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**English Adjectives in Indonesian Cosmetic  
Advertisement: A Study of Emphatic Personal  
Metadiscourse Markers**

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# English Adjectives in Indonesian Cosmetic Advertisement: A Study of Emphatic Personal Metadiscourse Markers

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## Abstract

The growth of the globalization of brands in international markets has led to the inevitable importance of advertisement and hence to scholarship on advertisement, such as with methods of metadiscourse. This descriptive qualitative study was aimed at determining interpersonal metadiscourse markers used in eight advertisements of Indonesian cosmetic products using English in the construction of beauty within contemporary Indonesian contexts. The results evidence an emerging new terminology in defining and classifying the types of beauty as a social construct presented in product advertisements.

Employing a discourse analysis and Hylans's emphatic personal metadiscourse marker adjectives, it was found that the advertising makers have used adjectives to describe nouns in the advertising texts due to their persuasive meanings, namely those of aesthetic adjectives. The adjectives found in the data belong to several categories, i.e. evaluativity, dimensionality (unidimensional and multidimensional), and measurability. All of these adjectives have constructed the concept of green beauty, healthy beauty, modern beauty, religious beauty and aesthetic beauty. This study is expected to contribute to the development of language and media studies, and to enrich media studies, especially those that can enhance the strategies used by advertising agencies to choose the most effective kind of language in their advertisements.

**Keywords:** Advertising, adjectives, cosmetic, beauty, emphatic personal metadiscourse

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## Background

The growing globalization of brands has led to the inevitable importance of advertisement and its studies, including methods used in these studies, such as metadiscourse. Metadiscourse, a term used to refer to the conceptual interaction between text and text-makers as well as between text-makers and readers (Hyland 2005: 1) embodies the notion that communication is not a mere exchange of information, goods or services, but that it also involves personalities, attitudes and assumptions of those who perform communications (Hyland 2005). Metadiscourse is classified into two macro categories: textual and interpersonal. Textual metadiscourse is used to organize propositional information coherently for a particular audience and appropriate for a particular context (Hyland 2005: 7). It can be concluded that metadiscourse can be used by text-makers to convey their

attitude towards the readers and the text they have created. It can thus lead the reader to understand the text according to their wishes.

Metadiscourse is a discourse on a discourse and refers to a linguistic manifestation of the speakers or text-makers through the texts they create to interact with the text-receivers (VandeKoppel 1985). There are many types of discourse that have at least two levels. First, the authors or text creators provide information about the subject of the text (VandeKopple 1985), i.e., they expand the proportional content. At the next level, the metadiscourse level, the authors or the text makers do not add proportional material but help the recipients to organize, classify, evaluate and react to the material. Various definitions of metadiscourse have been proposed by various scholars, which has led to an understanding that it refers to a means of interaction between writers or speakers and their readers or listeners through their use of language, and that it is a term widely used in discourse analysis, pragmatics and language teaching (Crismore 1983; Hyland 1998, 2005; Mauranen 1993; VandeKopple 1985). Metadiscourse is a linguistic, rhetorical and pragmatic source that reflects and refers to the relationship between the message or content that the speaker or the author want to convey through the text and the recipients (Marta Aguilar 2011).

Interpersonal metadiscourse marker refers to the interpersonal function of a language as proposed by Halliday (1974). This interpersonal function of a language causes a person to participate in acts of communication with others. The markers in this interpersonal category focus on the speaker's attitude towards the information conveyed and the speakers as the target of the discourse. Interpersonal metadiscourse, according to Campbell is interactional and evaluative while also an expression of the writer's persona. It indicates a created personality that is made known in the act of communicating (cited in Hyland, 1998: 443). Also, interpersonal metadiscourse is an important rhetorical strategy because is an important part of a text in which the writers impose an added affective value and use the degree of commitment to proportional content (Vande Kopple, W, 1985).

The overall context and epistemological view of a particular field affect the viewpoint that a writer employs to communicate with the reader. In establishing the suitability of the author's position, Hyland (2005: 49) considers an important role in the category of linguistic features which he names metadiscourse. He defines metadiscourse as a tool in which a proportional content is made coherent, clear and persuasive for a particular reader. Interpersonal metadiscourse refers to aspects of a text that reflect the writer's position against the content of the text and the reader. Gerot and Wignell (1995: 13) state that interpersonal meaning is a meaning that expresses a speaker's attitude and judgment. Based on that definition, an author can also express his or her attitude and judgment through text, and the meaning of the context is realized through auxiliary modals.

Hyland (1999) mentions five types of interpersonal metadiscourse markers: Hedges, person markers, emphatics, attitude marker and relational marker. In another study, Fuertes-Olivera et al (2001: 1298) mentions only three types of interpersonal metadiscourse markers that have been found in slogans, namely person marker, hedges and emphatics. Hyland (1996: 433-453) defines hedges as transient expression possibilities. In accordance with that definition, Salager-Meyer (1997: 106) describes hedges as interactive elements that connect proportional information on a text and the factual interpretation of the author. Hedges show higher frequency levels than other linguistic features because hedges can also reflect a particular language of the author.

Fuertes-Olivera et al (2001: 1297) suggest that emphatics in slogans serve to convince readers or potential customers and to avoid readers from hesitation. Emphatic markers comprise, among others, adjectives, adverbs or phrases that can reinforce nouns or statements previously provided.

Adjectives as emphatic markers describe a noun in an advertising text. The use of adjectives will have much of an effect on the proposition of the ad text due to their persuasive meanings. Adjective are words used to modify or explain nouns or pronouns. The word ‘modify’ means ‘change.’ To change a word means to change the meaning of the word. Adjectives are modifiers that have a grammatical property of comparison. They are often identified by a special derivative ending or certain adverbial modifiers that precede them. The most common position of adjectives is before a noun, but it can also fill another position.

## Method

This study is a Discourse Analysis of multimodality, a semiotic method with which to analyze texts that use more than one semiotic modes simultaneously in one occasion of delivering meaning (O’Halloran 2001). Multimodal analysis is based on the concept of language metafunction, namely ideational function, interpersonal function and textual functions as proposed by Halliday (1985). Hyland’s Metadiscourse (2005) was used to analyse the linguistic signs in the form of text in advertising. Metadiscourse markers comprise textual and interpersonal markers, and expose the attitudes of the speaker—the advertising text maker—regarding the information to be conveyed to the receiver—the advertising text reader—all of which serve as the target of the discourse. Interpersonal markers tend to be interactional and communicative, though in advertising this relationship can be somewhat artificial.

The data used in this research includes advertisements of Indonesian cosmetics on official Facebook accounts that use English, i.e., Sariayu Solusi, Wardah exclusive Series, Viva Perfect Look and Wardah Lightning Series. The analysis was performed on the adjectives used as Hyland’s emphatic personal metadiscourse markers, in order to identify and describe in detail the types and characteristics of the adjectives used in the advertisements, which persuasive meanings they contain and what concept of beauty these adjectives construct.

## Discussion

### *Data 1: Sariayu Solusi*

There are five (5) adjectives that serve as emphatic metadiscourse markers due to their function of indicating certainty and emphasis on a proposition.

- (1a) ... the finest organic product ...
- (1b) ... anti-aging and lightening skin care
- (1c) ... from ECOCERT certified grape seeds...
- (1d) ... ... keep your skin youthful ...
- (1e) ... it’s also safe even for the most sensitive skin

The adjectives in (1a) and (1f), the emphatic markers, are in superlative adjective form. The meanings of both superlatives imply by the two respective adjectives are, however, different. In (1a), the superlative ‘finest’ indicates the highest level of a comparative degree of the nature of something or someone. It derives from the adjective ‘fine,’ which is categorized as an aesthetic adjective of measurability. In (1f), the superlative form ‘the most sensitive’ is derived from its base form ‘sensitive.’ Combined with another metadiscourse marker in (1f), i.e., ‘safe,’ the use of the superlative form ‘the most’ is one of the emphatic metadiscourse markers that is used to convince readers that even the (most) ‘sensitive’ skin can still safely use the cosmetics offered in the

advertisement. The adjective 'safe' also serves as an emphatic metadiscourse marker by assuring readers that the cosmetics are not harmful.

The word 'anti-aging' and 'lightening' in (1b) are adjectives in participle form, a verb form that ends in -ing and -d/-ed that serve as a verb or adjective. In this data, the adjectives 'anti-aging' and 'lightening' modify the noun 'the Series,' i.e., the series of the products advertised, presenting active meaning. Therefore, the word 'anti-aging' and 'lightening' as the modifier to the noun 'skin care' have an active meaning so as to brighten, maintain and to defy aging. The emphatic marker in (1d) is the adjective 'youthful' that modifies the noun phrase 'your skin.' The adjective belongs to the category of aesthetic adjectives, ones that express someone's judgment about something or someone. As an aesthetic adjective, the word 'youthful' belongs to the dimensionality or, to be precise, multidimensional adjectives, i.e., adjectives defined by more than one criteria something or someone has.

This study has also found the use of past participle form in this data, which modifies the noun phrase 'grape seeds,' i.e. the adjective 'certified.' This is the past participle form of the verb 'certify,' and hence the meanings implied by the adjective in the past participle form are 'having earned certification; holding a certificate; guaranteed by a certificate.' Past participle indicates a passive meaning, and therefore the phrase '.. made from ECOCERT certified grape seeds ...' implies '.. made from grape seeds that are having an ECOCERT certification.'

### *Data 2: Wardah Exclusive Series*

There are five adjectives serving as the emphatic marker in this Wardah Exclusive Series ad, i.e.,

- (2a) Simply elegant
- (2b) Wardah exclusive series
- (2c) A skin perfecting make up
- (2d) ... inspiring beauty
- (2e) ...velvety, long lasting...

The emphatic markers in (2a) and (2b) are aesthetic adjectives. Based on the linguistic criteria of semantic categorization of adjectives by Bartsh and Vennemann (1972) the words 'elegant' and 'exclusive' belong to the category of aesthetic adjectives which show measurability.

In (2a), the word 'elegant' is a positive judgment of the speaker/writer about the characteristics of something or someone considered luxurious in a controlled way or something very well thought out but simple. In (2b), the adjective 'exclusive' is a positive judgment of the speaker/writer about something considered of high-quality or fave, and for limited superior members. The adjectives 'perfecting,' 'inspiring,' 'long lasting' in (2c), (2d), (2e) above, are adjectives with participle forms which indicate an active meaning that the cosmetics make the skin flawless, completely free from faults or defects, or as close as possible to a condition as such that the cosmetics make (something) perfect.

The same analysis also applies to the adjectives 'inspiring' and 'long lasting,' the former means the cosmetics can make the skin in a condition as such that the result can lead to inspiration (2d). Literally, 'inspiring' means 'encouraging or making someones feel that she/he wants to do something (good/useful/beneficial). The whole phrase implies 'beauty that encourages you to want to do something good.' Wardah inspiring beauty can therefore be interpreted as a cosmetic brand that can yield the kind of beauty that inspires. The word 'long lasting' in (2d) is a present participle that means 'enduring or existing or being effective for a relatively long

period of time.’ Likewise, the adjective ‘velvety’ implies a meaning of ‘having a smooth, soft appearance, feel, taste or nature.’ Based on the linguistic criteria of semantic grouping of adjectives by Bartsh and Vennemann (1972), the word ‘velvety’ differs from the other two kinds of adjectives. The adjective ‘velvety’ is an aesthetic adjective that belongs to the unidimensional adjective category. Unidimensional adjective is a characteristic or property used to describe something or an individual according to the property it describes and, in (2e), describes the characteristics of being measurable and soft.

### *Data 3: Viva Perfect Look*

Four adjectives are found in the Viva perfect look ad above: ‘perfect,’ ‘advanced,’ ‘super’ and ‘botanical.’ Three adjectives can be categorized as aesthetic adjectives, i.e. perfect, advanced and super. Botanical, however, belongs to the category of environmental adjectives. The adjectives in the ad above can be seen in the following data.

- (3a) Get 10 benefits for your perfect look.
- (3b) Advanced Make-up and Care
- (3c) Super Botanical Extract

The empathic marker in the ad text above is the adjective ‘perfect,’ an adjective that is related to aesthetics or idea assessment. This adjective ‘perfect’ becomes the modifier for the noun ‘look.’

‘Advanced’ is an aesthetic adjective that can be categorized as an emphatic interpersonal metadiscourse marker, because it gives a persuasive meaning to the nouns it describes, namely make-up and care. The word ‘advanced’ in this phrase informs the viewers that the advertised product is the most up-to-date makeup and care among other products. In this data, the emphatic interpersonal metadiscourse marker is the adjective ‘super,’ which can be interpreted as having an excellent quality or level or being very large or most powerful. Based on its semantic classification of adjectives, the word ‘super’ is an aesthetic adjective and belongs to the category of evaluativity, as the word is used to entail a positive or negative attitude or to evaluate something from the speaker’s side

### *Data 4: Wardah Lightening Series*

There are five adjectives in the ad Wardah Lightening Series above, as follows.

- (4a) cleansing
- (4b) protecting
- (4c) lightening
- (4d) 7 active white complex
- (4e) Get healthier and brighter skin.

The words ‘cleansing,’ ‘protecting,’ and ‘lightening’ in (4a), (4b) and (4c) above, are adjectives in participle form, ending with ‘-ing’ or ‘-d/ed,’ thus becoming a verb or an adjective. In the above data, the participle form is an adjective owing to that it describes the noun ‘the series’ of the products in the ad above, indicating an active meaning. Therefore, the word ‘cleansing’ that modifies the noun ‘series’ has an active meaning, and hence the series can be interpreted as ‘to make (something) free of dirt, contamination or impurities. Likewise, the words ‘protecting’ and ‘lightening’ have active meanings.

The word ‘white,’ according to McNally (2011), belongs to the category of aesthetic adjectives which express an aesthetic assessment of something or someone. As an adjective in the form of color, the word ‘white’ belongs

to the group of measurability, i.e. an adjective defined by more than one criterion something or someone possesses. The word 'white' in this data is an embedded element contained by the additional ingredients of the cosmetics. 'Active white complex' is an active ingredient that is effective for brightening the skin tone by blocking UV rays and by preventing the formation of Melanocytes on the skin ([www.wardahcosmetics.com](http://www.wardahcosmetics.com)).

In (4e), there are two adjectives connected with the symbol. The word 'healthier' and 'brighter' are adjectives that indicate a degree of comparison to describe and modify a noun. This comparative form is used to declare that something or a person has more properties than others; increasing circumstances; or the nature or state of an object that is increasing. The words 'healthier' and 'brighter' are both adjectives of dimensionality with differences. 'Healthy' belongs in the category of multidimensional adjectives because 'healthy' is a state defined or represented by several factors a person or something possesses, while 'bright' is a unidimensional adjective because the state of being 'bright' can be measured using only one factor. 'Brighter skin' in this ad is clearly measurable, i.e. that the current tone of the skin is brighter than that previously; 'healthier skin,' however, cannot be measured by one condition. Healthy conditions can be measured by considering several aspects, such as skin colour, and it being free from diseases.

## Conclusion

Based on the data analysis above, it is evident that there is emerging new terminology that defines and classifies type of beauty as a social construct presented in the cosmetic product advertisements that use English in Indonesia. The advertising makers have used adjectives in their ads as a means of constructing the concept of beauty within the contemporary Indonesian context due to their persuasive meanings. These adjectives serve as emphatic personal metadiscourse markers in the advertising texts. The adjectives found in the data belong to several categories, i.e. of aesthetics, evaluativity, dimensionality (unidimensional and multidimensional) and measurability. These adjectives have helped advertisement makers construct the concept of green beauty, healthy beauty, modern beauty, religious beauty and aesthetic beauty.

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