**The use of metadiscourse in argumentative essays at advanced levels**

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Most research into student academic writing has focused on research writing or essay/assignment writing in the initial years of university study. As a result, description of the essay writing of more advanced students available for EAP writing instructors and course developers is fairly limited. This paper reports a study that focused on the use of metadiscourse in argumentative essays, a key student written genre. Metadiscourse is an important resource writers can draw on to help them create reader-based prose and how it is used may be indicative of student writers’ developing competence in academic discourse. Metadiscourse is generally understood to comprise two distinct components - textual markers which enable writers to signal the organisation of text and how one text part relates to another and attitudinal markers, including hedging, which enable writers to signal their stance towards the ideas and information presented in text. The present study drew on a classification of textual and attitudinal metadiscourse in persuasive text (Dafouz-Milne, 2008) in a discourse-based study of year three/four undergraduate and postgraduate student essays across a range of disciplines compiled from the Michigan Corpus of Upper-level Student Papers (MICUSP). The study sought to identify ways the student writers had used metadiscourse and it searched for possible associations between the use of metadiscourse and level of academic study (undergraduate or postgraduate) and linguistic background (English L1 or L2). The presentation provides textual illustrations of some of the most common sub categories of metadiscourse used by the student writers as well as quantitative findings. Findings from the study are discussed in relation to targeted writing instruction in EAP.

**Keywords:** Metadiscourse, essays, advanced writing, EAP

**Reference**

Dafouz-Milne, E. (2008). The pragmatic role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in the construction and attainment of persuasion: A cross-linguistic study of newspaper discourse. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 40: 95-113.