

WRITERS' AWARENESS OF METADISCOURSE FEATURES IN MALAYSIAN BUSINESS NEWS

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ABSTRACT

Metadiscourse is an important linguistic resource in business news because it guides readers throughout the text. Business news is vital to keep people abreast of how the economy affects job opportunities, how high or low interest rates may go, and whether layoffs are imminent in local industries. However, it is the news that people read the least because it is not engaging to them. The study aims to investigate *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* business news writers' awareness on the use of metadiscourse features. Metadiscourse Awareness Test was given to 10 business news writers from *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* respectively. The findings showed that sequencers had the lowest mean score (M=2.334) for textual metadiscourse, while certainty markers had the lowest mean score (M=2.667) for interpersonal metadiscourse. Although *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers exhibited the lowest mean score in identifying sequencers and certainty markers, they still demonstrated a high awareness in identifying all the categories of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. The findings revealed the importance of metadiscourse features for the business news writers to fully utilise them in the news industry.

Keywords: business news; linguistic resource; metadiscourse; Metadiscourse Awareness Test; writers

Introduction

Business news updates people about the world of business and commerce. Business news has expanded because newspapers publish business sections and have a large reporting and editing staff devoted to the subject (Hewitt, 2002). It ranges from hard news to soft features, handouts to personal finance columns, and people items to business openings (Itule & Anderson, 2008). A news story that consists of hard news chronicles the information as concise as possible. The information includes the who, what, when, why, and how of an event. However, it can be soft and standing back to examine the people, places and things that shape the world (Itule & Anderson, 2008). Business news is vital because it encourages people to engage in decision making in economy that influences their routines (Bowman & Willis, 2003). Most of the time, the lack of recognition of the latest policies in economy might affect inequality when it comes to income, thus undermining social justice. Nevertheless, business news has always been the news that people least likely to read due to the lack of engagement to them. This is because the writers are not able to clearly report news, thus creating a less reader-friendly text (Hewitt, 2002).

In order to attract readers to read business news, metadiscourse can be used (Oeldorf-Hirsh, 2011). Metadiscourse is an imperative way for writers to organise their written work and reveal their identity towards the text or readers to explain the occurrences and effects of certain events (Hyland & Tse, 2004). Metadiscourse is categorised into two types: textual and interpersonal features. Metadiscourse is used not only for writers to assist readers through the content of the text but also express their attitude and points of view towards the propositions to readers. This means that writing is communicative in nature; thus, Hyland (2005) concurs that metadiscourse is interpersonal as it helps in maintaining the relationship between writers and readers. Hyland mentions that metadiscourse helps in making the content more comprehensible, convincing, and lucid for readers. The latent awareness of metadiscourse use by writers in business news is analysed in this study because thus far, the focus on metadiscourse studies has been on the use of metadiscourse (Hudson & Rowlands, 2012; Itule & Anderson, 2008; Mencher, 2011; Ryan & Tankard, 2005). Since there is not emphasis on the metadiscourse awareness, this leads to no detailed discussions on news writing in reference books or manuals. The information from textbooks is unclear because there is only a small section of guidelines in writing news. Therefore, learners do not have enough awareness on how to use appropriate metadiscourse in their writing, particularly writing of business news. They are unaware of the use of metadiscourse features in business news (Khattak et al., 2003).

News writers are familiar with inverted-pyramid style (Hudson & Rowlands, 2012; Itule & Anderson, 2008). Following this structure, the “base” of the pyramid—the most fundamental facts—appear at the top of the story, in the lead paragraph. Non-

essential information appears in the following paragraphs in order of importance. The most important of the five W's and H (what, where, who, when, which, and how) are in the lead that should capture the readers; curiosity, followed by the body of the news, which should hold readers to the closure. All good media organisations have house style manuals (Itule & Anderson, 2008), but writers are given the flexibility either to use or not to use them. They also use whatever grammar rules that come to mind when they write (Ryan & Tankard, 2005). This shows that writers are not aware of the correct linguistic conventions in order to write business news effectively. For example, they do not know that the use of announcements in the lead paragraph at the beginning of the news is imperative to provide readers with the information on what to expect. Apart from that, writers are unaware that commentaries are essential to be used in the news to capture readers' attention. In other words, writers do not realise the significance of acknowledging or involving readers in the text.

Literature Review

Hewitt (2002) and Hudson and Rowlands (2012) believe that metadiscourse is used by writers to make business news interesting, appealing, and engaging. Nevertheless, it is astounding that there is not much attention on the investigation of metadiscourse features in business news texts (Clark & Marchi, 2017; Hoque, 2017). To date, studies on metadiscourse that focused on news were not on business news, but they were on newspaper discourse. Farnia and Mohammadi (2018) in their study on opinion articles demonstrated that interpersonal metadiscourse was present in both British and Iranian newspapers, but they only focused on the role of interpersonal metadiscourse in the newspapers. This could be a drawback in Farnia and Mohammadi's (2018) study because textual metadiscourse is important for examination as it makes the text more lucid and cogent. Mardani's (2017) study on newspaper articles suggested that metadiscourse had a very significant role in persuasive texts in both writing and translating in newspaper articles. This notion concurs with Xi's (2020) findings, which confirmed that the use of metadiscourse in business news reports is vital to share information, promote the business company, and interact with readers in the text.

Metadiscourse is considered a new concept in many areas of discourse analysis and language education (Hyland et al., 2022). Thus, there is a need to create awareness of the use of metadiscourse in various settings. Some researchers have conducted studies related to metadiscourse awareness, such as Karakus (2020), Nugrahani and Bram (2020), and Prommas (2020), who conducted studies on awareness of both interactive and interactional metadiscourse. The findings of those studies may be used to determine future instruction. However, metadiscourse awareness was created in academic settings and not in news setting. It is also important to raise awareness on the use of metadiscourse in business news to ensure that the content is more meaningful for readers.

With the lack of investigation on the use of metadiscourse in business news, the purpose of the study is to examine *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* business news writers' awareness on the use of metadiscourse features in business news. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question, which is "To what extent are the business news writers of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* aware of the use of metadiscourse features?"

Method

Participants

The participants of this study comprised 20 business news writers. Ten were from *The Star Online* and ten were from *Focus Malaysia*. The writers were chosen purposively, in which they should have written business news for at least a year in order to test their awareness on the use of metadiscourse in business news writing. The participants from *The Star Online* were ranged between one to 20 years of writing business news, while the participants from *Focus Malaysia* were ranged from one to six years of writing business news. There were six male writers and four female writers were from *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* respectively. The Chief Editors from *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* were contacted to obtain their permission to involve the writers from the two news portals in the research.

Analytical Framework

Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model was employed as an initial framework in the present study, which forms a small part of a larger study. This model consists of syntactic and pragmatic aspects of metadiscourse features; thus, it is comprehensive. Dafouz-Milne's metadiscourse model encompasses two main dimensions: textual and interpersonal. There are seven categories for the textual dimension: logical markers, sequencers, reminders, topicalisers, code glosses, illocutionary markers, and announcements. In contrast, there are five categories for the interpersonal dimension: hedges, certainty markers, attributors, attitude markers, and commentaries. However, it was shown that business news did not have reminders and illocutionary markers significantly from the pilot study that was conducted. Hence, there are 10 metadiscourse categories in the revised framework because these two categories were omitted. In the revised framework, there are five categories of textual metadiscourse comprise *logical markers, sequencers, topicalisers, code glosses, and announcements*, while there are five categories of interpersonal metadiscourse that comprise *hedges, boosters, attributors, attitude markers, and commentaries*. Table 1 displays the metadiscourse categories and some examples of linguistic realisations of Dafouz-Milne's revised metadiscourse model.

Table 1
Revised Dafouz-Milne's (2008) Metadiscourse Model

Textual Metadiscourse		
Categories		Examples
Logical markers		
-	Additives	and, furthermore
-	Adversatives	However
-	Consecutives	Therefore
-	Conclusives	Finally
Sequencers		
Topicalisers		
Code glosses		
-	Punctuation devices	when (as with the Tories now) Tax evasion: it is deplored in others, but not in oneself.
-	Reformulators	in other words, that is, to put it simply
-	Exemplifiers	for example, for instance
Announcements		
Interpersonal Metadiscourse		
Categories		Examples
Hedges		
-	Epistemic verbs	may, might
-	Probability	probably, perhaps
-	Epistemic expression	it is likely
Certainty markers		
Attributors		
Attitude markers		
-	Deontic verbs	have to
-	Attitudinal adverbs	unfortunately, undoubtedly
-	Attitudinal adjectives	it is absurd, it is surprising
-	Cognitive Verbs	I feel, I think
Commentaries		
-	Rhetorical questions	What is the future of Europe integration or disintegration?
-	Direct address to readers	dear reader

- Inclusive expressions we all believe
- Personalisation I do not want
- Asides She seemed (ironically for
Spencer) not of establishment.

Instrument

Metadiscourse Awareness Test consisting of 17 short extracts of news, which were taken from *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia*. Business news was employed to investigate the awareness of participants on the use of metadiscourse. The short extracts with different lengths from short to long were utilised to take into account the business news writers’ different awareness levels in the use of metadiscourse features. Such method followed Treptow et al.’s (2007) study on using short extracts in reading comprehension. The news extracts were altered to fit the paragraph development of the business news. Metadiscourse features were removed in each news extract. This test is designed to test the participants’ awareness in identifying the metadiscourse features in each news extract.

For the test items in the test, there were a total of 30 metadiscourse items. The test adapted Vegada et al.’s (2016) language testing of multiple-choice questions (MCQ) test in which the test incorporated 30 items for examination. In order to warrant that the grading system was objective and without rate bias, the items in the study were written? in the form of multiple-choice questions (Higgins & Tatham, 2003). There were 10 metadiscourse categories, which three test items were constructed for each category, giving a total of 30 items. Beziat’s (2012) testing strategy for learning of text and long-term retention was followed, where multiple-choice items were tested for three times on the same language element to assess the learners’ performance accurately in the test. All the different categories of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse were reflected in the test items. Moreover, three options were given for each item in the test, namely, A, B, and C. This was done to enhance the reliability of the test items and lessen the time that the participants spent answering the questions as there were not many distractors (Vegada et al., 2016).

Data Collection Procedures

To minimise ambiguity in the Metadiscourse Awareness Test, two inter-raters were employed to ensure that the test items were valid to be conducted with the writers. In order to avoid vague language, unclear options and unsuitable content, the process of amending the items based on the inter-raters’ comments was pertinent (Sahin, 2019). Subsequently, the test was piloted with six business news writers. A reliability test was run to check the internal consistency of the test items. The Cronbach’s alpha for all 30 items of the Metadiscourse Awareness Test was 0.739. This shows that the items had internal consistency as values greater than 0.7 are considered reliable (Taber, 2017) and

the test was ready to be administered to the writers for the study. Prior to data collection, letters of permission were written to the Chief Editors of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* to obtain their consent to enable the writers to participate in this study. Consent forms were given to the 20 business news writers personally when they agreed to participate.

Prior to conducting the research, the Metadiscourse Awareness Test was uploaded to Google Form. The purpose of using Google Form was to allow the researcher to check the responses from the writers to ensure that they submitted their responses and would not leave any questions out. The results from Google Form showed the percentage of each option of the item. Hence, the researcher would be able to check each writer's response to each item of the test and determine the overall score for each writer. The writers were seated together in the office of the news company and they had to answer the test online using their desktop. To improve the objectivity of the test, the researcher was present in each news company to assist the writers. Instruction was given by the researcher to the writers to ensure that the test was conducted for a duration of 40 minutes. All 10 writers from each online newspaper had to answer the test questions online simultaneously.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data were analysed using mean scores for each category of metadiscourse. These mean scores were then categorised to three levels of awareness: high, moderate, and low. Ghazaei et al.'s (2016) awareness levels of management tasks were used as a reference in the present study because these levels were relatively similar to the present study's levels of metadiscourse awareness. The scales in the present study were different compared to Ghazaei et al.'s study, in which the scales were 0-10, 11-20, and 21-30. Using Ghazaei et al.'s scales as a base of this current study in identifying a metadiscourse feature, the scales were changed to 0.0-1.0 (low awareness), 1.1-2.0 (moderate awareness), and 2.1-3.0 (high awareness).

The mean scores of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers were also compared to determine which metadiscourse categories the writers were most familiar with, and which categories were still a challenge for them. Independent samples t-test is a test done to compare the means of two independent groups in order to determine whether there is statistical evidence that the associated population means are significantly different (Derrick et al., 2017). Consequently, independent samples t-test was conducted in the present study to determine whether there was a significant difference between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers' awareness in textual and interpersonal metadiscourse categories. It was carried out after obtaining the mean scores by *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers in identifying the categories of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse.

Results

The purpose of Metadiscourse Awareness Test was to gauge the awareness of metadiscourse use of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers. This subsection presents quantitative findings, which seek to answer the research question. The Metadiscourse Awareness Test scores are shown in Table 2.

Table 2
Overall Metadiscourse Awareness Test Scores

Participants	News Portals	
	The Star Online (%)	Focus Malaysia (%)
1	83.33	86.67
2	56.67	63.33
3	70.00	83.33
4	86.67	73.33
5	93.33	73.33
6	83.33	96.67
7	70.00	90.00
8	76.67	90.00
9	80.00	93.33
10	90.00	93.33

Table 2 shows the scores of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers. The results revealed that the highest score for *The Star Online* writers was 93.33%, while the highest score for *Focus Malaysia* writers was 96.67%. For the lowest score, Participant 2 from *The Star Online* scored 56.67%, while Participant 2 from *Focus Malaysia* scored 63.33%. The average score for *The Star Online* writers was 79.00%, while the average score for *Focus Malaysia* writers was 84.33%. This could imply that the awareness of *The Star Online* writers was lower than *Focus Malaysia* writers.

Textual Metadiscourse

A comparison was done on the overall mean score of each category of *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Overall Mean Score of Textual Metadiscourse in The Star Online and Focus Malaysia Business News

	News Portals	Mean
Textual metadiscourse	The Star Online	2.700
	Focus Malaysia	2.834

Table 3 shows the overall mean score of textual metadiscourse in both news portals. Out of five categories of textual metadiscourse, the overall mean score of textual metadiscourse in *Focus Malaysia* was 2.834, while the overall mean score of textual metadiscourse in *The Star Online* was 2.700. This shows that the awareness of identifying textual metadiscourse was almost similar for both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers. Independent samples t-test was carried out to compare whether there was a difference between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers' awareness in textual metadiscourse categories (see Table 4).

Table 4
Independent Samples T-test for Textual Metadiscourse Categories

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
						Lower		Upper
Textual metadiscourse	Equal variances assumed	1.298	.287	.000	8	.598	-.55483	.55483
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	6.982	.598	-.56924	.56924

From Table 4, it was found that there was no significant difference between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers' awareness in textual metadiscourse categories because the significant value ($p = .598$) was greater than alpha at .05 level of significance. This may indicate that *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers had similar awareness in identifying the categories of textual metadiscourse. The mean scores obtained by the writers in identifying each category of textual metadiscourse are subsequently calculated and shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Mean Scores Obtained by the Writers on the Identification of Textual Metadiscourse in Metadiscourse Awareness Test

Textual Metadiscourse Categories	Mean Score		Difference in Mean	Overall Mean Score
	The Star Online	Focus Malaysia		

Logical markers	3.000	2.333	0.667	2.667
Sequencers	2.000	2.667	-0.667	2.334
Topicalisers	3.000	3.000	0.000	3.000
Code glosses	3.000	3.000	0.000	3.000
Announcements	2.500	2.500	0.000	2.500

The overall mean scores of the different categories of textual metadiscourse indicated that both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers were aware at identifying the categories of textual metadiscourse. The overall mean scores suggested that both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers exhibited a high awareness in identifying topicalisers, code glosses, logical markers, announcements, and sequencers. From Table 5, the highest mean score was exhibited by topicalisers and code glosses (M = 3.000), followed by logical markers (M = 2.667), announcements (M = 2.500), and lastly, sequencers (M = 2.334).

When a comparison was made among the five categories of textual metadiscourse in *The Star Online*, the mean scores of logical markers, topicalisers and code glosses categories, were the highest (M = 3.000) compared to announcements (M = 2.500) and sequencers (M = 2.000). This showed that the writers had a high awareness in identifying logical markers, topicalisers, code glosses, and announcements but a moderate awareness in identifying sequencers. However, the *Focus Malaysia* writers scored the lowest in the mean scores of identifying logical markers.

In contrast, topicalisers and code glosses had the highest mean scores for *Focus Malaysia* (M = 3.000), followed by sequencers (M = 2.667), announcements (M = 2.500) and lastly, logical markers (M = 2.333). The results indicated that the *Focus Malaysia* writers had a high awareness in identifying all the five categories of textual metadiscourse. The writers had a higher awareness in identifying topicalisers and code glosses compared to logical markers. Identifying logical markers had the lowest mean score. When a comparison was made between the two groups of writers, both groups had the highest overall mean scores in the identification of topicalisers (*The Star Online*: M = 3.000, *Focus Malaysia*: M = 3.000) and code glosses (*The Star Online*: M = 3.000, *Focus Malaysia*: M = 3.000). However, *The Star Online* writers had a higher awareness than *Focus Malaysia* writers for the identification of logical markers (*The Star Online*: M = 3.000, *Focus Malaysia*: M = 2.333). For announcement identification, the awareness of *The Star Online* writers was similar to *Focus Malaysia* writers (*The Star Online*: M = 2.500, *Focus Malaysia*: M = 2.500). Even though both writer groups had the lowest overall mean score for sequencers identification (M = 2.334), *Focus Malaysia* writers had a higher awareness than *The Star Online* writers in identifying sequencers (*The Star Online*: M = 2.000, *Focus Malaysia*: M = 2.667).

To sum up, the overall mean score of textual metadiscourse identification was the highest for topicalisers and code glosses (M = 3.000). This means that both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers had a high awareness in the use of topicalisers and code glosses. The mean scores of the writers' awareness in identifying textual

metadiscourse categories suggested that *The Star Online* writers had better metadiscourse awareness of logical markers than *Focus Malaysia* writers. For sequencers, *Focus Malaysia* writers were more aware of its use compared to *The Star Online* writers. The writers' awareness of topicalisers, code glosses, and announcements was similar for both groups.

Interpersonal Metadiscourse

Similar to the textual metadiscourse analysis, a comparison was done on both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers on the overall mean score of each aforementioned category of interpersonal metadiscourse. The results are depicted in Table 6.

Table 6
Overall Mean Score of Interpersonal Metadiscourse in The Star Online and Focus Malaysia Business News

	News Portals	Mean
Interpersonal metadiscourse	The Star Online	2.700
	Focus Malaysia	2.834

Table 6 shows the overall mean score of interpersonal metadiscourse in both news portals. Similar to textual metadiscourse, the awareness of identifying interpersonal metadiscourse for *The Star Online* writers was almost comparable with *Focus Malaysia* writers. Out of five categories of interpersonal metadiscourse, the overall mean score of interpersonal metadiscourse in *Focus Malaysia* (M = 2.834) is a little slightly higher than the overall mean score of interpersonal metadiscourse in *The Star Online* (M = 2.700). A comparison was conducted to determine whether there was a difference between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers' awareness in interpersonal metadiscourse categories. This comparison was done through independent samples t-test (see Table 7).

Table 7
Independent Samples T-test for Interpersonal Metadiscourse Categories

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Lower	Upper	

Interpersonal metadiscourse	Equal variances assumed	0.000	.352	.000	8	.623	-2.4067	2.4067
	Equal variances not assumed			.000	8.000	.623	-2.4067	2.4067

The results showed that there was no significant difference between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers' awareness in interpersonal metadiscourse categories because the significant value ($p = .623$) was greater than alpha at .05 level of significance. This may reveal that there was no difference in the writers' awareness in identifying interpersonal metadiscourse categories. The mean scores obtained by the writers in identifying each category of interpersonal metadiscourse are shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Mean Scores Obtained by the Writers on the Identification of Interpersonal Metadiscourse in Metadiscourse Awareness Test

Interpersonal Metadiscourse Categories	Mean Score		Difference in Mean	Overall Mean Score
	The Star Online	Focus Malaysia		
Hedges	3.000	2.667	0.333	2.834
Certainty markers	2.667	2.667	0.000	2.667
Attributors	3.000	3.000	0.000	3.000
Attitude markers	2.833	3.000	-0.167	2.917
Commentaries	2.667	2.833	-0.166	2.750

The overall mean scores of the different categories of interpersonal metadiscourse showed that both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers were aware at identifying the metadiscourse categories. This revealed that both groups of writers had a high awareness in identifying attributors, attitude markers, hedges, commentaries, and certainty markers. The results indicated that attributors had the highest mean score ($M = 3.000$), followed by attitude markers ($M = 2.917$), hedges ($M = 2.834$), commentaries ($M = 2.750$), and lastly, certainty markers ($M = 2.667$).

When comparing the categories of interpersonal metadiscourse, *The Star Online* writers scored the highest in the mean scores in hedges and attributors identification ($M = 3.000$), followed by attitude markers ($M = 2.833$), certainty markers ($M = 2.667$) and commentaries ($M = 2.667$). The scores revealed that the writers exhibited a high awareness in the use of hedges, attributors, attitude markers, certainty markers, and commentaries. The results showed that *The Star Online* writers had a higher awareness

in hedges and attributors identification compared to certainty markers and commentaries.

For evidentials (or attributors), Nugrahani and Bram (2020) mentioned that these attributors are important linguistic elements in writing because citation of other writers' work provides credibility to the writer's own writing. Hence, *The Star Online* writers achieved the awareness required for citing materials from other sources because they had the highest mean score in identifying attributors

For *Focus Malaysia*, the highest mean score was displayed by attributors and attitude markers categories ($M = 3.000$), while the second highest mean score was displayed by commentaries category ($M = 2.833$). The lowest mean score was displayed by hedges and certainty markers categories ($M = 2.667$). From the mean scores, the writers had a high awareness in identifying attributors, attitude markers, commentaries, hedges, and certainty markers. The results showed that there was no difficulty in identifying attributors and attitude markers for the writers; thus, they were more aware in the use of attributors and attitude markers in business news. Besides that, the writers had a better awareness in identifying commentaries compared to hedges and certainty markers.

When the awareness of both groups of writers were compared, *The Star Online* writers were found to have better awareness in identifying hedges ($M = 3.000$). Conversely, *Focus Malaysia* writers identified attitude markers ($M = 3.000$) and commentaries ($M = 2.833$) better than *The Star Online* writers. Both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers, however, had similar awareness in identifying attributors (*The Star Online*: $M = 3.000$, *Focus Malaysia*: $M = 3.000$) and certainty markers (*The Star Online*: $M = 2.667$, *Focus Malaysia*: $M = 2.667$). It was observed that the mean difference in hedges identification between *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers was high ($MD = 0.333$) compared to the other metadiscourse categories.

To conclude, the highest overall mean score of interpersonal metadiscourse identification was exhibited by attributors ($M = 3.000$); therefore, both *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers had a higher awareness in the use of attributors in business news. The findings of this study did not concur with Noorian and Biri's (2010) study because in their study, hedges were used the most in persuasive journalism; American and English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writers were more aware in using hedges in persuasive writing. From Table 8, the mean scores of the writers' awareness in identifying interpersonal metadiscourse categories suggested that *The Star Online* writers had better metadiscourse awareness of hedges than *Focus Malaysia* writers. For attitude markers and commentaries, *Focus Malaysia* writers had a higher awareness of its use compared to *The Star Online* writers. The writers' awareness of attributors and certainty markers was similar for both groups.

Discussion

The findings of the study demonstrate clearly that the participants from the two news portals were able to exhibit high awareness in all categories of metadiscourse features. These findings are in line with Farahani's (2018) study, in which transitions (or logical markers) were used the most in research articles; thus, the writers were aware of the use of transitions (or logical markers) in the text. Such trend is also observed in academic discourse in a study carried out by Nugroho (2020), in which logical markers were the most frequently used in opinion and business articles. This implies that the writers emphasised on the organisation of the text and connection between different parts of information in the news; hence, the writers were aware of the use of logical markers in the news. In other words, it was observed that the writers made connection between different sections of the information in the news.

The awareness in the use of sequencers is supported by Xi's (2020) study because there were not many sequencers in business news reports as these reports are more objective and not persuasive. The findings are also consistent with Dafouz-Milne (2008), which she mentioned that sequencers were not necessary in short length news. Perhaps this is the reason the writers were not aware and rarely used sequencers when writing their news.

Hashemi and Golparvar (2012) found that text connectives (consisting of logical connectors, sequencers, reminders, announcements, and topicalisers) were the most frequent type in Persian news reports. This indicates that the writers were aware of the use of topicalisers in the Persian news reports. Moghadam (2017) also discovered that transitions (or logical markers) were used the most in the news. These transitions were important markers used in the text to represent writers' attempt to ensure readers were able to correctly grasp the writers' points and ideas (Hyland, 2005).

In order for the news to be written credibly, code glosses were used in newspaper articles. The findings of this study concurred with Dafouz-Milne's (2008) study. Although Dafouz-Milne noted that opinion columnists were aware of a high readership, she also found similarities. Interestingly, more exemplifications and explanations, as well as reading cues were included in the form of code glosses in the news in Dafouz-Milne's study. Mardani (2017) also discovered that code glosses were much of use in newspaper articles.

The fact that *The Star Online* writers had higher awareness in the use of hedges is pertinent as it further supported other studies on the use of interactional metadiscourse (or interpersonal metadiscourse) in news (Abdullah et al., 2020). Abdullah et al. (2020) found that hedges were used most frequently in newspaper articles. They explained that writers used hedges to balance the truth and claims against the possible counter arguments of the readers, as well as mitigate the facts or personal beliefs based on some evidence to avoid any personal accountability. This further ascertained the claim by Hyland (1994) that hedges were used to allow claims to be stated with politeness, caution, and modesty. The study conducted by Abdullah et al.

(2020) demonstrated that the writers were more aware in the use of hedges because these writers used hedges predominantly in news discourse. The writers understood the importance of taking a humble stance by stating the claim with no accurate information (Hyland, 2005).

The higher awareness in the use of attributors by *The Star Online* writers is similarly found in Boshrabadi et al.'s (2014) study. It seems that the writers were more aware in the use of attributors in newspaper writings. However, a different finding was shown in the study by Farnia and Mohammadi (2018) where in their study, it was found that attributors were not frequently used in British magazine editorials. Although the lack of attributors may affect the writers' credibility, the discrepancy in the results warrants further investigation to determine why British magazine editorials lack the use of attributors. Kuhi and Mojood's (2014) study partially affirmed the findings of this study because in their study, attitude markers were predominantly used in English and Persian editorials. From Kuhi and Mojood's study, the findings revealed that the writers were more aware in using attitude markers in editorials. Nevertheless, evidentials (or attributors) were not used frequently in editorials in Kuhi and Mojood's study.

Even though metadiscourse features are widely employed, it is sometimes the case that writers tend to use them inappropriately, resulting in ineffective texts. This is true when it comes to the use of logical markers. Occasionally, the writers used the logical marker *and* and *but* at the beginning of the sentences. This is not advisable because it makes the news informal and unacceptable by strict grammarians. Nonetheless, for the other categories of metadiscourse features, they were used properly in business news.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study has fulfilled its objective in establishing the fact that metadiscourse awareness is pertinent because through the proper use of metadiscourse, writers would be able to express their viewpoint, and at the same time, engage with the readers as members of the particular community. They would be more critical and effective writers as they apply their metadiscourse awareness and skills appropriately throughout their practice. The results indicated that although sequencers had the lowest mean score for textual metadiscourse and certainty markers had the lowest mean score for interpersonal metadiscourse, *The Star Online* and *Focus Malaysia* writers had high awareness in identifying all the categories of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. The findings indicated that both groups of writers were able to identify textual and interpersonal metadiscourse in their writings; thus, they were aware of the use of metadiscourse features in business news. This study has a few pedagogical implications. First, the Metadiscourse Awareness Test could be used by writing instructors to determine the latent awareness of metadiscourse use by writers in business news. This test has gone through stringent validity and reliability tests and therefore, it is a valid instrument to be used in future research. In a way, the

construction of the test is the tangible contribution of the current study. Perhaps, future studies can use the Metadiscourse Awareness Test to investigate the participants' awareness on the use of metadiscourse in different settings, disciplines, and cross-cultures. Second, the writing instructors and business news writers can also benefit from the findings as the awareness of metadiscourse would allow the writers to construct business news more effectively to warrant the need for metadiscourse to be included in writing manuals. Finally, the revised version of Dafouz-Milne's (2008) metadiscourse model, which is another contribution of the study, can be used for future research on business news by the academic community. Although the study has several pertinent contributions, there are some limitations. One of the limitations is the small sample size of the study. Therefore, the results obtained in this study is only true for the participants of this study. For the results to be generalisable, it is suggested that future research conduct the study on a larger scale by including a larger number of writers from other news portals. Although the Metadiscourse Awareness Test has gone through stringent validity and reliability tests, the test is only conducted once to analyse the writers' awareness in the use of metadiscourse in knowing and understanding how readers would be able to comprehend the text. Thus, future studies may want to examine the writers' knowledge, in which it could be done at the initial and another one to be done after a period of time to yield more authentic data in order to prevent the writers from guessing the answers.

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