METADISCOURSE AS RHETORICAL STRATEGY IN YOUTUBE REVIEW VIDEOS

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Abstract

Following that of Ädel's approach namely reflexive metadiscourse, this paper investigates the use of metadiscourse in computer mediated communication, specifically those review videos which has been gaining popularity lately as source of information. Metadiscourse is generally seen as commentaries towards the language that is employed to construct the discourse. Reflexive approach emerges as an attempt to challenge previous theories which (unlike the conventional ones) only include references inside the current discourse involving current addresser, addressee(s), and current discourse. The study found 4 metadiscourse classifications and 21 discourse functions performed by speakers in three selected video. Furthermore, as there are tendencies in researching academic written discourse, I wish to explore the spoken non-academic one to provide a fresh contribution regarding the topic. I discover that the markers employed in CMC are less formal than those of the previous studies concern to both written and spoken academic metadiscourse.

Keywords: Metadiscourse, reflexive metadiscourse, youtube, rhetorical strategy, youtube review videos

Introduction

One essential thing we need to ensure when communicating our thought is whether people are able to catch the idea; otherwise, the utterances would be left worthless. In opposite, if our message is often successfully delivered it will shortly be rhetorically forceful. This has underlain the linguists interest in exploring the branch under the study of discourse analysis namely metadiscourse. For the past few decades, a number of theories and research have been composed in regard of the topic. Today as the era shifts to modernity the study of metadiscourse is challenged to seek whether the existing theories are still compatible with the current fact.

Metadiscourse is described as a discourse about discourse [1]. It scrutinizes the relations between the writer and both the text and its reader in a discourse. Related studies have compared how one writer differs to another in terms of the metadiscourse use in articles, journals, abstracts, theses, and any other writing forms specifically those of academic purposes. Experts suggest that this tendency due to the belief that written publication is a proof of someone's flair in their major. A person with great writing skill and experience would likely be easily recognized and more hire material.

However, those statements could no longer comply with today's generation. The rapid development of technology gives birth to more and more video-based media which serve quick effortless access to everyone. The fact that those media are not bound by time and space is such an improvement that is hard to resist. It leads us to the conclusion that writing is not the only method people could use to approach others nowadays. Therefore, it is time to realize that verbal forms of discourse need immediate concern as public speaking is also as powerful as written publication.

Although Ädel [2] and Correira [3] have attempted at observing metadiscourse strategy on academic speech, speeches via computer-mediated-communication still remain unexplored. YouTube is one platform

people use to spread any ideas they are having. Each year the popularity of this social channel is getting stronger. Monetized account is one reason underlies it. People make content on YouTube are paid per a thousand view on their published videos. It is said that the earning is moderately promising for someone develop a career here. This fact is adequate for a further study to be conducted

Consequently, this research aims to seek the functions of metadiscourse used as rhetorical strategy employed in the product review videos by three selected YouTube channel owners. Aforementioned to that the appearing metadiscourse will first be classified to a particular type. Moreover, as there are a lot of numbers of metadiscourse analysis concern to written and lately a few spoken form of academic related topic, this research eager to compare the results of the previous studies to the current findings.

Metadiscourse is described as a form of advance writing [4]. It shows that a writer concerns to how their reader might grasp the ideas they are conveying. They also note that metadiscourse depicts the way the writer interacts with its readers. The already conducted research are mostly associated to academic genres since the utterance producers are anticipated to lead their audiences through the discourse [2]. Currently, the model that is frequently employed in most metadiscourse-related study is still the Hyland's interpersonal, following Halliday's function of language, distinguishing between interactional and interactive.

The analysis of metadiscourse has begun to emerge dated back in the 80's. Dovoodi [5] stated Williams and Vande Kopple had attempted to construct the definition for the expression by "discourse about discourse, and communication about communication". Then Swales still in Davoodi [5] went more specific, such as "writing about the evolving text rather than referring to the subject matter". Metadiscourse model was initially categorized into 'interpersonal' and 'textual' until Hyland proposed that the gap between the two is often overlapping and therefore the exclusively interpersonal model is considered more reliable.

The term reflexive metadiscourse which is promoted by Annelie Ädel is a breakthrough in metadiscourse study when the majority of related research still loyally employ Hyland's theory of the interpersonal model. A critical review toward this new approach believes that the theory has brought to sharper emphasis and method of the metadiscourse analysis [6]. Ädel's model focuses on the metalinguistic, expressive and directive functions of language following Jakobson's linguistics functions [7]. She designs a *reflexive triangle* to describe her model.

Fig. 1.
Ädel's reflexive triangle
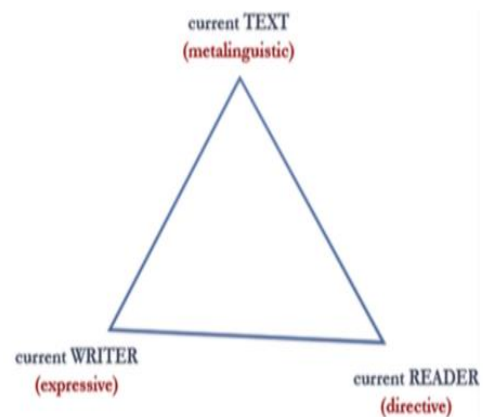
The figure above illustrates three main points of the reflexive triangle including current text or the discourse, current writer/ speaker persona, and real or imagined audience [7]. However, the most important thing to highlight here is the meaning of the term 'current' used to describe the three points considering that any references to entities in the 'real world', outside the world of discourse are excluded. Ädel proposes 22 functions of metadiscourse which are categorized into five classifications. Principally within the taxonomy she has extended from her previous research, distinctions between metatext and audience interactions are drawn.

Metatext focuses on the use of code/discourse itself, while audience interaction primarily toward the audience. Metatext is divided into three classifications namely *Metalinguistic Comments, Discourse Organisation, and Speech Act Labels*. On the other hand, audience interaction marks another classification, *References to the Audience*.

Each classification then includes some functions. The distribution is as follows:

a. Metalinguistic comments which include repairing, reformulating, clarifying meaning, and managing terminology

b. Discourse organization such as managing topic includes introducing topic, delimiting topic, adding to topic, concluding topic, marking asides. Managing phorics includes enumerating, endophoric marking, previewing, reviewing, and contextualizing

c. Speech act labels that involve both arguing and exemplifying, and last

d. References to the audience consist of managing comprehension, managing discipline, anticipating response, managing the message, and imagining scenarios

Metadiscourse functions and classifications above are the adjusted version which are allegedly more extensive version from the taxonomy proposed by Ädel in 2006.

The CMC trend is one of the results of the technology growth. It stands for Computer Mediated Communication or some also use the term Computer-based Media Communication, either way means the same. Simpson [8] argues that CMC is a new both form of discourse and way of learning. For several years now most research in CMC is dominated by its contribution to teaching and learning, academic related just as in the case of metadiscourse study.

In the study of CMC it is important to see the role of computer in the discourse. Kern and Warschauer [9] suggest that here the computer seen as a tool and expected "to provide alternative contexts for social interaction as well as facilitate access to existing discourse communities". Furthermore they explain that aside from academic related topic, the existing findings in CMC research is rather text-based than comprising image and voice. The platform of discourse which nowadays are attempting more exploration on the video form that later uploaded in the internet is very intriguing to analyze.

YouTube is a prominent model of the current CMC platform. Having a television-like concept, YouTube offers more freedom for its users to choose their own channels to watch. Interestingly, the channels and actors are anyone's made with barely no restriction. Some channels gain international recognition as well as the content makers. They become the ambassadors of any fields they are specialized at as their strong influences determine the decisions of their followers. Those figures include Jeffree Star, Tati Westbrook, and Jaclyn Hill who are internationally renowned as beauty enthusiasts reviewing newest beauty products marketed all over the world.

These three are chosen as they are considered veterans in beauty world. They

No	Code	Data	Metalingual Comment					Explanation
			Rp	Rf	CM	MT	CLF	
1.	TW/04.55-05.10	**Don't take it** as you have to run and buy it			√			She personally likes how the product applies on her skin. However, the high price tag makes her hesitate to recommend people to buy it as there are a lot of options for the same product for reasonable price

even earn a nickname beauty guru for their enthusiasm in beauty industry. On YouTube their channels have gained millions of subscribers who always keenly watch every beauty news from them. Billions of YouTube users have watched their videos counted since no less than five years. As they also gain popularity in person, they often launch their own beauty products and benefit from their big name in the industry branding.

Methodology

The data of this research are taken from the review videos recorded and published online by three beauty gurus mentioned earlier in previous chapter. The minimum unit of the data is in the form of words and the largest is discourses used as metadiscourse markers. I started the data collection by selecting the YouTube beauty guru channels which had more followers than the average beauty influencers. Then, I searched for videos which provide CC (closed-caption) or subtitles. The review videos were selected under several criteria such as: equipped by transcription, not a self-launched product review, no longer than 30 minutes, and not an endorsement product review.

The next step was examining if the provided transcripts matched the actual utterances in the videos, some changes were done. Each videos were around fifteen minutes long. I eventually selected three videos including Jeffree Star "JELLY HIGHLIGHTER...?! TESTING WEIRD MAKEUP", Tati Westbrook "CRYSTAL LASH TOPCOAT … WTF", and Jaclyn Hill "KKW/KYLIE COSMETICS SWATCHES & REVIEW". I began observing the selected video one by one and noted the metadiscourse markers in the review videos. As there were four metadiscourse classifications, I scrutinized each video four times, each time was focusing on one classification.

Table 1.
The Form of Data Sheet for Metadiscourse Classifications & Functions in *YouTube* Review Videos

TW: Tati Westbrook	**Rf**: Reformulating
JH: Jaclyn Hill	**CM**: Clarifying meaning
JS: Jeffree Star	**MT**: Managing Term
Rp: Repairing	**CLF**: Commenting on Language Form

The primary instrument of the research was the researcher herself and data sheets as addition for note taking. The model of the data sheet is provided above. A single sheet was designed for one type of metadiscourse and the possible functions. Therefore, as there were four types, I employed four kinds of sheets created for note-taking. The codes were always preceded by initials shows the utterance maker and then followed by the time of the data occurrence. The technique of analysis started with classifying the data to the type, then analyzing the function, after that discussing the findings in a specific chapter and finally reporting the results of the research.

Findings and Discussion

This chapter is divided into four sections due to four classifications of metadiscourse found on the data. Regarding the functions of metadiscourse, I found twenty-one different functions. All of those I present under the metadiscourse classification they belong to.

Metalingual Comments

The first three classifications concern to the inside discourse means the code employed to construct discourse. Metalingual comments focus more on the relation and meaning between sentences. The data which are categorized in this classification composed by five functions such as *repairing, reformulating, clarifying meaning, managing terminology,* and *commenting on linguistics form/ meaning*. The most frequent functions found in the data is *clarifying meaning* and *commenting on linguistics form/meaning*.

Clarifying meaning is benefitted to convey speaker's actual objective so that audiences are not misled. However, it inserts examples

to specify the meaning of previous discourse and does not include interaction with audience. For example, in Jaclyn Hill (JH) (JH/00.05-00.07): "I'm so grateful to be receiving free makeup, *but that in no way* is going to shape my opinion". She provides clarification that even though she was sent the product by the company itself, the review she made is honest. More from JH (06.42-06.46): "*I know I said* the first one was my favorite *but* that might've been because I hadn't tried the second." Here she redesigns her own utterance about her preference. Other findings include:

- (TW/00.40-00.44): It has a doe foot applicator you guys *what on earth I mean* you could put this on your lips
- (TW/06.17-06.19): *you can't really see* it so much out here but it's really beautiful
- (JH/06.06-06.10): it definitely did fade; *it wasn't completely* gone but it fades which is fine.

Next function to be discussed is *commenting on linguistics form/meaning*. These commentaries refer to the linguistics form, meaning and word choice. When describing the container in which the reviewed product came, Jeffree Star (JS) (00.58-01.01) said: "this isn't a compact this is kind of jar *I guess we call it*". We see that he is hoping his proposed term represent the actual container. Another datum uttered by JH has the same purpose (JH/04.14-04.19): "they're actually are more just like lipsticks that are liquid and creamy. *Does that make sense?*". Clearly she is wondering if she explains well therefore she feels the urge to make comment on her own saying.

- (JS/04.49-04.51): okay people *I really don't know what I want to talk about it*
- (JS/09.44-09.46): that's the exact same 'complaint', *if you will*

Sometimes in a discourse we express some concepts and we would like to mention appropriate term to label them. *Managing Terminology* allows the speakers to act so. For example, Jaclyn Hill in her opening act (00.05-00.07), states: "we'll be doing a review *slash* (/) swatches demo and kind of a first impression-*esque* on the.." which indicates that she attempted on putting a label on the activity she was about to do in the video. The annotation 'which is' are appearing twice also in JH's video those are (JH/05.28-05.30): "this is (shade) 'Kimberly' *which is* the one I/m currently wearing" and "this is the shade 'Kim' *which is* more peachy one". Another one of the kind showed in her video is (JH/03.56-03.60): "we've just *been kind of taught like* liquid lipsticks are dry…"

Repair is a common event occurring in a natural language processing. The term *repairing* here means providing alternative to evaluate or correct the already uttered expressions. By repairing the utterance, speakers wish to cancel the preceding concept they have mentioned and hence take account of the new one. There are two data found during analysis function as repair. The first one is by JH when she explained the finish look of the formula the lipstick she was reviewing has, (JH/04.19-04.27): "they're not gonna be matte whatsoever. *I mean* they are kind of matte but not matte like an actual liquid lipstick". The other datum found in TW's video where she changed her mind and uttered another term to explain her impression toward the lash product she reviewed, (TW/00.57-00.59) "it would be fabulous *I mean* it's kind of cool putting it on your lid as well".

The last metadiscourse function in this class is *Reformulating* is used for suggesting other forms of expressions which rather enhance the significance of the utterance than fixing it. The datum represents this function, for example, is from JH's video (JH/03.35-03.40): "a cream liquid lipstick *or* a crème liquid lipstick depending on how 'boojee' you want to be with your wording". One new version of the previously stated term is given there using a French accent rather than English. Unfortunately, I did not find any other data in the three videos I observed.

Discourse Organization

As how this classification is being labelled, discourse organization focuses on the topic arrangement inside discourses. Discourse organization differs the term managing topic from managing phoric. Topic management comprises a set of discourse functions including introducing topic, delimiting topic, adding topic, concluding topic, and asides marking. Meanwhile, *managing phorics* deals with a number of positioning (pointer) in the ongoing discourse. They are seen as a road sign in the current discourse (Ädel, 2006). Managing phoric functions found in this study such as enumerating, endophoric marking, previewing, reviewing and contextualizing.

Certainly every discourse whether written or spoken must start with an opening, or what so called introduction. Therefore, in all three videos I found the speakers perform expressions aimed for *introducing topics*. TW in data (00.02-00.06): "*we're testing out* the craziest high-end sparkly makeup" and (TW/03.51-03.54) so *we're gonna* **see** if this works or …" employed 'testing out' and 'gonna see' expression to show audiences her agenda in the video. At exactly the same point JH, (JH/00.02-00.04): "*I'm going to be doing* a review slash (/) swatches demo…" used 'going to be doing' to express the massage she was delivering. Lastly similar to JH, JS mentioned 'are doing' as the discourse marker functioning as introducing topics, (JS/06.00-08.00): "*today we're doing* a highly requested review on a brand new…".

Delimiting and *adding topic* are scarcely found in JH and JS's videos. TW on the other hand in her review attempted on delimit and add topic, each appears once. *Delimiting topics* equals restricting the main focus, in this case the product being reviewed. Furthermore, *adding topic* provide an addition to the topic discussed and/or if there is a subtopic in the discourse. It is lucidly stated that during the opening section TW has mentioned her attention of testing out a high-end sparkly makeup, however, she has not been mentioned which of the kind she would specifically review, therefore she delimited her topic, (TW/00.11-00.16): "*what we have to chat about today* is a glitter topcoat by Estee Lauder". Moreover, for adding topic she said, (TW/00.44-00.46): "maybe we'll try that, *too*", here to represents addition.

As introducing topic functions well in CMC discourse, speakers also tend to have *concluding topic*; both phenomena are considered common and natural to begin and end topics in a discourse. The examples below reflect how the three speakers conclude topic:

- (JH/08.19-08.21): alright *so as for my overall opinion* on this collection …
- (JH/11.09-11.10): so *that's a wrap* on this video
- (TW/08.19-08.21): so *there we have it* I'll see you guys in the sunshine
- (TW/10.09-10.11): so *that is that* I'm gonna watch…
- (JS/10.09-10.10): I can honestly *give my thought* already

Asides marking is another function under topic management in discourse organization. This function is unique since it can only be performed by utterance makers in spoken discourse. *Asides marking* is any opening or closing expression used to move track temporarily or in other words depart from the actual topic to deliver other messages which makes it clear why this do not normally occur in written discourses, especially the academic ones. There are two asides marking found in data via JH's video which are:

- (JH/06.15-06.18): But *I'm just putting that out there* for you guys in case…
- (JH/11.48-11.52): *Anyway*, so I just went in, I applied a regular long-lasting liquid lipstick

From managing topic, we are now discussing the other sub function in discourse organization namely managing phoric. Its first function is *enumerating* in which the current discourse contents are listed in order, for instance, (JS/00.38-00.1): "*first of all* I love the packaging that it came with *and* it has of course …". On the expression we can tell that Jeffree was about to explain de physical detail of the product therefore this utterance is

considered enumerating. Other samples seen below:

- (JH/02.58-03.03): *It starts off with* the shade Kimberly, Kim, Kiki, Kimmy
- (JH/07.44-07.46): *Last but not least*, we have the …
- (JH/08.21-08.23): I would say *the first thing that comes to mind* …

Previewing and reviewing would make total sense when discussed at once. First off, *previewing* refers to the later discussed topic inside the discourse. By contrast, *review* is a way the speaker of a discourse reminds their audience about the already discussed topic. There are five findings related to both functions consist of three previewing and two reviewing.

Previewing:

- (TW/04.08-04.09): so *I'm gonna scoot you guys there* and …
- (JS/00.21-00.26): You can put it on your face … and your entire body so *we might just do that in a minute*
- (JS/02.14-02.17): is it Jeffree Star approved *we're about to find out in a minute*

Reviewing:

- (JH/02.44-02.48): so *the reason I was* ridiculously excited it because it's four different shades
- (JH/06.00-06.03): *It's like I said* right before I applied this …

If previewing and reviewing refer to a certain location in the discourse either has previously discussed or will be discussed later, *endophoric marking* does not refer to any specific case, for examples in (JH/05.32-05.34): "I'm foing to do over top of it so *you can see* what it actually looks like", here she doen not refer to any case in the past or in the future since video offers a motion picture she can show everything she wants her audience to see. There is another example of endophoric marking found in the data by JS in (01.25-01.30): "*you see it* shaking right there? I don't want to …".

Lastly, I found two data belong to contextualizing function in the data.

Contextualizing means providing annotation on the discourse conditions hence shows traces of discourse production. Firstly, in JS's (05.13-05.15) "so *now that we've* really patted this into the skin *let's*…". The other one found in (JH/05.17-05.19): "and *then we can move forward* to swatches"

Speech Act Labels

When speakers are actually acting out what they utter, this condition is called speech act labelling. Discourse functions emerged through the use of this metadiscourse classification are arguing and exemplifying. Unlike other classifications which comprise five or more functions, this has only two. *Arguing* presents emphasized expressions towards the current topic by providing reasons or citing evidences. As illustrations, (JH/05.53-05.55): "*I can't say enough* good things about this color" and (JH/08.29-08.31): "*If I were to grade* it would be A++". One expression that appears repetitively is 'I feel like' as seen below:

- (TW/00.53-00.55): *I really feel like* this product you could put …
- (TW/04.34-04.36): *I feel like* I'd like more glitter but …
- (JS/04.04-04.07): *I feel like* this could last you a long time

As can be detected from the label, *exemplifying* used for listing clear example(s). I found that the exemplifying expression used mostly in the data would not likely be implemented in written nor spoken academic discourse. There is consistence use of 'like' as in 'she is lazy just *like* her brother' and 'you know'.

- (JS/02.00-02.08): they're really like getting to know their audience from a consumer standpoint *you know* they've had one really huge hit product.
- (JH/06.25-06.26): just *like* a regular lipstick would
- (JH/03.58-04.02): *you know, like* all the liquid lipstick out there

Reference to The Audience

The last classification of metadiscourse includes four functions found in the data. We

begin from the first one namely *managing comprehension* which is essential as in this case speakers confirming that their audience following their ideas. However, the datum appeared from the video is one way only since audiences could not reply at the very moment. The only datum gained from JH she stated (10.28-10.30): "*do you know what I'm saying* it's not like breaking up or cracking".

One discourse function under this category which shows most data is *anticipating audiences' response*. It is uttered as if the speakers are able guess their audiences' response regarding the current topic. The typical characteristic of this function is the use of pronouns such as 'I', 'you', or 'we'.

- (JS/02.23-02.25): *I know* a lot of of *you are gonna be like* $40! Jesus!
- (TW/07.32-07.36): *I don't think I've found that yet* but I'm kind of like …
- (JH/01.25-01.27): "say what you will about Kim, *I know* that they're a very controversial family *but*…".

Managing message is the next function used to highlight the principal idea the speakers try to convey inside the discourse. Speakers purpose is to ensure their audiences remember the idea. Other point of this function is to add remarks on the anticipated understanding.

- (JH/05.16-05.17): so *be aware* it is not what it is
- (JH/10.21-10.22): *I just wish* that it's more …
- (JH/01.45-01.46): *I hope* that they come out with …
- (JS/11.39-01.41): *hopefully* you learnt something new today

The last case in the category is *imagining scenario* where speakers invite the audiences to see a case from a certain standpoint. Nonetheless, this is applied limited only the concepts related to the ongoing discourse and not outside it (real world). For instance, JH shared her audience her expectation about the reviewed product, seen in (JH/05.08-05.13): "I was expecting to receive a matte liquid lipstick that's creamy, that's not what you're gonna get *if that's what you're expecting*".

Besides, JS were spotted using 'suppose' to ask his audiences imagining a scenario as in "this is *supposed* to be infused with Farsali skincare DNA" and (JS/02.47-02.52): "we're *supposed* to be really radiated"

Conclusions

The study reveals that the entire metadiscourse classifications proposed in reflexive approach are found in spoken discourse especially in computer mediated communication (CMC), in this case review videos on YouTube. Nevertheless, there is a discourse function which is not applied and seen in the collected data. It is *managing audiences' discipline* in which the addresser directly requests the addressee to do something, for instance as quoted from Ädel (2010), "can I get your attention please?", or "can we have a little bit of quiet?" are not necessarily employed in the data as this type of CMC only allow interaction between addresser and the addressee through chat facility; this function is not usually found in written discourse either.

Other functions beside the audiences' discipline management can be identified from the data. Nonetheless, I note that there are two discourse functions which would only be found in spoken discourse. Those include *repairing*, which in written discourse can easily be edited before being published, or if it does not get fixed before than will remain a mistake. Another one on the list is *asides marking* as an author would not likely has any side topics and therefore they do not need any sidetrack markings, otherwise it will create confusion to the reader.

Furthermore, I found that the metadiscourse markers in CMC are applied distinctively from those used in written or spoken discourse of academic context. CMC review videos on YouTube has relatively more casual context therefore the markers people tend to use are less formal, for example when arguing, an academic speaker would employ 'I argue that" or 'I am postulating' rather than 'I feel like' or 'personally I…". Moreover, when delimiting topic, the

speakers did not use "*we're not gonna deal with all eight here*" or "okay we *won't go into that*, that's a little too much for us to consider", rather they keep it simple like "we will… *too*". Thus as conclusion discourse context influences metadiscourse markers use.

Considering major distinction that can be found between metadiscourse use in spoken and written discourse as well as formal and informal situation, I encourage other possible researchers conduct further study on the matter. Exclusively metadiscourse phenomenon in computer mediated communication still remains scarcely investigated. YouTube is one interesting object which can provide more data to explore. By doing so hopefully more markers related to less formal context can be discovered.

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