

# An Analysis of Psychologists’ Interactional Metadiscourse in CCTV Program “Psychological Interview” ——from the Perspective of Rhetorical Persuasion Theory

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**Abstract:** Metadiscourse is an good way for writers to express their views and influence readers’ understanding of their discourse. Previous studies focused on written discourse, while little effort has been conducted in spoken discourse. Based on Hyland’s (2005) interpersonal model of discourse and Aristotle’s rhetoric persuasion theory, this study explores psychologists’ use of interactional metadiscourse in CCTV program “Psychological Interview” and how they are used to achieve appeals of persuasion. The result shows that psychologists use much boosters and engagement markers to enhance the persuasion of their discourse, and focus on the realization of credible appeal with boosters, hedges, self-mentions. Engagement markers, attitude markers, self-mentions are used achieve affective appeal.

**Keywords:** Interactional metadiscourse; Psychologist; Appeal of persuasion

## 1. Introduction

In modern society, much more attention has been paid to mental health issues, and there is an increasing demand for psychologists. Psychologists’ discourse contains much interactional metadiscourse, which has obvious persuasion characteristics. This study, applying Hyland’s (2005) interpersonal model of metadiscourse as the classification system for metadiscourse, investigates the use of psychologists’ interactional metadiscourse and how they helps to achieve rational, credible and affective appeal, so as to enrich the research of metadiscourse in spoken discourse.

## 2. Literature view

Harris (1959) proposed the concept of metadiscourse to indicate that the writers or speakers intend to guide the readers’ better understanding of text. Hyland (2005) divided metadiscourse into interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Interactional metadiscourse focuses on the expression of the writer’s position and the reader’s subjective initiative, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions and engagement markers. Subcategories of interactional metadiscourse are presented in table 1 below.

Table 1 Categories and functions of interactional metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005)<sup>[3]</sup>

Category	Function	Example
Hedges	withhold commitment to the proposition, open dialogue	about, might, possible
Boosters	emphasize certainty or close dialogue	in fact, clearly, definitely
Attitude markers	express writer’s attitude to proposition	unfortunately, I agree
Self-mentions	explicitly refer to author(s)	I, we, my, us
Engagement markers	clearly establish a relationship with readers	note that, you can see that

Hyland said that “Rhetoric is the art of persuasion” (Hyland 2005: 63). Aristotle introduced his famous three means of persuasion: ethos, logos and pathos, which provide sufficient means to constitute a persuasive discourse<sup>[1]</sup>. Ethos refers to credible appeals that involve the speaker’s personality, including their competency and authority. To achieve logos (rational appeal), the content should be logical and reasonable. Pathos (affective appeal) evokes the audience’s emotions.

The existing studies mainly focus on written discourse, but in recently years, researchers have begun to show interest in

metadiscourse in spoken discourse. Much attention has been paid to academic discourse, and some to book review, advertisement, teachers' classroom discourse and speech discourse. Zhang Jing (2018) comparatively studied the characteristics and rhetorical functions of metadiscourse of English and Chinese TV talk show hosts. Ye Huijun and Yang Xinni (2021) studied how spokespersons of routine press conferences of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs use interactional metadiscourse to interact with the audience to achieve their communicative purposes<sup>[2]</sup>. Wen Jing (2021) investigated how counselors use different metadiscourse resources in online counseling to achieve persuasive functions.

### 3. Research Methodology

#### 3.1 Research questions

(1) What are the frequency and distribution of psychologists' interactional metadiscourse in CCTV program "Psychological Interview"? (2) How does psychologists' interactional metadiscourse help to achieve appeals of persuasion?

#### 3.2 Data resource

This study selects 20 episodes extracted and transcribed from CCTV 12 program "Psychological Interview" (<http://tv.cctv.com/lm/xlft/>) from August 15th, 2021 to December 25th, 2021, which covering rich topics. "Psychological Interview" is the first mental health program on CCTV, the country's most authoritative broadcaster. The total number of words is 35357. AntConc 3.5.8, were used to calculate the frequency of interactional metadiscourse markers.

### 4. Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Frequency and distribution of psychologists' metadiscourse

Interpersonal metadiscourse helps psychologists express their opinions or attitudes and engages the audience in their discourse. In this paper, Hyland's (2005) interpersonal metadiscourse model is used as the classification system, and AntConc is used to calculate the frequency of interactional metadiscourse resources, as shown in Table 4-1.

Table 4-1 The frequency and distribution of interactional metadiscourse

Category	Number	Percentage (%) in interactional metadiscourse
Hedges	257	17.2%
Boosters	586	39.3%
Attitude markers	64	4.3%
Self-mentions	159	10.7%
Engagement markers	426	28.5%
Total	1492	100%

As shown in Table 4-1, the total number of interactional metadiscourse is 1492, with boosters the most frequent by 39.3% with 586 occurrences. Then is engagement markers (28.5%, 426 times), hedges (17.2%, 257 times), self-mentions (10.7%, 159 times), and attitude markers (4.3%, 64 times), which is used least frequently.

#### 4.2 The rhetorical function of psychologists' interactional metadiscourse

Metadiscourse can be used to help guide the reader or listener to a better understanding of the text, thus reflecting the speaker's trying to build some certain relationship with the listener. Metadiscourse contributes to rational appeal (connecting opinions), credibility (stressing the speaker's character or authority), and emotional appeal (showing respect for or building a relation with the audience) (Hyland, 2005: 63). Rational appeal is usually realized by interactive metadiscourse markers, so this paper does not discuss the realization of logoi.

##### 4.2.1 Metadiscourse realizing credible appeal

As authoritative psychologists, although they already have various characteristics, it is still necessary for them to re-establish credibility during the process of discourse. Interactional metadiscourse is a good way to achieve rational appeal. In the data, boosters, hedges, self-mentions, and attitude markers are used to help achieve ethos.

##### Boosters

Boosters are the most commonly used interactional metadiscourse markers to achieve credible appeal, and are often used to express the speaker's certainty about their presentation and add a firm commitment to their positions. Psychologists thus project an confident and authoritative image. Boosters are the most frequently used, appearing in the data 586 times, accounting for 39.3% of the total interactional metadiscourse.

Example 1: So one thing I particularly want to remind you is that many fathers actually need to be trained.

Boosters “particularly” and “actually” are used to emphasize the content of the utterance, suggesting that the listener is paying more attention to what he is saying, demonstrating his authority and expertise.

## Hedges

Hedges are often used to help the speaker to weaken expressions or statements. “Psychological Interview”, is related to psychology and involves some sensitive topics. Psychologists should be cautious when expressing their opinions and leave room for negotiation. Hedges appeared 257 times, accounting for 17.2%.

E2: But, most fathers might often find an excuse to do their own things more.

Hedges “most” and “might” leave space for negotiation with readers, and help to build the psychological expert’s image as considerate and respectful.

## Self-mentions

Hyland (2005) points out that the first person pronoun is the most powerful interactional metadiscourse for presenting self-existence in a text. Psychologists on the show may introduce themselves a lot to highlight their expertise. Self-mentions appeared 145 times, accounting for 9.7%.

E3: So, in fact, psychologically speaking, I think her recreation is significant.

Self-mention “I” indicates that the psychologist is openly responsible for his words and tries to project an image of competence and authority.

### 4.2.2 Metadiscourse realizing affective appeal

Psychologists also need to involve guests and audience to the conversations, so as to build a harmonious relationship with the audience and enhance affective appeal.

## Engagement markers

Engagement markers directly construct the interaction between the speaker and the audience.

In the data engagement markers occurred 426 times, taking 28.6%.

E4: But one thing need to be noticed is that do not to “kidnap” your child for his love of the activity.

“one thing need to be noticed” is used to draw the audience’s attention and involve them in the discourse.

## Attitude markers

Psychologists employ certain attitude markers to express affective attitude towards the propositional content to achieve pathos, with 64 occurrences, and accounting for 4.3%.

E5: I feel so moved, too. I was going to ask you something else, but I think what she said is so good.

Attitude markers “moved” help to achieve affective appeal by resonating emotionally and intellectually with the audience.

## Self-mentions

Self-mentions “we” can also be used as an important rhetorical strategy to achieve interaction with the audience, thus obtain emotional recognition, and enhance the effect of persuasion, with 14 occurrences, accounting for 0.9%.

E6: I am particularly touched by the “Meng” that Qiao said just now.

Self-mention “I” indicates that the psychologist feels the same as the audience, thus expressing his or her position, which can further influence the audience’s recognition of his or her point of view unconsciously.

## 5. Conclusion

This study analyzed psychologists’ use of metadiscourse in “Psychological Interview” program based on Hyland’s interpersonal metadiscourse model and Aristotle’s rhetoric theory, and how different kinds of interactional metadiscourse markers are employed to achieve appeals of persuasion. It is found that psychologists used much more boosters and engagement markers on the program, and they pay more attention to the realization of credible appeal to help make their discourse more persuasive. This study enriches the research of interactional metadiscourse in spoken discourse and help promote the audience’s understanding of psychological experts’ discourse.

## References:

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