

A Corpus-Based Meta-Discourse Analysis of Political Speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of meta-discourse markers, such as boosters and hedges, in political discourse through an analysis of speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Shareef. Meta-discourse markers are essential tools used by political leaders to convey their ideas effectively. The study focuses on identifying and classifying the types of metadiscourse markers, including hedges and boosters, used in the political speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif and to analyze the frequency and distribution of hedges and boosters in the speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif. The present study is based on mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative). Hyland's concept of metadiscourse makers is used as a theoretical framework in this research paper. By examining two speeches of each leader randomly selected, the research finds that hedges and boosters are commonly used in the speeches of these Pakistani political leaders. This insight contributes to a deeper understanding of how politicians shape their messages and express certainty or doubts in their speeches, ultimately enhancing the impact of their political discourse.

Keywords: Hedges, Boosters, Meta-discourse, Political speeches, Political discourse, Hyland's concept of metadiscourse markers.

Introduction

This research paper discusses the use of metadiscourse markers, particularly hedges and boosters, in the political discourse of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif. Metadiscourse means how the linguistic strategies employed by speakers to manage and shape interactions with their audience. It serves as a tool for guiding the audience's understanding, managing their expectations, and building rapport.

The term metadiscourse means discourse about the discourse or discussion about a discussion. Metadiscourse markers refer to Halliday's meta-function of a language. The "textual", "ideational" and "interpersonal" features are referred to here. Metadiscourse is a vast field consisting of many relevant concepts that explore the use of metadiscourse markers in discourse. The primary objective of this field is to provide an insight into language devices used by speakers in a compelling and consequential way to convey their message to the audience. There are a number of linguistic devices used by political leaders in their speeches, including "hedges," "boosters," "self-indicators," etc.

Within political communication, metadiscourse markers play a important role in framing messages, establishing credibility, and influencing audience perceptions. By employing metadiscourse effectively, political leaders can project authority, convey conviction, and foster engagement with their ideas and policies.

In addition to hedges and boosters, metadiscourse encompasses a wide range of linguistic devices, including self-indicators, attitude markers, and engagement markers. Each of these elements contributes to the overall effectiveness of political discourse by signaling the speaker's stance, managing the audience's response, and shaping the narrative.

Furthermore, metadiscourse analysis often involves examining not only the explicit language used by speakers but also the implicit cues and contextual factors that influence interpretation. This multidimensional approach

allows researchers to uncover subtle nuances in communication and understand the underlying strategies employed by speakers to achieve their rhetorical goals.

Through a comprehensive exploration of metadiscourse in the speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif, this study aims to shed light on the intricate dynamics of political communication in Pakistan. By examining the interplay of hedges, boosters, and other metadiscourse markers, it seeks to elucidate how these linguistic devices contribute to the effectiveness and persuasiveness of political discourse in shaping public opinion and mobilizing support.

Research Objectives:

1. To identify and classify the types of metadiscourse markers, including hedges and boosters, used in the political speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif.
2. To analyze the frequency and distribution of hedges and boosters in the speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif
3. To examine the functional roles of hedges and boosters in shaping the persuasive and rhetorical strategies employed by Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif in their political discourse.

Research Questions:

1. What are the predominant types of metadiscourse markers, including hedges and boosters, used in the political speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif?
2. How do the frequency and distribution of hedges and boosters vary across different speeches and contexts in the discourse of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif?
3. What are the rhetorical functions and strategic purposes of hedges and boosters in the political discourse of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif?

Significance of the research:

This research investigates the use of metadiscourse markers such as boosters and hedges, in political discourse through an analysis of speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif which provides insights into political communication strategies. Various studies have been conducted worldwide on the use of metadiscourse markers such as boosters and hedges, in political discourse but few studies have been conducted on the use of metadiscourse markers such as boosters and hedges, in political discourse through an analysis of speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif. This research is a significant addition to the existing body of knowledge on political communication and provides practical insights for understanding and analyzing political speeches. The current study examines linguistic devices in political speeches that contributes to discourse analysis methodologies. Studying hedges and boosters offers insights into the persuasive techniques of politicians and understanding how metadiscourse markers shape political narratives.

Literature review:

Political discourse analysis has long been a subject of interest for researchers seeking to understand the intricacies of communication strategies employed by political leaders. Within this field, the study of metadiscourse markers, including hedges and boosters, has garnered significant attention due to its role in shaping the persuasiveness and impact of political narratives. This literature review provides an overview of key studies and theoretical frameworks related to the use of hedges and boosters in political discourse, with a focus on its application to the speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif.

Theoretical Frameworks:

Various theoretical frameworks have been developed to analyze the use of metadiscourse markers in discourse. Hyland's (1996) conceptualization of metadiscourse as discourse about discourse provides a foundational framework for understanding the functions and strategies of metadiscourse markers. According to Hyland, metadiscourse markers serve interpersonal, textual, and ideational functions, guiding the reader's interpretation and engagement with the text. This framework forms the basis for analyzing the use of hedges and boosters in political discourse.

Previous Studies:

Several studies have examined the role of hedges and boosters in political discourse across different contexts and languages. Political discourse, as Graber (cited in Ismail, 2012) explains how politicians talk to influence people. They use language and tactics to shape what people think and impress them. The media and politicians both use different tricks in their speeches to get their message across.

Sherazi et al (2024) conducted research on lexico-semantic relations of adjectives in the Saraiki language and examines how adjectives relate to each other through antonyms, synonyms, gender distinctions, homophones,

meronyms, and collocations. Using a one-million-word corpus from Saraiki books and analyzing 1500 words, the study employs the 3A model by Wallis and Nelson (2001) to quantify these relations.

Similarly, this research on meta-discourse markers in Shehbaz Shareef and Maryam Nawaz's political speeches can benefit from a corpus-based methodology and quantitative analysis. Both studies seek to understand specific language use—Saraiki adjectives and political discourse markers. While the Saraiki study focuses on lexico-semantic relations, this study will categorize and quantify meta-discourse markers like transitions, frame markers, and engagement markers. These markers help organize political speeches and engage audiences, revealing how politicians structure their discourse to systematics and communicate effectively. Thus, both studies use systematic approaches to provide valuable linguistic insights in their respective contexts.

According to Kopple (1985, p.83), the word 'meta-discourse markers' refers to 'discourse on discourse.' Hyland suggests two main things about these markers: they're 'interactional,' meaning they help with the flow of conversation, and 'interactive,' meaning they involve the listener or reader in the discussion. Ghaleb Rabab'ah et al. (2015) conducted a corpus-based analysis of hedges usage in political speeches of King Abdullah II of Jordan. This study examines hedging in King Abdullah II of Jordan's speeches, aiming to identify hedging devices and understand their functions. Analysis of twenty-five political speeches from his official website reveals modal auxiliaries, particularly "can," as the most frequently used hedging devices. These devices serve various pragmatic functions, including expressing indirectness, politeness, lack of commitment, and probability. The study suggests that speaking Arabic as a second language does not significantly influence the types of hedging devices or their functions in King Abdullah II's speeches. Additionally, it contrasts the usage of hedging devices in political discourse with scientific discourse, highlighting their broader communicative purposes in political contexts. Ali Arshad et al. (2020) examines the significance of metadiscourse markers, particularly boosters and hedges, in political discourse using Benazir Bhutto's speeches as a case study. Drawing from Hyland's (1996) concept of metadiscourse, the study analyzes thirteen randomly selected speeches delivered between 1989 and 1997. The findings reveal a higher frequency of hedges compared to boosters, shedding light on how politicians strategically shape their messages using these markers to enhance their political narratives' impact. This research enhances our understanding of how rhetorical devices, such as metadiscourse markers, are utilized by political leaders to convey certainty or express doubts in their speeches.

Application to Political Discourse:

The application of metadiscourse analysis to political discourse has yielded valuable insights into the rhetorical strategies employed by political leaders. In his study on political discourse in the United States, van Dijk (1998) examined the use of meta-discourse markers to construct political identities and ideologies. Similarly, Fairclough (2003) analyzed the discursive strategies used by political elites to legitimize power and control public opinion.

The gap in the Literature:

While previous studies have been conducted to analyze how metadiscourse markers are used in political speeches, there's still a gap in research when it comes to speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif, two important figures in Pakistani politics. So, limited researches have been conducted about how they use language features like hedging and boosting in their speeches. Filling in this gap will help us understand better how these leaders communicate politically in Pakistan and what persuasive techniques they use.

The literature we've looked at so far shows that analyzing meta-discourse is important for understanding political speech. It also emphasizes the need to study how this applies specifically to the speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif. This research aims to add to what we already know by using existing theories and studies to delve deeper into political communication and how language is used in it.

Methodology:

The present study is based on mixed-method approach (both qualitative and quantitative). The research methodology for this study involves examining the ways in which Maryum Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif utilizes interactional meta-discourse markers in their speeches. Meta-discourse markers, as described by Hyland (2005), help the speaker convey their message clearly and engage the reader by anticipating their reactions. These markers include attitude markers, which reveal the speaker's mood and stance. Hedges indicate uncertainty, while boosters express confidence in the subject matter.

To conduct the analysis, a corpus of 04 random speeches by Maryum Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif was compiled from internet sources. The corpus was then cleaned to remove extraneous information such as headings and dates, resulting in a total of 2632 word tokens. The corpus analysis was performed using Antconc, a tool developed by Anthony Lawrence (2014), which allows for both quantitative and qualitative examination. By employing both quantitative analysis and qualitative interpretation, this research aims to provide insights into the use of meta-discourse markers in political discourse, specifically in the speeches of Maryum Nawaz and Shahbaz Sharif.

Corpus Analysis Tools:

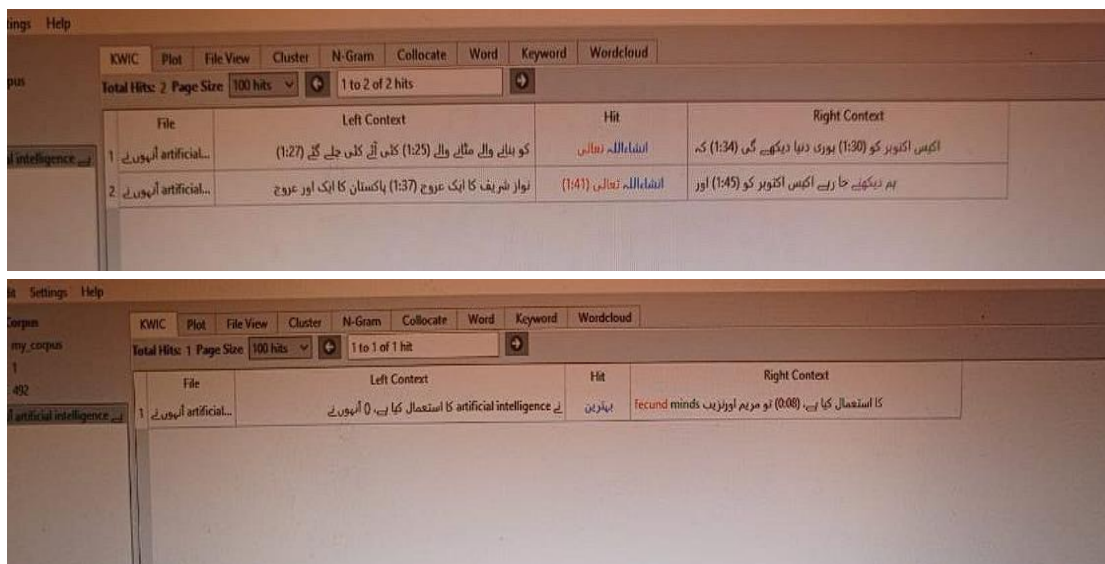
Antconc, a robust corpus analysis tool developed by Anthony Lawrence (2014), was utilized for data analysis. This software offers a wide array of functions suited for corpus linguistics research, including concordance analysis, keyword identification, and frequency calculation. **Frequency Calculation:** After identifying hedges and boosters, their frequencies within the corpus were calculated to quantify their prevalence in Maryum's and Shahbaz's discourse. This quantitative analysis provided valuable insights into the distribution and frequency of these meta-discourse markers throughout their speeches.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Analysis: The research methodology involved a synthesis of quantitative frequency analysis and qualitative interpretation. By combining numerical data on marker frequencies with qualitative insights into their contextual usage, researchers aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of both leader's rhetorical strategies.

Premier Adobe and Turbo-scribe were used to transcribe the speeches.

Theoretical Framework:

Hyland's theoretical framework on meta-discourse markers, particularly hedges and boosters, was applied to the corpus data. This involved utilizing corpus linguistics and discourse analysis techniques to identify and analyze the frequency of these markers within the speeches. Anthony's concordance function was employed to locate instances of hedges and boosters within the context of the speeches, aiding in the calculation of their frequencies.



Shahbaz Sharif's 1st speech:

Hedges:

Hedges from Shahbaz Sharif's speech:

Words or Phrases	Frequency
hope that	01
if by the grace of God	01
It seems as if"	01

"Hope that": Hedge used to express hope while acknowledging uncertainty.

"If by the grace of God": Hedge used to acknowledge the element of uncertainty and reliance on external factors.

"It seems as if": Hedge used to suggest a possibility rather than stating it definitively.

Boosters:

Boosters from Shahbaz Sharif's speech:

Words or Phrases	Frequency
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great moment in our history	01
This proves the point"	01
This nation will hold them accountable"	01

"great moment in our history": Booster used to emphasize the significance of the moment.

"This proves the point": Booster used to emphasize the validity or strength of the argument.

"what a pity it is": Booster used to emphasize the unfortunate nature of a situation.

"By the grace and mercy of Allah": Booster used to emphasize the role of divine intervention or blessings.

"this nation will hold them accountable": Booster used to emphasize the determination of the nation to take action.

Shahbaz Sharif’s 2nd speech:

Hedges:

Hedges from Shahbaz Sharif’s speech:

Words or Phrases	Frequency
Little less than	01
By no means	01
Almost	01

"Little less than" - This phrase can function as a hedge, indicating a slight decrease or reduction without specifying an exact amount.

"By no means" - It's used to emphasize that something is not true or possible under any circumstances, suggesting a strong denial or exception.

"Almost" - It indicates that something is close to happening or being true but not quite there, suggesting some level of uncertainty or approximation.

Boosters:

Boosters from Shahbaz Sharif’s speech:

Words or Phrases	Frequency
Honorable	01
Great	01
Huge	01
Wonderful	01
Excellent	01

"Honorable" - Can be considered a booster when used to emphasize respect or dignity.

"Great" - A booster, used to convey a high degree of positivity or significance.

"Huge" - Also a booster, indicating something of considerable size or importance. "Wonderful" - Another booster, expressing admiration or delight.

"Remarkable" - Yes, a booster, highlighting something as worthy of attention or praise.

"Excellent" - Absolutely a booster, indicating high quality or superiority.

"Total" - While it can be a booster in some contexts, it's often used more as an intensifier to emphasize completeness or entirety.

"Dynamic" - Can function as a booster, particularly when describing something as energetic or impactful.

Overall, Shahbaz Shreef's speech contains a mix of hedges and boosters, with hedges used to qualify statements and boosters used to emphasize positivity, significance, and determination.

Maryum Nawaz Sharif’s speech:

Hedges:

Hedges from Maryum Nawaz Sharif's speech

Word or Phrases	Frequency
can be done	01

"can be done" can indeed function as a hedge in certain contexts. It suggests that something is possible but doesn't assert it with absolute certainty.

Boosters:

Boosters from Maryum Nawaz Sharif's speech

Word or Phrases	Frequency
resounding answer	01
Wow Gujranwala Wow	01
salute to them	01
buried the politics of revenge	01

"Resounding answer": Booster used to emphasize the strength or impact of the response.

"Wow Gujranwala Wow": Booster used to express enthusiasm or admiration.

"Salute to them": Booster used to express respect or admiration.

"Promise goes to Gujranwala once again": Booster used to emphasize the commitment or reliability of the promise.

"Buried the politics of revenge": Booster used to emphasize the positive action of moving away from negative politics.

"Progress and Pakistan's progress": Booster used to link the progress of a specific locality with the progress of the entire nation.

"Allah Ta'ala bless you all abundantly": Booster used to invoke divine blessings and express goodwill.

Overall, Maryam Nawaz Sharif's speech contains a mix of hedges and boosters, with hedges used to soften assertions or attribute statements to others, and boosters used to emphasize enthusiasm, commitment, and positive outcomes.

Maryum Nawaz Sharif's 2nd speech speech:

Hedges:

Hedges from Maryum Nawaz Sharif's speech

Word or Phrases	Frequency
because it will take a long time	01
I want to say with pride	01

"Because it will take a long time": Hedge used to justify avoiding a detailed discussion by suggesting lengthiness as the reason.

"I want to say with pride": Hedge used to soften the assertion by framing it as a personal feeling rather than an absolute truth.

Boosters:

Boosters from Maryum Nawaz Sharif's speech

Word or Phrases	Frequency
I must tell you that I am very very proud of you	01
stellar job	01
super duper proud	01
Long live Pakistan	01
very very very proud	01

"I must tell you that I am very very very proud of you" used to emphasize the sentiment of pride without making a definitive statement.

"whoever opposes Nawaz Sharif Sahib is also on Nawaz Sharif's path" can be considered a booster. It strengthens the assertion by suggesting that even those who oppose him are essentially following his lead or contributing to his cause.

"stellar job": Booster used to express high praise or admiration.

"super duper proud": Booster used to emphasize extreme pride or satisfaction.

"rise another rise of Pakistan": Booster used to emphasize the significance or positive impact of an event.

"very very very proud": Booster used to intensify the sentiment of pride.

"Long live Pakistan": Booster used to express goodwill and loyalty to the nation. "chant with me 'Nawaz Sharif'": Booster used to encourage participation and enthusiasm.

Overall, Maryam Nawaz Sharif's speech contains a mix of hedges and boosters, with hedges used to soften directives or assertions and boosters used to express praise, confidence, and enthusiasm

Use of Hedges:

Softening Statements: Hedges such as "little less than" and "almost" are used to soften statements, indicating a degree of uncertainty or approximation. This allows the speaker to avoid making overly definitive claims and to acknowledge the limitations of their knowledge or information.

- **Managing Expectations:** Phrases like "by no means" and "not only" are used to manage expectations and temper the audience's perceptions. By downplaying the achievement as "by no means a small achievement," the speaker acknowledges challenges while still emphasizing its significance. Similarly, the phrase "not only" suggests that there are additional factors to consider beyond what is being mentioned.
- **Mitigating Risks:** Hedges such as "which has a direct" and "which has devastated" are used to mitigate risks associated with certain statements. By attributing the devastating impact on the economy to external factors ("which has a direct"), the speaker shifts some responsibility away from internal factors and acknowledges broader challenges beyond their control.

Importance of Hedges:

- **Maintaining Credibility:** Hedges help the speaker maintain credibility by acknowledging uncertainty or limitations in their knowledge. This demonstrates honesty and humility, which can enhance the audience's trust in the speaker's words.
- **Avoiding Overstatement:** By using hedges to soften statements, the speaker avoids overstatement and exaggeration. This can prevent misunderstandings and misinterpretations while ensuring that the message remains balanced and realistic.
- **Demonstrating Prudence:** Hedges show prudence and caution on the part of the speaker. Instead of making bold, unequivocal statements that may be later proven incorrect or unrealistic, hedges allow for a more nuanced and careful approach to communication.

Use of Boosters:

- **Emphasizing Importance:** Boosters such as "great" and "huge" are used to emphasize the significance of certain achievements or events.
- **Expressing Gratitude and Appreciation:** Boosters like "excellent" and "sincerely" are used to express gratitude and appreciation towards individuals or groups involved in the project.
- **Inspiring Confidence:** Boosters help inspire confidence and optimism among the audience. By using words like "wonderful" and "remarkable" to describe achievements, the speaker creates a positive impression and instills belief in the project's success.
- **Importance of Boosters:**
- **Building Morale:** Boosters boost morale and motivation among stakeholders by recognizing their efforts and highlighting their achievements. This can foster a sense of pride and satisfaction, encouraging continued dedication and commitment to the project.
- **Creating Positive Associations:** Boosters create positive associations with the project and its outcomes.

- **Reinforcing Key Messages:** Boosters reinforce key messages and priorities by emphasizing their importance and impact. By repeatedly highlighting the project as a "great moment" and a "huge step," the speaker ensures that these messages resonate with the audience and are remembered long after the speech is over.

Hedges and Boosters play crucial roles in effective communication. Hedges help manage expectations, mitigate risks, and maintain credibility, while boosters emphasize importance, express gratitude, inspire confidence, and reinforce key messages.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, this research delves into the utilization of meta-discourse markers, particularly hedges and boosters, in the political speeches of Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif. Meta-discourse markers serve as tools for guiding audience understanding, managing expectations, and establishing rapport. The study applies Hyland's concept of meta-discourse markers as a theoretical framework and employs a mixed-method approach involving both qualitative and quantitative analyses.

Through corpus analysis and theoretical frameworks, the research identifies and classifies various types of meta-discourse markers used by the political leaders. Hedges are employed to soften statements, manage expectations, and mitigate risks, while boosters emphasize importance, express gratitude, and inspire confidence.

The significance of this research lies in providing insights into political communication strategies, contributing to discourse analysis methodologies, and enhancing understanding of how linguistic devices shape political narratives. By filling a gap in the literature and focusing on speeches by Maryam Nawaz and Shehbaz Sharif, the study offers practical insights for analyzing political discourse and understanding how language influences public opinion and mobilizes support.

Moving forward, this research could inspire further exploration into the effectiveness of meta-discourse markers in political communication across different contexts and languages, ultimately enriching our understanding of how politicians use language to shape perceptions and influence audiences.

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