

An Analysis of Metadiscourse Markers in Tourists' Comments: Hedges and Boosters Used in Tourists' Comments on Popular Travel Destinations in Japan

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Abstract

Metadiscourse markers are used as organizational signals which indicate that readers follow dialogues and build relationships with writers when reading texts (Hyland, 2005a). These markers have been widely investigated in academic research; however, studies in Japanese are still limited. Therefore, this study illustrates the use of hedges and boosters in interactional resources in metadiscourse markers in tourists' comments on two top Japanese tourist destinations between English and Japanese writers. The data taken from the TripAdvisor website consist of three groups of tourists from the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan. When visiting famous sightseeing places, tourists hope to have the best experience, and their advice and suggestions can be helpful. Tourists freely express their thoughts and write about their positive and negative experiences during trips. Hedges are used to soften their claims, and boosters are used to emphasise them more explicitly in tourists' comments. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted on 180 tourists' comments from the three groups in English and Japanese to reveal language and cultural similarities and differences in the use of hedges and boosters. The analysis focused not only on the discrepancies in the usage of hedges and boosters in tourists' comments between English and Japanese but also on their characteristics, including the use of language and sentence forms. The use of hedges and boosters correlates with the characteristics of tourists' comments, such as expressing their experiences and providing advice and information. Thus, the findings of this study can provide pedagogical suggestions for Japanese learners of English to write travel comments and advice using hedges and boosters more effectively when posting comments in English.

Keywords: tourism discourse, metadiscourse markers, hedges, boosters, Japanese comments

1. Introduction

Metadiscourse markers are used to indicate organizational signals and writers' intentions in spoken and written discourse. They are used to indicate speakers' or writers' attitudes and the flow of arguments. Hyland (2005a, p. 49) categorised metadiscourse markers into two major types of resources: interactive and interactional. Interactive resources include organizational markers such as transitions (e.g. *in addition, but, and*), frame makers (e.g. *finally, to conclude*), endophoric markers (e.g. *see Figure X, in section Y*), evidentials (e.g. *according to Z, X states*), and code glosses (e.g. *such as, in other words*), whereas interactional resources include hedges (e.g. *might, perhaps, about*), boosters (e.g. *in fact, definitely, it is clear that*), attitude markers (e.g. *unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly*), self-mentions (e.g. *I, we, our*), and engagement markers (e.g. *consider, note, you can see that*). These markers are used to guide and involve readers through the text regarding a written interaction (Hyland, 2005a, p. 49). Hedges and boosters are also categorised as intensifiers which consist of amplifiers used for upward scaling and downtoners used for the lowering effect (Quirk, 1980, p. 589).

Metadiscourse markers in written text have been widely studied. Since metadiscourse markers are used to negotiate writers' claims with readers (Hyland, 2005a), hedges and boosters have been widely analysed in academic research articles across different fields, including hard and soft science disciplines, cross-cultural analysis with different languages, and between native English writers and non-native L2 writers. For example, in research articles, writers tend to use hedges to suggest tentative claims, considering a wider audience, and/or use boosters to confidently state explicit claims. They are sometimes used differently by writers across languages and cultures, and between native and non-native writers in research articles written in English. Comparative studies have been conducted in Chinese (Hu & Cao, 2011), Persian (Samaie et al., 2014), Spanish (Lee & Casal, 2014), and Japanese (Fujimura-Wilson, 2019, 2020, 2023). L1 and L2 English writers using boosters and hedges have been examined by Hyland (2000), Hinkel (2005), and Kim and Lim (2015).

Moreover, hedges and boosters have been analysed in different types of texts, such as news articles, particularly in English. Yazdani et al. (2014)

analysed hedges and boosters on 50 front pages of news articles. Comparative studies of metadiscourse markers between English and Persian newspaper articles have also been conducted (Biria & Zavari, 2014; Farnia & Mohammadi, 2018). Fuertes-Oliveros et al. (2001) examined the metadiscourse markers in slogans and headlines in advertisements. Social media platforms such as blogs and X (formerly Twitter) in English (Biri, 2021; Lusón, 2023; Malavasi, 2021; Turiman & Joharry, 2023) and Italian (Diani, 2023) have also recently been analysed. Metadiscourse markers in English on online travel blogs (Huang et al., 2020) and forums (Jiménez, 2013) have also been examined.

Nevertheless, only a few studies of metadiscourse markers regarding Japanese writers using Japanese have been conducted on travel blogs on the Internet. Therefore, this study examines two metadiscourse markers, hedges and boosters, in travel comments on two famous Japanese tourism destinations in Kyoto in 2024 and conducts a comparative study among tourists from the U.S., the U.K., and Japan.

This study first discusses the theoretical background of metadiscourse markers in different types of texts, including academic research articles, social media (e.g. blogs and X), and cross-cultural studies. Previous studies on travel discourse, including the characteristics of travel comments, are also discussed. The research methods and data used in this study are then explained. The results section discusses the way in which tourists from the U.S., the U.K., and Japan use hedges and boosters in their travel comments and reveals their characteristics to see how these markers are effectively used to engage readers in their comments. Moreover, both similarities and differences regarding writers' language and sociolinguistic backgrounds in the use of hedges and boosters are discussed to confirm the rhetorical differences between English and Japanese, which may help Japanese learners of English write their posted comments in English.

2. Use of hedges and boosters in different types of texts, including tourism discourse and language used in tourism

2.1 Hedges and boosters used in Academic research articles

Hedges and boosters are interactional metadiscourse markers which have been studied extensively in academic research articles. Interactional

metadiscourse markers are used to show writers' intentions and attitudes. For example, hedges are used to soften writers' claims and reduce the explicitness of their comments, which protects the writer from criticism (Hyland, 2005a). In contrast, boosters are used to emphasise comments, and writers use them to explicitly claim their opinions, which makes narrower alternatives in their claims (Hyland, 2005a). These markers are used to negotiate the writers' opinions and claims with readers in discussions.

In pragmatics, these markers are used differently across various languages and cultures. Comparative studies have been conducted on hedges and boosters in different languages. For example, Hu and Cao (2011) examined them in 649 abstracts from eight journals of applied linguistics in both Chinese and English and found that Chinese writers used fewer hedges and boosters than native English writers, suggesting that Chinese and native English writers understand differently the way in which authors argue in writing. Chinese writers tended to consider the necessity of a tone of certainty and use more explicit sentences in their claims. Moreover, Lee and Casal (2014) analysed hedges and boosters in 200 master's theses on engineering by both English and Spanish students and found that English students used them more frequently than Spanish students. They claimed that the ways of organising arguments and interacting with readers were culturally different. Samaie et al. (2014) also revealed that native English writers used hedges twice as frequently as Persian writers in a comparative study of 40 research articles in English and Persian, and that Persian writers used a limited variety of hedges. In the comparative studies of hedges in research articles between native English and Japanese writers conducted by Fujimura-Wilson (2023), similar results revealed that Japanese writers used hedges less frequently than native English writers in 30 soft science disciplines articles including education, business, and linguistics, written in English and Japanese. In articles written in Japanese, Japanese writers used only one-third as many hedges as native English writers, suggesting that they tended to adopt a more explicit tone in their argumentation and might place less emphasis on building a relationship with readers than native English writers (Fujimura-Wilson, 2023). In articles written in English, the English hedges used by Japanese writers were also fewer than those used by native English writers (Fujimura-

Wilson, 2023). A similar result was revealed in a study of students' essays in English between native and non-native English students in Hong Kong (Hyland, 2000), suggesting that the acquisition of metadiscourse markers for non-native writers was quite difficult.

In research articles and academic writing, a tone of explicitness using fewer hedges by Asian writers seems to be common. Kim and Lim (2015) stated that L2 learners of English found it difficult to be aware of the sociocultural rules of pragmatics in English. Moreover, in terms of L2 English learners using hedges, Hinkel (2005) explained that L2 learners tended to use casual spoken language in writing and had not been much exposed to formal language in their use.

2.2 Studies of metadiscourse markers in social media

More recently, metadiscourse markers have been analysed on social media, such as blogs and X (whose name changed from Twitter in 2023). Studies tend to analyse the organization of comments and have often focused on particular metadiscourse markers, including the use of personal pronouns. For example, Malavasi (2021) compared metadiscursive clusters between randomly selected 10 research articles and 100 blog posts by Paul Krugman, a scholar, economist, and 2008 Nobel Prize winner. While the writers of the research articles avoided casual and personal expressions, blog posts were often written in spoken language, and Krugman frequently used personal pronouns (e.g. *I, we, you*), hedges such as *it seems to me, I guess, kind of,* and *it's possible*, and boosters such as *really* in interactional metadiscourse markers. Biri (2021, p. 139) examined posted data on the topics of 'political online discourse: alt-right, red pill, resist, and feminism' on social media platforms such as Twitter, Tumblr, and Reddit from November 2018 to February 2019 to reveal how written comments are organised in blogs. Personal pronouns, such as self-mention (e.g. *I, we*), audience mention (e.g. *you, ya*), and collective mention (e.g. *we, our, let's*) were frequently used, showing that these pronouns are used to engage with other users and indicate participants' turns in interaction. Lusón (2023) analysed 300 tweets from Twitter accounts of three scientific organisations in relation to the topics of climate change and wildlife. Posts were used to provide information (60.7%)

and showed interactions (9.3%) and actions (30%) (p. 171). The ways in which the tweets communicate with readers varied, and various interactional metadiscourse markers such as hedges (e.g. *could*, *suggest*) and engagement markers (e.g. *we*, *us*) were used in the tweets as well as emojis, directives (imperative sentences), question forms, and hashtags (#).

In the analysis of travel discourse, Huang et al. (2020) examined 30 travel blogs taken from the website of 'Trip and Travel Blog' with interactional metadiscourse markers in Hyland's (2005a, 2005b) taxonomy. Discourse markers indicating writers' stance and engagement with readers were analysed, and it was found that markers for writers' stance were used more frequently than markers for engagement with readers. In the results, personal pronouns such as *you*, *I*, and *we* and boosters showing the writer's stance were frequently used, suggesting that travel logs in their study were more writer-oriented, and the writers tended to express their stance and attitudes in expressing their travel experiences while trying to interact with readers. Jiménez (2014) analysed over 180 threads of conversation in the traveller forum on TripAdvisor to reveal writers' stance and engagement with others, finding that the participants interacted with each other with metadiscourse markers, such as self-mentions and hedges, to express both positive and negative opinions, advice, and evaluations of their trips. Self-mentions using personal pronouns, such as *I* and *you* were most frequently used to manage authority and explain experiences in the forum, followed by hedges when suggesting writers' ideas in politeness.

Moreover, cross-cultural studies of metadiscourse markers in travel discourse have been conducted. Sixty travel blogs commenting on several destinations in Italy, including Rome, Naples, Milan, Venice, and Florence, were cross-culturally analysed by Diani (2023) between American and Italian tourists. In their study, self-mentions of first-person pronouns, including *I*, *my*, and *me*, and second-person pronouns, including *you* and *your*, were mainly examined, and these markers tended to be used more frequently by American writers than Italian writers. Although Italian writers used first-person pronouns frequently (approximately 84% of American writers), they used second-person pronouns *you* and *your* much less frequently than American writers (only 61% of American writers). In written travel comments, directives

were sometimes used as engagement markers towards readers, and suggesting advice using *I suggest you*, *I recommend*, *suggerisco (I suggest you)*, and *vi consiglio (I recommend, I advise)* and strong suggestions using modal verbs *must* and *should*, the Italian noun *obbligo (obligation)*, and the verb *dovere (have to, must, duty)* were also observed. Phrases, including boosters such as *I highly suggest*, *you simply must*, and *you should know* tended to be used by American writers.

A comparative study of Spanish and English interactional metadiscourse markers used in websites and brochures of touristic services and products was conducted by Suau-Jeménez and Dolón-Herrero (2007). In English texts, engagement markers such as *you* and directives were most frequently used, and self-mentions such as *we* and *our* were also often used. However, in Spanish texts, boosters such as *magnificent* and *excellent* were most frequently used, suggesting that Spanish writers tended to use adjectives and adverbs indicating explicit positive tones more often than English writers. Therefore, they found that hedges were used more frequently in English than in Spanish texts.

2.3 Language used in tourism discourse

Tourism discourse has been analysed for marketing purposes in the tourism business. Personal pronouns and imperative (directive) forms are often used in travel discourse. When Pratiwi et al. (2019) examined accommodation advertisements published in Bali tourism magazines in English, they revealed some characteristics of tourism advertisements such as language choices and sentence forms. For example, personal pronouns such as *we* and *you* and verbs such as *enjoy*, *stay*, *come*, and *experience* were often used, and declaratives, imperatives, interrogatives, and exclamatory sentences were also frequently used (Pratiwi et al., 2019). Moreover, in the analysis of the threads of conversation in the traveller forum on TripAdvisor by Jiménez (2014), reader pronouns and directives were the most frequently used as engagement markers towards readers (97.3%). In terms of word choice, positive adjectives such as *perfect*, *warm*, *quiet*, *exciting*, and *delicious* were also often used on tourism websites (Teodorescu, 2014). Adjectives for availability (e.g. *available*), newness (e.g. *new*, *modern*), extraordinariness (e.g.

free, special), and ownness (e.g. *private*) were often used for expressions, and superlatives (e.g. *the best, the finest*) were also frequently used in the British hotel websites (Pierini, 2009).

Metaphors tend to be used to attract tourists, which helps to create particular effects (Pratiwi et al., 2019, p. 49) and make customers see the product from a different perspective (Palmer and Lundberg, 1995). Djafarova (2017, p. 38) stated that the metaphors used in tourism provide readers with enjoyable pictures and may offer new, different concepts from what they already have. For example, the metaphor in the advertisement of the hotels in Bali provided impressions of warm and heavenly places for the hotels, such as *Warm sunshine kisses your face ...*, and *Heaven in the heart Kuta*. (Pratiwi et al., 2019, p. 49).

Moreover, in an analysis of tourists' comments on Miyajima in Japan, tourists' comments in English used second-person pronouns *you*, imperatives, declaratives using the modal verb *should*, and conditional forms using *if* and *would* to give advice to readers (Fujimura-Wilson, 2021). Tourists' comments in Japanese also used imperatives and declaratives (e.g. *kudasai* (please do/don't), *youchuu* (be careful, attention needed), *hitsuyou desu* (need)) to give advice; however, Japanese writers tended to choose softer expressions (e.g. *omoimasu* (think), *osusume shimasu* (recommend)) in their comments (Fujimura-Wilson, 2021).

3. Research data and method

This study illustrates how two metadiscourse markers, hedges and boosters, are used in tourists' comments to determine the ways in which these markers are effectively used. The data for this study were retrieved from the tourism website TripAdvisor, which provides various information related to travel and destinations, including sightseeing places, restaurants, and accommodations. On the website, the page 'About Tripadvisor' explains that 'Tripadvisor's website and app provide reviews and advice on where to stay, what to do and where to eat based on guidance from those who have been there before' (Tripadvisor, 2025). Anyone can freely post and rate their visit and experiences of their trip, and more than one billion reviews and contributions have been posted on the website (Tripadvisor, 2025).

Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine and Kinkaku-ji Temple were the top two sightseeing destinations in Japan in 2024 and 2025 in the TripAdvisor website. Both the shrine and the temple are located in Kyoto Prefecture. Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine is a Shinto shrine situated at the head of approximately 30,000 inari-jinja shrines (*O-inari-san*) throughout Japan, which enshrines harvests, business prosperity, and the safety of homes and families. The shrine was built in 711 on Inari Mountain in southern Kyoto (Fushimi Inari Taisha, n.d.). Approximately ten thousand red *torii* gates stand on the mountain route in the shrine, and visitors worldwide have come to see this iconic site (Fushimi Inari Taisha, n.d.).

Kinkaku-ji Temple is a Buddhist temple of the Rinzai School of Zen Buddhism and the headquarters of the Shokoku-ji branch (*Rinzai-shu, Shokoku-ji-ha*). It was built in 1398 by Yoshimitsu Ashikaga, the third general (*shogun*) in the Muromachi era (Kinkaku-ji, n.d.). Kinkaku-ji Temple is famous for its golden pavilion built in Rokuon-ji Temple in the northwest of Kyoto City. This temple was designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994 (Kinkaku-ji, n.d.). Visitors come to see the three-story reliquary hall covered with gold, located next to a large pond in the garden of the temple.

Data on tourists' comments on TripAdvisor's website were collected in December 2024. The dataset from the two sightseeing places in Kyoto comprised the three groups of tourists from the U.S., the U.K., and Japan. Thirty comments were collected from each place in the three groups, and a total of 180 comments were analysed. Regarding Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, the comments of tourists from the U.S. were posted from November 2023 to November 2024, comments from the U.K. were posted from August 2023 to November 2024, and comments from Japan were posted from March 2023 to October 2024. Regarding Kinkaku-ji Temple, the comments of tourists from the U.S. were posted from May 2023 to November 2024, those from the U.K. were posted from April 2023 to November 2024, and those from Japan were posted from February 2022 to November 2024. U.S. and U.K. tourists wrote their comments in English, while Japanese tourists wrote their comments in Japanese.

Several taxonomies of hedges and boosters were used to analyse the data. First, to analyse the English data, Hyland's definitions of hedges and

boosters and their taxonomy were used in English data (Hyland, 2005a). Both hedges and boosters are parts of the interactional metadiscourse used to involve readers and control the propositional information of writers' claims (Hyland, 2005a, p. 52). Writers use hedges to withhold full commitment to their claims by stating their opinions, rather than absolute facts. By contrast, they use boosters to narrow their alternatives and express their claims with a high degree of certainty. Boosters are amplifiers in intensifiers which 'indicate a point on an abstractly conceived intensity scale' (Quirk, 1985, p. 589). Hyland (2005a, p. 53) states that 'boosters emphasize certainty and construct rapport by making involvement with the topic and solidarity with an audience'. In addition, this study used Holmes's (1982, 1988) taxonomy of epistemic modality to express doubt and certainty, and in terms of adverbial forms, used some of Ifantidou-Trouki's (1993) and Ifantidou's (2005) adverbial hedges and boosters. The hedges and boosters used for positive and negative politeness in business letters in the study conducted by Vergaro (2002) were also used for the analysis. Additionally, in the Japanese data, Fujimura-Wilson's (2023) taxonomy of Japanese hedges was used to analyse the Japanese data of hedges.

MAXQDA software was used to code and count the number of hedges and boosters, and both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted. Additionally, KH Coder,¹ developed by Professor Higuchi for text-mining studies (Higuchi, 2016), was used to count sentences and words. After the quantitative analysis, words used for hedges and boosters were qualitatively analysed in the context of word classes, including verbs, modal verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. The corpus of tourists from the U.S. comprised 771 sentences and 6,270 words, those from the U.K. comprised 694 sentences and 5,776 words, and those from Japan comprised 383 sentences and 7,132 words.

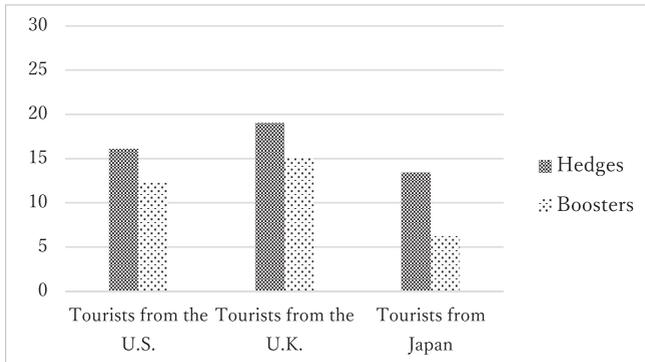
4. Results

4.1 Number of hedges and boosters used in the tourists' comments

The results of the present study revealed that hedges were generally used more frequently than boosters among the three groups (see Figure 1). Tourists from the U.S. used 101 hedges (16.1 hedges per 1,000 words), those from the U.K. used 110 hedges (19.0 hedges per 1,000 words), and those from

Japan used 96 hedges (13.5 hedges per 1,000 words). However, tourists from the U.S. used 77 boosters (12.3 boosters per 1,000 words), those from the U.K. used 87 boosters (15.1 boosters per 1,000 words), and those from Japan used 45 boosters (6.3 boosters per 1,000 words), which was significantly fewer than those who wrote comments in English. Both hedges and boosters were used more frequently in English comments than in Japanese ones. In the cross-cultural analysis of the three countries, tourists from the U.K. used both hedges and boosters most frequently, followed by those from the U.S. and Japan.

Figure 1. *Number of hedges and boosters used in the comments of the three groups (per 1,000 words)*



In the comparison of different text types, the use of hedges differed between tourists' comments and academic research papers. With reference to a previous study by Fujimura-Wilson (2023), writers of academic research articles used more hedges than tourists' comments. In a study of hedges used in soft science disciplines, including linguistics, education, and economics and business, native English writers used 25.8 English hedges per 1,000 words, while Japanese writers used 8.7 Japanese hedges per 1,000 words in their articles (Fujimura-Wilson, 2023). This difference between text genres might suggest that writing tourists' comments is similar to writing in casual spoken language. In English, writers of tourists' comments can express themselves more freely, while those writing academic research articles consider softening

their claims and relationships with readers more carefully and may use more hedges because they are aware of protecting themselves from criticism by other researchers. In Japanese, writers tended to express themselves more politely in tourists' comments, while those writing academic articles tended to express themselves more directly and explicitly in their research articles.

4.2 The use of hedges in the tourists' comments

The results confirmed that hedges are important markers of informal and casually written texts. In comments about Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine and Kinkaku-ji Temple in Japan, tourists in the three groups used a certain number of hedges and slight differences were confirmed among the three groups (see Figure 1). Tourists from the U.K. used hedges most frequently, followed by tourists from the U.S. and Japan.

The writers used hedges to explain their experiences and comments on the places they visited. Table 1 shows the frequent hedges used in tourists' comments among the three groups. In the English comments, modal verbs (e.g. *can*, *will*, *would*), verbs (e.g. *feel*, *indicate*), adjectives (e.g. *likely*), and adverbs (e.g. *about*, *quite*) were often used. Similar to the English data, modal verbs (e.g. *deshou*, *darou* (will, would)), verbs and potential verbs (e.g. *kanji*, *kanji desu* (seem, feel), *dekiru* (can), *mieru* (can see)), adjectives (e.g. *sukoshi* (a few, a little)), and adverbs (e.g. *yaku* (about, approximately), *kanari* (pretty)) were used in the Japanese tourists' comments.

Table 1. *Frequent hedges used in the tourists' comments among the three groups*

	Tourists from the U.S.	Tourists from the U.K.	Tourists from Japan
1	around	around	<i>yaku</i> (about, approximately)
2	can	can	<i>kanji</i> , <i>kanji desu</i> (seem, feel)
3	quite	would	<i>dekiru</i> (can)
4	will feel, felt	quite	<i>you</i> , <i>youna</i> (like, seem) <i>kana</i> (maybe)
5	would about	feel, felt	<i>deshou</i> , <i>darou</i> (will, would) <i>kurai</i> , <i>gurai</i> (about) <i>kanari</i> (pretty) <i>nado</i> (and so on)

First, among the three groups in this study, adverbs were the most frequently used, followed by modal and lexical verbs. In their comments, tourists often provided information about places and the length of time spent there, which can be useful for readers. The adverbs *around* and *about* were sometimes used to indicate an area and suggest an approximate time for visiting. Channell (1994, p. 45) suggests that *about* and *around* are used to affect on the meaning of an approximation. For example, in Example 1, the tourist explained that they walked *around* the garden at Kinkaku-ji Temple, which they found enjoyable. The adverb *around* indicates 'moving in or near a place, often, without a clear direction, purpose, or order' (Cambridge dictionary, n.d.). In Example 2, the writer estimated the length they stayed there using the adverb *about*. A round number indicates a relevant interval (Channell, 1994, p. 71). These hedges, called 'attribute hedges', are used to reduce intensity and explicitness (Hyland, 1998). They are also called downtoners as they help 'weaken the force of an attribute' (Hyland, 1998, p. 165). Speakers use approximate adverbs to avoid taking full responsibility for what they have said (Channell, 1994, pp. 71-89). In Examples 2 and 4, the speakers only indicated or suggested an approximate time for visitors to look around the places and let the readers choose how long they needed to explore them.

Similar to the comments written in English, the Japanese comments also sometimes used the adverbs *yaku* (about, approximately) and *kurai, gurai* (about, approximately) to explain numerical length and amount. In Examples 3 and 4, these Japanese adverbs were used to explain how long visitors actually spent and to suggest visitors' length of time for looking around Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine.

- (1) '... but the walk around the gardens was lovely'. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)
- (2) 'I was only here for about 20-30 minutes ...' (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)
- (3) '*Inari-yama no ichi no mine made itte, gururito mawatte yaku 2 jikan jaku kakarimashita*'. ([I] went as far as the first peak on Inari Mountain, and it took me about under two hours to walk around.) (Fushimi Inari-

taisha Temple, a Japanese tourist)

- (4) ‘... , *yukkuri to 2 jikan kurai mite mawaru no ga osusume desu*. (... , [I] recommend that you spend about two hours to slowly look around.) (Fushimi Inari-taisha Temple, a Japanese tourist)
- (5) ‘... it was quite crowded’. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)

Downtoners are used to ‘have a lowering effect on the force of the verb or predication which can be divided into four groups, such as approximators, compromisers, diminishers, and minimizers’ (Quirk, 1985, p. 597). The adverb *quite* is categorised as a compromiser which is used to have only a slight lowering effect (Quirk, 1985, p. 597). The adverb *quite* means a considerable extent (Merriem-Webster, n.d.), and in Example 5, the tourist used this adverb to slightly reduce the force of their statement describing how crowded the temple was. The function of reducing tension in a sentence can be defined as negative politeness in the linguistic politeness theory put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987). Negative politeness is ‘essentially avoidance based’ (p. 317) and speakers respect the addressee’s negative-face and their non-imposition (Brown & Levinson, 1999).

Second, modal verbs which express degrees of certainty, possibility, and probability (Swan, 1980) are used for hedging. Tourists who wrote their comments in English used a variety of modal verbs such as *would*, *will*, and *can* for suggestions and advice about sightseeing places to readers. In Example 6, after explaining how busy Kinkaku-ji Temple was and how the tourist could not enjoy their visit because they were constantly pushed forward, the writer softened their suggestion to visit another temple with a modal verb *would*. Tourists also explained what would happen at the sightseeing place, and in Example 7, the tourist explained that visitors could see many orange-red gates from their point of view using *you will*. The modal verb *will* is used to suggest future predictions (Swan, 1980, p. 630). Tourists provided readers with advice and suggestions regarding things they could do and gave a warning about what might happen there. In Example 8, the tourist suggested good photo opportunities in the shrine, and in Example 9, the tourist warned about the slippery steps under wet conditions.

- (6) 'Would suggest trying another temple'. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)
- (7) 'You will pass through thousands of orange-red gates while going up the stairs ...' (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.K. tourist)
- (8) 'You can get some nice photos ...' (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.S. tourist)
- (9) 'Steps can be slippery when wet wear good shoes'. (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.S. tourist)
- (10) '*..., hobohobo gaikokujin de, gaikoku no gaidobukku de mo soutou yuumeinan darou to omoimashita.*
(Mostly because of foreigners, [I] thought that this place would be very famous in the guidebooks published abroad.) (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a Japanese tourist)
- (11) '*Rekishi ya bunka ni fureru koto ga dekiru sutekina basho desu.*
([Kinkaku-ji Temple] is a nice place where [we] can contact history and culture.) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)
- (12) '*Roumon no shuiro ga mabushiku mieru hatsumoude deshita.*
(At the first visit of the year to the shrine, the vermilion colour of the two-story tower gate could look dazzling.) (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a Japanese tourist)

The Japanese modal verbs *deshou* (will) and *darou* (would) are categorised as modal verbs to indicate inference. In Japanese grammar, *darou* (would) is sometimes explained by two separate modal verbs: *daro* (*dantei no jodoushi* (a modal verb expressing definiteness)) and *-u* (*suiryou no jodoushi* (a modal verb expressing inference)) (Yamashita, 2022). In Example 10, the writer used the modal verb *darou* (would) to guess that the shrine was introduced in guidebooks published abroad, since most visitors were foreigners.

In Japanese, *dekiru* (can, be able to) is used to express possibilities. In Example 11, the writer describes what visitors can possibly do by saying that they can see Japanese history and culture at Kinkaku-ji Temple. In Japanese grammar, *dekiru* (can, be able to) is categorised as a potential verb because this form expresses the possibility derived from the verb *suru* (do) (Nakano, 2008). For example, *fureru koto ga dekiru* (can contact/touch) in Example 6 can be replaced by the Japanese potential verb *furerareru* (can contact/touch).

Conjugations of Japanese lexical verbs with the suffixes *-eru*, *-reru*, and *-rareru* also indicate possibilities which can have the same meaning as a combination of a modal verb and a lexical verb in English, and they are called *kanoudoushi* (potential verbs) in Japanese. For example, in Example 12, the writer used *mieru* (can see) to express how they could see the two-story red tower gate. *Mieru* (can see, can observe) and *mirareru* (can be seen, can be observed) indicate the possibility of seeing and sometimes expressing a speaker's wish in certain situations (Mori, 2014).

Tourists sometimes expressed how and what they felt about sightseeing places less directly, using the verb *feel* rather than explicitly defining it. 'I feel' is used to 'make opinions sound less categorical and dogmatic' (Swan, 1980, p. 172) and to 'express the speaker's tentativeness over the truth value' (Quirk, 1985, p. 1114). In Example 13, the writer expressed how they felt when visiting Kinkaku-ji Temple because of the many visitors. In their comments, some tourists mentioned overtourism at these popular sightseeing places.

Japanese visitors also used *kanji desu* (seem, feel) to suggest examples and avoid explicit claims when expressing their personal opinions. In Example 14, using *kanji deshita* (seemed, felt), the writer describes the experience as an example of taking a one-way route following other visitors inside Kinkaku-ji Temple. Also, in Example 15, the writer guessed the time visitors needed to look around the shrine using *kanji desu* (seem, feel) which helped soften their suggestion. These opinions were stated from a certain distance from the writers' perspective. Kotake (2019, p. 89) states that in Japanese conversation, [*to iu*] *kanji ga suru* is used to express not only the speaker's impressions and feelings, but also when speakers have typical ideas about a particular situation (*tenkeisei*).

(13) '... so many people there that you just feel constantly crushed'. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)

(14) '... *deguchi made, zutto zorozoro tsuranatte aruku kanji deshita*'.
(It felt like [we] were walking one after the other all the time until the exit.) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)

(15) '*Ichi-jikan jaku areba oufuku dekiru kanji desu*'.
(It feels like [visitors] can go and return in under one hour.) (Fushimi

Inari-taisha Shrine, a Japanese tourist)

4.3 The use of boosters in the tourists' comments

Boosters are used to emphasise the writer's claims, reinforce the meaning of sentences (Hyland, 2005b), convey a commitment to their statements, and persuade readers (Hinkel, 2002). The number of boosters used in the comments on Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine and Kinkaku-ji Temple quantitatively differed between English and Japanese tourists, since Japanese tourists used them fewer times than those from the U.S. and the U.K. (see Figure 1). The results of this study showed that the writers in English used boosters more than twice as often as those in Japanese.

The frequent boosters in tourists' comments are listed in Table 2. Writers of tourists' comments emphasised their opinions using modal verbs (e.g. *must*, *have to*), verbs (e.g. *think*, *believe*), adjectives (e.g. *sure*, *impossible*), adverbs (e.g. *really*, *actually*), and nouns (e.g. *must-see*, *must-visit*). Japanese writers also used modal verbs (e.g. *nakereba naranai*² (must, have to), verbs (e.g. *omou* (think)), adjectives (e.g. *tashika* (sure)), and adverbs (e.g. *totemo* (very, really), *hontou ni* (really)). Two types of verbs are used as boosters, which are introductory verbs (e.g. *find*, *show*, *demonstrate*, *establish*) and cognitive verbs (e.g. *believe*, *know*, *think*, *realise*) (Şanverdi, 2021). In tourists' comments, cognitive verbs (e.g. *think*, *believe*) were sometimes used to demonstrate cognitive certainty.

Table 2. *Frequent boosters used in the tourists' comments among the three groups*

	Tourists from the U.S.	Tourists from the U.K.	Tourists from Japan
1	must (modal verb)	really	<i>omou</i> , <i>omoimasu</i> (think)
2	must (noun)	must (noun)	<i>totemo</i> (very, really)
3	really	definitely	<i>jissai ni</i> (actually)
4	definitely	think, thought	<i>hontou ni</i> (really)
5	know, known actually	have to of course expect	<i>itsumo</i> (always)

In the English comments, adverbs were most frequently used, followed by verbs and modal verbs, whereas in the Japanese comments, verbs were most frequently used, followed by adverbs and modal verbs.

Adverbs such as *really*, *definitely*, and *of course* were frequently used as boosters in comments. The writers expressed their thoughts and feelings; therefore, these adverbs were used as modifiers to emphasise adjectives or whole sentences to express their strong feelings towards their visits and experiences. These markers are also called intensifiers, which ‘intensify or contribute to intensification of the items they modify’ (Claridge et al., 2024, p. 35).

- (16) ‘I would love to give this a five star review as it’s really spectacular with all the tori gates, but it was so overcrowded that it was really difficult to enjoy most of the visit’. (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.K. tourist)
- (17) ‘Definitely one of the shrines in Kyoto you have to visit’. (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.K. tourist)
- (18) ‘The gardens around it are, of course, stunning, and the overall effect is one of peaceful beauty’. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)

For example, the adverb *really* indicates a speaker’s attitude which ‘expresses their conviction of the truth or reality of what they are stating’ (Greenbaum, 1970, p. 25). The writer in Example 16 used this adverb to express strong feelings toward the spectacular tori gates and difficulty enjoying the visit because the shrine was overcrowded. This adverb *really* is commonly used in spoken English since it was one of the most frequently used intensifiers, including *very*, *really*, and *so*, in the two corpus studies in Tyneside, England, conducted by Barnfield and Buchstaller (2010). Moreover, both U.S. and U.K. participants used *really* the most frequently in the discourse completion task (DCT) of a study of intensifiers used in apologies (Wilson, 2019).

The adverb *definitely* is used to ‘emphasise that something is true and speakers express their certainty without’ (Oxford Learner’s Dictionaries, n.d.). In Example 17, the writer used *definitely* to strongly recommend that readers visit the shrine in addition to the use of a modal verb *have to* which expresses obligation (Swan, 1980, p. 284). The multiple use of boosters emphasises the writer’s claim.

The adverbial phrase *of course* is used to ‘show that what you are saying

is obvious or already known' (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.). In Example 18, the writer used this phrase to intensify how stunning and peacefully beautiful the garden of the temple was, indicating that it was quite obvious and already well-known. The tourist seemed to have expected to see the beautiful garden before visiting, and consequently, they became satisfied with it.

(19) '*Kireina tatemono de totemo miryōu saremashita!*'

([I] was really fascinated by the beautiful temple!) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)

(20) '*Yuki o kabutta kinkaku-ji wa hontou ni subarashikatta desu!*'

(The golden pavilion in the temple covered with snow was really wonderful.) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)

The Japanese adverb *totemo* (very, really) is called *teido fukushi* (adverbs of degree) in Japanese and is used to express the degree of certainty and emphasise its degree. This can be translated as *very*, *really*, or *extremely* in English. Shu (2018, p. 88) states that *totemo* is used to indicate a high degree and something over average (*heikin kijun*) and can be used to indicate a sensory degree (*kankaku kijun*). For example, in Example 19, the writer used *totemo* (really) to emphasise how fascinated they were by the beautiful temple, expressing the writer's feeling of being really fascinated. The Japanese adverb *hontou ni* (really, truly) was similarly used to intensify the degree of thought. Ichimura (2019, p. 100) explained that *hontou ni* (really) is an adverb expressing intensity (*kyouiteki fukushi*), which has become widely used as an intensifier in contemporary spoken Japanese. In Example 20, the writer stated that they were extremely impressed by the temple covered with snow, suggesting that the scenery with snow made the temple more stunning.

When tourists strongly recommend sightseeing places, they often use the modal verb *must* (*nakereba naranai*). Speakers generally use this modal verb to tell listeners about an obligation or the feelings of something being necessary (Swan, 1980, p. 286). *Must* also indicates deduction 'to say that we are sure about something' (Swan, 1980, p. 394). In Example 21, the writer expressed that the route for visitors to follow inside the temple was controlled by a rope, which indicates that there was a strict rule that visitors could not freely

wander around the temple. *Have to* is also used to indicate an idea of obligation (Swan, 1980, p. 281). In Example 22, the tourist warned of the slow speed of walking in a large crowd in the shrine, in which the writer used the metaphor of a sardine tin. Noun forms of *must* such as *must-see*, *must-visit*, and *a must* were also used to inform readers that they should visit places when they are in Kyoto (see Example 23). Tourists from the U.K. and the U.S. commonly used the noun *must* to strongly recommend that readers visit these sightseeing places.

Although the modal verb *must* and the noun *must* were among the most frequently used boosters in English comments, Japanese writers used the variation of this modal verb *nakereba naranai* and *nakutewa ikenai* (must, have to) only once in this study (see Example 24). They are also used to show obligation and necessity in Japanese (Shibuya, 1988). In Example 24, the Japanese writer expressed that they did not like the system in which visitors had to follow a decided route to look around the temple.

- (21) ‘There’s only one-way narrow roped path that visitor [*sic*] must follow’.
(Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.S. tourist)
- (22) ‘..., you have to plod along with the sardine tin’. (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.K. tourist)
- (23) ‘What a magic place! A real must-see in Kyoto’. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.S. tourist)
- (24) ‘*Kaeru mae ni zentai o aruki mawaranakereba naranai no wa, amari suki dewanai*’.
([I] don’t like the fact that [I] have to walk through the whole area of the temple before going home.) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)

The cognitive verb *think* was used as a booster in tourists’ comments. Tourists expressed their thoughts about their visit as their opinions, and the lexicon of *think* and *thought*, expressing opinions, were categorized as boosters by Hyland (2005a). Swan (1980, p. 172) states that the verb *think* is used to suggest ‘we just give a personal opinion’, and Turiman and Joharry (2023) state that *I think* is used to engage the audience while conveying their opinions. In Example 25, the writer commented on the ideal time to visit

Kinkaku-ji Temple from their experience using *I think* as an explicit opinion, since they visited too early and encountered schoolchildren at the time of their visit. Japanese visitors also expressed their thoughts and opinions about their travel comments using *omou* (think). In Example 26, the writer found the best chance to visit the temple in snowy weather, which they had always hoped to do, and *omou* (think) was used twice to indicate how much they had thought about the chance to visit the temple on a snowy day and their opinion on the best time to visit the temple in snowy weather. Both verbs *think* and *omou* (think) were used to express writers' opinions.

(25) 'I think the ideal time would have been 10 am'. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.K. tourist)

(26) '*Yuki no Kinkaku wa ichido mitemitai to omotte ori, ooyuki no sai ni chansu to omotte houmon shimashita*'.

([I] always thought that [I] wanted to see Kinkaku-ji Temple covered with snow. [I] visited there thinking that this was a chance to see the golden pavilion on a heavily snowing day.) (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a Japanese tourist)

The adjective *sure* is used to tell 'confidently that you know something or that you are right' (Oxford Learner's Dictionaries, n.d.), and tourists used this adjective to confidently express their opinions and strongly suggested important information. In Example 27, when visiting the shrine, the tourist used a guide, and they used small paths to visit small shrines in the mountain of Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, which other tourists without guides missed. The writer confidently wrote this information about visiting small shrines where they found special to visit. In Example 28, the writer advised the reader that they needed to bring cash because the temple did not accept other forms of payment. Directive and imperative sentences were used to provide strong advice. Directives, including imperatives and obligation modals, were often used to engage with readers as characteristics of tourist comments (Fujimura-Wilson, 2021; Jiménez, 2014).

(27) 'Pretty sure those visiting on their own miss these treats'. (Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine, a U.S. tourist).

- (28) 'Make sure you bring cash as that is the only form of payment they accept'. (Kinkaku-ji Temple, a U.S. tourist).

4.4 Language of tourists' comments

This study showed that writers used hedges for suggestions, possibilities, and downtoners, and boosters to emphasise their comments and to provide information and thoughts when expressing their honest opinions and advice from their experiences visiting Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine and Kinkaku-ji Temple. Writers in English sometimes used boosters, such as *must*, *must-see*, *really*, and *definitely*, with a strong tone to suggest ideas and advice or explain their experiences and opinions.

Written comments posted on the website tended to use informal and casual spoken language towards the readers. Particular language forms are often used in the communication of tourists' comments, such as imperative sentences to offer advice (see Example 28) and exclamatory sentences to express strong thoughts (see Example 19). When making suggestions and encouraging people to engage in certain activities, imperative sentences are often observed on tourist websites and advertisements (Teodorescu, 2014). The data of this study also showed that the use of imperative sentences is a common characteristic of English comments. Among the three groups, an imperative sentence was most frequently used by tourists from the U.S. (42 times), followed by those from the U.K. (27 times) and those from Japan (five times). Instead of an imperative sentence, the Japanese writers used the verb *osusume desu* (recommend) 12 times, while the tourists from the U.S. used the verb *recommend* five times, and those from the U.K. used it four times.

Exclamations are used to express 'emphatic degree', and in both phrases and sentences, they have similar discourse functions (Quirk et al., 1972). Quirk et al. (1985, p. 804) state that 'exclamations are used for expressing the extent to which the speaker is impressed by something'. Tourists from the U.S. used an exclamation mark (!) most frequently at 35 times, while those from the U.K. used it 22 times, and those from Japan used it 17 times. Exclamation marks are sometimes used with declarative sentences to indicate both assertions and emotional expressions (Beijer, 2002) (e.g. *Don't miss it!*, *Get there early, take your time, and enjoy it!*, and *Definitely a must do!*). In a study on digital chat

communication, Sandjojo et al. (2022) stated that Japanese participants tended to use exclamation marks to express positive emotions in Japanese chats. Also in this study, Japanese tourists occasionally used multiple exclamation marks at the end of a sentence to express positive feedback on their visits (e.g. *Totemo osusumedesu!!* ([I] highly recommend it!!), *Kinkakuji wa totemo good!!* (Kinkaku-ji Temple [is] very good!!)).

Moreover, one of the characteristics of travel blogs in English was the frequent use of reader pronouns, including *you* and *your*, indicating that writers actively try to engage with readers (Huang et al., 2020). In the English comments of this study, the second-person pronoun *you* (see Examples 7, 8, 17, 22, and 28) was used more frequently than the first-person singular pronoun *I* and the plural pronoun *we* for self-mentions. For example, tourists from the U.S. used second-person pronouns including *you* and *your* 84 times, first-person singular pronouns including *I* and *my* 48 times, and first-person plural pronouns including *we* and *our* 73 times. Those from the U.K. used second-person pronouns including *you* and *your* 96 times, first-person singular pronouns including *I* and *my* 71 times, and first-person plural pronouns including *we* and *our* 63 times. In contrast, since the Japanese spoken language often omits the subject of a sentence, self-mention as the subject of a sentence in the Japanese data of this study was also often omitted. Consequently, self-mentions using first-person singular pronouns including *watashi* (I) and *watashi no* (my) were only used 5 times, first-person plural pronouns including *watashitachi* (we), *watashitachi no* (our), and *watashitachi ni* (us) were used 8 times, and no second-person pronouns (*anata* (you), *anata no* (your), *anata ni* (you)) were used in Japanese tourists' comments. These Japanese personal pronouns can often be understood from context, and their repetitive use in a sentence may give the impression of being intrusive (Miyake, 1977).

According to the linguistic politeness theory proposed by Brown and Levinson (1987), making good suggestions, engaging readers, and showing positive emotions in tourists' comments can be defined as positive politeness. 'Positive politeness is approach-based', which treats others as members of the in-group and minimizes potential face-threatening (Brown & Levinson, 1999, p. 317).

5. Discussion and conclusion

This study illustrates the use of two types of metadiscourse markers, hedges and boosters, in tourists' comments on two top Japanese sightseeing places, Fushimi Inari-taisha Shrine and Kinkaku-ji Temple. The data were collected from three groups consisting of tourists from the U.S., the U.K., and Japan. Tourists from the U.S. and the U.K. wrote their comments in English, while those from Japan wrote their comments in Japanese. The writers expressed both positive and negative experiences and thoughts about visiting these places. Regarding visiting sightseeing places, especially abroad, tourists might find it difficult to understand customs and systems, and how they work; therefore, advice and suggestions, which can be very useful, were often written in the comments. The results of this study indicated that writers of English comments were accustomed to using hedges and boosters to show their attitudes in travel comments compared to those of Japanese comments.

Although the writers of the three groups used a certain number of hedges in their comments, those writing in English used them more frequently than those writing in Japanese. For example, English writers used modal verbs *will* to suggest predictions and what happens there, *would* to reduce explicitness, and *can* to tell possibilities when information about sightseeing places was provided. Japanese writers also used the modal verbs *deshou* (will) and *darou* (would) for inference and potential verbs to mention possibilities in their suggested information and ideas. Attribute hedges and downtoners to indicate the approximate time and reduce intensity were also used as information about the sightseeing places. Moreover, writers expressed how they felt about their visit using the verb *feel* (*kanji desu*) to express their thoughts less directly. Text type was important and affected the frequent use of hedges, and the writers of tourists' comments expressed themselves more freely and directly than those of academic research papers that used more hedges.

Boosters were more often used in comments written in English than in those written in Japanese. Tourists who wrote comments in English frequently used the modal verb *must* and the noun form *must* (e.g. *must-see*, *must-visit*, *a must*) to strongly recommend places to readers. Their opinions and thoughts about their visits were also emphasised with the adverbs of intensifiers such as *really* and *definitely*. The verb *think* was used to convey writers' thoughts

and points which they wanted readers to understand. In the English comments, these boosters were observed in advice and suggestions regarding visiting sightseeing places. According to the linguistic politeness theory put forth by Brown and Levinson (1987, 1999), both positive and negative politeness were observed in these uses of language in tourists' comments.

Modalities and expressiveness may differ across languages and cultures. The results of this study showed only slight differences between writers from the U.S. and the U.K. Although writers from the U.K. used both hedges and boosters slightly more often than those from the U.S., the lexicons used for hedges and boosters were similar between these two groups.

This study observed some characteristics of written comments in tourism discourse. First, writers often posted comments in informal and casual spoken language towards the readers. Some writers also used exclamation marks to express positive emotions and emphasise their thoughts. Second, writers from the U.S. and the U.K. tried to interact with readers more directly, since those in English tended to use imperative sentences to offer advice more frequently than Japanese writers. Imperative sentences tend to be used on tourist websites and advertisements (Teodorescu, 2014). Among the writers in English, tourists from the U.S. used imperative sentences more frequently than those from the U.K. Third, in English comments, the second-person pronoun *you* was used to directly address readers more frequently than the first-person singular pronoun *I* and the first-person plural pronoun *we*, whilst the Japanese tourists tended to omit the subject of personal pronouns in their Japanese comments. The second-person pronouns *you* and *your* are frequently used to address readers in travel blogs in English to actively engage with readers (Huang et al., 2020).

The results of this study can be used pedagogically by Japanese learners of English. The functions and usage of hedges and boosters can be introduced in EFL classrooms, since Japanese learners generally only know the meanings of vocabulary, such as modal verbs and adverbs, rather than how to actually use them in context. In particular, non-native English speakers find it difficult to acknowledge the importance of modality in pragmatics. With identifying differences with and without metadiscourse markers, how native English speakers understand them in each context needs to be clearly mentioned with

examples. Regarding writing travel comments, learners can benefit from the results of the characteristics of travel comments, various forms of modality and intensifiers used in the comments including the use of modal verbs, lexical verbs, adjectives, adverbs, and nouns including the obligatory expressions using *must*, and sentence forms such as directives and exclamation sentences. Types of hedges, boosters, and self-mentions in metadiscourse markers in English need to be introduced for learners to write their comments in English. Developing awareness of the meanings conveyed by metadiscourse markers will help with appropriate context-sensitive language use in English writing.

This study had several limitations. For example, although analysis of discourse markers within their used context is time-consuming, more data from different sightseeing places need to be examined among the three groups of the U.S., the U.K., and Japan to see clearer similarities and differences in terms of the types of places. Data on tourists from other countries need to be included in a comparative analysis. Tourists' comments written in English by Japanese L2 learners also need to be analysed to determine their language use and common mistakes in English comments. Different metadiscourse markers in interactive and interactional resources, such as self-mentions and engagement markers, also need to be examined in different types of texts. However, this study highlights how tourists from the U.S., the U.K., and Japan used both hedges and boosters in their travel comments, which directly reflects the purposes and functions of the comments and contribute to the gap in the study of different text types and metadiscourse markers in the Japanese language.

Note

1. The KH Coder can be useful for analysing word classes and calculating the frequency of words, excluding Japanese particles (*joshi*) and modal verbs (*jodoushi*) attached to Japanese verbs (Higuchi, 2016).
2. In Japanese grammar, *nakereba naranai* is comprised of *nakere* (modal verb), *ba* (conjunctive particle), *nara* (verb), and *nai* (modal verb).

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