

Metadiscourse Analysis in Essays on the Hagia Sophia Reconversion

Pranata Wikasmara

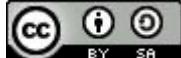
English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang
17320116@student.uin-malang.ac.id

Mira Shartika

English Literature Study Program, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang

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Corresponding

Author:

Pranata

Wikasmara

17320116@student.uin-malang.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study investigated the use of metadiscourse markers in essays discussing the reconversion of Hagia Sophia from a museum to a mosque. The research aimed to identify the most commonly used metadiscourse markers to understand how they contribute to the clarity and strength of the arguments presented using the qualitative method and Hyland's metadiscourse markers (2005). The findings revealed that interactive markers, such as transitions and frame markers, were widely used and effectively helped organize discourse in the essays. Meanwhile, interactional markers, such as hedging and boosters, were frequently employed to engage readers and emphasize key points. Additionally, the study found that authors supporting the reconversion of Hagia Sophia used metadiscourse to reinforce historical and religious narratives, while opponents focused on cultural heritage and secularism. The analysis of this study showed that metadiscourse shaped public discourse on controversial issues. The study also highlighted the significant role of metadiscourse in enhancing academic writing and suggests further research into multilingual and digital discourse contexts. The study concluded that metadiscourse is essential for strengthening arguments and clarifying the author's position in sensitive and complex public debates, making it highly relevant in modern communication

Keywords: essay, Hagia Sophia, metadiscourse

INTRODUCTION

In July 2020, the Turkish Supreme Court ruled that Hagia Sophia could be converted back into a mosque. On July 24, 2020, the first Friday prayer was held in Hagia Sophia as a mosque. That announcement sparked controversy around the world, with many people

seeing it as a violent act against the critical historical heritage of Hagia Sophia. However, the Turkish government argued that this conversion was an essential step in reviving the religious spirit in Turkey and reflected respect for the country's Islamic history and heritage.

The decision to convert the Hagia Sophia into a mosque sparked controversy in Turkey and internationally. Some people saw it as a violation of the building's status as a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a symbol of the secularism that Ataturk promoted. In contrast, others viewed it as a religious and cultural reclamation gesture.

The decision to convert Hagia Sophia into a mosque also had political implications. Erdogan is known for his Islamist leanings; some people saw the move as an attempt to appeal to his conservative base and consolidate his power. The reconversion of Hagia Sophia has been met with both support and opposition. Some people see it as a step towards restoring Turkey's Islamic heritage, while others view it as a setback for religious tolerance and cultural preservation. Some religious leaders, including the Greek Orthodox Church and Pope Francis, have also criticized the decision.

The reconversion of Hagia Sophia is an ongoing issue, and its implications continue to be discussed in Turkey and worldwide. One of the discussions occurred in an online forum called the Berkley Forum. The Berkley Forum is a digital platform that provides a forum for scholarly discussions regarding the relationship between religion and global issues. This platform invites many specialists to engage in extensive dialogues about crucial ethical and religious issues that impact the world. Each essay series gathers a diverse, engaging, and intellectually stimulating exchange of ideas, further explained below.

An article on the forum entitled "The Conversion of Hagia Sophia: Desire, Spectacle, and a Historical Re-Enactment" was written by Ömvr Harmanşah. This article was published on July 31, 2020. Ömvr Harmanşah is a University of Illinois at Chicago professor specializing in art history. His research focuses on the historical development of landscapes in the Middle East and the intersections between ecology, place, and cultural heritage in the era of the Anthropocene. This essay critically analyzes the Turkish government's shifting meanings and use of language in explaining and justifying the decision.

On July 27, 2020, Patricia Blessing and Ali Yaycioğlu wrote an article entitled "Beyond Conquest Narratives: Hagia Sophia, Past and Present". Ali Yaycioğlu is an associate professor at Stanford University specializing in Ottoman and Turkish history, focusing on economic, political, legal institutions, and cultural life in southeastern Europe and the Middle East during the Ottoman Empire. He is also the author of "Partners of the Empire: Crisis of the Ottoman Order in the Age of Revolutions." Patricia Blessing is an Assistant Professor of Islamic Art History at the Department of Art & Archaeology and earned her Ph.D. from Princeton University in 2012. This essay discusses Hagia Sophia's conversion in the context of historical population migration and exchange between Greece and Turkey.

The last article in the author's spotlight is on July 27, 2020, by Esra Akcan. This article is entitled "*Erasing History at the Hagia Sophia.*" Esra Akcan is the Michael A. McCarthy Professor of Architectural Theory in the Department of Architecture at Cornell University Institute for Comparative Modernities, where she is also the Resident Director. Her research focuses on the intertwined histories of Europe, West Asia, and East Africa in the context of modern and contemporary architecture and urbanism. She aims to highlight architecture's role in global, social, and environmental justice. Akcan has published

extensively on critical and postcolonial theory, racism, immigration, architectural photography, translation, neoliberalism, and global history.

These three essays are well-suited for analysis using Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse framework because each essay seeks to explain and justify the conversion of Hagia Sophia through specific language use to construct political and symbolic narratives. Ömur Harmanşah's essay, for example, analyzes the Turkish government's shifting meanings and language usage and aligns perfectly with metadiscourse analysis to uncover how language shapes public perception. The article by Patricia Blessing and Ali Yaycioğlu discusses the conversion in the context of historical population exchanges between Greece and Turkey, where the use of language to connect historical events and build cultural narratives can be deeply analyzed through metadiscourse markers. Esra Akcan's essay, focusing on the erasure of history at Hagia Sophia, also provides an opportunity to analyze how language is used to emphasize aspects of social and environmental justice in the context of architecture and urbanism. By employing Hyland's metadiscourse analysis, this research can identify how the authors use language to engage readers, frame arguments, and reinforce their positions in this complex and controversial debate.

Previous studies on metadiscourse have explored its significance in language use and its role in guiding readers' understanding of a text. Romadhonia (2018) studied metadiscourse markers in Indonesian students' argumentative and descriptive essays, while Rizqy and Fitriyah (2023) investigated metadiscourse functions in Model United Nations online conferences. Both studies applied Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse model, with Romadhonia finding that the use of metadiscourse markers differed between argumentative and descriptive essays and Rizqy observing a greater frequency of interactive features in diplomatic speeches. These studies align with Hyland's theory, demonstrating the relevance of metadiscourse in different genres and contexts.

Metadiscourse research extends beyond mini-theses and includes journal articles that explore its application in various contexts. Bhatia and Gotti (2019) discussed metadiscourse as a form of interaction in writing, emphasizing its importance in academic writing improvement. Dafouz-Milne and Camacho-Molina (2020) analyzed metadiscourse in English as a lingua franca academic spoken discourse, particularly in seminar discussions. Firdaus and Shartika (2021) examined using interpersonal metadiscourse markers and appraisal in B.B.C. News reports. Other studies focused on metadiscourse in academic writing, such as Du and Chen's (2020) investigation of Chinese undergraduates' use of metadiscourse and Hashemi and Fazeli's (2021) comparison of metadiscourse in research article introductions. Additionally, Zhu and Luo (2021) analyzed metadiscourse features in English research articles in applied linguistics. Suryani and Yamin (2022) investigated metadiscourse markers in academic writing by Indonesian senior high school students, highlighting the need for proper metadiscourse teaching to enhance their writing abilities.

Furthermore, Munawaroh and Ishlahiyah (2023) explored the use of metadiscourse in modern digital news formats in their study titled "Interactive Metadiscourse in Guardian Australia's TikTok and Website News Reports." They analyzed how metadiscourse is employed in both spoken and written news reports, utilizing Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse model to investigate various interactive markers such as transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential, and code glosses.

Their findings revealed significant differences in using these markers between TikTok videos and website news articles. It emphasizes how metadiscourse adapts to different media formats to maintain coherence and facilitate reader comprehension. This research highlights the evolving nature of metadiscourse application across various digital platforms and reinforces its role in enhancing audience engagement.

The research gap in the context of metadiscourse, particularly regarding essays on the Hagia Sophia reconversion, emerges from the existing body of literature on metadiscourse's significance in guiding readers' understanding and shaping interactions within various texts. While the previous studies had extensively explored the role of metadiscourse markers in diverse genres and contexts, such as argumentative and descriptive essays, diplomatic speeches, academic writing, and news reports, there is a notable absence of research specifically investigating metadiscourse within the context of papers discussing historical and architectural transformations like the Hagia Sophia reconversion. The studies conducted by Romadhon (2018) and Rizqy and Fitriyah (2023) demonstrated the application of metadiscourse markers in different genres; nevertheless, both studies must address the nuanced requirements of essays discussing historical and cultural subjects.

While the previous studies had comprehensively explored metadiscourse markers in genres such as argumentative and descriptive essays, diplomatic speeches, academic writing, and news reports, there needs to be more research specifically investigating metadiscourse in the context of historical and architectural transformations like the Hagia Sophia reconversion. Although studies by Romadhon (2018), Rizqy and Fitriyah (2023), Munawaroh, and Ishlahiyah (2023) have demonstrated the application of metadiscourse markers in different genres, they have yet to address the nuanced requirements of essays discussing historical and cultural subjects, thus indicating a significant research gap in this area.

Given the distinct nature of essays on historical reconversions, particularly the Hagia Sophia's conversion from a museum back to a mosque, this research utilizes Hyland's 2005 metadiscourse theory to explore how metadiscourse markers shape reader perceptions and establish the writer's authority in discussing complex historical, cultural, and religious implications. Hyland's framework is particularly suited for this study because it comprehensively categorizes meta-discourse markers that can reveal how writers navigate the intricacies of controversial historical events and architectural changes. By addressing this gap, the study aims to shed light on the rhetorical strategies employed in sensitive topics and offer insights into the broader applicability of metadiscourse markers in different domains of discourse, ultimately enriching the scholarship on both metadiscourse and the intricate discussions surrounding historical and cultural changes.

Based on the background of the study, this research is conducted to answer the following question; What types of interpersonal metadiscourse markers were used in the Hagia Sophia Reconversion Essay.

Following the topic, this present research was conducted with practical contributions, especially to the field of metadiscourse analysis, to understand the features of metadiscourse markers found in the Essay of Hagia Sophia Reconversion.

This study was limited to analyzing the use of metadiscourse markers in the English article published in The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs. The articles entitled "The Conversion of Hagia Sophia: Desire, Spectacle, and a Historical Re-

"Enactment," "Beyond Conquest Narratives: Hagia Sophia, Past and Present," and "Erasing History at the Hagia Sophia" were analyzed. The analysis identifies the metadiscourse markers used in the essay based on Hyland's theory (2005). It does not include an assessment of the essay's content or argumentation. Additionally, the study only examines three pieces and does not compare the use of metadiscourse markers in other articles or genres. Finally, the study does not explore the potential impact of cultural or social background on the use of metadiscourse in the report.

The concept of metadiscourse, which uses language to guide readers' understanding and facilitate communication, is grounded in functional analysis, a framework introduced by Halliday (1994) and developed further by Hyland (2005). Functional analysis explains how language features serve communicative purposes, highlighting three macro-functions: ideational, representing content and experiences; interpersonal, enabling interaction and expressing viewpoints; and textual, organizing the text coherently for reader comprehension. Metadiscourse markers are linguistic tools that structure texts and engage readers. Hyland (2005) categorizes them into interactive and interactional types. Interactive markers help organize content, making texts accessible, and include transitional markers like "furthermore," "similarly," and "therefore," which clarify relationships between ideas; frame markers like "firstly" and "next," which signal discourse structure; and code glosses such as "for example" and "in other words," which provide clarifications to anticipate misunderstandings and enhance comprehension. Together, these features improve the coherence, clarity, and reader engagement of a text.

Interactional metadiscourse engages readers and invites interpretation. It includes hedges, which show the author's openness to alternative viewpoints using words like "might," "seem," and "possible," encouraging dialogue rather than asserting absolute facts. Boosters, such as "obviously" and "in fact," emphasize certainty and reinforce the author's confidence. Attitude markers express emotional responses through verbs, adverbs, or adjectives, conveying stance and engagement. Self-mention, using first-person pronouns like "I" and "our," establishes the author's presence, while engagement markers, such as "you" or directives like "consider," directly involve readers, guiding interpretation and promoting active participation in the text.

Hagia Sophia, a historically significant monument located in Istanbul, Turkey, embodies a rich cultural and architectural legacy. Originally built as a church in 532 AD under the direction of Eastern Roman Emperor Justinian I, it became one of the largest and most important Christian churches of its time. Following the Ottoman conquest of Constantinople in 1453, it was converted into a mosque, undergoing various architectural modifications, including the addition of minarets and a mihrab. In 1935, after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey, Hagia Sophia was transformed into a museum, reflecting the secular vision of the new Turkish government. Recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1985, its status has been a focal point of cultural heritage. In 2020, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan announced its reconversion into a mosque, a move seen as part of a broader shift towards a more conservative and Islamic vision for Turkey, highlighting its continued significance in religious and cultural discourse.

RESEARCH METHOD

The study used qualitative research approach since the data is in words rather than numeric (Creswell, 2017). The primary objective of this method is to provide a subjective

approach to describing a phenomenon and providing meaning (Creswell, 2017). Unlike numerical data, qualitative research collects data in words or images (Creswell, 2017). According to Rahardjo (2020), qualitative research constructs knowledge by understanding the meaning of events through the perspective of the research subjects. In language research, qualitative research is always related to human agents, such as speakers, writers, readers, or listeners, whose relationship with the language under investigation is interesting (Creswell, 2017).

This study employed a descriptive-qualitative research design to provide a comprehensive analysis of the data, aiming to describe the nature of the phenomenon under investigation (Lambert & Lambert, 2013). Specifically, it focused on identifying and analyzing metadiscourse markers in diplomatic essays about the Hagia Sophia reconversion. The descriptive-qualitative approach was chosen because it allows systematic collection and analysis of data from documents, observations, and records, emphasizing detailed description over experimental manipulation. Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse taxonomy was applied to categorize markers into interactive and interactional types, enabling a structured analysis of linguistic features that guide reader understanding and engagement. The researchers acted as the primary research instrument, observing and interpreting the essays published on the Berkley Forum (<https://berkleycenter.georgetown.edu/posts/hagia-sophia-from-museum-to-mosque>), while a laptop supported data organization and classification. Three essays were purposively selected as the primary sources. The researchers read and systematically examined these texts, extracting data in the form of words, phrases, and sentence segments identified as metadiscourse markers. This combination of qualitative observation and structured categorization allowed for a thorough, accurate, and reliable study of how authors use language to structure arguments, convey stance, and engage readers in discussions about the Hagia Sophia reconversion.

The data collection process involved several steps to ensure relevance and accuracy. First, texts related to the Hagia Sophia reconversion were carefully selected by searching library databases, online journal repositories, and official websites. Next, the identified texts were screened based on predetermined inclusion criteria, and only those meeting the requirements were included in the primary sample. The researchers then analyzed the essays using Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse framework, identifying linguistic features and classifying them into interactive or interactional sub-categories. Subsequently, the most relevant metadiscourse markers were selected, organized, and systematically compared. Finally, the findings were contrasted with prior studies to draw meaningful conclusions, providing insights into how authors structure arguments, convey stance, and engage readers in discussions surrounding the Hagia Sophia reconversion.

FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

The research aimed to describe how the data was analyzed using metadiscourse theories proposed by Hyland (2005). Additionally, the first analysis determined that metadiscourse markers referred to interactive or interactional resources.

During this phase, the researchers provided a detailed overview of the data collected to address the research questions. The analysis involved examining interactive metadiscourse, including transition markers, frame markers, evidential and code glosses, and interactional metadiscourse markers such as hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-

mention, and engagement markers. For clarity, the description was categorized based on the sub-category of metadiscourse markers, as shown in some representations of the data below.

Interactive Metadiscourse

Hyland (2005) proposed the interactive metadiscourse model to help writers and speakers effectively communicate their discourse's main point to the audience. Interactive metadiscourse is a valuable tool that aids the audience in understanding the significance of the discourse. The model consists of five essential elements: transitional markers, frame markers, code-glosses, evidential, and endophoric markers. These elements are explained further to help the audience understand their roles and the importance of conveying the message effectively.

Transition Marker

These are conjunctions and adverbial phrases that clarify relationships between different parts of the text. They include addition markers like "furthermore" and "moreover," comparison markers like "similarly" and "however," and consequence markers like "therefore" and "thus." Transitional markers help guide readers through the argument by highlighting connections and contrasts between ideas.

*The destruction of the giant rock-carved Buddha images in Bamiyan Valley, Afghanistan, in 2001, the demolition of the sixteenth-century Babri Masjid in India's Uttar Pradesh region in 1992, Saddam Hussein's reconstruction of the neo-Babylonian structures at Babylon, **and** overlapping and undermining claims over the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem by different religious stakeholders are some of the case studies that we cover.*

The transition marker "and" is crucial in linking multiple examples, thereby expanding the scope of the discussion. It helps to accumulate various instances, illustrating the broad and multifaceted nature of the discussed issue. This linkage connects ideas and suggests a continuity and an additive relationship among the examples. The writer enhances the text's coherence, showing that each example is part of a larger pattern of cultural and historical conflicts over significant monuments.

*The agency of "authentic" materials was used to re-activate and re-consecrate the space, **while** the powerful icons of the Byzantine past were concealed, their agency muted.*

The word "while" serves as a transition marker, which introduces a contrast between two related but opposing ideas or actions. The word "while" marks as a shift from using "authentic" materials for re-activating and re-consecrating a space to the concealment and muting of influential icons from the Byzantine past. This contrast highlights these elements' roles and treatments within the same context or setting.

Frame Marker

Frame markers help to structure the text by organizing information into a coherent sequence. They signal the structure of arguments, stages in the discourse, or the author's purpose. Examples include "firstly," "next," and phrases like "there are several reasons why." These markers assist readers in following the progression of ideas and understanding the overall organization of the text.

Secondly, I will suggest that Hagia Sophia has been an icon of secular modernity in Turkey, whereas the AKP government's neo-Ottoman, neo-imperial gesture to recapture the holy space of the Hagia Sophia constitutes a legal, political, and indeed architectural undermining of the modernist institutions of museums and global cultural heritage, not unlike recent iconoclastic (although far more violent) acts of fundamentalist governments in the Middle East.

The word "secondly" is a frame marker. It explicitly signals to the reader that a new point is being introduced. It follows a preceding point or argument, indicating a sequential order in presenting ideas. The writer structures the discourse, ensuring that each point is introduced in a logical sequence. This helps to maintain coherence and clarity, guiding the reader through the argument step by step.

In the end, what we have in our hands is an act of heritage injustice and spatial violence, due to the explicit closure of the building to at least part of its own genuine history: its mosaics, its marble floors, its "weeping column," its reverberating sounds, its surfaces, the ongoing project of architectural conservation, the UNESCO-monitored management of the world heritage site, and so on.

The phrase "In the end" is a frame marker; it introduces a phase in which the writer summarizes or concludes the discussion. It signals to the reader that the subsequent statement will encapsulate the main points or the final assessment of the topic being discussed. The writer frames the sentence as a concluding remark, suggesting that what follows is the culmination of the argument or the main takeaway from the preceding discussion about heritage injustice and spatial violence.

Code Gloss

These provide additional explanations or clarifications to ensure that readers understand the intended meaning of the text. They include phrases like "for example," "such as," and "in other words." Code glosses anticipate potential areas of misunderstanding and offer elaborations to enhance reader comprehension.

*To many, the conversion of the mosque into a museum in 1934 made the building a monument to secularism, like, **for example**, the conversion of the Church of St. Genevieve into the Panthéon of Paris made it a monument to the French Revolution.*

The phrase "for example" serves as a code gloss. It elaborates on the abstract concept (monument to secularism) by offering a tangible parallel (monument to the French Revolution). This clarification aids in making the argument more explicit and understandable. It bridges the gap between the abstract idea and the reader's comprehension by providing a clear, relatable comparison.

*Architectural monuments often have deep geo-histories (**relatively much deeper than the human timeframe**).*

"(relatively much deeper than the human timeframe)" is a code gloss. It provides additional clarification and context, ensuring the reader understands the depth and significance of architectural monuments' historical context.

Evidential

Evidential refers to external sources or texts to support the author's argument and add credibility. They include phrases like "according to" or "as stated by." These markers help readers see the text as part of a broader discourse, lending authority to the arguments presented.

*The history of this compulsory mass migration **has been written separately** from the official nationalist perspectives of Greece and Turkey.*

The phrase "has been written separately" implies an evidential stance. It suggests that the information presented about the separate historical narratives is based on historical writings and research, indicating that the content is derived from available sources.

However, as Cyril Mango and Gülru Necipoğlu have demonstrated, the Christian mosaics remained on view in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The phrase "as Cyril Mango and Gülru Necipoğlu have demonstrated" is evidential. It provides evidence from authoritative sources, strengthening the argument with credible references.

Endophoric Marker

Endophoric markers refer to other parts of the same text, such as "as mentioned above" or "see chapter 3." They help readers navigate the text by linking different sections and reinforcing connections between ideas.

*Those who oppose the decision often focus on the building as a Christian monument, which was converted into a mosque by the Ottomans as a result of conquest in 1453, into a museum by Atatürk in 1934, as a result of his secular policies, and now back into a mosque by an Islamist and populist leader. **This narrative** emphasizes how a Christian monument survived in a Muslim context, from the Ottoman Empire to secular Turkey or today's new regime.*

"This narrative" serves as an endophoric marker. It explicitly refers back to the preceding discussion about the historical transformations of Hagia Sophia. The writer signals that they are summarizing or highlighting a specific story or account previously introduced or implied. In this case, it refers to the story of Hagia Sophia as a Christian monument that underwent various transformations under different political and cultural contexts.

It was also a rare monument that implied the acceptance of some accountability for state violence and imperial ambitions—a unique attribute that is now lost with its conversion into a mosque.

The phrases "It" and "its conversion into a mosque" serve as endophoric markers. "It" refers back to Hagia Sophia, the subject of discussion, and "its conversion into a mosque" refers to the specific event that led to the loss of its unique attribute, enhancing cohesion in the text.

Interactional Metadiscourse

The second type of metadiscourse is interactional metadiscourse, which focuses on the involvement of participants in the discourse. Interactional metadiscourse pertains to how writers interact with their audience by creating explicit content and encouraging readers to respond, interpret, and evaluate the material. It refers to the writer's textual expressions, which convey their assessment of the readers and the material. Interactional metadiscourse aims to engage readers in the text. It provides opportunities for readers to contribute to the discourse by understanding the author's perspective on both the content and the readers themselves (Hyland, 2005). According to Hyland (2005), interactional metadiscourse can be further classified into five subcategories, which are explained as follows.

Hedges

Hedges indicate the author's openness to alternative viewpoints and show a level of uncertainty or non-commitment to a proposition. Examples include "might," "seem," and "possible." Hedges encourage a dialogue with readers by presenting information as open to interpretation rather than as absolute facts.

From the viewpoint of architecture, turning the museum into a mosque erases both the secular and Christian history engraved on the building, metaphorically and to a certain extent, literally.

The phrase "From the viewpoint of" serves as a hedge. It introduces a particular perspective or standpoint, in this case, the viewpoint of architecture. It suggests that what follows is an analysis or evaluation from that specific angle. Using this phrase, the writer signals that the assertion about the erasure of secular and Christian history is based on a particular viewpoint rather than an absolute or universally accepted truth. This introduces a level of subjectivity or interpretation into the statement.

In the following, I hope to join this debate to emphasize the fact that this radical conversion took place as a state spectacle and historical performance, and argue that the extraordinary architectural space of the Byzantine basilica has been re-appropriated as a site of an atavistic (albeit poorly coordinated) re-enactment of Sultan Mehmed II's conquest.

The word "argue" introduces the writer's perspective or interpretation, suggesting that what follows is their reasoned argument rather than an indisputable fact. The writer acknowledges that their viewpoint is open to interpretation and debate. It signals to the reader that the following statement about the radical conversion of Hagia Sophia is a position the writer is advocating for rather than an unequivocal assertion.

Boosters

Boosters emphasize the certainty of the author's statements, reinforcing their confidence in the presented information. They include phrases like "obviously," "in fact," and "it is clear that." Boosters strengthen the argument by highlighting the author's conviction and shared understanding with the readers.

*According to the stories accumulated around the column over centuries, the column is associated with multiple Christian and Muslim saints and the perspiring water from its hole is **believed** to have healing qualities*

The word "believed" is a booster. It suggests a strong tradition or popular belief that the perspiring water from the column has healing qualities. This indicates the writer's acknowledgement and acceptance of this belief without necessarily asserting its objective truth. The writer boosts the claim's credibility within the context of cultural or religious narratives. It signals the reader that while the healing qualities are not scientifically proven, they are widely accepted or revered in the cultural or historical context discussed.

*Having served as a mosque since 1453, Hagia Sophia was not part of these transactions, **of course**, just like the Istanbulite Greeks who were exempt from the treaty.*

The phrase "of course" is a booster, as it expresses strong certainty and commitment to the statement that Hagia Sophia was not part of the transactions. It strengthens the argument, aligns the reader's understanding with the writer's perspective, and emphasizes the obviousness and Importance of the fact, making the assertion more compelling and authoritative.

Attitude Markers

These express the author's emotional response to the content, such as surprise or agreement. Examples include verbs like "agree," adverbs like "hopefully," and adjectives like "logical." Attitude markers help convey the author's stance and emotional engagement with the material.

*A fast-produced green carpet hides the **important** marble floor and damages the extraordinary acoustics.*

The word "important" is an attitude marker. It indicates that the writer considers the marble floor to hold significant value or significance within the context of the setting described. The writer expresses their evaluation of whether this feature is noteworthy or valuable. This evaluative stance influences how the reader perceives the significance of the marble floor relative to other elements mentioned in the sentence.

*It is also **noteworthy** that some secular intellectuals of the time opposed this decision, on the basis that an active religious monument would better represent this complex history than a museum devoid of spiritual identity.*

As an attitude marker, "noteworthy" highlights the writer's belief in the importance of the fact that some secular intellectuals opposed the decision. It underscores the writer's judgment about the value and relevance of this piece of information. The use of "noteworthy" indicates that the writer believes this opposition is a crucial detail that adds depth to the understanding of the historical event. It signals that this fact is not trivial but has significant implications for interpreting the discussed history.

Self-Mention

Self-mention involves the use of first-person pronouns and possessive adjectives, such as "I," "my," and "our." It allows the author to assert their presence in the text, establishing a personal connection and projecting their identity within the discourse.

I refer to this column to illustrate the truly holy and deeply historical character of the place with intimate material connections to a divine past, which is recognized by its pilgrims.

"I" serves as a self-mention. By using "I," the writer explicitly identifies themselves as the source or narrator of the presented information. This personalizes the perspective, signaling to the reader that the following statement reflects the writer's viewpoint or interpretation. This self-mention helps to establish the writer's presence within the text, emphasizing their role in presenting the argument or describing the significance of the place. It gives a sense of direct involvement and authorial authority over the content discussed.

The current government's advocates keep reminding us of Istanbul's conquest in 1453 to justify the change in use.

The pronoun "us" functions as a self-mention marker, referring to the audience or broader community to whom the advocates are directing their reminders. It engages the reader by implicating them in the discourse and suggesting a shared understanding or experience.

Engagement Markers

Engagement markers directly address the readers and involve them in the text. They include pronouns like "you" and directives like "note" or "consider." These markers help position the readers within the discourse, guiding them toward the intended interpretation and encouraging their active participation.

I invite you all to read the suffering and pain in the individual testimonies of these enforced migrants, which reached the public only after the 2000s.

The sentence, particularly with the phrase "I invite you all to read," is a strong engagement marker. The speaker actively involves the reader, inviting them to explore specific content and encouraging them to empathize with the suffering and testimonies of the enforced migrants. This direct engagement enhances the reader's emotional connection with the topic.

I will leave it to the readers to reach out to the scholarship in Byzantine and Ottoman studies to learn more about the numerous spatial and visual aspects of this unique building.

The phrase "I will leave it to the readers" directly engages the audience, encouraging them to pursue further research and fostering a sense of involvement and responsibility.

The analysis demonstrates that interpersonal metadiscourse markers play a central role in shaping how the three essays construct arguments about the reconversion of Hagia Sophia. Transition markers were the most frequently used, functioning to connect ideas, signal contrasts, and introduce shifts in perspective. Markers such as *and, however, even though*, and *in a way* helped the writers weave multiple examples and viewpoints into a coherent narrative. Their strategic use enabled the authors to highlight conflicting interpretations of historical events while maintaining logical flow throughout the essays. This finding supports Hyland's (2005) conceptualization of transitions as essential tools for building coherence in complex discourse.

Beyond showing coherence, the use of markers such as *contrary to, moreover, and thus* deepened the analytical complexity of the essays. These markers helped the writers extend, challenge, and summarize arguments effectively, especially regarding debates on population movements, political motivations, and cultural symbolism. This pattern resonates with findings by Firdaus and Shartika (2021), who observed frequent use of interactive markers in news reports to manage shifts in stance and perspective. However, unlike their study—which centered on journalistic objectivity—the essays on Hagia Sophia used transition markers to foreground ideological tensions and interpretive contestation, demonstrating a more evaluative tone.

Frame markers also played a significant role in structuring the essays. Items such as *in this respect, secondly, third, and in the end* acted as explicit textual signposts, enabling the authors to guide readers through their argumentative sequence. This organizational strategy aligns with the observations of Romadhonina (2018), who found that frame markers help maintain cohesion in student essays, but the present study reveals more sophisticated and deliberate use of such markers to navigate politically and historically complex arguments. Similarly, Bhatia and Gotti (2019) highlight how metadiscourse supports interaction across different academic genres; the current study extends this view by showing how frame markers structure discourse in culturally sensitive historical debates.

Code glosses further enhanced clarity by providing clarifications, definitions, or concrete illustrations—such as historical analogies and explanations of unfamiliar legal or religious terms. Their use helped the essays remain accessible despite engaging with dense historical and political issues. While Munawaroh and Ishlahiyah (2023) found that code glosses in digital news formats serve to simplify and adapt content for broader online audiences, the present study reveals that code glosses in academic-style essays are used more for conceptual precision than simplification. This distinction underscores the genre-specific functions of metadiscourse.

Overall, the strategic deployment of interactive metadiscourse markers across the essays illustrates how writers manage argumentation, foreground contrasting viewpoints, and guide readers through historically and politically sensitive topics. These findings complement and extend previous research: while earlier studies have examined metadiscourse in academic essays, diplomatic speeches, student writing, and online news, none have investigated essays discussing historical and architectural controversies. The present study fills this gap by demonstrating how metadiscourse markers support nuanced meaning-making in discussions of cultural heritage and political symbolism. In doing so, it enriches the broader literature on metadiscourse and confirms the importance of these markers as rhetorical resources in contentious historical discourse.

CONCLUSION & SUGGESTION

The reconversion of Hagia Sophia into a mosque in 2020 has elicited diverse responses globally, reflecting its complex historical, cultural, and religious significance. This study aimed to explore the metadiscourse within essays discussing this reconversion, highlighting how various stakeholders articulate their positions and the rhetorical strategies employed to advance their arguments. The analysis showed that the metadiscourse markers significantly influenced the essays' persuasiveness and clarity. Writers use these markers to guide readers through their arguments, emphasize critical points, and build credibility. The essays examined showcased a blend of interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers, with a noticeable emphasis on engagement markers to involve readers and hedge words to present arguments cautiously. Many essays emphasized the historical and cultural importance of Hagia Sophia, framing the reconversion as either a loss of a shared cultural heritage or a restoration of its original religious function. The reconversion was frequently discussed in terms of its spiritual implications, with proponents highlighting its importance to the Muslim community and opponents viewing it as a step back for interfaith relations and secularism. Several essays discussed the political context of the reconversion, suggesting it was a strategic move by the Turkish government to consolidate power and appeal to conservative bases. The study demonstrates that metadiscourse analysis provides valuable insights into how arguments are constructed and conveyed, revealing underlying biases and intentions. This approach can be instrumental in understanding controversial topics and the varied perspectives surrounding them.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for future research and practice. Future studies could explore how metadiscourse markers vary across languages and cultural contexts, particularly in discussing globally significant issues like the Hagia Sophia reconversion. Educators should emphasize the importance of metadiscourse in academic writing, helping students understand how to use these markers effectively to enhance the clarity and persuasiveness of their essays. The researchers should consider cross-disciplinary approaches to metadiscourse, combining insights from linguistics, cultural studies, and political science to understand controversial topics comprehensively. Additionally, with the rise of digital communication, future studies could analyze how metadiscourse markers are employed in online forums, social media, and other digital platforms where discussions about issues like the Hagia Sophia reconversion occur. By addressing these suggestions, scholars and practitioners can deepen their understanding of metadiscourse's role in shaping public discourse and improving communication strategies in academic and public contexts.

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