

**I-ROLE 2023****International Conference of Research on Language Education****THE USE OF METADISOURSE IN SHORT STORY WRITTEN  
BY ESL LEARNERS**

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**Abstract**

This study aimed to uncover the metadiscourse features used in the short story written by the ESL students from one public university in Malaysia. The primary objective is to identify the differences of metadiscourse markers in relation to creative and critical thinking skills by the ESL students using Hyland's model of metadiscourse. A corpus of 47 short stories written by the students was developed and analysed through quantitative research approach. Results revealed that the interactional markers were mostly used by the students compared to the interactive markers. It was also found that the high use of interactional markers corresponds to level of creative and critical thinking needed in the writing of the short story due to the open characteristic of these markers. This study concluded that interactive and interactional markers are equally important to be included in the academic curriculum especially in a language related programme to ensure a critical thinking author can be developed.

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## 1. Introduction

The importance of short story writing in developing creative and critical thinking skills among the tertiary students must not be overstated. 21<sup>st</sup> century skills demand the learners to master myriads of learning, literacy and life skills that include creativity and critical thinking. Paul and Elder (2008) define creativity as the process of creating or producing whereas critical thinking as the skill of assessing and judging information or ideas. The authors further elaborate that the writing process requires the author to write creatively and critically since one must consciously interpret, create and evaluate their work. In retrospect, the emphasis of creative and critical thinking in developing higher order thinking skills started with the American thinker, John Dewey (1859-1952) and later continued by the contemporary scholars. Scholars like Cohen (1971) and Sotto (1994) agree that these elements of creative and critical thinking skills are warranted in developing the learners' higher order thinking skills in general. Furthermore, current literature on higher order thinking skills have also shed the light on the needs to incorporate the elements of creative and critical thinking according to specific subject or courses such as engineering (Alkhatib, 2019), mathematics (Hidajat, 2021) and educational psychology (Barnett & Francis, 2012). Apropos of that, creative writing subject has become among the core subjects embedded in a language-related programme at the higher learning institutions' in Malaysia to help develop the creative and critical thinking skills.

The function of creative writing for the English as Second Language (ESL) learners in a language-related program works twofold. One is to create a better writer and thinker and second is to develop the learners' confidence in the language (Randolph, 2012). Short story writing is among the most common element in creative writing class as the writer needs to be able to write a complete story using limited number of words. However, as a genre, short story writing presents formidable challenges for ESL learners (Berman & Cheng, 2010; Coker, 2007; Raimes, 1985). Previous research have revealed that among the problems faced by the ESL learners in writing a short story include their inability to develop an appropriate story (Nasution et al., 2020), interference from first language (L1) syntax and sentence organization (Darus & Ching, 2009) and lacking of second language (L2) metacognitive competencies (Tsirotakis et al., 2020). Hence, this creates a cognitive overload to the ESL learners that affect their L2 writing capabilities (Schoonen et al., 2003). In response to these challenges and tensions faced by the ESL students, creative writing teachers focused on the textual elements, readers' engagement and the writer's dynamic evaluation of the short story which can be grouped under the branch of metadiscourse.

Metadiscourse was derived from the work of Zellig Harris in 1959 that explains the attempt of the writer or speaker to guide the receiver's perception of a text. This notion was later expanded by Williams (1981) that defines metadiscourse as "writing about writing, whatever does not refer to the subject matter being addressed" (p. 212). In the same vein, Vande Kopple (1985) suggests that a writer does not only need to deliver information but also to help the reader "organize, classify, interpret, evaluate and react to such material. Metadiscourse, is discourse about discourse or communication about communication" (p. 83) whereas Crismore (1989) rephrases it as 'discoursing about the discourse' (p. 280). Therefore based on the definitions presented, the traditional ideational dimension of texts has gradually shifted. The idea of using text to objectively convey information and representing the external reality is now amalgamated

with the presence of the author of the text (Amiryousefi & Eslami Rasekh, 2010; Crismore & Farnsworth, 1990; Hyland, 2005a)

In this view, readers are not just presented with comprehensible and suitable information but are also induced to keep reading the text (Hyland, 2004). Therefore, the writers need to fulfill the social and communicative function of writing by meeting the readers' anticipations and needs as this engagement process will affect their understanding of the texts (Hyland, 2005a; Hyland & Tse, 2004).

As explained by the scholars, metadiscourse contends that communication is not limited to the process of exchanging information but also incorporates the author's disposition and presence together with the consideration of the readers' assumptions. As a genre, short story written without the application of metadiscourse will affect the writer's flow, intention and choice of words. These add to the issue of ESL students' inhibition in writing a short story (Choi & Wong, 2018) and the difficulty in maintaining the readers' interest of the text (AlJazrawi & AlJazrawi, 2019). Nevertheless, even with the significant function of metadiscourse in writing, it still does not receive the attention it deserves in the creative writing course particularly in short story writing. Language teachers still focus on the idea generation, tone and other literary elements perceived to be important in creating a short story and to date metadiscourse elements in the short story are rarely taught (Hyland, 2005a). Since metadiscourse embodies the writer, the reader and the text, this current study tries to examine the use of metadiscourse by the ESL undergraduate students in their short story writing.

## 2. Metadiscourse

Metadiscourse is defined as the use of linguistic cues in not only organising the information in the text but also to connection between the author and the readers. Hyland (2005a) characterizes metadiscourse as "*the aspects of a text, which explicitly organise a discourse or the writer's stance towards either its content or the reader,*" (p. 14). Nevertheless, metadiscourse does not take the propositional meaning or the "*communicative content of discourse*" (Hyland, 2005a, p. 38) of a text; but it is the "*linguistic material in text, written or spoken, which does not add anything to the propositional content but is indeed help the listener or reader organise, interpret and evaluate the information given*" (Crismore et al., 1993, p. 40). Succinctly, metadiscourse focuses on the non-propositional content or the content-less level of meaning. This linguistic element is used to help the readers to organise, classify, interpret, evaluate and to induce the reader's involvement with the text.

Literature offers various classification of metadiscourse. From the Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) perspective, language serves three meta-functions. Based on Halliday's (1994) classifications of language meta-functions, the notion of language carries ideational, interpersonal and textual functions was derived. Ideational function allows the language to express the ideas which correspond to the concept of propositional content. The interpersonal function focuses on the interaction between the author and the reader and to understand the valuation and feelings of each other. As for the textual function, it focuses on the language used to organise the text and to relate to what is said to the world and the readers. This classification gave rise to Vande Kopple's (1985) distinction of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. However, the vagueness of these classifications have led Crismore et al. (1993) and Hyland (1998, 1999) to provide a better definitions of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse. Hyland (1999) defines textual

metadiscourse as the resources that help with the coherence of the propositional information in the text and interpersonal as the resources that help the writers in presenting their views towards the propositional content.

Hyland and Tse (2004) proposed that all metadiscourse markers to be considered as interpersonal as in the writing process should consider the connection between the text, author, and reader. Subsequently, the written text is the result from the author's interpersonal selection of putting forward their connection and interpretation of the text and accommodating the reader's understanding. Correspondingly, Hyland (2005a) proposes a metadiscourse model that unites the author, reader and the text which includes interactive and interactional resources. Interactive resources consist of transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential and code glosses concerning the use of linguistic cues to help the reader understand the texts better. Accordingly, the interactional resource is used to help engage with the readers through the use of hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions and engagement markers (refer to Table 1).

**Table 1.** Hyland's Taxonomy of Metadiscourse (2005a)

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

The use of metadiscourse in various settings has been abundantly investigated. It has been investigated not only in written communication, such as undergraduate essays (Mohamed & Rashid, 2017; Tan & Bee Eng, 2014) and postgraduates dissertation (Akoto, 2020; Navarro et al., 2022) but also in spoken communication, such as lectures (Kashiha, 2022), campaign talk (Albalat-Mascarell & Carrió-Pastor, 2019) and business presentation (Kuswoyo & Siregar, 2019). Studies on metadiscourse in digital communication have also been explored, like request email (Ho, 2018) and institutional response in social media (Li et al., 2020), but studies conducted on metadiscourse in the literary genre are still scarce.

Several studies have been conducted in relation to metadiscourse in literary text in the construction of critical thinking. AlJazrawi and AlJazrawi (2019) found that metadiscourse markers were aptly used in the short story written by Edgar Allan Poe, Mark Twain and Raymond Carver to achieve persuasion. In another study, Ahangari and Kazemi (2014) found that there is no significant difference in term of

frequency of interactive and interactional metadiscourse used in a novel which is attributed by the author's knowledge on the norm of literary genre. Similar results were also found by the study conducted by Esmacili (2020) and Esmaili and Sadeghi (2012) whereby the different frequency of metadiscourse markers used in the literary text did not carry much significance. Esteban and Dizon (2021) analysed the use of metadiscourse markers used in the descriptive essay by the school students. The students were asked to write their opinion on a short story entitled *How My Brother Leon Brought Home a Wife* by Manuel E. Arguilla and the result showed that socio-demographic characteristics did not influence the use of metadiscourse in the students' essay.

Central to the notion that metadiscourse markers can encourage the critical thinking skills, it is essential to note the significance of metadiscourse in the literary text. Regrettably, to the best of the authors' knowledge, study on metadiscourse in literary text in construction of critical thinking is still scarce. Thus, the current study examined the use of interactive and the interactional markers in the ESL students' short story to help grow the knowledge of metadiscourse in relation to critical thinking.

### **3. Research Methodology**

This study applied quantitative research method to analyse the frequency of metadiscourse markers in the short story in the construction of creative and critical thinking by the ESL learners. The content-based analysis was used to examine the frequency of the metadiscourse markers used in the short stories. Elo and Kyngäs (2008) attest that this type of analysis enables the researchers to increase their understanding of the phenomena. Content analysis offers a greater understanding for this study as it acts as a structure in processing a large amount of textual data (Kleinheksel et al., 2020). Hence, it can help to identify and categorize various metadiscourse markers through a systematic process of interpretation.

#### **3.1. Research samples**

This study aims at finding the usage of metadiscourse elements used in the short story writing by the ESL undergraduate students. 47 short stories written by ESL undergraduate students from one public university in Malaysia were chosen as they had studied Creative Writing subject as part of their curriculum in semester four. One of the assessments for the subject includes short story writing, whereby the students are required to write a short story of 1000 words based on several specific themes set by the teaching lecturer. Despite the word limitation set to this assessment, the text written must still comply to other assessment's criteria which it must not only include formation of proper theme, message, and setting, but also the progression of plot, and good character development must also be taken into consideration.

The ESL students were given six weeks to complete their short story and allowed to seek for the guidance of their teaching lecturer during the assessment period. A total of 47 short stories were selected and this compilation of short stories was stored digitally in the txt. format for the analysis purpose.

### 3.2. Corpus

The collection of the short stories written by the ESL undergraduate students were compiled and then converted into an electronic corpus and this corpus generated 49,466 tokens. A corpus analysis software AntConc was used to store and analyse the metadiscourse elements in the corpus. The tokens were digitally stored and subsequently analysed manually to ensure the tokens fit the definition of metadiscourse. Thus, functional analysis was conducted to examine the function played by language used in the short story, that is how the language is used a whole compared to its dictionary meaning. For example, the word then can carry the metadiscourse meaning of sequence or progress of the discourse (a) or it can also describe the progression of event based on time (b).

- i. She called Jimmy to make sure everything was fine but then the line got cut (S2)
- ii. “They don’t want that?” ask the young man to the cashier. The cashier looks at the almond cake and nodded. “I’ll take it then”, the young man replied (S17)

In (a), the writer narrates the action that the female character was performing which was calling Jimmy and then later proceeded to describe the telephone line was broken. This sentence illuminates how the process unfolds, one process after another. However, in (b), then carries propositional content as the action of taking the almond cake by the young man happens due to certain circumstances of another patron disinterest of the cake in the first place. Therefore, (b) does not assume the function of a metadiscourse marker and was discarded from the analysis. The functional analysis of the corpus was conducted by the author who received the supervision and guidance from another experienced researcher in the field of metadiscourse. The classification of the metadiscourse markers in the corpus were thoroughly deliberated to ensure the validity of the findings in this study.

### 3.3. Procedure and analysis

This study seeks to investigate the metadiscourse markers used in the short story in building creative and critical thinking skill. The compilation of the short stories was initially collected and converted into an electronic corpus. The occurrence of the metadiscourse markers in the corpus were calculated and categorized according to Hyland’s model of metadiscourse (2005a). The built corpus was then analysed against the 498 metadiscourse markers illustrated by Hyland and later expanded to other linguistic devices deemed fit in the context of metadiscourse. Only sentences containing metadiscourse markers were analysed and classified according to the categories and the occurrence of the specific linguistic markers identified in the corpus was later calculated based on all frequencies reported. Occurrences per 1000 words were used to find a more accurate representation of the data based on the corpus.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1. The overall frequency of metadiscourse markers

The analysis revealed that there were 11,038 metadiscourse markers used in the corpus. In the corpus of 49,466 tokens, the percentage of metadiscourse markers used in the short stories is 22.31%.

This indicates that there were 22 words with metadiscourse function were used for every 100 words and 223 words for every 1,000 words. Based on the total number of 49,466 tokens it was found that the interactional metadiscourse are used more frequently than the interactive metadiscourse in the ESL learners' short story. The frequency of the interactional resources happens three times as many with 8,515 raw occurrences compared to just 2,523 of interactive resources. The frequency of used of interactive and interactional metadiscourse is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Frequency of use of metadiscourse markers

Metadiscourse category	Raw occurrences	F per 1000 words	Percentage
Interactive	2,523	51	22.86%
Interactional	8,515	172.14	77.14%
Total	11,038	223.14	100%

#### 4.2. Interactive metadiscourse

The data show that there were 2,523 occurrences or 22.86% of interactive metadiscourse were used in the corpus. However, only three types of interactive metadiscourse were employed by the ESL learners which were transitions, frame markers and code glosses. Since the interactive metadiscourse markers were mainly used to shape and organize the text, it was not frequently used in the short story genre. The frequency of occurrences for these markers is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Frequency of interactive metadiscourse

Types of markers	Raw occurrences	F per 1000 words	Percentage
Transitions	1,783	36.04	70.67%
Frame markers	623	12.59	24.69%
Code glosses	117	2.37	4.64%
Endophoric markers	0	0	0
Evidentials	0	0	0
Total	2,523	51	22.86%

Table 3 indicates that the highest usage of interactive metadiscourse is transitions markers with 70.67%. This result is not unexpected as the author needs to connect words, phrases and clauses that offer coherence in the short story. This marker consists of addition, causative, and contrastive and the most frequently used marker is through addition which was realized by the use of "and". This is followed by the contrastive with the use of "but" and for causative it was achieved through "because". The following examples illustrate the use of transitions in the corpus.

15 minutes went by, *and* I could see the two girls walking towards us (S16)

The world felt like hers, *but* it was gloomy (S29)

Perhaps it was *because* of my less than desirable upbringing (S39)

The second highest interactive marker is frame markers with 24.69%. The use of frame markers is very prevalent as these elements are used to describe sequences or stages. The most common word for this marker came from the category of change of topic. This is followed by label stages, sequencing and finally declare goals. Change of topic was most frequently used using "so" and label stages is reached

through “now”. Other frame markers included “then” for sequencing and “want to” for declaring goals as the following examples illustrates.

- The sun rose and so did Daniel (S9)
- The flame has now decreased by a big amount (S44)
- The man then came back all exhilarated (S13)
- She does not want to lose him (S47)

Code glosses were the least used among the three sub-categories that appeared in the interactive dimension with 4.64%. This marker is used to provide additional information through explanation, elaboration and rephrasing. Based on the corpus, explanation was attained by the words “called”, elaboration is through “like” and rephrasing from the word “or”. The examples for this category are as follows.

- He quietly gets up of his shared tent to search for a rare flower *called* Ghost Orchid (S31)
- Amy’s career is withering *like* a wilting flower (S32)
- Despite that, the village head *or* also known as Tok Abu was a grumpy guy (S33)

It should be noted that endophoric markers and evidentials were not evident in the corpus. Endophoric markers are used to the information in the other parts of the text whereas evidentials are to cite ideas from another source and hence, these markers were not suited to be used for this literary genre.

### 4.3. Interactional metadiscourse

Data showed a higher frequency of interactional metadiscourse with 8,515 occurrences forming 77.14% of the total number of metadiscourse markers used in the short story corpus. All five resources in this dimension were highly used by the ESL learners and this indicates that the learners were able to project their textual voice to the readers. Table 4 presents the result in more detail.

**Table 4.** Frequency of interactional metadiscourse

Types of markers	Raw occurrences	F per 1000 words	Percentage
Engagement markers	4,469	90.34	52.48%
Self-mentions	2,459	49.71	28.88%
Boosters	772	15.61	9.07%
Hedges	621	12.55	7.29%
Attitude markers	194	3.92	2.28%
Total	8,515	172.14	77.14%

Engagement markers demonstrate notable occurrences in the corpus with 52.48%. Punctuation marks such as question and exclamation marks were mostly used in the short story. This is followed by the personal pronouns “your”. Below are the examples for this category.

- Why do you still want to be friends with me? (S37)
- Don’t you ever come back here! (S43)
- It was never *your* fault (S30)

The use question mark in the short story is not only to express certainty and negation, but also to guide the readers throughout the reading process. By providing a question and answer in the text, the readers can easily grasp the author’s flow of idea, the main idea and understand the text better (Fang &



Zhuang, 2022). Exclamation mark was also used to indicate urgency and also acts as an intensifier to express feelings (Carrio-Pastor, 2019). Together with the reader-inclusive pronoun "your", these elements were common in the narrative essay that requires the author to tell a complete story. This form of engagement requires the author to think and write critically as to avoid any possible objections from the readers and to lead them into the intended comprehension.

Self-mentions have the second highest occurrences in the corpus with 49.71%. This explicit reference to the author happened through the use of "I", "me" and "my". The examples for self-mentions can be seen below.

*I* was enchanted (S14)

It is hard for *me* to take care of all of these myself (S37)

I waited for *my* eyes to adjust to the uneven light sprawled across my room (S45)

The use of first-person pronoun such as "I" and "me" and the possessive determiner "my" were typical in short story written in the first-person point of view. In the same vein, the first-person pronoun functions to elaborate on the author's elaboration on the argument, opinion and the author's knowledge (Tao, 2021). In essence, this personal involvement shows the author's own contribution in the short story which entails the process of critical thinking.

Boosters were also mentioned in the short story, however it did not enjoy a high frequency of occurrences. Boosters entail certainty and commitment in forwarding the argument and to signal the author's "*privileged knowers in their disciplinary community*" (Hu & Cao, 2015, p. 20). Below are examples of boosters used in the short story corpus.

I couldn't *know* which way I was looking (S27)

She *never* felt this powerful (S2)

This element typically works together with hedges to ascertain the authorial role of the author. Based on the corpus, the author is the creator of the short story and can be inferred as the all-knowing. Thus, by being omniscient of the short story, it indicates that the authors have projected their creative and critical thinking skills as they have to forward their proposition and argument to the readers.

Hedges were also used in the short story corpus. Lakoff (1972) defines hedges as "*words or phrases whose job is to make things fuzzier*" (p. 195). This powerless language signals the author's reluctance to commit to the argument and simply offer a vague statement on the issue. It was not very highly used in the corpus, but they were used more than attitude markers.

I *felt* like I could see a light at the end of the tunnel (S12)

After suffering from it far too long, it *appears* to be worsening (S36)

*Should* I make a run for it? (S43)

Based on the short story, hedges allowed the information to be presented as an opinion compared to a fact. The author must realize how the text affect the perception of the readers, hence with hedges, it requires the authors to critically set the boundary for the readers. Accordingly, thinking about the readers' minds clearly shows the ability to perform creative and critical thinking skills.

Attitude markers were the least used in the corpus with only 2.28%. The use of these markers allows the author to express their emotions and their view of the text. These can be seen from the examples below.

I felt nauseous, *shocked* by his words (S13)

We were *disappointed* that we were unable to go diving (S16)

Attitude markers typically consists of loaded words which can influence the readers. Hence, by utilizing proper adjectives and adverbs, these attitude markers can influence the reader's emotions. As one of the elements in expressing the author's stance, attitude markers must be positioned carefully to ensure the author's view is taken correctly (Hyland, 2005b). Therefore, this too signals the author's creative and critical thinking in their short story writing.

#### 4.4. Discussion

The findings of this study have shed some insights on the use of metadiscourse markers in the short story by ESL students in relation to their creative and critical thinking skill. Firstly, the frequency of interactional metadiscourse was significantly higher than the interactive metadiscourse. This is due to the characteristic of literary text (Adel, 2012). For a literary text, not all of the interactive metadiscourse markers were used as the text-organising markers such as evidentials and endophoric markers. The absence of these markers in a literary text is logical due to its function that is to direct the readers' attention to different section or source in the text in which are not warranted in a literary text. In this present study, it is worth to note that there were no instances of evidentials and endophoric markers identified in the corpus. This is supported by the study conducted by Farahani and Mohemmed (2018) which found that interactional metadiscourse were mostly used in the non-academic writing to accommodate the writer's purpose which is to show consideration towards the readers.

Another justification that can be inferred from this result is due to the word limit assigned for the short story which requires the ESL learners to yearn a more suitable metadiscourse markers to ensure the explicit idea can be expressed in the text. Thus, this shows that the ESL students were aware of the norms of literary writing and managed to apply their creative and critical thinking skills. This can be seen from the vast differences of metadiscourse markers that focused more on the engagement with the readers which requires the writers to project a suitable author's persona and tenor in writing the short story (Hyland, 2005b). Further, the high usage of interactional metadiscourse also shows that the ESL student writers managed to foresee, recognize, argue, and control various interpretations from the readers (White, 2003) compared to interactive metadiscourse which only focuses on words, phrases or clauses to help guide the reader through the text. Therefore, due to the function of the metadiscourse in the literary text, it can be inferred that the extent of creative and critical thinking skills was primarily used in the interactional metadiscourse markers than the interactive metadiscourse markers which do not require the same level of thinking skills to be executed.

The use of interactive metadiscourse in a text is to offer a more coherent text and to guide the readers to grasp the intended meaning of the writer. This linguistic signposting is very common in academic writing, unlike literary writing that does not require the writer to channel the reader's attention to different sections such as literature review or the references. Ahangari and Kazemi (2014) also found that, due to the inherent features of the short story is narrative, the use of these markers for literary writing was very limited. In relation to creative and critical thinking in literary text, the usage of signposting is trivial and does not require a deep and thorough planning as the words and phrases are only used to guide

the readers thorough the text. Granted that the author has proper practice and understanding of signposting, the use of this element can be executed very effortlessly in the text and consequently required a lesser amount of critical thinking.

Unlike the interactive metadiscourse which requires a lesser extent of critical thinking, the high use of interactional metadiscourse was not surprising. With the purpose of expressing the author's ideas, attitudes and ideas into the text (AlJazrawi & AlJazrawi, 2019), the author also needs to consider the readers' expectation and assumption. In addition to that, the three-way function of writer, reader and text require the author to exert more cognitive ability. Hence, with the use of all the interactional markers which denote more abstract quality and higher engagement with the readers in the short story, it clearly showed that creative and critical thinking skills were successfully used by the ESL learners.

## **5. Conclusion**

The current research has described the metadiscourse markers in the short story written by the ESL students in detail. It was found that the students focused more on the writer's presence and engagement with the readers and less emphasis was placed on the text organisation words, phrases or clauses. Hence, due to the nature of interactional metadiscourse markers which are more abstract compared to a more generic structure of interactive metadiscourse in the short story, this study has found that the ESL students have effectively employed proper metadiscourse markers based on the nature of the text. Based on the high frequency and the type of metadiscourse dimension used in the short story, it was also found that the creative and critical thinking skills was greatly utilized by the learners and hence validate the importance of incorporating metadiscourse in the short story or literary writing in developing the creative and critical thinking skills among the ESL students. Therefore, based on findings of this study, it is recommended that the teaching of metadiscourse to be included in every writing subject to help develop a better and more critical ESL student writer.

While this study only investigated the short story written by students from ESL undergraduate students, it is hoped that this study has contributed to the body of metadiscourse in relation to creative and critical thinking skills. However, to get more conclusive evidence of creative and critical thinking from a literary text, a more diverse sampling from different levels of academic programmes can be collected to understand the function of metadiscourse in the attainment of the skills. In addition, future research can also move beyond short story written by the local ESL students by comparing the short stories written by the ESL students from other countries to understand the differences of metadiscourse used in the literary text.

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