

Involving the Reader in the Text: Engagement Markers in Native and Non-native Student Argumentative Essays

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Abstract

The research explores an aspect of writer-reader interaction in native and non-native speaker student argumentative essays. Based on the assumption that writing is inherently a dialogue between writers and readers, this study looks in detail at key aspects of the ways in which Iranian and British students interact with their readers, bring them into the text, and involve them in the construction of the discourse and the arguments in order to contribute to the interactiveness and persuasiveness of the text.

Three linguistic resources – interactant pronouns, questions, and directives – are looked at in a corpus totalling 334 short argumentative essays produced by Iranian EFL writers (at two proficiency levels of high and low and two test versions of Academic and General) and British A-level students. The texts are analyzed using specially devised analytical frameworks and with the help of *WordSmith Tools*, a corpus analysis software.

The results reveal that both language groups use the three linguistic devices for fairly similar purposes, indicating the generic similarities in the writings of both groups of students. The findings, however, show noticeable quantitative differences: the British students use questions more frequently than the Iranian students, whereas the Iranian students use interactant pronouns and directives considerably more frequently than the British students. The quantitative differences seem to be related to distinct cultural conventions as well as the Iranians' overall lower proficiency level. Within the Iranian sub-corpora, Iranian high-scoring and Iranian Academic students use the three interactive resources more frequently than their low-scoring and General counterparts. The pedagogical implications of the study for novice EFL writers are outlined.

This work is original and has not been submitted previously in support of any degree, qualification or course.

Signed:

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Rationale for the study

The present research deals with one aspect of writer-reader interaction in native and non-native student argumentative essays. The initial impetus for the study came from my ten-year working experience with Iranian EFL writers: no matter at what proficiency level, Iranian L2 students' written texts typically failed to be even close to those of native writers, at least in terms of creating effective and convincing arguments. As a non-native speaker of English, I was well aware that limited linguistic competence was one of the main reasons for the poor production of my students. I also knew that lack of familiarity with the ways English essays are generally structured was another reason for producing incoherent and ineffective written texts. In order to improve my students' writing skills, therefore, I – like many other EFL writing teachers – tended to spend a lot of time improving their general English and teaching them how to write essays in English¹. The results were usually satisfactory, at least when comparing the students' initial performances with their final texts. They had clearly fewer language errors; the texts were comparatively smoother to read and better organized. However, on the whole, the texts still lacked persuasiveness. It was through trying to identify the source of this problem that I was led to explore an important aspect of creating effective and convincing

¹ For example, I used to teach them that a short English essay conventionally consists of *an introduction*, *a body*, and *a conclusion*. I then taught them how to write each section and link them together in order to produce coherent and effective essays.

arguments in written texts, namely writer-reader interaction. Looking at the students' texts in detail from this perspective showed me that even the most proficient students of mine often failed to establish an appropriate interaction with their readers. Having pinpointed this problem, I was motivated to explore in detail how Iranian EFL writers typically interact with their readers.

With this motivation, I reviewed some relevant literature and found out that the traditional view that (academic) writing is an impersonal, dry, detached, faceless, author-evacuated, and objective process whose main job is to express ideational information is now widely rejected (e.g. Hyland, 1994; Bazerman, 1988; Swales, 1990). Writing is now generally viewed as a social act (e.g. Rubin, 1998; Bruffee 1986; Hyland, 2005a,b), centred around authorial presence, writer's persona and voice in the text (e.g. Hyland, 2001a; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Tang and John, 1999) and an interaction between the writer and the reader (e.g. Bakhtin, 1986; Hoey, 1983, 2001; Hyland, 1994; Thompson, 2001; Myers, 1999). Hyland (2001a: 549), for instance, points out that academic writing is "a persuasive endeavour" which crucially depends on "a writer's development of an appropriate relationship with his or her readers". It is writing viewed as the interaction between writers and readers on which the present research is carried out.

As we shall see in the next chapter, there is a large body of research on different aspects of writer-reader interaction in various genres, disciplines, and languages. To the best of my knowledge, however, writer-reader interaction is largely underexplored in Iranian EFL texts. In order to address this gap and also contribute to the growing literature which

contends that an important aspect of effective persuasive writing is establishing writer-reader interaction, I set out to look in detail at exactly how Iranian L2 students use certain linguistic devices to engage with their readers. I chose the genre of student argumentative essay writing for this study since, as noted above, as an EFL teacher I am well aware of the challenges that novice EFL writers typically face when writing in English and hope that the findings of this study can assist EFL writing teachers and students to be more conscious of the ways writers can interact with readers to build effective and persuasive arguments. I also compared my learners' ways of interacting with readers with a similar set of data produced by native-speaker students in an attempt to identify the similarities and differences between the two language groups. It should be stressed at the outset, however, that the L1 student corpus is mainly used as benchmark for this study in order to compare L2 student writing with a control group, namely, a similar genre of L1 text. The point of this comparison is, therefore, by no means to belittle the production of L2 writers.

In order to examine the dialogic aspects of writer-reader interaction in student argumentative essays, the present study is set out to explore three linguistic resources: *interactant pronouns*, *questions*, and *directives*. Interactant pronouns *we* and *you* can be seen as the most explicit ways through which writers can bring their readers into the text as discourse participants. Questions are also one of the linguistic resources which are viewed as inherently dialogical since they often require some kind of response from the addressee. Finally, directives can be also employed as a strategy to invoke reader participation in the text by instructing them to perform certain actions. All the three

resources can, therefore, be deployed to assist the writer to create a more or less overt dialogic interaction with the reader, engage with them, involve them in the text as discourse participants, and enhance the interactiveness of the text in order to build more effective and convincing arguments.

1.2 Organization of the thesis

In order to address the research purpose mentioned in the preceding section, in Chapter 2 I will carry out a literature survey on: writer-reader interaction and one important means of realizing such an interaction in the text (i.e. metadiscourse); existing frameworks for identifying the resources used by the writer to involve the reader in the text; writer-reader interaction in academic writing and L2 student essays; and finally, Iranian cross-cultural studies on writer-reader interaction. In Chapter 3, general information on my data will be presented and a brief outline of my methodology will be provided. Chapters 4, 5, and 6 introduce the major analyses, present the results in quantitative and qualitative terms, and discuss the findings. Chapter 4 explores the use of interactant pronouns and their contributions to enacting overt dialogic writer-reader interaction in the text. Chapter 5 examines how questions are employed by the writers in both corpora to create an interaction with the reader. Chapter 6 looks at the ways directives are used by the writers to engage with their readers. Finally, Chapter 8 concludes the thesis by summarizing and outlining the major findings, analyzing three full sample essays as well as attempting to suggest reasons for the linguistic behaviours of non-native students in the present research in terms of overt writer-reader interaction.

CHAPTER TWO

RELEVANT RESEARCH BACKGROUND

2.1 Introduction

Language serves numerous functions and must be explored through all of them (Jacobson, 1960). Philosophers, linguists, and sociologists have proposed several functional classifications of language. In principle, however, it can be taken that most of them seem to believe that the most important functions of any language are communicating information and maintaining social relationships: *transactional* and *interactional* (Brown and Yule, 1983), *descriptive* and *social-expressive* (Lyons, 1977), *referential* and *emotive* (Jacobson, 1960), *autonomous* and *interactive* (Sinclair, 1981), *ideational* and *interpersonal* (Halliday, 1973).

Although these and many other scholars agreed that any given language is used to serve these functions, some of them failed to attribute the same level of significance to both functions and tended to focus on the transactional view of language at the expense of the interactional view. Some linguists had a general tendency to regard the communicating of information as the most salient function of any language (Brown and Yule, 1983). Jacobson (1960: 352), for instance, stated that “we must agree that ideation reigns supreme in language”, calling the other important functions of language “secondary factors”. In the last thirty or so years, however, the focus has been noticeably shifted from the transactional aspects of the language to the interactional aspects, paying more

attention to the relationship between the participants in the discourse. More specifically, increasingly researchers are more interested in looking at the ways language can be used to establish an interaction between the addressors and the addressees. Such an interaction between the discourse participants includes both spoken and written language but since in this study we are concerned with the written discourse; I will mainly talk of writer-reader interaction.

2.2 Writer-reader interaction

Writing, as noted in the previous chapter, is a social act. It can be assumed that in any social context there is an interaction between the provider and receiver of information. In oversimplified terms, if we assume the writer as the provider of information and the reader as the recipient of it, then we can argue that, based on the view of ‘writing as social engagement’ (e.g. Hyland, 2005a: ix), the writer should establish (and maintain) a relationship with the reader in order to create convincing texts. From this perspective, a written text can be seen as “a record of a *dialogue* between writer and reader” (Thompson, 2001: 58, stress added). Bakhtin (1973, 1981, 1983, 1986) is the pioneer in emphasizing the ‘dialogic nature of discourse’. What Bakhtin calls the dialogic nature of language enables people to “enter into dialogue with past writers or speakers, whose words they are borrowing or disagreeing with, into dialogue with potential readers and into dialogue with many others” (Matheson 2005: 8).

Based on the above, writing is a *dialogic interaction* between the writer and reader. This view of writing is now well established (see, for example, Nystrand, 1986; Grabe and

Kaplan, 1996; Davies, 2004; Thompson, 2001; Hyland, 1994; Hoey, 1983, 2001; Myers, 1999). Hoey (2001), for instance, defines a written text as:

the visible evidence of a reasonably self-contained purposeful interaction between one or more writers and one or more readers, in which the writer(s) control the interaction and produce most of (characteristically all) the language.

(Hoey, 2001: 11)

Since it is the writer who is mainly in charge of performing the interaction with the reader, s/he should “anticipate the audience’s likely background knowledge, processing problems and reactions to the text” (Hyland, 1999: 5). Highlighting the role of writer in performing the writer-reader interaction in the text, Thompson (2001) also points out:

... proficient writers attempt to second-guess the kind of information that readers might want or expect to find at each point in the unfolding text, and proceed by anticipating their questions about, or reactions to, what is written. The text is built up as a series of writer responses to these anticipated reactions.

(Thompson, 2001: 58)

In order to write effectively, therefore, the writer should develop an awareness of the audience and their possible needs, comprehension abilities, and reactions to the text. As Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) point out:

... when a writer has a clear sense of audience, the task of writing becomes simpler. When writers focus on an audience, they have greater insight into which concepts are common ground and which must be explained and supported. They have a better understanding of the appropriate voice to adopt and the ways of presenting their thesis and establishing their credibility. They know how to develop their text for their audience so that, within de Beaugrande and Dressler’s (1981) framework, it will be appropriate, that is, efficient (easy to understand) and effective (interesting).

(Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995: 253-54)

Thompson and Thetela (1995) distinguish two main types of interaction in written texts namely *interactive* and *interactional*. The interactive aspects of textual interaction, according to Thompson (2001: 59), “are related to awareness of audience’s likely reactions and needs” and mainly “involve the management of the flow of information and thus serve to guide readers through the content of the text”. Thompson refers to the interactional features of interaction as those “aspects which aim to involve readers in the argument or ethos of the text” and “allow writers to conduct more or less overt interaction with their audience” (2001: 59). From this perspective, there appears to be an ongoing interaction between the writer and the reader in (almost) any written text. In other words, the writer performs an interaction with the reader to guide them through the text (i.e. interactive aspect) and involve them in the text (i.e. interactional aspect).

Although they might be seen as performing two distinct functions, the interactive and interactional aspects of interaction are, according to Thompson (2001: 61), “essentially the two sides of the same coin”:

Rather than simply moulding the text interactively to fit the readers, writers may choose at any point to bring their management of the unfolding of the text to the surface and to engage themselves and the readers explicitly in the process: in these cases the text acts out the organizing interactionally instead of just embodying it.

(Thompson, 2001: 61)

As noted above, the writer performs different types of interaction based on his/her awareness of the audience. However, as Thompson (2001: 59) points out, “to explore interaction only in terms of writers’ implicit assumptions about the reactions of readers gives an incomplete picture”. The question worth raising here is, therefore, how to ‘bring

the underlying dialogue to the surface'? In other words, how can the writer explicitly interact with the reader?

Closely linked to the idea of writer-reader interaction discussed above is the notion of reader involvement because in order for the writer to perform an ongoing interaction with his/her audience, s/he needs to involve them in the text. Kim (2006: 38) links interaction with the concept of involvement in discourse studies (Chafe, 1982) and argues that traditionally the notion of involvement is a characteristic feature of spoken discourse (not written discourse), since this concept, like other features of spoken language, is closely related to the availability of face-to-face interaction. Since there is no face-to-face interaction in written discourse, it might be argued that "involvement in written language is irrelevant" (Kim, 2006: 38). Kim, however, argues that:

writers construct text as if they are interacting with possible future readers, predicting the readers' needs in relation to the text and trying to evoke the reader's involvement in the text. For this reason, it is found that written language may well have features of spoken language, particularly those related to face-to-face interaction.

(Kim, 2006: 45)

Through employing certain linguistic features (some of which are characteristically associated with spoken discourse), therefore, the writer can perform an overt interaction with his/her reader and involve them in the text.

One way in which the writer-reader interaction in the text can be formally realized is through the use of *metadiscourse* resources. Since some metadiscourse resources, as we

shall see later, are directly related to the present study, I will choose metadiscourse as my main practical framework. In the remainder of this chapter I shall introduce metadiscourse and its classifications and will review some relevant studies carried out being mainly inspired by this concept.

2.3 What is metadiscourse?

Metadiscourse as a new term was first coined by Zellig S Harris in 1959 and later elaborated on by Williams (1981), Vande Kopple (1985) and Crismore (1989) (Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995; Beauvais, 1989; Hyland, 2005a). It is often referred to as a ‘fuzzy’ concept (Crismore *et al.* 1993; Hyland 2005a). Swales, for instance, argues that “although the concept of metadiscourse is easy enough to accept in principle, it is more difficult to establish its boundaries” (1990: 188). Such fuzziness clearly suggests that it is rather difficult to find a single widely agreed definition of the term metadiscourse and that is perhaps why the literature is replete with various definitions of the term.

This relatively new concept has been defined as *discourse about discourse* or *communication about communication* (Vande Kopple, 1985: 83) or similarly *writing about writing* (Williams, 1981: 197). Other terms which have been used to refer to the same concept are *metalanguage* (Lyons, 1977), *non-topical linguistic material* (Lautamatti, 1978), *meta-text* (Enkvist, 1978), *gambits* (Keller, 1979), *meta-talk* (Schriffin, 1980) and *signaling devices* (Crismore, 2004). The uncertainty linked with the definition of the concept of metadiscourse is also reflected in the way in which this term

is comprehended by some analysts (e.g. Mauranen, 1993; Valero- Garces, 1996; Bunton, 1999) who, following Enkvist (1978) and Lyons (1977), use the term *meta-text* or *text reflexivity* simply to refer to “the writer’s awareness of the text, rather than that of the reader” (Hyland, 2005a: 17).

Metadiscourse descriptions are broadly categorized into two groups: those which describe metadiscourse simply as ‘non-topical’; and those which describe it as signalling what the writer is doing. The definitions of metadiscourse which share the idea that it deals with non-propositional meaning can be traced back to the early definitions of the term. Harris (1959: 464), who advanced the concept of metadiscourse for the first time, pointed out that “metadiscourse kernels... talk about the main material”. Metadiscourse is narrowly defined by Beauvais (1989: 15) as “illocutionary force indicators that identify expositive illocutionary acts”. Lautamatti (1978) also regarded metadiscourse as ‘non-topical linguistic material’ and Williams viewed it as (1981:226) anything which “does not refer to the subject matter being addressed”.

As noted above, the second group views metadiscourse as signalling what the writer is doing in the text. Vande Kopple (1985: 83), for instance, pointed out that “on the level of metadiscourse, we do not add propositional material but help our readers organize, classify, interpret, evaluate, and react to such material”. Elsewhere, Crismore (1983: 2) stated that metadiscourse is “the author’s intrusion into the discourse, either explicitly or non-explicitly, to direct rather than inform, showing readers how to understand what is said and meant in the primary discourse and how to ‘take’ the author”.

Beauvais (1989), who himself criticized Crismore's (1983) definition of metadiscourse, regarded metadiscourse as being secondary, which only helps the writer present the primary discourse. Such views of metadiscourse as 'secondary discourse' or 'signaling devices' have been questioned, amongst others, by Mao (1993: 265) who claims that "this approach unnecessarily relegates metadiscourse to inferior status". Being critical of such propositional/non-propositional distinction, Hyland (2005a) presents one of the most satisfactory definitions of the term metadiscourse:

Metadiscourse is the cover term for the self-reflective expressions used to negotiate interactional meanings in a text, assisting the writer (speaker) to express a view point and engage with readers as members of a particular community.

(Hyland, 2005a: 37)

According to Hyland, the distinguishing feature of his definition of metadiscourse is its "overlapping with other views of language use which emphasize the interpersonal, such as *evaluation*, *stance* and *engagement*" (2005a: 37, original emphasis). This new approach to defining metadiscourse, therefore, highlights the presence of the writer in the text and also foregrounds the role of the reader in the construction of argument.

To sum up, metadiscourse indicates the writer's attempt to guide and direct the reader's understanding of the discourse in the unfolding text in order to both develop the text and interact with the reader. Nevertheless, as suggested above, the imprecise definitions of the term and the distinctions made between 'propositional' vs. 'metadiscoursal' and 'primary' vs. 'secondary' content had made it, until recently, rather confusing to

understand and confidently apply the term. Hyland's (2005a) view of metadiscourse which has focused on the interaction between writers and their readers, however, seems to be a more comprehensive and pragmatic account of metadiscourse. In the following section, I will elaborate more on the writer-reader aspect of metadiscourse and report on some metadiscourse classifications.

2.4 Metadiscourse: functions and classifications

Metadiscourse, either viewed as a 'rhetoric' device (Crismore, 1984: 7) or a 'linguistic' device (Hyland, 2000: 109), has empowering benefits for writers and readers alike. Metadiscourse resources are used not only to help the writers to organize the text and make it more cohesive but also to make the argument more convincing and effective. Writers can also assist the reader to understand the text more easily by the appropriate and judicious use of metadiscourse resources. Several researchers (e.g. Camiciottoli, 2003; Jalilfar and Alipour, 2007; Parvaresh and Nemati, 2008) have discussed the positive effects of metadiscourse in helping the reader to comprehend the text better. Hyland (2005a: 14) argues that "without metadiscourse readers would be unable to conceptualize a text". Similarly, Crismore (2004: 311) contends that "metadiscourse signals for the reader a way to understand both the writer and the text".

Metadiscourse as a concept is based on a view that writing is a social activity (Hyland, 2005a) and therefore is an effective resource for writers to fulfil their communicative duty. This function of metadiscourse is indeed an attempt made by the writer to interact with the reader in order to both transfer information and sustain social and

communicative relationships. Crismore (1984: 7) points out that “metadiscourse calls attention to the communicative speech act” which is important and useful for writers because it signals their presence. Through metadiscourse the writer can explicitly communicate and interact with the reader. The role of metadiscourse is to “facilitate communication through supporting a writer’s position and building a relationship with an audience” (Hyland, 1998a: 438; Hyland, 2004: 159). Metadiscourse resources, therefore, have the potential to assist writers to interact with the reader communicatively, thereby making the text more socially oriented. Writers communicate with the reader by involving them in the text so that they can build their arguments jointly with their reader’s cooperation. Thompson (2000: 62) states that the text can be “jointly constructed with communicative space being left for the readers to contribute to the achievement of the text’s goals”. In so doing, not only does the writer shape his/her arguments in a way that s/he desires but also manages to perform communicative interaction with the reader, acknowledge their viewpoints, express general agreement, and build his/her own personality as a reputable writer. Metadiscourse is used to “reveal the communicative intent of a writer” (Beauvais, 1989: 28) by allowing writers to “address their audience and engage them in a developing dialogue” (Intaraprawat and Steffensen, 1995: 254), thereby fulfilling the important goal of effective communication. At the same time, as Barton (1995: 219) points out, metadiscourse allows writers “to specify the inferences that they wish their readers to make”.

In addition to assisting the writer to perform a communicative interaction with the reader, metadiscourse has another equally important function of helping the writer to develop

and organize the text. Intaraprawat and Steffensen (1995) note that metadiscourse can make a text more cohesive since it “makes the relationship between sentences, paragraphs, and other textual units explicit” (p. 254). Writers use metadiscourse to guide their readers by controlling and directing their own content (Schiffrin, 1980; Fairclough, 1992). Metadiscourse, therefore, helps writers to make their text more readable and cohesive.

As noted above, metadiscourse is based on a social view of writing. Writers, thus, use metadiscourse resources by constantly thinking of and being aware of the reader’s needs in comprehending the text. Crismore and Hill (1988: 3) believe that metadiscourse has the potential to “guide and direct readers through a text by helping them understand the text”. However, what writers should bear in mind is that their desired textual interaction with the reader does not take place in a vacuum. By anticipating the reader’s textual needs the writer can construct an interaction with the reader and make them “recover the writer’s preferred interpretations and goals” (Hyland, 2005a: 49). What the writer does through metadiscourse resources at this level is to organize the text in such a way that it hangs together and sounds more cohesive but this effort is, and should be, done based on the reader’s needs.

We have seen above that metadiscourse can assist writers to both organize their texts based on the reader’s needs and also be more convincing by involving the reader in the construction of the argument. But what exactly counts as metadiscourse?

Metadiscourse resources are usually explored based on the functions that they perform in a particular context. The theoretical support for many studies to take a functional approach in the analysis of metadiscourse is the realization of three broad functions of language proposed by Halliday decades ago (Hyland, 2005a). According to Michael Halliday, we use language to fulfil three macro-functions of language, namely *ideational*, *interpersonal*, and *textual*. Ideational elements (also referred to as representational, informational, propositional or experiential) concern content that is “the speaker’s experience of the real world, including the inner world of his own consciousness” (Halliday, 1973: 58). These elements are “meanings about how we represent experience in language” (Eggins, 1994: 12). The interpersonal function of language, on the other hand, deals with “language as the mediator of role, including all that may be understood by the expression of our own personalities and personal feelings on the one hand, and forms of interaction and social interplay with other participants in the communication situation on the other hand” (Halliday, 1973: 58). The elements within the interpersonal function of language are used to maintain social relations and allow us to express our attitudes not only toward each other but also to the ideational material. Finally, the textual function of language has an “enabling function, that of creating text” (Halliday, 1973: 58). The textual function of language assists us to hang what we are saying together and relate it to what was said before and to the surrounding context (Eggins, 1994). In other words, the textual function deals with the organization of the text itself. These macro-functions (also known as *metafunctions*) are simultaneously used so that we can achieve the desired social functions (Martin and Rose, 2003).

Being theoretically inspired and supported by Halliday's metafunctions of language, most of the studies in the area of metadiscourse have generally viewed it as a resource to fulfil the textual and interpersonal functions of language. One of the major early attempts to classify metadiscourse was made by Vande Kopple (1985). His taxonomy was on the basis of previous efforts and suggestions made by Lautamatti (1978) and Williams (1981). Vande Kopple's metadiscourse scheme consisted of seven types of metadiscourse which were divided into textual and interpersonal categories. Textual metadiscourse was defined by Vande Kopple as features that can "help us show how we link and relate individual propositions so that they form a cohesive and coherent text"; and interpersonal metadiscourse as the features which "enable us to express our personalities and our reactions to the propositional content of our texts and characterize the interaction we would like to have with our readers about the content" (1985: 87). Therefore, as noted earlier in this section, metadiscourse features can be employed to both guide the reader through the text (i.e. textual metadiscourse) and assist the writers to interact with the reader (i.e. interpersonal metadiscourse). Vande Kopple's (1985) metadiscourse classification is summarized in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 Vande Kopple's (1985) metadiscourse classification

Textual Metadiscourse	Functions and examples
1. Text Connectives	used to connect particular pieces of information to each other
* Sequencers	first, next, in the third place
* Logical/Temporal connectors	however, thus, at the same time
* Reminders	As I noted earlier
* Announcements	I will now develop the idea that, as we shall see in Chapter Six
* Topicalizers	There are/is, as for, in regard to
2. Code Glosses	used to assist readers grasp the correct meanings of words and phrases
3. Illocutionary Markers	used to make the discourse act performed by the author explicit
	I hypothesize that, to sum up, for example, my purpose is
4. Narrators	used to let readers know who said/wrote something
	Mrs. Wilson announced that, according to X, Brown notes that
Interpersonal Metadiscourse	Functions and examples
5. Validity Markers	used to assess certainty and uncertainty of propositional content and the degree of commitment to that assessment
* Hedges	perhaps, possible, might, would, seem, tends
* Emphatics	clearly, undoubtedly, it's obvious that, certainly
* Attributors	according to Einstein
6. Attitude Markers	used to reveal author attitudes toward the propositional content
	surprisingly, I find it interesting that, it is fortunate that
7. Commentary	used to draw readers into an implicit dialogue with the author
	you may not agree with that, dear reader

One of the most extensively quoted drawbacks attributed to this taxonomy is its imprecision and functional overlaps. Beauvais (1989: 14), for instance, argues against treating ‘narrators’ and ‘attributors’ as two distinct functional categories of metadiscourse since there is no major difference between ‘Einstein reports that’ as a narrator and ‘according to Einstein’ as an attributor. Hyland (2005a) also criticizes Vande Kopple’s system in that it has failed to make a clear distinction between ‘validity markers’ and ‘illocution markers’ and introduces the example of ‘we suggest that’ which can simultaneously function both as an illocution marker and validity marker. However, it can be argued that it is misleading to criticize Vande Kopple at least in regards with functional overlaps of validity and illocutionary markers since he himself has clearly stated that:

... some individual words or groups of words can fulfill the functions of more than one of these [metadiscourse] kinds. For example, *I hypothesize that* probably functions in most texts as both an illocution marker and a validity marker. Whether one function is more prominent than another probably cannot be determined outside of the particular text.

(Vande Kopple, 1985: 85)

Most of the metadiscourse classifications to date have largely benefited from Vande Kopple’s (1985) model, particularly from his innovative division of metadiscourse features into textual and interpersonal. However due to some shortcomings and ambiguities, as suggested above, his classification has been extensively modified and revised by numerous writers (e.g. Crismore *et al.*, 1993; Hyland, 1998a, 1999, 2000). One of the main revisions of Vande Kopple’s system is proposed by Crismore *et al.* (1993), who also divided metadiscourse into textual and interpersonal but further

subdivided the textual category into textual markers and interpretive markers. Crismore *et al.*'s (1993) metadiscourse categorization is shown in Table 2.2.

Although, in general, this model seems to be more robust than that of Vande Kopple (for example, by the omission of *narrators* which appears to function in the same way as *attributors* do), Hyland (2005a: 33) seems justified in questioning the reason for the division of textual metadiscourse into *textual* and *interpretive* markers since it is obvious that textual metadiscourse features are used to organize the text and help the reader to interpret it and there seems no need for further labelling them *interpretive*.

Table 2.2 Crismore *et al.*'s (1993: 47) metadiscourse categorization

Textual metadiscourse

1. Textual markers
 - Logical connectives
 - Sequencers
 - Reminders
 - Topicalizers
2. Interpretive markers
 - Code glosses
 - Illocution markers
 - Announcements

Interpersonal metadiscourse

3. Hedges (epistemic certainty markers)
4. Certainty markers (epistemic emphatics)
5. Attributors
6. Attitude markers
7. Commentary

Hyland (1998a, 1999, and 2000) also classified metadiscourse into textual and interpersonal but reorganized Vande Kopple's categories more substantially. His system

follows Vande Kopple's (1985) and Crismore *et al.*'s (1993) in distinguishing textual and interpersonal metadiscourse types. However, it should be borne in mind that, as Hyland admits, although more pragmatically grounded, any such taxonomy cannot "do more than partially represent a fuzzy reality" (1998a: 444). Hyland's (1998a) taxonomy of metadiscourse is summarized in Table 2.3.

Table 2.3 Hyland's metadiscourse classification (1998a: 442)

Textual metadiscourse:

- *frame markers* that signal or preview a discourse act or text phase
- *code glosses* that help readers to better understand a particular text element
- *logical connectives* to express relations between clauses
- *endophoric markers* that refer to other parts of the text
- *evidentials* that refer to other information sources

Interpersonal metadiscourse:

- *emphatics* that express communicative force or the writer's certainty
- *hedges* that modify the writer's commitment to the proposition
- *person markers* or first person pronouns indicating the writer's presence
- *attitude markers* to express the writer's stance towards content
- *relational markers* to create a relationship with the reader

There are other similar attempts at offering metadiscourse models and classifications, mainly based on Halliday's functions of language, but these attempts were made on a more restricted scale compared with those highlighted above. Ädel (2003), for instance, has proposed a model of metadiscourse which is considerably limited in scope. She claims to have made a "theoretical distinction between metadiscourse and evaluation" (Ädel, 2005: 153). In other words, following writers such as Mauranen (1993) who are more concerned with textual metadiscourse, she regards only textual elements in the text as metadiscourse and considers interpersonal features as evaluation. Dahl (2004) has also

proposed a metadiscourse taxonomy and has similarly restricted it to metatextual functions (locational and rhetorical) and ignored interpersonal metadiscourse altogether. *Locational* metadiscourse, according to Dahl, comprises linguistic elements which refer to the text itself or to parts of it; *rhetorical* metadiscourse includes elements which assist the reader in the processing of the text by making explicit the rhetorical acts performed by the writer in the process of argumentation.

As already highlighted, metadiscourse is based on a social view of writing. Therefore, what writers should do all the time during the writing or composing process is to ensure that they are interacting with their audience. They should do so even when they are simply organizing the text by, for example, thinking of the reader's needs in processing the text or by predicting the reader's ability to comprehend the text. Nevertheless, most of the metadiscourse classifications, including those presented and reviewed above, although groundbreaking, have not focused on the important social aspect of writing, and instead rigidly divide metadiscourse into either textual or interpersonal. But if we accept that writing is a social endeavour, we should appreciate the fact that metadiscourse is all interpersonal. In other words, even when simply dealing with the organization of the text, the writer uses metadiscourse to communicate with the reader by taking into account their possible needs, comprehension capacity and knowledge. For example, if you add 'therefore' to a sentence (i.e. textual) you are asserting the relation to be causal, at the same time indicating to the reader that you think it might not be self-evident (i.e. interpersonal). It is this theoretical view (i.e. metadiscourse is all interpersonal) that

Hyland (2005a) proposes, and based on which he presents a ‘more reliable’ model of metadiscourse.

Hyland (2005a) classifies metadiscourse resources into those that are used to assist the writers to show that they have the reader’s needs in mind and those that are used to involve the reader in the text, and calls them *interactive* and *interactional* respectively. He has borrowed these terms and their concepts from Thompson and Thetela (1995) who have argued that the interaction between the writer and the reader can draw on both interactive and interactional resources (see 2.1 above). Hyland’s (2005a) metadiscourse classification is displayed in Table 2.4.

Table 2.4 Hyland’s (2005a: 49) Interpersonal Model of Metadiscourse

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

As noted above, Hyland's model of metadiscourse is entirely based on the interpersonal function of language. He believes the writer is always in interaction with the reader. Even when organizing the text to make it more cohesive, the writer should think of the readers' needs (for interpretive guidance), knowledge and familiarity with other related texts, as well as his/her own relationship with the reader (Hyland, 2005a: 49-50). In the interactive dimension, metadiscourse assists the writers to organize their content in such a way that their imagined reader will regard it as cohesive and smooth to read. Interactive metadiscourse essentially corresponds to the textual metadiscourse introduced above. The main difference between the two is, however, that interactive resources are viewed as being used to organize the flow of information *based on the readers' needs*.

What the writers still need to do is to conduct an interaction with the reader by "intruding and commenting on" their own message (Hyland 2005a: 49). As Thompson (2001: 59) also points out, the writer can create an explicit interaction with the reader "by appearing in the text to comment on and evaluate the content". The writer from this perspective needs to open an imagined dialogue with his/her assumed reader to build on the argument by thinking of and respecting the reader's possible reactions and opinions. Interactional metadiscourse is an effective resource to help the writer to explicitly interact with the reader to make his/her text more credible and persuasive. Hyland (2005a: 52) points out that interactional metadiscourse resources "involve readers and open opportunities for them to contribute to the discourse by alerting them to the author's perspective towards both propositional information and readers themselves". Commenting on the importance

of the interactional aspect of interaction, Thompson (2001) argues that such resources assist the writer to involve the reader in the text:

The readers' views are politely and collaboratively taken into account; but collaboration is a two way process and the readers are therefore encouraged to take part in the interaction and collaborate back, by accepting, even if provisionally, the roles, stances and arguments attributed to them.

(Thompson, 2001: 62)

Achieving reader involvement through interactional resources is, according to Thompson, a major step in argumentative and persuasive texts.

In sum, the focus of this section was to elaborate on the significance of metadiscourse as a powerful resource for the writers. Having acknowledged the fact that writing is a social activity, we proposed that metadiscourse is an effective resource for writers to negotiate with their readers. This negotiation can take place interactively for the purpose of organizing the text based on the reader's needs and interactionally for the purpose of negotiating and 'arguing' (Thompson, 2001) with the reader². Hyland's (2005a) model of metadiscourse embodies the two dimensions of interaction between the writer and reader and lists a number of linguistic devices which can assist the writer to perform the interaction.

Metadiscourse has become an increasingly important and worthwhile topic for researchers since it offers tremendous potential to explore 'under one heading' a large number of features writers employ (Hyland and Tse, 2004; Hyland, 2005a). Such potential is perhaps one of the unique characteristics of metadiscourse which has recently

² It should be noted that 'arguing' is only part of the interactional function when the writer represents the reader as not necessarily agreeing with what the writer says.

drawn the attention of many researchers. The importance of metadiscourse from the researcher's point of view is the issue I will turn to in the following section.

2.5 Metadiscourse from the researchers' point of view

As noted at the end of the preceding section, metadiscourse has recently become an increasingly interesting and important area of research in composition, reading comprehension, L2 writing, text structure, rhetoric, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis. The crucial importance of metadiscourse from the researchers' perspective lies partly in the fact that this concept offers huge potential based on which many features of written discourse can be explored. Having been inspired and sparked off by such potentiality, researchers have carried out widespread studies of metadiscourse in particular from the descriptive and contrastive points of view³. These studies in general have focused on the use of metadiscourse across various genres: undergraduate textbooks (Hyland, 2000), newspaper articles (Dafouz, 2000, 2003, 2008; Le, 2004), advertising slogans (Fuertes-Olivera *et al.*, 2001), fundraising letters (Crismore, 2004; Connor and Gladkov, 2004; Vergaro, 2002), company annual reports (Hyland, 1998b), popularizations (Varttala, 1999; Crismore and Farnsworth, 1990; Kim, 2006, 2009; Kim and Thompson, 2010). Various studies have explored the effect of metadiscourse resources on learners' reading comprehension (see, for example, Crismore, 1989; Crismore and Vande Kopple, 1997, Crismore and Hill, 1988; Camiciottoli, 2003; Jalilfar and Alipour, 2007; Parvaresh and Nemati, 2008). In addition, there is a considerable body of research on the use of different interactive and interactional metadiscourse

³ It should be borne in mind that some of these studies have not necessarily used the term metadiscourse although they have investigated the same sort of phenomena.

resources in academic research articles: code glosses (Hyland, 2007), self-mentions (Hyland, 2001b; Ivanič, 1998), hedges, boosters, and attitude markers (Hyland, 1998c, Abdi, 2002), personal pronouns (Hyland, 2002a; Harwood, 2005a,b,c), questions (Frank, 1989; Webber, 1994; Hyland, 2002b), and directives (Hyland, 2002c) (for more on interactant pronouns, questions, and directives see Chapters 4, 5, and 6 of the present research).

As we have seen above, the use of metadiscourse resources has been extensively looked at across various genres. What is of considerable relevance to the present research, though, is reviewing the use of metadiscourse in the genre of student essays. But since this study intends to look at the use of engagement markers in native and non-native student essays, it is equally relevant to review previous research on metadiscourse across languages and cultures. Since most cross-cultural metadiscourse studies (e.g. studies on Iranian texts) have focused on the genre of academic research articles, I shall briefly review contrastive metadiscourse studies in the genre of academic research articles first and then move on to the genre of student essays later.

However, it might be argued that the use of metadiscourse resources by ‘expert’ writers is not close to the use of such resources by students and therefore reviewing studies exploring them is irrelevant. Yet I would like to argue that irrespective of the many differences between the two genres, there are some shared features between the two. It is true that, as Barton (1993: 755) points out, “there are obvious differences between students writing in an examination situation and academics writing for motives of their

own”, but the two genres of academic writing and student argumentative essay writing seem to be similar, at least, in that “both groups are constructing arguments for a general audience of academic readers” (Barton, 1993: 747). Furthermore, both genres require the writers to build convincing arguments and therefore adopt a persuasive style. Hyland (1998a: 438) points out “the act of convincing an academic audience of the veracity of one’s arguments involves making linguistic choices which that audience will conventionally recognize as persuasive”. The interactional dimension of metadiscourse, as argued above, offers a number of linguistic resources which assist the writers in these two genres to engage with their academic readers and build persuasive arguments. Metadiscourse studies on academic writing show that research article writers extensively employ interactional metadiscourse resources in order to explicitly interact with their readers and convince them about the credibility of their arguments. Therefore, it can be argued that students can also employ metadiscourse resources to interact with their readers in order to build persuasive arguments. Accordingly, looking at some metadiscourse studies in the genre of research articles seems justified.

2.5.1 Metadiscourse use by expert writers

Recently, linguists have increasingly become interested in investigating the rhetorical differences between texts written by academics with different cultural and language backgrounds. The term ‘contrastive rhetoric’ was coined by Kaplan (1966) to describe such differences and since then many studies have focused on these differences from different perspectives. Some of these studies have adopted the notion of metadiscourse as their analytical framework. As already noted, the genre of research articles is one of the genres where metadiscourse is used substantially as an effective means of persuasive

writing and as a resource to assist the writers to build and increase their credibility. However, as we shall see in the following paragraphs, many studies have shown that native and non-native writers typically employ metadiscourse resources differently in academic research articles. More specifically, such studies suggest that English writers, on the whole, tend to be more concerned in guiding the reader through the text, engaging with the reader, being reader friendly, and using more explicit rhetoric.

Ventola and Mauranen (1991), for instance, look at 31 academic journal articles written in English by Finnish-speaking and Swedish-speaking researchers. They compared the results of their textlinguistic analysis with six articles written by native speakers of English and found that Finns used connectors (identical to *transitions* based on Hyland's 2005a model) less frequently than the native writers. Ventola and Mauranen also found that Finns employed a relatively limited set of connectors. Ventola (1992: 201) points out that Finns favour some connectors excessively "at the expense of variety". Their findings were later confirmed by Mauranen's (1993) study in which she explored the cultural differences between texts written by Finnish and Anglo-American academics regarding the use of metatext. Having compared two pairs of research articles written in English by Finnish economists and English economists, Mauranen observes that these two groups used metatextual features differently. Finnish economic texts contained less metalanguage for explicitly organising the discourse and orienting the reader while English native speakers of English used more metalanguage devices to relate different sections of the text to each other. She emphasizes, however, the importance of the fact

that both rhetorical strategies described in her study “can be perceived as polite and persuasive in appropriate cultural contexts” (1993: 18).

Following Mauranen’s (1993) analytical framework of research, Valero-Garces (1996) investigates the use of metatext in Spanish-English and English economics texts. The comparison of texts indicated the different use of metatextual features by the two groups. The Anglo-American writers used more metatext than the Spanish-speaking writers and seemed to be more concerned with guiding and orienting the reader than their Spanish-speaking counterparts. They also showed more explicit presence of the writer in the text. Based on the findings of this study, Valero-Garces suggests that “the Anglo-American texts reflect a more reader-oriented attitude, and a generally more explicit textual rhetoric”, whereas “the Spanish-speaking writers put a greater emphasis on the propositional content and favour a more impersonal style of writing, as well as a greater tendency towards implicitness in their writing” (1996: 279). The outcomes reinforce Mauranen’s (1993) similar view that “there is intercultural variation in the rhetorical preferences of writers, despite a relative uniformity of academic papers imposed by the requirements of the genre” (Mauranen, 1993:18).

Vassileva (2001) looks at similarities and differences in the degree of commitment and detachment in English, Bulgarian and Bulgarian English research articles in Linguistics. Vassileva finds considerable differences in the overall distribution of two interactional metadiscourse categories of *hedges* and *boosters* (as the means of expressing certain degrees of commitment and detachment) throughout the Introduction, Discussion, and

Conclusion parts of the articles. She observes that English writers employ hedges and boosters more frequently than their Bulgarian counterparts.

On the whole, as the findings of the above cross-cultural studies clearly showed, language background, among other things, seems to be one reason for the different use of metadiscourse resources in research articles. As I argued earlier, the genre of the academic research article, in spite of many differences, has a number of shared features with the genre of student argumentative essay writing. If non-native research writers use metadiscourse resources differently from native writers, it can be equally argued that non-native students should also use such resources differently from native students. Since the present study aims to explore the use of metadiscourse in one group of L2 student essays, namely Iranian students, and compare it with that of native students, I shall now shift the focus from the genre of academic writing to the genre of L2 student essay writing which is more directly related to the present study.

2.5.2 Metadiscourse and L2 student essays

Increasingly, a substantial body of research has focused on L2 student essays from various perspectives. What is of particular interest to the present research, however, is the use of *metadiscourse* in L2 student writings.

Through an analysis of a corpus of 40 persuasive texts written by 20 Finnish and 20 American students, Crismore *et al.* (1993) look at the use of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. Their findings revealed that students in both countries used all the metadiscourse resources, with Finnish students using more metadiscourse than American

students. They also found that both groups of students used interpersonal metadiscourse more frequently than textual metadiscourse. They attribute their findings, partly, to cultural variations.

Among the resources which can fall in the interactive dimension of metadiscourse, connectives (*transitions* in Hyland's terms) have attracted a great deal of attention in this genre. It is interesting that almost all such studies suggest that non-native students misuse, overuse, or underuse connectives (see, for example, Crewe, 1990; Khalil, 1990; Field and Yip, 1992; Milton and Tsang, 1993; Granger and Tyson, 1996; Flowerdew, 1998). Connor (1984) suggests that the use of connectives may be developmental (Connor 1984, cited in Kennedy and Thorp, 2007:320).

A large body of research has also explored the use of interactional metadiscourse in L2 student essays. Researchers (see, for example, Hyland and Milton, 1997; Flowerdew 1997; Hinkel, 1997, 1999, 2002, 2003; McEnery and Kifle, 2002) have looked at hedges and boosters in L2 students writing and have found non-native students, in general, tend to be more tentative and less confident in making claims. As already mentioned, the use of certain rhetorical features such as connectors might be developmental, meaning that as L2 students become more proficient English language users they may try to use such features in a more native-like way. Hyland and Milton (1997) observe that more proficient L2 students approximated more closely in their use of hedges and boosters to native speaker patterns (p. 189).

The use of personal pronouns in writing is an important aspect of the interactional dimension of metadiscourse (Hyland, 2002a). The studies which have focused on the use of personal pronouns in L2 student essays (see for example, Hinkel, 1999; Breeze, 2007) mainly draw attention to the fact that such pronouns are either underused or overused and say little about the discourse or rhetorical functions that these pronouns perform in students' essays (for more on how interactant pronouns *we* and *you* are used in student argumentative essays see Chapter 4 of the present research).

Previous research has also examined the use of questions (Hinkel, 1999; Hyland, 2002b) and directives (Hinkel, 1999; Hyland, 2002c) in L2 student essays. Hinkel (1999) looks at what she calls 'direct personal appeals' in native speaker and non native speaker student essays and found that the latter contained more imperatives. She argues that imperatives are regarded as devoid of rhetorical objectivity and are among the strategies which should be avoided in Anglo-American compositions (1999: 98). However, she neither reported on the number of imperatives nor described the functions of imperatives in her study.

In a more detailed and extensive study, Hyland (2002c) explores the use of directives through an analysis of a 2.5 million word corpus of published articles, textbooks, and L2 student essays in eight disciplines. His findings reveal that directives are used for very different strategic purposes. The undergraduate final year project, Hyland points out, is a high-stakes genre for students since "it carries the burden of assessment for an entire course, perhaps determining the quality of their degree" and L2 students, in particular, find it rather difficult to recognize their "readers' greater experience and knowledge of

the field” while they write such reports (2002c: 220). He argues that L2 student writers should analyze and accommodate their readers’ expectations and the appropriate use of directives can assist students to accomplish their particular social goal.

In a similar study, Hyland (2002b) explores the distribution and use of questions in a 1.8 million corpus of research articles, textbooks, and L2 student essays in eight disciplines, and through interviews with insider informants on their perceptions and practices. His findings show that questions underline the essentially interactional nature of academic writing since they assist writers to “invoke explicitly the involvement of their readers in the discourse addressing the perceptions, interests, and needs of a potential audience” (2002b: 529). Through the analysis of the student essays he observes that the use of questions varies across proficiency levels with more expert writers using more questions. The interviews with L2 students, though, reveal that many students were uncertain about the appropriateness of using questions as a rhetorical device to construe their arguments (2002b: 540). (For more on the use of questions and directives in L2 student essays see Chapters 5 and 6 of the present research.)

Intaraprawat and Steffensen’s (1995) work is one of the few studies in which the use of all metadiscourse features in good and poor L2 student essays have been examined (*cf.* Crismore *et al.* 1993). The essays used in their study were produced by 12 ESL (English as a Second Language) students at a large Midwestern university. The essays were given a score between 1 and 5 and were then divided equally into the 6 best essays (having average scores of 5) and the 6 worst essays (having average scores of 1 or 1.2).

Intaraprawat and Steffensen analyzed their data based on Vande Kopple's (1985) metadiscourse classification (see Table 2.1 above) and found that the good essays employed a greater amount and variety of metadiscourse features than the poor essays. Unsurprisingly, the good essays contained more correct metadiscourse than the poor essays. The good and poor essays were not only different in the proportion of the use of correct metadiscourse features, but also differed in the use of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse resources. The authors point out that the difference in metadiscourse features in good and poor essays suggests "different levels of awareness of the forms of rhetorical organization and audience needs, and differing abilities to generate text that is accessible" (1995: 263). This interpretation gains support by the distribution of the broad categories of textual and interpersonal features in good and poor essays. According to Intaraprawat and Steffensen "it is not unreasonable to expect more *narrators*, *emphatics*, *hedges*, *attitude markers*, and *commentaries* in well-written essays, reflecting more attention to developing the interactive function of the text, and more *connectives* in poorly written essays" (1995: 263). This seems to be an important point since it partly goes against the expectation one might have that poor writers would simply use less metadiscourse of any kind. In fact, the findings reveal that good essays had a higher percentage of interpersonal features (54%) while the poor essays had a higher percentage (57%) of textual features.

Another area of difference between the two proficiency levels was the range of vocabulary items that the essays contained. The good essays included approximately twice as many metadiscourse expressions. None of the poor essays used every type of

metadiscourse while four of the six good essays did. Poor essays had a restricted range of high frequency metadiscourse features and simple grammatical constructs, while the good essays had greater versatility in both metadiscourse vocabulary and syntactic constructions (1995: 366).

Based on the density of metadiscourse features and the range of types in good and poor essays and their clear quantitative differences, Intaraprawat and Steffensen argue that “metadiscourse is an aspect of written text that varies with the overall quality of essays” (1995: 268). They also suggest that cultural differences would affect the use of metadiscourse and emphasize the importance of teaching metadiscourse features to L2 students pointing out that “direct teaching of metadiscourse has the potential to help students become more ethical writers because to use such devices correctly, they must examine their own beliefs and encode them in their writing” (1995: 270).

The studies by Mayor *et al.* (2007) and Kennedy and Thorp (2007) have a more relevant bearing on the present study at least from the perspective that they both have examined the use of some linguistic and rhetorical devices in L2 students’ IELTS (International English Language Testing System) written exam scripts at different proficiency levels (The data for this study is also, as we shall see in the next chapter, very similar to their data). In addition, like the present study, they have also explored the roles of language background, language proficiency and topics of the tests in relation to the linguistic behaviour of their students.

Mayor *et al.* (2007) look at how high-scoring IELTS writing scripts written by Chinese and Greek candidates differed from low-scoring scripts. Their data comprised 186 candidate scripts written in response to two different versions of IELTS Academic Task 2. The scripts were then divided roughly equally between 'high' scoring (a score of 7-8) and 'low' scoring (a score of 5), and between first language Chinese and first language Greek candidates. The five forms of linguistic analysis of the data in this study included error analysis; sentence structure; argument structure; and tenor and interpersonal meaning. What is of particular relevance to the present work is, however, the findings in relation to tenor and interpersonal meaning.

The analysis of the full set of scripts for instances of first and second person pronouns (and determiners) revealed that there was a tendency for low-scoring candidates to use the first person singular and the second person more than the high-scoring candidates. The analysis of the distribution of the personal pronouns according to the first language group of the candidates indicated that Chinese L1 candidates made a greater use of the first person singular and the second person while the Greek L1 candidates predominated in the use of third person 'one' (the authors [p. 284] regarded the third person 'one' "as arguably representing a more formal alternative to the generic use of 'we' or 'you'"). In addition, the writers explore the use of interrogatives and imperatives in students' essays. The results showed that high-scoring candidates produced more interrogatives and slightly more imperatives than low-scoring candidates. The findings also revealed that the Chinese L1 candidates used significantly more imperatives and interrogatives than the Greek L1 candidates.

The major finding of this study is that high-scoring and low-scoring essays were differentiated not by a single feature, but rather by a constellation of features (2007: 250). In general, high-scoring candidates used rhetorical devices more frequently than low-scoring scripts. As far as the candidates' first language is concerned, the findings clearly indicated that there are some significant differences in the writing of candidates, particularly in their use of interpersonal tenor. The Chinese L1 language group, for instance, used all the dialogic features considerably more than Greek L1 language groups. In fact, the Chinese L1 group used both a larger amount and a wider variety of interpersonal reference, as well as a higher proportion of interrogatives and imperatives. Mayor *et al.* argue that candidates' writing for the test may have been also affected by the topic or wording of the task (2007: 298). They point out that "the generic prompt appears to trigger in candidates an overly personal ... style of writing". In addition, they suggest that the high usage of first person plural pronouns among both language groups, for instance, might have been the result of coaching for the test, or simply because candidates were overshooting the target in an attempt to speak with an authoritative voice without always having enough evidence to support it (2007: 299).

Kennedy and Thorp (2007) also explore the linguistic nature of 130 scripts responding to the same task from IELTS Academic Writing Task 2. The scripts were divided into three proficiency levels: 8 (expert user), 6 (competent user), and 4 (limited user). The researchers reported on eleven main findings with regard to differences and similarities in the three levels. The outcomes which have a more direct bearing on the present work,

however, are in relation to the interactions between the writer and reader through the use of *questions* and *imperatives*.

The use of (rhetorical) questions as an important aspect of the writer-reader interaction in their data was more frequently observed in level 8 scripts (i.e. the more proficient writers). 40% of the writers at this level used questions, compared with only 20% at level 6 and 26% at level 4 (i.e. less proficient writers). The authors also observe that only high-scoring essays (i.e. level 8 scripts) contained imperatives.

As we have seen above, metadiscourse studies in the genre of student essays typically show that non-native students use metadiscourse resources differently from native students. The survey of these studies also shows that, in addition to language background, language proficiency may affect the use of metadiscourse resources: high proficiency L2 learners use a constellation of metadiscourse devices in their essays. The fact that such essays enjoy a greater variety of interactional metadiscourse features can be a useful indicator of the high proficiency learners' greater awareness of the readers' needs. However it is important to bear in mind, drawing on the results of all these studies, that language proficiency level is only one of the major factors which can affect the use of metadiscourse in L2 student essays. As already described above, cultural differences and language backgrounds can also affect the use of certain metadiscourse features in L2 student essays at different proficiency levels. Since this study aims at looking at the use of metadiscourse resources in Iranian L2 essays, it is worth briefly reviewing a number of English-Persian contrastive metadiscourse studies in the next section to see whether

language background and cultural variation affect the use of such resources in texts written by Iranian writers.

2.5.3 English-Persian contrastive metadiscourse studies

Unfortunately, there is not a lot work in the area of metadiscourse analysing texts written by Iranian writers. Most of the existing work, as we shall see below, is in the genre of academic research articles.

Zarei and Mansoori (2007) compare the use of metadiscourse features in Persian and English research articles. Their corpus comprised 19 articles selected from two disciplines; applied linguistics and computer engineering published in the two languages, English and Persian. The intralingual analysis indicated that both Persian-speaking and English-speaking writers used interactive resources more than interactional ones, emphasizing the significance of text coherence over the interpersonal function of language in the academic genre. Nonetheless, compared with English-speaking writers, Persian-speaking writers made greater use of interactive resources, indicating, as Zarei and Mansoori (2007: 24) argue, that Persian-speaking writers tend to “put a premium on textuality at the expense of reader involvement, hence, being comparatively less reader responsible”. The view that Persian, compared to English, is less reader friendly is also taken by Rashidi and Souzandehfar (2010).

Faghih and Rahimpour (2009) also examine the use of metadiscourse in a corpus of ninety discussion sections of applied linguistics research articles using three kinds of

texts: English texts written by native speakers of English, English texts written by Iranians (as non-natives of English), and Persian texts written by Iranians. Their findings revealed that different groups used all sub-types of metadiscourse. They also observed that interactive metadiscoursal factors were used significantly more than interactional metadiscoursal factors by all the three groups. English writers, however, employed more interactional metadiscourse than Persian writers writing in Persian or English.

Abdollahzadeh (2011) looks at the use of interpersonal metadiscourse in a corpus of 60 English research articles written by Iranian and Anglo-American writers. He observes that English writers use interactional metadiscourse more frequently than Iranian writers. Falahati (2004) looks at one aspect of interactional metadiscourse, namely hedging, in 24 research articles written in English (by native writers) and in Persian. His quantitative analysis revealed that English writers employ hedges more frequently than Iranian writers.

The only English-Persian study of metadiscourse in student argumentative essays that I know of is that of Simin and Tavangar (2009). Drawing on Vande Kopple's (1985) classification of metadiscourse, they look at the use of metadiscourse resources in written texts produced by 90 Iranian EFL students at three proficiency levels: upper-intermediate, intermediate, and lower intermediate. Their analysis reveals that Iranian students across all the proficiency levels employ textual metadiscourse more frequently than interpersonal metadiscourse. They also find that the more proficient language learners use metadiscourse resources more frequently than less proficient ones. Although they did not

set out to explore the effect of essay topics on the use of metadiscourse in their data, it is clear from some of their tabulated findings (p. 243) that different topics elicited different amount of metadiscourse from the Iranian learners.

The recurring theme in the above studies is that textual metadiscourse is more frequently employed than interpersonal metadiscourse by Iranian writers. The major limitation of these descriptive studies is that they typically do not give us any explanation why and how Iranian writers behave this way. In fact, there is no qualitative study exploring the use of metadiscourse by Iranian writers across genres. The only available descriptive studies are also, as noted above, mainly limited to the genre of academic writing (with the exception of Simin and Tvangar's [2009] study). However, all these studies confirm what has been earlier identified through the survey of contrastive metadiscourse studies in 2.5.1 above: language background, among other things, affects the way metadiscourse is used by writers across genres.

2.6 Aims of the study

As mentioned in section 2.1 above, metadiscourse is one way in which writer-reader interaction can be formally realized. Writers employ metadiscourse resources to make their texts accessible to their readers and involve them in the texts in order to build convincing arguments. We have also seen that metadiscourse has attracted a great deal of attention from researchers in recent years. One of the key themes that has emerged from the survey of some metadiscourse studies reviewed above is that the use of this resource varies across genres, disciplines, and cultures. In particular, we find that non-native

writers typically employ metadiscourse resources differently from native writers. The survey of English-Persian metadiscourse studies also confirms the role of language background and cultural variations in the use of metadiscourse resources in that they show that Iranian writers employ metadiscourse resources differently from native writers. These studies, however, tell little, if anything at all, about how exactly Iranian writers use metadiscourse resources. In fact, they only report on their quantitative findings and basically ignore the qualitative aspects of the use of metadiscourse features by Iranian writers. The present research, therefore, aims to fill this gap by looking in detail at exactly *how* Iranian EFL writers use certain interactional metadiscourse resources to construe writer-reader interaction and compare them with a corpus of native student writing.

According to Hyland (2005a), interactional writer-reader relationship can, as shown in Table 2.4, be performed through *hedges*, *boosters*, *attitude markers*, *engagement markers*, and *self-mentions*. In order to prevent the scope of the study from getting unmanageable, I decided to only look at the resources which are used to explicitly bring the reader into the text, namely *engagement markers*. They include the “devices that explicitly address readers, either to focus their attention or include them as discourse participants” (Hyland, 2005a: 53). Engagement markers mainly include *questions*, *directives*, *reader pronouns*, *appeal to shared knowledge*, and *personal asides* (Hyland 2005b: 177). At the preliminary stage of the present research, I did a pilot study mainly to count the number of engagement markers in a sample of the data from both Iranian and British corpora. The instances of ‘appeal to shared knowledge’ and ‘personal asides’

were so infrequent that I decided to exclude them from my analysis since the small size of these two sub-categories would have prevented me from making any generalisations. By the exclusion of these devices, I tried to ensure a higher reliability. The present study, therefore, will focus on the use of ‘reader pronouns’ (Chapter four), ‘questions’ (Chapter five), and ‘directives’ (Chapter six).

In this study I hope to see how generalizable the previous findings in relation to the use of these engagement markers in student essays were, and to observe the differences, if any, and seek out plausible explanations for them. In addition, this study will look at the use of these interactional resources at different proficiency levels and test versions to see if the linguistic behaviour of L2 students is affected by these variables.

Before analyzing these interactional resources, I will introduce my data and methodology in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Information on the data

The data for this study consist of two native and non-native learner corpora totalling just over 100,000 running words. The first learner corpus is Granger's (1993) LOCNESS and consists of 114 argumentative English essays written by British A-level students (60,209 running words). The second learner corpus was compiled by myself and comprises 220 short argumentative English essays produced by Iranian L2 students in response to the writing tasks of two sample IELTS tests (46,777 running words). What follows provide basic information about the two sets of data used in the present study.

3.1.1 British A-levels⁴

A-levels (Advanced Level Examinations) are subject-based qualifications mostly taken by UK students aged 16-19. An A-level is normally achieved through a two-year course. A-levels are the main route to higher education and may be required for some jobs. A-levels have areas of study called units. These units are typically assessed by written exams. English language is one of these units. After attending the related course, students taking this unit are required to produce argumentative English timed essays on given topics. As noted above, the L1 learner corpus in this study consists of 114 argumentative

⁴ The information regarding the British A-levels is extracted from:
<http://web.aqa.org.uk/over/qual/gceas.php>.

English practice essays written by British A-level students. It should be noted that the precise wording of the essay titles was not available, although it was easy to work out what the topics were from the content of the essays.

3.1.2 The IELTS test

The International English Language Testing System (IELTS) is the examination jointly set and administered by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES), the British Council, and IDP (International Development Program) Australia. IELTS is one of the most widely recognized English proficiency tests. The number of candidates taking this test is increasing as 6000 institutions, professional bodies, immigration authorities, and other government agencies across the globe require or accept IELTS scores⁵. In 2009, over 1.4 million people took the IELTS test in over 130 countries (IELTS Annual Review, 2009). IELTS is now the world's most widely taken test of English proficiency (ibid).

IELTS is available in two versions: Academic (the version used for university admissions purposes) and General training (used for vocational training and immigration purposes). The test consists of four modules (reading, writing, listening and speaking). Each skill is assessed and graded on a 1-9 scale. Requirements differ by institutions, but normally a score less than 5 is below the average acceptance level while scores 6 and 6.5 are typically sufficient for gaining unconditional admissions to most universities.

⁵ www.ielts.org

The section of the IELTS test of interest for the present study is the second task in the writing module. This section requires students to write a short (40 minute) argumentative essay by responding to a previously unseen controversial topic. The standard format and wording of the writing task of the two versions of the IELTS test are as follows:

Academic Writing Task 2

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic

[Controversial proposition]

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

General Training Writing Task 2

Write about the following topic:

[Controversial proposition]

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your experience.

Write at least 250 words.

3.1.3 The Iranian corpus

As noted above, the Iranian data consist of short argumentative essays produced by Iranian students in response to the writing sections of two sample IELTS tests. My main impetus for compiling this corpus was the popularity of IELTS in Iran (see Rasti, 2009). Iran is one of the top countries in terms of the number of candidates who sit the IELTS test (IELTS Annual Review, 2003). As the number of Iranian IELTS candidates increases, so does the number of preparation programs. I was responsible for organizing and running one of these programs in a busy offsite IELTS venue of the British Council for the administration of actual IELTS tests in Iran from 2004 to 2007⁶. Students who intended to attend the IELTS preparation programs in this centre were given a full sample version of the IELTS test for placement purposes⁷. The placements tests were available in Academic and General training versions. It was up to the applicants to choose the version which suited them the best. The tests were administered in the same place where the actual IELTS tests were being held in that period. Like the real IELTS test, all the placement tests were given in the morning. In addition, prior to the administration of any IELTS placement test in this language centre, I used to give a brief presentation of the test format in order to familiarize students with the test rubric ensuring that the tests would measure their language proficiency and that their likely unfamiliarity with the format of the test would not adversely affect their real linguistic competence. By strictly controlling the facets of the testing environment and the test rubric (Bachman, 1990: 119), I would argue that the administration of the sample IELTS tests closely resembled

⁶ The name of this venue is *Dibagaran Technical College* and it is located in Shiraz, a city in the south west of Iran.

⁷ I had compiled the placement tests mainly from the commercially available retired IELTS papers (i.e. they were in use for a certain amount of time in the past years in some official IELTS test centres). In so doing, I ensured that the tests I used would enjoy a high measure of reliability and validity.

the administration of the real IELTS tests. Matching the real IELTS as closely as possible both through controlling the testing environment and using actual IELTS questions (see footnote 8 below) enabled me to compare the findings of the present study to those of the studies which have used authentic IELTS scripts (e.g. Mayor *et al.*, 2007; Coffin and Mayor, 2004; Kennedy and Thorp, 2007).

In the contexts of such placement tests as a whole, all the four language skills were assessed. The writing section of these tests required the candidates to respond to a task (see 3.1.2 above for the format and wording of such tasks) by writing a short argumentative English essay.

This is a purposeful sample of such essays produced by Iranian candidates in 2007, in the testing environment introduced above, which has formed my Iranian learner corpus for the present study. Since, for the purpose of the present study, I needed to have two distinct proficiency levels, I chose only the essays which were graded 4 or 6⁸, defined as ‘low-scoring’ and ‘high-scoring’ essays respectively in this study (see Table 3.1). This gave me a corpus totalling 220 essays. All the 220 essays were written by Iranian students speaking Persian (or Farsi) as their first language. They were both males and females aged 16 or over. One of the factors that makes the Iranian corpus a bit more controlled and homogeneous is the fact that almost all the participants intended to sit the

⁸ I marked all the student essays based on the public version of ‘IELTS Task 2 Writing band descriptors’ (see Appendix 1) published jointly by the British Council, IDP IELTS Australia, and the University of Cambridge ESOL Examinations. I had been marking sample IELTS tests for about five years then and was fairly consistent in marking the writing sections. The high correlation of my students’ actual IELTS scores obtained from the real IELTS tests with the exit scores they typically got from me before sitting the real tests can testify to the reliability of my marking.

actual IELTS test for university admission and/or vocational/immigration purposes and as such could be expected to be highly motivated in taking the sample IELTS placement tests seriously as the results of these tests meant they could or could not enter the preparation programs.

It is worth mentioning that level 6 essays are not really very proficient language users, not least because they typically have many language errors. As Kennedy and Thorp (2007) point out, “level six essays are level four’s better versions”, meaning that level 6 essays are not actually ‘high-level’ essays. But since there were only a handful of essays which were given scores of 7 or above, I had to consider level 6 essays as high even though it is only in comparison with level 4 essays. In other words, ‘high’-scoring is mainly a term that I am using in order to distinguish such essays from low-scoring essays. I also divided my Iranian data according to the test version into Academic and General sub-corpora (see Table 3.1). What follows show the standard format and wording of the writing tasks together with the controversial topics of the Academic and General training of the sample IELTS tests given to students⁹ (from which virtually all the examples in this study are drawn):

Academic Writing Task 2

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic.

⁹ The two topics are extracted from *IELTS: International English Language System. Specimen Materials 2003* (updated January 2005).

Television is dangerous because it destroys family life and any sense of community; instead of visiting people or talking with our family we just watch television.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

General Training Writing Task 2

Write about the following topic:

People should be allowed to continue to work as long as they want to, and not to be forced to retire at a particular age such as 60 or 65.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your experience.

Write at least 250 words.

The full sample of the Iranian essays subjected to analysis is shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1 Distribution of Iranian essays according to test version and task score

Test version	Task score	Number of essays	Word count
Academic essays	High-scoring (6)	50	13,205
General essays	High-scoring (6)	50	13,060
Academic essays	Low-scoring (4)	60	10,270
General essays	Low-scoring (4)	60	10,242
Totals		220	46,777

All 220 essays written by Iranian students and 114 essays written by British students were analyzed in the present study. Each Iranian essay was given a unique identifier in the form of IR/A/6/15 (indicating an Iranian candidate who took the Academic version of the sample IELTS test and obtained a score of 6, with a unique identifying number of 15). All references to individual scripts are given in this form. All Iranian scripts were originally handwritten but they were all typed into a Word processor to make them into machine-readable texts. Spelling errors in the original scripts were corrected since such errors might distort the results of automatic word counts. Each British essay was also given the unique identifier already ascribed to them in Granger's (1993) corpus (e.g. ICLE-ALEV-0005.9 or Boxing-B11). All British essays were already typed in word documents by the compilers of the corpus.

One of the most obvious differences between Iranian and British essays was the overall length of the texts. The average length of a typical British essay is 528 words, whereas the average length of a typical Iranian essay is 213 words. In the Iranian sub-corpora, the overall length of high-scoring essays is greater than low-scoring essays: the average length of a high scoring essay is 263 words, whereas the average length of a low-scoring essay is 171 words. The overall length of Academic and General essays, however, is almost the same with an average length of 213 words. Since I was dealing with the corpora of unequal sizes, I normalized the raw frequencies of the findings in each chapter to be able to make comparisons.

There are several reasons why I decided to compare the Iranian student argumentative essays with the British A-level discursive essays. First, and most importantly, A-level essays perhaps represent the best level realistically that we could expect the Iranian L2 students in this study to attain. Second, finding a comparable test type was very difficult precisely because essays of this kind (i.e. argumentative) are a kind of discourse that often appears in educational contexts and is not expected to be found very much in the real world outside education, so the A-level essays seem to be the nearest comparable corpus of the kind. Finally, the overall target of the majority of the Iranian IELTS candidates in this study was to get their required band scores and subsequently use them as a way to get out of Iran. In other words, most of them were not trying to prepare themselves for publishing scholarly papers; thus comparing their performance with a target like research articles (as is often the case in similar studies [see, for example, Hyland, 2002c]) was felt not to be a reasonable option. Student essays are a genre in which writers get no official exposure to other models of the genre but the research article genre is not expected to be the genre students would model themselves on instead. Obviously, there are many possible educational and socio-cultural differences between the two language groups preventing a direct comparison of their written performances, and this should be borne in mind when considering the results. However, there are also considerable similarities between the two sets of data and as such they can be considered as being broadly comparable: both corpora belong to the genre of student argumentative essays, written as practice for a high-stakes test which the students would take later; they were both written by students of a similar age range typically above 16; finally, both A-

level students and IELTS candidates typically intend to pursue their higher education and/or find jobs and in this respect they seem to share similar motivations.

3.2 Method

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the analysis drew on Hyland's (2005a) interpersonal model of metadiscourse (see Table 2.4 in Chapter 2) in which explicit writer-reader interaction is realized by engagement markers. Illustrated below by examples from my data, these engagement markers are (1) interactant pronouns, (2) questions, and (3) directives:

(1)

a. In fact, **we** should increase the salary of the old people IR/G/4/15

b. It is expensive to partake in as **you** need a horse, dogs and riding equipment (e.g. helmet, boots etc.) **you** also need land to do it in.

Fox hunting - FH03

(2)

a. How can T.V influence our ordinary life? IR/A/6/41

b. Is it inhumane to support a sport in which death can so tragically happen?

Boxing - B-06

(3)

a. **Consider** a person works during a day and unable to see his/her family.

IR/A/4/21

b. You **have to** decide exactly when and where you want to travel in advance.

Transport 02

In order to highlight the various features of engagement markers in the data I formulated research questions in each chapter. In addition, since each chapter dealt with a different grammatical feature I established different analytical and functional frameworks for analysing the data. For this reason, each chapter adopts a fairly different methodology preceded by a brief survey of relevant literature highlighting why each of the engagement markers is considered an important linguistic means of constructing writer-reader interaction. After presenting the results and discussing them, in the last chapter I explore the writer-reader interaction in student essays through the analysis of one typical essay from the British corpus and two typical essays from the Iranian corpus, following the example set by Kennedy and Thorp (2007: 329):

Though it cannot be said that any particular script is strictly ‘typical’, it is, in ethnographic tradition, ‘illuminating’ or ‘telling’ to look at one in closer detail. As Evans (1988: 7) says of his own qualitative studies, ‘the validity ... does not depend on numbers but on ... necessarily subjective efforts to understand the whole through close attention to individuals’.

(Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 329)

Finally, I link my findings with some possible socio-cultural factors focusing mainly on the Iranian students’ performance.

CHAPTER FOUR

INTERACTANT PRONOUNS

4.1 Introduction

As discussed in detail in Chapter 2, one major way in which the writer-reader interaction in the text can be constructed is through the deployment of metadiscourse resources. *Engagement markers* are one of the interactional metadiscourse resources which overtly involve the reader in the text. *Personal pronouns* such as first-person plural pronoun *we* and second-person pronoun *you* (and their corresponding possessive pronouns, possessive determiners and reflexives) are classified as one of the engagement markers (Hyland, 2002a) that explicitly bring the reader into the text and create a dialogic interaction between the discourse participants. Fortanet (2004: 46) also suggests that “among the personal pronouns, the ones that are especially important for communication are the first and second person pronouns for the implications they have for both participants in the speech event”. The use of these pronouns is, Fortanet points out, “an important indicator of how audiences are conceptualized by speakers and writers in academic discourse” (p. 45). Similarly, Kuo (1999: 123) suggests that personal pronouns can “define or reveal interpersonal relationships between or among the individuals involved in the interaction”. Kuo also maintains that the presence, or non-presence, of a personal pronoun can potentially indicate the way writers view their relationship with readers (p. 123). Harwood (2005a: 346) asserts that inclusive *we* can create writer-reader dialogue and make the reader feel involved. He, then, points out that through this “(simulated)

involvement” the reader will hopefully be “more receptive to the writer’s claims for rhetorical effect” (p. 346). Hyland (2001a: 557) regards personal pronouns *we* and *you* as the most explicit way of bringing the readers into the text as discourse participants. Thompson and Thetela (1995: 108) also argue that personal pronouns are used in ‘projected roles’ which function as the textual personae of the intended writer and reader. Acknowledging the role of personal pronouns in constructing discourse participants, Kim (2009: 2087) argues that using personal pronouns can help the writer to “evoke the reader’s involvement in the textual interaction, i.e., encourage the reader to accept the role of the dialogic participant, and ultimately enhance the persuasiveness of the text”. In other words, personal pronouns *we* and *you* create and boost an overt dialogic interaction between the participants in the text; a process which in turn may lead to the construction of a more convincing argument by the writer.

There is a growing body of research on the use of personal pronouns *we* and *you* to create writer-reader interaction in academic writing. What is in common in this body of research is that the use of these pronouns has been found to differ significantly according to some variables, such as genre, discipline, cultural background, linguistic competence, etc. (e.g. Mur, 2007; Luzón, 2009; Coffin and Mayor, 2004). The use of these pronouns has been extensively analyzed in various genres and disciplines (e.g. Hyland, 1999, 2001a,b, 2002a, 2004; Harwood, 2005a,b,c; Coffin and Mayor, 2004; Luzón, 2009; Kuo, 1999; Martinez, 2005; Ivanič and Camps, 2001; Tang and John 1999). The use of *we* and *you* has been also comprehensively analyzed cross-culturally (e.g. Kim, 2009; Mur, 2007;

Breivega, Dahl, and Fløttum, 2002; Fløttum, 2003; Fløttum, Dahl, and Kinn, 2006; Vassileva, 1998, 2000, 2001; Vladimirou, 2007b).

As noted above, the use of *we* and *you* varies significantly across genres, disciplines, and cultures. In quantitative terms, one of the main discrepancies in the usage of these pronouns is their varied overall frequencies according to the above-mentioned variables. Hyland (2002a: 1098), for instance, finds that the use of first-person pronouns by professional writers is four times more than student reports, with figures higher for the soft disciplines than the hard ones. Other researchers (e.g. Coffin and Mayor, 2004; Luzón, 2009), however, find that students use first-person pronouns considerably more frequently than expert writers. In contrast to *we*, the occurrence of *you* in academic writing is very rare (e.g. Kuo, 1999) but it is employed with almost equal frequency with *we* in science popularizations (Kim, 2009) and more frequently in student essays than academic prose (Coffin and Mayor, 2004).

In addition to quantitative issues related to personal pronouns, in qualitative terms two of the most extensively discussed aspects of first-person plural and second-person pronouns in all the above studies are their semantic reference and the discourse functions in which they appear. These are the issues to which I will turn in sections 4.2 and 4.3 respectively.

4.2 References of personal pronouns

Fortanet (2004: 46) argues that “in the negotiation of meaning that is always present between the person issuing a message and the person receiving the message one of the key elements is the reference of the personal pronouns”. Many researchers, however,

argue that it is not always easy to identify the referents of *we* and *you*. Pennycook (1994: 175) describes *we* as “problematic” and Biber *et al.* (1999: 329) view it as “vague”. Biber *et al.* point out that “*you* is similar to *we* in being used with different intended referents” (p. 329). Wales (1996: 163) maintains that the identification of the seemingly limitless references of *we* depends on “the particular context of use and the inferences to be drawn on the basis of the mutual knowledge of the speaker and interpreter”. Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990: 745) call first-person plural pronoun “an incompletely defined collectivity that includes the speaker and one or more others, without specifying who the others are”. Mühlhäusler and Harré (1990: 169) also argue that “simplistic statements such as that *we* stands for a group of people including the speaker (Leech & Svartvik 1978: 57) are not borne out in all instances” (Mühlhäusler and Harré, 1990: 169, as cited in Vladimirou, 2007a: 146).

Traditionally, English pronouns are determined according to person, number and gender (Wilson, 1990: 45). Based on this traditional account of personal pronouns, the reference of first person pronouns includes the speaker(s)/writer(s) and the reference of the second person pronouns includes the addressee(s), but excludes the speaker(s)/writer(s) (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 339-340; Huddleston, 1984: 288, as cited in Kitagawa and Lehrer, 1990: 740). Personal pronouns in their traditional sense are typically referred to as ‘referential’ or ‘deictic’ pronouns (e.g. Kitagawa and Lehrer, 1990). Personal pronouns can have references other than their conventional referents. Plural personal pronouns, for instance, can be used generically (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 553-54) meaning that they refer to ‘people in general’. *We* and *you* have a generic reference in (4.1) and (4.2):

(4.1) **We** can spend a part of **our** free time with watching good films and listen to music. IR/A/6/49

(4.2) The Internet allows **you** to correspond with people all over the world.

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Quirk *et al.*'s (1985) notion of generic pronouns virtually corresponds to Kitagawa and Lehrer's (1990) concept of impersonal pronouns. Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990: 740) point out that "impersonal pronouns, like personal pronouns, refer to one or more persons, but no specific person is picked out in contrast to the personal pronouns". Adopting Laberge and Sankoff's (1979) description of the indefinite use of *tu/vous*, Kitagawa and Lehrer characterize the impersonal use of *you* as follows:

(a) It conveys the theme of *generality*- particularly a generally admitted truth or a personal opinion that the speaker hopes is shared.

(b) It can be replaced by an indefinite pronoun (e.g. *on* in French, *one* in English)

(Laberge and Sankoff, 1979: 275, as cited in Kitagawa and Lehrer, 1990: 742)

According to this characterization of impersonal *you*, *you* in (4.2) above refers to 'people in general' and can be replaced by generic pronoun *one* without affecting the informational content of the text. A similar description to the one outlined above for impersonal *you* can be applied to impersonal *we*. Like impersonal *you*, impersonal *we* can also convey the theme of generality and can be replaced by a generic pronoun. Accordingly, *we* in (4.1) above can be replaced by the generic pronoun *one* with the informational content of the text remaining intact. It is worth noting that *we* and *you* are

also usually interchangeable in these contexts with the informational context unchanged (though the interactional effect, as we shall see later, is very different).

Many researchers have also distinguished between ‘inclusive’ and ‘exclusive’ *we* (for example, Biber *et al.*, 1999; Haas, 1969; Kuo, 1998; Levinson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Spiegelberg, 1973; Fortanet, 2004; Harwood, 2005a; Mur, 2007; Tang and John, 1999; Vladimirou, 2007a). Put simply, inclusive *we* “includes the hearer or audience in its reference scope” while exclusive *we* “excludes the hearer or audience from the reference” (Fortanet, 2004: 48). Identifying the semantic reference of *we* by adopting this classification (i.e. inclusive vs. exclusive) has also been found to be tricky: as Harwood (2005a) points out, the exclusive/inclusive divide is fuzzy. Distinguishing between exclusive and inclusive use of personal pronouns, however, some discourse analysts have offered detailed taxonomies that capture the different references of first-person plural pronoun (see Table 4.1).

Although specific to genres other than student essays, the categories summarized in Table 4.1 are very useful in setting up the analytical framework for the identification of references of *we* in the present study. Coffin and Mayor (2004), however, examined authorial voice and the dialogue between writer and reader, as evidenced by the extent of explicit writer or reader reference in *student essays* and set out the following references of **both** *we* and *you* in their data: *writer reference*, *reader reference*, *joint-reference to writer/reader-in-the-text*, and *collective reference to writer and reader, plus others, in the world beyond-the-text*. As we shall see in section 4.4.1, Coffin and Mayor’s (2004) categorization of *we* and *you* references is also very suggestive for establishing the

analytical framework for identification of references of these two pronouns in the present study. Moving on from the reference of personal pronouns *we* and *you*, I will deal with the discourse functions in which these pronouns appear in the next section.

Table 4.1 Semantic references of *we* identified by previous research

Previous research	Semantic references of <i>we</i>
Fortanet (2004)	Larger group of people (including speaker + audience) Speaker + Audience ‘We’ for ‘I’ ‘We’ for ‘you’ (audience) Speaker + Other people ‘We’ for indefinite ‘you’ or ‘one’ ‘We’ for ‘they’ Reported direct speech: larger group of people (including the reported speaker)
Kuo (1999)	Writers Writer and readers Writers and other researchers The discipline as a whole
Vladimirou (2007a)	Exclusive we: ‘We’ for ‘I’ Writer and other people Inclusive we: We-writer and audience We-academic community We-indefinite
Coffin & Mayor (2004)	Writer reference Reader reference Joint reference to writer/reader-in-the-text Collective reference to writer and reader, plus others, in the world beyond-the-text

4.3 Discourse functions of personal pronouns

The use of interactant pronouns can be approached in two different ways. The first way is to identify the rhetorical context in which these pronouns appear. Many researchers (see, for example, Kuo, 1999; Harwood, 2005a; Hyland, 2002a; Martinez, 2005; Mur, 2007; Luzón, 2009) have looked at interactant pronouns in terms of the contexts where they appear. Hyland (2002a: 1099-1106), for instance, summarizes the contexts where *we* is used as: stating a goal/purpose; explaining a procedure; stating results/claims; expressing self-benefits; and elaborating an argument. This approach in itself leaves open the question of why writers use *we/you* in such contexts. Accordingly, the second way to look at the use of interactant pronouns, which is also implied in the first way, is to identify the functions that these pronouns perform in the text: that is, to examine why the writer has chosen a particular interactant pronoun rather than another wording (such as avoiding a pronoun by the use of a passive form). This is the approach I intend to focus on in this study, although as we shall see later two of the discourse functions identified for *we* in this study are more accurately characterised as the functions of the propositions where it appears rather than the discourse function of the pronoun itself.

One of the main functions often attributed to *we* is “expressing solidarity or assuming shared knowledge” (e.g. Kim, 2009; Kuo, 1999). Pennycook (1994: 175) points out that *we* encompasses “a covert assumption about shared communality”. Hyland (2001a: 557) also argues that personal pronouns, most commonly inclusive *we*, can be used to solicit reader solidarity. Similarly, Luzón (2009: 201) asserts that inclusive *we* can be used “as a solidarity strategy intended to involve the reader and build a working relationship”.

Likewise, Kim (2009: 2087) argues that the “implication of in-group solidarity can also contribute to enhancing the reader’s involvement in textual interaction”. It can, therefore, be argued that through using *we*, the writer implies his/her solidarity with the reader and perhaps it is partly because of this sense of solidarity or ‘having shared aims’ that the reader feels more involved in the construction of the argument alongside the writer and is expected to find the writer’s claims more persuasive.

Compared with *we*, less attention has been paid to *you* in academic writing, perhaps partly because the use of *you* is rare in that register. Although *you* is generally considered as the most explicit acknowledgement of the reader’s presence in the text (Hyland, 2001a; Smith, 1985, as cited in Kuo, 1999: 126), it is widely avoided in academic texts which, as Hyland (2001a: 575) points out, might indicate that “writers generally seek to circumvent the stark detachment from their audience that *you* suggests”. Similarly, Kuo (1999: 126) posits that as far as the interaction between the writer and the reader is concerned, “*you* could sound offensive or detached since it separates readers, as a different group, from the writer”. Kuo (1999: 126), however, distinguishes between *you* and *generic you* and suggests that in its generic sense “*you* could sound both interactive and inclusive”.

Along the same line, explaining that the ‘person-deixis’ framework of English language enables the speaker to abstract the 2nd-person pronoun away from its referential property associated with the immediate speech act domain, Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990: 752) highlight that:

A sense of camaraderie is often present with the use of impersonal *you* precisely because the speaker assigns a major ‘actor’ role to the addressee. In so doing s/he is letting the hearer into the speaker’s world view, implying that the hearer also shares the same perspective. This can be considered as an act of camaraderie.

(Kitagawa and Lehrer, 1990: 752)

Similarly, Hyland (2001a) argues that *you* can “often carry an interactive and encompassing meaning, which shows that writers are able to identify with readers, anticipating their objections, voicing their concerns, and expressing their views” (p. 557). Kim (2009: 2087) also argues that explicitly addressing the reader with *you* can assist the writer to give the reader “a textual persona with whom the reader can identify”, which in turn can contribute to enhancing the involvement of the reader and thus persuasiveness of the text. Examining the use of personal pronouns in non-native student argumentative essays, Coffin and Mayor (2004: 244) suggest that *you* can “shift, often ambiguously, from addressing a specific reader (or readers) to referring to a more generalised identity”. They further explain that the construction of a specific reader is mostly associated with dialogic features such as the use of interrogative and the imperative while the construction of a collective identity is often indicated by a statement of a general truth.

4.4 The study

4.4.1 Criteria for identifying *we* and *you*

The corpus was analyzed using the Wordlist and Concordance tools of *WordSmith* (Scott, 2004) searching for instances of first person plural and second person pronouns regardless of whether they were realized in the form of subject pronouns (*we*, *you*), object

pronouns (*us, you*), possessive determiners (*our, your*), possessive pronouns (*ours, yours*) or reflexives (*ourselves, yourself*).

Hyland (2005a: 54) calls inclusive ‘we’ and ‘you’ *reader* pronouns. But since he regards these pronouns as linguistic devices which are used to create an interaction between the writer and the reader, it is probably better to call them *interactant* pronouns. *We* and *you* were, therefore, only counted as interactant pronouns if they were used to create a writer and reader interaction in the text. A careful analysis of the co-text and context of *we* and *you* was carried out in order to separate interactant pronouns from non-interactant pronouns. All instances of inclusive *we* were counted as interactant pronouns. However, there were instances where the writer was referring either to him/herself or people associated with him/herself. Such instances of *we* were regarded as exclusive and therefore were not counted as interactant pronouns. (4.3) is an example where the writer is describing his/her family through *we*. Such instances of exclusive *we* were not counted as interactant pronouns since they do not create a dialogic writer-reader interaction¹⁰:

(4.3) I hate television, because T.V is always turn on in **our** house and my parents always see that box and they don’t talk with me and my brother and sister and **we** spend **our** times in **our** private rooms and didn’t talk with each other.

IR/A/4/42

¹⁰ An exclusive use of *we* only works by distinguishing the referent from the reader, thus making it interactant in a different way. Therefore, it can be argued that, strictly speaking, *we* refers to an interactant even when it is exclusive but for the purpose of the present research only the instances of *we* which refer both to writer and reader are considered as interactant pronouns.

There are other instances, where *we* or *you* are used in quotations, indicating that the writer is quoting someone else and therefore not creating a dialogic interaction with the reader. Such cases were not counted as interactant pronouns either:

(4.4) The slogan of the National Lottery, 'it could be **you**' came under intense criticism. 001

In (4.4) *you* is part of the slogan for the National Lottery and is not used by the writer to address the reader of his/her text and therefore no dialogic interaction is created. Such cases where *we* or *you* did not construct a dialogic interaction between the writer and the reader were not counted as interactant pronouns in the present study.

Although the studies reviewed in Sections 4.2 and 4.3 above have examined the use of personal pronouns comprehensively and have identified a wide range of personal pronoun references and functions, they are mostly limited to research articles or student academic reports (with Kim's [2009] study of personal pronouns in science popularizations and Coffin and Mayor's [2004] study of personal pronouns in student argumentative essays being exceptions). The present chapter, however, aims at extending the previous research by looking at writer-reader interaction in what might be seen as an 'apprentice' genre of student argumentative essay writing, through an exploration of the explicit use of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* in native and non-native essays. Accordingly, this chapter sets out to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* in student essays?
2. What are the references of *we* and *you* in student essays?
3. What discourse functions do *we* and *you* perform in student essays?

Using the criteria discussed above, the present chapter aims at answering the above research questions within the analytical frameworks which are presented in sections 4.4.2 and 4.4.3 below.

4.4.2 Identifying interactant pronoun references

Generic and impersonal *we* and *you* are also referred to as ‘collective’ *we* and *you* by Coffin and Mayor (2004) and ‘indefinite’ *we* and *you* by Vladimirou (2007a). Following Quirk *et al.* (1985), however, *we* and *you* in their non-referential/non-deictic sense (i.e. whenever referring to people in general) are called *generic* in the present study. Non-generic references of *we* and *you* are called *restricted*. Partly drawing on the taxonomies summarized in section 4.2 above and partly using the data themselves, I established an analytical framework (see Table 4.2) for mapping the references of first-person plural and second person pronouns *we* and *you*.

Table 4.2 Analytical framework for identifying the semantic references of interactant pronouns

Generic Reference	<p>We</p> <p>You</p>
Restricted Reference	<p>We</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writer • Writer + reader • Reader • Specified group of people <p>You</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate reader

As can be seen in Table 4.2, interactant pronouns *we* and *you* are divided into two categories: *generic* and *restricted* references. As defined above, generic *we* and *you* refer to ‘people in general’. Examples (4.1) and (4.2) above showed these pronouns being used generically. Interactant pronouns *we* and *you* in their restricted (i.e. non-generic) sense can be divided into further subcategories. When *we* has a restricted reference, it can refer to a single *writer*¹¹ (as in ‘**We** mention some of them here’); *writer* and *reader* (or, strictly speaking, ‘reader-in-the-text’ in Thompson and Thetela’s [1995] terms) (as in ‘In figure 1 **we** can see...’); *the reader* (when the most likely reading of *we* is *you*) (as in ‘**We** must always remember...’ meaning ‘*You* must always remember’); and *a specified group of people* (as in ‘In **our** country people...’). When *you* has a restricted reference, it can refer to *the immediate reader* (as in ‘As **you** know...’).

¹¹ It is worth noting that *we* referring to the writer (*we* for *I*) is different from the instances of *we* which refer to the writer and, for example, his/her family as in example (4.3). Cases like (4.3) are exclusive *we* since they do not include the reader. But restricted *we* = *I* is inclusive since, as we shall see later in section 4.5.3, such instances of *we* are used by the writer to involve the reader in the production of the text.

4.4.3 Identifying discourse functions of interactant pronouns

As noted in 4.3, previous research has mainly focused on the contexts where interactant pronouns are used. However, I intended to focus on the interactional effect of choosing *we/you*. To develop the functional taxonomy, therefore, I analyzed the occurrences of interactant pronouns in the present data and identified different ways in which *we/you* are employed by the students (see Table 4.3). The introduction of the criteria set out for identifying the functions of interactant pronouns, the detailed explanation of what each function does in terms of creating writer-reader interaction and persuasiveness in the text, and the frequency counts of each function in the data will be presented later in section 4.5.3.

Table 4.3 Functional taxonomy for identifying discourse functions of interactant pronouns

Interactant pronouns	Discourse functions
We	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc.• Guiding the reader through the text• Involving the reader in the production of the text• Involving the reader in the construction of the argument• Emphasizing/catching the reader's attention
You	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Giving an active role to the readers and expressing solidarity with them• Setting up an imaginary dialogic engagement

Having briefly introduced the analytical framework for identifying the references of interactant pronouns and also the functional taxonomy for classification of the functions

of interactant pronouns, I will present and discuss the findings in the remainder of this chapter.

4.5 Findings and discussions

4.5.1 Research question one: frequencies of interactant pronouns

The distribution of interactant pronouns according to language background is shown in Table 4.4. It can be seen that, in line with previous studies which observed the overall tendency for greater use of *we* than *you* by academic writers (for example, Hyland, 2002a; Kuo, 1999), *we* is used more frequently than *you* in both corpora. In fact, about 80% of interactant pronouns in both corpora are instances of *we*. The most striking finding according to language background, however, is the overuse of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* by Iranian students, deployed more than four times as often as British students.

Table 4.4 Instances of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	We	You	Totals
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	948 (20.26)	241 (5.15)	1189 (25.41)
British essays [60,209 words]	257 (4.26)	73 (1.21)	330 (5.48)

The overuse of these pronouns is opposed to the conventions of academic writing, as Coffin and Mayor (2004: 251-52) argue the high use of “personal reference (both in individual terms and generalised community terms) is in sharp contrast to the model of an

abstract and conceptually organised essay normally associated with tertiary education”. It can be seen from Table 4.5 that, when the figures of Iranian use of interactant pronouns are calculated according to language proficiency and test version, the use of interactant pronouns appears to be broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 4.4, in that all Iranian sub-groups also used *we* more frequently than *you*.

The high incidence of *we* and *you* by non-native students in the present study is in agreement with Coffin and Mayor’s (2004) study where they also find that *we* and *you* were overused by non-native students in their IELTS corpus. Recognizing the lack of a comparable large-scale corpus of novice academic writing, Coffin and Mayor used professional academic prose drawn from the Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (Biber *et al.*, 1999) in order to compare writer-reader interaction in their IELTS data with that of academic prose. Table 4.6, partly adapted from Coffin and Mayor (2004: 249), shows the use of *we* and *you* in different corpora (including both Iranian and British corpora used in this study and Chinese and Greek corpora in Coffin and Mayor’s study). As can be seen, the findings are quite striking in that the usage of *we* by non-native students greatly exceeds that of Biber *et al.*’s academic prose and even conversation data. The use of *you* by non-native students is also more frequent than that of academic prose but, unsurprisingly, less than that of general conversation.

Table 4.5 Instances of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	We	You	Totals
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	521 (19.83)	173 (6.58)	694 (26.42)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	427 (20.81)	68 (3.31)	495 (24.13)
Academic version [23,475 words]	714 (30.41)	146 (6.21)	860 (36.63)
General version [23,302 words]	234 (10.04)	95 (4.07)	329 (14.11)

Table 4.6 Comparative frequency of usage of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* per thousand words in different corpora

	We	You
Biber <i>et al.</i> academic prose corpus: average across disciplines	4	1
Biber <i>et al.</i> data on ‘general conversation’	8.5	33
Chinese essays [27,193 words]	23.7	6.2
Greek essays [28,961 words]	23.4	2.7
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	20.3	5.2
British essays [60,209 words]	4.3	1.2

The use of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* by the British students in the present study, however, closely resembles that of academic prose in Biber *et al.*, indicating that British students are probably more aware of the generic conventions of academic writing than non-native students. Mayor *et al.* (2007: 286) suggest that one possible reason for the high usage of *we* by their non-native IELTS candidates could be because of “coaching for the test, since they may be seen as a characteristic of academic writing”. They also argue that, in their overuse of first person plural, it is possible that IELTS candidates “may simply be overshooting the target, attempting to speak with an authoritative voice without always having the evidence to back it up” (p. 299). Similarly, ‘coaching for the test’ may be a possible reason for the overuse of *we* by Iranian students in the present study too (the discourse functions that *we* (and *you*) perform in the data will be discussed later in Section 4.5.4). Overall, Mayor *et al.* suggest that it is possible that the strikingly high use of interpersonal resources (including *we* and *you*) is due to the wording of the tasks which emphasize the personal nature of the dialogue (p. 299). I shall return to the issue of wordings of the generic prompts shortly below.

It can be argued that language proficiency can have an effect on the use of interactant pronouns by students. Language proficiency slightly affected the usage of *we* and *you* by non-native students in Mayor *et al.*’s (2007: 285) study. Their findings reveal that more proficient language users employed *we* and *you* slightly less often. Similarly, as shown in Table 4.4 above, more proficient language users in this study (i.e. British students) used fewer interactant pronouns *we* and *you*. A possible reason for the effect of language proficiency on the use of interactant pronouns emerges when the frequency of the use of

we by different levels of Iranian students is considered. As can be seen in Table 4.5, Iranian high-scorers used *we* slightly less than Iranian low-scorers, suggesting that more linguistically competent students may tend to use interactant pronoun *we* less than less proficient ones. But this relationship does not apply to *you* since *you* is deployed more frequently by high-scorers than low-scorers. In other words, unlike Mayor *et al.*'s (2007) study where high-scorers use both *we* and *you* less than low scorers, Iranian high-scorers in this study only used *we* less than low-scorers. It is not immediately clear why Iranian high-scorers adopted a more overt dialogic style through directly addressing their readers. It should be noted, however, that relying on simple frequencies makes the situation less clear. In fact, these figures do not give us a clear picture about the effect of language proficiency on the use of *we* and *you*.

Another possible explanation for the greater use of interactant pronouns by Iranian students could be their essays' test prompts. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 250) argue that "it may be that the test prompt, which cues students explicitly into a dialogic style, is responsible for directing them towards a more conversational tenor", leading to their greater use of *we* and *you*. The generic test prompts of the Academic and General versions of the (sample) IELTS test used in this study are re-introduced below:

Academic Writing Task 2

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist

knowledge of the following topic

[*Controversial proposition*]

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

General Training Writing Task 2

Write about the following topic:

[*Controversial proposition*]

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your experience.

Write at least 250 words.

Although the generic test prompts of both test versions may have encouraged Iranian students, in general, to adopt a personal style ('use *your* own ideas, knowledge, and experience ...') which have resulted in their greater use of interactant pronouns than British students, it can be speculated that the Academic test prompt cues students more towards an interpersonal style than the General test prompt since the former explicitly defines the reader for the students ('Present a written argument or case to *an educated reader...*'). This can potentially make Academic students more conscious of the reader's presence and therefore cue them towards adopting a more dialogic style whereby they can explicitly involve their reader in the text partly by using interactant pronouns *we* and *you*. Drawing on a similar line of argument, it could be further speculated that the Academic test prompt encourages students to adopt a more interpersonal style than

General students through using the word *argument* ('Present a written *argument*...') which can potentially direct students towards thinking of an imagined reader to argue with. As argued earlier, one of the major ways in which writers can construct convincing arguments is by involving their readers in the text and creating a dialogic interaction through the use of *we* and *you*. As shown in Table 4.5, Academic students used interactant pronoun *we* considerably more than General students. In fact, they used *we* three times more often than General students. Academic students also used *you* slightly more frequently than General students. On the whole, then, the wording of the controversial topics in both tests versions may have contributed to the greater use of interactant pronouns by Iranian students and the slightly different wording of the Academic test prompt may be also partially accountable for the greater use of interactant pronouns by Academic students.

Another possible explanation for the greater use of interactant pronouns by non-native students in the present study could be their lack of genre awareness. Luzón (2009: 194) states that "the use of the first person pronoun as a strategic resource requires a high degree of genre awareness, which learners usually lack". As we shall see in the next section, Iranian students tend to employ the features of spoken discourse in their written texts. Adopting (partially) an overt dialogic style, which is the characteristic feature of a face-to-face conversation, might have led Iranian students to employ a conversational tenor in which the writer and the reader interact most explicitly through the use of interactant pronouns *we* and *you*. In their high use of interactant pronouns, they might have simply overshot their target and overused these pronouns.

4.5.2 Research question two: interactant pronouns and their semantic references

Moving on to a more qualitatively oriented analysis, I will explore the semantic references of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* in this section. References of personal pronouns are often discussed alongside the discourse functions in which they appear (see, for example, Fortanet, 2004; Kuo, 1999). But in this section, I have attempted to focus mainly on the semantic references of interactant pronouns rather than linking them with the discourse functions that they perform. It should be noted, however, that these two variables are so closely interwoven that sometimes it becomes very frustrating to separate the two. Therefore, although semantic references are sporadically connected with discourse functions here, I will reserve the more thorough analysis of the discourse functions of interactant pronouns for the next section.

As shown in the analytical framework presented in section 4.4.2, the referents of *we* and *you* are divided into *generic* and *restricted*. In line with previous research (e.g. Coffin and Mayor, 2004), the findings of this study also reveal that the vast majority of interactant pronouns have a generic reference. As can be seen in Table 4.7, both Iranian and British students employ generic interactant pronouns more frequently than restricted ones.

Table 4.7 Overall instances of semantic references of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Generic references	Restricted references
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	1060 (22.6)	130 (2.77)
British essays [60,209 words]	288 (4.78)	46 (0.76)

As found with the overall frequency of interactant pronouns in the previous section Iranian students also use *we* and *you* with the generic reference considerably more frequently than British students. It can be seen from Table 4.8 that when the Iranian corpus is divided according to language proficiency and test version, the frequency of the semantic references of interactant pronouns in all the sub-groups appears to be broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 4.7, in that Iranian sub-groups also use generic pronouns more frequently than restricted pronouns.

Table 4.8 Overall instances of semantic references of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Generic references	Restricted references
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	607 (23.11)	82 (3.12)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	453 (22)	48 (2.34)
Academic version [23,475 words]	773 (32.92)	87 (3.70)
General version [23,302 words]	287 (12.31)	43 (1.84)

But a closer analysis reveals some interesting discrepancies. The use of generic interactant pronouns across proficiency levels is consistent with the overall Iranian pattern observed in Table 4.7. The use of generic interactant pronouns across test versions, however, differs considerably from the pattern that emerged in the use of these pronouns by all Iranian students. Academic students use about 33 generic pronouns in every 1000 words which is more frequent than the overall pattern, whereas General students use only about 13 out of 1000 words which is less frequent than the overall pattern. The restricted references of interactant pronouns used by Iranians across proficiency levels are also similar to the overall pattern. Yet, while the use of restricted interactant pronouns exceeds that of the overall pattern, General version students use such pronouns less frequently than the overall pattern. It seems likely then that test version has affected the use of these pronouns. I will return to this issue later in this section.

The comparative frequencies of *we* and *you* with generic and restricted reference according to language background are shown in Table 4.9. As can be seen, *we* with either generic or restricted reference is more frequently used than *you* in both corpora. This is in line with the overall finding of this chapter that *we* is used more than *you*. The interesting, but rather expected finding, however, is the high use of generic *we* by Iranian students. Similar to Coffin and Mayor's (2004) study where IELTS candidates use a high number of instances of *we* with collective reference (26.6 instances per 1000 words), non-native students in this study also overuse generic *we* (18.6 instances per 1000 words).

Table 4.9 Semantic references of *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Generic references		Restricted references	
	We	You	We	You
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	868 (18.55)	192 (4.1)	84 (1.79)	46 (0.98)
British essays [60,209 words]	229 (3.80)	59 (0.97)	29 (0.48)	17 (0.28)

It can be seen from Table 4.10 that when Iranian data is divided according to language proficiency and test version, the use of generic *we* and *you* as well as restricted *we* and *you* is broadly consistent with the combined Iranian data shown in Table 4.9, meaning that Iranian sub-groups also tend to use generic and restricted *we* respectively more frequently than generic and restricted *you*. But while Iranians across proficiency levels use generic and restricted *we* and *you* like the overall pattern, Academic students employ generic and restricted *we* and *you* more frequently than the Iranian students' overall pattern.

Table 4.10 Semantic references of *we* and *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Generic references		Restricted references	
	We	you	We	you
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	471 (17.93)	136 (5.17)	48 (1.82)	34 (1.29)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	398 (19.40)	55 (2.68)	36 (1.75)	12 (0.58)
Academic version [23,475 words]	657 (27.98)	116 (4.94)	57 (2.42)	30 (1.27)
General version [23,302 words]	209 (8.96)	78 (3.34)	27 (1.15)	16 (0.68)

One possible explanation for the overuse of generic *we* by Academic version students may be the Academic topic (*Television is dangerous because it destroys family life and any sense of community; instead of visiting people or talking with **our** family **we** just watch television.*). The inclusion of generic *we* in the topic may well have cued Academic students towards using this pronoun, with 10% of all the instances of generic *we* being the exact repetition of part of the topic (i.e. **our** family or **we** just watch television).

Fortanet (2004: 54) argues that the frequent presence of generic *we* “can be attributed to the lack of identity of the speaker who cannot speak for him/herself and must then speak as a representative of a group”. For a similar reason, generic *we* in this study also seems to have been overused by the Iranian students who express their voice collectively, depicting themselves as a representative of a generalised community of people or human beings in general, as in the following examples:

(4.5)

a. **We** are human beings and **we** need to live with each other, **we** need to communicate. IR/A/6/46

b. so **we** should do something to stop making wrong decisions. IR/A/6/24

c. **We** should control the kids IR/A/4/26

d. **We** should not have one law for all people. IR/G/6/13

Although less frequently, British students also use generic *we* as a way of making themselves the representatives of a larger group of people or human beings in general:

(4.6)

a. **We** are all now affected by the results of genetic engineering
ICLE-ALEV-0015.8

b. **We** are using bacteria and viruses to find vaccinations and cures
ICLE-ALEV-0024.8

c. Since the beginning of man on this earth **we** have always detected, stalked, captured and killed our prey. Fox hunting - FH04

If we replace *we* in (4.5) and (4.6) above with ‘people’ or indefinite pronoun ‘one’, the informational contents of the texts will remain unchanged but the writers’ choice of *we* can potentially create a stronger interactional effect.

You is also employed quite frequently with generic reference by Iranian students and less frequently by British students. Generic *you*, as described earlier in section 4.2, can be replaced with generic *we* or indefinite pronoun *one* without seriously affecting the ideational aspect of the discourse. The writer, however, can create an interactive relationship by explicitly involving the reader in the text through using generic *you* instead of generic *we* or indefinite pronoun *one*, since generic *you* is more dialogic and is directly addressed to the reader. Furthermore, the real reader may identify themselves with generic *you* more easily than generic *we* or indefinite pronoun *one*. *You* in the following examples has a generic reference:

(4.7)

a. By watching television **you**'ll recognize what happened in the world.

IR/A/6/29

b. Television can positive and Negative and it is depend on, How can to use it in **your** home.

IR/A/4/40

c. When **you** get older usually there is no motivation for **you** to test and try new ways.

IR/G/6/3

d. if **you** forced to do something as obligation **you** don't do that's task well

IR/G/4/54

e. If **you** are going to be stuck in a traffic jam, people prefer to listen to their own

Transport 02

In (4.7) all the instances of *you* can be replaced with indefinite pronoun ‘one’ or a lexical item like ‘people’ in which case the reader might not explicitly feel involved. The writer, therefore, uses *you* to create a more dialogic interaction.

In addition to the generic reference, *we* and *you* can also have a restricted scope. As shown in the analytical framework in section 4.4.2, restricted *we* can refer to the writer alone (*we* for *I*), writer and reader together, only the reader (*we* for *you*), or a specified group of people. The frequencies of restricted *we* referents in both corpora are shown in Table 4.11. As can be seen, the use of restricted *we* to refer to the ‘writer’ alone or ‘reader’ alone is almost exclusive to the Iranian students, with only one instance found in the British data. Iranian students also employ restricted *we* to refer to ‘writer and reader’ or a ‘specified group of people’ slightly more frequently than British students.

Table 4.11 Instances of restricted *we* referents (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Writer	Writer and reader	Reader	Specified group of people
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	34 (0.72)	14 (0.29)	12 (0.25)	24 (0.51)
British essays [60,209 words]	0	9 (0.14)	1	19 (0.31)

The most frequent references of restricted *we* in Iranian essays are ‘writer’ and ‘specified group of people’ respectively. It can be seen from Table 4.12 that when the frequencies of different references of restricted *we* in Iranian sub-corpora were examined, a similar pattern emerged showing that Iranian sub-groups also tend to use restricted *we* mainly to refer to either the ‘writer’ or a ‘specified group of people’.

Table 4.12 Instances of restricted *we* referents (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Writer	Writer and reader	Reader	Specified group of people
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	21 (0.79)	9 (0.34)	9 (0.34)	9 (0.34)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	13 (0.63)	5 (0.24)	3	15 (0.73)
Academic version [23,475 words]	28 (1.19)	8 (0.34)	9 (0.38)	12 (0.51)
General version [23,302 words]	6 (0.25)	6 (0.25)	3	12 (0.51)

As noted above, restricted *we* can refer to the writer (*we* for *I*). *We* with this reference is mostly associated with verbal Processes (e.g. *say* or *talk*) as in the following examples:

(4.8)

a. **we** can **talk** about the doctors (no surgery) teachers, lawyers, managers

IR/G/4/57

- b. But since **we're talking** generally I think it's best if most people retire at this age. IR/G/6/34
- c. So **we can't say** Television is dangerous IR/A/4/11
- d. But, here, **we mention** some of them IR/A/6/19

We in the examples above refers to the writer alone but the writer seems to involve the reader by using *we* rather than *I* although, in fact, it is only the writer who can perform the action of 'saying', 'talking' or 'mentioning'. As shown in Table 4.11, British students do not use *we* referring to the writer at all. The use of verbs such as *talk* and *say* is not appropriate in written academic genres but, as we shall see in the next section, Iranian students frequently employ *we* with such verbs.

Restricted *we* can also refer to 'writer and reader'. *We* referring to writer and reader is "characteristically associated with mental Processes" (Coffin and Mayor, 2004: 244) Although this kind of *we* is used more frequently in the genre of academic writing (e.g. research articles), it is, nonetheless, in evidence in student essays in the present study:

(4.9)

- a. In figure 1, **we can see** the original price and quantity.

ICLE-ALEV-0006.7

- b. Now that **we have seen** both sides to this argument solutions should be discussed.

Fox hunting - FH01

c. if **we imagine** a human such as a machine. That machine must have some program for it. IR/G/4/41

d. So, **we can conclude** that the retired people can not work as well as the others. IR/G/6/11

e. if **we look** television from this view can understand Television sometimes improve... IR/A/4/14

We in these examples can refer to both the writer and the reader. By using *we*, the writer seems to intend to co-opt the 'reader-in-the-text' into the stages of the textual argument (Thompson and Thetela, 1995) and possibly persuade the readers to see the world from his/her perspective.

Occasionally, writer-reader reference of *we* is realized as the imperative forms of *let's* or *let us*. Quirk *et al.* (1985) and Wilson (1990) suggest that *let's* is inclusive while *let us* can be both inclusive and exclusive. As we shall see in Chapter 6, imperatives are one of the linguistic devices used by writers to involve their readers in the text. The combination of an imperative and an interactant pronoun can, therefore, have a stronger interactive effect. *Let's* and *let us* in the present data are often followed by mental Processes, as in the following examples:

(4.10)

a. Let **us consider** how a professional boxer would feel.

Boxing - B04

b. **Let's assume** that you have a part time job.

IR/A/6/2

Restricted *we* can also be referred to the ‘reader’ (*we* for *you*). *We* with this reference is used mainly by Iranian students and only once by British students. Similar to *we* referring to writer and reader, *we* referring to the reader alone is also primarily associated with mental Processes. In the data, this kind of *we* is often followed by an obligation modal verb such as *must*, *should* or *have to*:

(4.11)

a. **we must remember** that changes in the demand for computers has certainly not been ... ICLE-ALEV-0010.6

b. but there some problem occurred which **we should be attention** them.

IR/G/4/59

c. The other problems that maybe important and **we must attention** to it is the unuseful and uncorrect information. IR/A/4/5

d. and after all **we must not forget** the television like every thing else is a matter of interest. IR/A/6/23

e. so **we have to take it into consideration** according to advantages and disadvantages. IR/A/6/5

Arguably, the most likely reading of restricted *we* in these examples is *you*. The writer seems to intend to mention that ‘*you* must remember...’, ‘*you* must not forget ...’ etc., but s/he mitigates the face-threatening aspect of the proposition by aligning him/herself with the reader through using *we* rather than *you*.

Finally, restricted *we* also refers to a ‘specified group of people’, (mainly referring to Iranian or British people), with whom the reader could potentially identify. This semantic reference for *we* is also identified by Kim’s (2009) analysis of personal pronouns in science popularizations in which Koreans use *we* referring to a certain group of people (i.e. Koreans) more frequently than British writers. Kim explains that cultural differences might be responsible for such a difference in the referential scope of personal pronouns:

These different results related to the pronominal referential scopes seem to reflect the fact that the two cultures may have differently emphasized senses of community. It can be suggested that, with the use of *we* in this genre, the British writers and readers tend to have a stronger sense of humanistic community as human beings, and to have a weaker sense of national community as British. In contrast, it can be argued that the Koreans, in the use of *wuli*, seem to have a stronger sense of national community as Koreans, and to have a weaker sense of humanistic community as human beings.

(Kim, 2009:2095)

Kim’s explanation does not seem to apply to the findings of this study since, as shown in Table 4.11, Iranian and British students use *we* to refer to their own countries with almost equal frequency.

Based on their contexts, the semantic references of *we* in the following examples are ‘specified group of people’. The writers in these examples use *we* to refer only to a certain group of people (i.e. British people and Iranian people) with whom the reader could identify.

(4.12)

a. so why do **we** British hang on to this cruel and heartless exercise.

Fox hunting - FH06

b. Over the past few years, **our** Monarchy has gone from one scandal to the next.

Fox hunting - FH06

c. in **our** country Iran, Finding job is very very difficult.

IR/G/4/59

d. but unfortunately **we** don't have them in Iran.

IR/G/6/39

You can also have a non-generic reference when it refers to the immediate reader rather than people in general (i.e. generic *you*). As noted earlier in this chapter, restricted *you* is used very rarely in academic writing since it sounds command-like and distancing and writers in general avoid using them. But students in this study use this kind of *you*. As we can see in Table 4.13, Iranian students tend to use restricted *you* more frequently than British students.

Table 4.13 Instances of restricted *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Restricted <i>you</i>
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	46 (0.98)
British essays [60,209 words]	17 (0.28)

Students in both corpora seem to employ the restricted *you* as a way to dialogically address their readers as if the writer and the reader are orally conversing with each other:

(4.13)

a. Whatever **you** believe, I shall continue to enjoy my roast beef and
Yorkshire pudding, ICLE-ALEV-0006.9

b. I agree with **your** idea if the people in the old ages don't have to work
for living on... IR/G/4/60

Coffin and Mayor (2004: 244) suggest that in the majority of cases, “the clues to the hypothetical identity of the ‘you’ lay in the co-text”. The close analysis of the co-texts where instances of restricted *you* are used in the present data revealed that restricted *you* is mostly used in interrogatives or imperatives. As we shall see in the next two chapters, interrogatives and imperatives are two metadiscourse resources that, like interactant pronouns, can assist the writer to create a dialogic interaction with the reader. Interrogatives and imperatives assume the presence of an addressee, so when *you* is employed with interrogatives and imperatives, the addressee is explicitly created. The readers can, therefore, easily identify themselves with this created addressee:

(4.14)

a. Have **you** ever thought about life without television?

IR/A/6/18

b. Do **you** know the problem that it creates between family?

IR/A/4/17

c. Let me give **you** an example

IR/G/6/41

d. consider **you** live in the small towns

IR/A/6/48

In (4.14), the writers use *you* through interrogatives and imperatives in order to create a discourse participant. *You* in these examples has a restricted reference since only the immediate reader is addressed by the writer, not people in general as is the case with generic *you*.

In addition to interrogatives and imperatives, there are other cases where the interlocutor is created through restricted *you*. Some writers in both corpora tend to address the reader in a very direct way as if the reader is really present:

(4.15)

a. Even I can affect **you** if I talk to **you** 5-6 hours a day!

IR/A/6/41

b. I'm telling **you** my reason. **you** can judge about what am I saying.

IR/G/4/33

The examples clearly show that the writer is enacting an imaginary dialogue with the 'educated reader' who, in the context of this study, is the examiner/teacher. Therefore, *you* refers to the immediate reader alone. The use of restricted *you* in this way is opposed to the conventions of professional academic writing. More linguistically competent language users in this study (i.e. British students) use restricted *you* less frequently.

Surprisingly, however, more proficient Iranian students use it more frequently than less linguistically competent ones (see table 4.14). Iranian high-scorers use restricted *you* rather frequently in the conversational-like cluster of ‘as you know’:

(4.16)

a. Actually **as you know** Television is one of the most important communicated advices. IR/A/6/45

b. But **as you know** there are always exceptions every where.

IR/G/6/2

The test version used also seems to have affected the way restricted *you* is used by Iranian students. It can be seen from Table 4.14 that Academic students tend to use this kind of *you* more frequently than General students.

Table 4.14 Instances of restricted *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian sub-corpora

	Restricted <i>you</i>
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	34 (1.29)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	12 (0.58)
Academic version [23,475 words]	30 (1.27)
General version [23,302 words]	16 (0.68)

As noted above, it can be argued that the generic prompt of the Academic test is, at least partly, responsible for encouraging students to adopt a more conversational tenor since it explicitly requires candidates to write their essays to a reader ('Present a written argument or case to an *educated reader*...'). By creating the imagined reader for them the Academic generic prompt seems to cue the students to be more interpersonal and also to be more intentionally aware of the existence of the reader. Academic students' tendency to be more interpersonal is partly reflected, as indicated earlier in this section, in their overuse of generic and restricted interactant pronouns. Their awareness of the reader also might have led the Academic students towards addressing their reader more directly through restricted *you*.

Although less frequently than Academic students, General students also are inclined to adopt a dialogic tenor through restricted *you*, mainly by using the conversational filler (or the 'sociocentric/empty phrase', in Hoey's [2011] terms) 'you know':

(4.17)

a. **You know** I think it is the ability of people which is important.

IR/G/6/10

b. **you know** I think government has to create solutions for this kind of situations.

IR/G/6/18

c. because **you know** if you forced to do something as obligation you don't do that's task well.

IR/G/4/54

In (4.17), the writers use restricted *you* to simulate spoken-like features and create an interlocutor to converse with.

The frequent use of restricted *you*, mainly by non-native students across proficiency levels and test versions, seems to be one of the characteristic features of student essays which is in sharp contrast to the model of academic writing where the use of restricted *you* is generally avoided. It can be argued that employing spoken features in written discourse by students, particularly Iranian students, indicates their lack of genre awareness.

4.5.3 Research question three: interactant pronouns and their discourse functions

Table 4.15 shows the functions that the interactant pronoun *we* performs in British and Iranian essays. As can be seen, the vast majority of instances of *we* in both corpora fall into the category of ‘assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals etc.’. Iranian students, however, use *we* serving this function considerably more frequently than British students. Although deployed quite rarely, *we* is also employed by Iranian and British students with almost equal frequency as a means of ‘guiding the reader through the text’ and ‘involving the reader in the construction of the argument’. *We* employed to perform the functions of ‘involving the reader in the production of the text’ and ‘emphasizing/calling the reader’s attention’, however, is exclusive to Iranian students with almost no occurrences by British students.

Table 4.15 Discourse functions of *we* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

Discourse functions of <i>we</i>	Iranian essays	British essays
1. Assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc.	888 (19)	260 (4)
2. Guiding the reader through the text	3	2
3. Involving the reader in the production of the text	31 (0.66)	0
4. Involving the reader in the construction of the argument	14 (0.29)	7 (0.11)
5. Emphasizing/catching the reader's attention	12 (0.25)	1

It can be seen from Table 4.16 that all Iranian sub-groups also perform function (1) more frequently than the other functions. It is, however, interesting to note that although the use of *we* performing this function is almost the same across proficiency levels, it differs significantly across test versions, with Academic students using *we* to serve function (1) about three times more frequently than General students. The other discourse functions of *we* are employed with almost equal frequency by all the Iranian sub-groups.

We serving function (1) is employed 18 and 20 times per 1000 words respectively by Iranian high-scoring and low-scoring students. This similar frequency can tentatively be seen as indicating that language proficiency alone is not the determining factor in the overuse of *we* serving this function by Iranian IELTS candidates in this study. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 261) also argue that it is not the frequency of personal pronouns which

determine high or low scores but “the adept use of the resource which is important in contributing to the overall coherence and persuasiveness of the argument”.

Table 4.16 Discourse functions of *we* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

Discourse functions of <i>we</i>	High-scoring essays	Low-scoring essays	Academic version	General version
1. Assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc.	475 (18)	413 (20)	669 (28.49)	219 (9.39)
2. Guiding the reader through the text	2	1	3	0
3. Involving the reader in the production of the text	19 (0.72)	12 (0.58)	25 (1)	6 (0.25)
4. Involving the reader in the construction of the argument	9 (0.34)	5 (0.24)	8 (0.34)	6 (0.25)
5. Emphasizing/catching the reader’s attention	9 (0.34)	3	9 (0.38)	3

However, when compared with the pattern which emerged in Table 4.15 above that the more proficient language users (i.e. British students) employ *we* to perform discourse function (1) significantly less often than the less proficient language users (i.e. Iranian students), the situation becomes less clear. In other words, language proficiency seems to be a crucial factor in encouraging the more linguistically competent students (i.e. British students) to make less use of *we* carrying out this function whereas it does not produce the same effect among Iranian students since both high-scoring and low-scoring students tend to employ *we* serving this function with almost equal frequency.

As noted above, unlike language proficiency, test version appears to impinge on the frequency of function (1) among Iranian candidates since Academic students deploy *we* serving this function more than three times as often as General students. It is not immediately clear why Academic students overuse this discourse function through *we*. It can only tentatively be speculated that the Academic generic prompt (*Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic*) has explicitly made Academic students cognizant of the presence of an audience. This, in turn, might have contributed to involving the defined audience in the arguments more frequently by assuming a certain amount of shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc. through *we*.

A further possible reason for the greater use of *we* serving function (1) by Academic students emerges when the final segment of the Academic generic prompt is considered where students are explicitly requested to support their arguments (*You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence*). As we shall see shortly below, writers seek to support their arguments partly through assuming shared elements with the reader and they do so through *we*. The generic prompt of the General version of the test neither creates an audience for the reader nor does it explicitly ask them to support their arguments. The difference in the (wording of) the generic test prompts may, therefore, be a plausible factor in the different use of *we* performing discourse function (1) among Iranian students.

In addition to the possible effect of the Academic generic prompt, the controversial topic of this version of the test might have led to the overuse of *we* performing function (1). As also noted in the previous section, the overt inclusion of generic *we* in the topic (i.e. ‘our family’ and ‘we just watch television’) may have cued Academic students towards using *we* with generic reference. Since the *we* in the topic functions as ‘assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, etc’, it can be argued that the topic has given a signal or permission to students to use *we* with such a function in their texts. As usual, students might have overshot their targets, this time by overusing *we* serving function (1). Furthermore, the topic of the Academic test (i.e. *watching TV*) is arguably more ‘universal’ than the topic of the General test (i.e. *retirement*). TV can affect almost anybody; that may be why Academic students have employed *we* in order to create a shared assumption with the reader and therefore used it as a way to perform function (1). Retirement, however, does not seem to affect everybody the way TV does (i.e. it affects people only once in their lives rather than everyday, and most people have not yet experienced it); that is possibly why General students did not need to create a shared assumption with the reader to convince them of their arguments.

Table 4.17 shows the discourse functions that interactant pronoun *you* performs in Iranian and British essays. As can be seen, most of the instances of *you* in both corpora carry out the function of ‘giving an active role to the reader and expressing solidarity with them’. This function is, however, employed more frequently by Iranian students. Both Iranian and British students also make use of *you* to ‘set up an imaginary dialogic engagement’

with the reader but again Iranian students employ *you* serving this function slightly more frequently than British students.

Table 4.17 Discourse functions of *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

Discourse functions of <i>you</i>	Iranian essays	British essays
1. Giving an active role to the reader and expressing solidarity with them	193 (4.12)	59 (1)
2. Setting up an imaginary dialogic engagement	47 (1)	17 (0.28)

It can be seen from Table 4.18 that the discourse functions of *you* found in the Iranian sub-groups are broadly consistent with the overall pattern shown in Table 4.17, in that the Iranian sub-groups also tend to employ *you* serving function (1) more frequently than function (2).

Table 4.18 Discourse functions of *you* (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language background and test version

Discourse functions of <i>you</i>	High-scoring essays	Low-scoring essays	Academic version	General version
1. Giving an active role to the reader and expressing solidarity with them	137 (5.21)	56 (2.73)	113 (4.81)	80 (3.43)
2. Setting up an imaginary dialogic engagement	35 (1.33)	12 (0.58)	31 (1.32)	16 (0.68)

However, some discrepancies appear to emerge when examining the use of *you* more closely in the Iranian sub-corpora. For instance, test version does not seem to be a crucial

factor. Language proficiency, however, does appear to be a determining factor in the use of *you* by Iranian students since high-scorers make use of this resource approximately twice as often as low-scorers. The interesting observation is that the performance of low-scoring Iranian students regarding the use of *you* serving either function is closer to that of the British students. In fact, Iranian high-scorers use *you* more frequently than Iranian low-scorers and the British students. It seems possible that high scorers are at a certain developmental stage where they tend to overuse some of the interpersonal resources including interactant pronouns.

I shall discuss all the discourse functions of *we* and *you* in turn below.

4.5.3.1 Discourse functions of *we*¹²

4.5.3.1.1 Assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc.

One way to express solidarity with the reader and involve them in the text is by assuming that what is argued is, at least partially, shared by the reader. *We* can be used by the writer as a rhetorical strategy to build a relationship with the reader through assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc. Once the relationship is built and the interaction is created, the reader can be expected to feel involved in the text. This reader involvement may potentially contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Kuo (1999: 133) argues that through *we* “the writers presuppose readers’ background knowledge and ability to follow the arguments”. She also points out that *we* serving the function of

¹² It needs to be stressed that 4.5.3.1.1, 4.5.3.1.3, and 4.5.3.1.4 are in fact more to do with the effect of *we* rather than another wording; whereas, 4.5.3.1.2 and 4.5.3.1.5 are more accurately characterized as the discourse functions of the propositions containing *we*.

assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc. “shortens the distance between writers and readers and stresses solidarity with readers” (p. 133). Similarly, Hyland (2001a: 558) argues that *we* can “set up a dialogue between equals in which the potential view of the reader is woven into the fabric of the argument”. In other words, the writer presumes the potential view of the reader about a particular argument and merges it with his/her own viewpoint through *we*.

The high use of *we* serving this function in the data, particularly by Iranian students, suggests that students feel the need for support from the reader so that they can build on their argument. In other words, the writer seeks the readers’ agreement on a particular line of argument and weaves his/her opinions and the reader’s by using *we*. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 244) suggest that a major function of generic *we* is “to construe a shared (material) experience, upon which a consensual (mental) perspective could more easily be built”. They also observe that *we* is chiefly used in their IELTS corpus as a:

... resource for aligning and fusing writer and reader points of view as if a single unifying, common sense standpoint is unproblematic - a ‘given’. In other words, in the novice academic writing represented by the IELTS corpus the possibility of divergent positioning and the consequent likelihood of undermining the reader’s viewpoint does not appear to be a motivating factor in its deployment. Rather, collective reference is used to invoke consensual knowledge as a form of pseudo-evidence. Such ‘evidence’ is drawn on to support a line of argumentation.

(Coffin and Mayor, 2004: 260)

Put simply, in order for their arguments to sound more plausible and convincing, students need some supporting evidence. They appear to frequently align their viewpoints with those of the reader through *we*. *We* in this sense creates the support that the students seek

for their arguments to be persuasive. *We* serving function (1) can refer to people in general, with whom the immediate reader can also identify. In fact, the writer seems to use *we* referring to people in general to perform this function precisely because s/he requires wider and more global support for persuading the immediate reader. Generic *we* seems to assist the writer in gaining the desired credibility s/he requires to structure the arguments.

The semantic reference of *we* is very helpful in identifying the discourse functions and is, therefore, the main recognition criterion set up for the identification of function (1) in the present study. Accordingly, all the instances of generic *we* in the present data are counted as cases which perform function (1).

The writers speak in a collective voice through generic *we* and argue as if what they are seeing is equally seen and shared by other people (including the reader). Put simply, they assume a shared amount of knowledge, experience, etc. by the reader and the use of generic *we* assists them to create such an assumption based on which the arguments are presented. Instances of *we* in the following examples refer to people in general and are used in sentences which perform function (1):

(4.18)

a. One of the most important things which **we** need is information about **our** environment and the progresses in science. IR/A/6/11

b. **we** have already witnessed huge advances in the field of medical science. ICLE-ALEV-0014.8

In (4.18a), through *we* the writer presupposes that the reader also thinks that information about one's environment and advances in science is important and, therefore, assumes shared knowledge (or belief) with the reader. Similarly in (4.18b), using *we*, the writer presumes that the reader has also witnessed what s/he has witnessed (i.e. huge advances in the field of medical sciences) and, therefore, assumes shared experience with the reader. The writers in these examples seek to achieve solidarity with readers through *we* by assuming shared knowledge, experiences, beliefs, goals, etc. They need the reader's support in order to build on their arguments and they appear to do so through involving the reader in the argument by using the interactant pronoun *we*.

As noted above, all instances of generic *we* in the data serve the discourse function of assuming shared knowledge, experiences, beliefs, goals, etc. The contexts in which instances of *we* serving this function appear, however, are slightly different in the data according to language background. For example, Iranian students typically have a tendency to make use of *we* serving function (1) through expressions such as 'we know that', 'we all know', 'as we know', highlighting the assumption that what they know is also known by the reader. It should be noted that these phrases are rather coercive since they do not actually allow the reader to disagree:

(4.19)

a. **we all know** this magic box.

IR/A/6/34

b. **we know that** some of the programs aren't good for little child.

IR/A/4/17

- c. **As we know** television is the most important part of every people's day. IR/A/4/20
- d. **we all know** whether **we** should give it up or continue. IR/G/6/34
- e. **As we all know**, society situation, family problems and in general 'making money'... IR/G/6/2
- f. **we know that** people are working to make living. IR/G/4/10

Interestingly, no instance of overt appealing to shared knowledge as a rhetorical strategy to build on arguments through *we* is found in British essays.

Another difference in the way generic *we* performing function (1) is employed, almost exclusively by Iranian Academic students (17 occurrences), is that *we* is often used near phrases such as 'in today's world', 'in today's global-village', 'in a high-tech era', 'in information age', 'in a marvellous age', 'Nowadays', etc.:

(4.20)

- a. **we** are living *in a high-tech era*. IR/A/6/33
- b. *In today's global-village* **we** have to be aware of what is passing around us. IR/A/6/38
- c. **We** are living *in information age*, ... IR/A/6/30
- d. In this age that **we** live *in a glassy world*, living without being familiar with new events... IR/A/6/31
- e. **we** are living *in a marvellous age*. IR/A/6/42
- f. **we** need to talk with our family *in the century of technology*.

IR/A/6/12

g. Today, **we** are floating on *the world of media* all the day.

IR/A/6/25

h. on the other hand **we** cant avoid TV and internet *in this Century*.

IR/A/4/35

i. *in the modern world*, **we** know all The thing From Media Like TV.

IR/A/4/34

No instance of such phrases is observed in General essays and only one example is found in the British essays. It can be speculated that the Academic writing topic (i.e. ‘Watching *Television*’) may have cued students to use the expressions which are more related to technology, communication, information, etc. But if this is the case a question remains open: why don’t British students use such phrases even though some of their topics are also related to technology? Iranian Academic writers seem to turn to such expressions as a strategy to prepare the ground for making their argument for or against a certain points. Let us look at some of the examples in (4.20) above in their wider contexts to see how the co-occurrence of *we* with such expressions can assist the writers to convince the reader of a certain claim:

(4.21)

a. ... **we are living in a high-tech era**, while the whole world is being called a village. one of the main reasons is the fact communication made by media , one of them is TV. You were never able to see other places far

from you without this magic box, but right now you have a very good visual memory of different scenes and things.

IR/A/6/33

b. **We are living in information age**, which the technology is growing in super speedy way. we have no choice to keep up with that or loose track of development. Among all the achievements, TV is one of the most fascinating inventions which has had the great role in giving information and improving the general knowledge of society in different aspects.

IR/A/6/30

c. Today's, **we are floating on the world of media all the day**. Sometimes we need information, many times we're surrounded by them and the other times we enjoy surfing on media. Television is the most common media which is a member of our families ...

IR/A/6/25

The writers in these examples appear to intend to introduce TV as a major medium of communication which has a great role in the spread of technology and information. They assume that the reader has potentially a similar viewpoint in this regard and therefore merge the reader's viewpoint with their own through *we*. At the same time, they use phrases like 'information age', 'high-tech era', etc. to gain some kind of 'universal support' for their claim that TV is an important part of today's life. In other words, they suggest to the reader that the reason that TV is needed is people's constant need to gain new information and catch up with new global technology, leading them to the direction

that watching TV is really important in today's world. Therefore, it can be argued that expressions like 'we live in a high-tech era', etc. introduce an uncontentious 'fact' which the reader is constructed as sharing; and that is then used a basis for a following opinion, whereas expressions like 'as we know' introduce an opinion that is being 'forced' on the reader.

Another pattern emerging from the data is that both Iranian and British students use lexical items related to humans and human beings followed by or in association with the pronoun *we*, indicating the learners' general tendency to appeal to a collective identity for gaining support for their claims. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 259), however, argue that whether the use of nominals such as 'humans' in student essays serves "to add weight to a claim, deflecting attention away from the reader and writer as individuals, and representing an initial step towards abstraction" is an open question. Extracts in (4.22) show how *we* is used with such nominals:

(4.22)

a. **we** are *human-beings* and **we** have ability to manage **our** time.

IR/A/6/31

b. **we** are *human beings* and **we** need to live with each other, **we** need to communicate.

IR/A/6/46

c. As all of **us**, I mean *humans*, know, no one would like to stop working.

IR/G/6/25

d. it makes the *human being* lazy to a certain extent and thus, allows **us** to use **our** brains even less and less.

Instances of *we* in these examples refer to an indefinite, collective and universal identity. Through *we* accompanied by words like ‘human’, the writers assume shared identity and thus shared knowledge, experiences, beliefs, goals, etc. with the reader. They expect the reader to identify him/herself, as human beings, with *we*. The writers seek to achieve the reader’s solidarity through suggesting to him/her that what they are arguing for is a universal truth which is (or should be) shared and agreed upon by all human beings. Having the ability to manage one’s time (4.22a), the need for living and communicating with each other (4.22b), knowing that no one would like to stop working (4.22c), and using one’s brain less and less because of laziness (4.22d) all seem to be somehow shared by all human beings. The writer uses generic *we* with which the reader can identify and presupposes that what s/he is arguing is potentially shared by the reader. Doing so the writer hopes to involve the reader in the argument and direct them to a preferred destination. For instance, the writer argues for watching TV and disagrees that it can have negative effects in (4.23), which is (4.22a) in its wider context:

(4.23) I believe that television is really necessary for today’s life! And I totally disagree with its negative effect. **We** are **human-beings** and **we** have ability to manage **our** time. By spending time for watching TV, many **we** loose time for talk with others but **we** can manage **our** time and **our** relationship.

IR/A/6/31

The writer in (4.23) assumes that the reader also believes that human-beings have the ability to manage their time and watch TV sensibly. S/he weaves the reader's potential viewpoint into the fabric of the argument through *we*. This function of *we* seems to be similar to the way *we* functions in examples (4.21) above where the writers introduce something as a fact and assume it to be shared by the reader and then use it as the basis for their following arguments.

We is also extensively collocated with auxiliary and semi-auxiliary obligation modals *must*, *should*, *have to*, and *need to*, particularly by Iranian students (83 instances). As we shall see in Chapter 6, commands are among the rhetorical devices employed by writers to interact with the reader. The use of *we* with such modals adds to the interactive effect of the text. In addition, the writer seems to express his/her feeling of in-group solidarity, implying that the writer and the reader together are responsible for performing an action or changing the state of affairs. Furthermore, the face-threatening aspect of the obligation modals seems to be mitigated through using *we* since the writer obliges him/herself to do something alongside the reader. The following extracts show 'we+ obligation auxiliary/semi-auxiliary modals' in student essays:

(4.24)

a. **We *have to*** think about **ourselves** and **our** desires and then choose some programs IR/A/6/36

b. but **we *should*** know the correct applications of TV and use of it

IR/A/4/10

c. if **we** work hardly or for more time **we** can't useful for popular and **we** don't have concentrate for dissolve problem so **we *have to*** work good

IR/G/4/55

d. **we *must*** not force them-whom **we** called old- to give up their job.

IR/G/6/12

e. Nowadays every thing is fast moving so **we *need to*** adopt **Our** Life with this fast like.

IR/A/6/11

f. But **we *ought to*** ask ourselves

ICLE-ALEV-0013.9

The writers in (4.24) presuppose that what they think should (or should not) be done is shared by the reader. They create such an assumption by engaging the reader in the text through *we* and guide the reader to the direction that they desire and accordingly aim to make their argument more persuasive. In addition, as noted above, the use of *we* seems to soften the forcefulness of the obligation imposed on the reader. If the writers in (4.24) used *you* instead of *we* (as in 4.25), the effect would be more coercive because *you* excludes *I* and therefore, the writer is saying 'I don't need to be told':

(4.25)

a. **You *have to*** think about **yourself** and **your** desires and then choose some programs

IR/A/6/36

b. but **you *should*** know the correct applications of TV and use of it

IR/A/4/10

c. **you *must not*** force them-whom **you** called old- to give up their job.

IR/G/6/12

A further context in which generic *we* performs function (1) is the use of this interactant pronoun in association with verbs like *have*, *find*, and *see*. There were 45 occurrences of ‘we+ have/find/see’ having an existential meaning, used instead of ‘there is/are’, in the Iranian data whereas there were only two occurrences of such use of generic *we* performing function (1) in the British essays. The relatively high use of *we* with an existential meaning is one of the characteristic features of the way this pronoun is employed by the Iranian students:

(4.26)

a. And also **we** *have* a group of people who don’t watch T.V at all.

IR/A/6/4

b. at west of the world **we** can *see* this happens more than eastern people.

IR/A/4/49

c. **we** surly can *find* people who is working until they arrive in age 75 or

80.

IR/G/4/40

In such cases, Luzón (2009: 202) points out, “expert writers tend to use other devices that make the author less visible”. But students, particularly non-native students, tend to use a different structure which not only makes them more visible but also helps them to involve the reader in the text. ‘We can find’ and ‘we have’ in these examples could be replaced by ‘there are’. But the use of *we* can help the writer to create a shared view or fact and use it as the premise for his/her following arguments. Such a shared assumption would not be created had the writer used ‘there is/are’. Writers in (4.26) seem to presume that

what they have or what they can find or see can equally be seen or found by the reader as well. As noted above, they use *we* to construe an interaction with the reader, involving them in the text and ultimately leading them to the preferred destination. In (4.26a), for instance, the writer mentions ‘we have a group of people...’ but apparently s/he uses *we* to create an interaction with the reader, bringing them into the text and leading them towards his/her desired direction. In (4.27b) also the writer appears to involve the reader in the text through *we*, making them see the world his/her way (i.e. ‘the western world is different from the eastern world’).

We performing function (1) appears 46 times in the concluding sections of the Iranian essays, mostly limited to the Academic high-scoring texts, often signalled by ‘In conclusion’, ‘In brief’, etc. In line with what Coffin and Mayor (2004) observe in their corpus of non-native student essays, a common pattern that emerges from the Iranian data in the present study also shows that Iranian students employ *we* extensively throughout their essays but in the concluding stages of their arguments they resort to a personal voice (i.e. *I*) instead of an interpersonal one (i.e. *we*) to draw a conclusion to their argument. The writer may use *we* in the preceding stages in order to prepare the basis for the introduction of his/her own voice through ‘I’ in the concluding sections of the text. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 253) point out that:

This pattern, it would seem, is an effective rhetorical strategy in that the writer uses the body of the essay to co-opt the reader into seeing the world from a single perspective e.g. ‘we know that the growth of the earth’s population has risen dramatically’. It is likely that this strategy of aligning the reader to share the writer’s world view – or at least to accept the writer’s characterisation of the collective view - as the text moves through the stages of the argument leads the reader towards accepting the final

point of view, which in contrast is framed as a personal judgement rather than a shared standpoint.

(Coffin and Mayor, 2004: 253)

The following examples show *we* in the concluding sections of the texts where the writers wrap up the texts by using the personal pronoun 'I' while at the same time inviting the reader to get involved in the preferred conclusion through 'we':

(4.27)

a. *In conclusion I* believe it depend on **our** characters how **we** use this magic box. IR/A/6/35

b. *In brief , I'm* of the opinion that **we** must set a schedule in order not to pay too much attention to it. IR/A/6/26

c. *at the last I* think if **we** let the experienced people work as they could, they can treat more youths. IR/G/6/19

d. *Finally I* want to say **we** must always think of future. therefore **we'd** better notice youngers too. IR/G/6/3

As indicated above, students tend to use *we* throughout the essay as a strategy to make the reader see the world from their intended perspective and direct them towards the final stages of the argument where instead of using *we* to conclude the text they use a personal voice (i.e. *I*). It seems likely that the generic prompt (i.e. *Do you agree or disagree?*) cues students toward employing this strategy. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 253) argue that:

... given that the task instructions emphasise that the writer must agree or disagree with the controversial opinion put forward, it is a strategy for directly meeting the requirements of the test. The writer is explicitly providing a personal opinion, and this is persuasive precisely because it emerges from a set of arguments which are construed as enjoying common support.

(Coffin and Mayor, 2004: 253)

No instance of *we* serving function (1) is found in the concluding sections of the British essays. Coffin and Mayor argue that this pattern is encouraged by IELTS practice books. But the Iranian essays used in the present study were written at the start of the course, before the students would have used the practice books so it is not immediately clear why a noticeable group of Iranian students employed the aforesaid pattern.

The Iranian students in the present study use *we* serving function (1) 36 times in expressions such as ‘I think/I believe/ etc.+ we’, expressing their personal voice while at the same time inviting the reader to join them in the ongoing flow of the argument. Luzón (2009: 199) points out that verbs such as *think* or *believe* are used by expert writers of research papers “to hedge the author’s comments on the possibility that an interpretation, explanation or claim should be true or valid”. The uses of these verbs in the present data are not similar to the ways experts employ them. In the present data, ‘think’ is used in the following two patterns: If ‘I think’ is followed by ‘we+ an obligation modal verb’, the writer seems to be mitigating/softening the ‘command’ which is expressed through the obligation modal as in:

(4.28)

a. So *I think we shouldn't* omit the television.

IR/A/6/39

b. *I thinks, we should* separate the Jobs in many groups... IR/G/4/8

c. *I think we should* see who are better and useful and remain them at
their work IR/G/6/48

In (4.28), the writers appear to soften their commands through ‘I think we’ which not only hedges the propositions but also commits the writer (alongside the reader) to performing a certain action.

However, if ‘I think’ is NOT followed by ‘we+ an obligation modal verb’, the writer appears to be simply expressing his/her opinion as in the following examples:

(4.29)

a. *I think* the learning that **we** catch from watching and listening at the
same time can be more useful. IR/A/6/7

b. *I think* if **we** control any child to see TV and it is not bad...
IR/A/4/8

c. *I Think we* need some civil society that They Support us without
working... IR/G/4/44

d. *I think* that it is possible to argue that the computer has made **us** both
use and not use **our** brain more for a number of reasons.

ICLE-ALEV-0001.6

We carrying out function (1) is in a few instances embedded within the contexts where the subject of the discourse is ‘people’ as in the following examples:

(4.30)

a. Some times, some *people* say now that **we** have expensive car and exclusive Building and **we** are rich so **we** don't need work and **we** use at this capital... IR/G/4/43

b. *some* believes that by allowing people to work all they life **we** encourage the sense of helpfulness in olds. IR/G/6/32

c. many *people* believe **we** should obey the rules to turn over the members of working very fast. IR/G/6/43

d. Many *people* argue that it is wrong & **we** are playing God.

ICLE-ALEV-0026.8

e. It is the whole purpose of **our** species, in some peoples' view, to reproduce... ICLE-ALEV-0030.8

It might be argued that *we* in these examples does not directly create a writer-reader interaction in the text since 'people' say or believe *we* should do something not the writer but it may be taken that, arguably, it is the writer who hedges his/her own opinion through using the word 'people'. Fortanet (2004:57) argues that:

Citing or quoting anonymous speakers seems to be often used as a linguistic device of hedging, since, in this way, it is other people, and not the speaker, who express their opinion. Moreover, cited or reported words do not necessarily have to be the real words said by the reported speaker or it may even be possible that the reported speech event never happened; what the speaker presupposes the hearer knows and accepts.

(Fortanet, 2004: 57)

Therefore even if *we* is included in a clause whose subject is ‘people’, it can have the same interactive effect.

In addition to all the cases of generic *we*, all instances of *we* which refer to a specified group of people (i.e. restricted *we*) also perform function (1). Restricted *we* serving discourse function (1) is mainly used to express in-group solidarity not with all the people or human race in the world but with a ‘smaller group of people’:

(4.31)

a. Around 50 years ago there were no Television in **our** country for example in channel 4 **we** get a good information a world. but in other channel **we** don’t get necessary information and when **we** spend sometimes to watch this channel **we** died times and otherwise **we** can spend this time to **our** family. IR/A/6/6

b. in **our** country Iran, Finding job is very very difficult. IR/G/4/59

c. In **our** country **we** have so many young people full of energy and most of them have no job. IR/G/6/46

d. **We** have superb fighters with excellent character such as Lennox Lewis, Nigel Ben... Boxing - B14

e. It has given **us** the freedom to travel anywhere within **our** own peninsular and, including **our** travel, almost anywhere in the world.

Transport 03

The writers in such cases assume shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals etc. with a smaller group of people, namely with Iranians (4.31a, b, c) and British people (4.31d, e). According to their contexts, instances of restricted *we* in these cases appear to perform the same discourse function that generic *we* does, but with a smaller and more limited scope. The writers in such cases seem to assume that the reader is British or Iranian and can therefore be identified with *we*. Thus, they structure their intended arguments based on this assumption and seek to get their readers involved through *we*.

4.5.3.1.2 Guiding the reader through the text

Employed only 5 times in the data, the propositions containing *we* can perform the discourse function of ‘guiding the reader through the text’. Some studies have identified a discourse function for the contexts in which *we* appears in academic writing called ‘discourse guide’ (e.g. Harwood, 2005a). Luzón (2009: 199) points out that *we* can be used “in statements that signal the different parts/sections of the text and present the content of the subsequent discourse in order to make the structure of the text clear to the reader”. Harwood (2005a: 362) argues that *we* in phrases such as ‘as we shall/will see’ is employed “to enhance the reader-friendliness of the text and construct positive politeness by treating the readership as equals”. The semantic references of *we* serving function (2) can be ‘writer+ reader’ or ‘writer’ alone. *We* in the following examples have a restricted reference of ‘writer+ reader’ (or what Thompson and Thetela [1995] call ‘reader-in-the-text’):

(4.32) In figure 1 **we** can see the original price and quantity

ICLE-ALEV-0006.7

The writer in (4.32) metadiscursively guides the reader through the discourse. S/he engages the reader in the text as an interactant who is actively involved in the ongoing flow of discussion and is collaborating with the writer in the construction of the text. At a textual level, the writer uses *we* serving function (2) to guide the reader through the text and therefore helps them comprehend the text better. Yet at a more interpersonal level, the writer interacts with the reader through constructing solidarity and involving them in the flow of the arguments in the text.

The Iranian students do not appear to be so skilful in the effective use of *we* in the statements functioning as a discourse guide, not least because of their lack of genre awareness as this is, partially, reflected in their use of verbs which are more frequently employed in spoken discourse rather than written discourse, e.g. 'talk'. *We* in the following examples refers to the writer alone (*we* for *I*) but the writers seem to use it to involve the reader in shaping/framing the discourse (pointing forward):

(4.33)

a. Ok now **we** want to *talk* about television.

IR/A/4/23

b. But, here, **we** *mention* some of them.

IR/A/6/19

The writers in these examples intend to involve the reader in framing the discourse and seem to use *we* as a rhetorical way to express solidarity but, as noted above, they seem to fail to be effective since they employ verbs which are more associated with spoken rather than written discourse.

4.5.3.1.3 Involving the reader in the construction of the text

The next discourse function of *we* (rather than the context in which *we* appears like 4.5.3.1.2 above and 4.5.3.1.5 below) which is entirely limited to the Iranian students (31 occurrences) with no occurrence among the British students, is ‘involving the reader in the production of the text’. *We* performing this function is mostly followed by a Verbal Process verb such as ‘say’ or ‘talk’. As noted above, however, it should be pointed out that the use of such verbs is a characteristic feature of spoken discourse and is often not appropriate in written texts. *We* serving function (3) has always a restricted reference to the writer (*we* for *I*) but, arguably, it is employed as a rhetorical strategy by the writers to involve the reader in the production of the text as in the following examples:

(4.34)

- a. **We** can *say* the TV is a part of family. IR/A/6/28
- b. All of people know television and **we** can *say* surely that all of them have one in their home. IR/A/4/44
- c. for example **we** can *talk* about the doctors (no surgery) teachers, lawyers, managers IR/G/4/57
- d. But since **we**’re *talking* generally I think it’s best if most people retire at this age. IR/G/6/34

We in the above extracts appear to be intended to engage the reader in the construction of the discourse (not the argument) since, literally, it is the writer who can actually ‘say’ or ‘talk’ not the reader but the writer seems to use *we* to create an interaction with the reader

and build a discourse participant (i.e. projecting a face-to-face dialogue). The presence of the reader in the text (or in the production of the text) gives an active role to the reader which in turn can assist the writer to argue more effectively and persuasively.

4.5.3.1.4 Involving the reader in the construction of the argument

Another discourse function of *we* in the present data is ‘involving the reader in the construction of the argument’. The writer needs to construct a convincing argument in the text and, therefore, explicitly involves the reader in the text through *we*, providing a context in which the reader can collaborate in forming the writer’s intended argument. This is a rhetorical strategy deployed by the writer to persuade the reader. As Hyland (2001a: 560) points out, binding writer and reader through *we* “draws on a strategy that stresses the involvement of the writer and the reader in a shared journey of exploration although it is always clear who is leading the expedition”. In other words, the main reason that the writer involves the reader in the construction of the argument is to be able to persuade them more easily.

We serving function (4) has a restricted reference of ‘writer+reader’ and is mostly characterised by Mental Process verbs such as ‘conclude’, ‘accept’, ‘assume’, ‘consider’, ‘argue’, etc. In the Iranian corpus there are a few (only 3) occurrences of ‘we (can) conclude’ at the concluding sections of the texts, employed by students to involve the reader in drawing their own intended conclusions:

(4.35)

a. In last **we** *conclude* That The TV is a good & great Media because with it we can Alert From any News & subject in any place of the world and it No destroys Family life. IR/A/4/43

b. In conclusion, **we** can *conclude* that although television-watching is good and uses as a kind of entertainment medium but it has its own disadvantages and dangers, like being far away from your community and family. IR/A/6/19

c. So, **we** can *conclude* that the retired people can not work as well as the others. But the government can use them as a part-time workers in easier jobs and even there should a special place which is allocated with these retires people who don't feel depression at home and can work like the other people. IR/G/6/11

In these extracts, the writers use *we* to involve the reader in the text and make him/her collaborate with them in the structuring of the argument (which in these instances is the writers' intended conclusions).

It seems that using 'let's/let us' to involve the reader in setting up the argument is another way for writers to convince the reader of a particular claim, interpretation, explanation, etc. Both British and Iranian students use 'let's/let us+ a mental Processes verb' to involve the reader in the construction of the argument. As noted earlier, writers can create an interaction with the reader through commands. The use of interactant pronouns

alongside commands can add to the interactive effect of the text. ‘Let’s/Let us’ can construct an obligation on the reader to perform a certain action. When they are followed by Mental Process verbs, as in the following examples, they put pressure on the reader to perform a mental action (for more details see Chapter 6). In fact, the writers appear to intend to set up an argument but to make their arguments more convincing, they need to interact with the reader and make them feel involved. They do so through *we* (i.e. *let’s/let us*). Potentially, the writer can be more persuasive once the reader is collaborating with him/her in constructing the argument:

(4.36)

a. **Let us** *consider* how a professional boxer would feel. He is clearly aware of the dangers and brutalism of the sport, which is possibly why he enjoys it so much. I have yet to hear any boxer regret his choice of career. The excitement of being in the ring, the joy at knocking an opponent onto the canvass, and all the money that is there to be made are overwhelming factors which keep boxers fighting. Boxing - B04

b. **Lets** *assume* that you have a part time job. You work whole the da. In this case you don't have any information about outside world. when you finish your work and come back to your house, just is enough to turn on the television, and find a NEWS channel ,in order to get NEWS from outside world. so it's a good way to be beside of your family and also getting news. IR/A/6/2

In (4.36a), the writer wants to argue why boxers keep fighting. Through ‘let’s consider’, s/he invites the reader to join him/her in considering how a professional boxer would feel, trying to involve the reader in depicting a mental image. S/he then goes on to explain why boxing is exciting and what keeps boxers fighting. The reader’s involvement and their simulated collaboration in constructing the writer’s intended argument may take place, at least partially, through the command (i.e. *let us*) whose interactive effect is reinforced with the interactant pronoun *we* (i.e. *us*). In (4.36b), the writer intends to argue for watching TV. In order to make his/her argument more convincing, the writer sets up a hypothetical situation and asks the reader to join him/her in assuming that situation. Once s/he steers the reader through the imaginary situation, the writer then spells out his/her final conclusion that ‘it’s a good way to be beside of your family and also getting news’ through TV.

4.5.3.1.5 Emphasizing/catching the reader’s attention

The final discourse function the propositions containing *we* – which is again almost exclusively restricted to the Iranian students with only one occurrence in the British essays – is ‘emphasizing/catching the reader’s attention’. *We* in this sense is used by the writer to appeal to the reader (*we* for *you*) and mostly occurs in the pattern of ‘we+ must/should/have to+ remember/not forget, pay attention to’ as in the following examples:

(4.37)

a. and after all **we** *must not forget* the television like every thing else is a matter of interest.

IR/A/6/23

b. The other problems that maybe important and **we must attention to** it is the unuseful and uncorrect information... IR/A/4/5

c. but there some problem occurred which **we should be attention** them... IR/G/4/59

d. **we must pay attention to** this issue that an old wo/man who works until... IR/G/6/42

e. **we must remember** that changes in the demand for computers has certainly not been...

ICLE-ALEV-0010.6

In these examples, the writers aim to capture the reader's attention through the above pattern. It is, in effect, the reader that should remember (or not forget) something, not the writer, but it seems that the writers intend to soften the face-threatening aspect of their commands through including themselves as the joint-performers of a particular (mental) action alongside the reader. The use of *we* can assist the writer in calling the reader's attention while at the same time expressing solidarity with them and making them feel involved.

4.5.3.2 Discourse functions of *you*

4.5.3.2.1 Giving an active role to the reader and expressing solidarity with them

It is often argued that while writers use *we* to expresses solidarity with their readers, they use *you* to construct distance from them (e.g. Hyland, 2002a; Kim, 2006). Following Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990), however, I would argue that *you* is highly interactive and

can assist the writer to get the reader involved in the ongoing flow of argument in the text. It can also give a chief role to the reader by representing them as sharing what the writer says, believes, etc. Kitagawa and Lehrer (1990:752) argue that:

A sense of camaraderie is often present with the use of impersonal *you* precisely because the speaker assigns a major 'actor' role to the addressee. In so doing s/he is letting the hearer into the speaker's world view, implying that the hearer also shares the same perspective. This can be considered as an act of camaraderie.

(Kitagawa and Lehrer, 1990:752)

Kitagawa and Lehrer's (1990) view about the interactive effect of *you* in spoken discourse can be equally applied to written discourse, where the writer plays the role of the speaker and the reader plays the role of the addressee. Basically what I argue is that, in the genre of student argumentative essay writing, students essentially want to argue with and persuade their readers of their claims and that their use of *you* is to involve the readers explicitly in the text and expressing solidarity with them rather than to sound authoritative and to distance (e.g. as is often the case in the textbook genre or research articles). The immediate reader can easily identify themselves with *you* although *you* in its interactive sense refers to people in general (i.e. generic), not necessarily the reader alone. In fact, as we shall see below, if *you* refers to the immediate reader alone it is less interactive since in this sense it embodies an authoritative and distancing tone even though it is directly addressed to the reader and has a highly dialogic tone. On the other hand, when *you* has a generic reference it is more interactive and less authoritative since it is not the reader alone who is addressed by the writer but potentially all people. Accordingly, I have found two main functions exactly corresponding to the two main semantic references (generic and restricted *you*) respectively: all the instances of generic

you in the present data are counted as cases which perform the discourse function of ‘giving an active role to the reader and expressing solidarity with them’ and all the instances of restricted *you* are counted as cases which serve the function of ‘setting up an imaginary dialogic engagement’.

Students in the data seem to make use of generic *you* as an effective interpersonal strategy to assign an active role to their reader (i.e. the examiner), seeking to achieve solidarity and, ultimately, be more persuasive in their arguments. As noted earlier in section 4.2, generic *you* can be replaced with generic *we* without seriously affecting the informational content of the text. The interactional effect can, however, vary significantly. In (4.38), the writer assumes shared belief with the reader, presupposing that the reader also believes that the way one learns from television is important. The use of *we* assists the writer to express solidarity with the reader and makes them feel involved in the ongoing argument:

(4.38) In my opinion the way **we** learn from television is important...

IR/A/6/5

Similarly, in (4.39) the writer expresses solidarity by giving an active role to the reader through *you*. The writer appears to assume that what s/he thinks is important is shared by the reader as well. In other words, the reader is allowed by the writer to enter the writer’s world and see it from the writer’s perspective. Generic *you* creates an audience with

which the reader can easily identify. Therefore, generic *you* can also assist the writer to express solidarity with the reader.

(4.39) In my opinion the way **you** learn from television is important...

IR/A/6/5

Sometimes the writer anticipates the readers' objections, voices their concerns and expresses their views. The following extract shows how the writer interacts with the reader and voices the reader's potential concerns about watching TV through *you*:

(4.40) So, **you** have to be careful about how to use television! So, television, can be useful if **you** know how to use it and it can be dangerous and destroy **your** family. so if **you** carefully use it, it can be use full for **you**.

IR/A/6/50

The writer in this example anticipates that the reader may have some concerns about watching TV. Having anticipated the reader's concern, the writer textually constructs the reader as a discourse participant who has a similar understanding, goals, beliefs, etc. and merges the reader's voice into the fabric of the argument. Once the reader's viewpoints and concerns are expressed, the writer then draws his/her desired conclusion (i.e. TV can be useful if watched 'carefully'). In other words, the writer attempts to persuade the reader that watching TV can be useful by first addressing the reader's concerns and giving them an active role in constructing the argument (partly through generic *you* with which the reader can identify) and then drawing his/her own intended conclusion.

There are other instances where the writer uses *you* serving function (1) specifically to state a general truth. The argument (or the general truth) that the writer constructs can be potentially more convincing if the reader explicitly feels involved. The use of *you* assists the writer to explicitly engage with the reader and make them more receptive to the ‘general truth’ expressed by the writer:

(4.41)

a. Also there's a big problem in watching T.V a lot. **Your** eyes might be damaged. IR/A/6/46

b. It is impossible to learn that **you** have contracted the disease for up to seven years. ICLE-ALEV-0005.7

c. According to researches, working will help **you** be more healthy both physically and mentally. IR/G/6/13

d. The menopause is the body's way of telling **you** that **you** are too old and **your** body is no long capable of bearing a baby.

ICLE-ALEV-0003.8

The writers in these examples appear to intend to state a ‘universal reality’. Through *you*, they appear to create a discourse participant. They give an active role to the created participants by allowing them to share what the writer already knows, and thus express solidarity with the readers.

4.5.3.2.2 Setting up an imaginary dialogic engagement

Students in the present data occasionally employ restricted *you* by directly addressing the reader and creating an imaginary dialogue with them. This use of restricted *you* is rare in academic writing but it is found in the student essays. This dialogic style is particularly prevalent amongst Iranian students but it seems that both Iranian and British students employ it in a rather similar way. For example, students in both corpora use restricted *you* in questions and commands. As we shall see in the next two chapters, questions and commands are two interactional functions in their own right, providing a context in which the use of *you* presumably serves some kind of separate, if supporting, function. In other words, questions and commands can be employed by the writer to create a dialogic interaction with the reader and the use of restricted *you* in them can add to the ‘interactiveness’ of the text, making it more dialogic.

Instances of restricted *you* are also found in ‘markers of spoken involvement’ (Chafe, 2002: 64), that is, expressions which are strongly associated with oral discourse, creating an imaginary dialogue with the reader:

(4.42)

a. **As you know**, technology is the most variable and important parts of our lives. IR/A/6/43

b. **You know** I think it is the ability of people which is important...

IR/G/6/10

Similarly, the writers in both corpora address the immediate reader (i.e. examiner) directly as if they are literally conversing with them (i.e. they project a face-to-face dialogue):

(4.43)

a. ... introduced or not is very much a personal thing and depends on how importantly **you** rate the points I have emphasized in this essay. 005

b. Even I can affect **you** if I talk to **you** 5-6 hours a day! IR/A/6/41

c. I can't give **you** a 100 percent solid answer IR/G/6/34

d. I'm telling **you** my reason can judge about what am I saying.

IR/G/4/33

e. I agree with **your** idea if the people in the old ages don't have to work for living on... IR/G/4/60

f. I don't know about using **your** brain but I'd say that by working with all these time-saving, quick compute... ICLE-ALEV-0001.6

As already noted, the use of restricted *you* performing function (2) in academic writing is extremely rare, if not non-existent. Addressing the audience directly through restricted *you* is closely associated with oral discourse and its deployment in student essays indicates the learners' lack of genre awareness. Lack of expertise in writing persuasively and possibly little, if any, exposure to English academic writing might also have led some students, particularly Iranians, to the employment of *you* to set up an imaginary reader engagement in a way that reflects their novice status.

4.6 Overview of patterns

In this chapter, we have seen that interactant pronouns can be employed by the writers to enact an overt dialogic interaction with the reader, evoking their involvement as a discourse participant in the text. Engaging with the reader via interactant pronouns can potentially contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Based on this assumption, I have examined the use, distribution and functions of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* in the Iranian and British student essays. The analysis shows that there are quantitative differences between the two corpora.

The Iranian students use interactant pronouns strikingly more frequently than the British students. Compared with the British students, Iranians appear to aim to establish a more explicit dialogic interaction with their audience through using *we* and *you*. As shown in 4.5.1, the British students' use of such pronouns, however, closely resembles that of expert writers.

The analysis also shows that Iranian high-scoring students employ interactant pronouns more frequently than low-scoring students. The greater use of interactant pronouns by more proficient students may suggest that they are at a developmental stage where they create a persona through which they simply tend to exuberantly overuse some linguistic and interpersonal features like interactant pronouns.

We have also found that Iranian Academic students use interactant pronouns more frequently than General students. The greater use of such pronouns by Iranian Academic

students may be due to the wording of the generic prompt of this test version which ‘cues’ candidates towards adopting an interpersonal style by explicitly requiring them to address their essays to a certain reader. This might have contributed to the greater awareness amongst Academic writers of the presence of a reader. The marked overuse of *we* may be due to the controversial topic of the Academic test which again appears to have cued students towards employing *we* in their texts. The overall high reliance of Iranian students, across proficiency levels and test versions, on employing interactant pronouns throughout their essays may suggest that these pronouns play a salient role in constructing an explicit dialogic writer-reader interaction in the Iranian texts.

Finally, the findings reveal that interactant pronouns appear to serve similar discourse and rhetorical functions in both corpora. The most popular function of interactant pronoun *we* observed in both the Iranian and the British student essays is ‘assuming shared knowledge, experience, beliefs, goals, etc.’ with the reader. Students seem to have used *we* serving this function mainly as a strategy to shorten the distance between themselves and the readers and to express solidarity with readers. Students in both corpora also appear to deploy *we* as a way to weave the reader’s support into their lines of argumentation.

Interactant pronoun *you* also serves similar functions in both corpora. The Iranian and the British students tend to use generic *you* mainly as a strategy to enact an overt dialogic interaction with the reader. By directly addressing the reader via *you*, they give an active role to the reader and evoke their involvement in the construction of the argument. As

noted above, reader involvement as a discourse participant can contribute to the persuasive effect of the text. It is true that both *we* and *you* enact dialogue, but *you* does so more explicitly precisely because *you* directly addresses the reader, whereas *we* does not.

CHAPTER FIVE

QUESTIONS

5.1 Introduction

As discussed fully in Chapter 2, metadiscourse resources are used to assist the writers both to guide their readers through the text interactively and to involve them in the text interactionally. As also pointed out in Chapter 2, one of the underlying assumptions of metadiscourse is that writing has a *dialogic* (Bakhtin, 1986) nature. Metadiscourse markers, particularly in the interactional dimension, construct a more or less explicit dialogic interaction between the writer and the reader in the text. Among the interactional resources of metadiscourse, *engagement markers* are one major resource through which the dialogic interaction between the interactants can be construed. *Questions* fall in the category of engagement markers and therefore mainly perform an interactional function. Questions can, as Thompson (2001: 61) suggests, be also interactive, meaning that they might be used to signal where the text is going next, thus organizing ideas and guiding the reader through the text. However, it should be stressed that their interactional function is inherent. Questions add a sense of ‘dialogicality’ to the written discourse and precisely because of this they are seen as inherently interactional, as Badraneh (2009) points out:

... interrogative structure implies the existence of an addressee, which gives a sense of dialogicality to the text. This dialogicality is therefore implicit, giving the text a sense of “hidden dialogicality,” which is, according to Bakhtin (1984: 197), “a dialogue of two persons in which the remarks of the second person are omitted, but omitted in a way that the general meaning is not violated.” (Badraneh, 2009: 646)

The arguments put forward in the present chapter are also all based on the assumption that even the questions which are used primarily to signal where the text is going next (and therefore, strictly speaking, belong to the interactive aspect of metadiscourse) are seen as having an interactional function of involving the reader in the text.

Questions have received a great deal of attention in both spoken and written discourse. They have been studied by conversational analysts (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973; Drew and Sorjonen, 1979; Heritage and Roth, 1995; Wang, 2006; Koshik, 2005; Sinclair and Van Gessel, 1990; Frank, 1990), pragmatists (Harris, 1984) and written discourse analysts (Hoey, 1983; 2001). In written discourse analysis the use of questions has been investigated across various genres such as dating advertisements (Marley, 2002), written commercial ads (Thompson and Thetela, 1995), newspaper editorials (Badraneh, 2009), sales letters (Frank, 1989), science popularizations (Kim, 2006), academic writing (Webber, 1994; Hyland, 2002b) and L2 student essays (Mayor *et al.*, 2007; Kennedy and Thorp, 2007, Hinkel, 1999).

Previous research on questions is mainly concerned with this question: ‘... what is it that we do when we ask questions?’ (Goody, 1978, as cited in Steensig and Drew, 2008: 5). In other words, what seems to be of paramount importance in studies on questions is the functions that they perform in the interaction. In line with previous research, one of the most frequently discussed aspects of questions in written texts is their discourse and rhetorical functions. In addition, some research on academic writing has also looked at

the position of questions. In the following section, I will briefly talk of the functions and position of questions in written texts.

5.2 A brief overview of the functions and positions of questions in written texts

Questions are employed in written texts to “serve both the writer and the reader (Webber, 1994: 258). Webber (1994) points out that questions can:

create anticipation, arouse interest, challenge the reader into thinking about the topic of the text, and have a direct appeal in bringing the second person into a kind of dialogue with the writer, which other rhetorical devices do not have to the same extent.

(Webber, 1994: 268)

Questions are important rhetorical devices to enact a dialogic interaction in written texts and, as Hyland (2002b: 529) points out, “allow writers to invoke explicitly the involvement of their reader in the discourse, addressing the perceptions, interests, and needs of a potential audience”. Reader involvement, as noted in Chapter 2, can contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Through engaging with the reader, questions can “lead the reader along the way the author wishes to take him or her” (Webber, 1994: 528) and therefore assist the writer to be more persuasive, as Hyland (2002b) argues:

Questions play an important role in this by explicitly introducing readers as participants in a dialogue: claiming solidarity and acknowledging alternative views, but most importantly inviting readers to engage with the argument. Readers are asked to play a part in the unfolding text by responding to the writer and entering a forum where they can be led to a preferred viewpoint.

(Hyland, 2002b: 553)

Viewing questions as essentially dialogic, previous research has identified various discourse and rhetorical functions of questions in written texts (see Table 5.1). Although the use of questions varies across genres, such functions are helpful in establishing a functional taxonomy for the present study.

Table 5.1 Discourse functions of questions identified by previous research

Previous research	Discourse functions of questions in written texts
Webber (1994)	Arousing interest Providing a framework for discourse Signalling a change or angle Distancing and hedging Pointing to future with suggestions for future research
Hyland (2002b)	Creating interest Framing purpose Organizing text Establishing niche Express evaluation Supporting claims Suggesting research
Kim (2006)	Introducing information Enhancing understanding Enacting debate Real questions Rhetorical questions
Mayor <i>et al.</i> (2007) & Kennedy and Thorp (2007)	Demanding information Structuring discourse Involving the reader

As noted above, some studies have also explored the position of questions in written texts. These studies have mainly observed that the position of questions can affect their functions. Kim (2006), for instance, looks at the use and distribution of questions in Korean and British science popularizations and observes that questions are employed in different parts of the text to perform different discourse functions. He finds that the most favoured position of questions for British writers is ‘within’ the text while Koreans tend to use questions more in ‘title/headline’ or ‘beginning’ of the texts (p. 168). Hyland (2002b) also explores the distribution and functions of questions in academic writing and argues that the position of questions can impinge on the functions that they serve in the text. For instance, he finds that questions which are used for ‘getting attention’ and ‘framing discourse’ are normally located in ‘titles’ and ‘introductions’ (p. 541). Webber (1994) looks at the use of questions in medical journals and finds a link between the positions of questions and the key functions they perform in written texts. Table 5.2 summarizes the positions and functions of questions in Webber’s study.

Table 5.2 A summary of the functions of questions in relation to their positions in Webber’s (1994) Study

Positions	Functions
Titles	To arouse interest
First paragraph	To provide a framework for discourse
At the beginning of a paragraph	To signal a change or angle
Throughout the text	For distancing and hedging
Towards the end of the text	To point to future with suggestions for future research

Kennedy and Thorp (2007: 345-46) also explore the functions of questions in relation to their positions in L2 student essays. They find that paragraph-final questions are used as “a way of structuring the essay, providing a link between the end of one paragraph and the beginning of the next”, whereas mid-paragraph questions are employed “as part of the writer’s argument”. On the whole, however, they point out that identifying the position of questions within the students’ paragraphs is often difficult since their paragraphing is often poor (p. 348).

Unsurprisingly, the common theme emerging from the survey of studies on the use of questions in written texts is that the use and distributions of questions vary across genres, disciplines, cultures, and languages, as Hyland (2002b) points out:

A reasonable reason for such variation is that while questions seek to involve readers in both the argument and the ethos of a text, they may also construct unequal social relationships. Questions convey authority along with intimacy, carrying the implication that the writer is in full control of both his or her material and, often, of his or her audience as well, but not all genres confer such rights.

(Hyland, 2002b: 534)

Regardless of the variation in the use of questions, however, one of the shared features of such studies is that they mainly focus on the *functions* and *positions* of questions, paying less attention to other aspects of questions in relation to the writer-reader interaction. The role of questions in creating effective writer-reader interaction can be analyzed from other perspectives such as their *types*, and whether they are answered in the text or not (henceforth referred to as their *dialogic status*). The preliminary investigation of the data in the present study revealed that the use of questions can also be examined through

another feature: *content*. What is meant by content here is restricted only to whether questions contain interactant pronouns or not because, as discussed in the previous chapter, the use of such pronouns can help writers to interact with their readers and explicitly involve them in the text. Therefore, it can be assumed that if questions contain interactant pronouns *we* or *you*, they may be even more interactional. The use and distribution of questions in the present data is explored basically through the aforementioned aspects. Before introducing the analytical framework established for exploring the use of questions in this study, I will first explain my criteria for identifying questions in the students' essays.

5.3 The study

5.3.1 Identifying form

According to Functional Grammar, *question* is a (speech) function which is typically – but not always – grammatically realized as an interrogative clause. In analysing any discourse (spoken or written) it is, therefore, essential to differentiate between interrogatives and questions, as the former is basically the form while the latter is the function; and there is not a complete one-to-one match between the two. In order to identify questions in written discourse most analysts use formal criteria. Hyland (2002b), for instance, offers an operational definition of questions based on form, in terms of syntax and punctuation, labelling “any independent interrogative clause, tag, or sentence fragment concluded with a question mark” as a question. Other analysts (for example, Heritage and Roth, 1995), however, adopt both formal and functional identification criteria. According to this combined approach, not only is any interrogative coded as a

question but also any non-interrogative sentence employed pragmatically as a way of seeking or demanding information is also considered to be a question. Following this combined approach, the present study also adopts both formal and functional criteria for identifying questions in the texts.

In order to identify questions, the data were searched using the Concordance tools of *WordSmith* (Scott, 2004) for instances of the sentences ending with a question mark, but due to poor punctuation all the essays were also searched manually. Manual analysis was also needed for identifying the positions, dialogic status, and discourse functions of questions (see 5.4.2; 5.4.4; 5.4.6 below). One issue that arose in this process was that of rhetorical questions: that is, sentences which have an interrogative form but function as statements. Since I was using both formal and functional criteria, I decided to include these as questions, but to discuss them separately in terms of their function see 5.4.4 below. In order to identify rhetorical questions in the data, this study follows Ilie (1994: 44-46) and uses the following range of criteria:

- (i) the discrepancy between the interrogative form of the rhetorical question and its communicative function as a statement;
- (ii) a polarity shift between the rhetorical question and its implied statement (i.e. a question in the negative usually implies an affirmative answer);
- (iii) the implicitness and exclusiveness of answers to rhetorical questions, which suppose the addressee infers the answer implied by the

addresser through the exclusion of all other answers.

(Ilie, 1994: 44-46)

All the questions were studied within their larger contexts to ensure they were used to create writer-reader interaction.

Based on Functional Grammar, as mentioned above, questions are formally realized as interrogatives but they may be also ‘incongruently’ coded as a declarative as in:

(5.1) Television is dangerous?

IR/A/4/18

The above sentence is formally expressed as a declarative but it certainly functions as a question. In spoken discourse, rising intonation would indicate that, although not an interrogative in form, this sentence is demanding information and therefore functions as a question. In written discourse, however, the use of a question mark at the end of a declarative clause shows that it is intended to function as a question. Such declarative questions are used only a few times in this study but they are, nonetheless, in evidence and were, therefore, counted as questions.

Following Hyland (2002b), tags and sentence fragments concluded with a question mark as in:

(5.2) No brains are needed to watch daytime television everyday, **are there?**

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or as in:

(5.3) Young or old?

IR/G/6/12

were also coded as questions.

In addition, there were cases of ‘embedded or reported questions’, where the question is part of an embedded clause and strictly speaking is not a question on its own since it is embedded within the independent non-interrogative clause. However, based on the context, it is often clear that such a structure is intended to be read as a question. In (5.4), for instance, the writer labels the embedded clause with the word ‘question’ showing that, although in grammatical terms the clause is not interrogative in form, it is intended to be read and to function as a question. For this reason, such cases were counted as questions in the present study:

(5.4) The real *question* to ask is **where to draw the line.**

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Questions which were not relevant to writer-reader interaction were excluded from the analysis. In (5.5), for instance, the writer reports the question that ‘people’ asked of the government and provides the government’s response too:

(5.5) *People* questioned: "**If there are no symptoms, how do we know that no infected animals are getting into the food chain?**" The

government reply was along lines of: "Our safety precautions are enough to ensure that no infected beef is eaten,"

ICLE-ALEV-0004.7

In (5.5), the question-answer pair does not create an overt writer-reader interaction in the text. For this reason, such cases were not counted in the present study.

There were other cases which were not related to writer-reader interaction like (5.6) where the writer asks a question of him/herself¹³:

(5.6)

a. well what should I say?

IR/G/6/34

b. What should I do?

IR/G/4/14

Such cases are not directly and explicitly interactive since the writer is addressing him/herself (not the reader), almost holding a conversation with him/herself. Such questions were also excluded from the analysis.

Using the formal and functional identification criteria discussed above, the present chapter aims at exploring the use of questions in native and non-native student essays in an attempt to answer the following research questions:

¹³ It should be stressed that in such cases the reader is encouraged to make his/her answers against the ones provided and therefore, these example may be seen as interactive, albeit in a different way, but such questions do not explicitly create writer-reader interaction the way other questions do in the present study and for this reason are excluded from the analysis.

1. How frequently are questions used?
2. What are the preferred positions of questions?
3. What types of questions are used more frequently?
4. How frequently are questions answered or unanswered?
5. How frequently are interactant pronouns used in questions?
6. What functions do questions perform and what are their characteristic features in terms of their position, type, dialogic status and content?

Drawing on the frameworks introduced in sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3 below, this chapter will answer the above research questions.

5.3.2 The Analytical framework

As noted in section 5.2, questions can be analyzed from various perspectives. In order to explore the use of questions from different angles, an analytical framework was established and all the questions were codified accordingly (see Table 5.3).

Table 5.3 Analytical framework for examining the use and distributions of questions in student essays

Position	Initial Medial Final
Type	WH-questions Yes/no questions Others
Dialogic status	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">Answered</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↗</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↘</div> </div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>Immediate</p> <p>Delayed</p> </div> </div> <div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">Unanswered</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↗</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↘</div> </div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>Real</p> <p>Rhetorical</p> </div> </div>
Content	<div style="display: flex; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-right: 20px;">Interactant pronouns</div> <div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center;"> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↗</div> <div style="margin-bottom: 10px;">↘</div> </div> <div style="margin-left: 20px;"> <p>We</p> <p>You</p> </div> </div> <p>Non-interactant pronouns</p>

The framework consists of four major categories:

1. **Position:** This concerns the place of questions within a given *paragraph* and is comprised of three main categories: *initial*, *medial*, *final*. As discussed above, the positions of questions have been found to affect the way questions function in the text. Writers raise questions at various locations in the text strategically in order to interact with their readers both by guiding them through the discourse

and explicitly involving them in the text. The use of questions at specific locations in the text assists the writers in steering the reader to their intended interpretation of the text.

2. *Type*: This concerns the grammatical form of a question and is primarily divided into *WH-questions* and polar *Yes/no questions*. WH questions mainly have the purpose of requiring the listener (reader) to fill in a missing part of the message whereas in Yes/no questions the speaker (writer) primarily wants the listener (reader) to specify the polarity of the message (Thompson, 2004: 55). Since WH-questions and Yes/no questions require different kinds of answers (Quirk *et al.* 1985: 806), it can be assumed that writers use them for different purposes in the text. Compared with Yes/no questions, for instance, WH-questions are principally “much more open in terms of the freedom allowed the responder to answer as they choose from a wide range of possible formulations” (Marley, 2002: 83). Yet as discussed above, there are other instances which do not fit the grammatical form but, nevertheless, function as questions. These are classified as *others*.

3. *Dialogic status*¹⁴: This concerns the degree of dialogic interaction that the use of a question appears to create between the writer and the reader. As mentioned

¹⁴ It should be noted that previous research has not explicitly used the criterion *dialogic status* the way I am using it here. What is important for the purpose of this study is to examine the use of questions in relation to the interactional effect they create in written texts. Therefore, it can be argued that whether the writer decides to answer his/her question or leave it unanswered can affect the way s/he sets up the dialogue with the reader, thus the term *dialogic status*. (See section 5.4.4 for more details.)

at the outset of this chapter, questions are used in written texts essentially to construct a dialogic interaction between writer and reader. However, the level of this interaction can be argued to vary based on the writer's decision to answer the question or to leave it unanswered. The writer's decision in this respect can assist him/her to control the level of interaction with the reader at any given point in the text. The writers may decide to challenge the reader to think deeply about a particular argument set forward in the text through the use of an unanswered *real* question or they may prefer to strongly assert their opinion and imply that the answer is obvious to the reader through the use of an unanswered *rhetorical* question. The writer may also decide to answer the question either *immediately* to set up an overt dialogic mini conversation with the reader or with a *delay* to organize his/her discourse.

- 4. *Content*:** This concerns the degree of interactiveness generated by the use of a question in the text and is simply measured in the present study by examining whether any given question contains an *interactant* pronoun or not. As discussed in the previous chapter, the use of *we* is assumed to assist the writer to 'establish common grounds' with the reader whereas the use of *you* can help the writer to create a more explicit 'dialogic tone' in the text with the reader. While questions are inherently interactive, as argued above, the degree of interaction can potentially be reduced if the writer decides not to include any interactant pronoun in his/her question. In other words, the inclusion of an interactant pronoun in a question adds to the interactiveness of the question.

5.3.3 Identifying the functions of questions

As noted in section 5.1, the previous research on questions has extensively examined the functions of questions in written texts. Although some of the functions identified by previous studies (e.g. Webber, 1994; Kim, 2006) might be specific to certain genres, as noted in section 5.2, the lists of functions shown in Table 5.1 above were found useful for identifying the functions of questions in the present study. However after the initial analysis, a further process of categorization was also carried out. Attempts were made to match the emerging categories in the texts with the categories introduced earlier. Eventually, the resulting categories were boiled down to four main functions shown in Table 5.4. The detailed explanation of the following functions will be presented later in section 5.4.6.

Table 5.4 Analytical framework for identifying the discourse and rhetorical functions of questions in student essays

Functions of questions in the student essays
1. Provoking readers' interest
2. Constructing argument
3. Structuring discourse
4. Summing up argument

In the following sections, the results will be presented and discussed.

5.4 Findings and discussions

5.4.1 Research question one: frequencies of questions

The distribution of questions according to language background is shown in Table 5.5¹⁵.

As can be seen, the British students make greater use of questions than the Iranian students.

Table 5.5 Instances of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

Iranian essays (46,777 words)	61 (1.3)
British essays (60,209 words)	135 (2.2)

In addition to the greater number of questions employed in British essays, the number of British students who use questions in their essays is also more than Iranian students (see Table 5.6). The British students who use this device more than once are also more numerous than Iranian students who use questions more than once (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.6 Number (and percentage) of the students who use questions in student essays according to language background

Iranian essays	41 (19%)
British essays	54 (40%)

¹³ Questions have often clause-level realizations. Presenting results as word counts is therefore not intended to convey the proportion of questions in a text but merely to enable a comparison of their occurrence in corpora of unequal sizes.

Table 5.7 Number (and percentage) of the students who use questions more than once in student essays according to language background

Iranian essays	9 (4%)
British essays	28 (25%)

Table 5.8 shows the use of questions in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency. As can be seen, Iranian high scorers use questions more than twice as often as low-scoring students.

Table 5.8 Instances of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency

High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	45 (1.7)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	16 (0.7)

In addition to language proficiency, test version seems to have affected the use of questions in the Iranian sub-corpora. As shown in Table 5.9, the students who took the Academic version of the sample IELTS test tend to use questions more than those who took the General version.

Table 5.9 Instances of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to test version

Academic Version [23,475 words]	42 (1.7)
General Version [23,302 words]	19 (0.8)

There is apparently a test effect in relation to the use of questions in the present study, but it is not immediately clear from the topic alone why the Academic version should encourage greater use of interrogatives. Mayor *et al.* (2007: 299) also find that the test version affected the use of questions in their data and suggest that “it is possible that the generic test prompt itself may be cueing candidates into adopting a style of writing which encourages the use of interactional resources like interrogatives”. The relationship found between the use of questions and test version in the present study, as we shall see below, may also be the consequence of the specific wording of the generic prompts of the two tests. The generic test prompts of the Academic and General versions of the sample IELTS test as well as the conversational topics used in this study are reintroduced below:

Academic Writing Task 2

Present a written argument or case to an educated reader with no specialist knowledge of the following topic

Television is dangerous because it destroys family life and any sense of community; instead of visiting people or talking with our family we just watch television.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

You should use your own ideas, knowledge and experience and support your arguments with examples and relevant evidence.

Write at least 250 words.

General Training Writing Task 2

Write about the following topic:

People should be allowed to continue to work as long as they want to, and not to be forced to retire at a particular age such as 60 or 65.

Do you agree or disagree?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your experience.

Write at least 250 words.

As can be seen, and already noted in Chapter 4, the wordings of the test versions are slightly different. It can be speculated that the Academic generic prompt cues the students into using questions more frequently than General students because it states that students ‘should present a written *argument*’. Argumentative writing lends itself to the use of interpersonal metadiscourse (Williams, 1989, cited in Crismore *et al.* 1993: 64). It is true that arguments do not inherently encourage questions but they do encourage adopting an interpersonal style and questions are one of the devices which reflect such a style. Therefore, it can be tentatively suggested that the existence of the word *argument* in the generic prompt of the Academic version might have, at least, indirectly cued students towards adopting an interpersonal style and using more interpersonal metadiscourse resources including questions.

In addition to the possible effect of the word *argument*, the Academic wording may prompt more interactive essays in still another way. As has already been noted in Chapter 4, the Academic version generic prompt clearly specifies for the writer the reader to

whom the essay should be addressed (i.e. ‘the *educated reader* with no specialist knowledge of the topic’). The General version task rubric, however, does not specify the reader to whom the essay should be written. Any piece of writing is written having a (type of) reader in mind but specifying explicitly the reader for the students in the Academic version of the test may imply to them, in a subtle way, that they need to constantly think about the reader and their needs and that the students need to interact with them. The Academic students might have used questions more frequently than General students, as a way of recognising the reader’s presence by involving them in the argument, because such students are ‘cued’ into being more interactional. “Questions require answers” (Steensig and Drew, 2008: 7), that is whenever a question is raised there should be someone to answer, thus assuming a dialogic interaction. Since the Academic prompt clearly specifies the existence of a reader, it is possible that Academic students have tried to show their awareness of the presence of the specified reader by engaging the reader in a dialogic interaction partially through the use of questions.

In sum, as explained in Section 5.1 above, the use of questions in written texts creates a dialogic interaction between the writer and the reader in the text. The greater use of questions in the British texts, therefore, suggests that they are more inclined to be overtly dialogic. This ‘dialogicality’ for creating interaction with the reader through the use of questions has not been, at least as far as simple frequencies are concerned, found to be favoured by the Iranian students. However, frequencies alone cannot give us a clear and complete picture of how this dialogicality is constructed in texts. The following sections in this chapter elaborate on the ways the interaction between the reader and writer is construed through the use of questions.

5.4.2 Research question two: positions of questions

As described in section 5.3.2, questions can be used in paragraph-initial, paragraph-medial, and paragraph-final positions. As we can see in Table 5.10, the British students raise nearly two thirds of their questions in paragraph-medial positions, whereas the Iranian students use questions with almost similar frequencies across all the three positions in the paragraphs. While about a third of the questions have been used at the beginning of the paragraphs by the Iranian students, just less than 10% of questions are used in paragraph-initial positions by the British students. In fact, paragraph-initial position appears to be the least favoured among the British students. While paragraph-medial questions are most frequently used by the British students, they are least frequently used by the Iranian students.

Table 5.10 Preferred positions of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Initial	Medial	Final	Totals
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	21 (0.44)	15 (0.32)	25 (0.53)	61
British essays [60,209 words]	11 (0.18)	87 (1.44)	37 (0.61)	135

As shown in Table 5.11, when the Iranian data is divided according to proficiency level and test version, the use of questions across all the three positions appears to be broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 5.10, in that questions occur with roughly equal frequency in the three positions in all the groups, with medial position the least favoured.

Table 5.11 Preferred positions of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Initial	Medial	Final	Totals
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	15 (0.57)	12 (0.45)	18 (0.68)	45
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	6 (0.29)	3 (0.14)	7 (0.34)	16
Academic version [23,475 words]	14 (0.59)	13 (0.55)	15 (0.63)	42
General version [23,302 words]	7 (0.30)	2 (0.08)	10 (0.42)	19

The use of questions in different positions in paragraphs in student essays, as we shall see later in section 5.4.6 below, is strongly associated with the functions that they perform locally within the paragraphs and globally within the texts.

5.4.3 Research question three: types of questions

As mentioned in section 5.3.2, questions can be mainly divided into WH- and polar Yes/no interrogatives. As can be seen in Table 5.12, the overall incidence of WH-

questions used by the Iranian students does not differ greatly from that in the British essays. The main striking difference between the two corpora lies in the relatively low incidence of Yes/no questions in the Iranian scripts.

Table 5.12 Comparative frequencies of question types (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	WH-questions	Yes/no-questions	Others	Totals
British essays [60,209 words]	65 (1.07)	70 (1.16)	0	135
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	40 (0.85)	16 (0.34)	5	61

As we can see in Table 5.13, Iranian students across proficiency levels and test versions also tend to use WH-questions more than Yes/no questions.

Table 5.13 Comparative frequencies of question types (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	WH-questions	Yes/no-questions	Others	Totals
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	29 (1.10)	12 (0.45)	4 (0.15)	45
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	11 (0.53)	4 (0.19)	1 (0.04)	16
Academic version [23,475 words]	28 (1.19)	12 (0.51)	2 (0.08)	42
General version [23,302 words]	12 (0.51)	4 (0.17)	3 (0.12)	19

Having presented the quantitative findings regarding the use of Wh- and polar Yes-no questions above, in the remainder of this section I shall discuss the purposes for the use of each type.

Yes/no questions are typically considered as closed questions (Frank, 1989: 240) that normally require an answer which either “affirms or denies the propositional content of the question” (Bennett, 1982: 100, as cited by Kim, 2006: 173). Yes/no questions seek confirmation or rejection of their propositional content from the reader. From this perspective, such questions typically help the writer to narrow down the topic.

What is more, a Yes/no question is posed by the writer to construct a dialogic frame whereby s/he involves the reader in his/her argument but does not provide the reader with a wide range of options to choose from (as WH-questions normally do). In fact, using a Yes/no question helps the writer to establish a dialogic interaction with the reader in a limited way meaning that the reader’s response is highly predictable.

Using Yes/no questions in the text helps the writer to control and guide the reader to his/her interpretation while at the same time involving the reader in the text:

(5.7) ... An age limit should be set and adhered to, family history should also be looked into the regulations should be as stringent as those for adoption. Sex selection is another **issue** that affects the rights of the parents. The major query is, **do parents have the right to choose the sex of their child?** The main worry is that the choice of sex will lead to other

specifications which result in parents being able to choose the 'perfect child' and natural variation going out of the window. The regulation on this should be, that sex is not allowed to be selected, unless it prevents the continuation of a sex linked genetic disease such as hemophilia; in which the males are mainly affected, females carry the disease but are usually unaffected...

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In (5.7), the writer is arguing whether post-menopausal women are entitled to receive fertility treatment and be allowed to have children. S/he also argues about the issues of choosing the sex of the child. The writer wants to argue that this is a controversial issue and that there are a lot of queries which should be resolved prior to letting such women receive any fertility treatment and choosing the sex of their children. The writer discusses the sex issue through employing a Yes/no question. Using a Yes/no question enables the writer to keep on writing about the main topic but narrowing it further down to yet another related issue (i.e. sex of the child). The writer then argues against parents having such a right. The deployment of the polar question helps the writer to be more in control of his/her argument on the one hand, and more interactional with the reader on the other hand.

Such a skilful use of Yes/no questions, however, has been observed only a few times in the British corpus and not at all in the Iranian corpus. Iranian students instead use Yes/no questions in a totally different way in their essays. 13 out of 16 Yes/no questions employed by the Iranian students are essay-initial questions attempting to introduce the

topic in a way which appears to be intended to be interesting as in (5.8):

(5.8) **Have you ever seen an old man who is working happily?** There are several reasons why working is good for different ages. The first one is feeling useful, Second, is the happiness that every one feels after working efficiently, and the third one is the effect of working on the people health specially in the old ages. IR/G/6/28

Such questions, however, do not always appear to be quite satisfactory in introducing the topic since the contents which follow them are often, at best, very vaguely related to the questions or, at worst, not related at all. In other words, the Yes/no questions seem to have been randomly posed as a way to open the essays but fail to be reasonably connected with their following contents. The Yes/no question posed at the beginning of the following example, for instance, is a rather isolated sentence which has no logical relationship with its following sentences:

(5.9) **Have you ever thought that how television can be perilous and dangerous in this hectic pace of life?** It has been ages that television is the most famous amusement among people even family and children all around the world. There are numerous reasons for this dramatic popularity. IR/A/6/14

It can be speculated that the Iranian students may have been advised to use questions at the beginning of their essays as a simple way to introduce their topics but they typically

appear not to have been successful in linking their questions with their following sentences. This has resulted in essays which open quite interactively through the use of questions but fail to maintain the interaction by creating any logical connection between the question and the following sentences. The reader may become confused reading the sentences following the question since they are introduced to content which is not a logical continuation of the question. Iranian students appear to be aiming to use Yes/no questions to narrow down the topics in this way but, as noted above, they have not performed this function quite effectively.

Yes/no questions, as noted by Kim (2006: 173), can also “represent the writer’s doubt on a certain argument”, as in example (5.10) below:

(5.10) **Is over watching Television a bad habit?** It is said that spending so much time in front of television have descended peoples social activities while another group of researches believe that if it controlled it would become a source of unity in families. IR/A/6/1

The writer in example (5.10) casts doubt on whether too much watching of television is a bad habit through a polar Yes/no question and then introduces two opposing ideas and sets out to construct his/her text accordingly in the following paragraphs. Posing a Yes/no question in this way helps the writer to frame the text by creating some space to put the argument forward. Yes/no questions functioning this way, however, are very atypical in the two corpora accounting for just less than 5% of all the questions.

In contrast to Yes/no questions, WH-questions are typically regarded as open-ended questions (Frank, 1989: 239) which help the writer to introduce a wider range of topics (Kim, 2006: 176). One of the main functions performed by WH-questions in both corpora is that they help the writer to create some space to build on his/her arguments. Questions in (5.11) perform this function:

(5.11)

a. **Why some people think television destroys theirs family.** I think TV can learn we how we can have a good family, good children and lovely relation. When we see a lovely film, we like to talk to our partner. We like to sit near to our love and kiss her and talk to her about our life and our sense to each other... IR/A/4/18

b. Nowadays because of various jobs, works, classes & programs the member of a family have less time than before to stay together so **if we spend that little time to watching TV, what about our family**, we shouldn't forget that family is not some people that just live together, They are a group that love, blood kindness & friendship connect them together, A group that we would dedicate our life or money or everything for them, but when TV is on we just sit together, & and drinking tea together without any connection, without paying attention to them because TV is magic... IR/A/6/22

c. In my opinion, there should be some regulations. Lets look at a) fertility treatment for post-menopausal women. Unless, there is a reasonable argument for example, early menopause taking place there

should be some regulations. **If a women goes for this treatment, and has a baby when she is 55 what kind of life will that child have?** When, it reaches its early teens the mother will be nearly 70. I think that there should be an age limit on fertility treatment... ICLE-ALEV-0007.8

As mentioned above, WH-questions can be used to create a space for the writer to expand his/her arguments and make them more complete. In (5.11a), the writer is against the idea that TV destroys the families. S/he poses a WH-question and creates a space for him/herself to explain why watching TV does not destroy the families. In (5.11b), the writer believes that watching TV can cause the members of the families to have less time to be together. In order to build on his/her argument, the writer uses a WH-question to provide some space for him/herself. In (5.11c), the writer argues that some regulations should be set for post-menopausal women who want to receive fertility treatments. The writer uses a WH-question whose answer is implied to be obvious to the reader and goes on to comment that there should be an age limit on fertility treatment. The use of WH-question helps him/her to involve the reader in the construction of his/her argument and therefore sound more convincing in arguing with the reader that an age limit should be set for older post-menopausal women.

WH-questions enable the writer to introduce a controversial issue and argue for or against it effectively. This function of WH-questions, in effect, establishes a dialogic interaction between the participants in the text where the question creates a desired scope for the writer to steer the reader into the destination that s/he prefers. WH-questions which are

used this way are typically found either in paragraph-initial or paragraph-medial positions in both corpora.

Many rhetorical questions in both corpora have been found using the form of WH-questions. Rhetorical questions are typically used as a forceful way to assert an opinion (see section 5.4.4 below for further details). Using rhetorical questions in the form of WH-questions (as opposed to Yes/no questions) seems to be less coercive (Danet *et al.*, 1980, as cited by Frank, 1989: 256). WH-questions by their nature offer a wider range of options to the reader. Accordingly, it can be argued that when a rhetorical question is asked of the reader in the form of a WH-question the potential threats to the reader's face can be mitigated since s/he appears to have some options from which to choose his/her answer. The writers in (5.12) use WH- rhetorical questions and seem to have managed to soften their forceful assertions:

(5.12)

a. Some people have special talents and have reached golden experiences during their working times, and now that they have got a chance to give these experiences to others specially young workers, **why should they be forced to retire?** IR/G/6/13

b. In some especially, earlier on in the days of treatment multiple births took place. A women would give birth to 7 babies not just one. **How would a woman of 55 cope with 7 young children?**

ICLE-ALEV-0007.8

In (5.12a), the expected response to the rhetorical question is that such people *should not* be retired at all but the use of WH-question ‘why’ gives the reader the opportunity to think of any possible reason why talented people *should* be retired. Given the preceding context, however, the writer seems to be confident in winning the argument but in a less forceful or face-threatening way. The writer also seems less concerned to control the reader. If this WH-question is reformulated as a Yes/no question (i.e. *Should they be forced to retire?*), the question does not leave any room for the reader to think of anything else but to either reject or confirm the propositional content of the question because, as described above, Yes/no questions usually are followed by an affirmation or rejection of the propositional content of the question and do not offer a wide range of options. In the case of WH-rhetorical questions no real affirmation or rejection is expected to be given in the text by the writer (on behalf of the reader) since such questions are usually left unanswered. However, as I argued above, the use of WH-form can reduce their force while at the same time they can be an effective way to involve the reader in the text.

The same line of logic is applicable to example (5.12b). The writer seems to be arguing against the fertility treatment given to post-menopausal women because it might result in giving birth to a lot of babies, not just one. In order to persuade the reader about this argument, the writer poses a rhetorical question but by using it in the form of a WH-question instead of a Yes/no question, s/he essentially reduces the face-threatening effect of a polar rhetorical question and gives the reader some opportunity to think about the possible ways a 55-year old woman can cope with 7 young babies, but because of the

preceding argument the writer hopes it is highly unlikely that the reader will think of any possible way to do so and instead be convinced that coping with such a situation is very difficult and had better be avoided in the first place (i.e. post-menopausal women should not receive fertility treatments).

The WH-questions used in the examples above, although they are used at the end of their paragraphs and are not followed by any other sentences, seem to serve a similar function as (5.11) in that these are also used as a way to expand the writer's argument, but instead of creating a space to do so they function retrospectively and build on the previous argument and so they act as a conclusion to that line of argument (see rhetorical questions in section 5.4.4 below for more details).

Having elaborated on the use of grammatically complete WH- and Yes/no questions, it is worth mentioning briefly at this juncture that just less than 5% of all the questions in both Iranian and British essays are grammatically incomplete fragmented sentences. Sentence fragments are a characteristic feature of spoken language (Chafe, 1982, 1986; Lakoff, 1982, as cited in Chang and Swales, 1999: 149). When questions are more spoken-like in written texts, it can be argued they can be processed more easily and quickly (Kim, 2006: 179). However, it could be speculated that since such questions, as noted above, are markedly informal and are very strongly associated with spoken language, the British students tend to avoid them.

5.4.4 Research question four: dialogic status

In this section I will focus on questions mainly from the perspective of their degree of dialogicality in the text by looking at whether they are answered or not. Basically, the main argument presented in this section is that both answered and unanswered questions allow a dialogic intrusion of the writer in the text. It can be argued, however, that answered questions are more overtly dialogic, whereas unanswered questions are more interactive: answered questions, as we shall see shortly, are explicitly dialogic since they resemble a conversation setting where a question is typically followed by an answer. But since the question is answered by the writer, the reader is not given as much scope to become involved in the argument. From this perspective, therefore, answered questions are less interactive (but more dialogic). Unanswered questions are, on the other hand, less overtly dialogic since the answer is missing in the question-answer pair. They are, however, more involving and interactive since they give the reader the space to think about them and possibly answer them. In other words, an unanswered question may mean that the reader is induced to answer it him/herself, which in principle is more involving than an answered question. Such questions are more interactive since they assume shared knowledge and values with the reader, and suggest solidarity and positive politeness (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 348).

It can be seen from Table 5.14 that most British and Iranian students are inclined to leave their questions unanswered. Questions can be answered either immediately or with a delay. It can be seen from Table 5.15 that both British and Iranian students tend to answer their questions immediately.

Table 5.14 Comparative frequencies of questions (and their percentages) in relation to their dialogic status in student essays according to language background

	Answered	Unanswered
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	11 (18%)	50 (82%)
British essays [60,209 words]	32 (23%)	103 (77%)

Table 5.15 Comparative frequencies of questions in relation to their dialogic status (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Answered		Unanswered	
	Immediate	Delayed	Rhetorical	Real
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	10 (0.21)	1 (0.02)	16 (0.34)	34 (0.72)
British essays [60,209 words]	22 (0.36)	10 (0.16)	48 (0.79)	55 (0.91)

When the Iranian data is divided according to proficiency level and test version (Table 5.16), the use of answered questions appears to be broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 5.15, in that real questions occur more frequently than rhetorical questions in all the groups.

As noted above, answered questions enact a more explicitly dialogic interaction in the text than their unanswered counterparts. Frank (1989) argues that the writer can involve the reader explicitly in the text “through provision of Questions **and** Answers” (p. 241, original emphasis). Asking questions and answering them in written texts creates an

informal style since when questions are immediately answered “the writers are almost conversational with themselves or the reader” (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 347) forming a “minimal conversational dialogue” and “encouraging the reader to view themselves as the partner in a two-way communication” (Frank, 1989: 246). In fact, the writers manage to involve their readers explicitly in the text by forming such question/answer pairs and make the reader’s participation ‘vicariously experienced’ (Frank, 1989: 246). It is true that the writer both asks and answers the question, but the existence of a question-answer pair may contribute a sense of dialogicality and interactiveness to the argument. So although it is the writer – not the reader – who answers the question, it can be expected that the reader may feel involved as a discourse participant in a ‘two-way communication’.

Table 5.16 Comparative frequencies of questions in relation to their dialogic status (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Answered		Unanswered	
	Immediate	Delayed	Rhetorical	Real
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	8 (0.30) 18%	1 (0.03) 2%	12 (0.45) 27%	24 (0.91) 53%
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	2 (0.09) 12.5%	0	4 (0.19) 25%	10 (0.48) 62.5%
Academic version [23,475 words]	7 (0.29) 17%	0	9 (0.38) 21%	26 (1.10) 62%
General version [23,302 words]	3 (0.12) 16%	1 (0.04) 5%	7 (0.30) 37%	8 (0.34) 42%

In (5.13), the writers explicitly engage with their readers by immediately answering the questions. As argued above, the simulated dialogues created as a result of the question-answer pairs enable the writers to involve the reader in the text. The writers, then, script their answers in a way to guide the reader to the direction that they prefer [answers are in italic]:

(5.13)

a. **Is developing in technology bad or good?** *The answer is all of them are good and useful but we must use them correctly...* IR/A/4/57

b. We have a few vacancies for them to start their employment. **Why?** *because all of the workers are fully filled and the circle of work is ok...*

IR/G/6/43

c. However, **when people cease to eat beef what do they eat instead?** *The answer is pork, lamb and other meats...* ICLE-ALEV-0004.9

d. **What if you were to make a mistake writing an important letter?** *You would have to start again unlike pressing one key on a computer.*

ICLE-ALEV-0001.6

e. **Can we expect a scientist to bear this additional burden for the whole world?** *In truth no, it is unreasonable.* ICLE-ALEV-0021.8

f. **Should they have the right to 'buy' themselves a baby?** *I think so...*

ICLE-ALEV-0006.8

g. **So what could possibly stop them from eating beef?** *The answer is fear for their lives...* ICLE-ALEV-0003.9

Compared with immediately answered questions, the questions whose answers are given with a delay are fewer in both corpora. Such questions are less dialogic than immediately answered questions since they form a less explicit dialogue with the reader: the writer poses a question, then sets up his/her argument and then answers the question. It can, therefore, be argued that such questions are less conversational than immediately answered questions. In the following examples, the writers answer the questions with a delay [delayed answers are in italic]:

(5.14)

a. “Television is dangerous because it destroys family life & any sense of community”. This is a sentence that we usually hear from different people.

But why they have this idea.

T.V has came to our life to make it better & easier. as you know with television we can listen to news find many information, learn many things &... . but against these advantages we don't have time to be with our family because we are watching T.V.

T.V. was become to our life To help us but it is against our life in many way. some times all the family members are at home in one room but they are looking at a box and they don't see each other or talk to each other. So although they are a family they become more foreigners to each other day after a day. They learn many things by watching T.V. but they don't know many things about their family members.

New researches prove that watching T.V for many hours a day, cause you not to sleep well. As a result if you don't sleep well you can not work well & will have many problems with your friend on work. *So that's why many peoples agree that Television Is dangerous for our family life & sense of Community*

IR/A/6/13

b. What about those fighters who never quite enter the big money fights, those who remain on small payments? It could be argued, considering that the stratospherically wages earned by top heavy weights +/- millions are matched by the small earnings of small time boxers, that the sport only loons after its successes and exploits the rest, the unsuccessful majority. It is true that wage differences appear unjustifiably large, *but the heartless answer is that we live in a market economy, demand must equal supply and the punters demand to see the bigger, and brighter stars of boxing.*

Boxing - B-06

c. Two men, one ring, only one can leave. Dramatic it may be but basically that is the main principal of boxing. Although throughout the years rules have been made to dilute the sports sadistic side, **should boxing be banned?**

Every time a boxer gets punched in the head his brain moves vigorously inside his skull. This causes the boxer to lose many brain cells per boxing fight and if this occurs frequently then the boxer can end his career with

brain damage. *In my eyes and probably the eyes of others this is reason enough for the banning of boxing.*

Boxing - B01

In examples (5.14) it can be argued that the questions are less dialogic since their answers are given with a delay. The pattern is, therefore, ‘question-content-answer’ rather than the more dialogic ‘question-answer’ pair. The interaction created through such questions can be seen as less overt than immediately answered questions.

As noted at the outset of this section, unanswered questions are less overtly dialogic but they are more interactive. As we have seen above, both British and Iranian students use unanswered questions more frequently than answered questions. They also tend to use real questions more than rhetorical questions (see Table 5.15 above). The British students, however, employ rhetorical questions more than twice as often as the Iranian students. It seems plausible that British students use rhetorical questions more frequently because they are more competent in the English language. This speculation is supported when the frequency of these questions by different proficiency levels of the Iranian students is considered (see Table 5.16). High-scoring Iranian students tend to use rhetorical questions more frequently than low-scoring students, suggesting language proficiency may affect the use of such questions. Kennedy and Thorp (2007: 346) also observe that high-scoring IELTS candidates use rhetorical questions more frequently and with greater skill than low-scoring IELTS candidates.

As noted in the previous section, rhetorical questions are the questions whose answers are assumed to be obvious both to the writer and the reader. Badraneh (2009) describes rhetorical questions as follows:

Rhetorical questions have the double feature of being both a question and an assertion, with the second feature being understood as the intended meaning... In contrast with genuine questions, a rhetorical question is a way of asking that aims to emphasize the content of the question, produce a particular rhetorical or stylistic effect, or both. It involves a discrepancy between form and function, but this discrepancy is not intended to deceive the addressee. Rather, the addressee is expected to solve this discrepancy on the basis of the context of situation (Haverkate 1997).

(Badraneh, 2009: 641)

Rhetorical questions assist the writer “to solicit solidarity with and agreement from the audience” (Hinkel, 1997: 368). Functioning as a way of seeking agreement from the reader can make rhetorical questions very interactive. As noted above, however, such questions are less overtly dialogic than answered questions since they are not followed by an answer. Yet the writer tries to involve the reader implicitly in the text and, given the preceding arguments, guide the reader rather forcefully to his/her desired direction. These questions are, therefore, more involving than answered questions, at least in some ways, since the reader is forced to see that the answer is implied and thus supply the ‘unnecessary’ answer for themselves. The following examples are all instances where the writers first set up an argument and then conclude their argument rather forcefully by stating their own opinion through a rhetorical question:

(5.15)

- a. A boxer's risks do not stop when he retires. Sure, he hasn't been injured badly during his fights, but every time he has been hit during his several

years in the sport, a slight bit of damage has been done to his brain. This damage has built up every fight and the boxer is ore likely, even though he doesn't participate in the sport any more, to have a brain hemorrhage or a stroke. They are also very likely to suffer, in their old age, from a serious and sometimes fatal disease called Parkinson's disease. It affects the nervous system very badly and can lead, in some cases, to paralysation. **Is this kind of a risk really worth a life in the sport of boxing?**

Boxing - B15

b. For centuries the Monarch has been the head of the country, the head of the Church of England and the head of the Houses of Parliament. However, nowadays, politicians run the country, the Monarch is a source of ridicule for the Church of England and she is not even allowed to set foot in the House of Commons. **Is such a 'head' really necessary?**

ICLE-ALEV-0010.7

c. I personally feel that we should retain the Monarchy. They are our country's heritage and other countries envy us for our Monarchy. They give our country something to feel proud of, **who has never dreamed of being a Royal?**

ICLE-ALEV-0002.8

d. we should not have one law for all people. Because all people are not the same. You may see a 60 years old man who is healthy and looks very young, and has no problem to work. **Why should we restrict him?**

IR/G/6/13

Questions in (5.15) are all classic examples of rhetorical questions in that they are raised at the end of the paragraphs, sum up their preceding argument and are left unanswered.

Rhetorical questions are used in yet another rather different way. There are instances where the rhetorical questions are followed by some comment. It seems likely that the writers in such cases tend to mitigate the force that such questions carry and thus be more respectful to the reader. The inclusion of a comment after a rhetorical question maintains the reader involvement and might lead to mitigating the inherent forcefulness of the rhetorical question, as Frank (1990: 738) argues:

the value of rhetorical questions lies in their capacity to serve a dual role; by strengthening assertions and mitigating potential threats to face, they enable people to win an argument (short term), while not jeopardizing a relationship (long-term).

(Frank, 1990: 738)

It is interesting to note that almost half of the rhetorical questions used by the British students are followed by some comments while only 1 out of 16 rhetorical questions used by the Iranian students is actually followed by a comment, suggesting that the British students seem to be more concerned with the reader's face. The following examples include the rhetorical questions which are followed by some comments [comments are in italics]:

(5.16)

a. ... I watched the Benn-McLellan fight in 1994 and despite the shocking consequences for McLellan it was one of the most memorable sporting

occasions I have ever seen; The same can be said for Ali and Foreman's "Rumble in the Jungle" and I wonder if anyone who watched Frank Bruno win his world title fight this year will ever forget it. When you watch boxers like Nasseem Hamed at work it seems ridiculous to say that boxing isn't a proper sport and these incredibly talented men shouldn't be allowed to do what they do best and entertain.

Who would ban boxing if they had felt the excitement and passion which it evokes in those people who give it a chance. *Banning boxing goes against the will of the many. Improving the availability of medical help is good enough for me, I think boxing should go on.*

Boxing - B02

b. ... I think that I would like to see a change in the law to allow women to have children if they feel able to cope but I feel if legalised it would be a decision taken to freely by women and not taking into consideration the consequences. At twelve years old the mother could be near seventy and **is this really the age to bring up a teenager?** *The resentment, bullying and communication barrier between the child and mother could cause numerous problems.*

ICLE-ALEV-0004.8

The writers in the above examples give some brief comments on the given questions and try to carry on involving the reader in the text rather than closing the dialogue as the classic rhetorical questions typically do. In (5.16a), the writer argues against banning boxing by listing a number of memorable boxing matches s/he has seen. S/he then raises

a rhetorical question which, given the preceding arguments, requires ‘nobody’ as its response. The writer then goes on to give a brief comment explaining why boxing should not be banned (*Banning boxing goes against the will of the many*). In (5.16b), the writer argues that some change should be made to the law regarding the age of women who want to have children in old age and then gives an example of a case where the mother of a twelve-year old teenager is herself seventy years old. S/he then poses a rhetorical question whose answer is implied to be ‘no’. The writer then comments on the question by explaining why 70 is not an appropriate age to bring up a teenager. It is true that commented rhetorical questions are less interactive – since they are not completely left unanswered for the reader to get involved, but the comment provided by the writer enables him/her to build on the preceding argument while at the same time reducing the forcefulness of the assertion made via the rhetorical question. Such commented rhetorical questions are, therefore, “powerful persuasive devices for maintaining involvement while yet enabling writers to take longer turns to expand on their arguments” (Frank, 1989: 255).

Some rhetorical questions found in both corpora are used as a series of questions posed by the writer. The writer sets up an argument and then raises a series of rhetorical questions and either leaves them unanswered (as in 5.17) or briefly comments on them (as in 5.18). The writer does not seem to expect the reader to answer these questions and therefore is not concerned about establishing an explicit dialogic interaction with the reader but instead s/he forms the questions in a way to build on his/her argument more effectively and persuasively since these series of questions assert his/her opinion rather

strongly and their “logical implications are always in the questioner’s favor” (Frank, 1989: 253). As Frank (1989: 253) observes, a series of rhetorical questions are found “in contexts where closure, capping or predictability of response is more desirable an outcome than furthering the conversational exchange”:

(5.17)

a. Yes, just like this TV causes an argument between family members.

And we usually insist on watching nonsense programs just for Fun. **Do we ever think of what we are watching? Or how can T.V influence our ordinary life? Is it good to be treated by T.V to be a mobile encyclopedia?!**

IR/A/6/41

b. and all these problems were caused because of their retirement before the time it had been. There fore, **why should we take the chance of life from them? Why should not we let them feel happy and jolly while they are able to do their work themselves. Why do we want to see them sick while they can live healthy with having so much love in their heart.**

IR/G/6/15

c. Remember that time that wasn’t TV or any communication tools. **People how could knew about each other, or how could knew the world around themselves. How could they understand the where is beauty, where is even better for life.**

IR/A/4/2

(5.18) The history of science is littered with examples of discoveries made with good intent but which have been misused. Take for example Kalashnikov, the inventor of the Kalashnikov machine gun. He was simply asked to design a machine gun for the Czechoslovakian government: **is he to shoulder the responsibility of the deaths caused by Kalashnikov rifles. How was he to know that the government in Czechoslovakia were going to sell his rifles to militant and rebel forces around the world.** *He was just asked to design the gun. If he had not done it the same militant groups would be shooting each other with different weapons.*

ICLE-ALEV-0018.8

The largest group of questions used by students in British and Iranian essays (44% and 56% respectively) are instances of real or ‘genuine’ (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007) questions to which the writer seems to be either genuinely in search of answers or indifferent to knowing them. Real questions, like rhetorical questions, are left unanswered but, unlike rhetorical questions whose answers are expected to be inferred by the reader (see criterion iii for identifying rhetorical questions in 5.3.1 above), the answers to real questions are not obvious (that is why they are called ‘real’). These are the questions which are raised by the writer and left unanswered so that the reader has the chance to think about them more deeply. From this perspective, it can be argued that real questions are very interactive. In (5.19) the writers pose real questions in a way to implicitly involve the reader in the construction of their desired argument guiding him/her to their intended interpretation:

(5.19)

a. We must ask if such video games are detrimental to the youth of the world and also its population, or whether they relieve stress and form part of modern life. They do utilize the brain, testing reaction times and lateral thinking skill, but **is this escapism a good or a bad thing?** ...

ICLE-ALEV-0010.6

b. Due to the carrot that was the £7 million jackpot every week, analysts were worried that more people would start to gamble, spending money that they could not afford. This was a major talking point and **what could these people do if they won £7 million?**

010

c. By genetic manipulation many hereditary degenerative diseases could be wiped out, but **would people be satisfied with that?**

ICLE-ALEV-0011.8

d. Television and it's influences in family communication. Such an argumental topic to discuss. we all know this magic box and we all have or more than one of it in our homes, But the case here is **how do we spend our times in front of it**, Not just our time actually, our mind, our thought... etc. The point here I think is **how do we pay attention to our communities with the family,** ...

IR/A/6/34

The interesting observation in the way real questions are used by the Iranian students is that almost all the paragraph-initial real questions, which appear to be intended to be

interesting, are immediately followed on the same line by the next sentence - which is not the answer. If a line break or a 'slot' was left by the writer for the reader to answer such questions, these real questions would be an effective way to involve the reader in the text but since such slots are not left for the reader, the reader might find it confusing to interpret the ideas. Frank (1989: 43) argues that "the space visually works to prevent readers from assuming that the next (adjacent) sentence is the second pair part." The space also "leaves room for them to mentally insert the notably missing response – since without an answer, the text is discontinuous" (p 43). This 'discontinuity' might make the text difficult to follow. Example (5.20) is an instance where the writer poses a real question at the beginning of an essay and immediately follows it with his/her next idea:

(5.20) **Have you ever seen an old man who is working happily?** There are several reasons why working is good for different ages. The first one is feeling useful, Second, is the happiness that every one feels after working efficiently, and the third one is the effect of working on the people health specially in the old ages. IR/G/6/28

In (5.20), the writer directly asks the reader whether they have seen an old man who is working happily and then immediately mentions some reasons why working is good for different ages. The reader might assume that these reasons are the answers to the question and might find it difficult to interpret the main intention of the writer. In other words, the writer's real intention of posing the question in the first place (which is perhaps attracting the reader's attention) seems to be obscured here. The writer, however, could have

avoided making such confusion by leaving a line break or ‘slot’ after the question for the reader to think about the question. In this way, the writer could have implicitly involved the reader in the text.

In contrast to the Iranian students, the British students typically employ their real questions which seem to be intended to attract the reader’s attention at the end of paragraphs. In so doing, the desired empty slot is automatically created and the reader has the chance to pause, think and try to answer the question and fill the slot and thus be implicitly involved in the text. From this perspective, it can be argued that the real questions which are used at the end of paragraphs function like (unanswered) rhetorical questions in that they also leave space for the reader to pause and think about the question. However, while rhetorical questions take advantage of their preceding arguments to imply the answer to the reader, real questions seem to genuinely seek information without necessarily suggesting or implying an obvious answer to the reader. Yet real questions can be strategically posed to guide the reader to a certain direction. So it can be argued that, while rhetorical questions often function retrospectively, real questions are typically raised to prepare for the upcoming argument. In (5.21), the writer poses a real question at the end of the first paragraph:

(5.21) It is sometimes argued that they can mount the fox back at home, but most times the fox is so damaged by the gun shot wound that only its head is mountable. It is such a waste to see these beautiful creatures hung up on walls for show, when their numbers are dwindling. The idea raises

disgust from other countries, and in some places is laughable, **so why do we British hang on to this cruel and heartless exercise.**

I wonder if the people who partake in this sport would like to be chased down by bloodhounds and people with guns, while they themselves were unarmed... Fox hunting - FH06

The empty slot provided by the writer at the end of the first paragraph in (5.21) enables the reader to think about the question before reading the next sentence. This gives the writer the opportunity to interact with the reader and move the reader in the direction that he/she desires. The reader may also feel more engaged with the text (and the writer) and is expected to keep on reading. So the real question posed at the end of the first paragraph seems to be intended to prepare the reader for the following argument(s) in the next paragraph(s).

Taken together then, the observations in this section suggest that both British and Iranian students favour a less overtly dialogic style by leaving the majority of their questions unanswered, conveying that they, in general, prefer to interact with their readers more implicitly. Equally, it can be suggested that both groups of students are in favour of being more interactive (not dialogic) through unanswered questions.

5.4.5 Research question five: questions and their contents

As noted earlier, questions can be analyzed based on their contents, that is whether they contain interactant pronouns or not. It can be seen from Table 5.17 that Iranian students tend to use questions which contain interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (henceforth called *interactant questions*) slightly more frequently than questions without interactant pronouns *we* and *you* (henceforth called *non-interactant questions*). The British students, however, use non-interactant questions much more frequently than interactant questions.

Table 5.17 Comparative frequencies of questions in relation to their content (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Interactant questions	Non-interactant questions
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	33 (0.70)	28 (0.59)
British essays [60,209 words]	24 (0.39)	111 (1.84)

While both British and Iranian students use interactant pronoun *we* in their questions with similar frequencies, Iranian students use *you* in their questions almost three times more frequently than British students (see Table 5.18).

As can be seen from Table 5.19, Iranian high-scoring students and the Iranians who took the Academic version of the test use interactant questions more frequently than Iranian low-scoring students and the Iranians who took the General version of the test. This pattern is different from the overall pattern shown in Table 5.17 where Iranians in

general, irrespective of their language proficiency and test version, tend to use interactant questions more frequently.

Table 5.18 Comparative frequencies of interactant questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	We	You
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	16 (0.34)	17 (0.36)
British essays [60,209 words]	18 (0.29)	6 (0.09)

Table 5.19 Comparative frequencies of questions in relation to their content (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Interactants questions	Non-interactant questions
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	28 (1.06)	18 (0.68)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	5 (0.24)	10 (0.48)
Academic version [23,475 words]	24 (1.02)	18 (0.76)
General version [23,302 words]	9 (0.38)	10 (0.42)

It can be seen from Table 5.20 that all the Iranian students (except Iranian low-scorers) use *we* and *you* in their questions with almost equal frequencies.

Table 5.20 Comparative frequencies of interactant questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	We	You
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	15 (0.57)	13 (0.49)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	1 (0.04)	4 (0.19)
Academic version [23,475 words]	11 (0.46)	13 (0.55)
General version [23,302 words]	5 (0.21)	4 (0.17)

As argued throughout this chapter, questions are inherently interactive and can assist the writer to create a dialogic relationship with the readers by involving them either explicitly or implicitly in the text. Questions can be even more interactively engaging if they contain interactant pronouns since such pronouns reinforce the already present ‘interactiveness’ of questions by either establishing a common ground with the reader through the use of *we* (as in 5.22) or setting up a dialogic tone through the use of *you* (as in 5.23):

(5.22)

a. I think when the members of a family are gathering and watching TV, this causes a better relationship between them. I think watching TV makes people to be more socialized. This statement that television is dangerous, is totally wrong, **how we can say that when we almost watch whatever we need from TV.** We watch news, that I think is the most important

program. Television is useful if we know how and when to use it.

IR/A/6/28

b. We can argue that surely the scientist must have the greatest realization of the uses of the discovery good or bad since he is the expert on the subject. But **are we right to blame him?** Let us consider that he has discovered a cure for cancer as a result of genetic engineering. It is against human nature to stop at this stage and ask, should I introduce what could be the greatest medical discovery of our lifetime when I am not 100% sure of the consequences.

ICLE-ALEV-0021.8

(5.23)

a. ... if you have just 3,4 hours in a day for them, it's not logically right to spend this little time in front of TV, of course you may like some programs , but remember that TV and it's program is always yours, but **what about your family, your wife or husband, your children, your mum and dad.** They would never return to you, if you missed them, not physically, Loyally and spiritually even.

IR/A/6/34

b. ... I find this to be a difficult issue to agree or oppose as only being young and having my life ahead it is quite easy to say that it is disgraceful women of late 50's having children and they had their chance and they let it go but if at fifty and maybe you put your career first all your life and now want a family **should you not be given the chance and is it not how old you are but what kind of a mother you would be?** I think that I

would like to see a change in the law to allow women to have children if
they feel able to cope but ... ICLE-ALEV-0004.8

Almost half of the questions including interactant pronoun *we* in both corpora are rhetorical questions. As noted in the previous section, rhetorical questions are a major way to assert an opinion rather forcefully. The use of *we* in rhetorical questions seems to mitigate the ‘coerciveness’ of the assertion put forward by the writer through establishing a common ground with the reader. Examples in (5.24) are all the instances of rhetorical questions which contain interactant pronoun *we* used by the Iranian and the British students:

(5.24)

a. Yes just like this TV causes an argument between family members. And we usually insist on watching nonsense programs just for Fun. **Do we ever think of what we are watching? Or how can T.V influence our ordinary life? ...** IR/A/6/41

b. Finally I have to mention that having a family is the gift from the lord, therefore **why do we lose it for a nonsense device?** IR/A/6/46

c. You may see a 60 years old man who is healthy and looks very young, and has no problem to work. **Why should we restrict him?** IR/G/6/13

d. and all these problems were caused because of their retirement before the time it had been. There fore, **why should we take the chance of life from them? Why should not we let them feel happy and jolly while they are able to do their work themselves. Why do we want to see**

them sick while they can live healthy with having so much love in their heart.

IR/G/6/15

e. Many parents will argue that their son's hero is a boxer. They may try to copy the boxer, but is this acceptable? **Do we want to be presenting boxing as good if it is going to cause disreputable behavior?**

Boxing - B11

f. **Do we, the western world (5% of the population of the world), have the right to use the resources of the rest of the world at the environmental cost?** Just because we can not be bothered to get out of bed a bit earlier to catch public transport. Even if we did, then shortly so does the rest of the world. That could have disastrous implications.

Transport 16

Mention was made above of the fact that the use of interactant pronoun *you* (rather than *we*) in questions establishes a dialogic tone since it is directly addressed to the reader. As also noted above, the Iranian students in this study in general use *you* in their questions more frequently than the British students. The analysis of such questions used by the Iranian students revealed an interesting pattern in that almost half of these questions (8 out of 17) are used in the essay-initial positions as a strategy to open the essays interactively:

(5.25)

a. **Have you ever noticed that new hidden member has been included to our life?** Over the last decades Television has entered in to family

life... IR/A/6/21

b. Do you ever thought Excessive watching TV had psychological and physical problems in children as well as adult ? We know that it has a great concern.. to parents , ground parents and educators... IR/A/6/32

c. Have you ever thought about life without television? what utter unbelievable!... IR/A/6/18

d. Are you really prefer watching TV instead of reading a book or being with your family and talk to them? if so, it may be a problem that you have to solve it as soon as its possible... IR/A/6/36

e. Have you ever seen an old man who is working happily? There are several reasons why working is good for different ages... IR/G/6/28

As argued in the previous sections, the Iranian students have not been necessarily successful in their attempts to open their essays through such questions. In addition, the greater use of *you* in questions used by Iranian students suggests that they are more inclined towards setting up an overt dialogic tone with their readers. British students, on the other hand, do not tend to establish an overt dialogic tone through raising questions which contain *you*.

5.4.6 Research question six: questions and their discourse functions

As introduced in section 5.3.3, the analysis of questions in the present study resulted in identifying four main functions¹⁶: *provoking readers' interest*, *constructing argument*, *structuring discourse*, and *summing up argument*. Some questions may serve more than

¹⁴ There are, however, a few instances in the Iranian corpus which, despite their dialogic interaction with the reader, do not fit into any of these functions and are, therefore, classified as *others*.

one function in a text. Collectively, these four functions are exploited to construe an interaction with the readers, bring them into the text, and guide them to the writer's intended destination. In this section, I will consider each of these functions in turn.

Table 5.21 shows the distribution of occurrences of the functions of questions in the Iranian and British data. As can be seen, about half of all questions were used to construct and sum up the writers' arguments. It is not surprising to see that students use questions mostly for argumentative purposes given the fact that they are writing argumentative essays. The slightly more frequent use of questions for [more] argumentative purposes by the British students, however, indicates that they may be more aware of the generic conventions of argumentative writing and use their questions accordingly. The Iranian students, on the other hand, tend to use questions for argumentative purposes less frequently.

Table 5.21 Comparative frequencies of functions of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Provoking Readers' Interest	Constructing Argument	Structuring Discourse	Summing up Argument	Others
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	17 (0.36)	13 (0.27)	12 (0.25)	16 (0.34)	3
British essays [60,209 words]	23 (0.38)	38 (0.63)	32 (0.53)	42 (0.69)	0

It can be seen from Table 5.22 that the purposes for which questions are used in the Iranian sub-corpora are broadly consistent with the overall pattern of combined Iranian

data as shown in Table 5.21 above. As observed in Table 5.21, Iranians use questions to provoke readers' interest and sum up argument with almost the same frequencies. This pattern is also observed in the Iranian sub-corpora. Similarly, questions that construct argument and structure discourse are employed with nearly the same frequencies. This pattern is also consistent with the Iranian sub-corpora (Table 5.22).

Table 5.22 Comparative frequencies of functions of questions (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in the Iranian sub-corpora according to language proficiency and test version

	Provoking Readers' Interest	Constructing Argument	Structuring Discourse	Summing up Argument	Others
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	12 (0.45)	10 (0.38)	9 (0.34)	12 (0.45)	2 (0.07)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	5 (0.24)	3 (0.14)	3 (0.14)	4 (0.19)	1 (0.04)
Academic version [23,475 words]	11 (0.46)	11 (0.46)	8 (0.34)	9 (0.38)	3 (0.12)
General version [23,302 words]	6 (0.25)	2 (0.08)	4 (0.17)	7 (0.30)	0

I shall discuss all of the functions in what follows by examining each individual one in relation to its position, type, dialogic status and content.

5.4.6.1 Provoking readers' interest

Asking an interesting question, particularly at the outset of a text, may be used to get the readers' attention, arouse their interest in the topic, involve them in the text and encourage them to keep on reading. The main characteristic feature of these questions within the present corpora is that they are *all* unanswered real questions. They are, therefore, highly interactive since they are designed by the writer to involve the readers in the text and guide them in the direction that s/he wishes.

Such questions can be posed in any position in the text. They may be used in 'titles', for instance, to create interest in the potential readers (Hyland, 2002b; Webber, 1994) although this was observed only once in the present data:

(5.26) TV or not TV?

IR/A/6/17

Iranian students typically tend to use questions to provoke readers' interest at the beginning of the first paragraph in their essays. In fact, 16 out of the total of 17 of such questions are employed in paragraph-initial positions. As noted earlier, however, these questions just appear to be intended to be interesting and are often unlikely to effectively arouse the reader's interest since they are not often clearly linked with their following arguments, as in example (5.8) reintroduced as (5.27) below:

(5.27) **Have you ever seen an old man who is working happily?** There are several reasons why working is good for different ages. The first one is feeling useful, Second, is the happiness that everyone feels after working

efficiently, and the third one is the effect of working on the people health especially in the old ages. IR/G/6/28

Although not necessarily successfully executed, such questions are heavily used by the Iranian students irrespective of their linguistic competence or test version, suggesting that they might have been instructed to utilize questions this way. It can be also argued that L1 transfer might have led them to use questions this way. As a native speaker of Farsi, I can testify that occasionally Farsi texts open with questions but, unfortunately, I do not have any empirical evidence showing this. Iranian students seem to use questions in this way also as a strategy to introduce the topic to the reader. Almost one third of essay-initial questions repeat part of the wording of the test topics, suggesting that it might be possible that using questions to open the essays is under the influence of the topic. The following question, for instance, appear to be intended not only to provoke the readers' interest but also to lead to the following discussion:

(5.28) **Why some people think television destroys theirs family.** I think TV can learn we how we can have a good family, good children and lovely relation. When we see a lovely film, we like to talk to our partner. We like to sit near to our love and kiss her and talk to her about our life and our sense to each other... IR/A/4/18

In contrast to the Iranian students, the British students tend to use such questions in paragraph-final positions. 22 out of 23 questions employed by the British students to

arouse the reader's interest are placed at the end of the paragraphs. The writer raises an open real question at the end of the paragraph, intending to make the reader interested in the following discussion. As noted earlier, such questions are highly interactive since they involve the readers in the text by making them think about the raised issue more deeply. The use of such questions in paragraph-final positions keeps the argument open because through such questions the reader is expected to pause, think about the raised question, get interested in it, and then keep on reading the rest of the text, as in (5.29):

(5.29) National Lottery draws have become a rigor part of Saturday nights for most British Families. Some people have become millionaires overnight because their numbers have been picked out. However, before the first draw was made, heated debate centred around the fact that **should the National Lottery even exist?**

During the debate many interested parties stated their objections to the National Lottery. One of Britain's most famous businesses and Families had a particular objection to the start of the National Lottery. The 'pool' companies and Littlewards, in particular, were particularly worried about the start of the National Lottery. They were worried that people instead of spending money on the 'pools', would stake a £1 on the National Lottery instead. This was a major part of their argument, that the National Lottery would take their business away ...

010

More than half of the questions provoking readers' interest in the Iranian corpus are realized as Yes/no interrogatives which contain the interactant pronoun *you* (with no single instance of *we*). As noted at the end of the last section, Iranian students tend to establish an overt dialogic interaction, addressing the reader directly through the use of *you* in an attempt to gain their attention and explicitly involve them in the text. Interactant pronouns and questions are complementary resources: a question is interactive and the pronoun *you* is interactive; so when *you* occurs in a question it adds to the interactive effect.

The favourite syntactic structure employed by the Iranian students occurs in the questions which start with: *Have you ever...?* or *Do you ever...?*. This could be the effect of L1 transfer as some Farsi texts (particularly science popularizations) open with posing a question with exactly the Farsi equivalent of the aforementioned syntactic structure. Examples in (5.30) show the way such questions are posed by the Iranian students:

(5.30)

- a. Do you ever thought Excessive watching TV had psychological and physical problems in children as well as adult? IR/A/6/32
- b. Have you ever think: "how a great revolution has occurred in social life after television invention"? IR/A/6/10
- c. Have you ever heard that how much of times we use to watching the television daily? IR/A/4/17

The British students, similarly, favour the use of Yes/no interrogatives for questions which are used as a way of arousing reader's interest but, unlike the Iranian students, they are less likely to utilize interactant pronouns in their questions, with only 2 out of 23 of them containing *we* or *you*.

5.4.6.2 Constructing argument

In addition to provoking readers' interest, questions also play a key role in constructing the writer's argument. Questions can create a 'slot' within which the writer can invite the reader to join him/her for the construction of the argument. Hyland (2002b: 548) points out that the importance of such questions is "helping the writer to create what appears to be a jointly constructed textual environment for exploration, providing writers with a rhetorical space to contribute to the completion of the text and the achievement of its objectives". Such questions are also highly interactive since they "bring the reader to the heart of the matter" (Hyland, 2002b: 548).

The main characteristic feature of these questions in both corpora is that they are *all* unanswered real questions which are raised in paragraph-medial positions. But while all the instances in the Iranian corpus are realized as Wh-form interrogatives, only half of the cases in the British corpus are realized as this form. Iranian students also tend to use interactant pronouns more frequently than British students in these types of questions.

Such questions can help the writer in the construction of his/her intended argument in different ways. The writers in the following examples, for instance, raise unanswered real

questions to create some space to interact with the readers by involving them in the smooth flow of the discussion and leading them to the next line of argument:

(5.31)

a. ... It is true in a way, the development of portable calculating machines (calculators) has meant that we no longer need to be able to work out sums in our heads, **but at what cost?** In many shops, the cashiers appear to be dumbfounded by the simplest of sums without the aid of their tills...

ICLE-ALEV-0007.6

b. We can argue that surely the scientist must have the greatest realization of the uses of the discovery good or bad since he is the expert on the subject. **But are we right to blame him?** Let us consider that he has discovered a cure for cancer as a result of genetic engineering. It is against human nature to stop at this stage and ask, should I introduce what could be the greatest medical discovery of our lifetime when I am not 100% sure of the consequences...

ICLE-ALEV-0021.8

c. ... it's natural when you don't love your family, when you think that they don't understand you and your beliefs and even you don't know the way to talk with them, so you escape of facing with them, and talking.

There is no difference between men and women in this case, but the point is your point of view about our communities with family at home and **how do you like them** and **how much of your time do you prefer to spend with them**, and actually **how much time do you have for you**

family, if you have just 3,4 hours in a day for them, it's not logically right to spend this little time in front of TV, of course you may like some programs , but remember that TV and it's program is always yours, but what about your family, your wife or husband, your children, your mum and dad. They would never return to you, if you missed them, not physically, loyally and spiritually even. IR/A/6/34

In (5.31a), the writer seems to be implying that it is a good thing that calculating machines do the calculations for humans, but s/he raises a real question afterwards to build a line of argument against the use of such machines. Note the inclusion of *but* immediately before raising the question signalling the writer's intention to make a contradiction. The use of *but* plus 'at what cost?' shows that the writer may intend to construct a counterargument denying or challenging the usefulness of calculating machines. The use of a mid-paragraph unanswered real question, therefore, helps the writer to create some space for him/herself to construct his/her desired argument and lead the reader in that particular direction. Similarly, in (5.31b) the writer poses a paragraph-medial unanswered real question in order to build a certain line of argument. The writer first argues that the scientist should be responsible for his/her discovery since s/he is the expert. However, the writer's main argument is that the scientist should not be blamed for the consequences of his/her discovery. The writer raises a real question leaving the reader to think about it and then implies (through setting up a hypothetical situation) that it is not right to blame the scientist for the by-products of his/her discovery. Notice again the use of *but* immediately before the question signalling the writer's intention to create a

counterargument. The use of an unanswered real question in the middle of the paragraph assists the writer in providing the necessary space for constructing his/her desired argument. In addition, the inclusion of *we* in the question further assists the writer to explicitly interact with the reader. In other words, *we* contributes to the interactiveness of the question by expressing solidarity and assuming shared knowledge with the reader. Unanswered real questions for constructing arguments in (5.31c) are not as skilfully formulated as the previous examples. They, nevertheless, show the writer's attempt in using these questions as a means of building some arguments. In the first paragraph, the writer seems to be suggesting that when somebody does not love their family, they may escape from being with or talking with them (and perhaps watching TV is one way to do so). In the second paragraph, the writer appears to be intending to suggest that there is a link between family relationships and watching TV and that people should spend enough time with their family members. The writer's series of unanswered real questions seem to assist him/her both to build and expand this line of argument as s/he, subsequently, goes on to comment on the contents of the questions: ... *it is not logically right to spend this little time in front of TV...* . The use of *you* in the questions also increases the interactiveness of the questions, giving a dialogic tone to the text.

As mentioned earlier in this section, British students seem to be more aware of the conventions of the genre of argumentative essays since they use a greater number of their questions for argumentative purposes. Evidence which appears to support this claim includes the fact that 24 out of 38 of these questions in the British corpus are surrounded by semantic expressions such as *argument, issue, debate, discussion, question, query,*

etc., signalling the writer's overt intention to set up an argument and thus his/her understanding of the requirements of this kind of genre:

(5.32) A reason for the *debate* being so heated is the variation in fortunes of separate fighters. Two extremes can be identified; millionaire, celebrity status in the case of Naseem Hamed for example, or death in the ring as is sometimes the tragic case. It is too easy to allow emotion to control the *argument* and the various *arguments* must each be given light. Foremost in many peoples minds is the *issue* of death and the potential for it to occur within boxing. **Is it inhumane to support a sport in which death can so tragically happen? What about motor racing, mountaineering, rugby, horse riding?** The list of sports in which death all too often occurs is numerous...

Boxing - B-06

In addition to such examples, some questions, particularly in the British corpus, are 'prefaced' by phrases like *'The (real) question is'*, *'The (major) query is'* *'The question to ask is'*, etc., signifying that students in this genre typically intend to label their questions in order to highlight the argumentative nature of the topic they are writing about. Take, for instance, the following example where the writer argues that sex selection by parents is an important issue, stressing the argumentative nature of this proposition by posing an open question and highlighting its importance via labelling it as *'the major query is'*:

(5.33) Sex selection is another issue that affects the rights of the parents.

*The major query is, **do parents have the right to choose the sex of their child?*** The main worry is that the choice of sex will lead to other specifications which result in parents being able to choose the 'perfect child' and natural variation going out of the window...

ICLE-ALEV-0029.8

The analysis of questions in their contexts reveals that the British students typically argue fairly convincingly after raising their questions, whereas the Iranian students in most instances appear to be struggling in creating effective arguments after questions. British students elaborate more fully on their arguments and attempt to persuade the reader accordingly. It can be argued that this is at least partly due to their higher linguistic competence. A possible explanation for the more skilful building of the arguments by the British students emerges when the use of questions for constructing arguments by the Iranian students at different proficiency levels is considered: Iranian high scorers argue more effectively and extensively after their questions than Iranian low-scorers. Compare examples (5.34) and (5.35) below written by an Iranian high-scorer and an Iranian low-scorer respectively and note the comparatively more effective, convincing, and complete argument following the question posed by the high-scorer in the first example:

(5.34) Nowadays because of various jobs, works, classes & programs the member of a family have less time than before to stay together so **if we spend that little time to watching TV, what about our family, we**

shouldn't forget that family is not some people that just live together, They are a group that love, blood kindness & friendship connect them together, A group that we would dedicate our life or money or everything for them, but when TV is on we just sit together, & and drinking tea together without any connection, without paying attention to them because TV is magic, because it has screen it give your conscious part of mind, that you would forget the problems or matters which are active on your mind, even for a little part of time. IR/A/6/22

(5.35) After retiring we feel upset and think we are not useful. Sometimes we get depression. in this step government must feel duty for return retirees to natural life with facilities and respect. **now if the persons who young are without work what do they do?** I think mustn't replace young person instead old person but also must use of experience of old man and power of young man. IR/G/4/2

In (5.34), the writer prepares the premise for arguing for the importance of family members through raising a real question. The question can help the writer to sound very interactive since it appears to be intended to push the reader towards thinking about it and possibly answering it. This, in principle, can make the question more involving. The question is then followed by the writer's comments on the importance of family and the adverse effect of (too much) watching of TV on it. In contrast, the writer's attempt for arguing effectively after the question in (5.35) appears less satisfactory. Before posing the question, the writer implies that retirement makes old people depressed and that the

government should be responsible for helping the retired people. Then s/he poses a question which signals s/he is going to talk about young people next. But, instead, the writer gives a 'bald-on-record' personal idea about using both young and old people and thus fails to build any relevant and effective argument after the question.

British students typically tend to raise a cluster of real unanswered questions in paragraph-medial positions as an effective strategy for both involving the reader in the text and leading them to the intended direction. In (5.36), the paragraph mainly consists of three open questions which in principle assist the writer to create an argument and invite the reader to think about the raised concerns. Since the following paragraph does not provide the answers to the raised questions in the first paragraph, it can be speculated that the questions *themselves* are the writer's argument. The writer in this example formulates the moral problems raised as a result of some 'genetics advances' through three unanswered open questions. In other words, the clusters of questions reflect the ideational as well as interactional aspects of the text. The clustering of questions creates an interaction with the reader by inviting them to think about these issues and collaborate with the writer in constructing the subsequent discussion (which is not necessarily the direct continuation of these questions):

(5.36) ... Many moral problems are raised with such advances, **do we have the right to play God? Should we be able to choose features of our children?** More importantly then is the question of **'Is it right to deprive a child of life because of genetic defects'** which is likely to raise

the most argument. Along with the moral problems there are also physical dangers with 'tampering' with genetics... ICLE-ALEV-0024.8

Example (5.37) also comprises a series of questions asked by the writer as a strategy both to involve the reader in the text and highlight that the issue being discussed is a very controversial one about which there are still some unresolved queries. Note that the writer states that 'it is an argument not easily solved...' immediately after the clusters, suggesting that s/he is demanding the reader to come into the text and try to collaborate with the writer to construct the related subsequent argument:

(5.37) The real question to ask is **where to draw the line**. One could wrangle endlessly about the pros & cons of genetically manipulated wheat varieties but the question to ask is **do we judge on intention or on results? If a scientist releases a cure for the common cold but an unpredictable side effect causes unsightly rashes what position can we take? Were his intentions good or did he rush the patent through to release the drug + start making money?** Basically it is an argument not easily solved... ICLE-ALEV-0016.8

5.4.6.3 Structuring discourse

As we have seen above, questions can assist the writer to construct an argument jointly with the reader's collaboration: the writer poses a question, leaves some space for the reader to think about it, and then builds his/her argument based on the question leading

the reader in his/her preferred direction. Questions have a relatively similar function to constructing argument in the text: they can be used as “in-text signals to navigate the reader through an argument” leading readers metadiscursively “where writers wish them to go, moving from old to new information and explicitly establishing preferred interpretations of propositional meanings to ensure that they recover the writer’s intentions” (Hyland, 2002b: 544). The writer raises questions to frame the discourse and organize the following arguments not only as a textual strategy, but also as an effective way to create a dialogic interaction with the readers by involving them in the construction of the text and guiding them in his/her preferred direction. Hyland (2002b: 544) argues that although these questions organize the text by “either introducing shifts in the discourse or preparing for the next step in an argument”, they more importantly “represent the writer’s awareness of audience and the extent to which he or she wishes to restrict the reader’s selection of alternative interpretations and directions.” Such questions are, therefore, similar to questions which are employed for constructing argument in that they also prepare the foundation for the ensuing arguments. The questions employed for structuring discourse are, however, different from the questions which are used for constructing argument in that the former performs a more textual function of organizing the text, whereas the latter performs a more interactive function of involving the reader in the text.

Just over a quarter of all the questions in the present corpora are used to organize the text. The main characteristic feature of these questions in the present corpora is that they are *all* answered (either immediately or with a delay) in the text as such questions have a

strong discourse structuring function (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007:348). These questions within the data are almost equally distributed in different positions in the texts, are realized mostly as Wh-forms and may (or may not) contain interactant pronouns.

Questions which structure the discourse may function slightly differently depending on whether they are answered immediately or later in the text. Immediately answered questions seem to limit the reader's choice of response since the writer does not offer the reader the scope or opportunity to think of any other alternative responses and instead *immediately* provides his/her *own* desired answer, aiming to push the flow of discussion forward and manage the structure of the argument. The writers in the following examples restrict the reader's possible responses by promptly answering the questions the way they prefer and frame their discourse and organize their ensuing arguments accordingly:

(5.38)

a. **But what would we do if suddenly it upset the ecosystem, draining the soil of its nutrients and not allowing other plants to grow?** *In theory a scientist should take responsibility for this but in an area such as genetic manipulation of which we do not know a great deal, it may not be possible to find a solution.* ICLE-ALEV-0023.8

b. **So what could possibly stop them from eating beef?** *The answer is fear for their lives.* ICLE-ALEV-0003.9

c. but we ought to ask ourselves **"What happens when the computer-orientated world collapses?"** *We would then have to use our brains.*

- d. **You know what's the problem?** *Government has not program to amuse retirement people.* IR/G/6/21
- e. **Suppose that this devise (I mean TV) has not invented, what happens.** *The communication would be at a low level.* IR/A/6/47
- f. **what we can do at home when we haven't TV?** *we can Read more newspaper or book or what we have to do for weekend , or what we can do for backyard and front yard.* IR/A/4/24
- g. For example you see the man's that die after Their retirement **do you know why?** *Because they think that this is the end chapter of their life...* IR/G/6/49
- h. **Is developing in technology bad or good?** *The answer is all of them are good and useful but we must use them correctly.* IR/A/4/57

There are a few other instances found only in the Iranian corpus where the writer poses the question on behalf of the *reader* and then immediately answers it. The writer predicts that the reader might have a question in mind at a particular stage in the text and therefore foregrounds the role of the reader by creating a reader-in-the-text (Thompson and Thetela 1995), raises the question on behalf of the reader-in-the-text and then answers it in order to help him/her process the text more effectively, as Thompson points out:

An interrogative mood choice typically constructs the role of questioner. This role may be assigned to the reader - the question is projected as being asked by the reader - in which case the writer is most likely to be assigned the complementary role of answerer.

(Thompson, 2001: 59)

Such questions are posed by the reader-in-the-text in order for them to be responded to by the writer. In the present data, the distribution of roles is signalled explicitly enabling me to distinguish questions asked on behalf of the the reader from other types of questions:

(5.39) Absolutely I disagree with this opinion: **why?** *I'll explain...*

IR/A/6/29

As can be seen, the writer explicitly signals (*I'll explain*) that s/he is going to provide the response to a question posed by the reader. Such overt signalling shows that the reader is assigned the role of questioner while the writer is assigned the role of answerer.

Questions whose answers are given later in the text tend to provide a framework for discourse and enhance the understanding of the topic of the text by introducing relevant background information (Kim, 2006). These questions also primarily function textually by, as noted above, performing 'in-text signals' leading the readers metadiscursively where the writer wishes them to go (Hyland, 2002b: 544).

Questions with delayed responses in the British corpus are used in different ways. Some surface in the beginning of the paragraph and are answered later at the end of the same paragraph (as in 5.40) while some are posed at the end of the paragraph and are answered either throughout the next paragraph (as in 5.41), or throughout the remainder of the text (as in 5.42):

(5.40) So **what is the future of boxing?** There must as in most things, be some room for compromise. Suggestions as for the improvement of the sport range from the sensible: reduce the number of rounds, increasing time between rounds, changing the type gloves used and regulating the time span between each fight, to the ludicrous such as only allowing body punches, a measure that would also send the original sport under ground. Compromise can and must be made if boxings future is to be clear but at the moment *their is still sufficient argument for continuing the noble art.*

Boxing - B-06

(5.41) Two men, one ring, only one can leave. Dramatic it may be but basically that is the main principal of boxing. Although throughout the years rules have been made to dilute the sports sadistic side, **should boxing be banned?**

Every time a boxer gets punched in the head his brain moves vigorously inside his skull. This causes the boxer to lose many brain cells per boxing fight and if this occurs frequently then the boxer can end his career with brain damage. In my eyes and probably the eyes of others this is reason enough for the banning of boxing.

Boxing - B01

(5.42) Traffic jams are becoming larger and more frequent. Trains are never on time. Everybody always has a complaint about some part of the transport system in the United Kingdom. What is wrong, and **what can we do about it?**

[...] Many things have been tried to reverse this, but to no avail. *Closing small lines which regularly lose money may seem sensible* but leads to less people getting trains in general - after all if you have to drive twenty miles to the nearest station, you might as well just drive to wherever you are going. Increasing or decreasing prices could be tried, but as trains are more expensive than cars for most journeys anyway, this would have little effect.

The only way to make profits is to get more people on trains, and this requires an improvement in services. This would initially cost a lot, and unfortunately sufficient funding is never available.

As more and more people use cars, traffic in city centres during rush ours comes to a near standstill. More cars arrive, get stuck in jams, and spread the congestion further and further out of the city, until motorways and bypasses become blocked.

The problem is obvious - there are too many cars on Britain's roads. *There are two ways around the problem - reduce the number of cars, or build more roads.*

In cities, where all traffic jams start, there is no room for more roads - every square yard is already in use. The only place more roads can be built is outside cities, building more and wider motorways. This reduces the spread of traffic jams once they begin to stretch out of the city, but is environmentally damaging, both by destroying whatever happens to be on

the route and, according to environmentalists, encouraging even more cars, and thus more pollution.

So, the only way around the problem is to have less cars.

Transport 02

In (5.40), the writer opens the paragraph by raising a question about the future of boxing. The writer frames his/her following arguments through this question and gives a number of suggestions for the improvement of the sport. At the end of the paragraph, s/he answers the question by suggesting that boxing can be continued. In (5.41), the question posed at the end of the first paragraph is a way of structuring the text, providing a link between the end of one paragraph and the beginning of the next (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 345). The question posed in (5.42) has a very similar function to the one in (5.41) in that this question too is employed as a way to structure the discourse by linking the first paragraph to the following ones. (5.42), an abridged text, clearly shows how the use of questions can assist the writer to structure the whole text. The text is initiated by a question whose answer is provided by the writer in the subsequent paragraphs. This question leads the reader metadiscursively to the interpretation that the writer desires in the following paragraphs, an interpretation that is ultimately spelled out at the end of the essay and signalled by 'so' (*So, the only way around the problem is to have less cars*)

Iranians favour immediately answered questions more and use questions with delayed answers only once:

(5.43) “Television is dangerous because it destroys family life & any sense of community”. This is a sentence that we usually hear from different people. But **why they have this idea.**

T.V have come to our life to make it better & easier. as you know with television we can listen to news find many information, learn many things &... . But against these advantages we don't have time to be with our family because we are watching T.V.

T.V. was become to our life to help us but it is against our life in many way. Some times all the family members are at home in one room but they are looking at a box and they don't see each other or talk to each other. so although they are a family they become more foreigner to each other day after a day. They learn many thing by watching T.V. but they don't know many things about their family members.

New researches proves that watching T.V for many hours a day, cause you not to sleep well. as a result if you don't sleep well you can not work well & will have many problems with your friend on work *So that's why many peoples agree that Television Is dangerous for our family life & sense of Community.*

IR/A/6/13

Like the examples in (5.42), (5.43) also makes use of a question as a way to organize the text. The question posed at the end of the first paragraph in this example assists the writer to structure the rest of the essay. This question links the first paragraph to the remaining paragraphs and is finally responded to at the end of the text.

5.4.6.4 Summing up argument

Finally, the present data contain questions which close down the arguments. About a quarter of all the questions are designed to sum up the preceding arguments. The writer establishes his/her argument and then raises a question whose answer is implied to be obvious based on the preceding argument. The main characteristic feature of such questions in the present data is that they are *all* rhetorical questions. As shown in Table 5.21, rhetorical questions which sum up arguments are the most heavily used function among British essays and the second most frequently used one among Iranian essays.

These rhetorical questions typically function ‘retrospectively’. In effect, they “establish a common ground with the reader” and “imply the reasonableness of the preceding argument and of the writer’s opinion” (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 346), as in the following three extracts:

(5.44)

a. For centuries the Monarch has been the head of the country, the head of the Church of England and the head of the Houses of Parliament. However, nowadays, politicians run the country, the Monarch is a source of ridicule for the Church of England and she is not even allowed to set foot in the House of Commons. **Is such a 'head' really necessary?**

ICLE-ALEV-0010.7

b. Some people have special talents and has reached golden experiences during their working times, **and now that they have got a chance to give these experiences to others specially young workers, why should they be forced to retire?** IR/G/6/13

The questions in the above excerpts are some of the classic examples of rhetorical questions in the present data in that they function as forceful assertions which are realized as interrogative forms. They are unanswered and posed at the end of the paragraphs. These questions ‘cap arguments’ and are very much interactive since they “assume shared knowledge and values with the reader” and as such “suggest solidarity and positive politeness” (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007: 348). The previous contexts of these questions guide the reader to figure out for themselves what the answer is (5.44a requires a ‘no’; 5.44b requires a ‘nobody’; and 5.44c requires something like ‘there are no reasons why they be forced to retire’).

As mentioned above, these questions are typically found in paragraph-final positions. There are, however, instances, found only in the British corpus, where rhetorical questions are used in paragraph-initial positions, summing up the arguments in the preceding paragraphs, as in the following example:

(5.45) How could we ever ban a sport as full of skill and traditional values (such as good sportsmanship) as boxing is beyond me. Perhaps the fact that it is a sport which almost entirely excludes women counts against it. I can imagine how much feminists would dislike its machoism. But this is

no reason to stop this ancient sport. I watched the Benn-McLellan fight in 1994 and despite the shocking consequences for McLellan it was one of the most memorable sporting occasions I have ever seen; The same can be said for Ali and Foreman's "Rumble in the Jungle" and I wonder if anyone who watched Frank Bruno win his world title fight this year will ever forget it. When you watch boxers like Nasseem Hamed at work it seems ridiculous to say that boxing isn't a proper sport and these incredibly talented men shouldn't be allowed to do what they do best and entertain.

Who would ban boxing if they had felt the excitement and passion which it evokes in those people who give it a chance. Banning boxing goes against the will of the many. Improving the availability of medical help is good enough for me, I think boxing should go on. Boxing- B-02

Here, the writer argues against banning boxing quite passionately and extensively in the first paragraph and then commences the next paragraph by raising a rhetorical question whose answer seems to be an obvious conclusion to the preceding arguments (i.e. ‘nobody would ban boxing’) and then provides further comments in support of boxing.

Characteristically, rhetorical questions are not followed by answers. As noted above, however, more than half of these questions in the British corpus are followed by *comments* (rather than answers). Such questions are typically found in paragraph-medial positions:

(5.46) ...This idea is extremely beneficial to married couples who have been trying for a baby but have been unsuccessful are able to have children. An in vitro fertilisation allows the baby to grow inside, which allows the mother and baby to bond and it would feel apart of her, this would not happen if the couple adopted. What I do feel is ethically incorrect is when a woman who is post-menopausal decides she wants a baby. Nature has already taken its course to tell her she is too old to have any children so **why should she have one implanted into her.** *It is not fair on the child because when it grows up and all its friends are playing with their 30-40 year old parents, its mother could be drawing her pension and I am sure she would not feel like playing with her child. Also the mother may die of old age before the child has led a full life and this would be unfair to the child. The child may also have to look after the mother in her old age.*

ICLE-ALEV-0005.8

Here, the writer first argues for in vitro fertilization for married couples who are unable to have children. But s/he then argues against this treatment for post-menopausal women and immediately poses a rhetorical question to cap the argument. Instead of withholding the answer and leaving the reader to answer the question on their own, however, the writer starts giving further comments on why this is not fair for the child to have old parents. This strategy assists the writer to “preclude reader participation in the text” (Badraneh, 2009: 655). Although ‘preclude’ seems so strong a word – since the reader is not really stopped from participating in the text – it can be argued that the reader is less

involved. In other words, rhetorical questions which are followed by some further comments can be argued to be less interactive than classic rhetorical questions because in the former the writer provides some comments immediately after the rhetorical question to ensure that the readers interpret the rhetorical question the way the writer wishes and limits the required space for the reader to be involved in the argument. The reader, therefore, appears to be presupposed to be in agreement with the writer in such contexts. As noted above, it can be taken that 'commented' rhetorical questions are less interactive since the reader has limited opportunity to get involved in the construction of the text.

Taking a different perspective, however, it can be speculated that the comments could be seen as the writer's recognition that some readers may need persuading to accept the claim in the rhetorical question, and so show more reader awareness. From this perspective, 'commented' rhetorical questions can be seen as involving.

In contrast to British students who tend to use more than half of their rhetorical questions in polar Yes/no forms, Iranian students are inclined to raise more than 80% of their rhetorical questions in Wh-forms. But, in essence, both types of questions in the data appear to be intended to sum up their preceding arguments:

(5.47)

a. A boxer's risks do not stop when he retires. Sure, he hasn't been injured badly during his fights, but every time he has been hit during his several years in the sport, a slight bit of damage has been done to his brain. This damage has built up every fight and the boxer is more likely, even though

he doesn't participate in the sport any more, to have a brain hemorrhage or a stroke. They are also very likely to suffer, in their old age, from a serious and sometimes fatal disease called Parkinson's disease. It affects the nervous system very badly and can lead, in some cases, to paralysation. **Is this kind of a risk really worth a life in the sport of boxing?**

Boxing - B15

b. Let's discuss the jobs for example those who study for PhD degree at the end of their studies are almost 30-32 so they have had a longer time of studies and can be more useful to their society, **is it fair for them to have the same age of retirement with other employees?**

IR/G/6/9

c. Some people have special talents and has reached golden experiences during their working times, and now that they have got a chance to give these experiences to others specially young workers, **why should they be forced to retire?**

IR/G/6/13

Badraneh (2009) argues that rhetorical questions exploit the 'obviousness' of the answer. In order for the writer to be engaged with the reader through rhetorical questions, and in order that the audience adopt the position of the writer, "there must be some common ground which the writer exploits and builds upon in order to make the argument less intrusive and more palpable to the reader" (Badraneh, 2009: 561). Following Althusser (1984), Badraneh further argues that common sense plays an important role in inviting agreement in discourse (p. 61). Through rhetorical questions which are built on obvious common sense, some writers in the present corpora sum up the argument, expecting the

reader to agree with what is considered as an evident truth. In (5.47a), for instance, given the preceding argument, it can be taken as evidently true that the kind of risk mentioned in the rhetorical question is *not* really right. In other words, it is obvious that boxing is dangerous and is not worth the risk. Through the use of the rhetorical question, therefore, the writer ‘exploits the obviousness’ and prepares the required common ground for the readers to accompany him/her in the intended direction. Quite a few rhetorical questions functioning this way in the British corpus are found to contain adjectives such as *right* or *fair* and adverbs such as *really* or *genuinely*, implying that the arguments raised by the writer may be regarded as common sense by the reader:

(5.48)

a. It is said that boxing should be banned, described as a barbaric sport, it has been known to lead to deaths and brain damage of fighters. The constant pounding of the head during a match doesn't necessarily do take its toll immediately, but as a boxer's career continues, the chances of him having some kind of serious brain damage are fairly high. *Is it **right** that we watch with excitement as someone is repeatedly battered about the head until they are no longer able to stand ...* Boxing – B 07

b. The late twentieth century has seen an astonishing range of developments in the field of genetic manipulation; science has become so advanced that scientists are often accused of 'playing God' by their actions which affect, sometimes very directly, the lives of individual human beings. Such accusations are very serious, as to imply that scientists are

taking the role of God implies that they must also be acting as the supreme moral arbiter and judge. *Is it though genuinely fair that they should be put in this position?* ICLE-ALEV-0014.8

Another characteristic feature of some of the rhetorical questions in the present corpora is that they tend to surface in clusters at the end of the paragraphs, appearing to be more convincing and simultaneously more forceful in closing the argument down. Hyland (2002b) points out:

These combinations of questions work to draw the reader ever deeper into the writer's world, having the cumulative effect of bringing a potentially skeptical or uninterested audience to a position where they share the writer's curiosity and excitement. (Hyland, 2002b: 542)

Examples in (5.49) are all instances where rhetorical questions appear in clusters:

(5.49)

a. Do we ever think of what we are watching? Or how can T.V influence our ordinary life? Is it good to be treated by T.V to be a mobile encyclopaedia?! IR/A/6/41

b. People how could knew about each other, or how could knew the world around themselves. How could they understand the where is beauty, where is even better for life. IR/A/4/2

c. is he to shoulder the responsibility of the deaths caused by Kalashnikov rifles. How was he to know that the government in chezoslovakia were going to sell his rifles to militant and rebel forces around the world.

d. Is it right that we watch with excitement as someone is repeatedly battered about the head until they are no longer able to stand, could this not have an effect on our general attitude towards violence ...

Boxing - B07

As noted above, rhetorical questions typically establish a common ground. The use of interactant pronoun *we* in such questions reinforces the already established common ground between the writer and the reader. The use of *we* in such questions, as argued in section 5.4.5, can also mitigate the forcefulness of the assertion made by the rhetorical question. This interactant pronoun is much more frequently employed in the rhetorical questions employed by the Iranian students:

(5.50)

a. Finally I have to mention that having a family is the gift from the lord, therefore **why do we lose it for a nonsense device?** IR/A/6/46

b. we should not have one law for all people. Because all people are not the same. You may see a 60 years old man who is healthy and looks very young, and has no problem to work. **Why should we restrict him?**

IR/G/6/13

5.5 Overview of Patterns

In this chapter, I have argued that questions can play an important role in assisting the writers to create a dialogic interaction with their audience. Questions are inherently

interactive as they need some kind of response from the addressee. Questions can bring the reader into the text and involve them in the construction of the argument. The reader involvement through questions can subsequently contribute to the persuasiveness of the text. Based on the above, I have explored the use, distributions, and functions of questions in the Iranian and the British student essays. The findings reveal some differences in terms of the use of questions in the studied corpora.

Firstly, British students employ questions more frequently than Iranian students. Secondly, I have examined in greater depth the ways questions are used in the genre of student argumentative essays. The analysis shows several dissimilarities in terms of the *positions, types, and contents* of questions in both corpora:

1. While Iranian students distribute questions almost equally all over their texts, British students prefer to raise the majority of their questions in paragraph-medial positions.
2. Whereas British students deploy WH-questions and polar Yes/no questions with almost equal frequencies, Iranian students tend to employ WH-questions considerably more frequently than polar Yes/no questions.
3. While Iranian students use questions which contain interactant pronouns and questions which do not contain such pronouns almost equally, British students tend to use non-interactant questions noticeably more frequently than interactant questions.

The only common feature in the use of questions in both corpora based on the analytical framework is that both Iranian and British students tend to leave most of their questions unanswered. As discussed in this chapter, unanswered questions are more interactive

since they lead the reader to enter a forum in which they can collaborate with the writer in finding an appropriate response to a given problem. Among unanswered questions, both Iranian and British students prefer to employ real questions more frequently than rhetorical questions.

Thirdly, it is also found that questions are used to serve four major functions in student essays: provoking reader's interest, constructing argument, structuring discourse, and summing up arguments. Dissimilarities are found in the frequencies of these functions in both corpora: while British students tend to use most of their questions for the purpose of either constructing arguments or summing them up, Iranian students employ questions mainly to arouse the readers' interest and capture their attention. It can be argued, then, that a large group of Iranian students do not seem to use questions as an interactive strategy to set up convincing arguments but simply as a way to kick off their essays and/or paragraphs by posing questions which appear to be intended mainly to grab the readers' attention rather than constructing any serious argument.

Finally, we have found that the generic test prompts might have affected the use of questions by the Iranian students, with Academic essays being more interactive. The reasons why Academic wording may prompt more interactive essays as a result of the possible effects of the words *argument* and *reader* were discussed in this chapter: Academic students use questions more frequently, perhaps at least partly, because the generic test prompt has explicitly required them to present an *argument* addressed to a certain type of *reader*. This may have led Academic students to think of the reader at a

more conscious level and create a discourse participant by involving them in the text and interacting with them through questions.

CHAPTER SIX

DIRECTIVES

6.1 Introduction

As elaborated on in detail in Chapter two, according to Hyland's (2005a) model of metadiscourse, engagement markers are linguistic and rhetorical devices which assist the writers to explicitly interact with their readers and bring them into the argument. Having investigated the use of two of such resources, namely interactant pronouns and questions, in the previous two chapters, in this chapter I will explore the use of directives as another metadiscourse engagement marker employed by writers to interact with readers. It should be stressed at the outset, however, that unlike interactant pronouns and questions that are inherently interactive, directives may or may not be interactive. In fact, only those directives which impose some kind of obligation on the reader can be classified as interactive directives. It is on this particular kind of directives that the discussions in this chapter are based. It is also important to note that directive as a functional term is synonymous with Halliday's (1994) 'command' and the two terms are employed interchangeably throughout this chapter.

In speech act theory, a directive force is an obligation imposed on the hearer by the speaker to perform a certain action (e.g. Searle, 1976). Directives are frequently used in oral discourse and in contexts like classrooms where teachers direct students to carry out certain actions (see, for example, Tapper, 1994; Dalton-Puffer and Nikula, 2006). A

directive utterance, however, has been recently borrowed as a term for a relatively similar concept in written discourse (e.g. Hyland, 2002c). Directives in written discourse are defined as “utterances which instruct the reader to perform an action or to see things in a way determined by the writer” (Hyland, 2002c: 215-16). Directives in this study are defined as: a stretch of language (usually a clause) which is intended to influence the behaviour of another, including the reader of the text. Directives maybe graded in strength from direct orders to advice, recommendations, request, etc. Thus, unlike Hyland’s definition, mine explicitly allows for the illocutionary acts of requests, suggestions, recommendations, etc. to be classified as directives.

Like other engagement markers, directives can also be deployed to assist the writer to invoke reader participation and add to the persuasiveness of the text. In fact, directives can be seen not only as a rhetorical strategy for writers to explicitly engage their readers but also as an effective way “to manipulate a relationship with readers and indicate the ways they are intended to follow the text” (Hyland, 2002c: 218). Despite not necessarily using the specific term ‘directives’, previous research has, indeed, explored this aspect of writer-reader interaction (i.e. reader involvement via expressing commands) through modals of obligation (Kim and Thompson, 2010; Giltrow, 2005) and imperatives (Swales *et al.* 1998). Kim and Thompson (2010) argue:

The writer’s imposition of obligation may make the reader feel a kind of responsibility to fulfill the obligation, and, as a result, he/she may feel involved in the text. Modal expressions which potentially impose some kind of obligation on the reader are thus seen as one way in which the writer can evoke in the reader a feeling of involvement in the text.

(Kim and Thompson, 2010: 56)

Webber (1994: 264) also claims that the “imperative sentence serves to include the reader in the discussion with the author and treats the reader on a par with the author”. Likewise, Swales *et al.* (1998: 97) comment that “despite the potentially face-threatening nature of imperatives, authors use them for various strategic purposes such as engaging the reader”. In fact, the writer can employ a directive addressed to the reader to involve them in the text and lead them to the argument. Hyland (2002c: 230) points out that directives are a rhetorical “way of setting out arguments and interacting with readers”. Additionally, he argues:

all writing...needs to solicit reader collusion: it must work to draw an audience in, carry it through an argument, and lead it to a particular conclusion. Directives enable writers... to do this ...

(Hyland, 2002c: 232)

Similar to questions and interactant pronouns, the use of directives in written texts seems to vary considerably according to a number of variables such as genre, discipline, cultural background and language proficiency. As mentioned in 2.5.2, Hyland (2002c) investigates the use of interactive directives in published articles, textbooks, and L2 student essays and finds that textbook authors employ directives considerably more than research article writers and L2 students. He also observes enormous variation across disciplines, with the hard sciences using directives more heavily than the soft fields. Having observed noticeable disparity in the use of directives across various genres and disciplines, Hyland (2002c: 236) argues that “the ways academic writers use directives are intimately related to their assessments of appropriate reader-relationships in different

generic and disciplinary contexts”. Swales *et al.* (1998) also explore the use of imperatives in research articles from ten disciplines and find that imperatives vary widely in their occurrence according to field.

In a corpus-based cross-cultural text analysis, Kim and Thompson (2010) investigate reader involvement in English and Korean science popularizations via obligation modals and observe that English science popularization writers deploy obligation modals for reader involvement more frequently than their Korean counterparts, suggesting that the quantitative and qualitative variations in the use of this linguistic device are influenced by an inclination toward implicitness and indirectness in the Korean texts and a preference for explicitness and directness in the English ones (p. 68). Examining L2 student essays focusing on the dialogic relationship between writer and reader, Mayor *et al.* (2007) find quantitative and qualitative variations in the use of imperatives and modals of obligation in L2 student essays across language background, language proficiency and test version.

The findings of these studies seem to have in common that they suggest that directives in written discourse are expressed differently and perform different functions across genres, disciplines, cultures, etc. For this reason, a more detailed overview of the forms and functions of directives seems useful for the examination of this interactive device in the student essays. The brief overviews of forms and functions of directives presented in the next two sections have mainly a practical orientation toward the establishment of the analytical frameworks for this study. It needs to be noted, therefore, that these overviews

are not intended to be a comprehensive exploration of the forms and functions of directives.

6.2 A brief overview of forms of directives

As suggested above, one of the main features of directives is that they can have various surface realizations. One of the formal realizations of directives is via ‘grammatical devices’ such as imperatives (Bolinger, 1967); modals of obligation (e.g. *should*, *must*, *ought to*); and semi-modals of obligation (*need to*, *have (got) to*, etc.) (e.g. Coates, 1983; Perkins, 1983; Palmer, 1986, 1990, Quirk *et al.*, 1985; Biber *et al.*, 1999). In addition to the surface syntactic realizations, there are some semantic devices by means of which directives can be expressed. Kim (2006) draws on previous research on semantic expansion of modal expressions (e.g. Perkins, 1983; Palmer, 1990) and collectively labels expressions, such as *there is a/no need to*, *be bound to*, *be supposed to*, *It is necessary to*, *It is essential to*, etc. ‘lexical modal expressions’. Kim (2006: 194) argues that “these expressions are so familiar that they are used like well-established grammatical patterns for the modal meaning of obligation”.

Moreover, some clauses can pragmatically function as directives without necessarily containing a particular syntactic or semantic item whose main function is imposing an obligation. For example, the italicized clause in (6.1) pragmatically expresses a weak command:

(6.1) If there is no demand for a product *there is little point in* producing

it.

ICLE-ALEV-0008.7

There is no grammatical or lexical item functioning as a directive force in (6.1) but, pragmatically, the italicized clause can be read as an implied demand for action (i.e. ‘a product which does not have any demand is better not produced.’). Such metaphorical expressions (Halliday, 1994: 355) can, therefore, be seen as another way in which directives can be realized. Unlike grammatical and lexical devices, however, it is not always easy to identify metaphorical expressions which are intended to be read as directives. Kim and Thompson (2010), for instance, did not count metaphorical expressions in their analysis, emphasizing that “there is no objective and absolute standard to decide which of these expressions are imposing obligation” (p. 57).

Finally, directives can be expressed as conditionals (e.g. Tapper, 1989; Douglas and Myers, 1989; McCarthy, 1994: 292; Mayor *et al.* 2007: 294). Hinkel (1997: 318) points out that “[T]he use of conditional tenses is an ambiguous indirectness strategy that can preclude a threat to the writer's and the reader's face”. Similarly, McCarthy (1994) argues that *some* conditional sentences can be classified as indirect directives “when the suggestion for action has to be inferred from the context of the discourse” (p. 294, my emphasis). It can, therefore, be argued that it is not the conditional sentence itself which expresses a directive force but the pragmatic interpretation based on the context in which the conditional is made. Accordingly, it can be tentatively suggested that the conditionals which impose obligation can be considered as metaphorical (rather than grammatical or lexical) devices through which a weak demand can be expressed.

Kim and Thompson (2010: 57) offer a simple but useful system for categorizing all the devices introduced above (except for imperatives and conditionals), dividing modal expressions of obligation into grammaticalized expressions (i.e. modals and semi-modals of obligation) and lexical modal expressions. Their division system is helpful for the identification of directives in the present study (see 6.4.1).

6.3 A brief overview of functions of directives

As explained above, directives can be formally expressed through modals, semi-modals, lexical modals, etc. Arguably, one of the crucial reasons for using different grammatical, lexical or metaphorical devices to express directives lies in the ‘degree of directness’ (or ‘weight of imposition’ in Hyland’s [2002c:215] terms) writers wish to convey. Directives can potentially be viewed as risky and manipulative ‘bald-on-record face-threatening acts’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Therefore, the writers’ choice of a particular form of directive over another may be very much dependent on the amount of obligation they desire to impose on the reader, or the degree of directness with which they wish to impose it. According to Brown and Levinson (1987) a fundamental factor in choosing a directive form is “the need for politeness in interactional contexts where a direct order may threaten a hearer’s sense of self, or face”. Similarly, Tapper (1994: 207) points out “[G]iven that directives aim at eliciting certain behaviour from hearers, it is very important that speakers express their directives appropriately, and that hearers are able to interpret utterances as directives”. Examining writer-reader interaction through directives, therefore, requires a framework which categorizes the degrees of obligation imposed on the reader.

A useful system for identifying and categorizing obligation, based on who imposes the obligation and who receives it, is offered by Kim and Thompson (2010: 60) (see table 6.1).

Table 6.1 Kim and Thompson’s (2010: 60) four possible types of obligation-imposed on the reader

Explicit entity	2nd-person pronoun <i>you</i> (Type 1)
	1st-person pronoun plural <i>we</i> (Type 2)
	3rd-person nominal forms (Type 3)
Implicit entity	Understood agent (Type 4)

According to Kim and Thompson’s framework, an obligation can be imposed explicitly on the reader through *you*, *we*, and a 3rd-person nominal form such as *humans* or implicitly through a passive voice whose agent is recoverable in the form of *by us*, *by you*, *by someone*, etc. Although this taxonomy is specific to the genre of science popularizations, it is useful for setting up a similar system for the present study since it categorizes the degree of obligation imposed on the reader, with Type 1 being the strongest and Type 4 the weakest. According to this system, the reader can identify with any of the four types but to a different degree. In other words, this framework enables the analyst to identify which type of obligation is more (in)directly imposed on the reader (and therefore potentially imposes more (or less) threat to the reader’s face). For example, ‘you+ a. modal of obligation’ imposed explicitly on the reader is potentially more face-threatening (and coercive) than, say, ‘people+ a modal of obligation’ imposed indirectly on the reader. Also, the former suggests that the writer intends to create an

authoritative and distancing persona via directly addressing the reader and directing them to perform an action whereas the latter indicates the writer's less authoritative and more cautious persona created through implicitly leading the reader in a certain direction. Therefore, it can be argued that the degree of directness the writer intends to create, depending on the degree of authoritativeness s/he wants to take on and the type of interaction s/he wishes to construct with the reader, may be a determining factor in the choice of directives. Identifying the degree of directness can, therefore, enable the researcher to investigate the writer-reader interaction and the potential contribution of such an interaction to the persuasiveness of the text.

In addition to identifying the degree of directness, investigating the rhetorical and discourse functions that directives carry out in a text can show us how writers strategically deploy them to involve the reader in the text and construct convincing arguments. Hyland (2002c: 234) points out that directives “appear to help reduce the distance between participants and to stress participation in a shared journey of exploration, but it is always clear who is leading the expedition”. But despite the frequent use of directives in written texts, little attention has been paid to their discourse and rhetorical functions (e.g. Hinkel, 2009). Swales *et al.* (1998) only look at one form of directives and observe that imperatives in research articles can: illustrate an argument; further the discussion of some point; serve as (sub)topic initiator which signals topic switch; function metadiscursively; function as an attention-getting device; and introduce a hypothetical situation in order to further the discussion (pp. 104-5). They also suggest that imperatives help the writer to engage with the reader, functioning “as a pausal or

braking device in the momentum of their text” (p. 110). Assessing the engaging function of imperatives in written texts, one of Swales *et al.*’s scholarly informants refers to his use of *let me explain* and comments that “[S]ometimes you need signals that you have to go slowly and carefully” (p. 110).

As explained earlier, Kim and Thompson (2010) examine obligation modal expressions in science popularizations but they focus more on the authorial stance in English and Korean languages rather than the precise writer-reader interaction created as a result of the obligation imposed on the reader and its ensuing effect on the construction of the writer’s argument and the overall persuasiveness of the text. Mayor *et al.* (2007: 296) also limit their discussion on the rhetorical functions of ‘demands’ to their observation that Greek L1 students favour ‘appeals to mental action’, whereas Chinese L1 students also equally like to ‘call for a physical response’.

Looking at directives in academic writing from the reader engagement perspective, Hyland (2002c) offers a system for categorizing directives according to the main form of activity directives direct readers to engage in. His framework is summarized in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2 Hyland’s (2002c: 218) categories of directives

Textual acts	Internal reference	<i>see section 1; refer to example 2.</i>
	External reference	<i>see Smith, 1990.</i>
Physical acts	Research focus	<i>the temperature must be set at ...</i>
	Real-world focus	<i>you should ask your teacher</i>
Cognitive acts	Rhetorical purpose	<i>consider; suppose; let’s examine</i>
	Elaborative purpose	<i>let X=b; this should be seen as</i>
	Emphatic purpose	<i>it should be noted that; remember</i>

As can be seen, Hyland's classification scheme has three major types: textual, physical, and cognitive. He defines these three types and their sub-types as follows:

First, directives allow academic writers to guide readers to some *textual act*, referring them to another part of the text or another text. They can also be used to instruct readers to perform a *physical act*, either involving a research process or real world action. Third, directives can steer readers to certain *cognitive acts*, where readers are initiated into a new domain of argument, led through a line of reasoning, or directed to understand a point in a certain way.

(Hyland, 2002c: 217, original emphasis)

Although specific to the genre of academic writing, Hyland's classification of functions of directives is helpful for establishing the initial functional taxonomy for the present study.

6.4 The study

6.4.1 Identifying form

As explained in 6.2, directives can be formally realized as different linguistic devices ranging from grammatical expressions, such as imperatives, modals and semi-modals of obligation, to lexical and metaphorical expressions. Drawing on and slightly expanding Kim and Thompson's (2010) division of modal expressions of obligation (by adding metaphorical expressions, realized as certain conditional sentences, and also imperatives as an instance of grammaticalized expressions), I developed a classification scheme summarized in Table 6.3 for the identification of directives in the present study.

Table 6.3 Classification scheme for the identification of directives

Types	Surface features	Examples
Grammaticalized expressions	Imperatives	<i>Consider; suppose</i>
	Modals of obligation	<i>Must; should; ought to</i>
	Semi-modals of obligation	<i>have (got) to; need to</i>
Lexical expressions	Adjectival modal expressions	<i>It is necessary/ vital to</i>
Metaphorical expressions	Certain conditionals	<i>If we don't do x, y will follow</i>

The data in this study were searched for the surface features listed in Table 6.3, using Wordlist and Concordance tools of *WordSmith* (Scott, 2004) (See Appendix 2 for the list of directive items.). I started looking for directives using the Concordancer but because of the proficiency problems of some of my informants, particularly in the Iranian data, I also looked at all the texts manually to ensure the Concordancer did not miss anything. As noted at the outset of this chapter, unlike questions and interactant pronouns that are inherently interactive, directives are only regarded as interactive if they impose some kind of obligation on the reader. Given the functional nature of directives, therefore, all the concordance lines were carefully examined to ensure that they were truly interactive, meaning that they are employed by the writer to impose, directly or indirectly, some kind of obligation on the reader. This attempt led to the separation of the items which were formally realized as directives but functioned differently.

The careful analysis of the co-texts and contexts of directive forms resulted in the exclusion of certain cases where no obligation was imposed on the reader through directives as in (6.2):

(6.2)

a. Finally *I* **have to** mention that having a family is the gift from the lord

IR/A/6/46

b. *I* **must** really come to the society and speak and collaborate with people
it the real world.

IR/A/4/60

c. At last *I* **should** notice that a system needs to get fresh every moment.

IR/G/6/7

d. First of all *I* **must** say that if there is a will there is a way...

IR/G/6/49

e. Therefore in conclusion *I* **must** agree with the original statement...

ICLE-ALEV-0012.8

f. *I* **must** start by stating that I totally agree with the proposition...

ICLE-ALEV-0012.8

All modals of obligation in (6.2) direct *only* the writer to perform a certain action and therefore do not create an overt writer-reader interaction. Cases like examples in (6.2) were not counted as directives in the analysis.

There are other cases where obligation is not imposed on the reader. For example, the directive is imposed on an 'explicit third party' (e.g. *government(s), parents, children, scientists, etc.*) as in (6.3):

(6.3)

a. I think in other countries specially west countries they have a machiny life and *both of mother and father* **should** work. IR/A/4/13

b. It's a poor family, I think *the kid's of the poor family* **have to** work as long as they can. IR/G/4/48

c. *The industry* will **need to** alter its ways if it wants to continue to make a profit. ICLE-ALEV-0003.9

d. However in some Islamic countries like Iran, we have culture cross and *these countries* **must** tolerate these transitions. IR/A/6/8

e. and precise scheme for managing peoples leisure times **should** be drawn *by sociologists* to regain a safer environment for the public social habits and activities. IR/A/6/1

All the directives in (6.3) impose some kind of obligation on an explicit third party. It is highly unlikely that the reader can identify themselves with any of these third parties. In fact, it can be equally argued that the writers in such examples do not appear to be intending to direct the reader to perform an action. Such cases were, therefore, excluded from the analysis.

All cases where a third person (rather than the writer him/herself) imposes an obligation on the reader were excluded from the analysis (*cf.* Kim, 2006). The main reason for the exclusion of such cases is that the focus of this study is the exploration of the ways *writers* (not other persons) interact with the readers. Another reason for their exclusion is

simply because there are only very few examples of them (particularly in the Iranian data) making it hard to have a thorough analysis of them. The examples in (6.4) are all instances where some obligation is imposed, directly or indirectly, on the reader by an explicit entity (shown in italics) other than the writer, and were therefore excluded from the analysis:

(6.4)

a. *It is strongly recommended by psychologists* that people from all walks of life, **must** construct themselves an intact family structure.

IR/A/6/38

b. and *many people believe* we **should** obey the rules to turn over the members of working very fast.

IR/G/6/43

c. unfortunately, *the governments say* that people **should** retire in this age and they determine a known age.

IR/G/4/50

As noted earlier, in contrast to grammaticalized and lexical expressions, whose identifications are relatively straightforward, there does not seem to be a single clear-cut recognition criterion for metaphorical expressions. Therefore, cases like example (6.1) introduced earlier above, which pragmatically can be viewed as a directive but cannot be easily identified in the data without having a clear and objective standard, were excluded from the category of metaphorical expressions. As shown in Table 6.3, however, I put certain conditionals in this category since, as noted in 6.2, not all conditionals are directives. Following Mayor *et al.* (2007: 294) and McCarthy (1994: 292), the main

criterion for the identification of *directive conditionals* in this study is examining whether they are realized as positive or negative conditions of the forms *If we don't do x, y will follow; If we do z, all be well*. However, it should be stressed that it is often not too easy to decide whether a conditional is actually meant to be read as a directive. As I did with other formal realizations of directives, I also carefully analyzed all the conditional sentences in their wider contexts to check whether there is a suggestion for action imposed (directly or indirectly) on the reader. So, while examples in (6.5) seem more clearly instances of directives, and therefore are included in the analysis, those in (6.6) may not be intended to be read as a demand for action since they are at least, apart from anything, too indirect, and therefore were excluded from the analysis:

(6.5)

a. “**If** we try to use it in a good way it has many benefits too.”

IR/A/6/49

b. **if** we stick on seat for many times in front of a television it is so dangerous.

IR/A/6/12

c. at the last I think **if** we let the experienced people work as they could, they can treat more youths, helpful worker...

IR/G/6/19

d. they are a lots of things that well go wrong **if** you let people in all kinds of works work for ever and do not retire.

IR/G/4/26

(6.6)

a. **If** these customs and cultures can strength the family relationship, TV will have a useful role in human societies.

IR/A/6/8

b. if there is no limitation for working according to age, older people rarely retire. IR/G/6/17

c. if people force to work they resist pressure. IR/G/4/47

Unlike the discourse functions and uses of directives in academic writing, the employment of this device in student argumentative essays has received comparatively less attention. The present chapter aims at extending the previous research on writer-reader interaction by examining the use of directives in native and non-native student argumentative essays. Drawing on the identification criteria set out above, the present chapter aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies of directives in native and non-native student argumentative essays?
2. What degree of directness is associated with the directives imposed on the reader?
3. What are the discourse functions of directives in student essays?

6.4.2 Identifying directness

As noted in 6.3, Kim and Thompson's (2010) frame of analysis for examining the modal meaning of obligation in science popularizations is a useful one for this study. My analytical framework for identifying the degree of directness created by directives in the student essays shown in Table 6.4 is, however, slightly different from Kim and Thompson's in that: firstly, in my framework '3rd-person nominal forms' are classified as

‘indirect’ directives since they do not impose any direct obligation on the reader; secondly, I added directive conditional sentences as a possible formal realization of directives.

Table 6.4 Analytical framework for identifying degree of directness in student essays

Degree of directness	Formal realizations
Direct directives	Imperatives 2 nd -person interactant pronoun (<i>you</i>) 1 st -person interactant pronoun plural (<i>we</i>)
Indirect directives	3 rd -person nominal forms (<i>people, humans, etc.</i>) Passive sentence with implicit agent Conditional sentence

As can be seen, and as was suggested earlier, a directive force can be imposed on the reader either directly or indirectly. The first type of directive addresses the reader directly through an imperative form or a clause containing an interactant pronoun *you* or *we*. The surface realization of an indirect directive, however, can be a 3rd-person nominal form referring to an unspecified collective lexical item such as *humans, people, anyone, etc.* Another formal realization of an indirect directive can be a passive voice sentence whose omitted agent is recoverable in the forms of *by you, by us, by everybody, etc.* Finally, an indirect directive can be realized as a conditional sentence whose most likely reading is an implied/weak suggestion for action imposed on the reader. According to this categorization scheme, directness can be seen in the form of a continuum where an imperative is the most direct form of obligation and a conditional sentence is the least

direct form of obligation. The use of direct and indirect directives in relation to writer-reader interaction in student essays is discussed in more detail in section 6.5.2.

6.4.3 Identifying the discourse functions of directives

To establish a taxonomy for the identification of the discourse functions of directives in the present study, I drew partly on Hyland's (2002c: 218) functional category of directives introduced in Table 6.2 above. Since Hyland's framework is specific to academic writing, some of his categories do not appear to fit in with my data. Hyland's 'textual acts' which have a metadiscursive function of directing readers to different parts of the text or to another text, for instance, are not expected to be found in texts as short as student essays. Furthermore, Hyland's 'research focus acts' which direct readers to carry out a physical act involving a research process seem to be limited to academic writing and were not observed in the student *argumentative* essays either. Therefore, although Hyland's system of describing functions of directives is useful for establishing an initial framework, it does not seem to fully cover the functions of directives in student argumentative essays. Thus, I established a system based on the instances found in my data for identifying the discourse functions of directives; this is summarized in Table 6.5. According to this system, writers may instruct the reader to perform a *real-world action*. The main criterion for identifying real-world acts is examining the main verb in the clause where the directive is expressed: an action verb (e.g. *work, spend, watch*) suggests a real-world *physical focus*; whereas a mental verb (e.g. *know, think, realize, etc.*) suggests a real-world *mental focus*.

Table 6.5 Analytical framework for identifying discourse functions of directives in student essays

Types of functions	Sub-types of functions	Examples
Real-world acts	Physical focus	<i>we should ask our parents ...</i>
	Mental focus	<i>people should know...</i>
Text-world acts	Rhetorical purpose	<i>consider; suppose</i>
	Emphatic purpose	<i>it is important to remember...</i>

Writers can also direct their readers to perform a *text-world action*. It is essential to note, however, that text-world directive is different from textual directive (*cf.* Hyland, 2002c) in that the former directs the reader to perform a mental action in processing the text while the latter metadiscursively directs the reader to refer to a part of the text. Using cognitive verbs, such as *imagine, consider, suppose, remember, note*, etc., writers may direct the reader as the text unfolds either to think in a certain way (i.e. *rhetorical purpose*) or to attend to a certain point (i.e. *emphatic purpose*). The use of directives performing real-world and text-world functions in student essays from the perspective of writer-reader interaction is elaborated on later in section 6.5.3.

6.5 Findings and discussions

6.5.1 Research question one: frequencies of directives

There are 355 directives overall in both corpora. As shown in Table 6.6, however, Iranian students employ directives considerably more frequently than British students.

Table 6.6 Instances of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Directives
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	277 (5.9)
British essays [60,209 words]	78 (1.3)

The high use of directives by non-native students is also observed by Mayor *et al.* (2007). The IELTS students in Mayor *et al.*'s study used about 5.5 'demands for goods and services' per 1000 words in their essays. Although not looking at modals of obligation and necessity from the writer-reader interaction perspective, Hinkel (1995) also finds non-native students using this rhetorical device in their essays significantly more frequently than native students, claiming that such a variation is 'culturally dependent'. The overuse of directives in non-native student argumentative essays in this study, however, is in sharp contrast with the much lower use of this device in Hyland's (2002c) undergraduate final year project reports which contained only 1 directive per 1000 words, highlighting, amongst other explanations, the significance of generic differences in the use of directives by students. Student argumentative essays seem to encourage students to take on a more interpersonal tone partly through the use of directives but, as they did with interactant pronouns (see 4.5.1), Iranian students appear to overshoot their target by overusing engagement markers such as directives.

Unlike the Iranian students, the British students seem to be more cautious in using directives. In fact, the use of directives by the British students (1.3 per 1000 words) is

relatively similar to the use of this device by Hyland's (2002c) undergraduate writers who used, as reported above, only 1 directive per 1000 words.

As noted in the previous chapters, the differences in the simple frequencies do not give us a clear picture. Relying solely on crude frequencies might lead us to speculate that the results are simply due to the fact that more competent language users (i.e. British students) use directives less frequently than less proficient language users (i.e. Iranian students). But the results for the use of directives across language proficiency in the Iranian data, shown in Table 6.7, suggest that linguistic competence alone does not appear to be the main factor in determining the overuse or underuse of directives since, contrary to the hypothesis presented above (i.e. more linguistically proficient students use less directives), Iranian high-scorers use directives slightly more frequently than Iranian low-scorers.

Table 6.7 Instances of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Directives
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	165 (6.28)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	112 (5.46)

The higher use of directives by more proficient Iranian students seems to confirm that these students are at a developmental stage where they tend to overuse some of the interactive features they know (recall from chapter four that Iranian high-scorers also overuse interactant pronouns). This developmental stage seems to push more proficient L2 learners towards exuberantly using interpersonal resources and showing off their linguistic competence. Such a linguistic behaviour, as we have seen in the present study, leads to the overuse of certain interactive features like interactant pronouns and directives. I shall return to the notion of developmental stage later in the next chapter.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, directives can have various surface realizations. Table 6.8 shows the distribution of the forms of directives in Iranian and British essays. As can be seen, directives are most frequently realized in the form of grammaticalized expressions in both corpora (comprising about two-thirds of all directives). Grammaticalized expressions are followed by metaphorical and lexical expressions respectively as the other two formal means by which directives are realized in both sets of data.

Table 6.8 Instances of forms of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Grammaticalized expressions			Lexical expressions	Metaphorical expressions
	Imperatives	Modals	Semi-modals		
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	22 (0.47)	164 (3.50)	40 (0.85)	11 (0.23)	40 (0.85)
British essays [60,209 words]	13 (0.21)	41 (0.68)	12 (0.19)	5 (0.08)	7 (0.11)

In the Iranian corpus, modals and semi-modals of obligation are more frequently employed than imperatives. This is in line with Mayor *et al.*'s (2007: 295) and Hyland's (2002c: 223) findings that modals of obligation are the most frequently employed realizations of directives in student essays and student reports. While one out of six Iranian students (17%) uses at least one imperative in their texts, only 6 out of 114 (5%) British students employ imperatives in their texts. The most commonly used imperatives in the Iranian corpus are 'let' (8 times), 'suppose' (4 times), and 'consider' (3 times). Similarly, the most frequently used imperatives in British corpus are 'let' and 'consider' comprising more than 60 per cent of all cases.

Although, reporting on Leech's (2003) and Smith's (2003) findings on modal verbs across dialects during the thirty year span between 1962 and 1992, Hinkel (2009) comments that the frequency of core modal uses has been declining, the findings of the present study show that modals of obligation are used four times more often than semi-modals. In fact, the modals *should* and *must* were the most numerous single devices overall in both corpora, accounting for 58 per cent of all directives in the Iranian essays and 36 percent of all directives in the British essays. This particular finding is in line with Hyland's (2002c: 222) observation that *should* and *must* are the most frequently used modals of obligation, comprising 57 per cent of all directives in his corpus of student reports.

Iranian students use metaphorical expressions (only realized as conditionals in this study) considerably more commonly than British students. Although deployed only very few

times, directives which are realized as lexical expressions are also employed more frequently by Iranian students.

As noted above, Iranian high-scorers use directives slightly more frequently than Iranian low-scorers. As can be seen in Table 6.9, however, the surface realization of directives in these two sub-corpora is almost consistent with the overall pattern observed in the combined data, shown in Table 6.8, where directives are most frequently realized as grammaticalized expressions with modals of obligation used more than semi-modals and imperatives.

Table 6.9 Instances of forms of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Grammaticalized expressions			Lexical expressions	Metaphorical expressions
	Imperatives	Modals	Semi-modals		
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	19 (0.7)	92 (3.5)	27 (1)	9 (0.34)	18 (0.6)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	3	72 (3.5)	13 (0.6)	2	22 (1)

It is interesting to note, however, that Iranian low-scorers use metaphorical directives slightly more frequently than Iranian high-scorers. On the whole, except for the use of imperatives and lexical expressions which are nearly non-existent in Iranian low-scoring essays, both high-scorers and low-scorers employ the same directive forms and with similar frequencies. Although both high-scorers and low-scorers use 3.5 modal directives per 1000 words, the frequency of the type of modals employed in each sub-corpus is

slightly different. Iranian high-scorers use *should* and *must* 72 and 19 times respectively, whereas Iranian low-scorers employ *should* and *must* 19 and 33 times. The normalizations of these raw frequencies reveals that while *should* is used about 3 times per 1000 words by high-scorers, it is used less than once per 1000 words by low-scorers. *Must*, however, is employed twice as often by low-scorers per 1000 words as high-scorers. Language proficiency may, therefore, be an important factor in the higher use of *should* over *must* (the different rhetorical effects of the two modals will be discussed in detail in the next section). A possible reason for the effect of language proficiency in the way *should* and *must* is employed emerges when the slightly higher use of *should* by British students in this study is taken into account. The higher use of *should* is also observed by Hyland (2002c) in his research articles corpus, suggesting that *should* is more frequently used than *must* by ‘expert’ writers.

It can be seen from Table 6.10 that the test version also seems to affect the use of directives in the Iranian essays, with Academic students employing this device more frequently than General students.

Table 6.10 Instances of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Directives
Academic version [23,475 words]	171 (7.28)
General version [23,302 words]	106 (4.54)

It is not immediately clear why Academic students use directives more frequently than General students. It can only be speculated, however, that the test topics in each version might have contributed to the higher or lower use of directives; as Hinkel (2009: 669) points out: “virtually all studies of topic influence on L2 language use have found that writing on different topics elicits markedly divergent features of text”. The controversial topic of the General test (*‘People should be allowed to continue to work’*) contains an obligation modal whereas the controversial topic in the Academic version (*‘Watching TV’*) does not. It might, therefore, be expected that General students would have been cued to agree or disagree with whether ‘people *should* be allowed to...and not be forced to...’, and therefore employed directives (particularly *should*) more frequently. In fact, the initial analysis of the General essays confirmed this speculation, revealing that General students used *should* alone 184 times (compare this figure with only 57 instances of *should* found in the Academic essays). But some instances of *should* (20 cases) in the General essays were exactly the repetition of all or some parts of the essay titles and many other instances did not impose any obligation on the reader and were therefore excluded from the analysis because they were mainly used in passive voice sentences whose omitted agents do not seem to be recovered in the form of ‘by you’, ‘by us’, ‘by everyone’, etc. It is more likely, however, that the omitted agent is ‘governments’, ‘those in charge’, etc. with whom the reader is highly unlikely to identify. Therefore, since such cases were all excluded, the assumption that the wordings of the controversial topics of the two test versions have contributed to certain use of directives seems to be less likely, leaving us with another possibility that the topics themselves have contributed to the different use of directives across test versions.

The overuse of directives by Academic students is likely to be due to the relevance of the topic to the writer (and assumed reader): As noted in Chapter 4, television affects everyone and the writers can therefore make suggestions (i.e. directives) to ‘everyone’, including writer and reader. On the other hand, retirement does not directly affect everyone, and suggestions/directives are more likely to be addressed to the authorities that control the age of retirement, etc. – that wouldn’t usually include the writer and reader. This would fit in with the finding reported above that many of the directives in the General version are not aimed at the reader. From this, it can be argued that the topics of the two test versions may have affected the use of directives by Iranian students, with the Academic students using more directives than the General students.

Table 6.11 Instances of forms of directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Grammaticalized expressions			Lexical expressions	Metaphorical expressions
	Imperatives	Modals	Semi-modals		
Academic version [23,475 words]	14 (0.59)	91 (3.87)	24 (1.02)	8 (0.34)	34 (1.44)
General version [23,302 words]	8 (0.34)	73 (3.13)	16 (0.68)	3	6 (0.25)

Although the use of directives is more frequent by the Academic students, the forms of directives employed by both Academic and General students appear to be very similar. It can be seen from Table 6.11 above that both Academic and General students tend to use grammaticalized expressions more frequently than lexical and metaphorical expressions.

6.5.2 Research question two: directives and their degree of directness

This section aims at addressing the second research question of this chapter exploring the degree of directness associated with the directives imposed on the reader. As noted in section 6.4.2, a directive force can be imposed on the reader either directly or indirectly. Table 6.12 summarizes the distribution of direct and indirect directives in student essays in both corpora. As can be seen, while Iranians are more inclined toward imposing direct obligation on the reader British students appear to be slightly more in favour of imposing indirect obligation on the reader.

Table 6.12 Instances of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Direct directives	Indirect directives
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	150 (3.2)	127 (2.7)
British essays [60,209 words]	34 (0.5)	44 (0.7)

As shown in Table 6.4, the degree of directness in student essays can be formally realized as imperatives, 2nd-person interactant pronoun (*you*), 1st-person interactant pronoun plural (*we*), 3rd-person nominal forms (*people, humans, etc.*), passive sentence with implicit agent, and certain conditional sentences. The distribution of these devices in both corpora is presented in Table 6.13. (The explanation of each individual form in relation to the degree of directness it creates is presented later in this section.)

Both Iranian and British students use direct commands through 1st-person plural interactant pronouns more frequently than 2nd-person imperatives and 2nd-person interactant pronouns. The Iranian students, however, employ all these forms considerably more frequently than their British counterparts.

Table 6.13 Instances of formal realizations of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

Formal realizations of direct and indirect directives	Iranian essays	British essays
Direct directives		
imperatives	16 (0.34)	8 (0.13)
2 nd -person interactant pronoun (<i>you</i>)	16 (0.34)	2
1 st -person plural interactant pronoun (<i>we</i>)	118 (2.52)	24 (0.39)
Indirect directives		
3 rd -person nominal forms (<i>humans, people, etc.</i>)	54 (1.15)	5 (0.08)
Passive sentence with implicit agent	33 (0.70)	32 (0.53)
Certain conditional sentences	40 (0.85)	7 (0.11)

As far as formal realizations of indirect commands are concerned, while Iranian students deploy 3rd-person nominal forms, passive sentences with implicit agents and certain conditional sentences with almost equal frequencies, British students use passive sentences with implicit agents more frequently than the other two forms. Both Iranian and British students, however, tend to indirectly impose obligation on their readers to perform a certain action through passive sentences with implicit agents with nearly identical frequencies.

As noted above, British students (i.e. more linguistically competent students) have a slight tendency to employ more indirect commands whereas Iranian students (i.e. less linguistically competent students) prefer to use more direct commands. Language proficiency, therefore, may be a factor in the use of direct and indirect commands in the student essays in the present study. It can be seen from Table 6.14 that when the Iranian corpus is divided according to proficiency level, interestingly the use of direct and indirect commands by Iranian low-scorers appears to be similar to that of British students while the use of direct and indirect commands by Iranian high-scorers seems to be broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.12 above, suggesting the possible effect of language proficiency on the degree of directness students tend to take on through directives.

Table 6.14 Instances of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Direct directives	Indirect directives
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	99 (3.76)	66 (2.51)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	51 (2.48)	61 (2.97)

The realizations of direct and indirect directives employed by Iranian high-scoring and low-scoring students are shown in Table 6.15.

Table 6.15 Instances of formal realizations of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

Formal realizations of direct and indirect directives	High-scoring essays	Low-scoring essays
Direct directives		
imperatives	14 (0.53)	2
2 nd -person interactant pronoun (<i>you</i>)	11 (0.41)	5 (0.24)
1 st -person plural interactant pronoun (<i>we</i>)	74 (2.81)	44 (2.14)
Indirect directives		
3 rd -person nominal forms (<i>humans, people, etc.</i>)	18 (0.68)	36 (1.75)
Passive sentence with implicit agent	30 (1.14)	3
Certain conditional sentences	18 (0.68)	22 (1.07)

As can be seen, both high-scorers and low-scorers use direct directives through 1st-person plural interactant pronouns considerably more frequently than 2nd-person imperatives and 2nd-person interactant pronouns. However, while using a passive sentence with implicit agent is the most common way of addressing an indirect directive by Iranian high-scorers, this is the least frequent way in which indirect directives are addressed by Iranian low-scorers. Instead, Iranian low-scorers appear to impose their obligation indirectly on the reader more frequently through 3rd-person nominal forms and certain conditional sentences.

As was the case with the overall use of directives, the test version was also expected to be potentially an important factor in determining the use of direct and indirect directives in the Iranian student essays in this study. In fact it can be seen from Table 6.16 that the findings partially confirm the above-mentioned expectation, showing that test version does affect the use of direct and indirect directives in some Iranian essays, with the Academic students using direct directives more frequently than indirect directives. The General students, however, appear to impose direct and indirect obligation on the reader with nearly the same frequencies (2.2 and 2.3 per 1000 words respectively). Therefore, unlike the possible effect of the Academic version on students' use of direct and indirect commands, the General version does not seem to create any such effect. It is also worth noting that the greater use of direct commands than indirect commands by Academic students is broadly consistent with the overall pattern in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.12 above.

Table 6.16 Instances of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Direct directives	Indirect directives
Academic version [23,475 words]	98 (4.1)	73 (3.1)
General version [23,302 words]	52 (2.2)	54 (2.3)

The same line of argument used in the preceding section in the discussion of the effect of the test version (i.e. the likely effect of the controversial topic of each test version) on the

overall use of directives can be applied here to provide a possible reason why the Academic version elicits more direct commands than the General version. As suggested in the last section, the more ‘universal’ topic of watching television may make the Academic writers employ more direct directives precisely because television affects virtually ‘everyone’, including both writer and reader. General students, whose essay topic (i.e. ‘retirement age’) seems to be less universal, however, do not need to necessarily express commands directly at the reader (or writer and reader) and therefore employ both direct and indirect commands with equal frequencies.

In addition to the overall use of direct and indirect commands by Academic and General students, the surface realization of directives in these two sub-corpora is also slightly different. As can be seen in Table 6.17, both Academic and General students use 1st-person plural interactant pronouns to express direct commands considerably more frequently than the other two forms. However, while Academic students use certain conditional sentences for imposing indirect obligation on the reader most frequently, General students deploy 3rd-person nominal forms to express indirect commands more than the other two forms.

Table 6.17 Instances of formal realizations of direct and indirect directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

Formal realizations of direct and indirect directives	Academic version	General version
Direct directives		
imperatives	10 (0.42)	6 (0.25)
2 nd -person interactant pronoun (<i>you</i>)	11 (0.46)	5 (0.21)
1 st -person plural interactant pronoun (<i>we</i>)	77 (3.28)	41 (1.75)
Indirect directives		
3 rd -person nominal forms (<i>humans, people, etc.</i>)	17 (0.72)	37 (1.58)
Passive sentence with implicit agent	22 (0.93)	11 (0.47)
Certain conditional sentences	34 (1.44)	6 (0.25)

I shall explore the degree of directness associated with the directives imposed on the reader in more qualitative terms below.

As explained in 6.4.2, different directives impose different degrees of obligation on the reader resulting in the imposition of different degrees of threat to the reader's face. While a direct command can be quite face-threatening, an indirect command imposes less threat to the reader's face. Choosing a direct command can, therefore, potentially violate the principle of 'politeness' in an interactional context (Brown and Levinson, 1987). However, a student's argumentative essay is not all about politeness. It can also be equally, or simultaneously, about interacting with the reader for the purpose of setting up convincing arguments. Employing a direct command with which the reader can easily identify can assist the writer to create an overt dialogic interaction with the reader. Through directly imposing an obligation on the reader, therefore, the writer can make the

reader feel involved in the text. Hyland (2002c: 228), for instance, argues that the “collocation of directives and inclusive pronouns ... helps to create a more personal relationship with readers by involving them more directly as participants in the actions the writer seeks to highlight”. As stressed throughout this study, the reader’s involvement as a discourse participant through joining the writer can contribute to the ‘persuasiveness’ of the text. From these two perspectives (i.e. politeness and persuasiveness), therefore, as shown in Table 6.12 above, it can be argued that while the Iranian students appear to be intending to be more persuasive through using more direct commands, the British students prefer to favour politeness, slightly more than mere persuasiveness, through employing more indirect commands. It should be stressed, however, that the Iranian students are not necessarily successful in their attempts to create convincing arguments via direct commands, not least because of their lower linguistic competence.

Drawing on the assumptions of politeness and persuasiveness in relation to the degree of directness imposed on the reader suggested above, it can equally be argued that Iranian high-scorers and Iranian Academic students also appear to be more inclined toward constructing an overt dialogic interaction with the reader, and ultimately being more persuasive, at least partly, through the greater use of direct commands. Iranian low-scorers and Iranian General students, however, like British students, seem to be slightly more in favour of ‘indirectness’ and constructing polite interaction with the reader through indirect commands.

There are a number of features which suggest that the Iranian students are more inclined to construct an overt interaction with the reader than to observe politeness in their textual interactions with the reader. As noted above, Iranians employ direct commands noticeably more frequently than British students. Iranian students, as shown in Table 6.13, use imperatives more than twice as often as British students, indicating that they appear to favour an explicit writer-reader interaction at the expense of politeness. Based on the framework introduced in Table 6.4, the most direct command in terms of the amount of obligation imposed on the reader is the prototypical second person imperative. Imperatives are often seen as bald-on-record face-threatening acts (Brown and Levinson, 1987) precisely because of the amount of directness associated with them and also because “they apparently claim greater authority for the writer over readers” (Hyland, 2002c: 216). In (6.8), for example, the writer expresses a command directly at the reader through imperatives. Doing so, the writer seems to intend to take on an authoritative persona distancing him/herself from the reader by directing the reader to perform a physical action:

(6.8) The emissions from diesel vehicles - cars, buses and lorries - are particularly harmful (just **watch** a bus start its engine, and **observe** the huge black cloud that belches forth from its exhaust pipe), and yet there is no control on these vehicles' exhaust. Transport 07

Imperatives can, therefore, potentially endanger the equal writer-reader relationships in the text and violate the conventional ‘politeness’ principle of the interactional context

(Brown and Levinson, 1987). Swales *et al.* (1998: 99), however, argue that “despite their assumed bald-on-record quality, imperatives are better seen as complex textual signals by which academic writers manipulate various rhetorical strategies”. (The rhetorical functions that imperatives perform in student essays are discussed in the next section.)

Iranian students, as shown in Table 6.13, also use *you* as a means of imposing direct imposition on the reader considerably more frequently than British students. Imposing obligation on the reader directly through 2nd-person interactant pronouns can be considered as the second most direct command. As was the case with imperatives, expressing a direct command to the reader through *you* also creates an authoritative persona for the writer preferring to distance him/herself from the reader. Kim and Thompson (2010: 67) argue that imposing obligation through *you* implies the writer’s preference for “distancing himself/herself from the fulfilment of the obligation and withdrawing behind the cloak of knowledge-based authority”. In (6.9), for instance, the writers impose direct obligation on the reader through *you*, implying that they are more ‘expert’ and have more ‘knowledge-based authority’ than the reader and that it is the reader alone who should fulfil the obligation:

(6.9)

a. So, **you have to** be careful about how to use television!

IR/A/6/50

b. and **you should** obey this new law: stay at home ; don’t move; don’t be active, just watching TV or any thing like that.

IR/A/4/23

c. but **you should** have chances to have other jobs.

IR/G/6/27

d. **you have to** decide exactly when and where you want to travel in advance.

Transport 02

Interestingly, all the 18 instances of *you* used in expressing direct commands at the reader by students in this study are ‘generic’, referring to people in general, including the immediate reader (see sections 4.4.2 and 4.5.3) but as Kim and Thompson (2010: 67) argue “the fact that the writer chooses *you* rather than, for example, *people* or *one* is significant in that, in comparison with the 3rd-person forms, *you* retains a strong flavour of direct address.” In the genre of student essays, nevertheless, students are typically not assumed to have ‘knowledge-based authority’ over their readers (i.e. teachers or examiners). It is possibly for this reason that imposing obligation directly on the reader through *you* is almost non-existent among British students.

Based on the above, the high use of imperatives and 2nd person interactant pronoun *you* to impose direct obligation on the reader reflects the Iranian students’ inclination towards creating overt dialogic interaction with the reader at the expense of politeness. Iranian students also use other types of direct and indirect commands more frequently than British students but arguably these types are not as face-threatening as the aforementioned types and, therefore, do not violate the politeness rules seriously. In the remainder of this section, I will introduce these less ‘face-threatening’ types of commands.

The next form of direct command is the use of 1st-person plural interactant pronouns. As noted above, the use of imperatives and 2nd-person interactant pronouns to express direct commands at the reader can be potentially face-threatening. Employing the 1st-person plural interactant form, however, can be regarded as a politeness device for redressing the unavoidable face-threatening aspects of directives. In other words, when the writer includes him/herself in fulfilling the obligation imposed on the reader through *we*, the face-threatening aspects of the directive force can be mitigated. Kim and Thompson (2010) link the frequent use of *we* to impose explicit obligation on the reader in their corpus to one of Brown and Levinson's positive-politeness strategies namely "to convey that S (speaker) and H (hearer) are cooperators", explaining that "if S and H are cooperating, then they share goals in some domain, and thus to convey that they are cooperators can serve to redress H's positive-face want" (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 125, cited in Kim and Thompson, 2010: 66-7). Kim and Thompson conclude that the use of *we* to impose direct obligation on the reader can

... suggest that both the writer and the readers are involved in the fulfillment of the obligation. This places the writer on the same level as the reader, evoking solidarity rather than constructing the writer as the "expert" at a higher level (through greater knowledge) than the reader. Thus, while the FTA is directly carried out, the potential imposition is diffused.

(Kim and Thompson, 2010: 67)

In (6.10), the writers mitigate the face-threatening aspects of directives by involving themselves in the fulfilment of the obligation and therefore make the directives less of an imposition:

(6.10)

a. **We ought to** have enough exercises and activates to have healthy body.

IR/A/6/12

b. but **we should** know the correct applications of TV and use of it.

IR/A/4/10

c. Of course **we should** let the youth to progress.

IR/G/6/48

d. **We must** educate ourselves more and our children especially

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e. So **we have to** work good, in time , best time

IR/G/4/55

Directives can also be addressed indirectly to the reader. Since indirect commands do not explicitly impose an obligation on the reader, they do not overtly threaten the reader's face and therefore do not violate the 'politeness' principle in the interactional context (Brown and Levinson, 1987). They are therefore mainly used to create an indirect interaction with the reader, involving them implicitly in the text. One realization of such directives is the 3rd-person nominal forms such as *humans, people, everybody*, etc. as in (6.11):

(6.11)

a. **people should** be aware of what is going on, in their environment.

IR/A/6/36

b. **The people needs to** spend some of their free times with each other.

IR/A/4/52

c. But **one should** ask himself weather this power remain the same or not.

e. God want from human that work hard for their food, house, and .

... human **should** practice to good Live.

Although the reader can identify him/herself with such lexical items, s/he is not as directly obliged to perform an action as, say, when s/he is explicitly addressed through *you* or *we*. The obligation imposed on the reader can, therefore, slightly be softened through such 3rd-person nominal forms. As noted above, while British students express an indirect command least frequently by employing a 3rd-person nominal form, Iranian students use them more frequently than other realizations of indirect commands. It is not immediately clear what the precise motivation of Iranian students is in imposing indirect obligation on the reader via using such nominal forms. Coffin and Mayor (2004: 259) point out that it is an open question whether “the use of ‘everyone’, or the nominal alternatives such as ‘human’ or ‘people’ ... serve to add weight to a claim, deflecting attention away from the reader and writer as individuals, and representing an initial step towards abstraction” or whether it is “simply an attempt by novice writers with limited English to vary the lexis”.

The next surface realization of an indirect command is a passive sentence with implicit agent. As explained in 6.4.2, if a passive sentence whose omitted agent is recoverable in the forms of *by you*, *by us*, *by everyone*, etc. contains a form of directive, that passive sentence is classified as an indirect command. Kim (2006: 230) argues that employing a passive sentence with implicit agent to impose an obligation on the reader is an “effective

way of reducing authoritative connotations in the imposition of obligation” and because “there is no explicit realisation of the obligation-imposed in the text which the readers can identify with, the pressure from the imposition of obligation on the reader may be relieved”. The writer in (6.12) expresses an indirect command through a passive sentence with implicit agent:

(6.12) Members of a family will gather to watch a film or news but it
should be scheduled. IR/A/6/15

The writer in (6.12) does not make it clear who should schedule watching TV for family members. Based on the context, however, it is clear that it can be ‘anybody’. There is not an explicit obligation imposed on the reader to perform the suggested action (i.e. scheduling watching TV) in this sentence but, nevertheless, the writer appears to intend to indirectly ask the reader to perform a certain action. The degree of directness associated with such directives is, therefore, less than those which explicitly impose an obligation on the reader through imperatives, *you*, or *we*. While English science popularization writers in Kim and Thompson’s (2010) study used such passive sentences less frequently than all other devices to impose obligation on the reader, British students in the present study employ such sentences more frequently than all other devices.

Finally, the least direct realization of a directive force is certain conditionals which express some weak/indirect demand on the reader. But since the directive force in such conditionals is very indirectly expressed, there does not appear to be any obvious threat

to the reader's face and therefore the normal writer-reader interaction can be expected to be retained. Examples in (6.13) can be read as indirect directives:

(6.13)

a. but **if** *we* use it in a wrong way, it can damage *our* relationship with other people. IR/A/6/49

b. We could, also, quite easily find that **if** *we* did ban boxing then the so called secret fights could be without boxing gloves. Boxing - B15

The first example can be read as an implied demand directed at 'us' suggesting that 'we should not use TV in a wrong way because it can damage our relationship...'. Similarly, the second example can be read as a weak demand directed at 'us' implying that 'we should not ban boxing because otherwise it could be pursued secretly and more dangerously in other ways'. The already weak and indirect demand in both examples is further mitigated through *we* making the directive very weak and more like a suggestion than a real demand.

6.5.3 Research question three: directives and their discourse functions

In this section I explore the discourse functions of directives in student essays both in quantitative and qualitative terms. As shown in Table 6.5 in section 6.4.3, directives can be used by the writer to instruct the reader to perform a real-world or text-world action. Table 6.18 shows the distribution of real-world and text-world directives in student essays in Iranian and British corpora. As can be seen, both Iranian and British students tend to rely more heavily on real-world directives than text-world directives.

Table 6.18 Instances of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Real-world directives	Text-world directives
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	239 (5.1)	38 (0.81)
British essays [60,209 words]	62 (1)	16 (0.26)

As explained in 6.4.3, real-world directives can be divided into physical and mental acts and text-world directives can be divided into rhetorical and emphatic acts. The distribution of these sub-functions of directives in both corpora is summarized in Table 6.19.

Table 6.19 Instances of sub-functions of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Real-world directives		Text-world directives	
	Physical	Mental	Rhetorical	Emphatic
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	188 (4)	51 (1)	22 (0.47)	16 (0.34)
British essays [60,209 words]	51 (0.84)	11 (0.18)	10 (0.16)	6 (0.09)

Both Iranian and British students employ physical real-world directives about four times more often than mental real-world directives. Iranian and British students also tend to use rhetorical directives slightly more frequently than emphatic directives. The findings presented in the last two tables clearly show that the overall pattern of the use of different discourse functions of directives in both corpora is broadly consistent with each other, with the only difference being the noticeably greater use of each function (and sub-function) by Iranian students.

Table 6.20 shows that the use of real-world and text-world directives by Iranian students across proficiency levels is broadly consistent with the overall use of these functions observed in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.18, with both high-scoring and low-scoring students being more in favour of employing real-world directives.

Table 6.20 Instances of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Real-world directives	Text-world directives
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	128 (4.87)	33 (1.25)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	111 (5.4)	5 (0.24)

The overall distribution of the sub-functions of real-world and text-world directives in the Iranian essays at different proficiency levels shown in Table 6.21 is also broadly consistent with the overall pattern observed in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.19, with physical directives being used most frequently and emphatic directives being employed least commonly by both high-scorers and low-scorers.

Table 6.21 Instances of sub-functions of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Real-world directives		Text-world directives	
	Physical	Mental	Rhetorical	Emphatic
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	91 (3.46)	37 (1.4)	18 (0.68)	15 (0.57)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	97 (4.72)	14 (0.68)	4	1

As noted in the previous two chapters, relying on simple frequencies for examining the effect of language proficiency on the use of interactive features in the present data is unsatisfactory. Similarly, relying on the crude frequencies for examining whether language proficiency is a determining factor in the use of various discourse functions of directives in the present chapter also makes the picture less clear. For example, Iranian students (i.e. less linguistically competent students) employ text-world directives more frequently than British students (i.e. more linguistically competent students), indicating that more proficient language users employ *fewer* text-world directives. However in the Iranian sub-corpora, high-scorers use text-world directives slightly *more* frequently than low-scorers. So, as noted above, the figures make the overall picture less clear. Therefore a qualitative analysis is needed.

Finally, the overall distribution of real-world and text-world directives in the Iranian essays according to test version shown in Table 6.22 is also broadly consistent with the

overall pattern observed in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.18, with both Academic and General students using real-world directives more heavily.

Table 6.22 Instances of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Real-world directives	Text-world directives
Academic version [23,475 words]	148 (6.3)	24 (1)
General version [23,302 words]	91 (3.9)	14 (0.6)

Similarly, the distribution of the sub-functions of real-world and text-world directives summarized in Table 6.23 is also broadly consistent with the overall pattern observed in the combined Iranian data shown in Table 6.19, with physical directives being used more frequently than mental directives and rhetorical directives being used more frequently than emphatic directives by both Academic and General students.

Table 6.23 Instances of sub-functions of real-world and text-world directives (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Real-world directives		Text-world directives	
	Physical	Mental	Rhetorical	Emphatic
Academic version [23,475 words]	113 (4.8)	35 (1.49)	13 (0.55)	11 (0.46)
General version [23,302 words]	75 (3.2)	16 (0.68)	9 (0.38)	5 (0.21)

The frequencies presented up to this point clearly show that both Iranian and British students tend to employ real-world directives more frequently than text-world directives. The figures also show that physical directives are more commonly employed than mental directives and rhetorical directives are deployed more heavily than emphatic directives. I shall explore the discourse functions of directives in the present data in qualitative terms below.

As noted above, real-world directives are the most frequently used type of directives in the present study, comprising about 85 per cent of all directives. Students in both corpora tend to instruct their readers to perform a real-world action either physically (80%) or mentally (20%). As noted in 6.4.3, the major criterion for identifying physical directives is to examine whether the main verb in the clause containing the directive force is an action verb such as *ask*, *look*, *spend*, *control*, *watch*, etc. Physical commands can be imposed on the reader directly as in (6.14):

(6.14)

- a. You need to be calm and have rest after a day full of stress, so **turn off** the television right now!! IR/A/6/46
- b. If you're ever in a traffic queue then **look around, look at** the occupants of cars. Transport 06
- c. We **should** *ask* our parents our friends to help us in making important decisions. IR/A/6/24
- d. If you think you can work, you **should** *do* it. IR/G/6/27

or indirectly as in (6.15):

(6.15)

a. for example each person **must** *be watching* only especial programs that she or he likes. IR/A/4/5

b. **It's also vital to** *use* this fresh and updated potentials to improve the societies. IR/G/6/1

c. All people **should** *choose* their jobs by own. IR/G/4/51

In (6.14) and (6.15), all the directives explicitly or implicitly direct the reader to carry out a certain physical action in the real-world. It is, however, often hard to tell whether the reader is actually meant to go out in the real-world and perform those physical actions. As far as the writer-reader interaction is considered, it can be argued that the writer's use of a physical command, whether explicitly or implicitly imposed on the reader, seeks to lead the reader to a certain direction in the argument. In (6.16), for instance, the writer argues for retaining the lottery but with certain conditions including sharing the prize fund between more people. The writer imposes a physical obligation indirectly on the reader (i.e. *it is better to give ...*) but it is fairly obvious that the writer does not really intend to ask the reader to go out in the real-world and 'give fourteen people a fortune ...'. In fact, the writer seems to use this device in order to create an implicit interaction with the reader in order to make them feel involved in the argument and lead them to the conclusion that 'the prize fund should be shared between more people'.

(6.16) In conclusion, I think that the lottery should be retained, but not in its present form. I think that jackpots should be capped at 2 million pounds, and the prize fund shared between more people: **it is better to give** fourteen people a fortune than to give fourteen fortunes to one person.

007

As noted above, only 20% of all real-world directives are mental. Such directives instruct the reader to perform a mental action in the real-world. The major criterion for identifying such directives is to examine whether the main verb in the clause containing the directive force is a cognitive verb such as *be aware of*, *decide*, *know*, *understand*, and *think*. Examples in (6.17) are all instances where the writers instruct the reader to perform a mental action in the real-world:

(6.17)

a. As the information, science and technology is growing you **need to be aware of** them. IR/A/6/33

b. but we **should know** the correct applications of TV and use of it.

IR/A/4/10

c. But this does not mean that we **should ignore or forget** old peoples and retired. IR/G/6/32

d. you **have to decide** exactly when and where you want to travel in advance. Transport 02

Like physical directives, mental directives can also assist the writer in creating an interaction with the reader and involve them in the text for the ultimate purpose of setting up convincing arguments. In (6.18), for instance, the writer appears to be intending to argue that if we watch only certain programs based on our desires we can have more time to spend with our family members. The writer asks the reader to perform a mental action (i.e. *think*). This way, the writer constructs a dialogic interaction with the reader seeking to lead them to accept that watching TV can be a good habit provided that it is based on certain conditions (i.e. for example, we should only watch the programs that we like, not all the programs).

(6.18) Watching television shouldn't be a bad habit for us. *We* **have to** *think* about ourselves and our desires and then choose some programs on TV and just watch those programe. In this way we have time, doing many other tasks and we could be with our family when they really need us. I mean always and every minutes. IR/A/6/36

In addition, the writer's inclusion of him/herself via *we* for the fulfilment of obligation in (6.18) not only mitigates the face-threatening aspect of the imposed directive but also adds to the interactive effect of the clause containing the directive force. In fact, more than half of the mental directives in the present study contain interactant pronouns *we* and *you*, making them even more interactive.

Only about 15% of all the directives in this study are text-world directives. Explaining why students should employ cognitive directives (roughly equivalent to text-world directives in the present study) in their texts more than other types of directives, Hyland (2002c) argues:

Telling someone how he or she should navigate a text or carry out an experimental procedure is likely to impede their freedom of action and decision-making far less than directing the way they should follow a line of argument or the significance they should give to a claim.

Hyland (2002c: 226)

It can, however, be argued that although text-world directives can potentially be face-threatening, they are used to create an interaction with the reader for the purpose of enhancing the persuasiveness of the arguments set up by the writers. Text-world directives impose explicit or implicit obligation on the reader *within* the text. In other words, the readers are supposed to fulfil the obligation imposed on them literally while reading the text. From this perspective, it can be argued that text-world directives are more interactive than real-world directives precisely because the former seeks to address the reader explicitly or implicitly in order to involve them in performing a certain action in the world of the text rather than the real world.

Basically, text-world directives can be employed for rhetorical purposes to “lead readers towards the writer’s conclusions by setting up premises” (Hyland, 2002c: 233) or for emphatic purposes to stress that a point should be understood in a certain way. Rhetorical directives are often realized in the form of cognitive verbs such as *suppose*, *consider*, *imagine*, etc. More than 90% of rhetorical directives mostly expressed through such

verbs are realized as imperatives. As noted in the previous section, imperatives are the most direct form of directives and they are often regarded as ‘bald-on-record face-threatening acts’ (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Iranian and British students, however, tend to use imperatives mainly for rhetorical purposes in their essays:

(6.19)

a. Yes. Television does destroys our family life but only in the case that *we* don’t have a time schedule or table in watching it. **Suppose** after a boring day of hard work the father of the family arrives home. He says “hello” but there is no response from his children. *What is the matter?* Nothing, They are just watching their favorite film. Only the mother answer him but she doesn’t look at him. Her eyes are at the TV screen. It is not an excellent beginning for the short time that the family have to be together before sleep. I think *we* should learn that *our* family members are much more important than a TV program regardless of how exciting it is.

IR/A/6/39

b. and if *we* talk from the other view television makes the world smaller, **consider** *you* live in the small towns. And *you* can see a live program like world cup, and this give *you* a happy feel.

IR/A/6/48

Imperatives in (6.19) explicitly impose obligation on the reader and can potentially carry some threat to the reader’s face. These text-world directives, however, simultaneously assist the writer to construct a dialogic interaction with the reader contributing to the

involvement of the reader in the construction of the writer's desired argument. In (6.19 a) the writer employs an imperative form to illustrate his/her point. The writer intends to argue that watching TV can destroy our family life if we do not have an appropriate program. S/he uses 'suppose' to "introduce a hypothetical situation in order to further the discussion" (Swales *et al.*, 1998: 106). Drawing on his/her 'hypothetical situation' the writer, then, leads the reader to his/her intended destination spelled out at the end of the paragraph that family members are more important than TV programs. Similarly, in (6.19 b) the writer elaborates on his/her point that 'TV can make the world smaller' through an example which is introduced via 'consider'. It is worth mentioning that the italicized interactant pronouns in these two examples as well as the question posed and immediately responded to in the first example may add to the dialogic interaction created through directives making the readers feel more explicitly involved, probably contributing to the persuasiveness of the arguments.

Directives which are realized as imperatives are also used in the less imposing form of 'let us' as in (6.20):

(6.20) Now **let us consider** the friends or family of a boxer, who has been permanently injured (or been killed due to a fight). These individuals and others learning about the tragic incident in the media protest against the sport. The family, who were originally against the idea of their son finishing college early to take up the sport would be leading the protests against boxing.

Boxing - B04

In (6.20) the writer intends to give an example of those who can be against boxing. S/he invites the reader to collaborate with him/her in constructing the argument through ‘let us consider’ using his/her hypothetical example as a rhetorical way to lead the reader to the intended conclusion. It is worth noting that, as noted in chapter 4 (section 4.5.2), the combination of an imperative and an interactant pronoun (i.e. *us*) can have a strong interactive effect. In addition, *us* makes the imperative less face-threatening because ‘let us’ includes the writer as well and therefore imposes less obligation on the reader.

Finally, emphatic directives account for a smaller proportion of text-world directives and are mostly limited to Iranian essays. The findings of this study are in line with Hyland’s (2002c: 224) study where his students’ reports also contained fewer emphatic directives than rhetorical directives. Emphatic directives are essentially used to grab the reader’s attention and direct them to see a point the way the writer wants them to see it. Text-world emphatic directives are similar to real-world mental directives (introduced above) in that they both require the reader to perform a certain mental action. However, emphatic directives are different in that they help the writer to stress what the reader should attend to in the text-world rather than the real world. In other words, text-world emphatic directives “manipulate an audience’s reading of a text” (Hyland, 2002c: 233) by demanding that they carry out a certain mental action (e.g. *remembering* or *noting* or *not forgetting* a certain line of argument) in the text. The emphatic directives in (6.21), for instance, are employed to emphasize what the reader should attend to while reading the text:

(6.21)

a. First of all we **shouldn't** *forget* that we are human beings and we need to live with each other. IR/A/6/22

b. Whilst such behaviour cannot be condoned, it **must** *be remembered* that boxers do realize the risk of their chosen profession... Boxing - B09

c. **It is important to** *mention* that he is really successful in his job although he is 63 years old. IRG/G/6/10

In (6.21a), the reader is directed towards realising the importance of being a human being and the need for living with each other through the empathic directive force *shouldn't forget*. In (6.21b), the writer requires the reader to remember a certain point in the text (i.e. boxers know the risk of their chosen profession) through using an empathic directive force (i.e. *it must be remembered*). Finally, in (6.21c) the writer intends to draw the reader's attention to the fact that somebody is successful in their job although they are old. The writer does so through *it is important to mention that...*

6.6 Overview of Patterns

In the present chapter, I have argued that directives can be interactive only if they impose some sort of obligation on the reader. A directive force which is addressed, directly or indirectly, to the reader can potentially make them feel involved in the text. The reader involvement through directives may contribute to the persuasiveness of the arguments set up by the writer. Based on this assumption, I have explored the use of directives in Iranian and British student argumentative essays.

The analysis shows that Iranian students use directives more heavily than British students. The high use of directives by Farsi L1 students in this study is in keeping with Mayor *et al.*'s (2007) findings that Chinese and Greek L1 students overuse commands in their argumentative essays. The results of these studies support Hinkel's (1995) earlier observation that non-native students use directives more frequently than native students. Directives, however, are employed much less frequently in Hyland's (2002c) non-native undergraduate students' final year project reports, suggesting the significant role of genre-specific conventions in the use of interactive resources.

The frequency of directive use by British students in the corpus studied is very close to the frequency of directives used by 'expert' writers in Hyland's (2002c) study. This indicates that Iranian students not only exceed the use of directives in comparison with their British counterparts but also go far beyond the amount of directives typically used by expert writers.

We have also seen that Iranian high-scorers deploy directives more frequently than low-scorers. As argued in chapter four, the exuberant use of interpersonal features by more linguistically competent Iranians could be due to a persona created as a result of a developmental stage in which they have a tendency to overuse some of the interactive features that they know (e.g. various directive forms). It is also possible that the overuse of interpersonal features by more proficient L2 students is to do with 'showing off',

meaning that such L2 students may try out the resources of the L2 as they begin to feel more confident in it.

The results also show that Iranian Academic students employ directives considerably more frequently than Iranian General students. As argued earlier in this chapter, the topics of the two test versions may have affected the greater use of this linguistic resource by Academic candidates: The controversial topic of the Academic test version appears to elicit more directives because it is more universal than the topic of the General test version and therefore could affect ‘everyone’, including the writer and assumed reader.

In order to identify the forms that Iranian and British students often employ to impose their obligations on the reader, I have set up an analytical framework. The analysis shows that students in both corpora tend to address directives to the reader most frequently through modals of obligation.

To explore the degree of directness associated with the directives imposed on the reader by students in this study, a classification scheme has been established. We have seen that both Iranian and British students tend to impose their direct and indirect obligations on the reader with almost equal frequencies. The most popular way to address a direct command to the reader in both corpora is through the 1st-person plural interactant pronoun *we*. The greater use of *we* in comparison with imperatives and 2nd-person plural interactant pronoun *you* for expressing commands by a large number of students in both corpora suggests that they tend to mitigate the force of obligation imposed on the reader

and also redress the face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987) aspects of directives by engaging themselves (with the reader) in the fulfilment of the obligation.

As noted above, Iranian students, on the whole, make use of direct and indirect commands with almost equal frequencies. My quantitative scrutiny of the Iranian sub-corpora, however, reveals that Iranian high-scorers and Iranian Academic candidates tend to express direct commands more frequently than indirect ones. If, following Kim (2006), we assume that indirectness in imposing obligation is associated with politeness and directness is associated with enhancement of the ‘interactiveness’ of the text, it can be then tentatively concluded that, compared with British students, the majority of Iranians appear to favour interactiveness over politeness¹⁷.

Finally, in order to identify the discourse functions that directives serve in student essays I have drawn on an adapted version of Hyland’s (2002c) taxonomy of directives discourse functions. The analysis reveals that both Iranian and British students tend to use real-world directives noticeably more frequently than text-world directives. Through deploying either type of directives, students appear to create a dialogical interaction with the readers, make them feel involved, bring them into the text, lead them in the direction that the writers want and make them draw the conclusions that the writers desire by setting up premises.

¹⁷ It should be pointed out that politeness presupposes awareness of the reader’s face and from this perspective can be seen as interactive, albeit in a different way.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

7.1 Summary of the study

The present study is based on the assumption that certain linguistic and rhetorical devices can assist the writer to involve the reader in the text. More specifically, this idea is based on Hyland's (2005a) interactional dimension of metadiscourse that is concerned with the ways in which the writer can engage with the reader. According to Hyland's model, one of the interactional resources of metadiscourse is that of engagement markers. Interactant pronouns, questions and directives are three engagement markers which can assist the writer to explicitly build a relationship with the reader in order to jointly construct the text with them. It should be added that reader involvement through such resources can contribute to the persuasiveness of the text and the writer's arguments.

As discussed in chapter two, previous research has explored writer-reader interaction in various genres, disciplines, and languages. I am, however, unaware of any study looking at the ways in which Iranian L2 students employ engagement markers in their argumentative essays. In an attempt to fill this gap, I decided to explore the writer-reader interaction in Iranian L2 student essays and compare it with the ways in which native speaker students interact with their readers. I also set out to explore at a more delicate level whether the use of engagement markers varies amongst Iranians according to their language proficiency levels and the topics of their tests; and I therefore divided my

Iranian data into two sub-corpora looking at interactional resources based on these two variables. Among various engagement markers which can be employed for the purpose of reader involvement, this study focused on interactant pronouns, questions, and directives.

Chapter four explored how interactant pronouns *we* and *you* are employed in the student essays. These pronouns can help the writer to enact a dialogic interaction with the reader, invoking their involvement and contributing to the interactiveness of the text. The findings revealed that the Iranian students use interactant pronouns considerably more frequently than British students. As noted in chapter one, the British data are taken as a baseline, exemplifying the kind of performance that may be taken as the target for the Iranian students. Thus, markedly higher use of a feature by the Iranian students can be characterized as overuse. The possible reasons for the Iranian students' overuse of interactant pronouns will be discussed later in this chapter. Both the British and Iranian students deploy *we* more frequently than *you*. The results of this chapter showed that high-level Iranians and Academic students use interactant pronouns more frequently than low-level and General students. Given the importance of pinning down what the interactant pronouns refer to in the writer-reader interaction, an analytical scheme was set up to identify the semantic references of *we* and *you* in the student texts. The analysis showed that both the Iranian and British students tend to use interactant pronouns in their generic senses (i.e. referring to people in general) more heavily than in their restricted senses. In more qualitative terms, the analysis of the data revealed that interactant pronouns serve various discourse and rhetorical functions in the student essays. The most frequent function that *we* serves in both corpora is expressing solidarity with the reader

through assuming shared knowledge, experience, goals, beliefs, etc. Similarly, *you* is typically employed in both corpora for the purpose of assigning an active role to the reader in order to evoke solidarity with them, although the solidarity in the use of *we* is more obvious.

Chapter five analyzed the use, distributions and functions of questions in the Iranian and British essays, based on the assumption that questions are inherently interactive as they typically require some kind of response from the addressee. The quantitative findings clearly showed that the British students use questions more frequently than the Iranian students. As was the case with the interactant pronouns, language proficiency and test version were also found to affect the quantitative use of questions in the Iranian sub-corpora with high-scorers and Academic students employing more questions. In order to find out how questions are used in each corpus, an analytical framework was set up to analyze the positions, types, contents, and dialogic status of questions. The results showed that the only common feature of questions in the data is that both the Iranian and British students typically tend to leave their questions unanswered. Students' main preferences for the positions, types, and contents of their questions, however, were observed to be different. Finally, questions were studied in their wider contexts to investigate their discourse and rhetorical functions. Although questions were found to serve the same functions in both corpora, there were some distributional differences in their frequencies.

Finally, chapter six looked into the ways directives are used to create writer-reader interaction in the Iranian and British essays. Directives are strategic devices which can assist the writer to build a relationship with the reader, bring them into the text and lead them in the direction that he/she wishes by instructing them to carry out a certain action. The findings revealed that the Iranian students tend to employ directives more frequently than the British students. As found with questions and interactant pronouns, directives were also observed to be more frequently deployed in Iranian high-scoring and Academic scripts. Directives were most frequently realized as modals of obligation in all the data. In order to explore the degree of directness associated with the directives imposed on the reader, a classification scheme was established enabling me to divide commands into direct and indirect ones. The findings showed that whereas the Iranian students are more in favour of addressing direct directives to the reader, the British students prefer indirect commands slightly more than direct commands. The qualitative analysis of the data revealed that both the Iranian and British learners tend to impose obligation on the reader more heavily through real-world rather than text-world directives. The analysis also showed that both groups of students are more in favour of instructing the reader to perform a physical rather than a mental act. Rhetorical and emphatic directives were not used very frequently by either group of students.

As we have seen above, all the engagement markers analyzed in this study appear to serve similar functions in the Iranian and British essays. There are, however, conspicuous distributional differences in their frequencies. In the next section, I shall briefly introduce

the total numbers of the engagement markers employed by the students in order to highlight the quantitative differences in the overall use of these resources.

7.2 Engagement markers in Iranian and British student essays: a quantitative overview

The results of the present study showed noticeable dissimilarities in quantitative terms. As we can see in Table 7.1, the Iranian students employ the engagement markers more than three times as often as the British students. The considerably greater frequency of use of the engagement markers by the Iranian students may suggest that they tend to create explicit writer-reader interaction more than the British students. There seems to be a wide range of factors which might account for the heavy use of engagement markers by the Iranian students. These reasons will be discussed in section 7.4 below.

Table 7.1 Instances of all three engagement markers (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in student essays according to language background

	Engagement markers
Iranian essays [46,777 words]	1527 (32.6)
British essays [60,209 words]	543 (9)

The total numbers of engagement markers used by the Iranian high-level and low-level students are shown in Table 7.2. As can be seen, Iranian high-scorers tend to employ all the engagement resources slightly more frequently than low-scorers. As suggested specifically in the concluding sections of chapters four and five, the greater use of

engagement markers by more proficient Iranian students could be, at least partially, accounted for by the fact that they are at a developmental stage. This will be elaborated on later in section 7.4.7.

Table 7.2 Instances of all three engagement markers (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to language proficiency

	Engagement markers
High-scoring essays [26,265 words]	904 (34.4)
Low-scoring essays [20,512 words]	623 (30.3)

Finally, the Iranian Academic students also tend to employ all the three engagement markers markedly more frequently than the General students (see Table 7.3). Again, as suggested particularly in the closing sections of Chapters 4 to 6, the heavier deployment by the Iranian Academic students of engagement markers may be mainly due to the differences between the controversial topics as well as the different wordings of the generic prompts of the two tests. This assumption will be reintroduced in more detail later in section 7.4.7.

Table 7.3 Instances of all three engagement markers (recalculated as instances per 1000 words) in Iranian essays according to test version

	Engagement markers
Academic version [23,475 words]	1073 (45.7)
General version [23,302 words]	454 (19.4)

As noted above, there appear to be various factors contributing to the overuse of engagement markers by the Iranian students. Before discussing them, however, I shall in the following section discuss the main characteristic features of the Iranian and British texts in more qualitative terms by exploring the interactional effect of engagement markers, particularly when employed together.

7.3 The characteristic features of Iranian and British student essays in terms of engagement markers use: a qualitative overview

In this section, I intend to explore how all the three engagement markers work in tandem in Iranian and British student argumentative essays. For this purpose, I have chosen three essays from the two corpora since they seem reasonably typical in that the patterns of use in the individual texts are roughly proportional to the overall figures. At the outset, though, I should emphasize that neither the Iranian nor the British students in this study are believed to be ‘expert’ writers and, therefore, might not even be fully aware of the rhetorical effects that their use of engagement resources can produce. Nevertheless, the main objective of this analysis is simply to explore the possible effects the engagement markers have produced in the texts in terms of creating writer-reader interaction, irrespective of whether the writers were really aware or unaware of such interactional effects. What follows will analyze: a British essay – showing typical patterns of use which represent the Iranian students’ target; a successful Iranian essay – showing how the engagement resources can be deployed to engage the reader (if used well); and an unsuccessful (‘normal’) Iranian essay – showing the overuse of the engagement markers.

7.3.1 Analysis of a sample British essay

At 398 words, text *ICLE-ALEV-0024.8* is noticeably below the average length (602) of British essays. However, the rationale for choosing it, as noted above, is that its patterns of use of the engagement resources are roughly proportional to the overall figures. Although it has no directives, this text has the other two interactional resources looked at in the present study¹⁸. More specifically, there are 9 instances of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* as well as 7 questions. The essay follows¹⁹:

Paragraph 1

The area of genetics has expanded rapidly in the last few years and has raised many moral questions.

Paragraph 2

Modern genetics has improved healthcare by finding bacteria and virus responsible for certain illnesses meaning **we** can do something about them.

Paragraph 3

Our knowledge of <?> genes is improving all the time meaning that **we** can spot genetic defects, perhaps early in the stages of development of an embryo and a decision could be made about whether to keep the child or not. Further genetic findings lead to the possibilities of

¹⁸ It should be pointed out that directives are much less often used in the British essays in comparison with interactant pronouns and questions and their absence in this text is actually a typical feature shared by most British essays.

¹⁹In this and the following sample essays, interactant pronouns are shown in bold, questions are underlined, and directives are in capital letters.

being able to choose the sex of **your** child. This could be harnessed especially in the cattle and dairy industry where a farmer needs specifically male or female cattle and so waste could be reduced.

Paragraph 4

There are also future possibilities of being able to decide on specific features for offspring such as hair colour or musical talent. This has in some ways been carried out for centuries by cross-breeding to obtain desired features. Carrying it out genetically would give more control.

Paragraph 5

Genetic manipulation of viruses could mean that they could be used to carry useful genetic information round the body and pregnate it into other cells.

Paragraph 6

Many moral *problems* are raised with such advances, do we have the right to play God? Should we be able to choose features of our children? More importantly then is the *question* of 'Is it right to deprive a child of life because of genetic defects' which is likely to raise the most *argument*.

Paragraph 7

Along with the moral problems there are also physical dangers with 'tampering' with genetics. **We** are using bacteria and viruses to find vaccinations and cures, but there is a possibility that 'super' viruses or

bacteria could be produced which **our** bodies could not defend against and could wipe out entire populations. There is the chance that this is done purposefully i.e. biological warfare in which the effects could be catastrophic.

Paragraph 8

The moral *argument* is difficult as who at the end of the day has the right to make a decision? What about medical uses already in practice such as the production of insulin for diabetics which has made possible by genetic advancements, very few people would *argue* that there is a moral *problem* with that, so where can the line be drawn.

Paragraph 9

It is an *argument* which will re-appear and become more fierce as each new genetic step toward is discovered.

ICLE-ALEV-0024.8

As mentioned in 3.1.1, the exact topics of the A-level essays written by British students are not available in the LOCNESS corpus. Based on the informational contents of this and a few other similar texts in the British corpus, however, it can be surmised that the topic of this essay is about ‘genetics’ and the advantages and disadvantages of its application in different fields. The essay clearly falls into two parts: paragraphs 2-5 present the good points about genetic manipulation, and then paragraphs 6-7 the counter-arguments; and paragraphs 8-9 reach the conclusion that the issues are difficult to resolve (i.e. the writer does not come down on one side or the other).

The writer appears to enact a dialogic interaction with the reader through a fairly consistent use of interactant pronouns *we* and *you* throughout the text. All the instances of *we* in this text have generic referents, referring to people in general. The writer's choice of *we* over, say, *people* seems to have a rhetorical function of assuming shared knowledge, beliefs, and experience with the reader. In paragraph 3, the writer also addresses the reader explicitly through *you* (*your child*). Unlike paragraphs 2 and 3, the writer does not employ any interactant pronouns in paragraphs 4 and 5. However, it can be argued that since the writer has already brought the reader into the text through *we* and *you* in the preceding paragraphs, the lack of these devices does not seem to have seriously affected the overall interactiveness of the text. In paragraph 7, the previous pattern of explicitly interacting with the reader through *we* is picked up again.

In paragraph 6, the writer breaks the pattern of merely interacting with the readers through interactant pronouns and instead takes on an approach that has not happened before in the text: s/he poses a series of unanswered real questions. The writer raises three questions without answering them, leaving the reader to think about them. Whether the reader literally answers these questions or not does not seem to be very important. What is of more significance, however, is that the writer appears to have used questions as a rhetorical strategy to involve the reader in the text. The arguments constructed in this paragraph are realized as a number of questions. In other words, it is the questions per se that build the writer's argument; not necessarily the text following them. As we shall see shortly, the writer resorts to this strategy again in paragraph 8. Posing a number of

(paragraph/essay-medial) unanswered questions in order to construct arguments is one of the main ways questions are employed in the British student texts.

There are two further points in relation to the use of these questions in paragraph 6. Firstly, the writer's initial two questions contain the interactant pronoun *we* which adds to the already existing interactive effect of the questions. Secondly, the writer tends to label the questions through lexical items such as *question*, *argument*, and *problem* (italicized in the above text). Labelling questions through such items assists the writer to draw the reader's attention to a certain argument which is going to be introduced and highlighted through a question. It perhaps also suggests that the writers are moving closer to more expert writing, in that it is metadiscoursal labelling of the function of parts of the text. The writers' signalling that a question or a series of questions is/are approaching is, as shown earlier in 5.4.6.2, another characteristic feature of the questions as used by the British students.

Paragraph 8 is very similar to paragraph 6 in that again the writer employs a series of unanswered real questions leaving the reader to decide for themselves over: who should make a decision, what would happen to the medical uses of 'genetics' which are in practice, and where the line can be drawn.

As reflected in this sample essay, the British students in this study often employ a few instances of *we* and very few, if any, instances of *you*. They appear to rely on these few instances of interactant pronouns to create an overt interaction with the reader. They use

this resource sparingly but at important points in the text where they can have most effect. This is exactly the way most British students in this study deploy these pronouns. Having employed the interactant pronouns *we* and *you* only 4 times in the first 5 paragraphs of the above text, the writer deploys *we* 3 times in the relatively short sixth paragraph where s/he wants to introduce the problems associated with the implications of genetics and therefore needs the reader's collaboration in building the new line of argument in the text.

As the results of chapter five showed, the British students use questions more frequently than the Iranian students. The British students employ this rhetorical device mainly to construct or sum up arguments, thus meeting the requirements of the genre (i.e. argue for and against a given proposition). As we have seen in paragraphs 6 and 8 of the essay analyzed above, the questions posed by the writer are all deployed to assist him/her in constructing his/her intended arguments. These questions, as shown in the above text, are often found in clusters providing the reader with more rhetorical space to think about the arguments built by the writer.

Finally, as we have seen above, the writer of the sample text has not employed any directives in his/her text. As the results of chapter six revealed, the British students employ directives less frequently than the Iranian students. Taken together, the use of engagement markers in this text appears to be intended by the writer to create a discourse participant who collaborates with him/her in building the arguments for and against genetics and also concluding that the issues surrounding the implications of genetics are

not easy to resolve. The relatively adept deployment of these resources, as shown in the analysis of the above text, is a characteristic feature of the British essays in the present study. Using the engagement markers at key points appear to contribute to the interactiveness and persuasive effect of these essays.

7.3.2 Analysis of a sample successful Iranian essay

At 291 words, the first Iranian text that I will analyze is slightly above the average length (212) of a typical Iranian essay. However, it has all the engagement markers explored in the present study. More specifically, script *IR/A/6/46* has 11 interactant pronouns *we* and *you*, 6 direct and indirect directives, and 1 question. The essay follows:

Paragraph 1

Generally I agree with this idea that television has become a dangerous device. At first it was only for pleasure but these days it's something addictive.

Paragraph 2

If **you** enter a house most of the time **you** see the father for instance watching News and the other family members must be silent while he's watching TV, or the son of the house is watching sport all the time with a loud volume During dinner time nobody is paying attention to the food, they're just following the movie. They're addicted, addiction is not only about drugs but also about every thing. If **you** use something in a wrong way it has the same effect as drugs!

Paragraph 3

T.V must be an electronic device for just special times **You** see that children prefer to sit in front of TV set instead of playing with their friends or riding bicycle or other outdoor games. A wide range of people have become couch potatoes and a common scene in every house is someone who has the T.V control in one hand and a bowl of chips in the other hand. Also there's a big problem in watching T.V a lot. **your** eyes might be damaged and the balance between the secretion of gastric juices will be destroyed.

Paragraph 4

Hence, I STRONGLY RECOMMEND PEOPLE TO FIND A RIGHT WAY First of all **WE SHOULD'NT FORGET THAT WE ARE HUMAN BEINGS** and **WE NEED TO LIVE WITH EACH OTHER, WE NEED TO COMMUNICATE.**

Paragraph 5

Finally I have to mention that having a family is the gift from the lord, therefore why do we lose it for a nonsense device?

Paragraph 6

YOU NEED TO BE CALM AND HAVE A REST AFTER A DAY FULL OF STRESS, so TURN OFF THE TELEVISION RIGHT NOW!!

IR/A/6/46

As noted above, this essay seems to typify the Iranian texts since it contains a considerable number of engagement markers employed in a roughly similar pattern to the

overall figures. As we shall see below, the writer of this sample essay has fairly successfully used these resources to enact a dialogic interaction with the reader in order to build convincing arguments. Clearly, the essay is divided into two parts: paragraphs 1-3 present the negative points about watching TV; paragraphs 4-6 present the writer's 'bald-on-record statements of opinion' (Kennedy and Thorp, 2007:364) on the matter leading the reader towards the writer's last point (i.e. stop watching TV now).

The main pattern emerging from this high-scoring Academic text in terms of the engagement strategies seems to be the shift between the interactant pronouns. In paragraphs 2 and 3, the writer employs generic *you* five times but breaks this pattern in paragraphs 4 and 5. In paragraphs 2 and 3, the writer appears to aim to enact an overt dialogic interaction with the reader through *you*. It's worth noting that the referent of *you* is not always clear. In paragraph 3, *you see* refers to the reader/anyone as observer outside the undesirable situation, whereas later *your eyes* represents the reader/anyone as one of those watching TV.

In paragraph 4, the writer changes his/her interpersonal style. S/he first gives an indirect command to *people* (with whom the reader can identify). What is noticeable from the writer-reader interaction point of view here is the writer's rather abrupt shift from *you* to *people* and then *we* as s/he employs *we* five times in these two short paragraphs. The constant switches between the interactant pronouns *we* and *you* is one of the typical characteristic features of the Iranian texts in this study. Interestingly, Coffin and Mayor (2004) also observe a similar pattern in their IELTS candidates' scripts and point out:

Relatively more successful, but still weak, writers overload the text with a confusing variety of collective reference, including generalised nominal reference, with the result that cohesion can become lost. Jumping between referents, whether between sentences or even within the same sentence, can leave the reader unclear who is being referred to...

(Coffin and Mayor, 2004: 257-258)

Arguably, however, it does not seem that the writer's switch between *we* and *you* has adversely affected the informational content of this text. If anything, the use of *we* in paragraphs 4 and 5 seems to have enhanced the interactiveness of the text. The first instance of *we* in paragraph 4 is followed by a text-world emphatic directive force (i.e. *shouldn't forget*) aiming to capture the reader's attention and direct them to understand that the following series of 'messages' are important and should not be forgotten. The next three instances of generic *we* (*we are human beings/we need to live with each other/we need to communicate*) appear to be used for the purpose of expressing solidarity with the reader through assuming shared knowledge and beliefs. What is more, as noted in 4.5.3.1.1, the use of generic *we* by the writer may suggest his/her propensity to appeal to a collective identity to gain support for his/her claims. In addition, the use of *we* rather than *you* in (*we need to live with each other* and *we need to communicate*) seems to help the writer to mitigate the amount of obligation imposed on the reader through the real-world physical directive force *need to* since via *we* the writer engages him/herself (with the reader) in the fulfilment of the obligation, thus redressing the face-threatening aspect of the command. The use of *we* together with overt directives is, as we shall see later in section 4.7.6, another characteristic feature of the Iranian texts.

In paragraph 5, the writer gives a 'bald-on-record statement of opinion' (Kennedy and

Thorp, 2007:364): *I have to mention that having a family is the gift from the lord therefore why do we lose it for a nonsense device?* This sentence, in effect, forcefully sums up the preceding argument: the first part (i.e. *family is gift from the Lord*) is the most overt statement of why it is important to think of family before TV (which has been implied in the previous parts of the essay), and the question then brings in the strongest statement of the writer's opinion of TV. Given the preceding argument, this rhetorical question seems to be intended to forcefully, but nevertheless interactively, cap the text by making the reader feel involved in the construction of the concluding argument. As such, the question seems to direct the reader towards the writer's preferred response (i.e. 'we should not lose the gift of living with a family by watching too much TV'). However, the writer appears to have mitigated the forcefulness of his/her assertion by the use of *we*, since the writer engages with the reader by including him/herself in the question and therefore shares the fulfilment of the obligation (imposed through both the rhetorical question and *should*) with the reader.

Finally, in paragraph 6 the writer switches back to the second-person interactant pronoun and directly addresses the reader through *you*. As noted in 4.5.3.2, the use of *you* by the writer can give a more active role to the reader but in this paragraph *you* is even more interactive than the previous instances in paragraphs 2 and 3 since it seems to have a restricted reference referring specifically to the immediate reader of the text rather than people in general. As noted in 4.5.3.2.2, employing a restricted *you* assists the writer to set up an imaginary dialogic engagement with the reader by means of which the immediate reader is explicitly brought into the text. The writer then goes on to give a

direct command to the reader through *need to*, asking the reader to carry out a certain action in the real world (*you need to be calm and have rest after a day full of stress*). This direct command appears to aim to prepare the ground for the writer's last effort in fulfilling the goal of persuasion (i.e. that family is more important than watching TV). The writer rounds off the argument by giving a direct command (realized as a prototypical imperative) in '*so turn off the television right now*'. It is worth noting that there is an implied shift of time in this last sentence: whereas the rest of the essay is 'timeless', here the writer speaks to the reader as they read.

Up to the last paragraph, the writer appears to adopt a cautious persona at least by reducing the force of his/her directives through *we*. In the last paragraph, however, s/he seems to intend to take on an authoritative persona distancing him/herself from the reader by explicitly giving a command to them. Adopting such an authoritative persona via employing an imperative form in this paragraph leads the reader in the direction that the writer desires. In addition, there is also the shift from impersonal *you* to *we* to restricted *you* in this paragraph.

Taken all together, it can be argued that the writer of the essay analyzed above seems to intend to explicitly interact with the reader through the use of engagement markers. The analysis of this text clearly demonstrates the overall pattern of the use of the engagement markers by the Iranian students in this study: the Iranian students typically use interactant pronouns more frequently than the other two interactive features; employ direct commands more frequently than indirect ones; and, deploy questions less frequently than

the other two interpersonal resources. As noted earlier, the above text has employed the engagement resources relatively successfully. But the majority of the Iranian essays, as we shall see below, appear to fail to effectively engage with their readers through these resources mainly because they overuse them.

7.3.3 Analysis of a sample unsuccessful Iranian essay

At 261 words, the second Iranian text I intend to analyze is slightly above the average length (212) of a typical Iranian essay. Nevertheless, script *IR/A/4/18* typifies many unsuccessful Iranian essays since it noticeably overuses the engagement resources by having 29 instances altogether (24 interactant pronouns, 3 questions, and 2 directives). It is worth mentioning that this essay is also generally weaker in expression than the previous one, but this aspect is ignored as far as possible in my analysis. The essay follows:

Paragraph 1

Television is dangerous? It's my question. Some body say watching TV is bad for **our** children and **our** family. Why? LET'S GO TO BACK AND REMEMEBER WHEN **WE** WERE CHILD. There are no TV, no celle phone, no computer or act. **We** had to go out of home and play with **our** friends. Just that. And **our** brain was growing very very slowly. But at the moment **our** children teach every things by watching TV. Bad or good. IT IS IMPORTANT TO LEARN THEY WHICH THEM ARE GOOD AND WHICH THEM ARE BAD.

Paragraph 2

Our children civilized **ourselves**. They learn science, art, music, sport and act. They can find their life and their future easily by open eyes. They'll understand the problems of social. They can see different people from every place of earth. Why some people think television destroys their family. I think TV can learn **we** how **we** can have a good family, good children and lovely relation. When **we** see a lovely film, **we** like to talk to **our** partner. **We** like to sit near to **our** love and kiss her and talk to her about **our** life and **our** sense to each other. If **we** see a bad movie after that **we**'ll talk about that and try to do not that, by the other hand every nation see the sport game of their country team. And by seeing that some of them will be happy or some of them will be sad. So, I think TV is good for **our** family and **our** children and for **our** sense.

IR/A/4/18

As noted above, this two-paragraph essay is a representative of unsuccessful Iranian essays in terms of the deployment of engagement markers mainly because it overuses these resources. Clearly, the writer is arguing for watching TV and s/he appears to be intending to convince the reader that watching TV is useful: both paragraphs present the good points about watching TV guiding the reader to the writer's bald-on-record conclusion reached at the end of the text (i.e. TV is good for everybody).

The most noticeable pattern that emerges in this essay in terms of the engagement strategies is the writer's heavy reliance on the use of interactant pronoun *we*. The highly

frequent use of *we* in almost every 11 words in this text gives a highly interpersonal tenor to the text making it more similar to a conversation between him/herself and the reader rather than a persuasive written essay. The unsuccessful Iranian essays typically use *we* (and *you*) more indiscriminately than British essays and successful Iranian essays: that is, rather than using it especially at key points in the argument (as the two essays above do), they spread it through the essay, thus weakening its effect.

In contrast to the heavy overuse of interactant pronouns throughout the text, the writer has used questions and directives much less frequently. The writer starts the text by posing an unanswered question to introduce the topic (i.e. 'watching TV destroys family life and is therefore dangerous') and provoke the reader's interest to read the text. Because of the language weakness, the functions of the next two questions cannot be exactly identified but it seems that the writer uses them in a rather conversational fashion. The first one (i.e. 'why?') seems to be the writer asking his/her own question – Why do some people think TV is bad? S/he doesn't then answer this but lists reasons why TV is good, which suggests that the 'Why?' means something like 'I don't understand why people think this'. So it is like a conversation, using a question in a non-academic way. The second one (i.e. 'Why some people think television destroys theirs family.') seems to be meant to be read as questioning why some people think this – i.e. implying 'I don't understand why'. The two questions sound like the writer having asking the reader fairly aggressive questions in a non-academic way. The writer's use of questions at the beginning of this text to introduce the topic and arouse the reader's interest and also in

the paragraph-medial positions (as a strategy to construct the argument) is typical of many Iranian essays (see 5.4.6).

The writer's use of directives in the first paragraph also appears to add to the highly interpersonal tenor of the text as a whole. The writer imposes a mental obligation on the reader first through an imperative (i.e. *let's*) and then through *it is important to ...*. The Iranian students typically prefer to impose their obligations directly on the reader. Such overt and 'bald-on-record' use of directives by the Iranian students seems to have cultural reasons. I will discuss this issue also in section 7.4.5.

Overall, the text analyzed above appears to be relatively unsuccessful in terms of the appropriate use of engagement strategies mainly due to the overuse and inappropriate use of these resources. It is worth restating at this juncture that, as we have seen in the first two sample essays, the adept use of engagement markers can potentially assist the writer to enact a dialogic interaction with the reader and evoke reader involvement for the ultimate purpose of establishing convincing arguments. However, the noticeable overuse of these resources (as shown in the third sample essay) in the majority of Iranian essays seems to reduce the rhetorical effects of them: as Ferris (1994: 45) points out, "non-native student writers bring linguistic and rhetorical deficits to the task of persuasion in English". Taken all together, what I hope I have demonstrated through the analysis of the above texts is mainly the characteristic ways the Iranian and British students use engagement markers in their essays to attempt to set up writer-reader interaction. In the next section, I intend to explore some of the possible reasons why the Iranian students

overuse engagement markers. I will also briefly discuss why Iranian high-scoring students and Iranian Academic students use interactional resources more frequently than low-scoring and General students.

7.4 Why do Iranian students overuse engagement markers in their texts?

The overuse of the engagement markers by the Iranian students in the present study may have several possible explanations. Most importantly, the heavy reliance of Iranians on such resources may be due to the influence of L1 and some socio-cultural factors, as such factors are often believed to be, at least partially, accountable for the differences found between the texts written by native and non-native speakers. I will therefore focus mainly on such variables in this section.

7.4.1 Prestige and social self-image

Historically, learning and gaining native-like proficiency in a foreign language like English is regarded as ‘prestigious’ for many Iranians. Hoffman (1989) investigated the relationship between language and culture acquisition among the Iranians living in the United States in the 1980s. She observed that “when Iranians spoke with each other they often preferred to use a foreign language instead of Farsi, since ability to speak a foreign language conferred the prestige and high social status associated with having been educated abroad” (p. 122).

The concept of prestige gained as result of learning and using English can be partially related to the Iranian cultural notion of ‘*aberu*’ (i.e. ‘face, self image’). ‘*Aberu*’ is seen as a cultural concept that “holds the honor gathered through social interaction appreciated in the Iranian community” (Sew, 2008: 199). Many Iranians seem to attempt to increase their ‘*aberu*’ (i.e. their social self-image), amongst doing other things, by learning English. Vaezi (2008: 55), for instance, points out that Iranian parents are increasingly gaining interest in sending their children to English classes. Sharifian (2007: 38) argues that “the schema of *aberu* may act as the source of motivation for some Iranians to learn English, as it may be viewed as enhancing one’s *aberu* within the circles of family and society”. As noted above, Iranians may tend to contribute to their social self-image (‘*aberu*’), at least partly, by learning English and using it proficiently.

Accordingly, learning English and using it proficiently for many Iranians seem to be closely linked to the cultural notions of ‘prestige’ and ‘*aberu*’. What I argue in relation to the overuse of the engagement markers by the Iranian students is that once they feel more confident and think that they are proficient in English, some Iranian students may start to ‘show off’ by trying out some L2 resources such as engagement markers in an attempt to gain further ‘prestige’ and ‘*aberu*’.

This hypothesis can be further supported by our overall finding that Iranian high-scorers use the engagement markers more frequently than low-scorers. More proficient Iranian students may want to ‘show off’ their linguistic competence by overusing some L2 resources in order to gain more ‘prestige’ and ‘social self-image’. Based on the above, it

can be tentatively argued that the cultural notions of ‘prestige’ and ‘aberu’ might have, at least indirectly, contributed to the heavy use of the engagement markers by the Iranian students.

7.4.2 Politeness

When it comes to social interaction, Iranian culture is famous for its strict codes of politeness (see, for example, Beeman 1976). When communicating in Farsi, Iranians typically observe politeness rules fairly cautiously. O’Shea (2000: 122, as cited in Sharifian, 2007: 39), for instance, argues that “Iranian society revolves around ta’arof, a formalized politeness that involves verbal and non-verbal forms and cues”. The Iranians’ ‘over cautiousness’ in producing appropriate language particularly in (formal) social interactions in an attempt to be consistent with the standard cultural norms of their society can often obstruct the information flow between Farsi discourse participants. Interacting in English, however, appears to allow Iranians more ‘room for self-expression’ (Crismore *et al.* 1993: 64), as Hoffman (1989: 222) points out “communicating in English can simplify social interaction for Iranians”. Commenting on the reasons why Iranians living in the United States tend to speak English even to each other, Hoffman argues that using English protects Iranians from each other because the status demarcations and Farsi politeness codes seem to be rather difficult to apply in [English] social settings (p. 222). Investigating the way business letters are written by Iranian and English writers, Arvani (2006: 21) also argues that “business letters written by Iranians bore few traces of politeness strategies”.

Based on the above, what can be argued in terms of Iranian students' overuse of engagement markers is that the Iranian students seem to be taking advantage of the opportunity being given to them to interact in English. They appear to try to hide behind the conventions of English, removing the masks of politeness typically associated with social interaction in their culture and instead interact with their audience in a more 'care-free' fashion. In so doing, however, they appear to simply overshoot their targets by, for example, overusing interactant pronouns or directives. It can be argued, thus, that when writing in English, Iranians seem to get out of their cultural shells and overuse some of the interpersonal features which are otherwise very cautiously employed in their L1. This might justify Iranian students' overall tendency towards 'directness' at the expense of 'politeness', as suggested earlier in section 6.5.2.

7.4.3 Personalism

Although Iranians, as suggested above, tend to apply politeness strategies very strictly particularly in formal settings (perhaps like many other nationalities), they also tend to adopt a slightly more 'relaxed' and personal tenor in the less formal contexts of communication where personal relations outweigh the codes of politeness and social etiquette. One realization of such a personal and informal style can be the frequent use of interactant pronouns. It is possible that one reason for the overuse of interactant pronouns by the Iranian students is the cultural notion of 'personalism' and the strong value that Iranians, in general, attach to personalism in all their personal relations (Hoffman, 1989: 129). Hoffman argues that "Farsi is associated with art, emotional expression, friendship, and social refinement" (p. 127). The prevalent friendly and personal relations among

Iranians might influence their L2 behaviour, as the Iranian students in this study adopt a highly interpersonal style, partly, by overusing interactant pronouns. In other words, it appears that the Iranian students may be under the influence of their L1 linguistic and stylistic background which allows them to adopt a highly interpersonal tenor in informal social interactions. This overall tendency towards personalism seems to be coupled with their overall lack of genre and register awareness (see, for example, the argument at the end of 4.5.1), perhaps affecting their L2 performance where they also tend to rely heavily on setting up personal relationships with the reader, partly through overusing interactant pronouns.

7.4.4 ‘I just write’ approach

It has been claimed by researchers that one of the characteristic features of Farsi as it is used by Iranians is the importance of ideational content over form. In other words, Iranians typically pay more attention to the message rather than using the suitable form for conveying that message. Falahati (2004: 78), for instance, argues that “in a language like Farsi, the main concern of the writer is the propositional content of their text rather than the affective nature of discourse”. Similarly, Arvani (2006: 21) points out that “by using more informal and direct language ... Iranian communicators intend to simply convey their messages without thinking of how to employ forms which are acceptable to their counterparts”. I would argue that Iranians’ overall tendency towards communicating information at the expense of employing appropriate forms of establishing effective addressor-addressee interaction might well affect their L2 writing performance. Evidence for this emerges in, for example, Abasi *et al.*’s (2006) study on discourse appropriation,

construction of identities, and plagiarism among EFL student writers. One of their Iranian student subjects, Mina, responded to a question about whether she was aware of the textual identities constructed in her writings as follows:

Honestly, I haven't looked at my writing so consciously. *I just write*. I never actually consciously sit and say, "OK, why am I doing this?"
(Mina, December 2003, as cited in Abasi *et al.* 2006: 106, my emphasis)

Iranian EFL students, on the whole, seem to tend to have an approach in writing which I call 'I just write' approach. This approach to writing appears to be the result of the above-mentioned tendency of Iranians to focus on the propositional meaning rather than the form. 'I just write' style of writing makes Iranian students focus so much on their thoughts and ideas that they may overlook the fact that they are *writing* and that they should employ appropriate forms for the written genre of the essay. Instead, they just seem to intend to speak out what they think about a given topic and to do so they adopt a highly interpersonal tenor to ensure that the reader can easily decode what they are telling him/her. One realization of such an interpersonal style is the high reliance of the Iranian students on certain engagement markers like interactant pronouns and directives. It can, therefore, be tentatively speculated that Iranians' L1 stylistic conventions of paying more attention to meaning rather than form might influence their L2 performance by diverting their attention from the judicious use of interactive features (for conveying the propositional meaning) to the overuse of such features.

7.4.5 Iran's monarchy history

A country's past history can affect the language behaviour of its people. As Markkanen and Schröder (1987, as cited in Crismore *et al.* 1993: 65) suggest, one possible explanation for the heavy use of hedges in argumentative essays written by Finnish university students could be their past history of being ruled for centuries by the Swedes and then the Russians and also their position next to a powerful neighbour. Markkanen and Schröder argue that Finland's past history may have taught the Finns to be cautious about expressing their opinions and point out that this may be reflected in their linguistic behaviour even when writing persuasive essays (*ibid.*).

The linguistic behaviour of Iranian students may also be affected by their past history. Iran is one of the most ancient countries in the world, enjoying more than 2,500 years of documented civilization. It has had a history of monarchy (e.g. Brown and Landreth, 1983: 238, cited in Ghaffarian, 1998: 645) until the 1979 revolution which turned this country into a republic. The long history of dictators ruling Iran seems to have left the Iranian society with a particular cultural norm in which giving and receiving orders is quite common in most people's daily affairs. Abdollahzadeh (2011) argues that "cultural and educational upbringing and traditionally oriented leanings impose sets of orders and instructions [on Iranians] in the form of 'musts' and 'must nots' ". It can be speculated that this traditional culture (i.e. giving and receiving orders) may be reflected in their linguistic behaviour. It can be argued, therefore, that the heavy use of directives employed by the Iranian students in the present study might be, at least partly, due to their 'received culture' in which imposing obligations on each other is very common.

The monarchy system of ruling the country (mostly by despots) over the centuries has created yet another cultural practice in which (ordinary) people should not really ask questions: they should simply follow the orders imposed on them by those who have a higher ranking. In other words, raising (too many) questions is not a culturally accepted behaviour in Farsi. Abdollahzadeh (2011) argues that “[I]t seems to be a common practice in the Iranian tradition to abide by the rules and traditions without questioning or expressing doubt or opinion about them”. Khodabandeh’s (2007) findings regarding the use of rhetorical figures in Persian and English advertisements also reveal that questions are used very infrequently in Farsi advertisements. Based on the above, it can be cautiously surmised that the relatively infrequent use of questions by the Iranian students in this study may be influenced by the role of a culture which does not favour asking questions.

A counter-argument to this hypothesis, however, could be if the Iranian culture is so ‘hierarchical’, then, would one not expect to have a relatively low (rather than high) proportion of, say, directives to questions? As noted above, Iranian people have been under the influence of monarchy history for a very long time. But it is not just within the ‘big’ society where Iranians are traditionally faced with the things that they should or should not do; the culture of ‘musts’ and ‘must nots’ seems to be prevalent even in smaller communities such as family, school, circle of friends, etc. In other words, such culture appears to be so closely interwoven with people’s daily lives that it might have influenced their L1 linguistic behaviour and subsequently their L2 performance so deeply

that they use directives highly frequently. In such a culture in which people are used to being constantly told what to do and what not to do, they are equally discouraged from asking questions. So as the number of directives increases, the number of questions decreases. From this perspective, therefore, it seems plausible to expect a high proportion of directives to questions, not the other way around. It should be stressed, however, that discovering whether the relatively low use of questions or high use of directives by Iranian L2 students is mainly due to socio- historical/cultural influences requires not only further research involving in-depth interviews with the writers but also a thorough reading of historical and anthropological literature.

7.4.6 Repetition and fixed expressions

Each language and culture has a unique set of rhetorical conventions (e.g. Kaplan, 1966). Cultural differences in writing style can affect the way in which non-native students use linguistic and rhetorical strategies when writing in English. In addition to the possible roles of socio-cultural factors discussed above, the distinctive features of Farsi may also influence the way Iranian students write in English. ‘Retelling’ (Abasi *et al.* 2006), ‘repetitions’ (Khodabandeh, 2007), and the use of ‘fixed expressions’ (Edalat, 2009) are some of the characteristic features of Farsi discourse and style. As noted in section 7.4.4, it can be argued that Iranian students in this study tend to favour ‘content’ over ‘form’ and they ‘just write’. Nevertheless, perhaps due to their low language proficiency and lack of familiarity with presenting arguments in English, they typically end up with texts which have ‘thin’ arguments. It can be speculated that since they do not have much informational content to argue about, Iranian students in the present research tend to

adopt their Farsi style and resort to the use of some fixed phrases and repetition. The repetition of their ideational content is occasionally accompanied by the repetition of some of the engagement markers like interactant pronouns and directives. In addition, the high incidence of addressing direct directives to the reader through fixed expressions like ‘we must’, ‘we should’, ‘we have to’ ‘we need to’, etc. (all roughly equivalent to the commonly used fixed phrase of ‘ma bayad’ - ‘ma’ equivalent to *we*; ‘bayad’ equivalent to *must, should, have to, ought to* - in Farsi) suggests that the overuse of interactant pronouns and directives may be due to the influence of L1²⁰. (See paragraph 4 of the sample successful Iranian essay in section 7.3.2 above for the way Iranians employ such fixed expressions).

7.4.7 Language proficiency and test influence

Up to this point, the possible effects of socio-cultural factors as well as the possible influence of Iranian students’ L1 on the overuse of the engagement markers in the Iranian essays have been discussed. As the quantitative findings showed, the use of engagement markers also varies according to language proficiency and the test version being responded to in the Iranian sub-corpora.

The effect of language proficiency on use of engagement markers by non-native students is observed by other researchers. Mayor *et al.* (2007: 291) and Kennedy and Thorp (2007:

²⁰ It can be also argued that the cultural influence of repetition may be reinforced in the data by a particular aspect of ‘task effect’: Iranian students on the whole seem to try to reach the minimum 250 words set for them. Thus Iranian students may take advantage of their cultural inclination towards repetition partly as a strategy to get the required number of words; and this may have indirectly contributed to the high use of interactant pronouns and directives in the Iranian texts, since some of these occur in repetitions (note, for example, the repetitious occurrences of *our* + Noun - e.g. *our* friends, *our* sense, *our* children, *our* family, etc. - in the sample unsuccessful Iranian essay analyzed in section 7.3.3 above).

344), for instance, find that more proficient L2 students employ more interpersonal features than less proficient ones. In line with their findings, the results of this study also confirm that more linguistically competent L2 students employ certain interpersonal features more frequently than less competent ones. As already noted in chapters four and six, more proficient L2 students in this study seem to be at a developmental stage where they are inclined to exuberantly try out some interpersonal features, showing off their language proficiency. This fits in with the idea of ‘displaying expertise’ that is also observable in Kennedy & Thorp’s (2007) study. Kennedy and Thorp argue that “the expert L2 writers are displaying their expertise and facility in the language more overtly than we imagine an L1 writer would in a similar context” (p. 348). Similarly, I would argue that more proficient L2 writers forge a persona in which they tend to show off their linguistic competence, particularly by trying out interpersonal features in an overt way. The notion of overt use of interpersonal features by more proficient L2 students can be referred to as ‘interpersonal exuberance’. Taken together then, it can be suggested that language proficiency has affected the use of engagement markers by the Iranian students in the present study.

Mayor *et al.* (2007) observe that the use of interpersonal resources by L2 students varies across test versions. In keeping with their findings, we also find that test version affects the use of engagement markers by Iranian L2 students, with the Academic students employing these resources more frequently than the General students. As noted in the previous chapters, the main differences between the two versions of the tests are the wordings of the generic prompts and the controversial topics of the two tests. More

specifically, unlike the instructions of the General version test, the generic prompt of the Academic test explicitly requires students to ‘*present a written argument to an educated reader*’, which may well cue them towards adopting a conversational style both by defining the reader for them and by suggesting that they have to build arguments. Academic students’ awareness of the presence of a reader might have led them towards employing a more conversational tenor through the greater use of engagement markers. Furthermore, as Williams (1989, cited in Crismore *et al.* 1993: 64) points out, “argumentative writing lends itself to the use of metadiscourse, especially the interpersonal type”. It can be suggested, then, that the Academic students in this study might have been prompted by the word *argument* towards adopting a more interpersonal style, thus using more engagement markers. This might imply quite a sophisticated understanding of the use of engagement markers in persuasive argumentation. However, it is probable that Academic students overuse interpersonal resources not because of their deep understanding of the use of interactive features in argumentation (as they are relatively inexperienced in writing) but simply because of the possible influence of the second meaning of the word ‘argument’: the Farsi word for ‘argument’ has the same double meaning as English, with the second meaning of ‘verbal dispute between two or more people’. Therefore, it is possible that Academic students’ overuse of interpersonal features is due to the ‘verbal’ nature of argument associated with this word.

In addition to the different wordings of the tests, the topics are also different, with the topic of the Academic test (i.e. *watching TV*) being, arguably, more universal than that of the General one (i.e. *age of retirement*). This universality, as suggested earlier in 4.5.3

and 6.5.2, seems to have elicited more engagement markers from Academic students as television can affect everybody (including the writer and the reader). The aforementioned differences between the two tests may, at least partially, be explained by the effect of the test version on the use of engagement markers by the Iranian students.

In the end, it should be noted that finding explanations for the overuse of engagement markers by the Iranian students is very difficult without carrying out further empirical research involving interviews with individual writers seeking their reasons for their high use of interactional resources.

7.5 Concluding remarks

This study has attempted to show how native and non-native student writers interact with their readers in argumentative essays through engagement markers. The findings contribute to our growing understanding of how writers, in what might be seen as an ‘apprentice’ genre, deploy these resources to interact with their readers. The findings showed that the engagement markers are employed for fairly similar purposes by both native and non-native students but there are considerable distributional differences in their frequencies, with non-native students noticeably overusing the interactional resources. There is an established body of research on the effect of cultural conventions on the performance of L2 writers. The results of this research also contribute to such studies, showing that the overuse of engagement markers by EFL students may have been under the influences of such factors.

English language learning has gained an accelerating pace in Iran in recent years (e.g. Vaezi, 2008), partly as the number of Iranians who intend to pursue their higher education in English-speaking countries is increasing (e.g. Rasti, 2009). Writing is an integral component of almost any proficiency test (e.g. IELTS) that Iranian EFL students are required to take in order to apply to study at universities in English speaking countries. Given the importance of writing for such students, however, writing classes in Iran do not seem to fully prepare students for writing effectively in English. Traditionally, the English writing classes in Iran adopt product-based approaches with little, if any, attention paid to the processes of effective writing, particularly in terms of building effective arguments via appropriate writer-reader interaction. Accordingly, EFL students in Iran are typically unaware of the importance of the judicious use of engagement markers as a strategy to create effective writer-reader interaction to construct persuasive arguments. Even in Farsi composition classes, Iranian students are often asked to describe something rather than present arguments for or against a certain proposition. Therefore, as noted above, Iranian EFL students are not very familiar with establishing effective arguments. As noted earlier, most of their arguments are thin and not well supported, expanded or elaborated on. Instead, they seem to overuse some L2 resources in an attempt to compensate for their weak arguments. This leads to the final products which are, at best, too conversational and, at worst, too confusing, often leaving the reader frustrated in understanding the writers' intended meaning. As Zarei and Mansoori (2007: 24) argue, Iranian writers' high dependence on certain metadiscourse resources "cannot always be taken as a positive indication of facilitating communication". In fact, if anything, the high use of metadiscourse by Iranians could "affect the preciseness and

conciseness of propositional relationships, making them subject to extreme subjective interpretations by speakers of another language” (Zarei & Mansoori, 2007: 33).

The findings of this study, therefore, have relevance for the teaching of writing, suggesting that EFL students can benefit from an awareness of appropriate use of engagement markers for the purpose of interacting with the reader and building convincing arguments. EFL writers should be directed towards writing in a way that conforms to the conventions of the target language (Kaplan, 1987). One of the now firmly established principles of writing in English is creating writer-reader relationships through engagement markers for the purposes of reader involvement and building convincing arguments. If EFL students want to present persuasive arguments that are fluently read and understood by native-speaker readers, they need to employ these resources as far as possible in the way that native speakers do. EFL writing teachers should raise students’ consciousness and enhance their sensitivity by showing them the ways ‘expert’ writers employ engagement markers effectively in order to involve the reader in the text. They can make use of concordance programs to enable their students to discover for themselves the rhetorical functions of interactional resources in authentic persuasive texts written by native speakers. They can also use learner corpora (such as the one used in this study) in order to address the problems that, for example, Farsi speakers of English have in terms of the appropriate use of engagement markers, by showing them, and making them aware of, the undesirable effects caused by the overuse and misuse of such resources.

Finding the similarities and differences between Iranian and English writers can be relevant for teacher training and English language teaching since, as Hyland (2005a: 201-2) points out, “control of interactional features is often particularly difficult for L2 writers and contributes to the ‘cross-cultural pragmatic failure’ which can seriously affect the credibility of such writers”. Therefore, metadiscourse studies in other languages and cultural groups can help materials developers, syllabus designers, English language teachers, and above all, EFL students to realize which rhetorical and linguistic aspects of writing are more essential to be focused upon so that L2 student English essays resemble more closely the native speaker patterns.

One of the limitations of the present study was the lack of firm evidence for showing the exact effects of Iranians’ L1 discourse on the ways they perform writer-reader interaction in L2. In other words, the lack of qualitative metadiscourse studies on Farsi texts did not allow any consistent exploration of the possible effects of L1 on the L2 performance of Iranian students. There is, therefore, a significant need for further research on the ways of interaction in Farsi. The analytical frameworks established in this study can be used to explore the use of the engagement markers in Farsi texts.

Since there is not enough research on the use of metadiscourse resources in Iranian EFL student argumentative essays, further research needs to be carried out exploring other metadiscourse features employed by Iranian students and comparing them with those of native students to illuminate the similarities and differences between writers. Such studies could also feed into second language teaching and teacher training. Finally, I would argue

that further research on the effects of writing task variables on the performance of L1 and L2 students is needed. For example, the hypothesis of whether the wording of the two test versions investigated in this study has any effect on the greater use of the engagement markers in the texts can be tested. One way to test this hypothesis could be to ask other students to write on both topics and then compare the results with the findings of the present research.

I hope the present study has shown how certain engagement markers characterize the genre of student argumentative essay writing. I also hope to have illustrated how native and non-native students create writer-reader interaction in their texts. Writer-reader interaction through interactional metadiscourse resources in the genre of student essay writing has started to receive more attention. This area of textual interaction in this genre holds a considerable potential and deserves more research as the results can not only demonstrate the exact ways writer-reader interaction is performed in texts written by novice writers but also feed into EFL pedagogic practices.

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Appendix 1



IELTS Task 2 Writing band descriptors (public version)

Band	Task Response	Coherence and Cohesion	Lexical Resource	Grammatical Range and Accuracy
9	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> fully addresses all parts of the task <input type="checkbox"/> presents a fully developed position in answer to the question with relevant, fully extended and well supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses cohesion in such a way that it attracts no attention <input type="checkbox"/> skilfully manages paragraphing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a wide range of vocabulary with very natural and sophisticated control of lexical features; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips' 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a wide range of structures with full flexibility and accuracy; rare minor errors occur only as 'slips'
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> sufficiently addresses all parts of the task <input type="checkbox"/> presents a well-developed response to the question with relevant, extended and supported ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> sequences information and ideas logically <input type="checkbox"/> manages all aspects of cohesion well <input type="checkbox"/> uses paragraphing sufficiently and appropriately 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a wide range of vocabulary fluently and flexibly to convey precise meanings <input type="checkbox"/> skilfully uses uncommon lexical items but there may be occasional inaccuracies in word choice and collocation <input type="checkbox"/> produces rare errors in spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a wide range of structures <input type="checkbox"/> the majority of sentences are error-free <input type="checkbox"/> makes only very occasional errors or inappropriacies
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> addresses all parts of the task <input type="checkbox"/> presents a clear position throughout the response <input type="checkbox"/> presents, extends and supports main ideas, but there may be a tendency to over generalise and/or supporting ideas may lack focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> logically organises information and ideas; there is clear progression throughout <input type="checkbox"/> uses a range of cohesive devices appropriately although there may be some under-/over-use <input type="checkbox"/> presents a clear central topic within each paragraph 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a sufficient range of vocabulary to allow some flexibility and precision <input type="checkbox"/> uses less common lexical items with some awareness of style and collocation <input type="checkbox"/> may produce occasional errors in word choice, spelling and/or word formation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a variety of complex structures <input type="checkbox"/> produces frequent error-free sentences <input type="checkbox"/> has good control of grammar and punctuation but may make a few errors
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> addresses all parts of the task although some parts may be more fully covered than others <input type="checkbox"/> presents a relevant position although the conclusions may become unclear or 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> arranges information and ideas coherently and there is a clear overall progression <input type="checkbox"/> uses cohesive devices effectively, but cohesion within and/or between 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses an adequate range of vocabulary for the task <input type="checkbox"/> attempts to use less common vocabulary but with some inaccuracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a mix of simple and complex sentence forms <input type="checkbox"/> makes some errors in grammar and

	<p>repetitive</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> presents relevant main ideas but some may be inadequately developed/unclear 	<p>sentences may be faulty or mechanical</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> may not always use referencing clearly or appropriately <input type="checkbox"/> uses paragraphing, but not always logically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> makes some errors in spelling and/or word formation, but they do not impede communication 	<p>punctuation but they rarely reduce communication</p>
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> addresses the task only partially; the format may be inappropriate in places <input type="checkbox"/> expresses a position but the development is not always clear and there may be no conclusions drawn <input type="checkbox"/> presents some main ideas but these are limited and not sufficiently developed; there may be irrelevant detail 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> presents information with some organisation but there may be a lack of overall progression <input type="checkbox"/> makes inadequate, inaccurate or over-use of cohesive devices <input type="checkbox"/> may be repetitive because of lack of referencing and substitution <input type="checkbox"/> may not write in paragraphs, or paragraphing may be inadequate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses a limited range of vocabulary, but this is minimally adequate for the task <input type="checkbox"/> may make noticeable errors in spelling and/or word formation that may cause some difficulty for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses only a limited range of structures <input type="checkbox"/> attempts complex sentences but these tend to be less accurate than simple sentences <input type="checkbox"/> may make frequent grammatical errors and punctuation may be faulty; errors can cause some difficulty for the reader
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> responds to the task only in a minimal way or the answer is tangential; the format may be inappropriate <input type="checkbox"/> presents a position but this is unclear <input type="checkbox"/> presents some main ideas but these are difficult to identify and may be repetitive, irrelevant or not well supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> presents information and ideas but these are not arranged coherently and there is no clear progression in the response <input type="checkbox"/> uses some basic cohesive devices but these may be inaccurate or repetitive <input type="checkbox"/> may not write in paragraphs or their use may be confusing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses only basic vocabulary which may be used repetitively or which may be inappropriate for the task <input type="checkbox"/> has limited control of word formation and/or spelling; errors may cause strain for the reader 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses only a very limited range of structures with only rare use of subordinate clauses <input type="checkbox"/> some structures are accurate but errors predominate, and punctuation is often faulty
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> does not adequately address any part of the task <input type="checkbox"/> does not express a clear position <input type="checkbox"/> presents few ideas, which are largely undeveloped or irrelevant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> does not organise ideas logically <input type="checkbox"/> may use a very limited range of cohesive devices, and those used may not indicate a logical relationship between ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses only a very limited range of words and expressions with very limited control of word formation and/or spelling <input type="checkbox"/> errors may severely distort the message 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> attempts sentence forms but errors in grammar and punctuation predominate and distort the meaning
2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> barely responds to the task <input type="checkbox"/> does not express a position <input type="checkbox"/> may attempt to present one or two ideas but there is no development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> has very little control of organisational features 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> uses an extremely limited range of vocabulary; essentially no control of word formation and/or spelling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> cannot use sentence forms except in memorised phrases

1	<input type="checkbox"/> answer is completely unrelated to the task	<input type="checkbox"/> fails to communicate any message	<input type="checkbox"/> can only use a few isolated Words	<input type="checkbox"/> cannot use sentence forms at all
0	<input type="checkbox"/> does not attend <input type="checkbox"/> does not attempt the task in any way <input type="checkbox"/> writes a totally memorised response			

Appendix 2

The most frequent directive forms in academic writing compiled by Hyland (2002)

Imperatives

Add	Follow	Remember	It is essential to
Allow	Go	Remove	It is imperative to
Analyse	Imagine	See	It is important to
Apply	Increase	Select	It is indispensable to
Arrange	Input	Set	It is necessary to
Assess	Insert	Show	It is obligatory to
Assume	Integrate	Suppose	It is required to
Calculate	Key	State	It is significant to
Choose	Let A=B	Think about	It is vital to
Classify	Let's	Think of	
Compare	Look at/etc.	Turn	
Connect	Mark	Use	
Consider	Measure		
Consult	Mount	Necessity modals	
Consider	Note		
Define	Notice	Should	
Demonstrate	Observe	Ought	
Determine	Order	Need to	
Do not	Pay	Needs to	
Develop	Picture	Have to	
Employ	Prepare	Has to	
Ensure	Recall	Must	
Estimate	Recover		
Evaluate	Refer	It is ...	
Find	Regard	It is crucial to do	
		It is crucial to	