

Gender Identity and Metadiscourse Marker Usage: An Analysis of Grade 11 Learners' Argumentative Essays

Mark Kervin Y. Alcantara

College of Education-Graduate Studies, Polytechnic University of the Philippines, Sta. Mesa, Manila, Philippines
Division of Muntinlupa City, Cupang Senior High School, Muntinlupa City, Metro Manila, Philippines

Author Email: alcantara.kervin@gmail.com

Date received: September 26, 2025

Date revised: October 30, 2025

Date accepted: November 11, 2025

Originality: 99%

Grammarly Score: 99%

Similarity: 1%

Recommended citation:

Alcantara, M.K. (2025). Gender identity and metadiscourse marker usage: An analysis of Grade 11 learners' argumentative essays. *Journal of Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, 3(12), 117-128.

<https://doi.org/10.69569/jip.2025.696>

Abstract. Effective written communication, especially in argumentative writing, is vital for academic and professional success. This study examines the unique patterns of metadiscourse usage among male, female, gay, and lesbian individuals in the Philippines, thereby broadening the existing literature on gender-related writing practices. The research emphasizes the significance of representation in academic writing, recognizing the diversity of identities and experiences. It suggests that including gay and lesbian learners in studies can enhance understanding of their language practices and promote representation. This study analyzed interactional metadiscourse markers in argumentative essays from 120 Filipino Senior High School learners who self-identified their gender identity. The cohort consisted of 30 learners identifying as male, 30 as female, 30 as gay, and 30 as lesbian. The primary data source consisted of five argumentative essays from each student, which were analyzed for interactional metadiscourse markers using manual methods and AntConc 4.20, yielding an intercoder agreement rate of 85%. Ethical considerations were paramount; all participants provided informed consent, and their anonymity was protected throughout the analysis, particularly given the sensitive nature of self-disclosed gender identity. The study highlighted significant gender differences in marker usage, with "self-mention" being the most common. Male learners exhibited a complex interplay between indirectness and assertiveness using hedges and boosters. Female learners employed hedges for caution and boosters for confidence. Lesbian and gay learners balanced caution and assertiveness, reflecting strategic communication. The study advocates for teaching metadiscourse in primary education and addressing limitations, such as a small sample size and a lack of participant demographics, in future research to improve generalizability. This approach can help students broaden their knowledge and develop diverse communication tactics, fostering self-reflection on the function of metadiscourse and its link to gender and culture in general.

Keywords: Argumentative writing; Filipino learners; Gender identity; Linguistic analysis; Metadiscourse

1.0 Introduction

As AbdelWahab (2020) states, writing is not simply seen as putting together words on a page without considering the reader, the author, and the context of the topic. Instead, it is an intricate connection to different communicative purposes and fosters an interactive relationship between the reader and the author (Kamler & Thomson, 2014). Therefore, engaging with a written text facilitates a meaningful exchange of ideas and thoughts between the reader and the author. However, despite this emphasis, many students, particularly in language-learning contexts, struggle to master practical writing skills (e.g., Al-Khayyat, 2020; Bista, 2019).

Constructing arguments is essential for achieving success in higher education (Prata et al., 2019). This is because students need to be able to advocate for their stances on intricate and debatable issues within their chosen field of study (Fan & Chen, 2021). The development of argumentation skills fosters high-level thinking abilities in students, allowing them to critically analyze information, construct logical arguments, consider various viewpoints, and arrive at well-supported conclusions (Valero Haro et al., 2020). These skills remain valuable beyond higher education, equipping graduates to participate in and contribute meaningfully to professional and social discussions.

One of the most effective methods for improving learners' argumentation skills is through the practice of writing argumentative essays, a dominant form of academic writing (Liunokas, 2020). A study by Klein and Boscolo (2016) suggests that argumentative essay writing offers a more significant learning benefit compared to other writing styles. This advantage may be attributed to the inherent nature of argumentation, which requires a high level of cognitive processing and advanced thinking skills.

From viewing it as a fixed biological trait of individuals to a deep understanding that it is a performative, dynamic construct shaped by various societal and cultural influences, gender has been a topic of academic discussions (Butler, 2018). However, the widely accepted traditional binary definitions are being questioned and challenged as time passes, as different contemporary researchers and scholars have viewed gender as a spectrum influenced by other external environmental factors (Fausto-Sterling, 2000, cited in Butler, 2018). Even in the professional and academic setting, in every discourse, the representation of gays and lesbians is crucial since acknowledging their contribution and perspectives gives a unique experience, knowing that discrimination exists in academic settings.

Hyland (2019) emphasizes that metadiscourse markers signal the writer's stance, aid structured arguments, and foster reader engagement. This plays a significant role in argumentation and, thus, serves as a tool for writers to guide readers through their reasoning processes and effectively engage with their audience, intensifying the importance of these markers in creating more persuasive and coherent arguments.

This study aims to describe the nuanced connection between gender and metadiscourse in argumentative writing, with a focus on the representation of diverse identities. To contribute a more relevant understanding of gender dynamics in academic settings, there is a need to explore how Filipino men, women, gay, and lesbian learners use metadiscourse markers in their argumentative writing. This study aims to bridge this gap. Metadiscourse usage is intuitively appealing because it provides a motivating way to combine authors' various techniques to explicitly organize their texts, engage readers, and signal their attitudes toward their subject matter and audience. However, this ideal has never been achieved since metadiscourse is still poorly understood and experimentally ambiguous. It is more commonly seen as the author's linguistic and rhetorical manifestation in the text, bracketing the discourse organization and the expressive implications of what is being said. However, some analysts have narrowed the focus to features of textual organization or explicit illocutionary predicates (as cited in Zali, 2021).

This study, therefore, aims to bridge this gap. Specifically, it seeks to achieve the following objectives: a) To identify and categorize the interactional metadiscourse markers used in the argumentative essays of Grade 11 Filipino learners, (b) To compare the frequency and type of interactional metadiscourse markers used across four self-identified gender groups: male, female, gay, and lesbian, and (c) To analyze the differences in how these gender groups employ interactional metadiscourse markers to construct arguments and project a stance.

2.0 Methodology

2.1 Research Design

The researcher employed a quantitative descriptive research design, which utilizes both descriptive statistics, in this case, the mean and standard deviation, and inferential statistics to help test the hypothesis, determine the relationship between variables, and make predictions about certain elements being investigated. Thus, the study's primary focus is to describe how Filipino-gendered learners in public school systems utilize interactional metadiscourse markers (Hyland, 2005), as cited in Zali (2021), in their argumentative essays. This approach follows Creswell's (2017) guidelines for quantitative research design, ensuring an adequate sample size to explore and describe metadiscourse markers and gender identities. This systematic method enhances the

validity and generalizability of the findings, adhering to rigorous quantitative research principles.

2.2 Participants and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted at a public senior high school in Muntinlupa. The target population (N=481) comprised the entire Grade 11 Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) track (including Home Economics, Information and Communications Technology, and Industrial Arts) for the 2023-2024 school year. This track was selected because students were enrolled in English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP), a subject directly aligned with the study's focus on argumentative writing – Table 1 details this population, disaggregated by strand and sex assigned at birth.

Table 1. *Total Number of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood Students Population Based on Learner Information System (LIS)*

Strand/Sex Assigned at Birth	Male	Female	Total
Home Economics	107	123	230
Information and Communications Technology	108	88	196
Industrial Arts	43	12	55
Total	258	223	481

Table 2. *Total Number of Technical-Vocational-Livelihood (TVL) Track Student Population Based on Their Gender Identity*

Strand/ Gender	Male	Female	Gay	Lesbian	Total
Home Economics	84	110	23	13	230
Information and Communications Technology	93	71	15	17	196
Industrial Arts	40	5	3	7	55
Total	217	186	41	37	481

A stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure proper representation of the relevant subpopulations, specifically those related to gender identity. The sampling process was conducted in two stages. First, a voluntary survey was administered to the entire population (N = 481), allowing learners to self-identify their gender. This established four distinct strata for the study: male, female, gay, and lesbian. Second, simple random sampling was used to select 30 participants from *each* of these strata.

The stratified random sampling technique was employed to ensure that the sample properly represented the relevant subpopulations for the research. The process involved two stages: (1) Stratification: A voluntary survey was administered to the entire population (N=481) to allow learners to self-identify their gender. This process established four distinct strata (subgroups): male, female, gay, and lesbian, (2) Random Selection: From each of these four strata, 30 participants were selected using simple random sampling. This two-stage method resulted in a balanced, total sample of 120 participants (4 groups of n=30).

Table 3 presents the profile of respondents by gender. This indicates that out of the total 120 respondents, 30 are females, accounting for 25%; next, 30 are males, constituting 25%. For gays and lesbians, it shows 30 participants for both genders. This encompasses 50% more of the entire respondents.

Table 3. *Frequency and Percentage of Gender of the Respondents*

Respondents (N=120)	Frequency	Percentage
Straight Male	30	25 %
Straight Female	30	25 %
Gay	30	25 %
Lesbian	30	25 %
Total	120	100 %

This distribution suggests an equal representation of each gender, including straight males, straight females, gay individuals, and lesbian individuals. This approach yielded a total and balanced sample of 120 participants. The selection of 30 participants per stratum (n = 30) is a deliberate design standard in comparative research, considered sufficient to provide statistical power for group comparisons (such as MANOVA) while remaining feasible for textual analysis. As noted by Creswell and Creswell (2017), this two-stage random selection process is crucial for minimizing sampling bias, enhancing internal and external validity, and strengthening the generalizability of the findings. This study aims to quantitatively identify, describe, and compare the interactional metadiscourse markers used by these learners. Rather than an in-depth qualitative analysis, its primary goal is to determine how the frequency and type of these markers differ across the four self-identified gender groups.

2.3 Research Instrument

The primary instrument used to elicit data was a set of five argumentative essay prompts. The data source was the resulting corpus of essays written by the participants. A total of 600 essays were collected (five essays from each of the 120 participants). These essays were not a special task created for the study; instead, they were part of the students' regular required performance tasks for the *English for Academic and Professional Purposes* (EAPP) subject. This use of authentic, pre-existing coursework enhances the naturalistic quality of the data. Each essay was required to be approximately 600–700 words and adhere to a standard argumentative structure, including an introduction, body, and conclusion. The five topics were designed to be debatable, relevant to the students' context, and aligned with the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) of the EAPP curriculum.

The topics were: Benefits of part-time employment for senior high school students, A nationwide smoking ban in public areas is necessary, The enforcement of uniform dress codes in basic education, The interest of Filipino Gen Zs in starting families, and Whether KDramas should be banned in the Philippines. This set of essay prompts served as the specific instrument to elicit argumentative writing, which was subsequently analyzed for its use of interactional metadiscourse markers.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure

The primary data source was the five argumentative essays written by each student as part of their ongoing assessment. These essays, each approximately 600 to 700 words in length, consist of an introduction, body, and conclusion. A lecture was provided to guide the students on writing effective argumentative essays, covering the Most Essential Learning Competencies (MELCs) for English for Academic and Professional Purposes (EAPP). Instructions included conducting research, formulating a thesis statement, outlining, writing compelling introductions, developing body paragraphs with evidence, addressing counterarguments, and crafting conclusions. Proper source citation and thorough proofreading were also emphasized.

These materials were collected as usual outputs for performance tasks and subsequently analyzed manually. The text search function of AntConc 4.20 was used to detect typical and often non-ambiguous metadiscourse markers. The intercoder is a research teacher and has been exposed to various data analysis methodologies. The intercoder agreement rate was 85%, indicating a high level of agreement between coders. Annotations with disagreements between coders were discussed until the disagreements were resolved through a thorough analysis of the collected essays using AntConc. Triangulation with key informants was employed to ensure reflexivity in the interpretation and description of the data.

2.5 Data Analysis Procedure

To obtain precise data and results, the researcher analyzed the data using Frequency, Mean, and Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA). Frequency: This counts the number of times Interactional Metadiscourse Markers occur within each gender category: male, female, gay, and lesbian participants. Mean: This calculates the average frequency of these markers for each gender group, providing insights into their distribution and central tendency. MANOVA: This technique examines the relationship between Interactional Metadiscourse Markers and gender identities (male, female, gay, lesbian). It analyzes multiple dependent variables (different markers used in essays) across multiple independent variables (gender identities). This tool helps identify significant differences in marker usage among gender groups and explores interactions between gender and other variables.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

In conducting this research, adherence to ethical principles is vital to safeguarding the rights and well-being of participants (American Psychological Association, 2017). The researcher secured clearance from the university's ethics research office before proceeding with all necessary actions. The principles of Respect, Beneficence, Nonmaleficence, and Justice were upheld throughout all stages of the research process, including recruitment, informed consent, data collection, and analysis. Data collected from participants was protected in accordance with the Data Privacy Act to ensure anonymity and confidentiality. Each participant was required to obtain parental consent and assent forms before participating, fostering transparency and a sense of security among participants.

3.0 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Interactional Metadiscourse Markers Used by the Respondents

Table 4 presents the extent to which male learners utilize metadiscourse in their argumentative essays. The data reveals varying patterns across different markers. On average, male learners employ Hedges approximately 24 (23.667) times, Boosters around 17 (17.100) times, Attitude Markers about 9 (8.867) times, Self-Mention roughly 41 (40.833) times, and Engagement Markers approximately 12 (11.533) times in their essays, respectively.

Table 4. *Mean and Standard Deviation of Metadiscourse Markers Used by Straight Males*

Male (N=30)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hedges	23.667	8.770
Boosters	17.100	8.568
Attitude Markers	8.867	5.888
Self-Mention	40.833	20.780
Engagement Markers	11.533	8.182

These mean values, alongside their respective standard deviations, indicate both the typical usage levels and the variability in usage across essays. Notably, Self-Mention appears to be the most frequently used marker among male learners, followed by Hedges and Boosters. Attitude Markers exhibit comparatively lower mean usage. A single responder utilized the most hedges, a total of 40. The widespread use of hedges shows that men are frequently cautious in their speech. The responder who employed 40 hedges may have expressed greater doubt or ambiguity in their language. The analysis of the usage of these linguistic devices among males has several implications. Males, on average, display a cautious and uncertain communication style, as indicated by the frequent usage of hedges. However, the presence of boosters and engagement markers suggests that they also exhibit confidence and active involvement in communication.

The relatively low usage of attitude markets indicates that males may not openly express their opinions. This could be attributed to societal or cultural factors that discourage males from openly sharing their opinions. On the other hand, the high usage of self-mentions suggests that males tend to focus on themselves in their communication.

Table 5 summarizes the interactional markers for females. Table 5 presents the extent to which female learners utilize metadiscourse in their argumentative essays, revealing varying patterns across different markers. On average, female learners employ Hedges approximately 15 (15.067) times, Boosters around 14 (13.967) times, Attitude Markers about 12 (12.133) times, Self-Mention roughly 28 (27.866) times, and Engagement Markers approximately 18 (18.267) times in their essays, respectively.

Table 5. *Mean and Standard Deviation of Metadiscourse Markers Used by Females*

Female (N=30)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hedges	15.067	7.206
Boosters	13.967	7.735
Attitude Markers	12.133	7.205
Self-Mention	27.866	17.565
Engagement Markers	18.267	9.847

These mean values and their respective standard deviations provide insights into the typical usage levels and the variability in usage across essays. Self-mention appears to be the most frequently used marker among female learners, followed by Engagement Markers. Hedges, Boosters, and Attitude Markers exhibit comparatively lower mean usage. Overall, the findings suggest that females utilize a combination of cautious and assertive language strategies, effectively express emotions and attitudes, engage in self-referential communication, and employ techniques to promote active participation and social bonding. These communication patterns may have various implications for females. The usage of hedges may indicate a desire to maintain harmony or acknowledge diverse perspectives. The frequent use of boosters suggests that females can assert themselves and communicate their ideas confidently. The use of attitude markets enables females to express their emotions and opinions, contributing to authentic and meaningful communication.

The significant number of self-mentions indicates that females actively incorporate self-referential language,

which may support the development of personal identity and self-awareness. This self-referential communication can contribute to a stronger sense of self and facilitate more intimate and engaging conversations. In relation to and to support the interpretations made, as Lakoff (2004) describes, and as cited by Badari et al. (2019), when a girl speaks in a manner deemed too rough, the same as how boys talk, she faces social consequences like being ostracized, reprimanded, or even ridiculed. The members of the society, the parents, friends, and teachers, work to enforce norms that keep her behavior in check, reminding her of her expected role. This social conditioning of how girls should speak can lead to various issues. Although it is generally acceptable for people to socialize and learn different ways of speaking, teaching girls a particular style of language can lead to serious issues. The problem is that, even if the girl learns well, society might not fully accept her. Instead, people might use the way she speaks as a reason to mistreat her, make her unable to speak clearly and express herself forcefully, and not take her seriously as a person as she grows up. This is evident in their use of cautious and assertive language.

Table 6 exhibits the extent to which gay learners use metadiscourse markers in their argumentative essays, revealing varying usage patterns across different markers. On average, gay learners employ Hedges approximately 22 (21.667) times, Boosters around 17 (16.900) times, Attitude Markers about 14 (13.567) times, Self-Mention roughly 40 (39.333) times, and Engagement Markers approximately 16 (15.667) times in their essays.

Table 6. *Mean and Standard Deviation of Metadiscourse Markers Used by Gays*

Gay (N=30)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hedges	21.667	10.029
Boosters	16.900	10.080
Attitude Markers	13.567	7.938
Self-Mention	39.330	13.415
Engagement Markers	15.667	7.595

These mean values, alongside the standard deviations, highlight both the typical usage levels and the variability in usage across essays. Similar to male and female learners, Self-Mention appears to be the most frequently used marker among gay learners. However, gay learners demonstrate a slightly higher mean usage of Hedges compared to female learners. In the Philippine context, Taragua (2020) highlighted LGBT-related issues in academic settings, particularly academic bullying. Verbal assault, non-touching physical discrimination, and insensitivity were also identified as prevalent forms of bullying. The respondents employed coping mechanisms to mitigate the impact on their self-esteem. Their professors, classmates, loved ones, and school personnel were identified as the sources of these issues. LGBT students sought help from various sources, such as LGBT organizations, guidance and counseling offices, and school administrators, to address their concerns. In recent years, addressing concerns about social exclusion has become a priority for both governmental and non-governmental organizations.

The prevailing idea, as unanimously decided by the experts in this study, is the strategic use of metadiscourse markers by Filipino gay learners to navigate societal expectations, assert their identities, and engage their audience in argumentative essays. The group notes that gay learners exhibit a higher average use of hedges than other groups, indicating a communication style that prioritizes caution, politeness, and the acknowledgment of diverse perspectives. This cautious approach is more likely influenced by a need to avoid confrontation and to carefully navigate conversations, potentially due to societal pressures and fears of acceptance in their current setting. Hedges such as "may" and "might" are frequently employed to express tentativeness and to maintain harmony in discussions.

Relevant to this, the use of boosters by Filipino gay learners highlights their efforts to assert confidence and emphasize key points in their arguments. According to the expert's focused group discussion, their duality in language use—balancing carefulness with boldness—allows gay learners to articulate their positions firmly while also showing respect for differing viewpoints. The frequent use of self-mentions highlights a focus on personal experiences and perspectives, thereby enhancing the emotional and relational dimensions of communication. Engagement markers further underscore their commitment to fostering an inclusive and interactive dialogue, inviting readers to participate and consider alternative perspectives actively. This combination of strategies reflects a nuanced approach to communication that fosters understanding, advocates

for LGBTQIA+ rights, and challenges dominant societal assumptions.

Table 7 presents the extent to which lesbian learners utilize metadiscourse markers in their argumentative essays, revealing varying patterns of usage across different markers. On average, lesbian learners employ Hedges approximately 18 (12.700) times, Boosters around 10 (10.267) times, Attitude Markers about 8 (7.567) times, Self-Mention roughly 21 (21.100) times, and Engagement Markers approximately 11 (11.000) times in their essays. These mean values, alongside the standard deviations, highlight both the typical usage levels and the variability in usage across essays. Similar to male and female learners, Self-Mention appears to be one of the most frequently used markers among lesbian learners. Additionally, lesbian learners demonstrate moderate usage of Hedges and Boosters, indicating their active engagement with these metadiscourse markers in argumentative writing.

Table 7. *Mean and Standard Deviation of Metadiscourse Markers Used by Lesbians*

Lesbian (N=30)	Mean	Standard Deviation
Hedges	12.700	8.338
Boosters	10.267	6.623
Attitude Markers	7.400	5.110
Self-Mention	21.100	13.415
Engagement Markers	11.000	7.432

Filipino lesbian learners reflect their balanced approach to expressing care, insistence, and personal engagement in their argumentative essays. These experts themselves observe Filipino lesbian learners using hedges moderately, which enables them to present their arguments with a degree of indecision and courtesy, thereby accommodating multiple perspectives and reducing potential confrontation. This cautious tone, illustrated through phrases like "might" and "may," shows an awareness of the varied nature of the topics they discuss, acknowledging that their statements are not absolute but rather possibilities.

On the contrary, the use of boosters, though less frequent, indicates moments where Filipino lesbian learners assert their beliefs more confidently, using language that emphasizes necessity or obligation, such as "should." This confidence is balanced by the use of self-mentions, which highlight personal experiences and nurture a sense of shared responsibility and community. Engagement markers further illustrate their intent to actively involve the reader in the discussion, making their arguments more interactive and relatable. This combination of cautious yet assertive language, personal engagement, and an invitation to dialogue reflects a strategic and thoughtful communication style that fosters understanding and encourages thoughtful consideration of their perspectives.

Table 8 shows that the average frequency of respondents' usage of each metadiscourse marker varied across gender groups. Regarding Hedges, male respondents had the highest frequency, with a mean of 23.67, followed by gay respondents with 21.67, females with 15.07, and lesbians with 12.70, with an overall mean of 18.28. For Boosters, male respondents had the highest mean usage at 17.10, followed by gay respondents at 16.90, females at 13.97, and lesbians at 10.27, resulting in an overall mean of 14.56.

Table 8. *The Average Frequency of Respondents' Usage of Each Interactional Metadiscourse Marker Across Gender Groups*

Variables	Male (N=30)	Female (N=30)	Gay (N=30)	Lesbian (N=30)	Total
Interactional Metadiscourse Markers Hyland's (2005)	Mean	Mean	Mean	Mean	
Hedges	23.67	15.07	21.67	12.70	18.28
Boosters	17.10	13.97	16.90	10.27	14.56
Attitude Markers	8.87	12.13	13.57	7.40	10.49
Self-Mention	40.83	27.87	39.33	21.10	32.28
Engagement Markers	11.53	18.23	15.67	11.00	14.12

Regarding Attitude Markers, gay respondents demonstrated the highest frequency, with a mean of 13.57, followed by females (12.13), males (8.87), and lesbians (7.40), yielding an overall mean of 10.49. Self-mentions were most frequent among male respondents, with a mean of 40.87, followed by gay respondents with 39.33, females with 27.87, and lesbians with 21.10, resulting in an overall mean of 32.28. Lastly, Engagement Markers were most frequent among female respondents, with a mean of 18.23, followed by gay respondents with 15.67, males with 11.53, and lesbians with 11.00, leading to an overall mean of 14.12. These findings offer insights into the differential use of metadiscourse markers among different gender groups, highlighting distinct patterns that contribute to understanding gender differences in metadiscourse usage among Filipino students in writing

argumentative essays.

The findings revealed that self-mention was the most frequent metadiscourse marker, followed by hedges, boosters, engagement, and attitude markers. This suggests a prioritization of personal experiences and perspectives during communication. Respondents tend to express themselves and their viewpoints while employing hedges to mitigate potential assertiveness. Engagement markers indicated attempts to involve listeners and ensure understanding. Finally, the reliance on factual evidence over explicit attitude markers suggests a focus on clarity and information sharing (Hyland, 2005, as cited in Badari, 2019).

The influence of cultural norms on communication styles is acknowledged in this study. While some cultures traditionally promote indirect communication for women, there is also a growing trend towards empowering women's voices in certain instances. This shift may lead women to adopt writing styles that confidently express their opinions and establish credibility. While some studies suggest that Filipino women might use more indirect communication than men (Gonzales, 2015), this is less clear-cut than the clash between Filipino and Western academic writing styles. However, regardless of gender-specific communication styles, Filipino men and women may need to adapt their writing to appeal to a global and broader audience. Gen Z women demonstrate a distinctive label of feminism compared to previous generations. They are more vocal and poised when raising points and ideas (Livingstone, 2019). This conviction may stem from growing up in a globalized world with easy access to information and diverse perspectives, fostering a stronger sense of self-worth and the legitimacy of their voices (Ito et al., 2013). Social media further empowers Gen Z women by providing a platform to connect with like-minded individuals, challenge societal norms, and engage in global-scale discussions.

As for the gays, these cultures often value individual autonomy and respect for diversity. In such cultures, individuals are encouraged to explore various perspectives, engage in constructive dialogue, and be open to learning from others who may hold differing opinions or come from different cultural backgrounds. Open-mindedness can be nurtured through education systems that emphasize critical thinking skills, expose students to diverse cultures and ideas, and promote empathy, inclusivity, and understanding. Ultimately, they embrace open-mindedness as a core value, while others may have more traditional or conservative attitudes that prioritize conformity or adherence to established beliefs.

Moreover, in lesbian cultures where moderate use of metadiscourse in writing is valued and shown, individuals aim to balance providing guidance to readers and avoiding excessive or unnecessary self-reference. They recognize the importance of maintaining a clear and coherent flow of ideas while avoiding excessive metadiscourse that may distract or confuse readers. Individuals strive to convey their ideas effectively and engage readers without overshadowing the content. The moderate use of metadiscourse reflects a cultural emphasis on clear and coherent communication, logical organization, and reader-friendly writing practices.

The analysis is the intricate interplay between communication styles and cultural backgrounds, particularly in argumentative writing among Filipino learners categorized by gender and sexual orientation. During the focused group discussion, the expert's discussion centers on the dynamics of intercultural communication, highlighting how cultural values and norms significantly influence the use of metadiscourse markers, which regulate the flow of communication within texts.

3.2 The Significant Difference Between the Learners' Gender and Usage of Hyland's (2005) Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in Grade 11 Learners' Argumentative Essays

Table 9 shows the MANOVA analysis. It reveals a significant difference between the gender of grade 11 students and their use of Hyland's (2005) Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in argumentative essays, with an F-value of 5.567 and a p-value less than 0.0001, indicating highly significant differences. Gender was found to explain approximately 51.7% of the variance in Metadiscourse Marker usage, as indicated by Wilks' Λ value of 0.517, with a partial η^2 value of 0.197, highlighting its significance.

Further analysis using ANOVA demonstrated significant gender differences across specific types of Metadiscourse Markers. Hedges, Boosters, Attitude Markers, Self-Mentions, and Engagement Markers all exhibited significant effects, with gender accounting for varying percentages of the variance in their usage—notably, as indicated by Levene's Significance. Values assessing homogeneity of variance were all above conventional thresholds of 0.05, indicating acceptable homogeneity across groups. These findings highlight

nuanced gender disparities in the application of Interactional Metadiscourse Markers among Filipino grade 11 students, underscoring the need to consider gender-specific language in schools.

Table 9. *Multivariate Analysis of Variance: Comparison of the Learners' Gender and Usage of Hyland's (2005) Interactional Metadiscourse Markers*

Variables	Levene's Test		Male (N=30)		Female (N=30)		Gay (N=30)		Lesbian (N=30)		ANOVA		Decision
	F	p	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	p	
Interactional Metadiscourse Markers Hyland's (2005)													
Hedges	1.964	0.123	23.67	8.77	15.07	7.21	21.67	10.03	12.70	8.33	10.965	p<0.001	Significant
Boosters	2.565	0.058	17.10	8.57	13.97	7.73	16.90	10.08	10.27	6.62	4.408	0.006	Significant
Attitude Markers	2.158	0.097	8.87	5.89	12.13	7.20	13.57	7.94	7.40	5.11	5.543	0.001	Significant
Self-Mention	2.488	0.064	40.83	20.78	27.87	17.57	39.33	20.18	21.10	13.41	8.055	p<0.001	Significant
Engagement Markers	1.556	0.204	11.53	8.18	18.23	9.85	15.67	7.59	11.00	7.433	5.204	0.002	Significant
MANOVA Wilk's $\Lambda = 0.517$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.197$; $F(5,112) = 5.567$, $p < .0001$													
Reject H_0													

A post-hoc test was conducted to evaluate the data further and gain a deeper understanding of the significant differences. The Tukey HSD test was used to examine the differences in metadiscourse marker usage between males and females. A significant result ($p < 0.05$) indicates a statistically significant difference, meaning there is a statistically significant difference in the average use of that marker between the two genders. In contrast, a non-significant result indicates a specific gender pair and marker combination, meaning there is insufficient statistical evidence to conclude a difference in the average use of that marker between the two genders. Tukey HSD examines all gender pairs for each marker, providing p-values for each comparison. This helps identify specific gender differences in marker usage following a significant MANOVA test.

On determining the significant differences of the genders on the use of Hyland's Interactional Metadiscourse Markers in the argumentative essays of Filipino grade 11 learners, one of the experts, who happens to be a Mathematics Master Educator, points out the significant impact of the MANOVA and subsequent ANOVA analyses which revealed that gender differences account for a substantial portion of the variance in the usage of these markers differently. This highlights the importance of recognizing and addressing gender-specific language patterns in educational contexts, particularly in the Philippines, to understand better and support the diverse communication styles of students.

4.0 Conclusion

This study analyzed the use of interactional metadiscourse markers in the argumentative essays of 120 Grade 11 learners, equally representing four self-identified gender groups: male, female, gay, and lesbian. The analysis revealed distinct stylistic profiles: Self-Mention as a Divisive Marker. Self-mention was the most commonly used marker overall, but its use was not uniform. Male (mean ≈ 40.87) and gay (mean ≈ 40.00) learners used "I" statements at nearly double the rate of female (mean ≈ 28.00) and lesbian (mean ≈ 21.00) learners. Differing Relational Strategies. Clear preferences emerged in markers used to connect with the reader. Female learners showed the highest use of Engagement Markers (mean ≈ 18.23), focusing on guiding or including the reader. Gay learners, conversely, showed the highest use of Attitude Markers (mean ≈ 13.57), most frequently using language to express their personal feelings and judgments about the topic. The Nuanced "Assertive/Cautious" Profile. Male and gay learners both demonstrated a high concurrent use of Hedges (markers of caution) and Boosters (markers of certainty). Male learners led in both (Hedges ≈ 23.67 , Boosters ≈ 17.10), with gay learners following closely (Hedges ≈ 22.00 , Boosters ≈ 17.00). The "Formal-Detached" Profile. Lesbian learners consistently used all categories of interactional metadiscourse at a lower rate than the other three groups, particularly in their use of Self-Mention (lowest) and Attitude Markers (lowest). The overall data indicate that male respondents had the highest average frequency of Hedges at 23.67, Boosters at 17.10, and Self-Mention at 40.87. Gay respondents had the highest frequency of Attitude Markers at 13.57, while females used Engagement Markers the most at 18.23. Self-mention was the most frequent marker used across all groups, followed by hedges, boosters, engagement markers, and attitude markers, suggesting a prioritization of personal expression

and clarity.

To produce a well-written piece, one can utilize metadiscourse as a linguistic tool to organize the text, engage the reader, and convey a stance on the content. As Zali et al. (2021) mentioned, it is imperative to make writers' texts more concise. Generally, interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers are evident in students' written output. However, in English for Academic and Professional Purposes, particularly in the lesson on Writing Argumentative Essays, students frequently use interactional metadiscourse markers to make their arguments more compelling and persuasive. As stated by Hyland (2004), interactional metadiscourse markers: (1) Directly address the reader and involve them in the argument; (2) Convey the writer's feelings or opinions towards the content; (3) Emphasize certainty and confidence in the writer's statements; (4) Express uncertainty or caution, making statements less absolute; and (5) Involve the use of first-person pronouns and phrases. Hyland (2004) further categorized these markers as engagement markers, attitude markers, boosters, hedges, and self-mentions.

Based on the study's findings, which included 120 respondents, evenly represented by both genders, "self-mention" is the most frequently used marker across all groups. This suggests that when tasked with writing an argumentative essay, students tend to focus on making their roles and perspectives as writers more explicit, thereby adding a personal touch to their arguments. "Engagement markers," "attitude markers," "boosters," and "hedges" followed, suggesting a priority on shaping the way their writing conveys authority, certainty, and relationship with the reader.

Moreover, the study results may imply the following for future consideration of relevant studies: Re-evaluating "Authorial Voice". The high use of Self-Mention by male and gay learners suggests they construct their argumentative authority by adopting a strong, "I-centered" authorial persona. Conversely, the lower use by female and lesbian learners suggests they may construct authority differently, perhaps by favoring a more "content-focused," objective, or communal stance. This challenges any single, monolithic definition of a "strong academic voice." Writing is Relational, but in Different Ways. The data suggests that different groups prioritize different relationships. The female learners' preference for Engagement Markers implies a focus on the *author-reader relationship*, ensuring the reader feels guided and included. The gay learners' preference for Attitude Markers implies a focus on the *author-topic relationship*, ensuring their personal affective stance is transparent. Moving Beyond "Confident" vs. "Hesitant". The high concurrent use of Hedges and Boosters by male and gay learners is not a contradiction. It implies a sophisticated *rhetorical modulation*. This finding suggests these writers are not simply "confident" or "hesitant" but are strategically deploying certainty on their main points (Boosters) while simultaneously displaying academic politeness or caution on others (Hedges). Formality as a Rhetorical Choice. The lesbian learners' profile suggests a preference for a more "traditional" or "formal" academic style. By minimizing interactional markers, their writing may prioritize the logical structure of the argument itself, deliberately creating distance between the author, the reader, and the text.

Based on these findings, the following recommendations are proposed: For Educational Policy and Pedagogy. The findings indicate that distinct, gender-linked stylistic patterns are already firmly established by the time students reach Grade 11. This suggests that intervention and instruction should begin much earlier. The researcher advocates for intensive composition classes in primary education to build foundational writing skills. Subsequently, metadiscourse should be explicitly taught at the Junior and Senior High School levels. This instruction should focus on *rhetorical flexibility*, as EAPP educators move beyond teaching a single "correct" argumentative style. Instead of marking high hedge-use as "weak" or low self-mention as "lacking opinion," teachers can discuss how these different marker profiles create different effects (e.g., a "personal" voice vs. a "formal" voice, a "reader-guided" text vs. an "author-driven" text). For Curriculum Designers. Writing tasks should be designed to encourage students to experiment with these different "voices explicitly." For example, students could be asked to "write a persuasive essay that sounds authoritative and personal" (likely increasing Self-Mention and Attitude Markers) and then "rewrite it to sound more objective and communal" (likely decreasing Self-Mention and increasing Engagement Markers). This empowers students by making them aware of the diverse communicative tools available to them.

The findings of this research should be considered in light of several limitations that could be addressed in future studies: The study was limited to 120 participants from a single school track. A larger sample, drawn from a wider array of schools and a more diverse gender spectrum, would be needed to generate more

comprehensive and generalizable findings. The study did not collect sufficient data on other variables (e.g., mental state, economic status, age, background knowledge, ethnicity) that may interact with gender identity to affect academic writing performance. The study focused exclusively on argumentative essays within the EAPP subject. The observed patterns of metadiscourse use may differ in other genres (e.g., expository, narrative, descriptive, research papers) or subjects.

These limitations provide clear directions for extending this research. Future studies should aim for a larger, more diverse sample and collect richer demographic data to conduct a more thorough, intersectional analysis. Research is needed to explore how these gender-based patterns shift across different writing activities, such as concept papers, research reports, or narrative writing. This study confirms *the differences*. Future *qualitative* research, such as interviews with students from each gender group, is essential to uncover the reasons. This would explore their conscious or subconscious motivations for these distinct stylistic choices, providing invaluable insight into the link between identity and writing.

5.0 Contributions of Authors

The sole author independently undertook all aspects of this research, including the conceptualization and design of the study, development of research instruments, data collection, analysis and interpretation of data, and the writing of the manuscript. The author also managed the ethical clearance process, coordinated with participants, incorporated revisions, finalized the paper, and prepared it for submission.

6.0 Funding

This research received no external funding. It was conducted solely through the author's personal initiative and resources.

7.0 Conflict of Interests

The author declares that there are no conflicts of interest – financial, professional, or personal – that could have influenced the conduct, authorship, or publication of this study.

8.0 Acknowledgment

The researcher humbly and wholeheartedly extends his deepest gratitude to the individuals and institutions whose unwavering guidance, support, and encouragement made this study not only possible but profoundly meaningful.

First and foremost, to the Lord God Almighty, whose divine wisdom, unending grace, and steadfast love sustained the researcher through every trial and triumph. His presence illuminated moments of uncertainty with faith and strength, reminding the researcher that perseverance rooted in faith will always lead to purpose.

To the Polytechnic University of the Philippines – College of Education and the Master of Arts in English Language Teaching (MAELT) Program, for fostering an environment that molded not only competent educators but also compassionate and critical thinkers. The transformative experience of being part of this academic community taught the researcher the true essence of patience, perseverance, and the relentless pursuit of excellence – values that extend far beyond the four walls of the classroom.

With heartfelt appreciation, the researcher conveys his sincerest thanks to Assoc. Prof. Marie Claire Duque-Cruz, his thesis adviser, whose unwavering commitment, insightful mentorship, and gentle yet firm guidance served as a compass throughout this scholarly journey. Her wisdom, patience, and belief in the researcher's capability became the driving force that turned uncertainty into confidence and challenges into opportunities for growth.

The researcher also extends profound gratitude to the Chairperson of the MAELT Program, Dr. Annabelle A. Gordonas, who, as one of the esteemed panel members, shared invaluable insights and constructive feedback that helped refine and strengthen this study. Her professionalism and passion for scholarship inspired the researcher to uphold the same standards of integrity and diligence in his academic pursuits.

Heartfelt thanks are further given to the distinguished panel members, whose intellectual depth and perceptive comments enriched the study with clarity and scholarly precision. These women stand as exemplars of knowledge and dedication – proof that mentorship, when grounded in compassion and excellence, can transform a student's work into a reflection of true academic purpose.

The researcher also expresses sincere appreciation to his academic peers – Mr. Ronnel Landrito, Ms. Jaira Castillo, Ms. Rosechel Dela Cruz, and Ms. April Joy Chavez – for their camaraderie, shared wisdom, and unwavering moral support. Their presence made the challenges of research lighter and the milestones more meaningful. Together, they embodied the spirit of collegiality and shared growth.

Special thanks are extended to the respondents of this study, whose time, trust, and cooperation formed the foundation of this research. Their willingness to participate and share their insights lent authenticity and purpose to this scholarly endeavor.

Above all, the researcher dedicates his most profound love and gratitude to his family – Florida Y. Alcantara, Rolly C. Alcantara, Carlo Bryan Y. Alcantara, and Cookie – for being his constant source of strength, inspiration, and unconditional love. Their endless patience, sacrifices, and faith in him have been his guiding light throughout this academic journey. Every achievement, no matter how small, is a reflection of their unwavering support and belief in his dreams.

To all who, in ways both great and small, offered their time, wisdom, prayers, and encouragement – the researcher offers his sincerest and most enduring gratitude. This accomplishment stands as a testament not only to his efforts but also to the collective kindness, generosity, and love of all who walked beside him on this remarkable journey.

9.0 References

- AbdelWahab, A. F. (2020). Using interactive and interactional metadiscourse markers to develop EFL first-year special diploma students' academic writing skills. *Journal of Faculty of Education Assiut University*, 36(2), 1–28.
- Abdi, R., & Hyland, K. (2019). Gender and metadiscourse: An analysis of engagement markers in academic writing. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 38, 65–77.
- American Psychological Association. (2021). *APA dictionary of psychology*. <https://dictionary.apa.org>
- Amistad, A. (2018). The lived experiences of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth during their secondary education. *Psych Educ*.
- Angraini, H. W. (2016). The differences among writing anxiety, gender, and writing achievement of English study program students of PGRI University, Palembang. <https://doi.org/10.36706/jele.v3i1.2979>
- Angraini, H. W. (2017). Gender-based differences in levels of writing anxiety of undergraduate students of English study program. *Language Center of Sriwijaya University, South Sumatra*. <https://core.ac.uk/download/327227499.pdf>
- Al-Hindawi, M. (2017). *Intercultural communication: A contextual approach*. Cengage Learning.
- Badari, A. P., et al. (2019). An analysis of features and functions in women's speech in the talk show *United States of Women Summit*. *Journal Albion*. <https://doi.org/10.33751/v1i2.1309>
- Banet-Weiser, S. (2018). Activism on autopilot: The digital mobilization of millennial and postmillennial social movements. *Femsocieties*, 14(2), 183–204. <https://tinyurl.com/2p3fzm4e>
- Bouhali, M., Boulakoul, M., & Amiri, A. (2016). Hedges and boosters as metadiscourse markers of certainty and uncertainty in research article discussion sections: A gender-based analysis.

- Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 22, 142–152.
- Butler, P. W. (2018). *Gender and culture in American society*. University of Notre Dame. <https://tinyurl.com/muvw8mh2>
- Chen, P. L., & Yang, Y. H. (2018). The effects of argumentative writing instruction on EFL learners' self-efficacy in argumentation. 76, 209–222.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Eckert, P. (2017). Three waves of variation study: The emergence of meaning in the study of variation. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 46, 169–184.
- Fan, C. Y., & Chen, G. D. (2021). A scaffolding tool to assist learners in argumentative writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 34(1), 159–183. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09588221.2019.1660685>
- Furtina, D., Fata, I. A., & Fitriisa, D. (2016). Grammatical errors in writing task: Males vs. females. *Reciprocal Graduate Research Symposium Between University of Pendidikan Sultan Idris and Syiah Kuala University*.
- GLAAD. (2021). *Glossary of terms – LGBTQ*. <https://www.glaad.org/reference/lgbtq>
- Gong, H. (2021). The influence of gender on the use of metadiscourse in academic writing. *Language and Communication*, 76, 92–103.
- Hyland, K. (2019). *Metadiscourse: Exploring interaction in writing* (3rd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.
- Hyland, K., & Liu, X. (2020). Metadiscourse beyond culture: A cross-linguistic comparison of Chinese and English research articles. *Frontiers in Psychology*. <https://tinyurl.com/54cjx5ky>
- Jansen, S. C. (2018). #MeToo and the politics of social media outrage. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, 25(4), 442–456. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1350506818790570>
- Kamler, B., & Thomson, P. (2014). *Helping doctoral students write: Pedagogies for supervision* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315813639>
- Klein, P. D., & Boscolo, P. (2016). Trends in research on writing as a learning activity. *Journal of Writing Research*, 7(3), 311–350. <https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2016.07.03.01>
- Kosar, S. A. (2020). Millennials and Generation Z: Men's perspectives on hashtag feminism (Master's Thesis, Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University). Virginia Tech Digital Library. <https://tinyurl.com/5xy3xyu7>
- Labicane, G. E. M., & Oliva, R. M. M. (2022). Common errors in composition writing by college students. *Linguistics and Literature Journal*, 6(1). <https://doi.org/10.30743/ll.v6i1.4975>
- Liunokas, Y. (2020). Assessing students' ability in writing argumentative essays at an Indonesian senior high school. *IDEAS: Journal on English Language Teaching and Learning, Linguistics and Literature*, 8(1), 184–196. <https://doi.org/10.24256/ideas.v8i1.1344>
- Livingstone, A. G., Levine, M., & Wilkins, D. J. (2019). All click, no action? Online action, efficacy perceptions, and prior experience combine to affect future collective action. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 91, 97–105.
- Marra, M., & Paule, A. (2018). "I feel like people don't take me seriously": Nonbinary individuals' experiences with language and gender identity. *Journal of Language and Discrimination*, 2(1), 60–76. <https://doi.org/10.1558/jld.37295>
- Mustafa, F., & Kirana, M. (2017). Errors in EFL writing by junior high students in Indonesia. *International Journal of Research Studies in Education*, 6(1), 37–45. <https://doi.org/10.5861/ijrse.2016.1366>
- Noroozi, O., Banihashem, S. K., Taghizadeh, N., Kerman, M. P. A., Babayi, M., Ashrafi, H., & Biemans, H. J. A. (2022). Gender differences in students' argumentative essay writing, peer review performance, and uptake in online learning environments. *Interactive Learning Environments*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10494820.2022.2034887>
- Pasaribu, T. A. (2017). Gender differences and the use of metadiscourse markers in writing essays. *International Journal of Humanity Studies*, 1(1), 112–121. <https://doi.org/10.24071/ijhs.2017.010110>
- Prata, M. J., de Sousa, B., Festas, I., & Oliveira, A. L. (2019). Cooperative methods and self-regulated strategies development for argumentative writing. *The Journal of Educational Research*, 112(1), 12–27.
- Richardson, L. (2018). Inclusive language: Words matter. *Nurse Education Today*, 61, 1–3. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.nedt.2018.02.001>
- Taragua, A. T. R. (2020). Issues and concerns of the academic well-being of lesbians, gay, bisexual, and transgenders: A qualitative study. *Globus, Journal of Progressive Education*, 10(2), 35–50.
- Thomson, K. (2021). An analysis of LGBTQ+ representation in television and film. *Bridges: An Undergraduate Journal of Contemporary Connections*, 5(1), 7–21.
- Valero Haro, A., Noroozi, O., Biemans, H., & Mulder, M. (2019). The effects of an online learning environment with worked examples and peer feedback on students' argumentative essay writing and domain-specific knowledge acquisition in the field of biotechnology. *Journal of Biological Education*, 53(4), 390–398. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00219266.2018.1472132>
- Valero Haro, A., Noroozi, O., Biemans, H., & Mulder, M. (2020). Argumentation competence: Students' argumentation knowledge, behavior, and attitude, and their relationships with domain-specific knowledge acquisition. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10720537.2020.1734995>
- Wei, J., et al. (2016). Studies on metadiscourse since the 3rd millennium. *Journal of English and Practice*, 7(9).
- World Health Organization. (2021). *Gender and health*. <https://www.who.int/health-topics/gender>
- Zali, M., et al. (2021). Comparisons of interactive and interactional metadiscourse among undergraduates. *Academy of Language Studies, University of Teknologi MARA*. <https://doi.org/10.24191/ajue.v16i4.11946>