

Metadiscourse commonly is defined as "discourse about discoursing." In its brief history, the term has appeared in several studies of text structure; however, theorists disagree concerning the functions and forms of metadiscursive structures and the role of metadiscourse in a larger theory of text linguistics. This study provides representative examples of the problems that diminish the utility of the metadiscourse theories that currently are available. It then proposes an alternative theory that locates metadiscourse within the larger context of speech act theory. The study defines metadiscourse as indicators of expositive illocutionary acts, and it then provides a taxonomy of metadiscursive functions and forms.

A Speech Act Theory of Metadiscourse

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In its brief history, the word *metadiscourse* has appeared in several studies of text structure. Coined by Zellig S. Harris in 1959 to refer to passages of a text that contain information of only secondary importance (see Harris, 1959/1970, pp. 464-466), *metadiscourse* commonly has been defined as "writing about writing" (Williams, 1985, p. 226), "discourse about discourse" (Vande Kopple, 1985, p. 83), and "discoursing about the discourse" (Crismore, 1984, p. 280). Although most researchers agree that metadiscourse indicates an author's attempt to guide a reader's perception of a text, no consensus exists concerning a *precise* definition of the word, the range of linguistic structures that should be grouped under the rubric of metadiscourse, how the structures should be grouped, and the function of metadiscourse as an integral element in a comprehensive theory of text structure. In this essay, I will provide representative examples of the problems that diminish the utility of the metadiscourse theories that currently

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are available. I then will propose an alternative theory of metadiscourse—one that remedies the significant flaws in the available theories while placing metadiscourse within the larger context of speech act theory.¹

PROBLEMS IN METADISOURSE THEORIES

In any attempt to construct a theory of systematic phenomena, a primary consideration is the precision with which the basic terms of analysis are defined. In the case of metadiscourse theories, several possibilities exist for framing the basic analysis—metadiscourse may be considered as a syntactic, semantic, or pragmatic phenomenon, and most existing theories define key terms with references to all three of these domains. However, important questions concerning the appropriate domain for analysis all are rendered moot if the definitions of key terms are not sufficiently precise to enable theorists to agree concerning the specific entities the definitions describe. Such basic problems in definitions often plague the available theories of metadiscourse.

An imprecise definition of the term *metadiscourse* appears in the earliest theory of metadiscourse, the one advanced by Zellig S. Harris in 1959. In that study, Harris (1959/1970) examines metadiscourse in scientific articles. Noting that metadiscourse kernels (units of information that are transformed varieties of simple, active, positive, declarative sentences) “contain words entirely different from those of the main kernels” (p. 464), Harris provides little elaboration, saying only that “metadiscourse kernels . . . talk about the main material (e.g., discussing the problems of the investigators)” (pp. 464-465). Because Harris does not specify the differences between words in metadiscourse kernels and those in other kernels, his definition is not specific enough to ensure that researchers will agree concerning which entities are metadiscursive.

Another imprecise definition of *metadiscourse* appears in the metadiscourse theory advanced by Avon Crismore (1983). Crismore defines *metadiscourse* as “the author’s intrusion into the discourse, either explicitly or non-explicitly, to *direct* rather than *inform*” (p. 2), adding that the purpose of metadiscourse is to direct readers “so they will understand what is said and meant in the primary discourse and how to ‘take’ the author” (p. 2). However, Crismore does not draw a clear distinction between “directing” and “informing,” and she then exacerbates this problem by proposing a taxonomy of metadiscourse types that includes “informational metadis-

course," a category that conflicts with the basic distinction upon which she bases her definition.

Imprecisions in metadiscourse theories are not limited to definitions of the term itself; other imprecisions are evident in theorists' attempts to delineate clear and useful subcategories of metadiscourse. Consider the distinction that Crismore draws between "explicit" and "nonexplicit" forms of metadiscourse. Although a distinction between types of metadiscourse based on explicitness could be useful, Crismore does not offer a precise explanation of how to make such a distinction. She does suggest that "the larger metadiscourse phrases and sentences indicate more explicit author intrusion into the primary discourse while shorter metadiscourse words such as *luckily* or *clearly* indicate a more subtle intrusion on the author's part" (p. 15), but does not provide a clear method for making a categorical distinction between "long" explicit forms and "short" nonexplicit forms. And the term *nonexplicit* is a misnomer, because even the shortest forms of metadiscourse must be at least partially explicit in order for Crismore to identify them.

Another source of problems in categorizing types of metadiscourse is the inappropriate use of form-based and function-based categories. As noted above, the appropriate terms of analysis for metadiscourse theories remain in dispute. However, Joseph M. Williams (1979) has noted that the appropriate terms for a text theory cannot be provided by a theory intended for use at a lower level of analysis. Paul J. Beauvais and Frank Parker (1984) offer a similar viewpoint, suggesting that just as a syntactic theory that relies on phonological terms would be unrevealing, so too would it be unrevealing to construct a theory of text structure that relies primarily on syntactic terms (pp. 7-8). It seems clear, then, that a useful theory of metadiscourse must *first* use pragmatic terms to identify the functions that metadiscourse can serve in a text, and *then* use syntactic terms to identify the various forms that can serve each function. Both levels of analysis are needed for an adequate theory, but the functional categories constitute the primary level of analysis, with the formal categories serving a subordinate role. However, many of the existing theories of metadiscourse do not use functional and formal categories in this way, and the result usually is a theory that is unrevealing or confusing.

In some cases, theorists attempt to use formal (syntactic) categories as the primary level in their studies. For example, Crismore (1982) offers a syntactic analysis of metadiscourse, noting that "linguists would call most metadiscourse adverbials" (p. 8). However, her analysis is unrevealing, first because it ignores the fact that metadiscourse often appears in forms that are not adverbial (as in the sentence "*My second point is that they have a losing*

record”), but also because it ignores the fact that either primary discourse or metadiscourse can be presented in adverbial forms. Consider that in the sentence “Visually, it was a powerful play” (Quirk, Greenbaum, & Svartvik, 1980, p. 429), “Visually” is a viewpoint adjunct adverbial that most theorists would not classify as metadiscursive, while in the sentence “Secondly, they have a losing record,” the word “Secondly” is an enumerative conjunct adverbial that most theorists would classify as metadiscursive. Although it is important to analyze syntactic structures in forming a theory of metadiscourse, an analysis that uses syntactic forms as primary categories cannot provide an adequate description of metadiscourse.

In other cases, theorists offer functional descriptions of metadiscourse without considering the varying forms that can serve a single function. For example, Williams (1981) provides a functional definition, noting that metadiscourse can “express an attitude toward an event” (p. 197). He also identifies some of the syntactic forms of metadiscourse through examples such as “interestingly” and “it is odd that” (p. 197). However, Williams does not point out that most of the metadiscourse examples he cites can occur either as introductory clauses that precede a sentential complement (“I find it interesting that,” “it is odd that”) or as adverbs (“interestingly,” “oddly”). He misses the opportunity to point out that at least two linguistic forms can serve the same function—an observation that reveals a significant aspect of metadiscourse structure. A similar problem is evident in the most detailed theory of metadiscourse offered to date, the one presented by William J. Vande Kopple (1985). In establishing functional categories of metadiscourse, Vande Kopple ignores the fact that different forms may serve the same function. For example, he identifies “attributors” and “narrators” as two categories of metadiscourse; however, there is no significant functional difference between an attributor such as “according to Einstein” and a narrator such as “Einstein reports that,” so the two forms do not merit distinct categories. Instead, they should be treated as variant syntactic forms of the same functional category.

Although the available metadiscourse theories contain significant flaws, the ground-breaking studies identified in the examples above do suggest considerable agreement among theorists concerning some of the features that a metadiscourse theory must possess. Common to most of the theories is the belief that an adequate account of metadiscourse must include categories that identify the roles that a writer and a reader play in using a text as a communicative medium. These categories must account for specific references in the text to the writer and reader, and the categories also must identify the communicative functions that passages of metadiscourse serve.

Given these points of agreement, it is not surprising that both Vande Kopple and Crismore mention speech act theory in their writings on metadiscourse. Vande Kopple (1980) suggests that metadiscourse “calls attention to the speech act itself, often marking stages in the development of the primary discourse, displaying the author’s position on the primary discourse, or molding the reader’s attitude about the primary discourse” (p. 51). Crismore (1985) asserts that “metadiscourse calls attention to the communicative speech act itself, seeks to engage the reader as an active human being, and signals the presence of the author” (p. 11). In fact, most metadiscourse theorists are aware of the similarity between their own goals and those pursued by speech act theorists, with both groups attempting to identify the communicative functions that a variety of linguistic structures can serve. What is surprising is that no metadiscourse theorist has attempted to integrate work on metadiscourse into the larger framework for text studies provided by speech act theorists. Perhaps the most significant omission in existing metadiscourse theories is the failure to explore fully the possibilities offered by speech act theory.

In the pages that follow, I will advance a speech act theory of metadiscourse, a theory that attempts to define metadiscourse and to categorize its functions and forms within the context of the most important studies of speech acts.

A SPEECH ACT DEFINITION OF METADISOURSE

As a basis for the theory I will advance, I offer the following definition:

metadiscourse: illocutionary force indicators that identify expositive illocutionary acts

This definition uses terms from the work John Searle and J. L. Austin.² From Searle (1969/1984) I have borrowed the distinction between illocutionary force indicators that show how a proposition is to be taken and propositional indicators that convey statements with truth properties (p. 30). Searle clarifies the distinction by providing the following definition of a proposition:

Stating and asserting are acts, but propositions are not acts. A proposition is what is asserted in the act of asserting, what is stated in the act of stating. The

same point in a different way: an assertion is a (very special kind of) commitment to the truth of a proposition. (p. 30)

He then attempts to distinguish between the grammatical components of a sentence that convey a proposition and those that convey an illocutionary act:

From [a] semantical point of view we can distinguish two (not necessarily separate) elements in the syntactical structure of the sentence, which we might call the propositional indicator and the illocutionary force indicator. The illocutionary force indicator shows how the proposition is to be taken, or to put it another way, what illocutionary force the utterance is to have; that is, what illocutionary act the speaker is performing in the utterance of the sentence. . . . I may indicate the kind of illocutionary act I am performing by beginning the sentence with "I apologize", "I warn", "I state", etc. Often, in actual speech situations, the context will make it clear what the illocutionary force of the utterance is, without its being necessary to invoke the appropriate explicit illocutionary force indicator. (Searle, 1969/1984, p. 30)

In noting that the propositional force indicator and the illocutionary force indicator are not necessarily separate in the syntactic structure of the sentence, Searle retains the distinction advanced by Austin (1962/1981) between explicit performatives that use "verbs in the first person singular present indicative active" (p. 56) such as "I warn," and implicit forms that do not use canonical performatives, such as "Passengers are warned" (p. 57). The distinction between explicit and implicit forms will be preserved in the taxonomy that I offer, although I will use the term *partially explicit* instead of *implicit*, since I believe that the former more accurately reflects the nature of the structures that Austin describes.

From Austin (1962/1981) I have borrowed the category of expositive illocutionary acts. Austin asserts that these "acts of exposition involv[e] the expounding of views, the conducting of arguments, and the clarifying of references" (p. 161), and he adds that these acts "have reference to the communicational situation" (p. 162). In this regard, Austin's definition is akin to Williams's (1979) comment that metadiscourse includes "all the elements in a sentence that refer to the process of discoursing, as opposed to the reference of the discourse" (p. 33).

In defining metadiscourse as the structures in a text that identify expositive illocutionary acts, I am asserting that, when viewed in the larger context of speech act theory, metadiscourse serves exactly the function that Austin (1962/1981) assigns to expositives, which show how a proposition or

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>1st person</u>	<u>expositive</u>
I	state note assert

Figure 1: Simple Expositive Performative Clauses

a “ ‘statement’ is to be fitted into the context of conversation, interlocution, dialogue, or in general of exposition” (p. 85). The role of metadiscourse is to signal a writer’s communicative intent in presenting primary discourse, to show how the primary discourse fits into a purposeful text. In the taxonomy that follows, I will identify different ways in which metadiscourse performs this role.³

PRIMARY EXPOSITIVE ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

In identifying the various categories of expositive illocutionary acts, I first will consider those acts that I classify as primary. The characteristic that distinguishes primary acts from secondary acts is that primary acts can be expressed in canonical form with explicit performative structures that use first-person subject pronouns, while secondary acts use either second- or third-person subjects.

I shall call the most basic primary expositive illocutionary act the *simple expositive act*, the function of which is to state. In explicit performative form, this act is performed by clauses such as “I state,” “I note,” and “I assert,” all of which serve the same essential function. These clauses may be illustrated as shown in Figure 1.

In classifying illocutionary force indicators, I take the term *explicit* to mean that the indicator identifies both the illocutionary act that is performed and the person who performs it. Although the canonical form of a simple expositive act is a performative clause with a simple present verb, other explicit forms are possible; for example, clauses such as “I must note” and “I should state” are explicit indicators of simple expositives, despite the fact that they contain verb phrases with modal auxiliaries, instead of simply containing main verbs in the present tense.

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>		
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>	
<u>1st person</u>	<u>adverbial</u>	<u>expositive</u>
I	<u>sequential</u>	state note assert
	first also	
	<u>causal</u>	
	therefore	

Figure 2: Relational Expositive Performative Clauses

In addition to explicit illocutionary force indicators, partially explicit indicators also are possible; these forms identify an illocutionary act without referring to the person who performs the act. In the case of simple expositive acts, the partially explicit forms include clauses such as "It is notable" and adverbs such as "notably," as well as other illocutionary structures that do not identify an attributive subject.

Under the heading of "primary expositive illocutionary acts," I also would include several *complex expositive acts*; these forms differ from the simple expositive act in that they convey features of the expositive act that supplement the basic information that a speaker/writer is stating something. One category of complex acts is the *relational expositive act*, which identifies *sequential* and *causal* links among passages of propositional discourse. The canonical form of the relational expositive act is an explicit performative clause that also contains an adverbial to identify the relationship of propositional passages; this includes clauses such as "I first state," "I also note," and "I therefore assert," all of which are illustrated in Figure 2.

Explicit forms of relational expositive indicators that do not follow the performative formula in their verb forms include clauses such as "I first would state," "I also should note," and "I therefore must assert," all of which contain modal verbs. Another explicit form uses a first-person possessive pronoun, as in the clause "My first point is." Of the partially explicit forms, one of the most common is the use of only the adverbial to introduce the propositional indicator, as is exemplified by "First, she does not like lobster," "Also, it rained all day," and "Therefore, we shouldn't go fishing." These indicators contain no mention of the attributive subject, and the illocutionary act itself is identified only indirectly by the adverbials. However, the reader/listener can infer both the speaker/writer and the nature of the

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>		
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>	
<u>1st person</u>	<u>adverbial</u>	<u>expositive</u>
(I)	<u>sequential</u>	(state)
	first	
	also	
	<u>causal</u>	
	therefore	

Figure 3: Partially Explicit Relational Adverbs

illocutionary act from the adverbials. In Figure 3, implied constituents of the illocutionary indicator are enclosed in parentheses.

A second type of complex expositive act is the *evaluative expositive act*; this category includes those illocutionary acts that indicate the speaker/writer's assessment of propositional material. In addition to performing acts of stating, evaluative expositive acts express the speaker/writer's attitudes concerning the *validity* of propositions, and they also may express other judgmental *reactions* to propositions. In fully expanded form, validity is indicated by embedded explicit performatives such as "I state that I believe" and "I state that I doubt"; however, these often are reduced to simple explicit performatives such as "I believe" and "I doubt." The fully expanded form for indicating other reactions is exemplified by embedded explicit performatives such as "I state that I like" and "I state that I dislike"; however, these often are reduced to "I like" and "I dislike." Figure 4 illustrates the reduced forms of evaluative expositives.

Evaluative expositive acts also can be indicated by explicit forms that do not use the full performative formula; for indicating validity, these would include a near-performative such as "I am convinced" as well as a possessive pronominal form such as "My belief is." Examples that indicate other reactions include "I am surprised" and "I am concerned." However, the range of evaluative expositive acts is better suggested by the partially explicit forms. Examples of these for indicating validity include clauses such as "It is certain," phrases such as "in fact," and adverbs such as "certainly," as well as modal verbs such as "must" and "may." Examples of partially explicit forms that indicate other reactions include clauses such as "It is surprising" and adverbs such as "disturbingly." None of these examples indicates the person who is performing the evaluative act, nor do the examples indicate

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>1st person</u>	<u>evaluative expositive</u>
I	<u>validity</u>
	believe doubt
	<u>reaction</u>
	like dislike

Figure 4: Evaluative Expositive Performative Clauses

that the evaluative act is contained in an act of stating. In the cases of the adverbs and modal verbs, the illocutionary indicator often is embedded within a propositional indicator, as in the examples "They will *certainly* win" and "John *may* win the match"; however, it is possible to construct explicit embedded clauses that correspond to these forms, as is exemplified by "I state that I am certain that they will win" and "I state that I believe it is possible that John will win the match." It also is notable that in the case of evaluative expositive acts, the performative indicating the evaluation itself has a truth value when combined with a proposition, as is exemplified by a sentence such as "I believe that John will win," which may be true or false. However, this fact does not preclude considering the evaluative performative as "(a very special kind of) commitment to the truth of a proposition" (p. 29), which is the criterion that Searle (1969/1984) advances for identifying illocutionary acts.

As is the case for simple expositive acts, evaluative expositives can appear in relational forms, as in the examples "I also dislike" and "I therefore believe." The partially explicit forms of the relational expositive act include examples such as "It therefore is doubtful," "It also is possible," and "First, it is likely."

Another type of complex expositive is the *commissive expositive act*, which indicates that the speaker/writer is committed to performing a specific expositive act concerning specific propositional material in the discourse or text that follows the commissive act. For example, a speaker may indicate that she will state the causes of the Civil War. In fully expanded form, this act has the structure "I state that I will state"; however, the canonical form

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>1st person</u>	<u>commissive expositive</u>
I	will state will note

Figure 5: Canonical Commissive Expositive Clauses

of the commissive act is that of a near-performative with a verb possessing a future aspect, such as “I will state” or “I will note.” It also is a characteristic of this form to introduce a simple indication of reference, instead of introducing a full propositional indicator. For example, “the causes of the Civil War” merely indicates a specific group of referents; it does not advance a proposition that possesses truth properties. Figure 5 illustrates the canonical structure of commissive expositive acts.

Also possible are *relational commissive expositive acts*, which not only commit the speaker/writer to performing a specific expositive act concerning specific propositional material, but also link the act and material to other passages of the discourse or text. Canonical examples of relational commissive expositive acts include “I first will state,” “I next will note,” and “I therefore will consider.” Another explicit form for indicating a relational commissive act is the possessive pronominal clause, exemplified by “My first subject will be” and “My next topic is,” both of which indicate content that will follow, despite the present aspect of the verb in the latter example. Partially explicit forms include agentless passives such as “The next topic to be considered is” and clauses such as “The next subject will be,” as well as use of only the adverbial, as exemplified by “*First*, the causes of this growing problem.”

Yet another type of primary complex expositive is the *reiterative expositive act*, which restates an expositive act and its corresponding propositional or referential material. The canonical form of the reiterative act is a near-performative clause with a verb possessing a past aspect, as in the examples “*I stated* that the Red Sox won the pennant in 1986” and “*I have noted* the causes of the Civil War.” Figure 6 illustrates the canonical form of the reiterative expositive.

As is the case for other primary expositive acts, the reiterative expositive can appear in relational forms, as in examples such as “I first stated,” “I also have noted,” and “I therefore asserted.” Partially explicit relational reitera-

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>1st person</u>	<u>reiterative expositive</u>
I	stated have noted

Figure 6: Canonical reiterative expositive clauses

tives include forms such as "Having first considered" and "Also having noted."

The primary expositive illocutionary act categories constitute a taxonomy of the metadiscursive acts that can be performed *directly* by a speaker/writer. The specific examples listed for each type of act are merely representative rather than exhaustive; numerous other indicators that identify each act could be cited. However, the definitions that I have provided for the acts are sufficient to enable theorists to identify other instances of each act.

SOME SECONDARY EXPOSITIVE ILLOCUTIONARY ACTS

In addition to expositive acts that are performed directly by a speaker/writer, it also is possible for the speaker/writer to perform *indirect* acts of stating. I will refer to these indirect acts as *secondary expositive illocutionary acts*. The main characteristic that distinguishes these secondary acts from primary expositive acts is that the secondary acts do not use or imply first-person subjects; instead, they attribute the expositive act to someone other than the speaker/writer of the discourse or text. These secondary acts divide into two broad classes: those that use third-person attributive subjects and those that attribute the illocutionary act to the listener/reader by using second-person subjects. Space will not permit a detailed discussion of all the varieties of secondary expositive illocutionary acts, but I will introduce some representative examples.

Third-person illocutionary acts are mentioned briefly by Jerrold M. Sadock (1974) in *Toward a Linguistic Theory of Speech Acts*; he uses the term "covert illocutionary acts" to label them, and he provides examples that include "Officer O'Brien warned us that there were several bridges out" and

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>3rd person</u>	<u>expositive</u>
She	states
He	notes
Smith	asserts

Figure 7: Third-Person Simple Expositive Clauses

“My wife told me that the dog was barking” (p. 44). It is notable that these third-person speech acts do possess truth properties; that is, in addition to performing an illocutionary act, the illocutionary indicator is itself part of a proposition that may be true or false, as is the case for first-person evaluative expositive acts. This property suggests that third-person expositive acts may be difficult to distinguish from propositional material. However, the distinction is simplified by a closer analysis of the functional and structural properties of the third-person acts.

In third-person form, simple expositive acts are typified by illocutionary indicators such as “She states,” “He notes,” and “Smith asserts,” which are illustrated by Figure 7. Because third-person expositives refer to statements made previously by a person to whom the speaker/writer refers, the third-person act is as likely to use past-tense verbs as present-tense verbs; typical third-person expositives include examples such as “She stated,” “He noted,” and “Smith has observed.” Although these forms appear similar to the reiterative expositives discussed earlier, third-person simple expositives do not refer to illocutionary acts and propositions made previously *in* the discourse or text and *by* the speaker/writer; instead, they introduce acts or propositions taken from a *previous* communicative instance, incorporating these previous acts into a new text.

Unlike first-person expositive acts, third-person expositives generally do not appear in partially explicit forms. Third-person expositives are by definition attributed to a source other than the speaker/writer, so the use of a form that does not identify an attributive subject usually is inappropriate for conveying these acts; in most cases, a listener/reader will infer the existence of a first-person subject if no attributive subject is specified. However, third-person acts occasionally do appear in agentless passive forms such as “It is stated” and “It has been noted”; these forms can cause interpretive problems for the listener/reader unless the attributive subject is recoverable

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>3rd person</u>	<u>commissive expositive</u>
She	will state
He	will note
Smith	will consider

Figure 8: Third-Person Commissive Clauses

either from prior textual references or from extratextual aspects of the communicative situation.

Another category, *third-person commissive expositives*, seems to pose a unique problem, since a cursory analysis would suggest that it is impossible for a speaker/writer to commit another person to performing a specific expositive act concerning specific content. However, the occurrence of forms such as "She will state," "He will note," and "Smith will consider" suggests that third-person commissives are possible. In analyzing these acts, it is helpful to consider that the expanded forms corresponding to these examples are the embedded clause structures "I state that she will state," "I state that he will note," and "I state that Smith will consider." In any instance of communication involving only one speaker/writer, the only illocutionary acts by others that the speaker/writer can include in his or her own text are those that have been produced at an earlier time. In fact, the examples cited above do not commit a third-person subject to performing a particular illocutionary act; instead, they commit a speaker/writer to including in the discourse or text an act that already has been performed elsewhere. Since the speaker/writer is the real architect of the discourse or text, the onus is on him or her to include the appropriate material following the commissive indicator. (Figure 8 illustrates the reduced forms of the third-person commissives mentioned above.)

Other third-person acts are possible; these include *third-person evaluatives* such as "She believes" and "He dislikes," and *third-person reiteratives* such as "She stated" and "He noted." As is the case for first-person acts, relational forms are possible for each category of third-person expositive acts. However, all of the third-person categories differ from their first-person counterparts in that partially explicit forms of the third-person acts are rare.

The second broad class of secondary expositive acts includes those acts in which a speaker/writer attributes illocutionary acts to a listener/reader

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>2nd person</u>	<u>expositive</u>
You	may note may assert

Figure 9: Second-Person Simple Expositive Clauses

through the use of second-person attributive subjects. Although these second-person acts are similar to first- and third-person expositives in many regards, additional rules apply to some of the second-person categories.

In second-person form, simple expositive acts may be identified by illocutionary indicators such as “You note” and “You assert”; however, the second-person forms often use modal verbs to weaken the force with which an act is predicated of a listener/hearer, resulting in indicators such as “You may note” and “You may assert.” I take these weaker forms to be the canonical type of second-person simple expositives. Figure 9 illustrates the modal forms of the above examples.

In partially explicit form, second-person simple expositives often appear as imperative clauses such as “Note that” and “Consider that.” Although these clauses do not explicitly identify an attributive subject, the imperative form allows the listener/reader to infer that “you” is the intended subject of the above illocutionary indicators. Figure 10 illustrates the partially explicit second-person expositives cited above. In that figure, I have included “you” in parentheses to indicate that it is an implied constituent of the indicators.

Second-person reiteratives perform illocutionary acts that are restatements of acts and their associated propositional or referential content that already have appeared in the discourse or text under consideration. In performing second-person reiterative acts, it is not necessary for the act and content that are repeated to have been attributed originally to the listener/reader; it is possible to have a second-person reiteration of an act originally attributed to a first-person or a third-person subject. For example, an act that originally appears in a form such as “I note that the Red Sox have lost fifty games” or “Smith notes that the Red Sox have lost fifty games” can be reiterated as “You noted that the Red Sox have lost fifty games.” Canonical second-person reiteratives include clauses such as “You noted” and “You have observed,” both of which are illustrated by Figure 11. In relational forms, explicit second-person reiteratives are indicated by clauses

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>2nd person</u>	<u>expositive</u>
(You)	Note Consider

Figure 10: Imperative Second-Person Expositives

such as "You first noted," "You also observed," and "You therefore have noted." While partially explicit forms of nonrelational second-person reiteratives are uncommon, partially explicit imperative forms such as "Note again" sometimes do appear in texts.

Other second-person illocutionary acts are possible. These include *second-person evaluatives* such as "You may believe" and "You may like," and *second-person commissives* such as "You will note" and "You must consider." Relational forms for these acts also are possible.

DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this study, I have attempted to provide a clear and precise analysis of the functions and forms of metadiscourse by redefining metadiscourse within the context of speech act theory. By considering metadiscourse as a carefully delimited component of a theory that has a long history of productive scholarship, I believe that we may resolve the basic problems of defining and classifying metadiscursive structures, allowing us to proceed with important research concerning metadiscourse. While some theorists have questioned the utility of constructing taxonomies such as the one I have presented—see, for example, Derrida (1977)—it is difficult to conceive of communication studies that do not utilize some categorizations, however provisional, of the structures that constitute a discourse or text. It seems reasonable to expect that an analysis of these structures be as clear and precise as possible. The main value of my analysis, then, must be determined by its utility in enabling researchers to define discrete entities the communicative import of which may then be considered.

The most important questions that a metadiscourse theory may assist in answering are questions of affective saliency; that is, the ability of readers to

<u>illocutionary force indicator</u>	
<u>attributive subject</u>	<u>illocutionary predicate</u>
<u>2nd person</u>	<u>reiterative expositive</u>
You	noted have observed

Figure 11: Second-Person Reiterative Clauses

perceive the structures that the theory posits, and the effect that perceiving the structures has on a reader's comprehension and memory of a text.⁴ While Williams (1985) suggests that overuse of metadiscourse can impair a reader's understanding of a text (p. 81), Crismore (1985) believes that judicious use of metadiscourse can enhance a text's readability and memorability (p. 9). These two positions are compatible and both seem reasonable, but little experimental evidence is available to support either of them. It is evident that much more research is needed on the effects of metadiscourse in text processing.⁵

In pursuing research on the affective saliency of metadiscourse, researchers will need to consider a variety of specific questions. One category of questions concerns the memorability of metadiscourse itself: (1) Do metadiscourse and primary discourse differ in their memorability? (2) Do the different functional categories of metadiscourse differ in memorability? (3) Do explicit and partially explicit forms within a functional category differ in memorability? Another category of questions concerns the effect that metadiscourse has on a reader's comprehension and memory of primary discourse: (1) Does the presence of metadiscourse have any effect on a reader's comprehension and memory of primary discourse? (2) Do the different functional categories of metadiscourse have different effects on a reader's comprehension and memory of primary discourse? (3) Do explicit and partially explicit forms within a functional category have different effects on a reader's comprehension and memory of primary discourse?

Perhaps most important will be studies of the effects that metadiscourse has on what Haas and Flower (1988) call "rhetorical reading"—the ability of a reader to understand a text "not only as content and information, but also as the result of someone's intentions, as part of a larger discourse world" (p. 170). Haas and Flower have shown that the use of rhetorical reading strategies distinguishes mature readers from student readers. Since the role

of metadiscourse is to reveal the communicative intent of a writer, researchers should consider whether use of specific metadiscourse types can promote rhetorical reading.

Of course, the answers that researchers will find for important questions concerning metadiscourse will depend in large part on the theoretical framework they employ in pursuing their research. While a precise definition and a systematic taxonomy do not ensure that productive experimental research will follow, it is difficult to conceive of productive studies without the prior existence of such theoretical tools. I hope that my study provides these tools for future metadiscourse researchers.

NOTES

1. Because very few studies have been published concerning metadiscourse, some of the most important comments on the topic appear in articles that are devoted primarily to other, broader topics and in books (such as Joseph Williams's *Style*; 1985) that are intended primarily for pedagogical use. Such is the case with several of the works from which I have selected representative problems. In citing the problems in these works, I in no way wish to criticize the abilities of their authors, many of whom were pursuing goals somewhat different from my own and all of whom were confronted with an even greater paucity of scholarship in this area than I faced as I began this study.

2. In advancing my metadiscourse theory, I have assumed that the reader possesses some knowledge of speech act theory, and I have avoided rehashing the basic information that is readily available elsewhere. For a brief overview of speech act theory, see Levinson (1984) and Dasenbrock (1987).

3. Austin (1962/1981) acknowledges that a single linguistic structure may serve more than one function, and he recognizes that indicators that identify expositive acts also may identify other speech acts, such as "verdictives" and "behabitives" (pp. 161-162). In order for an act to be classified as expositive, it must "have reference to the communicational situation" (p. 162) and be concerned with "the clarifying of reasons, arguments, and communications" (p. 163), regardless of whatever else it does. I have tried to preserve this approach in my own analysis. While I recognize that some of the indicators that I include in my taxonomy (such as the evaluative expositive and commissive expositive indicators) could be classified as being other than expositive in Austin's taxonomy, I include them in my own metadiscourse taxonomy because they identify speech acts that clarify communication.

4. For two useful studies that suggest the importance of affective saliency, see Sloan (1984, 1988).

5. Vande Kopple (1980) observes that readers tend to recall less metadiscourse than primary discourse (p. 52), but he does not provide a detailed analysis of the relative readability and memorability of the various metadiscourse types. In the only substantial study to date that reports a correlation between metadiscourse use and text memorability, Crismore and Vande Kopple (1988) report that some personal-voice hedges (structures that, for the

most part, would be classified as explicit negative evaluatives in my taxonomy) enabled junior high school students to learn more from their reading of science and social science textbooks.

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