

THE ROLE OF INTERACTIVE METADISOURSE MARKERS
IN 9/11 PERSIAN NEWS REPORTS

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ABSTRACT: The term *metadiscourse* has been derived from Halliday's 3 macro-functions of language known as ideational, interpersonal and textual. Hyland (2005) regarded metadiscourse as a linguistic means that assist writers to direct the flow of textual information in a text, conduct their readers' interpretation and build a relation with them. The aim of this study was on the ways writers use interactive metadiscourse to organize their texts by considering their readers' background knowledge. Many researchers carried out studies about metadiscourse usage in different areas like educational issues or cross-cultural subjects, whereas newspaper as an important means of communication has not received attention the way it deserved. Thus, this study focused on employment of interactive metadiscourse markers in news genre. To fulfill this purpose, 30 news articles were chosen from Persian elite and widely read newspapers which were coming from a library archive of Astan-e-Qods-e-Razavi. The news was selected randomly to prevent the impact of journalists' style of writing on the results. In order to analyze the frequencies and percentages of interactive metadiscourse and its subcategories, the data were submitted to SPSS. To find out the probable statistical differences among interactive subcategories, the chi-square test was run. The findings revealed that transitions have been the most frequently marker due to formal style of writing in newspaper discourse, whereas frame markers were the least employed metadiscourse in this genre. Moreover, endophoric markers were absent in Persian news articles.

KEYWORDS: interactive metadiscourse, Hyland, newspaper discourse, 9/11 event, Persian news reports.

INTRODUCTION

Language is an important means to shape interaction. As an essential tool to be used in communication, [Halliday. \(1985\)](#) considered 3 macro functions for language. The first macro function is ideational, which is also known as referential, is concerned with external world, where individuals express their experiences. The second meta-function is related to the social world. It represents the relationship among language users in an interaction. Finally, textual meta-function as the third function of language is about the flow of textual information and the ways they are connected to each other in order to create cohesion in discourse. [Halliday, \(1994\)](#) believed that each these 3 functions "form parts of a different functional configuration, making up a separate strand in the overall meaning of the clause." Hence, the point that inferred from this description is that all these three types of language functions complement each other and do not act separately. They altogether cover parts of meaning.

The term "metadiscourse" has been derived from these three types of language met functions. [Hyland. \(2005\)](#) defines metadiscourse as a "cover term for the self-reflective expression used to negotiate interactional

meanings in a text, assisting the writer (or speaker) to express a viewpoint and engage with reader as members of a particular community." Hyland has admitted that these rhetorical features convey the relation between writer, text and reader which is more than a pure exchange of information. Some instances of metadiscourse markers are presented in the following as underlined parts of sentences (see appendix A):

- (1) In addition, a firefighters union official said he feared an estimated 200 firefighters had died in rescue efforts at the Trade Center. (Portland Press Herald, September 12th, 2001)
- (2) People called loved ones, and many took the day off from work and school to ruminate on the horror of it all. (Burlington Free Press, September 12th, 2001)
- (3) It was unclear how many people or when all the calls were made. (Idaho Statesman, September 12th, 2001)
- (4) They indicated the hijackers were armed with knives. (Idaho Statesman, September 12th, 2001)
- (5) The intended target of the plane was apparently Camp David, the presidential retreat in Maryland, 85 miles away from the

crash site. (Anniston Star, September 12th, 2001)

(6) I think we have certified for all practical purposes a recession as a result of this. (National Post, September 12th, 2001)

Newspapers are important means of information exchange. Among other mediums, is still popular. On one hand, readers of any social level in communities have access to it and on the other hand, unlike TV and radio, it would not oblige its users to confine themselves to specific time or place. Therefore, the role of newspapers in reflecting news is really significant. As an instance, the way American journalists covered 9/11 events, showed how they tried to defend their country's rights and to accuse Muslims to be the cause of this act of terror. Indeed, the way journalists acted, was like the way soldiers defend their country. In spite of the importance of newspaper discourse, it has not been successful in absorbing researchers' attention to study on language devices like metadiscourse markers in this type of texts.

1.1. Aims of the study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the role of interactive metadiscourse markers including transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials, and code gloss in 9/11 news articles.

1.2. Research questions

1- What is the frequency of interactive metadiscourse markers and its relevant subcategories in Persian news reports about 9/11 event?

2- Is there any significant differences between subcategories of interactive metadiscourse markers in 9/11 Persian news reports?

This study will present basic definitions of metadiscourse and will go through previous researches in section 2, while section 3 will provide information about materials, data collection and data analysis. Section 4 will express the result and discussion will be indicated in section 5. Finally, the conclusion and some implication of the study will be explained in section 6.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Metadiscourse as a linguistic device assists writers in having an impact on readers by conducting their interpretation and directing the information flow of text. This concept was first employed by [Harris. \(1959\)](#) which was derived from three Halliday's macro functions. So far, many researchers introduced various terms and classification for, metadiscourse ([Schiffrin, 1980](#);

[Williams, 1981](#); [Vande Kopple, 1985](#) and [Crismore, 1993](#)). The common ground for all of these studies was to dedicate two levels of discourse. The primary level was concerned with a propositional aspect of meaning, whereas non-propositional concepts speculated in second level which involved metadiscourse, as well.

Rejecting this assumption, [Hyland, \(2005\)](#) introduced a new classification for metadiscourse markers entitled "an interpersonal model of metadiscourse". He regarded 3 fundamental characteristics for metadiscourse:

- (A) The solidarity of propositional aspect of a text and non-propositional features
- (B) Considering metadiscourse markers as a vital means of successful interaction between writer and reader
- (C) Expressing relationship between metadiscourse and external arguments in world outside.

Thus, to present his own framework, Hyland benefitted from [Sinclair's, \(1981\)](#) discourse model.

Sinclair claimed that in addition to informational role, language helps readers to share their experiences, too. Therefore, he considered 2 basic planes for discourse:

- (I) Interactive plane which is concerned with language usage in interaction with readers.
- (II) Autonomous plane which is about organizing text structure to create interaction by experiences.

Between these 2 planes, the latter does not include those features of language that build a relation with the outside world. As this classification implied, the first plane seems to act like a connector between language and the real world.

Focusing on context, rather considering the distinction between textual and interactional function, Hyland applied [Thompson and Thetela, \(1995\)](#) and [Thompson, \(2001\)](#) for his categorization of metadiscourse. He regarded 2 levels: interactive resources which were similar to textual markers and interactional resources that were likewise interpersonal markers. [Hyland, \(2005\)](#) defines interactive resources as 'ways writers signal the arrangement of their texts based on their appreciation of the reader's likely knowledge and understandings. This influence 'reader- friendliness' of a text and primarily involves the management of information flow, addressing how writers guide readers by anticipating their likely reactions and needs.'

Hyland asserted that these 2 levels of discourse complement each other and would not act independently due to the fact that these levels together create a bond between the world and meaning in contexts.

Despite the importance of interactive resources, many studies carried out about interactional metadiscourse markers. Only a few researchers considered textual and interactive metadiscourse in their studies.

[Abdollahzadeh, \(2001\)](#) aimed to examine the employment of textual markers in the introduction section of academic writings. Therefore, he selected 73 research articles written by 36 Iranian and 37 American university students. The result of his study represented that American writers used more textual markers to direct their readers.

[González, \(2005\)](#) investigated the textual metadiscourse in commercial websites. His study focused on examining the role of these types of markers in conducting readers that are considered as potential customers, through the perplexed semiotic systems of a web page. He aimed to find the influence of these linguistic means of getting relevant information a reader is looking for. Utilizing Hyland and Fuertes's framework, he examined 100,000 words from virtual banks' websites collected at the university of Extremadura. The findings of his study showed that all five subcategories of textual markers had influenced on directing readers in commercial websites. Among these metadiscourse markers, the usage of code glosses and evidential were less than the other markers.

Newspapers not only not only contain news, but also include sections that might hardly be regarded as news like editorials, personal columns, news analyses, letters to editor, comic strips, cross-word puzzles, weather reports, classified ads, and so on. Newspapers carry out many purposes in a society such as informing people by supplying facts and figures, analyzing news in depth and providing a print marketplace for advertisers. Furthermore, journalists play a significant role in producing news. They collect different pieces of information about an event and weave them into a text. Thus, metadiscourse is one of those language means which journalists employ to accomplish the aims and scopes of the newspaper they are writing for.

Meanwhile, any researchers have been studied the usage of metadiscourse in different areas such as genres, cultural and educational issues, but despite the essential role of a newspaper in a community, this type of discourse has not received the attention it deserves. Only recently, a few scholars have been concerned with

newspaper discourse. [Dafouz-Milne, \(2003\)](#) investigated the role of metadiscourse markers in achieving persuasion between 2 newspapers. The results of the study showed hedges were the most frequent and commentaries were the least used markers in the corpus. [Le, \(2004\)](#) examined one of the French newspapers to discover how this type of discourse builds active participation within its editorials' argumentative to prove its authority. Le found out evidentials, personal markers and relational markers were directly connected to editorials' argumentative structure. [Ebrahimi and Ebrahimi, \(2012\)](#) tried to explore the role of metadiscourse markers in newspapers as a means of persuasion in 2 Iranian newspapers. They found out between Tehran Times and Iran Daily, only the latter employed metadiscourse markers to conduct the message to their readers. [Hashemi and Golparvar, \(2012\)](#) examined the role of textual and interpersonal metadiscourse markers in Persian news articles. Their study revealed that Iranian journalists used more textual markers.

All of these studies concentrated on both categories of metadiscourse in newspaper discourse due to the fact that metadiscourse markers assist writers to conduct their text and readers' interpretations, the present study intends to go through 9/11 news articles to figure out whether the Hyland's description of metadiscourse is valid for this type of news.

11 September 2001 was the most horrific and dramatic day in American history, when hijackers crashed 2 airliners into the World Trade Center, within an hour a 110 story tower collapsed and claimed the life of at least 50,000 innocent people. Reviewing 9/11 news, the authors decided to investigate the role of interactive metadiscourse markers about this controversial issue.

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Materials and data collection procedure

The corpus of the present study consists of 30 news articles which came from Iranian elite and widely read newspapers. These news reports were selected randomly. The reason for random sampling is because of avoiding journalists' styles of writing and their likes and dislikes. In order to make the articles comparable for measuring the frequency of interactive metadiscourse markers the length of articles were matched to a common basis (markers per 200 words). All of these news reports were published on 12th Sep. 2001 and collected from a library archive of Astan-e-Qods-e Razavi, which is located in Mashhad, Iran.

3.2. Data Analysis

In analyzing the data of this study, Hyland's, (2005) framework was utilized (see table 1) since it is more elaborated and convincing model for metadiscourse categorization and it has been used in most of the recent studies.

Table (1): Hyland's interpersonal model of metadiscourse (interactive resources)

Category	Function	Examples
Transition	Express relations between main clauses	In addition, thus, and
Frame marker	Refers to discourse acts, sequences or stages	Finally, my purpose is
Endophoric markers	Refers to information in the parts of the text	Noted above, see figure
Evidential	Refers to information from other text	According to X, Z states
Code gloss	Elaborate propositional meanings	e.g. such as

To examine the role of interactive metadiscourse, these markers were conducted manually and the frequency of them was counted per 200 words. Then, the findings were submitted to SPSS to be analyzed statistically. Finally, in order to figure out whether the subcategories distribution and their frequency of occurrence were meaningfully different, the chi-square tests were run.

RESULTS

Table 2 represents frequency and percentage of subcategories of interactive metadiscourse occurrences.

Table (2): Frequency and percentage of subcategories of interactive metadiscourse

Category	Frequency	%
Transition	48	57.83%
Frame marker	2	2.41%
Endophoric marker	0	0%
Evidential	24	28.92%
Code gloss	9	10.84%
Total	83	100%

As it can be depicted in the above table, the most frequent subcategory of interactive markers in the Persian news reports is transitions (57.83%), followed by evidentials (28.92%), code glosses (10.84%), frame markers (2.41%), and finally endophoric markers (0%).

In order to find out the probable difference between subcategories of interactive metadiscourse markers, the chi-square test was run. The results of these tests are presented in the following:

1- Transition and frame marker

Table (3): Results of chi-square test of transition and frame marker

P	df	value	
0.000	1	42.33	X< 0.05
		50	n

As table 5 showed, the value observed of chi-square test ($x^2= 42.32$) is meaningful at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) with a degree of freedom of 1 ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) represented the meaningful difference between these 2 markers; since the transition frequency of occurrence is higher.

2- Transition and endophoric marker

Table (4): Results of chi-square test of transition and endophoric marker

P	df	value	
0.000	1	45.08	X< 0.05
		48	n

The observed value in the above table of chi-square test ($x^2= 45.08$) at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) with 1 degree of freedom of ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) indicated that there is a significant difference between these 2 markers because of a higher usage of transition.

3- Transition and evidential

Table (5): Results of chi-square test of transition and evidential

P	df	value	
0.005	1	8	X< 0.05
		72	n

Table 5 displays the observed value of chi-square test ($x^2= 8$) with degree of freedom of 1 at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) which showed a meaningful difference between these 2 markers due to the fact that transition are used more frequently.

4- Transition and code gloss

Table (6): Results of chi-square test of transition andcode gloss

P	df	value	
0.000	1	26.68	X< 0.05
		57	n

As it seen in table 6,the value observed in chi-square test ($x^2= 26.68$) with degree of freedom of 1 at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) represented that the difference between these 2 markers is statistically significant because transitions are applied more than code glosses.

5- Frame marker and endophoric marker

Table (7): Results of chi-square test of frame marker and endophoric marker

P	df	value	
0.564	1	0.333	X> 0.05
		2	n

The observed value in chi-square test ($x^2=26.68$) in table 7 with 1 degree of freedom at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}> 0.05$) suggested that there is no considerable difference between these 2 markers.

6- Frame marker and evidential

Table (8): Results of chi-square test of frame marker and evidential

P	df	value	
0.000	1	18.61	X< 0.05
		26	n

As it can be seen in the above table, the value of observed chi-square test ($x^2= 18.61$) is meaningful with degree of freedom of 1 at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$); for the fact that evidential frequency is higher.

7- Frame marker and code gloss

Table (9): Results of chi-square test of frame marker and code gloss

P	df	value	
0.035	1	4.45	X< 0.05
		11	n

As seen in table 9, the observed value of chi-square test ($x^2= 4.45$) with a degree of freedom of 1 at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) is significantly different between these 2 markers for a higher percentage of code gloss usage in the corpus.

8- Endophoric marker and evidential

Table (10): Results of chi-square test of endophoric marker and evidential

P	df	value	
0.000	1	21.16	X< 0.05
		24	n

The findings in table 10, the value of observed chi-square test ($x^2= 21.16$) with a degree of freedom of 1 at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) depicts noticeable difference between these 2 markers. The reason for this difference is because number of evidentials used in the corpus is more than endophoric markers.

9- Endophoric markers and code gloss

Table (11): Results of chi-square test of endophoric marker and code gloss

P	df	value	
0.01	1	6.4	X< 0.05
		9	n

The observed value in table 10 of chi-square test ($x^2= 6.4$) with 1 degree of freedom is meaningfully different at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) higher employment of code glosses.

10- Evidential and code glosses

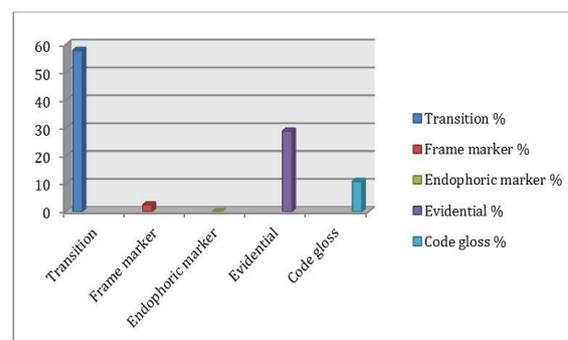
Table (12): Results of chi-square test of evidential and code gloss

P	df	value	
0.009	1	6.81	X< 0.05
		33	n

The result from table 11 indicated that the value of observed chi-square test ($x^2= 6.81$) at α level ($\alpha=0.05$) with a degree of freedom of 1 ($\text{sig}< 0.05$) indicated the significant difference between these 2 markers due to the higher frequency of evidential in the corpus.

DISCUSSION

The fairly high frequency of interactive metadiscourse markers reveals the importance of these linguistic means in newspaper discourse. According to [Hyland, \(2005\)](#) interactive metadiscourse are used to "organize propositional information in the ways that a projected target audience is likely to find coherent and convincing". He believed that the presence of these types of markers is not just to codify and arrange the information in texts, but also relies on writers' background knowledge about their readers for conducting their interpretations and building a relationship with them. The findings are best shown in Figure (1).

**Figure (1):** Frequency percentage of interactive metadiscourse subcategories

In terms of frequency of occurrence among interactive metadiscourse subcategories, transitions received the highest score (57.83%). One possible reason for this heavy usage of

transitions could be the formal writing style of journalists in news genre. Another reason might be the fact that journalists inclined to bring different pieces of information together by using cohesive ties. Moreover, these internal connections help readers to concentrate better on the writers' intention; hence it could signal writer-responsibility toward his or her reports. [Hyland, \(2005\)](#) admitted that transition markers are necessary for expressing arguments which are added to the text and they are also useful for explaining how and why an argument occurred. This might be the reason why major parts of the corpora are made up of transition. The following examples represent transition in the corpus (see appendix B):

(1) E.g. sâxteman-hâ-ye kongre, Pentâgon va vezârat-e xâreje mored-e Building-PLU-EZ Congress Pentagon and ministry-EZ state about

Hamle qarâr gereft.
Attack place put-PAST-3SG

Translation: Building of Congress, the Pentagon and the State Department were attacked. (Kâr-o-Kârgar newspaper, September 12th, 2001; p:front page)

(2) E.g. alâve bar ân, riyâsat-e jomhur-e Âmrikâ Jorj Buš dar zaman-e hadese dar in addition president-EZ America George Bush in time-EZ incident in

safar be Feloridâ bud ammâ safar-e xod râ pâyân
travel to Florida be-PAST-3SG but travel-EZ himself ACC finish

dâd va be Vâšngton bâzgašt.
give-PAST-3SG and to Washington RETURN-past-3sg

Translation: In addition, the President of America George Bush was traveling to Florida during the incident, but had finished his trip and returned to Washington. (Qods newspaper, September 12th, 2001; p:15)

The second numerous interactive metadiscourse applied in the corpus was evidentials (28.92%). This is due to the fact that journalists intend to quote from original sources, considering 9/11 as a controversial event, to support and to find an acceptable documentation for their claim. Another feasible reason for using an extended number of evidential might be for dealing less with quantitative data. Some examples of

evidentials are presented in the following (see appendix B):

(3) E.g. soxan-gu-ye Ariyel Šâron goft: Esrâel âmâde ast be Âmrikâ speak-er-EZ Ariel Sharon tell-PAST-3SG Israel ready be-3SG to America

dar xosus-e barasi-ye enfejâr-hâ-ye diruz komak konad.
in especial-EZ investigate-EZ explosion-PLU-EZ yesterday help SUBJ-do-3SG.

Translation: A spokesperson for Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon said: Israel is ready to help America in investigating yesterday's explosions. (Qods newspaper, September 12th, 2001; p:18)

(4) E.g. šahrdâr-e Niyoyork elâm kard bomgozâri-hâ-ye Meyer-EZ New York declare make-PAST-3SG bombing-PLU-3SG

markaz-e tejârat-e jahâni talaf-ât-e bâlâ-yi dâšt'-e ast.
center-EZ Trade-EZ World casualty-PLU-EZ high-a have-PART be-3SG

Translation: New York Meyer declared: the World Trade Center bombings had high casualties. (Afarinesh newspaper, September 12th, 2001; p:2)

The analysis of data also illuminated that code glosses were the third marker relatively used (10.48%) in the corpus. Code glosses are considered as extra information to be added to the text to classify the proposition for the readers. The findings related to code glosses in this study are in line with the study of [Dafouz-Milne, \(2003\)](#) that believed writers are conscious of the vast number of their readers' need; therefore by applying code gloss, they make sure to provide explicit clue to contribute the audience. Nevertheless, using too many code glosses in the text would be humiliating. Some instances of this type of metadiscourse are presented in the following (see appendix B):

(5) E.g. soxan-gu-ye in jebhe dar mosâhebe ba Irna goft: in jebhe Speak-er-EZ this the front in interview with IRNA tell-PAST-3SG this the front

Va jenâh-e nezâmi-ye ân (gordân-hâ-ye moqâvemmat-e meli) and wing-EZ military-EZ it (battalion--PLU-3SG resistance-EZ national)

in gune a'mal-y-ât râ anjâm ne-mi-dah-and.
this such operation-EZ-PLU ACC do not-DUR-
give-3PLU

Translation: In an interview with IRNA, an official spokesperson said: the Front and its military wing (battalions National Resistance) would not resort such operations. (Qods newspaper, September 12th, 2001;p:15)

(6) E.g. dar Niyoyork gozâreš šod-e ast do kešti-
ye jang'î barâ-ye
In New York report become-PART be-3SG two
ship-EZ battle for-EZ

enteqâl-e mardom az šahr-e Manhattan
(Niyoyork) be hume dar
transport-EZ people from city-EZ Manhattan
(New York) to country side in

banâder âmâde šode-and.
Port-PLU ready become-PART-3PLU

Translation: New York has reported 2 battleships to transport people from the city of Manhattan (New York) to country sides, have docked in ports. (Khorasan newspaper, September 12th, 2001;p:10)

Finally, the findings of the study also represented frame marker as the least used metadiscourse (2.41%) and endophoric markers were absent in the corpus. Frame markers, in comparison with endophoric markers, according to Hyland. (2005) "function to sequence, label, predict and shift arguments; and thus, provide framing information about elements of the discourse. On the other hand, endophoric markers provide references to the other parts of the same text which are hardly useful in news genre. An example of frame marker is presented below (see appendix B):

(7) E.g. alâme seyed Mohammad Hossein Fazlollah dar pâvân goft: mâ bâ in
Allama Seyed Muhammad Hussein Fazlollah in
end tell-PAST-3SG we with this

gune âdamrobayi va havâpeymârobayi moxâlef
hast-im.
such kidnapping and hijacking against be -1PLU

Translation: Allama Seyed Muhammad Hussein Fazlollah, in the end, said : we are against any kidnapping and hijacking. (E'temad newspaper, September 12th, 2001;p:2)

CONCLUSION

The present study focused on investigating the role of interactive metadiscourse and its relevant subcategories in Persian news reports about 9/11. As previous studies illustrated interactive metadiscourse markers have an essential role in organizing the text flow. These markers also assist writers to direct their readers' interpretation through text.

The findings of the study presented that Iranian journalists preferred to use transitions heavily in their reports, whereas the least employment of interactive metadiscourse belongs to frame markers. The absent marker in Persian news articles was endophorics.

The results of chi-square tests displayed the fact that there are significant differences among subcategories of interactive metadiscourse markers. Transition frequency, in comparison with other markers, was higher which was because of formal style of writing in news genre and it signaled the writer-responsibility toward texts. Frequent usage of evidentials indicated that journalists tended to apply original sources for supporting their claim and also dealing with less data and figures. Code glosses were the third useful markers in the corpus since they play an important role in clarifying proposition for the readers. Data analysis of this study also showed that heavy employment of code glosses would be disrespectful. It has been claimed by many previous scholars that transitions, evidentials and code glosses would create an explicit and persuasive text.

The present study aimed to show the necessity of interactive markers in newspaper discourse, although this genre needs further research and analysis. The result of this study might be useful in pedagogical areas. Teaching metadiscourse employment for journalism students would help them to avoid misunderstanding and misleading of their audiences, yet it would assist them in getting closer to international journalism.

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- 1- Hamshahri; p:11
- 2- Qods; p: 15 and 18
- 3- Resalat; p: 2 and 4
- 4- Khorasan; p: 3,6 and 10
- 5- Jam-e Jam; p:14 and 18
- 6- Iran; p: 2 and 14
- 7- E'temad; p: 2 and 6
- 8- Afarinesh; p: 2
- 9- Aftab; p: 2, 8 and 14
- 10- Kar-o-Kargar; p: front page and 7

APPENDIX A:

List of English newspapers frontpage used in presenting examples:

- 1- Portland Press Herald
- 2- Burlington Free Press
- 3- Idaho Statesman
- 4- Anniston Star
- 5- National Post

APPENDIX B:

List of Persian newspapers used in examples: