

**Interpersonal Metadiscourse in Western News Sites’  
Coverage of the Covid-19 Pandemic: A Corpus-Based Study**

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**Abstract**

*The current study applies Hyland’s (2005) comprehensive model of metadiscourse to study how writers of different news sites (mainstream news sites and alternative media news sites) use metadiscourse markers in their coverage of news related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of using different metadiscourse markers, especially when it comes to readers’ engagement with the presented texts. To elaborate more, the study examines how different metadiscursive strategies used by writers can reframe and reproduce different ideologies. For example, how the Alternative media news writers resorted to using more engagement markers to communicate the “hidden facts” about the “faked” Covid-19 pandemic and the “killer vaccines” directly to their readers, revealing the “truth” directly to their readers. Also, the study investigates how the use of metadiscourse markers can highlight the cooccurrence and confrontation of competing ideological manifestations and their role in persuasion. For the sake of the current study, an eclectic approach of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis is used. In addition to the corpus linguistic analysis, the study applies the interactional dimension of the Interpersonal Metadiscourse Model (Hyland,2005). The data of the study 4,662,477 words collected from different Western news sites between January 2020 and December 2022. By observing the data, it was clear that certain news sites promote conspiracy theories about the Covid-19 pandemic. Thus, the data was divided into two corpora: mainstream news corpus and alternative media news corpus. The mainstream news corpus includes 3,267,271 words collected from the following mainstream news sites: The Independent, The New York Times, and USA Today. The alternative media news corpus includes 1,395,206 words collected from the following alternative media news sites: Expose News, Clash Daily, and Before its News. The study highlights the ways in which writers of mainstream news sites and alternative media news sites use metadiscourse markers to persuade their readers with their ideologies about the Covid-19 pandemic; how ideology is embedded in their use of metadiscourse markers and how this use leads to conceptualizing metadiscourse as a strategy of persuasion.*

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Interpersonal Metadiscourse, corpus linguistics, mainstream news, alternative media news

ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي في تغطية مواقع الصحافة الغربية لجائحة كورونا: دراسة مبنية على علم المتون اللغوية

الملخص

تطبق الدراسة الحالية نموذج هايلاند الشامل (2005) لما وراء الخطاب لدراسة كيفية استخدام كُتاب المواقع الإخبارية المختلفة (المواقع الإخبارية الرئيسية ومواقع الإعلام البديل) لعلامات ما وراء الخطاب في تغطيتهم للأخبار المتعلقة بجائحة كوفيد-19 وتأثير استخدام هذه العلامات على تفاعل القراء مع النصوص المقدمة. وللتوضيح بشكل أكبر، تبحث الدراسة في كيفية إعادة تشكيل وإعادة إنتاج الأيديولوجيات المختلفة من خلال الاستراتيجيات الخطابية المختلفة التي يستخدمها الكُتاب و تحقق الدراسة في كيفية إبراز استخدام علامات ما وراء الخطاب لتزامن وتعارض التجليات الأيديولوجية المتنافسة ودورها في الإقناع. من أجل تحقيق أهداف الدراسة الحالية، تم استخدام نهج انتقائي لتحليل الخطاب النقدي القائم على المتون اللغوية. بالإضافة إلى التحليل اللغوي القائم على المتون اللغوية، تطبق الدراسة البعد التفاعلي لنموذج ما وراء الخطاب (هايلاند، 2005). تتضمن بيانات الدراسة 4,662,477 كلمة تم جمعها من مواقع إخبارية غربية مختلفة بين يناير 2020 وديسمبر 2022. ومن خلال ملاحظة البيانات، كان من الواضح أن بعض المواقع الإخبارية تروج لنظريات المؤامرة حول جائحة كوفيد-19. بناءً على ذلك، تم تقسيم البيانات إلى مدونتين لغويتين: مدونة الأخبار الرئيسية ومدونة الإعلام البديل. تتضمن مدونة الأخبار الرئيسية 3,267,271 كلمة تم جمعها من المواقع الإخبارية الرئيسية التالية: *The Independent, The New York Times, and USA Today Expose News, Clash Daily, and Before its News*. أما مدونة الإعلام البديل فتتضمن 1,395,206 كلمة تم جمعها من المواقع الإخبارية البديلة التالية: *Expose News, Clash Daily, and Before its News*. تسلط الدراسة الضوء على الطرق التي يستخدم بها كُتاب المواقع الإخبارية الرئيسية ومواقع الإعلام البديل لعلامات ما وراء الخطاب لإقناع قرائهم بأيديولوجياتهم حول جائحة كوفيد-19؛ وكيف تتجلى الأيديولوجيا في استخدامهم لهذه العلامات وكيف يؤدي هذا الاستخدام إلى تصور ما وراء الخطاب كاستراتيجية للإقناع. الكلمات المفتاحية: كوفيد-19، ما وراء الخطاب التفاعلي، علم المتون اللغوية، الأخبار الرئيسية، أخبار الإعلام البديل

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**Introduction**

Press reports on pandemics provide useful and important information that leads the public to practice positive healthy behaviors such as social distancing, wearing face masks, and getting vaccinated. Thus, press reports inform the public of positive health practices that reduce the spread of the virus. However, reports which rely mainly on arousing emotions of fear/ threat may negatively impact the public. According to Fairclough (1995a), Critical Discourse Analysis highlights that the use of language is ideologically motivated; the use of different linguistic features entails different ideologies resulting from their different situations and purposes. By these means, every language works as a form of social practice (Fairclough, 1995a). Thus, CDA scholars analyze how the linguistic features represented in people’s choice of words, sentences and utterances are not just arbitrary choices, but rather governed by how people are positioned in the social group.

In this regard, O’Keeffe (2012) states that media discourse can be defined as “interactions that take place through a broadcast platform, whether spoken or written, in which the discourse is oriented to a non-present reader, listener or viewer” (p.441). In this regard, Fairclough (1995b) states that types of media can be differentiated according to their channel of communication; written (press), oral (radio), or both (TV). Thus, the most personal channel of communication is TV and the least channel of communication is the press. Regarding the current study, the focus is directed towards online news articles of the press genre of media discourse.

Representing an issue in the media does not necessarily mirror reality. Instead, it is a process of sorting, filtering and finally producing (Berger & Luckmann, 1991). In the same regard, Fowler (1991, P. 19) highlights that reporting news has to do with identifying it within “a certain light of representation, and so selection involves an ideological act of interpretation”. Thus, Beard (2000, P. 18) claims that “there is no such thing as unbiased report, no such thing as neutral language”. Using a

personal point of view to positively or negatively represent something/someone is considered as bias according to Qayyum et al (2018). In news discourse, enacting bias can include many ways. For example, selecting a certain story over another, excluding certain voices while quoting others, and highlighting the credibility of certain sources while highlighting the unreliability of others. Finally, enacting bias can include referring to a certain group/topic using positive or negative lexical choices. Also, enacting bias can include attempting to draw readers' attention by the placement and the size devoted to the article within the newspaper (Hamborg et al, 2018).

The language of newspapers plays an important role in clearly conveying information to the public by communicating complex information in a straightforward manner. According to Bell (1991), the language of newspapers is produced to be informative, credible, and to be accessible to wide range of audience. Thus, writers use language to ensure that information are easily presented to the readers and to establish trust with their readers, which in turn creates a balance between clarity and complexity. In other words, this indicates that indicates that the language of newspapers plays an important role in shaping how information is perceived and understood by the public.

In this regard, Lukin (2013) states that Newspaper language can be used to not only to inform the public, but also to shape the public's perception by intentionally using certain linguistic strategies (specific lexical choices and narrative framing, for example). To elaborate more, Fowler (1991) argues that the linguistic choices in newspapers are not neutral but are instead shaped by ideological manifestations that shape how news is presented and understood. Thus, the language of newspapers is considered as a powerful tool in both informing the public and indirectly shaping the public's attitudes towards a certain phenomenon. Thus, the language of newspapers can significantly affect framing events, and often reflecting the underlying power structures and societal norms that control editorial decisions. So, the language of newspapers plays important role in forming and reinforcing public ideologies.

### **Interpersonal Metadiscourse**

This study investigates how writers of different Western news sites use language to achieve reader engagement and to show hidden ideologies by using an eclectic approach which integrates the theory of Interpersonal Metadiscourse alongside corpus linguistics. The interactional dimension of Interpersonal Metadiscourse is applied to identify the discursive strategies that writers use to engage and persuade

their readers of certain actions and ideologies. In addition to Interpersonal Metadiscourse, the study employs Corpus Linguistics to complement the framework with the quantitative account in which access is gained to the non-obvious meanings and ideologies that writers are using to persuade and mind-control the public. For this reason, a specialized corpus was compiled to uncover the dominant linguistic choices of different news sites' coverage of the Coronavirus pandemic. The interactional dimension of Interpersonal Metadiscourse is applied to identify the discursive strategies that writers use to engage and persuade their readers of certain actions and ideologies. In addition to Interpersonal Metadiscourse, the study employs Corpus Linguistics to complement the framework with the quantitative account in which access is gained to the non-obvious meanings and ideologies that writers are using to persuade and mind-control the public. For this reason, a specialized corpus was compiled to uncover the dominant linguistic choices of different news sites' coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Halliday's (1994) conception of metafunctions influenced many metadiscourse models. According to Halliday (1994), there are three macro functions of the language: the ideational function, the interpersonal function, and the textual function. The ideational function is used when writers describe/state their experience about something. However, when interacting with their readers, writers use the interpersonal function. The textual function is used by writers in order to organize their texts into cohesive discourses which can be easily understood by readers. It is worth mentioning that the Metadiscourse model proposed by Hyland (2005a) is one of the metadiscourse models that followed Halliday's (1994) conception of metafunctions. Hyland built the model of Metadiscourse (2005b) on Thompson and Thetela (1995) with the addition of stance and engagement markers. The model proposed by Hyland (2005b) includes two dimensions: the interactive dimension and the interactional dimension. When writers tend to accommodate their readers' needs and interests and make texts understandable for them; being aware of their readers, the interactive dimension of metadiscourse is used. On the other hand, when writers make their points of view explicit and attempt to engage readers to participate in the discourse, the interactional dimension of metadiscourse is used (Hyland, 2005b). This is clearly presented in figure (1) below. For the purpose of the current study, the analysis mostly depends on the interactional dimension.

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Category	Function	Examples
<b>Interactive</b> Transitions Frame markers Endophoric markers Evidentials Code glosses	<b>Help to guide the reader through the text</b> express relations between main clauses refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages refer to information in other parts of the text refer to information from other texts elaborate propositional meanings	<b>Resources</b> in addition; but; thus; and finally; to conclude; my purpose is noted above; see Fig; in section 2 according to X; Z states namely; e.g.; such as; in other words
<b>Interactional</b> Hedges Boosters Attitude markers Self mentions Engagement markers	<b>Involve the reader in the text</b> withhold commitment and open dialogue emphasize certainty or close dialogue express writer's attitude to proposition explicit reference to author(s) explicitly build relationship with reader	<b>Resources</b> might; perhaps; possible; about in fact; definitely; it is clear that unfortunately; I agree; surprisingly I; we; my; me; our consider; note; you can see that

Figure 1 An Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005b, P.49)

### The interactive dimension

Organizing propositional information cohesively in order to be easily understood by readers is the main function of the interactive dimension. Thus, the interactive dimension indicates that writers are aware of their readers; writers attempt to accommodate their readers' needs and interests.

**Transitions** highlight the relationship between main clauses and the semantic relations within the text. The main function of transitions is to easily guide readers through the text and help in shaping their understanding of the text.

**Frame markers** are used to highlight sequences or stages within a discourse. According to Hyland (2005b), writers use frame markers to mark changes in the steps of the argument. In other words, frame markers help writers in shifting arguments without losing the attention of the readers; readers can easily follow and understand the writer's argument.

Explicitly referring to information mentioned in other sections of the text, is the main function of **endophoric markers**. For example, markers like *as noted above* and *see Fig*. The use of endophoric markers guides the reader through the whole text and helps in clarifying the additional information mentioned by the writer.

**Evidentials** are used to indicate that writers attribute the presented information to another reliable source. For example, *according to X* and *Z states that*. In this regard, Hyland (2005b, PP. 51-52) states that "Evidentials distinguish *who* is responsible for a position and while this may contribute to a persuasive goal, it needs to be distinguished from the writer's *stance* towards the view, which is coded as an interpersonal feature".

The presented information can be explained and elaborated to the reader by the use of **code glosses**. For example, markers like: *in other*

words, and *this can be defined as*, or they can be presented by the use of parentheses.

### **The interactional dimension**

Engaging the readers into the discourse is the main focus of the interactional dimension. So, by using the interactional dimension markers, writers tend to make their voices explicit to encourage their readers' interaction and engagement with the text. In other words, the main focus of the interactional dimension is to engage and encourage readers to participate within the presented text. The following five sub-categories of Metadiscourse markers are indicative of the interactional dimension: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions and engagement markers.

**Hedges** are used when writers attempt to withhold a full commitment with an argument and encourage readers' engagement with the text and realize alternative points of view regarding the presented information. In this regard, hedges may help in engaging the readers with the text as the information is being presented as an opinion and not as a fact.

**Boosters**, on the contrary, are used when writers attempt to intensify the force of the argument by expressing their certainty about the presented information. So, in this case, writers are aware of the fact that there are alternative points of view regarding the presented information. However, unlike hedges, they choose to neglect these points of view.

**Attitude markers** are used when writers attempt to convey attitudes (express their appraisals) towards the presented information rather than just presenting and commenting on it. So, writers tend to use these markers when they want to express agreement, surprise, and so on.

**Self-mentions** are used when writers tend to explicitly represent themselves/their voices in the text. According to Hyland (2005b, P. 53), self-mentions are "measured by the frequency of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives (*I, me, mine, exclusive we, our, ours*)", and refer to the degree of explicit presence of the author in a text.

**Engagement markers** are used by writers to explicitly address their readers and encourage them to participate in the discourse. This is achieved by the use of imperatives, second person pronouns, obligation modals, and questions.

### **Corpus Linguistics**

This section mainly deals with introducing and discussing Corpus Linguistics. First, this section starts with introducing and defining Corpus Linguistics. Then, the features of corpus design are discussed. Finally, the

integration of Corpus Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis is discussed.

Studying language in use through corpora is the core of Corpus Linguistics. In this regard, Conrad (2002, P. 76) defines a corpus as “a large, principled collection of naturally occurring texts that is stored in electronic form (accessible on computer)”. According to Tognini-Bonelli (2001), Corpus Linguistics has two basic approaches: the corpus-based approach and the corpus-driven approach. Validating a hypothesis through the use of a corpus is the main focus of the corpus-based approach. In contrast, the corpus-driven approach claims that different theories can be created from different corpora; a theory is created from the analysis of a corpus. The current study adopts the corpus-based approach in order to analyze the language that different news sites use in covering the Coronavirus pandemic and a specialized corpus collected from different Western news is compiled. Thus, an eclectic approach of Corpus-Based Critical Discourse Analysis is used.

Corpus design has three main features that need to be considered when compiling a corpus, which are *representativeness, balance, and sampling* (McEnery, Tono & Xiao, 2006; McEnery & Wilson, 2001). Representativeness is an important feature of any compiled corpus and it heavily depends on balance “the range of genres included in a corpus” and sampling “how the text chunks for each genre are selected” (McEnery, Tono & Xiao, 2006, P. 13). It is worth mentioning that these three features are highlighted by the research questions that a corpus is designed to answer (McEnery, Tono & Xiao, 2006). In the same regard, Flowerdew (2004) states that there are three parameters (*purpose, contextualization, and size*) responsible for building a specialized corpus. These parameters guided the compilation process of the corpus used in the current study.

Many scholars expressed the possibility of integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with Corpus Linguistics (Baker et al., 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005; Stubbs, 1997). The most influential work expressing the need for integrating Critical Discourse Analysis with Corpus Linguistics is *Only Connect: Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics* by Hardt-Mautner (1995). She illustrates that the integration of Critical Discourse Analysis and Corpus Linguistics can compensate for the shortcomings resulting from using each approach on its own. As a direct result, the eclectic approach of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) was introduced.



Integrating corpus linguistics analysis is normally done using specialized corpus linguistics software which includes statistical descriptions of word frequencies, keywords, and collocations. By using specialized corpus linguistics software, analysis can be conducted to highlight the most frequent linguistics patterns (patterns that are not visible to the naked eye when it comes to big size data) in the selected data. Thus, results coming out from corpus linguistics software, which are quantitative in nature, are deeply studied through using more qualitative approaches; Critical discourse Analysis for example.

### المقطع 1.01 Data Collection

For this study, a corpus of 4,662,477 words was compiled and analyzed using the AntConc software. The data selection process was based on several factors. The first factor is **diversity**; data were collected from both UK and US news sites to represent the Western perspective. The second factor is **relevance**; data were collected from headlines and sections that is relevant to the Covid-19 pandemic. The third factor is **accessibility and availability**; data were collected with consideration of the availability of digital archives. The data were extracted to represent how language was used by different news sites to cover and represent Covid-19. Data was collected using "Coronavirus" or "Covid-19" as keywords to find news articles and reports that covered the Covid-19 pandemic. The data was extracted from different Western news sites: *The New York Times, The Independent, Before It's News, USA Today, Clash Daily, and Expose News.*

### المقطع 1.02 Procedures

After compiling the corpus, it was clear that some news sites promote conspiracy theories and alternative media news about the Covid-19 pandemic, so the compiled corpus was divided into two corpora: mainstream news corpus and alternative media news corpus. this classification of alternative media news is based on *Poynter's International Fact Checking Network (IFCN) Database*. The mainstream news corpus (M. Corpus) consists of (3,267,271) words and the alternative media news corpus (A. Corpus) consists of (1,395,206) words. The data for the mainstream news corpus was collected from LexisNexis database and was extracted from three different Western news sites: *The New York Times, The Independent, and USA Today*. Regarding alternative media news corpus, data was manually extracted from three different news sites: *Before It's News, Clash Daily, and Expose News.*

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**Data Analysis**

Generally, the percentage of metadiscourse markers is more in the M. Corpus than it is in the A. Corpus. Regarding the distribution of interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers across both corpora, it is clear that the interactive dimension is being used more than the interactional one in both corpora. However, interactional metadiscourse markers are more frequently used in the A. Corpus (36.8%) than it is in the M. Corpus (29.6%), which indicates that writers of the A. Corpus were trying to engage and persuade readers with their presented texts more than writers of the M. Corpus. This is clearly presented in tables (1) and (2) below.

Type of Metadiscourse Marker	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Interactive</b>	194721	70.4%
<b>Interactional</b>	81804	29.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>276525</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1 frequency and percentage of Metadiscourse markers in the M. Corpus**

Type of Metadiscourse Marker	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Interactive</b>	78159	63.2%
<b>Interactional</b>	45577	36.8%
<b>Total</b>	<b>123736</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 2 frequency and percentage of Metadiscourse markers in the A. Corpus**

As presented in tables (1) and (2) above, it is clear that the interactional dimension is being less used than the interactive dimension in both corpora. In the M. Corpus, the interactional dimension occurred 81804 times forming 29.6% of the total number of metadiscourse markers presented in the corpus. On the other hand, the interactional dimension occurred 45577 times in the A. Corpus forming 36.8% of the total number of metadiscourse markers presented in the corpus. For the purpose of the current study, the analysis mostly depends on the interactional dimension.

As displayed in tables (3) and (4) and figure (2) below, the most frequently used interactional discourse marker in the M. Corpus is *Self-Mentions*, which occurred 31203 times forming 38.2% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. On the other hand, the most frequently used interactional metadiscourse marker

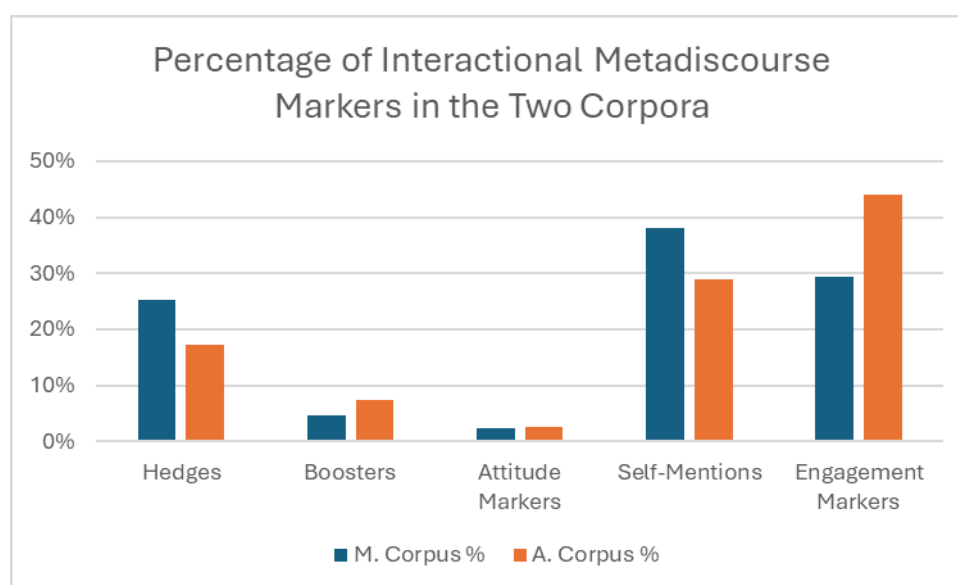
in the A. Corpus is *Engagement Markers*, which occurred 20030 times forming 44% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus.

Type of Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency	Percentage
Hedges	20726	25.3%
Boosters	3792	4.6%
Attitude Markers	2002	2.5%
Self-Mentions	31203	38.2%
Engagement Markers	24081	29.4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>81804</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 3 frequency and percentage of Interactional Metadiscourse markers in the M. Corpus**

Type of Metadiscourse Markers	Frequency	Percentage
Hedges	7885	17.3%
Boosters	3320	7.3%
Attitude Markers	1156	2.5%
Self-Mentions	13186	28.9%
Engagement Markers	20030	44%
<b>Total</b>	<b>45577</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 4 frequency and percentage of Interactional Metadiscourse markers in the A. Corpus**



**Figure 2 percentage of Interactional Metadiscourse markers in the two corpora**

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From both tables (3) and (4) and figure (2) above, it is clear that M. Corpus writers relied on hedges more than writers of the A. Corpus in their coverage of the Covid-19 pandemic related news. When writers use hedges, they indicate that their statements are *based on their reasoning* and not on an evidenced knowledge. According to Hyland (2005, P.52) "hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation". This may explain why M. Corpus writers resorted to using hedges rather than boosters in their statements about the Covid-19 pandemic; they want the reader to know that what is being stated is not evidenced facts, but it is the writers' own opinions; the Covid-19 pandemic is still new, and scientists are still figuring it out.

On the other hand, A. Corpus writers' use of hedges was less frequent as they want the reader to perceive their statements as facts based on evidenced knowledge. Alternatively, unlike M. Corpus writers, they resorted to using more boosters in their statements about the Covid-19 pandemic; they want to reflect their *certainty and commitment* about what they say. This is clear in the below examples. It is also worth mentioning that both hedges and boosters can achieve a persuasive purpose. By using hedges, writers are trying to convince their readers to adopt their opinions and points of view. On the other hand, writers use boosters to indicate that they are certain of their statements.

### **The following are examples of Hedges and Boosters extracted from the M. Corpus:**

1. Bennett said: "I feel fit and healthy. Hopefully this sends out a positive message to the community that **perhaps** many people have or have had the virus without showing any effects.

"I **obviously** would never have known if we hadn't returned to training and taken the tests, because I don't feel unwell and have got no symptoms whatsoever.

2. "You are also **more likely** to be able to have an open conversation about the virus with those close to you - being able to discuss the issue and **perhaps** make jokes about it, will help you to feel more comfortable and overcome any anxiety you may have over the threat."

3. The new research warned that coronavirus **could be** detected in the air up to 13 feet from patients and suggested the maximum transmission distance of Sars-CoV-2 **might be** up to four metres.

4. Even with coronavirus raging through Europe and the Americas, Russia's leadership has **confidently** rejected the prospect of an emergency at home. Vladimir Putin **certainly** has reason enough to be sanguine

about the situation. The number of confirmed cases has yet to accelerate out of control, and his government has acted decisively on a number of fronts from contact tracing to closing its borders.

5. "Although we have **clearly** passed the peak of the announced hospital deaths in this first wave, 449 deaths can never be thought of as any other than very sad news," said Prof Naismith.

"The UK has been one of the **hardest** hit countries in this first wave and we still have to add in deaths from care homes and the wider community. It is urgent that we learn what can be applied here so we do **better**".

**The following are examples of Hedges and Boosters extracted from the A. Corpus:**

1. Leave it to politicians to find a way to make things worse. **It seems like** all they know how to do is take away our rights under the illusion of providing safety.

2. National Geographic states that the lifetime odds of you being struck and killed by lightning during your lifetime is 1 in 3000. If you live in Texas, then you are 8 times **more likely** to be killed by a lightning strike during your lifetime than die of COVID-19.

3. President Trump, whom I support, has been **seriously misled by medical-socialists**. They **clearly lack** social/political/economic perspective and judgement in calling for the **drastic** economic shutdown that we are now experiencing. Destroying the US economy to fight COVID-19 is **perhaps the dumbest thing** that has ever happened to our government in my lifetime. And it will take years to overcome the damage delivered to our economy and citizens by this rash action.

4. China **clearly covered up** the outbreak and should be forced to pay restitution for the massive economic damage that has occurred because of it. Fox News is now reporting that China has covered up the origin of the virus and that sources indicate that **it did indeed leak** from the P4 Lab of the Wuhan Institute of Virology, but not as a bioweapon, as effort to compete with the United States in fighting viruses.

5. **Obviously**, Democrats are **unlikely to do anything** at all about Google's partisan activism, because Google is acting as a digital footsoldier and enforcer of their political agenda, with a fig leaf of 'fact checkers' for a pretense of legitimacy — exactly as they laid out in their Media Matters War Plan 2017.

Self-Mentions is the most frequently used interactional metadiscourse marker in the M. Corpus, which occurred 31203 times forming 38.2% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. In the A. Corpus, Self-Mentions is the most frequently used interactional metadiscourse marker after Engagement

Markers, which is the most frequent interactional metadiscourse marker in the corpus, occurred 13186 times forming 28.9% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. Self-Mentions markers *highlight the presence of writers into their texts* by using first person pronouns and possessive adjectives. So, self-mentions enable writers to express their attitudes towards their statements and arguments. From tables (3) and (4) above, it is clear that M. Corpus writers rely on self-mentions more than A. Corpus writers. This could be related to the previously mentioned fact that M. Corpus writers used hedges more frequently. This frequent use of hedges may in turn be associated with using more self-mentions to *express writers' opinions and points of view* about their arguments and statements.

**The following are examples of Self-Mentions extracted from the M. Corpus:**

1. "**We** will see many thousands of people infected by coronavirus, that's what **we're** seeing in other countries, and the important thing for **us** is to make sure that **we** manage those infections."
2. But this year how will **we** know whether **our** symptoms are a sign of a cold or being run-down, flu, or Covid-19? How does coronavirus differ from the regular winter flu and common cold?

**The following are examples of Self-Mentions extracted from the A. Corpus:**

1. **We're** also being lied to about the prevalence of infection. **We're** seeing inflated case numbers for the simple reason that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention no longer requires doctors to do testing in order to confirm that a patient is in fact infected with SARS-CoV-2 or died from COVID-19. The numbers now include "suspected" and "assumed" cases.
2. If the Kung Flu Chinese Coronavirus was supposed to be the big bad End Of The World... how do **we** explain the data points that don't make any sense at all? Are **we** going to come out of the end of this crisis feeling like a bunch of chumps who let **our** civil rights get trampled, and Liberal Agendas get advanced all in the name of keeping **us** from safe that wasn't the Big Scary Monster lurking under the bed that it was supposed to be?

As it is clear from figure (2) above, Engagement markers is the most frequently used interactional metadiscourse marker in the A. Corpus, which occurred 20030 times forming 44% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. In the M. Corpus, it occurred 24081 times forming 29.4% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. Writers use those markers for the

purpose of *engaging their readers in the text* through talking to them explicitly by the use of second person pronouns such as (you, your), inclusive we, obligation modals, or by using directives and questions. Thus, within the context of the current study, this use of Engagement Markers by writers of the A. Corpus might be because they want to communicate the “hidden facts” about the “faked” Covid-19 pandemic and the “killer vaccines” directly to their readers, revealing the “truth” directly to their readers.

**The following are examples of Engagement markers extracted from the M. Corpus:**

1. "If **you** look at the tissue in detail under the microscope **you** see that the fine hair-like endings of the receptor cells have fallen off and therefore the cells are no longer able to pick up odour molecules from the nose," Professor Philpott says.
2. Coronavirus: Kenya governor under fire after putting cognac in care packages; 'Drinking alcohol does not protect **you** against Covid-19,' World Health Organisation says
3. "It is likely that Covid-19 will be a part of **our** lives for quite a long time, despite **our** hope for a vaccine or treatment," said Xiao Wu, one of the scientists behind the study. "In light of this, **we should consider** additional measures to protect **ourselves** from pollution exposure to reduce the Covid-19 death toll."

**The following are examples of Engagement markers extracted from the A. Corpus:**

1. Mikovits is absolutely brilliant, but like many gifted researchers, her complex discussions on science quite challenging for the average lay person to follow. For this reason, I present her interview in a different format, cutting and splicing pieces together to present a more cohesive and coherent presentation of her many important points. **I would encourage you to watch** the initial, very short, videos first, so **you will be** well-grounded, and if **you** are motivated, **watch** the entire interview at the bottom of this article.
2. “Wearing a mask is going to cause more secretions and give more cells a home and amplify any viruses. [Wearing a mask is] immune suppressive; it’s going to limit **your** body’s ability to produce Type 1 interferon. **You’re** driving the infection in **yourself and you’re** not preventing the spread. [Instead], **you’re** amplifying [replication of] not just [SARS-CoV-2] but also many other [viruses], including **your** XMRVs, influenza or other dormant viruses. What keeps those dormant viruses dormant? **Your** natural killer (NK) cells, **your** mast cells, **your** macrophages. That’s where **you’re** getting the inflammatory signature.

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So, every virus **you** amplify is driving the inflammatory signature, and **you're** going to get sick. [The resulting illness] doesn't **have to** be SARS-CoV-2 at all. **You're** making **yourself** sick [by bringing dormant viruses out of dormancy].

3. The problem is not one of intelligence or wealth. The problem is about **your** unique personal information. The politician's can't know **you** and what **you** need. Albany can't save **you**, and neither can Trenton, or Hartford, or Lansing or Boston. To start, the governor's public-health decrees doesn't take account of how old **you** are. For young people in good health, the Wuhan flu is simply..the flu. Not so if **you're** over 70 years of age and have serious chronic illnesses. The governor can't know **your** family situation. If **you're** a young family with kids, then **you** should be at the playground having fun. College students should be at the beach. Some of you will get the flu, just as **you** did last year and just as **you** will next year. **I'm sorry you missed** a few days of vacation with the sniffles, but that is life and **you'll** get over it. That isn't true if **you** are taking care of elderly relatives with health issues. In that case, **you** might want to stay home, have **your** food delivered, and **watch** bad television for a few more weeks. While staying home might be a good solution for **you**, it is a death sentence for someone waiting for cancer treatment. **Let us go** because lives are at stake. **We** need different solutions for different people.

Looking back at tables (3) and (4), it is clear that Attitude Markers is the least frequently used interactional metadiscourse marker in both corpora. In the M. Corpus, Attitude markers occurred 2002 times forming 2.5% of the total number of interactional metadiscourse markers in the corpus. With the same percentage, it occurred 1156 times in the A. Corpus. These markers are realized by attitude verbs, sentence adverbs and adjectives. By using these markers, writers' main concern is not whether the presented information is reliable or true. Instead, they *express* importance, agreement, or obligation.

### **The following are examples of Attitude markers extracted from the M. Corpus:**

1. "I think these patients may be some of the hitherto hidden carriers that have facilitated the rapid spread of Covid-19," the statement said. "**Unfortunately**, these patients do not meet current criteria for testing or self isolation."
2. "**Unfortunately**, this virus is still present, and it is a new reality that we are still learning to cope and live with. "I am **hoping** things will ease with time so we can all resume lives the way they were."



3. "We're just starting to do testing and we'll report out on these very **quickly**," Joe Bresee, deputy incident manager for the CDC's pandemic told reporters. "We think the serum studies will be **very important** to understand what the true amount of infection is out in the community." Governments have expressed concern that antibody tests are not proving to be as reliable as swab tests.

**The following are examples of Attitude markers extracted from the A. Corpus:**

1. Feeling **stressed** about COVID-19? This **extraordinary** pandemic has inevitably caused strong emotional impressions for people. You may be feeling fear, anxiety, or depression which may be quite **overwhelming**. You may be struggling with fear of the unknown, anxious about the future and how this will impact your family, depressed due to isolation or about personal finances, or a combination of all of these difficult emotions. During these hardships, it is more **important** than ever to come together as a community. Everyone reacts **differently** to stress and people cope in very different ways, however, one common approach that we can all embrace is to become stronger together.

2. **Unfortunately**, some of our elitist betters in the Partisan Press and Democrat politicians are pushing Chinese propaganda so hard that some of them have been "useful idiots" for the Chi-Coms.

3. We don't huddle at home in fear of the common cold because we're familiar with the risk it represents. **Unfortunately**, the news media was more **interested** in **frightening** us than in putting the coronavirus of 2019-2020 into perspective. We are not all the same when it comes to these risks. Young people **hardly** know they have Covid-19. In contrast, elderly people who have other chronic illnesses are at **extreme** risk from Covid-19, just as they are at **extreme** risk from the seasonal flu.

**Discussion and Conclusion**

This study has attempted to show how that Hyland's (2005) comprehensive model of metadiscourse can be used alongside corpus analysis to reveal that writers of different news sites use metadiscourse markers differently in their coverage of news related to the Covid-19 pandemic and the effects of using different metadiscourse markers, especially when it comes to readers' persuasion (sometimes manipulation) and engagement with the presented texts. The study highlighted that metadiscourse is indicative of beliefs and attitudes about the discursive phenomenon; the Covid-19 pandemic. Also, the study focused on how writers of mainstream news sites and alternative media news sites made their voices explicit to persuade/manipulate their readers with certain ideologies and how these ideologies can be embedded in the

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use of metadiscourse markers; metadiscourse as a strategy of persuasion. Also, the study sheds light on the fact that alternative media news writers were trying to engage their readers more than mainstream news writers; alternative media news writers relied more on the interactional dimension of metadiscourse markers. This is because they want to persuade their readers with certain ideologies. For example, the Covid-19 pandemic is planned for and its vaccines are a bioweapon. Thus, alternative media news writers resorted to using more boosters and engagement markers than mainstream news writers. On the other hand, mainstream news writers resorted to using more hedges and self-mentions, as they want to indicate that their statements are based on their reasoning and not on an evidenced knowledge; the Covid-19 pandemic is still being figured out by scientists. Thus, the study indicates that different metadiscursive strategies can reframe and reproduce certain ideologies and have a role in persuasion. Further research may investigate the effect of readers' engagement with Covid-19 news (alternative media news VS. mainstream news) and how readers interact with this news. For example, investigating how readers interact with this news on social media platforms.

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