that increased use of metadiscourse increases grades achieved.

Is this due to the subject? Would a 'soft' discipline find the same results?

Implications for Learning Development

Students could be encouraged to consider the needs of the reader in their writing?

Students could be encouraged to expand their lexical repertoire of metadiscourse?

Learning Developers should concentrate on other areas of writing development?

What do you think?

Thank you for listening.

Any questions?

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