

From Distribution to Interpersonal Functions: The Application of Mood Metaphors in Academic Discourse

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Abstract

Based on Halliday's mood metaphor theory (2014), this study investigated the distribution and interpersonal functions of mood metaphors in academic discourse. Through both AntConc and manual sorting, mood metaphors based on rank shift and class shift were retrieved in 60 research articles (RAs) randomly selected from *The Modern Language Journal*(MLJ) and *Language Learning*(LL). The results revealed that in the corpus (1) the rank shift mood metaphors(139 times) were more frequently used than class shift type (27 times) ; (2) Within rank shift type, objective projection (121 times) were more frequently applied than subjective ones (18 times); (3) Regarding class shift type, only interrogative mood metaphors (27 times) were employed. It was also found that the rank shift mood metaphors could increase objectivity, expand negotiability and manifest interpersonal assessment in academic discourse, while the class shift type demonstrated different functions of establishing textual coherence, enhancing interpersonal interactions and highlighting key information. It is expected that this study can help second language learners better comprehend and more effectively use mood metaphors in their academic readings and writings.

Keywords: Mood Metaphor; Academic Discourse; Distribution; Interpersonal Function

1. Introduction

It has widely been known that academic discourse is noted for its scientific objectivity, with transmitting the latest information to academic community as its main goal. The traditional view puts more emphasis on the impersonal features of academic discourse by ignoring its interactive interpersonal features (Zhang, 2005). In the past three decades, with the development of communicative theory, a large number of researchers have found that academic discourse actually contains plenty of interpersonal meanings (e.g. Myers, 1989; Swales, 1990; Hyland, 1998 & 2002; Hood, 2006; Zhang, 2010, etc.). With regard to conveying interpersonal meanings, Halliday (2004 & 2014) suggested that the interpersonal metaphors could play an important role, which consist of modality metaphor and mood metaphor. The previous researches indicate that the modality metaphor has been extensively investigated, while mood metaphor remains relatively less explored. Moreover, regarding researches on mood metaphor, although previous relevant findings have been exclusively concerned with mood metaphors' interpersonal functions in news articles(Gao, 2015; Shen, 2010; Zeng, 2007 & 2008; Wen, 2011), advertising discourse(Li, 2010), literary works(Chen & Huang, 2014; Huang, 2018), and colloquial conversation(Tian, 2011; Yang, 2017), little research attention has been given to the role of this metaphorical patterns in constructing interpersonal meanings in academic discourse. Therefore, this article aims to conduct a quantitative and qualitative study to investigate the distribution of mood metaphors together with their functions on the construction of interpersonal meanings in academic context.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Mood metaphor

According to Halliday and Matthiessen(2014), based on the ways of realization, mood metaphors can be divided into two broad categories: mood metaphor based on class shift and rank shift. Class shift is generated by the transformation of speech roles and commodity-exchanged. Rank shift is produced through the interpersonal projection, which leads to the transformation of orientations. The formation of different types of mood metaphors is illustrated in Figure 1.

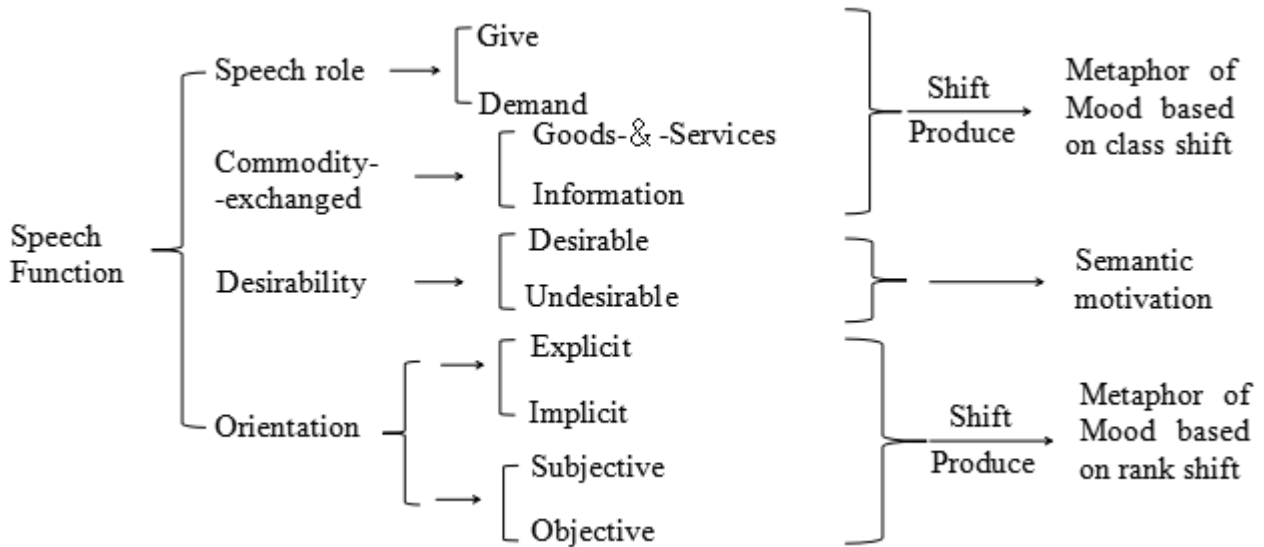


Figure 1: The formation of different types of mood metaphors (derived from Yang, 2006)

2.2 Mood metaphor based on class shift

“Classshift” refers to the transformation of semantic features between speech roles or communication-exchanged. The most fundamental types of speech role are just two: “give” and “command”(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:135). And the commodities being exchanged are either goods-&-services or information.“These two variables, when taken together, define the four primary speech functions of offer, command, statement and question” (ibid). The semantic system of SPEECH FUNCTION is realized by the grammatical system of MOOD[clause] ((Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:666).

Table 1: Speech functions and congruent mood realization

Speech role	Commodity-exchanged	Speech functions	Congruent mood realization
Give	Goods- & -Services	Offer	Declarativemood I want to give you this teapot. Imperativemood Please accept this teapot! Interrogative mood Shall I give you this teapot?
Demand		Command	Imperative mood Give me that teapot!
Give	Information	Statement	Declarative mood He's giving her the teapot
Demand		Question	Interrogative mood What is he giving her?

(Derived from Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014: 137)

As Table 1 shows, generally, declarative mood is used to express statements, interrogative mood illustrates questions, and the imperative mood shows command, while “offer” can be conveyed in several different moods. These general forms of speech functions are the “congruent forms”. However, “one kind of mood can reflect different speech functions, and one kind of speech function can be embodied in different moods”(Yang, 2006). This essentially involves the transfer from one domain of mood to another, which produces metaphor of mood. Table 2 shows the typical and metaphorical realizations of speech functions in mood types.

Table 2: Typical and metaphorical realizations of speech functions in mood types

Speech function mood	statement	question	command
declarative	I have never let you down	I wonder where you have been.	You should tell me the truth.
interrogative	Have I ever let you down?	Where have you been?	Could you tell me the truth?
imperative	Admit that I have never let you down!	Tell me where you have been!	Tell me the truth!

(Fan, 2000: 30)

Based on this table, metaphors of mood based on class shift can be divided into three categories:

- i. Interrogative mood metaphors
- ii. Imperative mood metaphors
- iii. Declarative mood metaphors

2.3 Mood metaphor based on rank shift

The transformation of semantic features among orientations often involves the shift of ranks, which is therefore called “rank shift”. “The metaphor of mood based on rank shift mainly refers to the explication of implicit speech functions which are either subjective or objective. Speech functions are always implicit, unless it is made explicit through interpersonal projection” (Yang, 2006).

Table 3: Typical realizations of rank shift mood metaphor

Rank shift mood metaphor	Typical forms
Subjective projection	I want , I urge , I implore , I promise , I + performative verbs ; I would advise you , may I ask you!we'd like ; can (may) I ask you!would you say! I wonder if , I tell you , I can assure you; you should , you must , you had better ; can you!could you!would you !you must believe , you must tell me , do you mean!
Objective projection	the act (authority) requires , staff (receiver) are encouraged , any notice of termination must , it is demanded that , it is important that , it is asked that , it is imperative that; they say , it is said that , it is rumored that , it is claimed that.

According to Halliday and Matthessien(2014: 698-704)’s discussion on the metaphors of mood, rank shift mood metaphor can be divided into following two categories:

- i. Mood metaphors involving subjective projection
- ii. Mood metaphors involving objective projection

3. Research method

3.1 Data collection

The corpus used in this study consists of 60 empirical RAs published from 2013 to 2018 in the field of applied linguistics, in which 30 RAs are randomly selected from MLJ and 30 are from LLJ. The RAs selected cover the topics of second language acquisition (36 RAs), language education (12 RAs), foreign language acquisition (7 RAs), bilingual education (3 RAs) and child language acquisition (2 RAs) (Table 4).

Table 4: Topics of 60 selected RAs

Topics	Numbers of RAs
second language acquisition	36
language education	12
foreign language acquisition	7
bilingual education	3
child language acquisition	2
Total	60

3.2 Research instruments

In terms of the identification of mood metaphor based on class shift, the current study follows three steps put forward by Fan (2000). The first step is to identify the mood of the target sentence. It would be useful to tell the mood of a sentence through sentence types because the sentence type is corresponding to the mood type in a sentence (Wu, 20). For instances, interrogative sentences are corresponding to interrogative mood, imperative sentences carry imperative mood, and declarative sentences express declarative mood. The second step is to identify the speech functions of the current sentence based on Halliday's desired responses for speech functions (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:137) (Table 5). The last step was to compare the mood type and speech function of a sentence so as to judge whether the target sentence is a congruent form or a metaphorical expression. The example below demonstrates the procedure of identifying a class shift mood metaphor,

(1) "What is it that distinguishes performance at the advanced level? I speculate that Larsen-Freeman and Cameron (2008) were right—the language learning environment is responsible for much of the learning that takes place." (RA NO. 4)

As above, the underlining part is an interrogative sentence with interrogative mood. Obviously, the sentence does not require readers to answer this question, rather, it offers the information in the following part. The desired response should be acknowledgment or contradiction to the information, thus, the speech function of the interrogative sentence is to give information, which is "statement". Finally, comparing the mood of the sentence (interrogative mood) to its speech function (statement), it is not a congruent realization, however, it is a interrogative mood metaphor projecting statement.

Table 5: Speech functions and responses

		Initiation	Response	
			Expected	Discretionary
Give	Goods- & -services	Offer Shall I give you this teapot?	Acceptance Yes, please, do!	Rejection No, thanks.
Demand		Command Give me that teapot!	Undertaking Here you are.	Refusal I won't.
Give	information	Statement He's giving her the teapot.	Acknowledgement Is he?	Contradiction No, he isn't.
Demand		Question What is he giving her?	Answer A teapot.	Disclaimer I don't know.

(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014:137)

As for rank shift type of mood metaphor, based on the examples in Table 3, AntConc 3.5.7 was first applied to retrieve all the patterns that are similar to metaphorical variants. For example, when searching for the metaphorical forms like “it is demanded that”, “it is important that”, “it is asked that”, “it is imperative that”, “it is claimed that” and etc., it would be useful to apply AntConc to search for the form of “it is...that”, which can include all the metaphorical expressions of this kind. Then, manual sorting was conducted to delete some expressions that do not belong to mood metaphor category. For example, the modality metaphor “it is possible that” could also be matched to the form of “it is...that”, which made it possible for AntConc to mistakenly regard it as a mood metaphor. Therefore, this metaphor-like expressions need to be manually deleted.

4. Distribution of mood metaphors in academic discourse

4.1 General Distribution of two mood metaphors

It is found that in all 60 research articles, mood metaphor based on class shift occurred 27 times and rank shift type appeared 139 times.

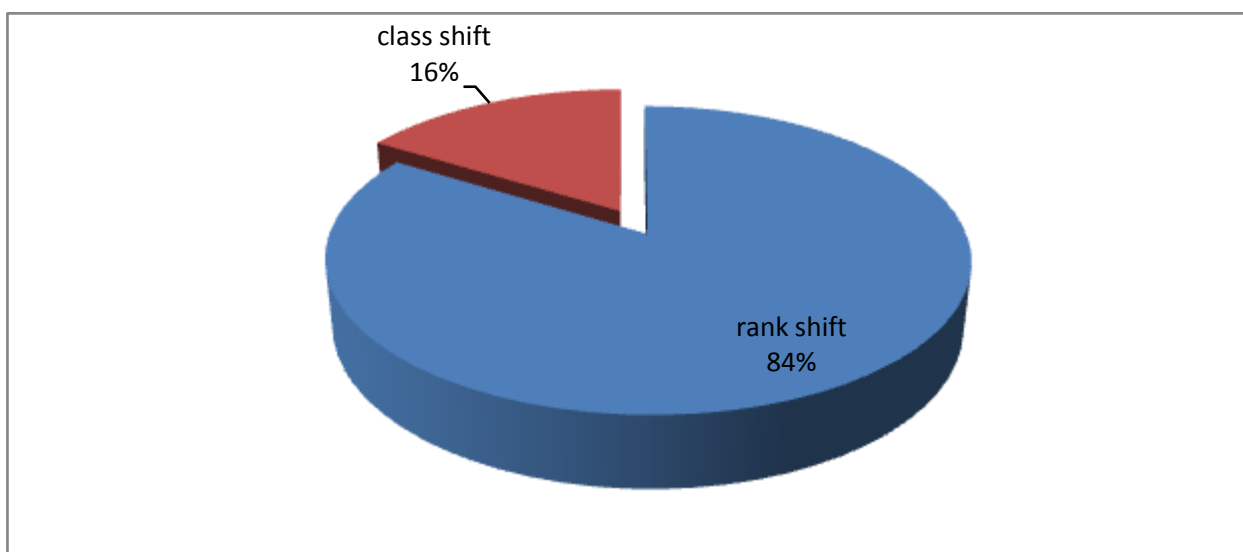


Figure 2: Distribution of mood metaphor in 60 RAs

Figure 2 reveals that metaphor of mood based on rank shift (84%) is employed much more frequently than class shift type (16%) in those 60 RAs. The reason for this distribution is associated with the features and academic purposes of academic genre.

It is widely acknowledged that the main purpose of research article is to display their scientific research results” (Pang & Chen, 2014), which limits the speech function of academic language in the case of “giving information,” without involving many other speech functions such as “giving goods-&-services,” “demanding goods-&-services,” and “demanding information.” Therefore, the shift among speech functions is not likely to happen in this type of writings, which directly lead to the small distribution of class shift mood metaphor in those 60 RAs.

Apart from presenting the results to the readers objectively, another important purpose of language in academic discourse is to persuade “readers to accept their viewpoint” (Hyland, 2000). To accomplish this communicative purpose, academic writers are apt to make their points of view explicit, objective, if it is necessary, subjective as well, so as to make their RAs more convincing. In other words, the shift between orientations (explicit, implicit, objective and subjective) is expected in RAs to convey the interpersonal meanings. Some instances are listed here for this statement.

(2) *The present study investigates the claim that the intensity of motivation is partly dependent on the learners’ capability to generate mental imagery. Specifically ... we sought to illuminate the relationship among learner characteristics related to sensory and imagery aspects, indices of the strength of the learners’ future L2 self-guides (ideal and ought-to L2 selves), and learning achievement.* (RA. NO. 14)

The pattern “*we sought to*” in the example (2) is a mood metaphor involving subjective projection since it uses “we” as project subject. The mood metaphor here makes the proposal more explicit, which may contribute to highlighting their research focus. Besides, since the projective subject is “we,” the author of this sentence tends to show that “we” are responsible to this proposal, which can enhance the reliability of the RA.

(3) *It is claimed that learners can only repeat structures that they have acquired and that SR tasks thus give a window into the underlying linguistic competence of the learner (e.g., Wu & Ortega, 2013).* (RA.NO. 30)

On the contrary to the subjective projection, the expression “*It is claimed that*” in example (3) is a mood metaphor with objective projection for its projective subject is a “non-interactant”—“it”. In this way, the authors can use other’s statement to express their own viewpoints, which enables to improve the objectiveness and credibility of RAs.

4.2 Detailed distribution of mood metaphor based on class shift

Table 6: Frequencies of three mood metaphors based on class shift in 60 RAs

Mood metaphors based on class shift	Frequency
Interrogative mood metaphors	27
Declarative mood metaphors	0
Imperative mood metaphors	0
Total	27

According to Table 6, the frequencies of three mood metaphors based on class shift in 60 RAs can be observed. It shows that there are 27 interrogative metaphors in the RAs, while declarative mood metaphor (0 time) and imperative mood metaphor (0 time) do not occur. These results suggest that the majority of authors in 60 RAs only employed interrogative mood metaphors in their academic writings.

As discussed before, the speech function of RAs is mainly “giving information,” without “giving goods-&-services,” “demanding goods-&-services,” and “demanding information.” Therefore, only the “interrogative mood metaphor projecting statement” and “imperative mood metaphor projecting statement” can be chosen. In addition, considering the politeness and objectiveness of RAs, imperative mood metaphor is not appropriate to appear in RAs. Consequently, only the “interrogative mood projecting statement” occurs in those 60 RAs, which uses questions to express statements.

4.3 Detailed distribution of mood metaphor based on rank shift

There are 18 mood metaphors involving subjective projection and 121 mood metaphors involving objective projection in 60 RAs.

As for the metaphor of mood involving subjective projection, the SUBJECT PERSON is ‘interactant’ rather than ‘non-interactant’; typically the Subject is either the speaker (I) or the addressee (you). Given one of the characteristic of academic writings is objectiveness, the addresser “I” or the addressee “you” therefore are not widely employed in the RAs. Thus, metaphors of mood involving subjective projection are relatively rare in the RAs.

In the case of mood metaphor involving objective projection, the Subject is non-interactant, and this can be the symbol of objective projection. “In the realm of propositions, forms such as ‘it is said that’, ‘it is rumoured that’ and “they say” serve as assessments of the nature of the evidence for a proposition”(Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014: 703). Typical explicitly objective wordings are “it is important that,” “it should be noted that” etc. “They are neutralized as facts” (ibid), which can improve the objectivity and credibility. In this sense, “mood metaphor involving objective projection often occurs in official documents, news reports or academic papers”(Yang, 2006).

5. Functions of mood metaphors in academic discourse

5.1 Functions of mood metaphor based on class shift

5.1.1 Establishing textual coherence

Hou (2006) suggested that the appropriate use of metaphorical mood or modality can form a special type of cohesion and coherence in the text. For instance,

(4) *One could object that learners might experience more or less FLA/FLCA depending on the language or even the FL teacher. In other words, how stable is FLA/FLCA across different target languages? Saito et al. (1999) compared FLCA and Foreign Language Reading Anxiety (FLRA) scores from 383 American first-semester students in French, Japanese, and Russian and discovered non-significant differences for FLCA between the groups.*(RA.NO. 14)

In the example (4), the question is not to demand information, rather, it is to give information.

Thus, it is an interrogative mood metaphor. In this metaphorical expression, “FLA/FLCA” directly matches the “FLA/FLCA” in the former sentence, which makes the two sentences connected. Besides, the following part of the mood metaphor is the answer towards the question, and it also mentioned FLA and FLCA, which forms a semantic link as well as lexical cohesion between those two sentences.

5.1.2 Enhancing interpersonal interactions

Interrogative mood metaphor “is similar to rhetorical question”(Yang, 2006), which refer to the pattern that put forward a question and answer it by oneself. The motivation of applying this linguistic variant is to arouse reader’s attention, for example:

(5)Can recent second language (L2) exposure affect what we judge to be similar events? Using a priming paradigm, we manipulated whether native Swedish adult learners of L2 Spanish were primed to use path or manner during L2 descriptions of scenes depicting caused motion events (encoding phase).(RA.NO.28)

This example is the abstract section of a research article. The writer of this article put forward a question at the beginning of his writing, which may attract readers’ attention or interest to this question and leave suspense for readers to think about it. In this way, the writer tends to interact with his readers, and invite them to participate into the discussion of the topic in the research.

5.1.3 Highlighting key information

Interrogative mood metaphor is the variant form of declarative sentence. And it ends with question mark, which is eye-catching. In this sense, this metaphorical mood form can often attract readers’ attention. And it should be noted that academic writers tends to employ this metaphorical structure when they intend to put forward important information that they want to emphasize. Therefore, this interrogative metaphor owns the function of manifesting key information in text, which can to some extent increase the reading effectiveness of readers. For example:

(6) There is one final issue to address concerning sensory preferences: While it may be logical to include the assessment of the learners’ visual style in the study of vision, why would auditory style be relevant in this respect? We have seen in the introduction that mental images can involve various forms of perception (visual, auditory, olfactory, or tactile) and, indeed, experiencing ourselves as an agent in a future situation—which is what future self-guides are about—does logically encompass various sensual dimensions of the experience(cf. Erikson, 2007). (RA. NO.13)

The author of this article applies the underlining interrogative sentence to address the “final issue” of his research topic, which provides readers with the core of his research. In this way, readers can better understand the main idea of the article.

5.2 Functions of mood metaphor based on rank shift

5.2.1 Increasing objectivity

In the case of propositions, objective projection “serves as a device enabling speakers to distance themselves from the proposition”(Halliday&Matthiessen, 2014: 703), for instance:

(7) *Therefore, it is claimed that Mandarin L2 English learners may have less difficulty mapping L2 syntactic form to pragmatic function in their L2 narrative production than their Korean counterparts, as a possible consequence of positive transfer from their native language.* (RA.NO.48)

In this example, through the application of a metaphorical form-- “it is claimed that”, “the line between explicitly objective propositions and modal assessment seems to disappear”(ibid). That is to say, the objective projecting subject makes the writer’s viewpoint as objective as a truth. In this sense, the metaphorical pattern contributes to enhance the objectivity in the text.

In the realm of proposal, when using mood metaphor indicating objective projection, “the line between an explicitly objective command and an explicit modulation seems to disappear: as they are ‘experientialized’, they are neutralized as facts” (ibid). For example:

(8) *It is also important to remember that the panel spoke about languages in general, whereas the FL lessons focused on each individual language (French, German, or Spanish).* (RA.NO.15)

In the above sentence, the projecting subject is “it”, a “non-interactant”. In this way, the author’s voice is hidden behind the proposal, which can therefore make the statement objective.

5.2.2 Expanding negotiability

“Metaphors of mood expand the interpersonal resources for negotiation, whether the negotiation involves consensus or conflict”(ibid). For example,

(9) *Considering this, it would be wise to treat the descriptive generalization of the Aspect Hypothesis as a “universal tendency,” not as an “absolute universal”* (RA.NO.24)

As above, the metaphorical expression “it would be wise to” indicates the writer’s suggestion for further research. The projecting subject “it” improves the objectivity of the proposal, which makes the writer stand far away from it. In this way, it will decrease the readers’ burden to evaluate this proposal. It should also be noted that this kind of mood metaphor always containing the modal words, such as the word “would” in this sentence, which leave the readers more space to negotiate.

5.2.3 Manifesting interpersonal assessment

The semantic domain of mood “is extended through grammatical metaphor to include explicit indications of subjective and objective orientation: a modal proposition or proposal is realized, as if it was a projection sequence, by a nexus of two clauses, or as if it was a fact embedded as a Carrier in a relational clause with a modal Attribute, rather than by a single clause” (Halliday&Matthiessen, 2014: 698). That is to say, through rank shift, the congruent wording is upgraded from a single clause to a relational clause. In this way, the interpersonal assessment can be explicit, for instance:

(10) *Although neither eye tracking nor thinking aloud were reactive for comprehension in this study, it is important to bear in mind that participants in all three groups read double-spaced, 18-point text. Such a layout is standard in eye-tracking research to ensure measurement accuracy; to make the three conditions comparable, we used the same layout for the other groups.* (RA.NO.18)

In this example, the metaphorical variant “it is important to” is upgraded from the congruent form “...is important”. When comparing these two patterns, it seems that the former one can manifest the

significance of a proposal, while this importance is apt to be buried in the latter form. Thus, the mood metaphor can make the interpersonal assessment explicit.

6. Conclusion

Situated in academic context, the current study investigated the distribution and interpersonal functions of mood metaphors in RAs. The statistic results show that the rank shift mood metaphors (139 times) were relatively more frequent employed in the academic discourse than class shift type (27 times). Regarding class shift type, only interrogative mood metaphors (27 times) occur in the corpus. For rank shift type, objective projection ones (121 times) were more frequently used than subjective projection (18 times). This distribution is associated with different features of mood metaphors and communicative purposes of academic writings. Besides, the study also reveals the interpersonal functions of these two mood metaphors in academic discourse. Rank shift mood metaphor help increase objectivity, expand negotiability and manifest interpersonal assessment in RAs, and class shift type contributes to establishing textual coherence enhancing interpersonal interactions highlighting key information. These results indicate that although the mood metaphors are not widely applied in academic RAs, they still have great contributions in terms of constructing interpersonal meanings in academic discourse. That is to say, with regard to the application of mood metaphors, what really matters is not quantity but quality (appropriateness). The research findings of this study may help second language learners better understand and more correctly use mood metaphor in their academic readings and writings to some extent.

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