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CONTENTS

ARTICLES

A discursive pragmatic study of emotional blackmail in American movies.....4
Nawal Fadhil Abbas, Afrah Suhail Najem and Hooi Chee Mei

Exploring the construction of academic authorial presence within diverse disciplinary and cultural contexts.....29
Ghada AlGhamdi

Lexical bundles in academic articles from arts disciplines.....57
Hana Atcheson

The power of stance: Linguistic strategies in Donald Trump's election campaign 80
Olga Boginskaya

Uncertainty markers in spoken learner discourse 101
Petra Huschová

A functional analysis of metadiscourse markers in political discourse: Persuasive strategies in Netanyahu's speeches 120
Shatha Naiyf Qaiwer and Bahram Kazemian

BOOK REVIEWS

Tinga, T. (2025). *The Africa rising discourse: Tropes, trophies and social actors.* Routledge.
Nguyen Huu Chanh.....144

List of contributors 148

A DISCURSIVE PRAGMATIC STUDY OF EMOTIONAL BLACKMAIL IN AMERICAN MOVIES

Nawal Fadhil Abbas, Afrah Suhail Najem and Hooi Chee Mei

Abstract

This study examines emotional blackmail from a discursive pragmatic standpoint to gain insights into how this psychologically manipulative phenomenon is revealed in the discourse of some American movies. Five extracts from five American movies are purposely selected and analyzed using an eclectic model based on a discursive pragmatic approach to navigate this unexplored study area. The model incorporates Halliday's (2014) transitivity system, Martin and White's (2005) attitude system, Forward and Frazier's (1997) types and tools of emotional blackmail, and Mayfield's (2010) informal fallacies. The present study is guided by four research questions that identify the types and tools of emotional blackmail employed in the selected data, investigate the informal fallacious appeals emotional blackmailers employ to perform emotional blackmail, analyse how emotional blackmailers use the transitivity system to influence their victims and explore how emotional blackmailers use the attitude categories to influence their victims. The analysis revealed the appearance of only the sufferer and punisher emotional blackmailers in the data, with the most common type of emotional blackmailers being the ones utilizing the guilt tool. This is because emotional blackmailers reveal their pain to their victims in an attempt to incite guilt in order to obtain what they desire. Besides, blackmailers adopted all types of informal fallacies in the selected data. Only mental, material, and relational processes were used. Finally, the extracts showed negative and positive attitudes ranging from blackmailers to victims for gaining control.

Keywords

discursive pragmatics, emotional blackmail, transitivity system, appraisal system, informal fallacy

1 Introduction

Emotional blackmail is an instance of manipulative communication in which blackmailers use the target's emotions to get his or her desired response. Language is vital in emotional blackmail to influence and control the victim. The emotions of an individual may be expressed and experienced via words to elicit specific emotions from the target; emotional blackmailers employ words, phrases, and appeals to emotions that are meticulously prepared. By exaggerating their victims' negative emotions, such as guilt, fear, or sadness through the use of language, emotional blackmailers may attempt to influence or convince people to comply with their desires (Forward & Frazier, 1997). The majority of earlier research has concentrated on blackmail in psychology or blackmail in

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general, rather than on the nuanced language used in intimate relationships. For instance, Al-Asfer and Bairmani (2021) only examined emails written between strangers, but they used a practical method to study cyber blackmail. Similarly, without concentrating on how emotional blackmail is portrayed in films, Igaab (2021) studied the linguistic characteristics of blackmail in Arabic and English contexts. Al-Kreimeen et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between emotional blackmail and female students' college adjustment. After conducting a thorough analysis, the researchers have concluded that movie representations can shape societal attitudes and perceptions regarding emotional manipulation in social situations. This study aims to bridge this gap by approaching emotional blackmail through discursive pragmatics which is "a platform for the pragmatic study of discourse" through a combination of pragmatic and discourse theories. It draws on the pragmatics informal fallacy approach by Mayfield (2010), the transitivity system of Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) and the attitude system of Martin and White (2005) for the analysis of discourse.

Fallacies that undermine the norms of acceptable and cooperative communication are often essential emotional blackmail, where blackmailers violate appropriate communication principles to manipulate others. Applying fallacy theory to studying emotional blackmail in movies may help scholars find manipulative linguistic fallacies. In the informal fallacy, fallacies are known to contain a psychological component in the form of deceptions and illusions, according to Ramasamy (2011). According to Dowden (2020), fallacies are logical mistakes that can be used to deceive, which is consistent with Ramasamy's view. The social distance between interlocutors in a particular context is one of the factors that determine an individual's language behavior (Leech, 1983, as cited in Qassim et. al., 2023). Since movies illuminate the discursive tactics used to deceive individuals, research on pragmatics, discourse analysis, and persuasive methods might benefit from examining emotional blackmail in movies. Scholars may get insights into these tactics by analyzing the dialogues from certain movie situations that depict emotional blackmail within various relationships. To date, no linguistic research has been conducted on the verbal component of emotional blackmail. The main objective of this research paper is to enhance our understanding of emotional blackmail in routine interactions.

Another point to highlight is that emotional blackmail-themed movies frequently explore the psychological complexities of manipulation, giving audiences a glimpse of the covert and overt strategies employed by abusive individuals. A more complex picture of how emotional control functions in relationships is offered by this investigation. These movies have the potential to start conversations about toxic partnerships and emotional blackmail, encouraging

people to talk about their own experiences and the social conventions around abuse. Viewers may become more sympathetic and understanding as a result.

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the types and tools of emotional blackmail employed in the selected data?
2. What informal fallacious appeals do emotional blackmailers employ to perform emotional blackmail?
3. How do emotional blackmailers use the transitivity system to influence their victims?
4. How do emotional blackmailers use the attitude categories to influence their victims?

2 Literature review

2.1 Emotional blackmail

Emotional blackmail, which Forward and Frazier (1997) define as a kind of blackmail that uses specialized tools to control and influence others, may occur in almost every social interaction and setting. Emotional blackmail rips up the safety net that every relationship requires, as well as the characteristics that allow people to open up and reveal their most private thoughts and feelings to another. To control their victims' emotions, blackmailers may undermine their self-esteem, diminish their abilities, and erode their confidence (Mu-Tzu, 2017).

Requests indicate that the sender wants the recipient to take a specific action, which is not indicative of what the hearer will often do (Trosborg, 1995, as cited in Abass et al., 2023). To make requests, blackmailers usually use three tools which are fear, obligation, and guilt. The acronym FOG is used to represent the three tools. By immersing their victims in a dense FOG, blackmailers ensure that they are scared to approach them, feel compelled to regard them with deference, and will suffer severe consequences if they fail to comply. Blackmailers create a thick FOG impermeable to even the most intelligent and gifted people to conceal their deceit and to obscure their manipulative activities, making them almost imperceptible. To guarantee that their victims feel powerless when confronted with blackmail, blackmailers conceal the truth. FOG denotes both the haziness and the uncertainty in such situations (Forward & Frazier, 1997).

2.1.1 Types of emotional blackmailers

Emotional blackmail, like conventional blackmail, involves using another person's secrets and playing on their emotions to extract something from them. By attentively considering the exposition by Forward and Frazier (1997) on

emotional blackmail as a potent form of control, one may see that individuals in their inner circle use direct and indirect threats as a means of retribution when their victims fail to comply with their demands. The foundation of every blackmail is a fundamental threat, which may manifest itself in several ways. Blackmailers may, for example, attempt to tarnish the reputation of their targets by referencing personal information from their past. They could even demand cash in exchange for concealing information. As per this view, emotional blackmail encompasses financial payments and other coercive measures, like the confession of information or the destruction of one's reputation.

Regarding the possible risks associated with emotional blackmail, Forward and Frazier (1997, pp. 31–49) delineate four distinct categories of emotional blackmailers:

1. Punishers appear as the most conspicuous blackmailers due to their explicit use of force and threats. Blackmailers of this kind often use coercive language such as "If you do X, I will do Y". Threats may be direct or indirect, delivered by withholding or silence. If the requests of the punisher are not conceded, the addressee could be subjected to bodily harm, psychological isolation, monetary deprivation, or abandonment. The following is an example of such a statement: "Should you elect to spend the evening with your friends, I will be unavailable upon your return".
2. Self-punishers use threats of self-harm instead of negative consequences when it comes to influencing others. Self-punishers often hold others responsible for their conduct and the outcomes that ensue during times of extreme distress. Consider the following: "I will become depressed, relapse, lose my job, contemplate suicide, etc. if you do not do X". A considerable number of individuals who engage in self-punishment find it challenging to believe in themselves and become dependent on others. Blackmailers exploit individuals' feelings of obligation and compromise their stability by emphasizing their helplessness and assuming the role of the rescuer; for example, one can be threatened with self-harm or death to provide the victim with some solace.
3. Sufferers experiencing negative emotions (e.g., loneliness, illness, misfortune) believe that fulfilling their aspirations may expeditiously overcome such experiences (e.g., financial assistance or more frequent phone calls). Certain people express their discontent publicly, but others may bear their pain in silence and communicate their emotions via nonverbal cues like body language. Sufferers who hold this notion are irritated when others cannot comprehend their thinking. Nevertheless, they possess considerable skill in insinuating guilt and leveling charges; they often deceive us into believing

they understand their aims so that we will be obligated to ensure they succeed. This category contains the following: "Being away makes me lonely. Return to put an end to my torment".

4. Tantalizers: In contrast to the other types, the blackmail tactic used by the tantalizer is far more sophisticated. Restrictions or prerequisites, such as financial remuneration, professional progression, or the quest for an ideal romantic relationship, often accompany the commitments that entice. By fulfilling their demands, tantalizers often breach their pledges by fabricating new excuses as to why the aid that they have obtained falls short of their expectations. Therefore, emotional blackmailers may use the tactful promise technique, as implied by the name tantalizing. This category includes statements such as "We will have far more fun tonight if you remain home than if you go out. This is crucial for the preservation of our connection".

2.2 Discursive pragmatics of emotional blackmail

This approach aims to explain language use processes and their relationship with language structures. Charles Morris, a philosopher, initially proposed the contemporary idea of pragmatics as the study of language in use in 1938. He states that pragmatics is the study of meaning as it is expressed and shaped by communicative participants rather than as it is produced by the linguistic system (as cited in Mohammed & Abbas, 2016). Thus, although discursive pragmatics might initially seem contradictory by combining two distinct referents—discourse analysis and pragmatics—it serves as a valuable tool for fostering common ground among researchers who approach language use from either perspective. This facilitates communication and the cross-fertilization of ideas (Zienkowski et al., 2011). Al-Hindawi and Saffah (2017) note that pragmatics and discourse analysis are sometimes regarded as interdisciplinary fields because both focus on aspects of language that are context-dependent.

Barron and Schneider (2014) suggest that the study of discourse should not be viewed as separate from pragmatics; rather, it can be seen as an integral part of it. The pragmatics of discourse and the pragmatics of utterance represent two complementary levels of analysis that emphasize both global and local aspects of human interaction. While the latter focuses on investigating speech acts as fundamental units of analysis, the former examines how these speech acts combine into larger units. Puig (2003) argues that both domains—pragmatics and discourse analysis—move beyond formal descriptions of phrases to concentrate on higher-level components such as speech acts and conversational turns. Both approaches investigate context and its structuring; however, pragmatics places greater emphasis on identifying speaker intentions and recovering covert

meanings that listeners need to access. Coulthard (1985) explains that discourse analysis examines how stretches above the sentence level are interconnected. Additionally, it aims to depict the construction of supra-sentential text or social transactions by applying specific analytical frameworks to data—either overtly or covertly.

The definition that best exemplifies language as a kind of social interaction is the one that can bring together the many different approaches to discourse (Mohammed & Kadum, n.d.). Consequently, discursive pragmatics focuses on analyzing discourse through a pragmatic lens, emphasizing the relationship between language use and social context (Moeschler & Reboul, 2009). Contemporary research in discursive pragmatics highlights socially oriented scholarship and considers a broader scope of context when interpreting meanings, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field (Vásquez & Kreis, 2023). Accordingly, Zienkowski et al. (2011) introduced the term "discursive pragmatics" to denote an inter-disciplinary and inter-theoretical field of great communicative potential for researchers who intend to carry out their research from a pragmatic and discursive perspective to approach language use empirically. Zienkowski et al. (2011) focused on discourse analysis through a pragmatic lens, emphasizing the functional and communicative aspects of language use.

The study of language in the contexts in which it is used is involved in pragmatics and discourse analysis. Pragmatics focuses on how the environment influences meaning. The context of the situation is essential to the study of pragmatics and the context of the situation is a representation of life (Muhammad, 2021). Accordingly, life encompasses the social, political, and cultural settings, as well as any and all other contexts in which discourse analysis is used to investigate the language utilized in various life situations. Within the field of linguistics, discourse analysis refers to the process of investigating how individuals interact with one another, the tools that they employ during interaction, the social and historical contexts that they encounter, as well as the functions that are produced through language in interaction (Nunan, 1993, as cited in Rashid, 2021). In light of this, the evaluation system drawn from systemic functional linguistics is part of discursive pragmatics. The attitude category of the evaluation system is a representation of speech acts in nature, even though it serves to criticize, express sentiments, appreciate, assess, laud, and condemn, as well as other activities realized by the evaluative categories. Furthermore, in the Transitivity System, the meaning transmitted by the processes and participants may be influenced by the speaker's purpose, the information that has previously been exchanged between the participants, or the context of the conversation. In other words, the discourse structures might affect the pragmatic sense. As a result, the most

comprehensible method for analyzing the language of emotional blackmail from the perspective of contextual and functional meaning in the social environment of American movies is discursive pragmatic analysis.

To analyze the selected extracts from a discursive pragmatic perspective, an eclectic model comprising emotional blackmail types and tools is developed. Additionally, the informal fallacy, transitivity system, and attitude system are employed. The component systems of the model are explained in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Informal fallacy

Since pragmatics studies how context affects meaning, it is crucial to comprehend informal fallacies, which usually feature unclear wording or implicit assumptions that might deceive listeners. When considering the type and variety, more than 300 kinds of fallacies have been reported (Zhou, 2018). Moreover, among them, the most popular one often used in political debates is ad hominem, which means attacking personal issues. However, to make it practical, logical fallacies are classified in a fallacy taxonomy and divided into four broad categories: manipulating through language, emotions, distraction, and inductive fallacy (Mayfield, 2010). For the purpose of the current study, only three categories of informal fallacy are adopted which cope with emotional blackmail fallacious discourse intended to manipulate target participants. The following are informal fallacies:

1. Manipulating via emotions

- Appeal to guilt: Attempts to influence others by making them feel guilty and blamed
- Appeal to fear: Attempts to convince by the induction of fear
- Appeal to pity: Attempts to convince by invoking sympathy
- Appeal to false authority: Attempts to convince by using a fabricated or unsuitable authority
- Appeal to bandwagon: Attempts to convince by capitalizing on the common sense of momentum
- Appeal to prejudice is divided into:
  i. Personal attack: An attack on an individual's character over issues that are not pertinent to the topic at hand
  ii. Poisoning the well: An attempt to spread discord among individuals, groups, or concepts to prevent their arguments from being evaluated based on their merits

2. Manipulating via distraction

– Red herring: Substitutes other concerns for the main focus
– Pointing to another wrong: The claim is that comparable conduct went unpunished and ignored
– Straw man: One refutes a small point in an argument and then asserts that this attack renders the whole argument worthless and void
– Circular reasoning: Varieties of the same conclusion's wording

3. Manipulation via inductive fallacy

– Either-or fallacy: Falsely asserts that there are numerous alternatives; however, there are only two extreme options
– Inconsistencies and contradictions: Presents assertions in conflict with one another
– Loaded questions: Employs an unfair question
– False analogy: Neglects substantial distinctions when comparing two entities
– False cause: Unreasonable assertion of a causal relationship

2.2.2 Transitivity system

A strong foundation for comprehending manipulation in interpersonal communication is provided by using the SFL notion of transitivity to investigate emotional blackmail. With a focus on the interaction between the verb (process), its participants (actors and goals), and the context of the action, transitivity describes how activities and participants are represented in language. Thompson (2004) remarked that transitivity denotes a framework that characterizes the whole phrase instead of only the verb and its object. It explains how the subject and predicate convey meaning by the verb (Hancock, 2005). This procedure encompasses a variety of participants and processes. A process is defined as the "occurrence" reflected across the whole clause (Bloor & Bloor, 1995). Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) classified processes into six categories:

1. Material processes
   Material processes signify actions or occurrences that transpire in the external environment outside the realm of human beings (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). This procedure pertains to the corporeal experience of individuals. Halliday (1994) noted that material processes are "doing" processes. These processes convey that a particular entity performs an action that may be performed on another entity. Clauses that pertain to a material process are required to have three elements: a doing (process), a doer (participant I), and an entity to whom the process is directed or extended (participant II).

2. Mental processes
   Verbs denoting perception, cognition, love, and desire include mental processes. They facilitate the expression of ideas, thoughts, and preferences by language users to assist in the delineation of their respective conceptions of reality. This process type is often expressed using the verbs *fear, want, like, think, dislike, disgust, deter, admire,* and *enjoy*. Material processes are distinct from mental processes in that they are concrete, as well as in motion, and tangible deeds. A mental process, from a semantic standpoint, incorporates the senses of a conscious human being. The mental process is associated with issues of psychology (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
3. Relational processes
   The relationship between entities is conceptualized through the relational processes identification, attribution, and possession (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014). The process takes place both inside and outside human beings. Relational processes are often executed using *to be* or related verbs class (sometimes called copular verbs), including the following: *appear, seem, become, sound, look*, etc. Alternatively, at times, *own* and *have* are used.
4. Behavioral processes
   They include psychological activities, such as respiration, sleeping, snoring, smiling, hiccuping, staring, observing, attentiveness, and contemplation (Gerot & Wignel, 1994). These processes are the least different of the six process categories due to the absence of clearly defined traits; they partially resemble the material and mental processes. This kind may be described as the ambiguous region between material and mental processes. Behavioral processes often include a single participant, a human, who is assumed to be the behaver (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
5. Verbal processes
   Speaking is undeniably a kind of act including verbs of 'saying'. Verbal processes demonstrate information-related behaviours. The procedure consists of saying, speaking, commanding, requesting, and providing (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2014).
6. Existential processes
   Existential processes are existence-related processes which serve as indicators of an event occurance. An existential process, as defined by Hancock (2005), is a sentence that only asserts the existence of a particular entity without making any further predictions about its nature. Apart from that, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014) explained that existential processes exhibit characteristics similar to relational processes, including using the verb *BE* (which includes *go, come, toil, exist, remain, arise, occur*, and *take place*). The common verbs are: *am, are, was, were, has, have been,* and so forth.

2.2.3 Appraisal system

Appraisal theory posits that emotions arise from individuals' evaluations of situations (Martin & Rose, 2003). In the context of emotional blackmail, the situational context significantly influences how victims perceive and respond to manipulative tactics. By applying attitudinal categories, researchers can analyze how different contexts (e.g., familial) affect the emotional responses elicited by emotional blackmailing behaviors. This analysis helps to clarify why certain manipulative strategies may be more effective in specific contexts. Appraisal, as a language of assessment or evaluation, is a theory of evaluation (Martin & Rose, 2003; Martin & White, 2005), and it is a new development within SFL (Halliday, 1994). It identifies meaning components that provide positive or negative connotations to the text. These elements of meaning function as language instruments for assessment. Using language evaluation instruments, text producers convey their perspectives about things, events, individuals, and so forth (Martin & White, 2005).

The appraisal system comprises three fundamental systems: attitude, engagement, and graduation. Attitude pertains to emotional states, judgements of people and behaviours, and appreciation of things. Engagement concerns the source of attitudes and the manipulation of discourse voices about views. Graduation, meanwhile, concerns gradability and focus on meaning (Hatem & Jameel, 2023). Moreover, an attitude may be categorized into three domains: affect, judgment, and appreciation. Affect is the psychological experience of positive and negative emotions. Judgment pertains to an individual's disposition towards conduct. The appraisal of entities is the focus of appreciation. Affect is further classified into three categories of emotional appraisal: happiness, security, and satisfaction. Judgment is sub-classified into those appraisals that involve ethical and legal values (values of "social sanction": veracity and propriety) and those that belong to a person's esteem in the community but which are not of an ethical or moral nature (appraisal of normality, capacity, and tenacity, termed 'social esteem'). Appreciation is the appraisal of an entity's valuation, reaction, and composition. For a complete account of these attitudinal categories and subcategories, see Martin and White (2005).

3 Methodology

The present study uses a qualitative research approach to examine five extracts from five distinct modern American movies depicting emotional blackmail between individuals in various relationships. The reason for choosing these extracts is that they are the most representative of emotional blackmail as a main theme. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that the qualitative research

method investigates events and objects in their natural settings to interpret or make sense of occurrences via the lens of the meanings that individuals ascribe to them. Aside from that, qualitative research emphasizes the importance of the social environment in understanding social behaviour (Neuman, 2014). Choosing a qualitative method for analyzing emotional blackmail is particularly advantageous due to several compelling reasons that align with the complexities of human emotions. Since emotional blackmail involves intricate emotional manipulations that are often difficult to quantify, qualitative methods allow researchers to delve deeply into participants' experiences, capturing the subtleties of their feelings and interactions. This depth is crucial for understanding how individuals perceive and respond to emotional blackmail, which may vary significantly from one context to another. In summary, qualitative research provides a robust framework for analyzing emotional blackmail by facilitating an in-depth exploration of complex emotions, offering flexibility in research design.

The devices utilized for data collection and analysis are referred to as the primary research instruments. Bogdan and Biklen (1982) explain that the main instrument used in a qualitative study is the researcher. Hence, the researcher serves as the main instrument in this study. The following steps were conducted to gather the data: First, the movies were watched multiple times before selecting the most suitable for analysis. Second, selected scripts were then thoroughly examined to comprehend the speech. Third, extracts containing emotional blackmail, showing at least one of the forms of informal fallacy, the transitivity system, and attitude categories, were exclusively gathered.

The discursive pragmatic analysis in the current study was divided into two parts: the first part was related to the pragmatic analysis and the second part was related to the discursive analysis. The pragmatic analysis was carried out by employing the informal fallacy while the discursive analysis was carried out by adapting the transitivity system and the attitude system. The extracts were analyzed using an eclectic framework. The use of pragmatic and discursive methods to coerce others emotionally was interpreted drawing on Halliday's (1994) transitivity system, Martin and White's (2005) attitude system, and Mayfield's (2010) informal fallacy. By conducting a qualitative analysis of the movie extracts, the present research attempted to decipher the societal language used to symbolize emotional blackmail.

4 Analysis and discussion

In this section, each of the five extracts that represent five movies is presented first as a quote followed by some contextualization and analyzed and discussed in light of the eclectic model proposed.

4.1 Extract 1: 'Room' (2015)

Ma: "If we don't leave soon, we won't be able to leave. We'll be stuck here forever, Jack. You don't want that, do you? You want to stay locked up here?"

Contextualization of extract 1

A gripping drama, the movie chronicles the experiences of Ma, a young mother, and Jack, her son, who are kept hostages by "Old Nick" in a tiny, soundproof hut. In the extract, Ma conveys to Jack her imperative to liberate them from captivity. She emphasizes the repercussions of remaining, particularly the possibility of imprisonment in the chamber eternally. She challenges Jack's inclination to stay confined and urges him to contemplate the significance of their liberty. Ma emotionally blackmails her son Jack to convince him to participate in their escape plan.

Analysis of extract 1

Type of emotional blackmailer

Ma, in Extract 1, assumes the role of a punisher by implying that Jack's refusal to comply with her demand would result in dire consequences. Ma declares, "If we don't leave soon, we won't be able to leave. We'll be stuck here forever". Through emphasizing the adverse repercussions of remaining, she instills in him a dread of being ensnared and unable to escape their predicament. This threat is intended to coerce Jack into complying with her desires by instilling a sense of responsibility for their future. She states that Jack's refusal will lock him up forever.

Tools of emotional blackmail

Ma uses two tools, guilt and fear, to emotionally blackmail Jack. Ma asks, "You don't want that, do you? You want to stay locked up here?" This query incites remorse and guilt inside Jack and suggests that his intention to remain within their restricted area would constitute a betrayal or guilt to Ma. Through the strategic phrasing of the inquiry, she manipulates Jack's emotions in a manner that serves her own interests, so impeding his ability to articulate any desire to remain. The extract also contains words by Ma that are primarily concerned with generating fear and using it to control Jack's actions and decisions. She employs emotional blackmail by instilling a feeling of urgency and exploiting Jack's fear of being ensnared in their present predicament.

Informal fallacy

In consensus with the emotional blackmail tools, the fallacy in discourse is emotional by manipulating emotions: appeal to fear and appeal to guilt. In this regard, Ma uses inductive fallacy, specifically, the either-or fallacy, when she puts Jack between two choices: support her plans or be locked up forever. This fallacy corresponds with the threat to put her victim between two choices, one with negative results. Another type of inductive fallacy is the loaded question when Ma asks Jack, "You don't want that, do you? You want to stay locked up here?" These questions manipulate Jack's mentality to rethink his destinations and preferences, as well as to imagine the potential of imprisonment in the same place for a lifetime.

Transitivity System

Within this extract, Ma articulates her apprehensions and endeavors to get Jack to leave their present place. The processes and participants engaged in her assertions are exposed using the transitivity analysis. By stating, "If we don't leave soon", she establishes a conditional circumstance and stresses the possible repercussions of being stranded there indefinitely. Ma then employs a mental process of 'want' to stimulate Jack's desire before asking if he wants to remain incarcerated. Using a conditional process she realizes the either-or fallacy, putting only two choices in front of Jack. The verb *leave* is a material process, and Ma and Jack are the actors. The result of not performing the material action would be the attributive process 'be able' where they will be the carrier of the state of inability to leave and then stuck forever.

Attitude system

To raise fear and guilt in Jack, Ma uses implied meanings of insecurity and incapability as represented by -security and -capability as in [-security: "If we don't leave soon, we won't be able to leave."], [-security: "We'll be stuck here forever, Jack".], and [-capability: "We'll be stuck here forever, Jack".]. Ma thinks she and Jack are insecure, scared, and in no position to encourage him, she thinks he is scared of staying; appreciating them as stuck indicates a willingness to accept an ability that is frightful. This appraisal realizes the implied threat.

4.2 Extract 2: 'Moonlight' (2016)

Paula: "I'm sorry for everything, Chiron. I messed up your life. I know I ain't been no mother. But I love you. You gonna help me, ain't you? You gonna take care of your momma, right?"

Contextualization of extract 2

A coming-of-age movie, this Barry Jenkins production chronicles the experiences of Chiron, a young African-American male protagonist, as he confronts the complexities of his personal life, sexual orientation, and the adversities of being in a dangerous Miami area. In the extract, Paula, the mother of Chiron, is overheard lamenting her previous deeds and recognizing her deficiencies as a caregiver. She expresses remorse to Chiron for her perceived detrimental influence on his life and acknowledges failing to fulfil her responsibilities as a mother. Conversely, she proclaims her affection for him and begs for his assistance and encouragement. By appealing to Chiron's emotions, Paula commits emotional blackmail in this extract. She tries to make Chiron feel responsible for her well-being by admitting her mistakes and expressing regret. She wants Chiron to do what she wants, as well as get her help and care, so she uses manipulative words and emotional pressure.

Analysis of extract 2

Types of emotional blackmailer

Here, Paula is a sufferer. She implies that she would suffer alone and that she needs good care. She implies that she would suffer if he would leave her with no help, as in, "You gonna help me, ain't you? You gonna take care of your momma, right?"

Tools of emotional blackmail

Remorse and guilt are conveyed by Paula's words, "Chiron, I apologize for everything. I caused chaos in your life. As anybody can tell, I have not been a good mother". She talks about how she has failed and affected his life negatively. Chiron is made to feel responsible for her own welfare by this guilt-tripping tactic.

Informal fallacy

To stimulate Chiron's guilt, Paula uses emotional fallacy, including appeals to guilt and pity. Paula confesses guilt for corrupting her son's life. Guilt, here, is not oriented towards the victim to blame but instead on the blackmailer herself to stimulate emotional reaction and acceptance in "I'm sorry for everything, Chiron. I messed up your life. I know I ain't been no mother". Paula seeks pity by implying how she loves her son and needs help and care as a mother in "But I love you. You gonna help me". Another type of fallacy is the inductive fallacy, where Paula uses a kind of emotionally loaded questions to stimulate Chiron's

thinking about her rights, needs, and being his mother in "You gonna help me, ain't you? You gonna take care of your momma, right?". This is to assert the fact that she is his mother realizing the fallacy of wrong authority when she reminds him of her motherhood in "your momma".

Transitivity system

In this extract, Paula expresses her emotions and appeals to Chiron using different processes. She apologizes for her past actions, acknowledges her failure as a mother, expresses love for Chiron, as well as requests his assistance and care. Paula commits emotional blackmail through different processes. To show guilt and remorse, Paula uses a relational attributive process where she carries the attribute "sorry" to identify herself as regretful and a carrier of guilt. The process is material in "I messed up your life"; Paula is the actor in the messing process and admits her responsibility in corrupting her son's life. This supports her appeal to guilt. The other material process is found in 'help' and 'take care' where Chiron is the actor and Paula is the goal. This process realizes the target action desired by Paula in which the help and care of her son are reflected. There are two mental processes in "I know I ain't been no mother. But I love you": 'know', where Paula is a senser to confess her guilt of being not a good mother and 'love', where she is again the senser to stimulate pity and get her son to sympathize with her.

Attitude system

Paula's remarks in this extract show many parts of the attitude system. She shows genuine sorrow for the toll on Chiron's life and his feelings for her. One example of her critical attitude is her expectation that Chiron would assist and look after her when she admits she has failed as a mother. On top of that, she shows gratitude for his help and concern. This system is shown in terms of -happiness, -satisfaction, -capability, and +happiness. The word "sorry" denotes negative emotions of sadness to express her emotional reaction to being guilty as a mother as in [-happiness: "I'm sorry for everything".]. Paula supports her remorse and appeal of guilt by using words denoting her dissatisfaction with her deeds with her son by describing her actions as a "mess" as in [-satisfaction: "I messed up your life"]. The mother keeps expressing her guilt by describing herself as "no mother" to appraise her actions as being away from motherhood. She judges herself as incapable of being a mother. This supports her feeling of guilt and stimulates pity as in [-capability: "I know I ain't been no mother"]. Moreover, the mother influences her son by showing positive emotions to fulfil her desire [+happiness: "But I love you"].

4.3 Extract 3: 'The Florida Project' (2017)

Halley: "I need some money, Ashley. I don't know what to do. I'm desperate. Please, I have no one else. You're my only hope. I thought you were my friend."

Contextualization of extract 3

The movie, directed by Sean Baker, provides an in-depth examination of the lives of those who are impoverished on the outskirts of Orlando, Florida. In this extract, one of the main characters, Halley, communicates with her buddy Ashley that she is in a dire situation and cannot turn to anybody else for financial assistance. Halley emotionally blackmails her friend, Ashley, pleading for financial assistance. Using victimology and guilt-tripping, Halley commits emotional blackmail in this extract. By showing her distress and stressing how much she relies on her, she aims to touch Ashley's emotions. By doing this, Halley tries to convince Ashley to give her the necessary funds.

Analysis of extract 3

Type of emotional blackmailer

Halley is a sufferer blackmailer who presents herself as a victim by stating, "I thought you were my friend". This implies that Ashley's refusal to help would not align with the expectations of a friend, creating a sense of guilt or obligation. She means that she would suffer because of the need for money.

Tools of emotional blackmail

Halley suggests guilt by her statement. By emphasizing her lack of control and depicting Ashley as her only support system, she instills in Ashley a sense of responsibility for Halley's predicament.

Informal fallacy

Halley's declaration, "I am at a loss for what to do. Desperate, I am. Kindly, I have no one else to ask. You are the only hope I have", may be interpreted as an appeal to pity. This fallacy attempts to elicit compassion from Ashley by accentuating Halley's dire circumstances and the absence of viable choices. Despite the fact that the first appeal for assistance may not be flawed, an argument based purely on pity can be flawed. Halley's remark, "I thought you were my friend", can be seen as an attempt to coerce Ashley into transferring the funds based on their purported relationship. Although this does not qualify as a fallacy, Halley's inference that a genuine friend would provide financial aid might potentially amount to guilt by association.

Transitivity system

Within this extract, Halley articulates her financial exigency, her despair, and her need for Ashley's assistance. In the clause "I need some money, Ashley", the process is mental, expressing the necessity of money and asserting the demand to Ashley. In the clause "I don't know what to do", Halley expresses a mental process negated to show her worry and need for money while for the clause "I'm desperate", the process here is a relational process where Halley is the carrier of the attribute "desperate", which is employed to elicit sympathy from Ashley. Besides, the verb in the clause "You're my only hope" indicates a relational process where Ashley is identified as Halley's "only hope". This process serves to influence Ashley to get financial help. In the clause "I thought you were my friend", Halley uses the mental process "thought" to provide alternatives for Ashley being a friend. In other words, Halley implies that Ashley is not a real friend if she does not help Halley with the money.

Attitude system

Halley's words in this extract communicate many elements of the attitude system. The individual recognizes her financial exigency, conveys doubt and despair, begs for aid, shows gratitude for Ashley's probable support, and assesses their relationship. The aforementioned views indicate Halley's affective condition, convictions, and assessments of her circumstances, as well as her relationship with Ashley. In this extract, the -security/-capacity, -happiness, +capacity, and -satisfaction are identified.

Halley exhibits a sense of insecurity and ignorance about the most effective course of action in her predicament. This would elicit Ashley's pity. Halley concedes that she needs funds, so expressing an evaluation of her present financial condition as incapable of providing enough money that she needs as in [-security/-capacity: "I don't know what to do"]. Halley conveys a sense of desperation, indicating a negative affective attitude about her circumstances. The negative attitude reflecting negative emotions is used to manipulate Ashley emotionally as in [-happiness: "I'm desperate"]. Halley appraises Ashley positively as the only one capable of helping him. This is opposition to the Appraisal of Halley of himself as incapable. Halley expresses gratitude towards Ashley for the possibility that she may serve as a rescuer or a source of assistance as in [+capacity: "You're my only hope"]. Halley's dissatisfaction or perplexity with Ashley's supposed friendliness indicates a pessimistic assessment of their relationship as in [-satisfaction: "I thought you were my friend"].

4.4 Extract 4: 'The Shape of Water' (2017)

Strickland: "You see, Doctor, I have a secret too. Something so secret it must be silenced. If you don't help me, I will expose you for what you really are."

Contextualization of extract 4

Strickland is a government agent shown in the movie as having apprehended an aquatic monster and in this extract he is addressing Dr. Robert Hoffstetler. Strickland is seen in the extract indulging in emotional blackmail, threatening the other individual, who is a physician and seeking to control him. By putting logical thinking aside in favour of emotional blackmail, informal fallacies are committed by Strickland. By establishing a power dynamic via the transitivity system, Strickland positions himself as the possessor of authority over the physician. Ultimately, Strickland's manipulative demeanor becomes apparent via the assessment system, which is marked by threats, intimidation, and emotional exploitation.

Analysis of extract 4

Type of blackmailer

Strickland uses emotional blackmail by threatening to expose the doctor for something unknown. The aim is to create fear and pressure to force the doctor into helping Strickland. Henceforth, the blackmailer, Strickland, is a punisher.

Tool of emotional blackmail

In this extract, Strickland uses fear to manipulate the doctor. This fear is represented by the threat of revealing the doctor's secret.

Informal fallacy

Appeal to fear and intimidation is used in this extract to influence and control the doctor by threatening him, as well as instilling in him apprehension around the disclosure of his top secret.

Transitivity system

The goal of Strickland's statement is to elicit the doctor's cooperation. Strickland wants the doctor to help him with something that is not explicitly mentioned in the given extract. In contrast, the subsequent statement implies the goal: "If you don't help me, ...". The verb *have* in "I have a secret too" denotes a relational process where Strickland is the carrier and having the money is the attribute. Strickland states that he possesses a secret. This process of having a

secret is attributed to him. This process highlights the information that Strickland has against the doctor. In Strickland's statement, "It must be silenced", the secret is anything that must be disguised or kept hidden. The phenomenon of the secret being silenced is ascribed to the secret itself. The process is relational attributive. The secret is the token and (be silenced) is the value attributed to the secret. The relational attributive process shows the value of the secret when silenced, that is, to control the doctor and keep that secret silenced. In his utterance "You see, Doctor", Strickland addresses the doctor directly, establishing the context of the conversation as a communication between them. He uses a mental process that elicits the doctor's thinking about his secret threatened by Stickland.

Attitude system

A perception of secrecy, authority, and compulsion marks Strickland's attitude in this extract. He frames his secret as a matter of great importance and underscores the imperative need to maintain its secrecy. His comment conveys an air of intimidation and menace, eliciting an adverse emotive reaction. This is implicit in: [-veracity/-propriety: "If you don't help me, I will expose you for what you really are"]. Strickland's remark suggests a negative judgment of the doctor, indicating negative veracity in that the doctor is not as he seems. Through his threat to expose the doctor, he implies that the doctor is hiding something or that his character is unwanted, which reflects negative morals (propriety). This negative judgment aims to influence and coerce the doctor into granting Strickland's demand.

4.5 Extract 5: 'Marriage Story' (2019)

Nicole: "You always make me feel like I'm never good enough. Like I'm always failing. You're so competitive. You can't help it. It's who you are. But you make me feel like I'm losing."

Contextualization of extract 5

The extract from the Noah Baumbach-directed movie 'Marriage Story' (2019) depicts Nicole, a pivotal character, conveying her feelings and frustrations to her spouse. The cinematic work explores the intricacies and difficulties that arise from a declining matrimonial union, as well as the consequent separation of Nicole from Charlie, her spouse. During an argument about their divorce, Nicole emotionally blackmails Charlie by revealing personal details. The above extract depicts Nicole using emotional blackmail on Charlie amid a dispute over their divorce. Emotional blackmail is distinguished by the use of guilt to manipulate her husband by the disclosure of personal information.

Analysis of extract 5

Types of emotional blackmailer

In this extract, Nicole is a sufferer. She states that if Charlie keeps behaving the same way, she will continue suffering and feeling like she is losing her life and marriage. She tells him they are in a competition where she is the loser. She states that because he does not want to continue their marriage, she feels insufficient: "You always make me feel like I'm never good enough".

Tool of emotional blackmail

Nicole starts by stating, "You always make me feel like I'm never good enough. Like I'm always failing". The purpose of this comment is to instill guilt in Charlie over his actions and suggest that he is responsible for her sense of inadequacy. Nicole attempts to influence his emotions and create a sympathetic reaction by attributing responsibility to him.

Informal fallacy

Nicole uses emotional fallacies, which are appeals to guilt and pity. Nicole, as explained above, stimulates emotions of guilt in Charlie as being responsible for her suffering and feeling insufficient. Besides that, she makes him sympathize with her suffering, feeling like a failure, a loser, and not good enough as a wife to cancel the divorce or at least carry the blame for the break-up. Furthermore, Nicole uses manipulation by the distraction fallacy. She employs the fallacy of pointing to another wrong. Nicole claims that Charlie puts her as an opponent in their relationship. Being competitive implies that Charlie does his best to get her out of the game (marriage) as a loser. This means that Charlie is wrong by considering her an enemy to falsify.

Transitive analysis system

Nicole uses the transitivity system in this extract to articulate her emotions, evaluations, and the repercussions of Charlie's conduct on her. The centrality of the verb *make* in her emotional blackmail implies that Charlie's acts lead her to feel insufficient and as if she is losing. In her statement: "You always make me feel like I'm never good enough", the verb *make* is a material process where Charlie is an actor, and Nicole is a goal affected by the process which transforms her and causes her to be a loser. Putting Charlie in the position of an actor and herself as a goal, Nicole supports her tool of guilt, and the fallacy is pointing out another's wrong. The causative verb *make* denotes Charlie as a responsible actor for her state of suffering. In her statement, "You're so competitive", Nicole

uses a relational process "are" where Charlie is the carrier participant, and "competitive" is the attribute to portray Charlie as competing against Nicole as if they were in a game where one of them should lose. This process supports the fallacy of pointing to another's wrong by putting Charlie in the position of a comparison leader.

Attitude system

To assert being a sufferer, Nicole uses negative attitude characteristics to portray her state in the divorce condition. She appraises herself as follows: [-security: "feel like I'm never good enough"], [-security: "Like I'm always failing"] and [-security: "feel like I'm losing"]. Nicole feels insecure as if she is failing a competition and losing her marriage. She worries and is scared of how things are going with her husband. She expresses negative emotions that represent the suffering caused by Charlie and his decision to get a divorce. On the contrary, Charlie is appraised negatively as [-normality: "You're so competitive"]. Charlie is appraised negatively as having an opponent's character psychologically leads her to failure. Nicole supports herself by judging Charlie's personality as abnormal an unable to deal with a wife as an opponent.

5 Conclusion

Five extracts from five different movies regarding emotional blackmail were analyzed in the present study to uncover the types of emotional blackmailers, informal fallacy, transitivity system, and appraisal (attitude) system as a set of linguistic devices and strategies utilized by emotional blackmailers to control their victims. Regarding the first research question, the analysis revealed that punishers and sufferers are the most dominant types of blackmailers recognized in the extracts. They either highlight their suffering if their demands are neglected or threaten their victims with alarming consequences in the case of refusal. The tools emotional blackmailers mostly use to control their victims are fear and guilt. The fear raised in victims is caused by the punisher eliciting compliance, whereas the fear of the sufferer elicits pity for the victim. On the other hand, the guilt of the victim raises the potential for compliance. As for the second question, which is related to fallacies, it is concluded that appeals to fear, pity, and obligation, which are used to control victims, are the most prominent, and the either-or fallacy is used to threaten the victim, putting him/her between choices. The analysis regarding the third research question has shown that the material, relational, and mental processes are the most dominant processes used to manipulate victims. Material processes are used to denote actions of threat and guilt. Mental processes elicit emotions of fear, pity, and obligation. The

relational processes are used to describe the victim or the blackmailer in a way that intensifies the negativity of the sufferers and the guilty participants' state or the positivity of the victim when committing compliance. As the fourth research question shows, how the appraisal system (attitude) is also effectively utilized to realize emotions, the most important of which are fear (-security) and sadness (-happiness), and negative evaluations of participants who suffer, feel guilty, and feel incapable. On the other hand, the victims are described and judged positively to comply with the blackmailers' demands. Despite this, the results cannot be generalized due to the study's limitations in that one extract is analyzed from each movie using specific linguistic tools.

This study is hoped to help individuals develop an in-depth understanding of emotional blackmail and identify the linguistic indicators or patterns that can be used to identify emotional blackmail in interactions with others. Moreover, it provides an understanding of the tactics employed by emotional blackmailers that may be gained by looking into the logical fallacies, transitivity processes, and attitude categories found in manipulative discourse. Besides, it is hoped that it will enrich the fields of literature and specific fields of linguistics, namely, pragmatics and discourse analysis. Finally, since discursive pragmatics is a new field of study and is open to a wide variety of studies to be tackled from pragmatic and discoursal perspectives, teachers of linguistics, students, and researchers can benefit from it. As such, the present study paves the way for future work in other genres using similar or different approaches.

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EXPLORING THE CONSTRUCTION OF ACADEMIC AUTHORIAL PRESENCE WITHIN DIVERSE DISCIPLINARY AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Ghada AlGhamdi

Abstract

This study explores how academic authorial presence is constructed across disciplines and cultural contexts, focusing on differences between Arab Academic English Authors (AAEAs) and Academic English Authors (AEAs). Despite previous studies examining authorial roles and self-representation in academic writing, there still is a gap in comparisons between AAEAs and AEAs. This study investigates the authorial roles assumed by AAEAs and AEAs and how these roles intertwine to construct authorial presence. A taxonomy of authorial representation developed by Tang and John (1999) was employed, with further additions of new authorial roles due to the nature of the genre of research articles (RAs). Thus, authorial roles were analyzed in terms of their functional distribution in order to determine how they shape authorial presence. The analysis showed that AEAs had a higher authorial presence than AAEAs across disciplines, with political science exhibiting the most authoritative presence, followed by law and journalism. There was a difference in authorial presence based on cultural background, disciplinary norms, and the argumentative nature of the RA genre, with roles such as recounter of procedures and originator being more prevalent, while claimers and asserters were less prevalent. This study sheds light on the complex interrelationship between culture, discipline, and conventions of academic writing. In this way, we gain a deeper understanding of how authors establish authority and credibility in various academic contexts.

Keywords

academic writing, authorial presence, cultural influences, disciplinary conventions, Arab academic English authors, academic English authors

1 Introduction

Academic writing relies on authorial presence to establish authority, credibility, and expertise, but this presence extends beyond stylistic choices. It is shaped by academic disciplines, cultural norms, and authors' engagement with readers. There are varying expectations for authorial presence within academic communities as they become more diverse and interdisciplinary. Effective communication requires adapting writing styles to meet the demands of rigorous objectivity in the natural sciences, critical reflexivity in the humanities, and practical application in the social sciences. In addition, linguistic conventions and cultural traditions play a significant role in how authors assert their voice, identity, and influence. In this study, authorial presence is examined from a

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multifaceted perspective, emphasizing the interplay between disciplinary norms, cultural values, and sociolinguistic factors.

Ivanič (1998), Tang and John (1999), and Lillis (2003) highlighted how linguistic choices shape academic identity, forming the basis for analyzing authorial roles in this study. Throughout these studies, the functional aspects of authorial presence were highlighted, in addition to the communicative functions that authors performed through self-representation to establish their authority and credibility. These studies also indicate the importance of understanding the author's intent and purpose in their writing. Moreover, they point to the importance of recognizing the author's role in creating meaning through language.

Disciplines differ significantly in self-representation, reflecting their epistemological and rhetorical traditions. The first-person pronoun is frequently used by authors in the humanities to emphasize their role as interpreters, especially in philosophical, historical, and literary disciplines (Hyland, 2002b). Likewise, subjectivity is often integral to qualitative research in the social sciences, such as sociology, anthropology, and education, where authors convey their interpretations and evaluations through self-representation (Hyland, 2001; Fløttum et al., 2006; Starfield & Ravelli, 2006). In contrast, the natural sciences typically favor passive constructions and impersonal language to maintain objectivity and universality. Nevertheless, some subdisciplines, such as environmental science and biomedical research, increasingly emphasize authors' contributions. Similarly, engineering and technology disciplines focus on results and processes instead of self-representation. Self-representation, however, has become more prevalent in areas emphasizing innovation and personal expertise (Martín-Martín, 2003).

Across cultures, authorial presence is shaped by linguistic conventions, cultural norms, and values. In Anglophone academic contexts, self-representation is emphasized, with academic English authors (AEAs) frequently using first-person pronouns to establish authority and emphasize the novelty of their research (Hyland, 2002b). However, it is important to balance self-promotion with humility, as excessive self-representation could lead to an impression of arrogance (Harwood, 2005a). In contrast, East Asian cultures, such as those in China, Japan, and Korea, reflect values of modesty and collectivism, portray themselves in academic writing with a more reserved tone, and discourage overt self-promotion (Hu & Cao, 2011; Yang et al., 2015). Consequently, East Asian scholars often use passive constructions or refer to their work in the third person, with collaboration prioritized over individual achievements (Marginson & Yang, 2022). European academic writing varies, with southern countries like Italy and Spain adopting self-presentation patterns similar to those found in Anglophone countries, while northern countries like Finland and Sweden are more reserved

(Vassileva, 2001). Culture plays a large role in these variations, with South Europeans being more expressive and direct in their authorial presence than northerners.

Cultural values in the Arab world are highly collectivist (Hofstede, 2011), which impacts identity and decision-making. A major value of Arab cultures, according to Hofstede (2011), is collaboration and solidarity among members of the group. Cultures that place a high priority on harmony and group consensus often display a subdued authorial presence. Rather than asserting individual opinions, authors may wish to align themselves with collective norms. The use of first-person pronouns can be avoided by those who adhere to collective norms and emphasize communal knowledge over individual opinions. Authors in individualistic cultures, however, are encouraged to highlight their unique perspectives and contributions. Individualistic Anglophone cultures may emphasize authorial presence by highlighting the author's originality and acknowledgment. Academic communication and authorship are influenced by underlying cultural values that differ between the two cultural contexts.

Research on personal pronouns is often either generalized as part of other discourse features or frequency-based without a functional analysis of self-representation. It would be more useful, however, to examine how these linguistic features contribute to the construction of authorial identity and the overall rhetorical strategy of research articles (RAs). Authorial presence and self-representation in RAs authored by Arab Academic English Authors (AAEAs) are also lacking in the literature. In light of Hofstede's (2011) suggestion that Arabic academic authors may adopt an impersonal authorial presence in order to align with the cultural and academic norms of their communities, it is important to investigate self-representation strategies in both AAEA and AEA RAs.

In contrast to the common misconception that native English-speaking authors are inherently more proficient than non-native English-speaking authors in non-Anglophone countries, AlGhamdi and Alyousef (2022) argued that this dichotomy is a "myth". The present study, therefore, adopts an institutional affiliation-based categorization of authors and moves beyond the traditional native/non-native speaker (NES/NNES) binary. It employs the terms Arab Academic English Authors (AAEAs) to refer to authors working in Arab universities or organizations, and Academic English Authors (AEAs) to denote authors working in Anglophone countries, even if English may not be their first language. A common view is that academic writing proficiency is more influenced by institutional context, disciplinary engagement, and exposure to English academic discourse than just first language. Following AlGhamdi and Alyousef (2022), I investigate how authorial presence varies across different institutional

settings (e.g., Arab vs. Anglophone). This approach allows for investigating how authors negotiate disciplinary discourse through norms and expectations embedded in institutional contexts. An analysis of the functional distribution of authorial roles in the construction of authorial presence is presented in this study. This study addresses the following research questions:

1. What authorial roles do AAEAs and AEAs assume in constructing their presence in English RAs?
2. How do these roles, shaped by disciplinary and cultural backgrounds, intertwine to construct authorial presence?

2 Theoretical framework

This paper examines self-representations through personal pronouns/nouns as linguistic features. Academic authors use self-representations for some purposes —organization, guidance, and acknowledgment. Author pronouns have been classified using several taxonomies (Bernhardt, 1985; Harwood 2003, 2005a, 2005b; Hyland, 2001, 2002b; Ivanič, 1998; Kuo, 1999; Sheldon, 2009; Starfield & Ravelli, 2006; Tang & John, 1999; Tarone et al., 1998; Vassileva, 1998). A pronominal signal analysis was conducted across languages (Molino, 2010; Sheldon, 2009; Vassileva, 1998) and within research articles sections (Harwood, 2005a; Martínez, 2005; Mur-Dueñas, 2007). Ivanič's (1998) seminal works have influenced how academic authors position themselves in the text. There is a continuum of *I* usage, ranging from no *I* use at all to using *I* to describe structured text, research, and cognitive processes (Ivanič, 1998). Pronominal discourse functions in academic writing have also been classified by Tang and John (1999). They developed their framework for first-person pronoun functionality based on the Systemic Functional Linguistics tradition of "creating identities". They proposed an authorial *I* continuum and power degrees embodied in first-person pronouns. Figure 1 shows the roles.

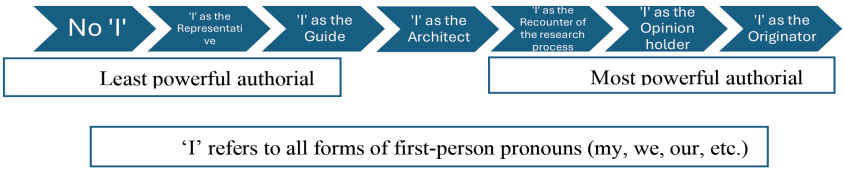


Figure 1: Tang and John's (1999) continuum of authorial presence in academic writing

Tang and Jones (1999) identified and ranked authorial roles based on their authorial power in academic essays. A strong authorial presence reflects both

the ability to control the text and demonstrate specialized knowledge. Their taxonomy ranges from least to most authoritative: (1) the representative, (2) the guide, (3) the architect, (4) the recounter of research procedures, (5) the opinion holder, and (6) the originator. Researchers have adapted Tang and John's (1999) taxonomy to create distinct authorial role categories. Starfield and Ravelli (2006) revised this by removing the "Representative" role and combining the "Guide" and "Architect" roles, making them the least authoritative. They also introduced the "Reflexive" role. Sheldon (2009) further refined this taxonomy, drawing on Ivanič's (1998) typologies and incorporating modifications from Tang and John (1999) and Starfield and Ravelli (2006). Sheldon's contribution was to introduce the concepts of narrativity and reflexivity within the Reflexive role. These taxonomies highlight how authorial presence varies across genres and disciplines.

In this paper, I explore patterns of authorial presence in research articles by AAEAs and AEAs across three disciplines—journalism, law, and political science —focusing on their use of first-person pronouns and author self-references. Based on this analysis, I propose the expansion of Tang and John's (1999) framework by introducing additional authorial roles, positioned between the opinion holder and the originator. These roles, ranked from least to most authoritative, are: advisor, evaluator, claimer, and asserter. The advisor role is characterized by offering suggestions and recommendations based on expertise, with a moderately authoritative presence, higher than the opinion holder but lower than the evaluator. The evaluator critically analyzes research, acknowledging its limitations and uncertainties, which gives their role a moderate to high level of authority, placing it above the advisor's but below the claimer's. Claimers, by contrast, present their findings or arguments with poise and ownership, but they remain open to further discussion and alternative viewpoints. This openness reflects a desire to participate in academic debate, and positions the claimer role as more authoritative than the evaluator but less so than the asserter. Asserters use assertive language to present their claims with confidence and conviction, implying that their conclusions cannot be disputed. This rhetorical stance conveys a higher degree of epistemic authority than that of claimers but lower than the originators. While the roles of claimer and asserter may seem similar, the key difference lies in the authority they project: claimers invite dialogue, while asserters make their claims seem indisputable. The two independent coders who participated in the data analysis addressed potential overlap by relying on contextual and linguistic cues (e.g., modality, stance markers) and discussing ambiguous cases collaboratively. The expanded framework contributes to our understanding of authorial presence in academic writing (Table 1).

	Authorial Role	Definition	Example
Least authoritative	The representative	The author is portrayed as a member of the broader community rather than as a prominent figure.	*The policy decisions that **we** have today reflect many years of strategic planning*. (L.-AAEA10)
	The guide	The author positions the reader in the context of the RA and highlights key landmarks.	*In Figure 5, **we can see** how the estimated effects of access are statistically indistinguishable from zero in 2000.* (J-AAEA12)
	The architect	The author structures the RA content and shapes the narrative.	***Next, I discuss** the factors in relation to government regulations as proposed in our research framework.* (L.-AAEA5)
	The recounter of research procedure	The author describes the stages of research, such as reading source materials, conducting interviews, and collecting data.	*To answer the second research question, **I examined** a larger corpus in the second level of analysis in relation to the Canadian press coverage of Somali Canadians using computational methods*. (J.-AAEA5)
	The opinion holder	The author expresses a personal viewpoint or attitude towards research findings or established facts.	***I think** that voter behavior and public opinion have been significantly influenced by the polarization of political parties.* (P.S.-AEA11)
	The advisor	The authors provide recommendations based on their findings, knowledge, and understanding of a particular research topic.	*Though these trends in television programming do not bode well for immigrant incorporation and participation, **I recommend** that future research continue to assess this vital resource.* (J.-AEA9)
	The evaluator	The author assesses or appraises previous research and makes evaluations based on findings, evidence, or standards.	***I use** a more robust dataset than Smith's (2015) findings, which rely heavily on small, non-representative samples*. (J.-AEA)
	The claimer	The author presents their argument with ownership while remaining open to alternative views.	***I argue** that the single-issue nature of most survey experiments masks systematic variation in elite cue effects across international issues.* (L.-AEA9)
	The asserter	The author presents their claim with strong conviction, signaling certainty and finality.	***I** thus **find strong** support for the notion that reputations can adhere to individual leaders as well as to states.* (P.S.-AEA4)
Most authoritative	The originator	The author claims authority over the content and positions themselves as a key contributor.	***I provide** the first comparative evidence to support the hypothesis, taking a wide variety of confounding.* (P.S.-AEA10)

Table 1: Authorial roles in RAs: Definitions and examples from least to most authoritative

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

This contrastive corpus-based study aimed to pragmatically explore how self-representations indicate the authorial presence in English research articles written by AAEAs and AEAs. It focused on the distribution tendencies of these self-representations within their disciplinary contexts (law, journalism, and political science) and cultural contexts (AAEAs and AEAs). Using a mixed-methods research design, a comprehensive analysis was conducted by combining quantitative data, which provided statistical insight into self-representations, as well as qualitative and quantitative analyses of authorial roles, which led to a deeper understanding of these patterns in light of context and culture. This approach ensured a more robust and holistic understanding of authorial presence in the analyzed research articles.

3.2 Data collection

A corpus of 90 research articles (RAs) was created based on selected disciplines and cultural groups, following a multi-stage process that involved 1) choosing academic disciplines, 2) selecting academic journals from those disciplines, and 3) identifying RAs from the chosen journals. The first stage used purposeful sampling to select disciplines, with law, journalism, and political science chosen for their relevance to cross-disciplinary rhetorical features and their under-researched status in ESP/EAP research, which are crucial for ESP/EAP instruction. These disciplines, all focused on empirical research through observations and measurements, were selected due to their distinctive rhetorical conventions. Journalism focuses on the subject rather than the writer in narratives. Law arguments emphasize deductive reasoning, commitment to objectivity, and reliance on institutional authority. Political science involves complex and ideologically charged issues, so authors usually make argumentative claims and take an explicit authoritative presence. Comparing these three disciplines allows for analysis of how various types of argumentation shape the construction of authorial presence in academic writing. Discipline-specific approaches to reasoning and argumentation can shape academic discourse through these contrasting disciplinary conventions.

In the second stage (Table 2), a two-step sampling procedure was used: quota sampling to select 30 journals from each discipline, followed by purposive sampling to ensure journal quality and representativeness using Clarivate Analytics' Journal Citation Reports (JCR).

Disciplines	Authors	Journals	Impact Factor
Journalism	AEAs	Journalism Practice	2.537 (2022)
		Journalism Studies	3.741 (2022)
	AAEAs	International Journal of Communication	1.802 (2022)
		Digital Journalism	7.986 (2022)
Law	AEAs	Journal of Empirical Legal Studies	1.610 (2022)
		Journal of Law and Society	1.029 (2022)
	AAEAs	International Journal of Law Psychiatry	1.851 (2022)
		European Journal of Law Economics	1.108 (2022)
Political Science	AEAs	British Journal of Political Science	5.174 (2022)
		American Journal of Political Science	6.081 (2022)
	AAEAs	Political Research Quarterly	2.556 (2022)
		Mediterranean Politics	2.588 (2022)

Table 2: A list of selected journals from each discipline

A probability sampling method combining random and stratified sampling was employed in the third stage of selecting research articles (RAs). To ensure a representative sample of the entire population, random RAs were chosen from different volumes and issues (Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The selected RAs were single-authored to control the use of *we* instead of *I*. RAs published between 2012 and 2022 were extracted from their respective journals and included in the sampling pool, with the focus solely on the results and discussion sections. Using Gotti's (2012) methodology and the Web of Science Core Collection, 90 RAs by AAEAs and AEAs were selected, with the authors' affiliations and social media presence confirmed. The total word count for the results and discussion sections across these articles was 163,443 (see Table 3).

Corpus	Disciplines	No. of Articles	No. of Words	Publication Date
AEAs	Journalism	15	28,999	2012–2022
	Law	15	24,602	
	Political Science	15	28,259	
AAEAs	Journalism	15	24,724	
	Law	15	25,077	
	Political Science	15	31,782	
Total		90	163,443	

Table 3: Summary of key features of the data

The Results and Discussion section was selected because it provides an opportunity for authors to demonstrate their scholarly voice, interpreting findings, placing themselves within existing research, and explaining their contribution. Authors primarily use these sections to establish their identities as researchers and to interact with the academic community. Since this study focuses on authorial presence, examining these sections offers insight into how authors deal with institutional influences and disciplinary expectations. Although other sections add to a research article's rhetorical structure, my focus allows for a more thorough and targeted examination of the instances in which authorial presence is most actively negotiated. This focused approach lays the foundation for a significant, nuanced understanding, though future research may broaden this scope.

3.3 Data analysis

In this contrastive corpus-based study, the data analysis procedure involved four main phases: indexing and categorization, functional analysis, second coder analysis, and statistical analysis.

First, instances of authorial presence were identified and categorized. Using QSR NVivo, a text search query was conducted to locate self-representations in the 90 Results and Discussion sections, with clause-by-clause annotations to thoroughly document the target features. Self-representation, encompassing both first-person and third-person references, includes pronouns (e.g., *I, my, we*) and nouns referring to the author. Although the first-person singular pronoun typically clearly identifies the writer, the first-person plural pronoun may be ambiguous, potentially referring to various entities (Biber, 2006). Second, a rhetorical analysis was employed, adapting Tang and John's (1999) framework to categorize self-representations into ten authorial roles: (1) the representative, (2) the guide, (3) the architect, (4) the recounter of research procedures, (5) the opinion holder, (6) the advisor, (7) the evaluator, (8) the claimer, (9) the asserter, and (10) the originator. Third, to ensure reliability, two samples from each discipline were coded by two independent coders using clause-by-clause annotations in QSR NVivo. The coders identified self-representation features and their functions, achieving an inter-coder agreement of 88.6%. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion and consensual coding (Kuckartz, 2014). A systematic coding scheme was applied to the corpus, achieving high intra-coder reliability (98.7%). Finally, the frequencies of self-representations were normalized per 10,000 words for each sub-corpus. A two-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effects of disciplinary and cultural contexts on these frequencies. To address significant results and avoid false positives, a Bonferroni post hoc test was performed to assess differences in self-representation strategies between writers.

4 Results and discussion

This section presents the results of quantitative and qualitative analyses of the use of self-representations. Overall, the AEAs showed a higher frequency of self-representational features across all disciplines than the AAEAs. After analyzing total token counts and normalized frequency data, the authorial roles are explored in depth.

4.1 Frequency patterns of authorial representation in the corpus

Table 4 shows that AEAs generally exhibited higher use of authorial presences than AAEAs across disciplines. Political science had the highest authorial presence in both cultural groups, especially AEAs (T = 149, M = 10.73), followed by law and journalism. AAEAs were less prevalent, with their authorial presence mostly found in Political Science (T = 56.39, M = 2.10). Such results show how discipline and cultural context have a combined effect on authorial presence (Figure 2). See Appendix for article-level frequency data.

	Journalism			**Law**			**Political Science**			
	T	M	SD	T	M	SD	T	M	SD	Total T
AEAs	34	1.26	2.12	55	4.03	3.77	149	10.73	8.17	238
AAEAs	11.7	0.78	1.11	18.92	2.1	2.08	56.39	2.1	4.02	87.01

(Note: T = Raw Total Tokens (unadjusted count), M = Mean frequency per 10,000 words, SD = Standard Deviation)

Table 4: Frequency counts and dispersion of authorial presence for AAEAs and AEAs in journalism, law, and political science

These differences align with expectations based on both disciplinary conventions and cultural norms. The AAEAs exhibited significantly less authorial presence, likely because academic papers are traditionally expected to be objective representations of an independent and external reality (Hyland, 2001). Among Arab academic circles, academic writing textbooks and academic writing instructors suggest the convention of impersonal reporting because any explicit author presence would defeat objectivity. Another possible explanation for their shunning of authorial presence is face-saving. As a result of avoiding self-representation, they made their writing appear objective and impersonal, thereby avoiding criticism or refutation from the audience (Hyland, 2001; Mur-Dueñas, 2007).

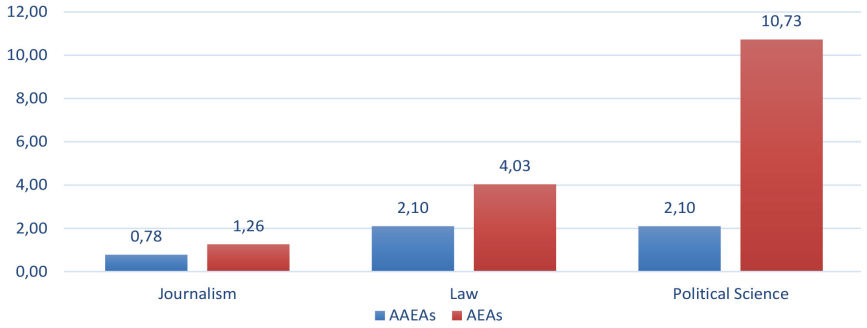


Figure 2: Authorial presence by the AAEAs and the AEAs in journalism, law, and political science

The two-way ANOVA result for self-representation strategies showed a statistically significant difference between the AAEAs and the AEAs ($F(1, 84) = 17.082$, $p = 0.000 < 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.169$), with small effect (partial eta squared = $0.169 < 0.20$) according to Cohen (1988) who defined effects as small at (0.2), medium at (0.5), and large at (0.8 or more). There was a statistically significant difference in self-representation strategies across journalism, law and political science RAs ($F(2, 84) = 12.431$, $p = 0.000 > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.228$), with medium effect (partial eta squared = 0.228). There was an interaction effect between disciplinary variation and scholars cultural background in self-representation strategies, ($F(2, 84) = 7.930$, $p = 0.001 > 0.05$, $\eta^2 = 0.159$), with small effect (partial eta squared = 0.159), see Table 5.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Corrected Model	1033.496	5	206.699	11.561	0.000	0.408
Intercept	1102.290	1	1102.290	61.653	0.000	0.423
Culture	305.404	1	305.404	17.082	0.000	0.169
Discipline	444.514	2	222.257	12.431	0.000	0.228
Culture x Discip.	283.578	2	141.789	7.930	0.001	0.159
Error	1501.834	84	17.879			
Total	3637.620	90				
Corrected Total	2535.329	89				

(Note: Dependent variable: tokens per 10,000 words)

Table 5: Statistical results for authorial presence strategies by the AAEAs and the AEAs in journalism, law, and political science

The multiple comparisons Bonferroni test was used to determine the difference between pairwise groups in self-representation strategies. The results revealed a significant difference between the AAEAs and the AEAs, with a value of (3.684) in favor of the AEAs with the highest mean score. Political science had a significant difference with a (5.392) against Journalism and (3.346) against law, in favor of political science having the most tokens per 10,000 words (see Table 6).

Group (I)	Group (J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval for Difference	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AAEAs	AEAs	-3.684-*	0.891	0.000	-5.457	-1.912
AEAs	AAEAs	3.684*	0.891	0.000	1.912	5.457
Journalism	Law	-2.045	1.092	0.193	-4.712	0.622
	Political Science	-5.392-*	1.092	0.000	-8.059	-2.725
Law	Journalism	2.045	1.092	0.193	-0.622	4.712
	Political Science	-3.346-*	1.092	0.009	-6.013	-0.679
Political Science	Journalism	5.392*	1.092	0.000	2.725	8.059
	Law	3.346*	1.092	0.009	0.679	6.013

(Note: *. The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.)

Table 6: Multiple pairwise comparisons Bonferroni for authorial presence strategies by the AAEAs and the AEAs in journalism, law, and political science

4.2 Exploring authorial roles in the corpus

The frequencies and distributions of referential pronouns and authorial roles in RAs by AAEAs and AEAs revealed varying levels of authorial presence, influenced by cultural background and disciplinary norms. These distributions (Figure 3) show that political science had the highest overall authorial presence, followed by law and journalism. This trend reflects the inherently argumentative nature of political science. It also highlights a broader tendency for AEAs to assert stronger authorial presence through roles associated with argumentation and epistemic commitment, while AAEAs are more frequently engaged in procedural narration and cautious positioning.

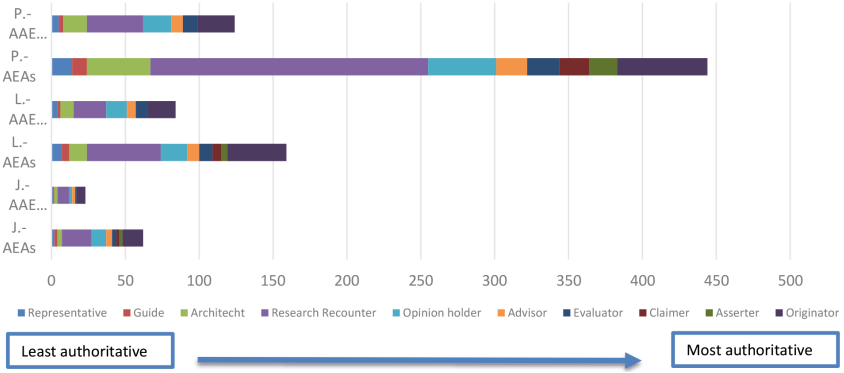


Figure 3: The authorial roles assumed by the AAEAs and the AEAs in journalism, law, and political science

Specifically, Table 7 shows that AEAs assumed more authorial roles than AAEAs regardless of discipline. The most common role among all roles was the research recounter (326), followed by originator (165), and architect (85). The opinion holder role was also relatively common (109) in comparisons to the other roles; the least common roles were claimer (28) and asserter (25), but these roles only appeared in AEAs and mostly notably in political science (P.-AEAs: claimer = 20, asserter = 19). Neither of these roles were included in the journalism and law subcorpora of AAEAs.

	Journalism		Law		Political Science		Total
	J.-AEAs	J.-AAEAs	L.-AEAs	L.-AAEAs	P.-AEAs	P.-AAEAs	
Representative	2	1	7	4	14	5	33
Guide	2	1	5	2	10	3	23
Architecht	3	2	12	9	43	16	85
Research Recounter	20	8	50	22	188	38	326
Opinion Holder	10	2	18	14	46	19	109
Advisor	4	2	8	6	21	8	49
Evaluator	3	1	9	8	22	10	53
Claimer	2	0	6	0	20	0	28
Asserter	2	0	4	0	19	0	25
Originator	14	6	40	19	61	25	165

(Note: J. = Journalism, L. = Law, P. = Political Science; AEA = Academic English Author, AAEA = Arab Academic English Author)

Table 7: Frequencies of authorial roles assumed by the AAEAs and the AEAs in journalism, law and political science

Authorial roles led to varied uses of pronouns and referential forms. Table 8 showcases a breakdown of singular pronouns (e.g., *I, my*), plural pronoun referential forms (e.g., *we, our*), and noun-based referential forms (e.g., *the author, the researcher*). Notably, the first-person singular pronoun, particularly *I,* was more often used by the originator, asserter, and claimer, which indicates a strong authorial presence and personal ownership. To illustrate epistemic authority and display reliability, the originator used *I* 99 times, and *my* 13 times. In contrast, roles such as representative and guide, which signal a more collective, less authoritative position, relied heavily on *we* (e.g., representative = 23; guide = 14), and referential nouns to denote lower authority (e.g., representative = 3). Notably, the recounter of research procedures showed a high frequency of *I* (130), which indicates author involvement in research during results interoperation. From these subtle distributions, it is evident that referential choices are closely connected to authorial roles, disciplinary conventions, and cultural positioning in academic discourse.

Referential Form	*I*	*We*	*My*	*Our*	Author/ Researcher	Total
Representative	1	23	0	4	3	33
Guide	2	14	0	3	2	23
Architecht	21	42	1	8	11	85
Research Recounter	130	114	16	32	32	326
Opinion Holder	49	32	10	5	10	109
Advisor	17	19	2	4	4	49
Evaluator	15	18	4	5	9	53
Claimer	14	7	2	1	2	28
Asserter	13	5	2	1	2	25
Originator	99	33	13	8	11	165

Table 8: Distribution of referential forms across authorial roles in the corpus

4.2.1 The representative

This authorial role emphasizes a general state of affairs rather than personal insight, minimizing the author's role by presenting them as part of a broader entity. As a result, this form of self-representation, using the first-person pronoun *we* carries the least authoritative presence. Figure 3 shows that political science RAs used the representative authorial role more frequently than those in law and journalism, with subtle cultural differences between AAEAs and AEAs. In Example 1, the pronoun *we* is used to refer to the general public. In Example 2,

we might denote a smaller, more specific group, such as policymakers or experts within the legislative field.

(1) *It resulted in the journalistic practices and ethical standards* ***we*** *adhere to today.* (J-AEA4)

(2) *For the legislative reforms,* ***we*** *recognize that they are crucial to the advancement of our legal framework*. (L-AEA13)

Similarly, in Example 3, the use of *we* implies a sense of collective ownership over these outcomes. The use of *we* often stresses the author's solidarity with disciplinary readers, stating a research gap (4), acknowledging issues and limitations of research (5), drawing practical implications (6) and anticipating further research (7).

(3) *The policy decisions that* ***we*** *have today reflect many years of strategic planning*. (L.-AEA10)

(4) *At present,* ***we*** *know little about the attitudes of party members as compared to those of party elites, and even less on how members reflect on and position themselves vis-à-vis the identity and strategies of their own party.* (P.S.-AAEA15)

(5) *The fundamental limitation for cross-national analysis is the level of aggregation; peacekeepers are not homogeneously located in host-states; thus, at the country level,* ***we*** *fail to observe whether variation in homicides is related to variations in UN personnel.* (P.S.-AEA5)

(6) ***We*** *need to be increasingly aware of the broader context in which substantive law operates.* (L.-AEA14)

(7) ***We*** *also need to look beyond the state's procedural framework which, despite giving the illusion of impartiality, strongly influences the actions taken by individuals*. (L.-AEA14)

This phrasing emphasizes a general state of affairs rather than providing personal insight, diminishing the author's role by presenting them as part of a broader entity. As a result, the use of the plural first-person pronoun in this context reflects a less authoritative form of self-representation (Hyland, 2002b; Harwood, 2005a).

4.2.2 The guide

To better understand this authorial role, consider the RA as a complex, multi-layered map and the author as a navigator guiding the reader through its intricate details. With the metaphor of "RA = Map" in place, the author's role becomes similar to that of a skilled navigator who directs the reader through the RA's landscape. The author positions the reader within the context of the article, highlights key landmarks and points of interest, and uses examples from the text to clarify these points. It becomes clear that when the author takes on the role of a guide, actively engaging the reader throughout the journey, self-representation frequently appears in plural, inclusive forms such as *we*. This usage underscores the collaborative nature of the writer-reader relationship, highlighting their shared journey through the text. Figure 3 illustrates RAs authored by AEA in political science utilized the guide authorial role more often than those in law and journalism, with slight cultural variations in how the AAEAs and AEAs employed this role.

The ultimate goal is to guide the reader to a conclusion or destination that the author believes will be clearly understood. This navigational role is often signaled by verbs like *note* and *observe*, associated with mental processes of perception (Halliday, 1994), as shown in Example 8:

(8) *Figure 3 indicates a notable increase in the year 2004, and* ***we can observe*** *that the projected outcomes of access are statistically significant* (J-AAEA12)

The inclusive *we* frequently appears with frame markers (e.g., *shall, now, next*) to guide readers through the text (Harwood, 2005b), as in Examples 9 and 10:

(9) ***We*** *can* ***now*** *turn our attention to the space newspapers devoted to policy discussion in their election coverage.* (J.-AEA7)

(10) *As* ***we shall see****, the trouble here is that, rather than practitioner excellence, a different kind of habitus is rewarded in our field: one that accords with our model of rational self- interest, based upon Tucker's betraying prisoner.* (L.-AEA13)

This use also aligns readers with the author's perspective in interpreting data or arguments. Phrases like *we can see* frequently guide readers to specific observations, as illustrated in Examples 11 and 12:

(11) *In Figure 5,* ***we can see*** *how the estimated effects of access are statistically indistinguishable from zero in 2000.* (P.S.-AEA9)

(12) *Looking at both the Syrian sample and the Egyptian sample in Table 4,* ***we can see*** *that both Syrians and Egyptians are significantly more likely to be inequity averse when the opponent is a Syrian (rather than an Egyptian).* (P.S.-AAEA5)

4.2.3 The architect

The architect authorial role in RAs simply refers to the process of organizing and structuring discourse through the use of self-representation features and endophoric markers (e.g., *below, in this section*, etc.) to structure textual information, label discourse acts, organize content or state the scholars' involvement in their research. While there are similarities between this role and that of a guide, a critical distinction sets them apart. The architect, akin to the author, is deeply involved in creating and structuring the content, shaping the narrative from the ground up. In contrast, the guide primarily navigates the reader through pre-established content, without altering its structure. Given that the architect's role involves more direct manipulation of the material, I find it appropriate to keep these roles distinct in my analysis.

Figure 3 shows that RAs in political science employed the highest architect authorial role compared to their counterparts in law and journalism. There were, however, slight cultural variations in the architect authorial role between the AAEAs and the AEAs.

The results suggested that both the AAEAs and the AEAs used the first-person pronoun to emphasize the organization of the text to the same extent. The similarity may be explained by the generic conventions imposed by the RA writing since the architect's role seems to be associated with various aspects of academic discourse rather than with differences or similarities among cultures. However, there was a slight difference in how the academic authors organized their texts retrospectively. The AEAs tended to refer to specific points in the text (e.g., *In figures 2 and 3*, *in the SI (Section A11, 21)*) to signal its organization (Examples 13 and 14) more often than the AAEAs (Examples 15 and 16).

(13) ***In this part of the article, I*** *discuss the findings of the empirical case study presented above and draw a number of conclusions about the value of using participation as an analytic framework for understanding consumer ADR.* (L.-AEA12)

(14) ***In Figures 2 and 3, I*** *display orthogonalized impulse response plots from the VAR results reported in Columns 1 and 2 of Table 1.* (P.S.-AEA1)

(15) ***Below I*** *present some problems included in the survey results.* (J.-AAEA1)

(16) *Therefore,* ***in this section I*** *discuss whether the results obtained for the full sample are influenced by this event.* (L.-AAEA13)

Hyland (2002b) considered this role low-risk, aiding readers' navigation of the text. Both AAEAs and AEAs use it across disciplines, with variations linked more to RA conventions than cultural differences. Clear signposting (Walková, 2019) is necessary to state a purpose, and authors must use dynamic discourse to engage readers in the competitive academic environment (Seoane, 2013).

4.2.4 The recounter of research procedure

Authors use first-person pronouns or noun references (e.g., *the researcher*) to describe stages of the research process, such as reviewing materials, conducting interviews, and gathering data. This role is often paired with material process verbs (Halliday, 1994), such as *examined* or *investigated*, typically in the past tense. Figure 3 shows that the recounter of research procedure role is the most frequently used in RAs, with AEAs in political science using it more than those in law and journalism, reflecting notable cultural differences between AAEAs and AEAs. Nonetheless, RAs written by the AEAs exhibited this specific authorial role more than those written by the AAEAs, as shown in Examples 17–20.

(17) *To determine whether these relationships survive more rigorous analysis* ***I investigated*** *them using regression models containing the same variables as in the state appeal models.* (L.-AEA7)

(18) *First,* ***I examined*** *the degree to which partisans had optimistic or pessimistic appraisals about the United States' standing in the world.* (J.-AEA11)

(19) *To answer the second research question,* ***the researcher examined*** *a larger corpus in the second level of analysis in relation to the Canadian press coverage of Somali Canadians using computational methods.* (J.-AAEA5)

(20) *To address the issue of selection bias,* ***I implemented*** *a design-based approach using station reception boundaries*. (P.S.-AEA9)

These examples show how AEAs present themselves as competent researchers, enhancing the credibility of their claims. AEAs are more persuasive in explaining their methods than AAEAs, systematically demonstrating their credentials (Sheldon, 2009). Cross-disciplinary variations revealed that AEAs in political science were more likely to use this discourse function, frequently pairing first-person pronouns with verbs such as *ask* and *inquire* to describe research acts (Hyland, 2002a), as shown in Examples 21–22:

(21) *For this reason, at the end of our survey, **I** also **asked** respondents to gauge the importance of acting in each of the same policy areas for which we assessed confidence*. (P.S.-AEA8)

(22) *For each of these potential period effects, **I inquired** as to whether the respondent had experienced a change in his or her work setting over the past decade.* (P.S.-AEA4)

AEAs in political science use meticulous procedures to demonstrate their commitment to gathering evidence, portraying themselves as thorough and diligent researchers (Harwood, 2003). The recounter role, often used for its low-risk nature (Hyland, 2002b), involves presenting research procedures chronologically with first-person pronouns and verbs like *investigate* or *examine*. AEAs appear more invested in detailing their methods than AAEAs, emphasizing their research skills and active role in the process (Swales, 1990).

4.2.5 The opinion holder

The opinion holder is a higher authorial role used to present arguments, often realized through first-person pronouns with cognitive or attitude verbs such as *think*, *believe*, *agree*, or *disagree* (Hyland, 2002b). Figure 3 shows that political science RAs ranked highest in this role, followed by law and journalism, likely due to the explicit nature of political discourse. Journalism, by contrast, tends to reinforce public opinions. Cross-cultural variations are evident, with AEAs more frequently assuming the opinion holder role, indicating a greater willingness to own their arguments (Examples 23–24). AAEAs, however, avoid explicit first-person pronouns to downplay their opinions and avoid reader conflict, as seen in Example 25.

(23) ***I think** that on easy issues, participants would have more crystalized opinions less likely influenced by party cues*. (P.S.-AEA5)

(24) *In sum, **I think** moral disengagement is a useful framework that may yield a rich and interesting line of research on how the mechanisms proposed by Bandura operate in Political contexts.* (P.S.-AEA2)

(25) *While no figures are available, **it seems reasonable to believe** – based on the confession statements of a few adherents—that there were few individuals who drifted into Salafi-jihadi violence from Al-Takfir al Hijra, Asbat al Ansar, Islamic Jihad, Al Qaeda, and a wide variety of Palestinian formations.* (P.S.-AAEA4)

AAEAs often use first-person determiners with terms like *findings*, *results*, or *theory* followed by the verb *align* to express opinions on theories or methods,

signaling that their arguments are grounded in established knowledge rather than personal views (Examples 26 and 27).

(26) ***My results*** *also* ***align*** *with neuroscientific evidence indicating that the brain continues to develop during the early 20s.* (L.-AAEA14)

(27) *Moreover,* ***my findings are aligned*** *with Levine (2005), Nili and Rastad (2007) and Bhattacharyya and Hodler (2014) in the view that a lack of financing is a leading constraint for private sector, while financial development can play a significant role in diversifying the economy*. **(**L.-AAEA11)

Compared to the recounter and originator, the frequency of the opinion holder role is rather low. This could be due to the fact elaborating arguments or sharing opinions requires subjectivity. Thus, hedges enabled the academic authors to present their knowledge claims as "provisional and subject to current objections and future revisions" (Hyland & Jiang, 2018, p. 26).

4.2.6 The advisor

The advisor authorial role involves offering suggestions or recommendations based on research findings, typically using first-person pronouns with verbs like *recommend*, *suggest*, or *hope*. This role encourages a dialogue with the reader, inviting them to consider or apply the author's advice and aiming to influence future research or practice. Figure 3 shows that political science RAs employed this role more frequently than those in law and journalism, with subtle cultural differences between AAEAs and AEAs. Examples 28 and 29 illustrate the use of first-person pronouns with verbs like *hope* and *recommend* to propose research recommendations or practical applications. Through these recommendations, academic authors express their judgment, creating a direct dialogue with the reader and allowing for negotiation, with their authority drawn from expertise and experience in guiding future actions.

(28) ***I hope*** *that both the findings and methods introduced here can serve as a springboard for research into these and other important topics related to political representation in the future.* (P.S.-AEAA12)

(29) ***I recommend*** *converting continuous spatial boundaries into boundary points and comparing voters within each boundary point*. (J.-AEA11)

4.2.7 The evaluator

The evaluator role critically assesses their own research process, results, and predictions. In academic contexts, evaluators might be seen as more authoritative

because their judgments are often considered final or conclusive, based on rigorous analysis. AEAs in political science used this role more than in law and journalism, with slight cultural differences (Figure 3). Authors in this role use first-person pronouns with verbs like *expect* or *anticipate* to assess whether results confirm or disconfirm their predictions (Examples 30 and 31). They also address research issues and limitations using verbs like *fail* and *failure* (Examples 32 and 33), positioning themselves as thorough and transparent researchers, which enhances credibility while protecting against criticism.

(30) *Given this context**, I predicted** that partisans will process political information and political elites will talk about the United States in a way that either upholds or undermines American exceptionalism, depending on which party currently holds the White House.* (J.-AEA11)

(31) *Drawing on psychological reactance theory, **I anticipated** that, for these targeted individuals, attacking their voting right would raise the value attached to that freedom and heighten the interest in engaging in it, ultimately increasing their propensity to turn out*. (P.S.-AEA2)

(32) *Since some media scholarship argues that Spanish- language media conglomerates are driven by the goal of profit maximization rather than voter mobilization (Len- Ríos 2017), this might explain why **I fail** to find mobilization effects for SLTV.* (P.S.-AEA12)

(33) ***We** need to be **careful** here though - descriptions can be functional too.* (L.-AAEA9)

AAEAs also prefer terms like *writer*, *author*, or *researcher* over *I* to avoid face-threatening situations, as *I* is seen as more intrusive (Mur-Dueñas, 2007). Thus, the use of the plural first-person *we* and *researcher* indicates AAEAs' intention to lessen personal attribution. The greater authorial presence in AEA-written RAs reflects their aim to establish solidarity and authority within their disciplinary community (Hyland, 2001; Mur-Dueñas, 2007).

4.2.8 The claimer

The claimer authorial role involves the author explicitly presenting their ideas or findings with ownership, using first-person pronouns to emphasize their contribution. This role positions the author as an authority, confident in defending their claims. Figure 3 shows the claimer role is most prominent in political science, where AEAs tend to make bold claims, reflecting the discipline's focus on debate. The absence of this role among AAEAs suggests a cultural preference for more neutral or cautious stances, likely reflecting norms of modesty or caution

in their writing. The academic authors used first-person pronouns in their RAs with verbs such as *argue*, *believe*, or *conclude* to convey their authorial presence when stating their results or making knowledge claims (Hyland, 2002a). AEAs often make explicit claims, using first-person pronouns and determiners to take full responsibility for their statements (Examples 34 and 35). In contrast, AAEAs tend to use the plural *we* for strong claims (Example 36), similar to patterns in multi-authored RAs (Mur-Dueñas, 2007), where first-person plural pronouns help minimize personal intrusion in knowledge claims (Hyland, 2001).

(34) ***I believe*** *that* ***my theory*** *applies to any subgroups that do not hold compatible views of their superordinate identity, but additional work can test this theory in new contexts.* (P.S.-AEA3)

(35) *In sum, the measurement challenge* ***I argue*** *affects survey roll-call measures seems to arise in the judicial realm as well.* (P.S.-AEA8)

(36) ***We conclude*** *with some observations about how* ***the findings****, especially those concerning the role of ideological disagreement in shaping institutional support, relate to the emerging conventional wisdom that the court today.* (L.-AAEA1)

Coffin and Hewings (2003) argue that using verbs like *believe* and *argue* with first-person pronouns allows authors to emphasize personal claims. Results showed that AEAs used the claimer role more frequently than AAEAs, indicating a greater willingness to take ownership of their arguments, while AAEAs downplayed their claims to avoid conflict with readers. Political science RAs had the highest frequency of this role, followed by law and journalism, likely due to the emphasis on sharing beliefs and attitudes in political discourse, while journalism reinforces public beliefs, reflecting similar patterns in academic writing.

4.2.9 The asserter

The asserter role involves expressing claims with strong conviction, using first-person pronouns and boosters (e.g., *certain, confident, strongly*) to emphasize the certainty of the claims. The asserter role is used sparingly across disciplines, with a stronger preference among political science AEAs, suggesting they are more likely to take firm stances. Its rarity among AAEAs may reflect cultural or stylistic differences in authorial presence (Figure 3). AEAs use this assertive voice to highlight their contributions and accountability (Examples 37 and 38), establishing themselves as competent knowledge contributors. AAEAs, however, demonstrate a more implicit assertive voice, relying on facts to assert their authority (Example 39).

(37) *As such, **I** am **confident** that the citizenship challenge, and reminder of that challenge, was the sole motivation for subsequent electoral participation.* (P.S.-AEA2)

(38) ***I** am **certain** that the measures we put forth in this article could benefit from considerable additional psychometric improvement.* (L.-AEA1)

(39) ***The results can strongly** confirm the multinational composition of FI, which resembles Al Qaeda. More than three quarters of the adherents are non-Lebanese.* (P.S.-AAEA4)

4.2.10 The originator

The originator role, the most authoritative in Tang and John's (1999) continuum, is used by academic authors to present research results and knowledge claims with first-person pronouns. Findings revealed cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural differences in its use (Figure 3). AAEAs used the originator role less frequently than AEAs, especially in political science. AEAs, particularly in law and political science, more often presented themselves as pioneers of new ideas, indicating a stronger emphasis on asserting their authority and contributions to the field.

Results are often presented using first-person pronouns and research verbs like *present*, *provide*, or *identify* (Hyland, 2002a). AEAs explicitly identified themselves as originators of ideas, especially in political science, where this role was more prominent than in law and journalism, and almost absent in the AAEAs subcorpus. AEAs portrayed themselves as independent researchers or theory creators (Examples 40 and 41), suggesting a focus on promoting their individual ideas rather than following community ideologies. In contrast, AAEAs preferred to let the facts speak for themselves, using the plural first-person pronoun less frequently to avoid explicit self-promotion (Example 42).

(40) ***I present** compelling evidence supporting the strong notion that reputations can adhere to individual leaders as well as to states.* (P.S.-AEA4)

(41) ***I provide** the first comparative evidence to support the hypothesis, taking a wide variety of potentially confounding factors into account.* (P.S.-AEA10)

(42) ***We can identify** eight recidivism risk factors which are specific to patients with schizophrenia independently of the offense's type.* (L.-AAEA2)

AAEAs often used the first-person determiner *our* paired with terms like *study*, *theory*, *results*, or *findings*, to tie propositions to a personal source, thus

weakening their commitment to the claim (Hyland, 1998). Examples 43 and 44 show how this use minimized their authorial presence, framing the claims as statements of truth rather than personal interpretations (Hyland, 1998).

(43) ***Our*** *study provides insights into the attitudes of the American people at only a snapshot in time.* (L.-AEAA1)

(44) ***Our*** *innovative findings not only confirm that overbroad copyright undermines artistic contributions (e.g., Aufderheide et al., 2016), but also reveal that copyright impairs health and wellness contributions.* (J.-AEAA15)

The originator role, the most authoritative in Tang and John's (1999) continuum, allows authors to project themselves into their claims using first-person pronouns and boosters like *find* and *provide* (Hyland, 2002b). Authors across all disciplines used this role to describe research results and make knowledge claims, supporting previous studies that show authors add new knowledge rather than present new arguments (Crosthwaite et al., 2017; Hyland, 2002b). However, cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural differences were observed. AEAs more explicitly presented themselves as originators, while AAEAs favored an implicit presentation, aligning with traditional academic conventions and relying on facts to state their claims.

5 Conclusion

The findings of this study showed how cultural values and disciplinary contexts affect authorial presence and reader engagement in RA writing. The political science RAs assumed the highest authorial presence across disciplines. Cross-culturally, the AEAs projected themselves in their texts, showing a higher authorial presence than the AAEAs. This study highlights how cultural and disciplinary norms shape authorial presence, with AEAs displaying higher engagement and AAEAs prioritizing objectivity. They sought to show their authorial presence in the text and cast readers into an active role; they underscored their personal fulfilment and value so that it becomes easier to convince readers of the validity of their research. Comparatively speaking, the AAEAs authorial presence was not outstanding in their texts. It seems they would make themselves absent from the text to let the fact speak for itself. As a result of this contrast, each group adopted a distinct authorial role: AEAs were more likely to assume authoritative roles such as originators, asserters, and claimers, while AAEAs tended to assume less assertive roles like architects, representatives, and recounters. As a result of these roles-based distinctions, we gain a deeper understanding of how presence is performed and perceived.

Authorial presence is key to establishing credibility and authority in academic discourse. Novice researchers often struggle with writing and publishing RAs, making it crucial to understand how varying levels of authorial presence shape academic communication. By using the authorial continuum in this study, ESP/EAP instructors can help students navigate academic conventions and develop their authorship skills. Besides using the role classification as a pedagogical tool, instructors can also use the findings of this study, such as the impact of discipline and culture, to create writing tasks and feedback strategies that consider learners' rhetorical positioning. As the concept of authorial presence evolves, further exploration is needed, especially as global academic collaboration grows increasingly vital.

Appendix

The frequency of authorial presence strategies by AEAs and AAEAs in the fields of law, journalism, and political science per 10,000 words (ptw)

	Authorial Presence											
No	Journalism				Law				Political Science			
	AEAs		AAEAs		AEAs		AAEAs		AEAs		AAEAs	
	Tokens	ptw	Tokens	ptw	Tokens	ptw	Tokens	ptw	Tokens	ptw	Tokens	ptw
1	0	0	2	0.8	32	13	4	1.59	47	16.63	31	9.75
2	0	0	5	2.02	19	7.72	9	3.58	35	12.38	0	0
3	2	0.68	0	0	0	0	0	0	19	6.72	0	0
4	20	6.89	0	0	16	6.5	0	0	76	26.89	1	0.31
5	0	0	8	3.23	16	6.5	0	0	4	1.41	41	12.89
6	2	0.68	0	0	19	7.72	7	2.79	40	14.15	0	0
7	4	1.38	0	0	13	5.28	10	3.98	21	7.43	0	0
8	0	0	1	0.4	0	0	0	0	37	13.09	2	0.63
9	1	0.34	0	0	8	3.25	5	1.99	79	27.95	17	5.34
10	1	0.34	3	1.21	0	0	0	0	19	6.72	2	0.63
11	15	5.17	0	0	0	0	6	2.39	31	10.96	3	0.94
12	1	0.34	7	2.83	9	3.65	11	4.38	15	5.3	0	0
13	0	0	3	1.21	3	1.22	15	5.98	11	3.89	0	0
14	0	0	0	0	9	3.65	12	4.78	19	6.72	3	0.94
15	9	3.1	0	0	5	2.03	0	0	2	0.7	0	0

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LEXICAL BUNDLES IN ACADEMIC ARTICLES FROM ARTS DISCIPLINES

Hana Atcheson

Abstract

This paper studies lexical bundles in academic articles in the fields of photography, product/industrial design and audiovisual arts disciplines. The comparative corpus study presents a quantitative and qualitative analysis of formal and functional types of 4-grams used in published articles by expert authors in the three arts disciplines. The analysis was based on Biber et al.'s (1999) formal taxonomy and Hyland's (2008a, 2008b) functional taxonomy of lexical bundles. The results show that both photography and audiovisual arts disciplines have similar utilisation of formal and functional types of bundles, prioritising content-oriented rhetorical functions. However, the discipline of product/industrial design shows a stronger preference for participant-oriented functions that utilise a distancing, hedging type of bundle. The findings help teachers of academic writing to identify the objective language needs of PhD students for writing in these disciplines. Writing instruction can be more precise with respect to disciplinary conventions in the creative arts disciplines. These disciplines have been overlooked in most of the English for Specific Academic Purposes teaching materials.

Keywords

academic writing, lexical bundles, corpus analysis, genre, needs analysis

1 Introduction

Over the last decade, new PhD study programmes in visual arts and design have started to offer engaging opportunities to develop research skills that support professional practice in the creative industry. This phenomenon of research, as well as academic careers within the fields of arts, design and other creative industries such as the film industry, is now in focus because the creative industry offers more and more job positions, mostly in digital arts and design, industrial and product design, and 3D animation. Research in these disciplines attracts new students who have completed undergraduate studies but also those who return to university from well-established artistic careers. A simple query on a PhD Study portal (phdportal.com, 2024) shows over 450 PhD or doctoral programmes in visual arts in Europe ranging from media arts and creative technologies, film studies, materials research in industrial design to fashion design or photography. Most of the students in such research programmes are challenged to learn academic writing conventions in English, which leads them to international publishing in English language. Research typically carried out

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in these three disciplines is often interdisciplinary, placed on the edge of social and natural sciences. Furthermore, research issues within visual arts and design are rather new in academia and those who strive to publish within the fields of photography, product/industrial design, and audiovisual arts must look for academic conventions and characteristic features of relevant written discourse. It is the differences between writing norms in these three disciplines that this study aims to investigate.

The corpora compiled for the research, each comprising 30 published articles from photography, product/industrial design and audiovisual arts, were explored using a comparative method. Both quantitative and qualitative research approaches were used in this study. The investigated lexical bundles touch on matters of grammatical (lexico-grammatical), pragmatic (the functions of the bundles, coherence, accuracy of statements) and sociolinguistic (appropriateness of the choice of verbal means with regard to the situation) competence in writing. According to Bachman and Palmer's (1982) model of communicative competence, mastery of foreign language vocabulary is a component of all of these competencies. Research on the needs of doctoral students in academic writing with regard to the correct use of lexical bundles falls within the aforementioned areas. Findings from this corpus investigation can inform specialised academic writing courses and instructional materials that will support the enhancement of the quality of academic writing in English. As stated by Biber and Conrad (2009), research focused on description of the language used in registers and genres from a particular profession or an academic discipline is essential when preparing syllabi for English for Specific Academic Purposes (ESAP).

Multi-word sequences, also lexical bundles, have received a variety of labels and definitions, such as lexical phrases, formulas, pre-fabricated patterns, and n-grams. Most studies have the same focus on how words line up into more or less fixed combinations. Originally theoretical, from the 1990s most research of this type has been empirical (Gray & Biber, 2015, p. 125). Lexical bundles in the English language are not a linguistic exception; they are not just a peripheral domain, such as idioms. There are more than 40 labels used for the term multiple word bundles in English terminology (Wray, 2002; Wray & Perkins, 2000). Due to the focus on corpus analysis in the academic writing context, the working definition in this paper is adopted from Biber and Barbieri (2007). They simply define lexical bundles as "the most frequently recurring sequences of words" (2007, p. 264). These sequences are usually not complete in their structures and do not have an idiomatic meaning, but serve important discourse functions (Biber & Barbieri, 2007, p. 264).

It has been proven that multi-word sequences (*it is possible to, at the beginning of*) are important for the acquisition and production of both native and foreign languages (Christiansen & Arnon, 2017; Isbilen & Christiansen, 2018). Lexical bundles have an important role in both spoken and written registers; however, their effective acquisition and correct use are among the most difficult aspects of the foreign language learning process (Cortes, 2006; Paquot, 2010). When learning academic writing, students need to be made aware of lexical collocations and the occurrence of words in longer meaning units. This research adopts the Firthian (1957) theory, well phrased in the statement: "you shall know a word by the company it keeps" (p. 11). Cook (2021) points out that focusing on the complexity of lexical meaning is more important than looking for an isolated semantic category. It is not possible to isolate individual meanings of words; there is a general agreement that meaning is context dependent.

Previous research in ESAP argues for the need to focus on variation in discursive practice across disciplines (Cortes, 2004, 2006, 2023; Charles, 2015; Flowerdew, 2016; Hyland, 2008b, 2008c; Samraj, 2024). The main focus is on texts published in peer-reviewed journals, and the premise is that published articles follow disciplinary generic norms and generic attributes. As pointed out by Goulard et al. (2022), intra-generic variation concerns theoretical and empirical articles, position papers, case studies, literary reviews, critiques, design specifications, and more. Student written genres in academic contexts often have similar communicative purposes to published academic articles. Therefore, it is practical to look closer at the characteristics of published texts in the relevant disciplines which have their own specific writing conventions. Disciplinary generic norms can be characterised not only by describing the organisation of the text and its internal structure, but also by determining the rhetorical function and frequency of lexical bundles (Hyland, 2005, 2008b, 2008c, 2012; Hyland & Tse, 2009). In this paper, to characterise a published article in peer-reviewed journals in the three selected arts disciplines, the occurrence of four-word lexical bundles is identified, then their pragmatic functions are analysed in order to compare how authors in the three disciplines report on their research work. The aim is to identify lexical preferences in scholarly writing in the three target arts disciplines.

2 Lexical bundles in academic writing

Academic writing shares only a few lexical bundles with spoken academic discourse and even fewer with fiction and conversation. Such differences have been confirmed by studies of large corpora (Biber et al., 1999; Hyland, 2012; Hyland & Jiang, 2018; Simpson-Vlach & Ellis, 2010) mostly to identify how lexical bundles vary in frequency, form, and function by mode, discipline, and genre. As pointed out by Biber and Conrad (2009, p. 256), a different

communicative purpose of a text will use different sets of linguistic features that are functionally suitable for such a purpose. The research presented in this paper focuses specifically on lexical bundles as 4-grams which make up only 4% of spoken and approximately 2% of written academic discourse, yet they are among the useful building blocks of academic discourse (Biber et al., 2004). Multiple word bundles or lexical bundles are further defined by Biber and Barbieri (2007) as lexical clusters or bundles that occur in the form of a fixed sequence of words. They are usually not structurally complete and do not have idiomatic meaning (e.g., *the extent to which, at the same time, it should be noted*) but serve as important discursive devices in both spoken and written discourse (Biber & Barbieri, 2007). The aim of this study is to characterise the three selected arts disciplines in their professional and academic written discourse by examining the use of lexical bundles in articles published in peer-reviewed journals. It draws on previous studies by Wray (2002), Cortes (2004, 2006) and Hyland (2004, 2008a, 2008b), who confirmed that established formulae allow language users to express their identity as a particular group, the community of a particular discipline. The frequency of occurrence and rhetorical functions of lexical bundles depend on the discipline and its discourse conventions (Hyland, 2004, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2012; Hyland & Jiang, 2018), among other reasons, because research articles in different disciplines may have different communicative purposes associated with specific rhetorical conventions. In her research oriented to academic language and the genre of research papers in specific disciplines, Cortes (2004, 2006) points out that the use of established vocabulary signifies competent mastery of language within a particular register, or learning the conventions of a particular register also implies knowledge of particular established formulas. Previous published studies focusing on lexical bundles in academic discourse across disciplines (Chang, 2012; Hyland, 2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005, 2008a, 2008b; Hyland & Jiang, 2018) support the notion underlying the research presented here: that the three disciplines likely vary to some extent in the lexical bundles they use.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research design

The mixed design approach applied in this corpus-based study encompasses quantitative and qualitative methods as described in Section 3.3 below. The three arts disciplines are analysed with the use of pre-selected taxonomies of lexical expressions in the register of academic writing within the genre of peer-reviewed journal articles. The two research questions for this corpus study aim at the realisation of lexical bundles that were retrieved as four-word units (i.e., 4-grams). These are first collected with the use of the Sketch Engine

software (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) and further identified as pragmatic markers that have discourse-functional properties. The research questions were formulated as follows:

1. What are the most frequent realisations of lexical bundles (limited to 4-grams) and their formal types in each of the three arts disciplines?
2. What rhetorical functions are presented in the most frequent lexical bundles (limited to 4-grams) in each of the three arts disciplines?

3.2 Composition of the corpora

The study analyses three corpora representing articles published in peer-review journals in the three disciplines. To limit the study, only authors from universities in English-speaking countries were selected. They have been categorised as expert users of English by name and affiliation with an institution in the UK, Canada, Australia or the USA. These authors have published research in English and are researchers, scholars or art theorists with specialisations in photography, product/industrial design, aesthetics, philosophy, digital media theory and visual communication. The selection was made from ten journals, three articles from each journal. The composition is described in Table 1. The total number of tokens is highest in the discipline of photography, as these are longer essays, with a disputative, descriptive and argumentative purpose. Yet a slightly higher number of unique word items and lemmas is observed in the discipline of audiovisual arts. This is in contrast to the texts published in product/industrial design, not only because published articles in this discipline are on average shorter. Also, when comparing the number of unique word items, it can be concluded that the articles in the disciplines of photography and audiovisual arts are lexically more varied than articles in product/industrial design.

Corpus type	Name	Genre	Number of texts	Size
L1 speakers	Normative Corpus 1	Published articles in photography	30	**243,380 words** 293,044 tokens 23,758 unique word items 17,089 lemmas
L1 speakers	Normative Corpus 2	Published articles in product/ industrial design	30	**180,218 words** 218,049 tokens 16,320 unique word items 11,709 lemmas
L1 speakers	Normative Corpus 3	Published articles in audiovisual arts	30	**222,394 words** 265,588 tokens 23,985 unique word items 17,109 lemmas

Table 1: Corpus characteristics and size comparison

The journals were selected as a representative sample of texts that meet the reading and writing needs for PhD students in the selected disciplines.

For Corpus 1 the articles take a historical perspective, refer to theory of photography as well as photographic artistic practice, the topics discussed in the articles relate to digital as well as analogue photography and their theoretical and practical problematics (*History of Photography, Photographies, Photography and Culture, Journal of Photography Education, Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, Oxford Art Journal, Critical Inquiry, Parallax, Arts, American Art,* and *Representations)*.

Corpus 2 is composed of papers in the disciplines of product/industrial design and related technical fields such as industrial engineering, from which product designers draw their information (*Design Issues, Co-Design: International Journal of Co-Creation in Design and the Arts, International Journal of Design, The Design Journal, Human-Computer Interaction, International Journal of Sustainable Engineering, Journal of Industrial Ecology, Journal of Engineering Design, International Journal of Art and Design Education,* and *Journal of Foot and Ankle Research*). The topics vary from product life cycle, sustainability and materials ecology in product design, industrial manufacturing and digitisation, designer interaction with the digital environment, designer education and studio work, collaborative design and the product design process, to women as designers.

The last discipline, the audiovisual arts as Corpus 3, covers a rather wide range of topics from film theory and history to the problematics of film production process, screenwriting, roles of individual crew members and technical processing, digital animation, VFX effects processing and more (*Journal of Film and Video, Media Practice and Education, Animation Studies, Journal of Cinema and Media Studies, Cinema Journal, Film Criticism, Film History, Literature and Film Quarterly, Film Matters,* and *Journal of Screenwriting*).

Many art journals specialise in selected topics for a longer period; their issues are often monothematic. To compile complex and representative corpora 1, 2 and 3 that would correspond to the varied topics of the three disciplines, the selected journal articles come from a longer period of publication, a period that spans from 2009 to 2023. A shorter period of publication would not allow a wide enough selection of topics and could be over-represented by the most recent themes, such as gender studies, impact of Covid-19, or research carried out with utilisation of recent digitalisation and programming. The starting point of 2009 is when digitalised arts and design journals began to cover a spectrum of themes that broadly correspond to the research topics in the target group of PhD students. Another selection criterion which was considered when building the corpus was

whether the authors are expert users of English. A positive assumption was made after checking their home institution affiliation, previous publishing activity, and their names. After the texts were selected, they were stripped of figure captions, photographs, tables, bibliographic references and references to other sources before the corpus file was closed. Then, with the use of the Sketch Engine software package (Kilgarriff et al., 2014), the three corpora were compiled.

3.3 Procedure

The method of quantitative and qualitative corpus analysis was chosen to determine the frequency of occurrence of lexical bundles forms. The four-word bundles were chosen for their length compared to shorter phrases, which are admittedly more numerous in occurrence; three-word bundles occur up to ten times more frequently in spoken and written discourse according to Biber (2009), but four-word phrases are more applicable for the analysis of rhetorical functions. Only forms with a minimum occurrence of 20 per million words were retrieved from the data sets. The Sketch Engine software package (Kilgarriff et al., 2014) was used for the analysis with the use of the implemented software statistical tools. The applied calculations for Log Likelihood (critical value 3.84) and the effect size statistics Log Ratio and %DIFF (Rayson & Garside, 2000; McEnery & Hardie, 2024) were done with the online calculator available from Lancaster University web pages (https://ucrel.lancs.ac.uk/llwizard.html). The data calculations and the procedure followed the guidance which was devised by Rayson (2024) and Centre for Corpus Approaches to Social Sciences at Lancaster University (https://cass.lancs.ac.uk/log-ratio-an-informal-introduction/). The occurrence of 4-grams together with the concordance lines of each 4-gram were examined. When reading the concordances, the context of 4-gram occurrence was monitored to eliminate content-specific nominal phrases that referred to artwork and film titles, journal titles, art associations, and so forth (e.g., *national film board of, This Is the American Earth, 'Photography and the New God'*). As highlighted in a previous survey by Davis and Morley (2015, p. 24), longer lexical bundles, those above 5 words, were mostly found unsuitable for re-use in academic writing as they contain non-generic content words that are tied to a particular topic or idea. Thus, lexical bundles composed of generic content words found in the Academic Word List or the General Service List were selected for the formal taxonomy analysis.

For functional analysis, only four-word bundles that meet Hyland's (2005, 2008a) taxonomy for rhetorical functions were marked to analyse the rhetorical functions of the most frequent 4-grams. To ensure representativeness of the corpus data, the even and uneven distribution of 4-grams across the corpus

in the individual texts was also observed, and instances of high reoccurrence with a standard deviation of 3 and more within a single text were recognised, isolated and ignored. The applied corpus study restrictions assure comparability with previous research. Obviously, the focus on 4-grams has restricted the scope of lexical bundles under analysis, since as Conrad and Biber (2005, p. 69) concluded, many text-organising bundles and topic elaborations are realised by 2- and 3-grams (*for example*, *such as*, *in order to*, *in terms of*). The size of the three individual corpora sets is compared at several levels, with tools that are available in the Sketch Engine package (Kilgariff et al., 2014). Comparisons were made according to the number of lemmas, the representative lexical forms, the range of word forms (number of unique textual forms) and tokens (absolute occurrence of these unique textual forms). Normalisation is in a standard format, per million words, referred to forthwith as wpm.

3.4 Taxonomies for lexical bundles

As mentioned above, Biber et al. (1999) distinguish between lexical bundles for spoken and written registers with separate taxonomies for each concluding that bundles in academic prose are phrasal rather than clausal. Biber et al. (2003) classify written academic bundles into the categories of *noun phrase fragments*, *prepositional phrase fragments and other prepositional phrase fragments*, *anticipatory It + verb/adjective phrase*, *verb/adjective + that/to clause fragment and passive verb + to clause*, *passive verb + prepositional phrase*. The formal taxonomy by Cortes (2004) for analysing lexical bundles in the disciplines of biology and history has eight slightly different categories. For example, Cortes identifies *noun phrases with "of" phrase fragment* as a single category (*a wide range of*), different from *prepositional phrase with embedded "of" phrase* (*as a consequence of*).

In this study the following categories were drawn:

1. nominal and prepositional phrase fragments + *of*, *in*, *at* (*of the design process*, *in the context of, at the same time*),
2. other expressions, prepositional phrases and phrase fragments (*as well as the*),
3. passive verb + *to* clause, passive verb + prepositional phrase (*is reported to be, is based on the),*
4. modal verbs + *be* + participle (*can be found in*),
5. the use of the pronoun *it* as an anticipatory *it* structure (*it is important to*).

Conrad and Biber (2005, p. 58–59) point out that lexical bundles are not a by-product of corpus-frequency analysis, and moreover, they are consistently functional. They serve basic discourse functions related to the expression of

stance (*it is necessary to*, *the fact that the*), discourse organisation (*on the other hand*) and referential framing (*as shown in Figure 4*, *in the case of*), and show differences from other lexico-grammatical features in their patterns of use as they are influenced by both mode and communicative purpose (Biber & Barbieri, 2007, p. 265–282). The rhetorical functions of lexical bundles are examined in the pragmatic approach to language as a means of social interaction, which consists of a negotiation between the author of a text and its reader. Research published so far in this area has suggested several categories for the rhetorical functions of lexical bundles. This study adopts Hyland's (2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2023) taxonomy of lexical bundles, which draws on Halliday's ideational, interpersonal and textual functions of language. Hyland's taxonomy of rhetorical functions for lexical bundles distinguishes between:

1. research-oriented (*in the present study*),
2. text-oriented (*on the other hand*),
3. participant-oriented (*it is possible that*).

The functional-pragmatic qualitative analysis in this study focuses on the linguistic means of expressing the above stated functions. Hyland (2008) further divided the interpersonal function, that is, the participant-oriented rhetorical function, into two sub-categories:

1) Stance features: stance features characterise lexical devices used to express the author's attitude and evaluation (*are likely to be*, *it is likely to*, *it would certainly appear*, *may be due to,* etc.); these are expressions of what the author thinks or assumes (*assumes to be*, *it will be*, *it was the case*). They can also include devices that mitigate the author's claims (hedges) and devices that enhance the credibility of the author's statements (boosters).
2) Engagement features: devices for engaging the reader that directly address the reader. The author perceives that there is something to point out, something to highlight (*it is worth pointing out*, *it is noteworthy*, *it is important to*, *it is necessary to*).

Lexical bundles for these two sub-categories are acknowledged in this study under the participant-oriented function.

4 Findings

4.1 Formal typology of lexical bundles

A comparison of the formal types of lexical bundles for the three disciplinary corpora, the first three examples having the highest frequency of occurrence, are shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4 below. The overall frequencies are presented together with numbers for identified types of lexical bundles in each observed category.

The second column also shows the absolute frequency of occurrence, and the third column gives normalised frequency per million words. The threshold frequency is 20 per million words.

Corpus 1 **Photography**	**Raw instances**	**Normalised data**
Nominal and prepositional phrase + *of*, *in*, *at*	**Total** **67 form types,** **651 occurrences**	**2,221.50**
at the same time	33	112.61
the way in which	25	85.31
in the case of	21	71.66
Other expressions, prepositional phrases and phrase fragments	**Total** **11 form types,** **132 occurrences**	**450.44**
on the other hand	30	102.37
on the one hand	23	78.49
as well as the	18	61.42
Passive verb + *to* clause, passive verb + prepositional phrase	none	0
Modal verb + *be*+ 3rd verb form	**Total** **1 form type,** **8 occurrences**	**27.29**
can be found in	8	27.30
can be understood as	5	17.06
can be seen in	5	17.06
Anticipatory *It*	**Total** **5 form types,** **32 occurrences**	109.19
it cannot be + (verb form)	8	27.30
it (be) important to	6	20.47
this is not to (say, suggest, deny)	6	20.47

Table 2: Corpus 1. Formal types of 4-grams. Raw occurrences and normalised relative frequencies

Corpus 2 **Product/industrial design**	**Raw instances**	**Normalised data**
Nominal and prepositional phrase + *of*, *in*, *at*	**Total** **68 form types,** **477occurrences**	2,187.58
of the design process	17	77.96
in the context of	16	73.83
in terms of the	14	64.21
Other expressions, prepositional phrases and phrase fragments	**Total** **10 form types,** **104 occurrences**	**476.95**
as well as the	30	137.58
on the other hand	16	73.38
the extent to which	13	59.62
Passive verb + *to* clause, passive verb + prepositional phrase	**Total** **1 form type,** **6 occurrences**	**27.51**
is based on the	6	27.52
Modal verb + *be* + 3rd verb form	**Total** **4 form types,** **30 occurrences**	**137.58**
can/should be used to	11	50.45
to be able to + verb	7	31.10
can be found in	6	27.52
Anticipatory *It*	**Total** **7 form types,** **45 occurrences**	**206.37**
it (be) important to	10	45.86
it is possible to	7	31.10
it should be noted (that)	6	27.52

Table 3: Corpus 2. Formal types of 4-grams. Raw occurrences and normalised relative frequencies

Corpus 3 Audiovisual arts	Raw instances	Normalised data
Nominal and prepositional phrase + *of*, *in*, *at*	**Total 48 form types, 457 occurrences**	**1,720.71**
at the same time	32	120.41
the end of the	24	90.37
in front of the	24	90.37
Other expressions, prepositional phrases and phrase fragments	**Total 12 form types, 98 occurrences**	**368.99**
as well as the	17	64.01
for the first time	10	37.65
the extent to which	10	37.65
Passive verb + *to* clause, passive verb + prepositional phrase	**Total 1 form type, 6 occurrences**	**22.59**
be seen as a	6	22.59
Modal verb + *be* + 3rd verb form	**Total 3 form types, 18 occurrences**	**67.77**
can/could be seen as	6	22.59
one could argue that	6	22.59
that we cannot (can not)	6	22.59
Anticipatory *It*	**Total 1 form types, 8 occurrences**	**30.12**
It is clear that	8	30.12

Table 4: Corpus 3. Formal types of 4-grams. Raw occurrences and normalised relative frequencies

The data presented in Tables 2, 3 and 4 indicate that the disciplines of photography and product/industrial design use nominal and prepositional phrases in high frequencies (2,221.50 and 2,187.58 respectively). However, in audiovisual arts studies the occurrence of these phrases is less frequent (1,720.71). Modals, typically associated with hedging and boosting expressions, are the most frequent in product/industrial design (137.58), followed by audiovisual studies, where they are half as frequent (67.77). They are least frequent in photography (27.29). The 4-grams containing the anticipatory *it* structure are again most frequent in product/industrial design (206.37), followed by photography (109.19) and audiovisual arts (30.12). This shows that texts in the discipline of product/industrial design use formulaic language the most.

The comparative corpus research done in 2018 by Hyland and Jiang identified that the number of bundles in the disciplines of applied linguistics, engineering, sociology and biology did not increase over the observed time and the most frequent among the top 20 bundles in academic writing over the past 50 years were *on the other hand, on the basis of, in the case of, at the same time, in terms of the, in the presence of, in the form of* and *in the absence of* (Hyland & Jiang, 2018). The bundle *on the other hand* is also at the top for photography and product/industrial design disciplines in this study. However, in audiovisual arts this bundle did not reach the three top positions.

The use of verbs in passive voice in lexical bundles did not meet the threshold frequency of 20 per million words and the limitations that were set to 4-grams. This could lead to a biased view on the usage of expressions in passive voice. To eliminate such bias and to look closer at this language feature, Figure 1 illustrates the number of verbs in passive voice across the three disciplines. The normalised data (Y-axis) indicate that the passive, impersonal constructs, are mostly typical for the discipline of product/industrial design (27,181) and occur in similar frequencies in photography (21,068) and audiovisual arts (19,906). A closer examination of the verb types used in passive voice also revealed that their frequency does not necessarily have a direct correlation with their occurrence in 4-grams.

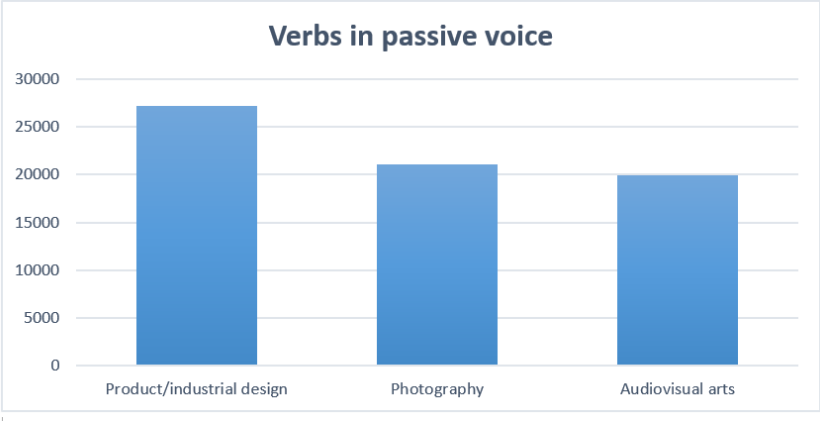


Figure 1: Verbs in passive voice, disciplinary differences (normalised data)

Table 5 shows a comparative analysis of selected formal types, based on Conrad and Biber's (2005) taxonomy for academic prose, for the realised 4-grams

(threshold 20 per million words) in three corpora with statistical indicators. The three corpora are compared, always with a larger set to a smaller set of tokens: *photography* to *product/industrial design*, *audiovisual arts* to *product/industrial design*, *photography* to *audiovisual arts*. The smallest set, the discipline of product/industrial design, shows the larger relative frequency of the 4-grams in most instances.

	Photo-graphy	Product/ industrial design	Audio visual arts	Product/ industrial design	Photo-graphy	Audio visual arts
Nominal and prep phrases + *of*, *in*, *at*						
Raw instances	651	477	457	477	651	457
Log Likelihood		**0.03**	**14.94**		**18.90**	
Log Ratio		**0.02**	**-0.37**		**0.38**	
%DIFF		**1.06**	**-22.36**		**30.17**	
Other prepositional phrases						
Raw instances	132	104	98	104	132	98
Log Likelihood		**0.22**	**3.67**		**2.45**	
Log Ratio		**-0.09**	**-0.39**		**0.30**	
%DIFF		**-6.02**	**-23.64**		**23.08**	
Verb in passive						
Raw instances	0	6	6	6	0	6
Log Likelihood	46.15		**0.13**		**8.87**	
Log Ratio	**-6.19**		**-0.30**		**-3.72**	
%DIFF	**-100**		**-18.96**		**-100**	
Modal verb + *be* + 3rd verb form						
Raw instances	8	30	18	30	8	18
Log Likelihood		**21.03**	**6.09**		**4.90**	
Log Ratio		**-2.34**	**-1.04**		**-1.30**	
%DIFF		**-80.25**	**-51.38**		**-59.39**	
Anticipatory It						
Raw instances	32	45	8	45	32	8
Log Likelihood		**7.84**	**36.86**		**13.34**	
Log Ratio		**-0.93**	**-2.80**		**1.87**	
%DIFF		**-3.02**	**-85.59**		**265.51**	

Table 5: Formal types of 4-grams, raw instances. Log Ratio provided for effect-size, with a minus sign indicating difference in underuse for the first corpus in the pair

What stands out from the data in Table 5 is that the texts in the discipline of product/industrial design contain more lexical bundles than the other two disciplines, photography and audio-visual arts. The closer numbers of realisations for the nominal and prepositional phrases with *of, in* and *at* for the corpora of photography and product/industrial design indicate similar usage of formalised prepositional phrases, a typical characterisation of formal academic discourse in the hard science and technology fields. These findings confirm previous studies (Hyland, 2012, 2023) which indicate that texts in technical and engineering fields use prefabricated structures more often than texts in humanities fields. The question is, where to fit the discipline of photography? Its technical and technological expertise as much as a philosophical background in theoretical studies reflect knowledge from both technical and humanities fields. Texts from the discipline of photography prove to be interdisciplinary and themes discussed in photography journals stretch across both categories.

The most frequent type of noun phrase and prepositional phrase fragments is in photography, but the difference in the frequency of this type of bundle between photography and product/industrial design is not statistically significant. Significant differences are observed, such as a lower frequency of bundles with modal verb + *be* + 3rd verb form in photography (-80.25 %DIFF) and audiovisual arts (-51.38 %DIFF), in comparison to product/industrial design. This indicates stronger utilisation of boosting and hedging language in the product/industrial design texts, which fits with the so far researched typical text characteristics of technical and hard science disciplines. A lower frequency of the anticipatory *it* structure for audiovisual arts (-85.59 %DIFF) is also seen in comparison to product/industrial design. The distancing function of the anticipatory *it* structure or *it-clause* in academic writing is mostly used in a rhetorical function which leads to an impression of the presentation of objective, impersonal knowledge (Hewings & Hewings, 2002). Researchers' claims and standpoints position them more firmly in the disciplinary discourse which is more individualistic. As Hyland (2023, p. 87) suggests, writers in the social sciences and humanities "put themselves into the text more" when compared with hard science disciplinary discourses. The findings also point to a statistically significant overuse of the anticipatory *it* structure (265.51 %DIFF), nominal and prepositional phrases with *of, in, at* (30.17 %DIFF) and other prepositional phrases (23.08 %DIFF) for photography in comparison to audiovisual arts. This can be attributed to a more conversational style of writing in the audiovisual arts.

4.2 Functional typology of lexical bundles

The rhetorical functions of lexical bundles are examined in the pragmatic approach to language as means of social interaction, which consists of a negotiation between the author of a text and its reader. Data presented in Tables 6, 7 and 8 indicate functional type occurrence of 4-gram lexical bundles in the three disciplines.

Corpus 1 Photography	**Raw occurrences**	**Normalised data**
Content-oriented	**Total 65 form types, 791 occurrences**	**2,699.25**
at the same time	33	112.61
the way in which	25	85.31
in the history of	25	85.31
Text-oriented	**Total 12 form types, 147 occurrences**	**501.63**
on the other hand	30	102.37
on the one hand	23	78.49
in the case of	21	71.66
Participant-oriented	**Total 6 forms, 47 occurrences**	**160.38**
can be found in	8	27.30
it cannot be (ignored, denied, understood, etc.)	8	27.30
appears to be a (basic feature, fortunate side)	7	23.89

Table 6: Functional types, most frequent examples in raw occurrences and relative frequencies

Corpus 2 Product/industrial design	**Raw occurrences**	**Normalised data**
Content-oriented	**Total 42 form types, 309 raw occurrences**	**1,417.11**
of the design process	17	77.96
in the development of	11	50.45
the development of a	11	50.45
Text-oriented	**Total 17 form types, 131 raw occurrences**	**600.78**
on the other hand	16	73.38
in terms of the	14	64.21
in the case of	13	59.62

Corpus 2 Product/industrial design	Raw occurrences	Normalised data
Participant-oriented	**Total 17 form types, 113 occurrences**	**518.23**
it is important to	10	45.86
can be used to	9	41.28
there is a need	8	36.69

Table 7: Functional types, most frequent examples in raw occurrences and relative frequencies

Corpus 3 Audiovisual arts	Raw occurrences	Normalised data
Content-oriented	**Total 50 form types, 470 occurrences**	**1,769.65**
at the same time	32	120.41
the end of the	24	90.37
in front of the	24	90.37
Text-oriented	**Total 14 form types, 116 occurrences**	**436.76**
in the case of	20	75.30
as well as the	17	64.01
on the one hand	11	41.42
Participant-oriented	**Total 5 form types, 33 occurrences**	**124.25**
this is not to (suggest, imply, say)	8	30.12
not to suggest that	7	26.36
one could argue that	6	22.59

Table 8: Functional types, most frequent examples in raw occurrences and relative frequencies

Collected data show that content-oriented phrases were used the most in photography (2,699.25) and the least in product/industrial design (1,417.11). Text-oriented bundles have the highest occurrence in product/industrial design (600.78) and the lowest in audiovisual arts (436.76). Participant-oriented bundles were used most in product/industrial design (518.23), and least in audiovisual arts (124.25). Comparing and sorting the retrieved 4-grams on concordance lines with the functional taxonomy by Hyland (2008a, 2008c, 2012) who composed his corpora from texts in disciplines other than photography, product/industrial design and audiovisual studies, revealed several differences in their utilisation. For example, the bundle *can be seen in* when followed with *Figure 1, in the table, data* etc. would fall into the category of text-oriented framing signals in many scientific disciplines, but in the three corpora here it falls into the content-oriented category: *can be seen in* would be followed for example with

a debate, a description, a late 13th century, Avatar, its entirety on YouTube. Most framing signals refer to *concept of, nature of, presence of...*, while description and content-oriented bundles often refer to *forms, ways, relationships, figure(s).*

Findings in the functional comparative analysis are illustrated here in Table 9.

	Photo-graphy	**Product/ industrial design**	**Audio visual arts**	**Product/ industrial design**	**Photo-graphy**	**Audio visual arts**
Content-oriented						
Raw instances	65	42	50	42	65	50
Log Likelihood	**0.48**		**0.03**		**0.84**	
Log Ratio	**0.20**		**-0.05**		**0.25**	
%DIFF	**14.60**		**-3.53**		**18.79**	
Text- instances						
Raw instances	12	17	14	17	12	14
Log Likelihood	**3.02**		**1.26**		**0.39**	
Log Ratio	**-0.94**		**-0.58**		**-0.35**	
%DIFF	**-47.73**		**-33.26**		**-21.68**	
Participant-oriented						
Raw instances	6	17	5	17	6	5
Log Likelihood	**9.30**		**9.68**		**0.02**	
Log Ratio	**-1.94**		**-2.07**		**0.13**	
%DIFF	**-73.87**		**-76.17**		**9.65**	

Table 9: Functional taxonomy, raw occurrences. Log Ratio provided for effect-size, with a minus sign indicating difference in underuse for the first corpus in the pair

To conclude the discussion of the functional types across the three disciplines, it should be noted that the utilisation of the rhetorical functions shows differences that correspond with previous findings in the formal analysis.

Participant-oriented lexical bundles in 4-grams, here mostly represented with the use of the pronoun *it* as an anticipatory *it* structure, show the most statistically significant difference when comparing product/industrial design with the two remaining disciplines. It is more significantly represented in the corpus from product/industrial design (504 wpm) compared to the corpus from photography (130 wpm) and audiovisual arts (122 wpm). A stronger distancing orientation away from the participants in hard sciences with the anticipatory *it* structure was also observed in a previous study by Hyland and Jiang (2018), who point out that over the observed period of time the hard sciences reduced their use of bundles which focus on reporting research and started adopting more forms which carry

epistemic evaluations, attitudes or modal meanings. This study confirmed more distancing lexical bundles with the use of participant-oriented functions for product/industrial design. Furthermore, closer reading of the concordance lines for individual occurrences within texts revealed a surprisingly high frequency, even an overuse, of lexical bundles by some authors in the product/industrial design corpus. Essay-type articles in photography and research papers in product/industrial design discipline have similar communicative purposes to persuade, speculate, or argue, but their authors use different rhetorical strategies.

The above collected data can be compared with previous research, specifically that language means for distancing can vary with respect to scientific discipline (Hyland, 2004) as can rhetoric used for argumentation (Walková & Bradford, 2022), also with respect to grammatico-syntactic level of language in which the text is written (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2013a; Jančaříková, 2023). The differences can be also significant due to different cultural and academic conventions of the relevant discourse and readiness to adapt to certain academic conventions. For example, novice writers whose L1 is Czech or German differ in the way they adapt to Anglo-American writing conventions (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2013b, 2023). Such findings contribute to discussions in ESAP lessons aimed at academic writing and individual voice in scientific disciplines.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore how the occurrence of lexical bundles contributes to the characterisation of texts produced in different disciplines. The findings build on previous studies in academic written English (Biber et al., 2004; Cortes, 2004, 2006; Conrad & Biber, 2005) and specifically those focusing on the differences in the language used in written academic discourse across disciplines (Hyland, 2005, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c, 2023; Hyland & Jiang, 2018).

With reference to the research questions, the most frequent realisation of lexical bundles (4-grams) in their formal types in all three disciplines are nominal and prepositional phrases with *of, in, at*. It has been demonstrated that authors of texts in photography and product/industrial design express themselves more frequently with the use of lexical bundles which they use in a wider variety than the authors in audiovisual arts. The findings have also pointed to a statistically significant overuse of nominal phrases and prepositional phrases *of, in, at* for photography in comparison to audiovisual arts. This can be attributed to a more open or conversational style of writing in the audiovisual arts. Technical and technological expertise as much as a philosophical background of theoretical studies in photography reflect knowledge from both technical and humanities fields. Photography texts prove to be interdisciplinary, with themes discussed in

photography journals spanning both categories. In contrast, greater utilisation of hedging or boosting language and distancing in the product/industrial design texts, which aligns with the so far researched typical text characteristics of technical and hard science disciplines, shows that product and industrial designers have a closer affiliation with technical fields. The tendency for these authors to use the lexical bundles of the anticipatory *it* structure more frequently suggests that in this discipline authors maintain a greater distance from the content of the text in order to create an impression of objectivity. Findings in the functional taxonomy also pointed out that the use of modals, indicators of boosting and hedging, is less frequent in photography and the audiovisual arts than in product/industrial design. As mentioned by Hyland and Jiang (2018), authors in the soft sciences tend to make stronger claims. Photography and audiovisual arts disciplines often opt for creative writing styles, with less utilisation of phraseology that is found in ESAP teaching materials for hard science students.

The study results can be utilised in the preparation of teaching materials for ESAP classes where the academic written discourse of arts and design disciplines is relevant for the course participants. Discipline-specific instructional materials can help students understand how authors guide readers through the text, what stance-taking strategies they adopt, or how they report on research data. Despite the wide range of resources currently available via writing manuals and phrasebanks or in the form of generative AI tools that supply novice writers in English with immediate support, the results of discipline-specific studies have the benefit of being tailor-made for specific PhD students' writing needs. Students can become more aware of the differences in academic genre characteristics and enhance their academic writing skills, rather than being dependant on a blind re-use of those skeletal phrases that can be readily added with generative AI tools today. Tailored study materials should support a creative approach to writing which leads to individual writing styles, a highly valued skill in any genre.

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THE POWER OF STANCE: LINGUISTIC STRATEGIES IN DONALD TRUMP'S ELECTION CAMPAIGN

Olga Boginskaya

Abstract

Language is the primary tool for shaping public discourse and driving political engagement. This research investigates how Donald Trump, as a Republican candidate, manipulates power dynamics and persuades audiences by strategically employing stance features as language resources in his election speeches. The analysis relies on the transcripts from *rev. com* and applies Hyland's (2005) stance framework. The study utilizes a mixed-method approach to analyze the frequency, function, and linguistic realization of specific linguistic features in Trump's speeches. The balanced use of stance markers suggests a deliberate effort to project confidence, express emotions, and cultivate a particular image. The article concludes that Trump's straightforward, emotional, and personal language style effectively communicates his ideas with clarity and conviction.

Keywords

Donald Trump, election, political discourse, rally speeches, stance features

1 Introduction

Politicians use language strategically not only to reflect social reality but also to construct and negotiate social relations, shaping the way individuals interact and perceive the world through their discursive choices. Through their control over language and their presence in public forums, political leaders have a significant power to shape common values, objectives, and concerns, effectively shaping public opinion and consensus (van Dijk, 2022). Using language strategically, they seek to create a credible representation of themselves by claiming solidarity with an audience and evaluating and controlling the level of personality to build persuasive arguments. Political discourse, therefore, acts as a semiotic practice, both a product of and a contributor to social structures and relations, as Reisigl and Wodak (2001) highlighted. It is influenced by existing social forces while also actively shaping those forces through its very existence.

Yet despite language used in election campaign discourse having been comprehensively analyzed from a variety of angles, few empirical studies (Ajiboye & Abioye, 2019; Ho, 2016; Kashiha, 2022; Sukma, 2017) appear to have analyzed stance as a persuasive tool in this type of political text and talk, even though it helps control the propositional content, present viewpoints, project values, capture trust, and build the relationship with an audience, being

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both an act of representation and expression that constitutes a type of meaning represented in discourse (Ajiboye & Abioye, 2019). Du Bois (2007) claims that stance is able "to assign value to objects of interest, to position social actors with respect to those objects, to calibrate alignment between stance-takers, and to invoke presupposed systems of sociocultural value" (p. 139). Being an attitudinal dimension that includes features utilized by speakers to present themselves and convey their judgments, stance is a crucial component of persuasion and persuasive discourse.

In recent years, stance has established itself as an analytical tool used in research on a variety of persuasive discursive practices (Boginskaya, 2023; Chaemsaithong, 2017; Fuertes-Olivera et al., 2001; Hernandez, 2017; Qiu & Jiang, 2021; Zou & Hyland, 2019). With the wealth of studies on stance features in various contexts, presidential election campaigns have not been given as much attention (Breeze, 2017; Capone, 2010; Hernández-Guerra, 2016; Kashiha, 2022; Sukma, 2017), although they provide a good example of how stance contributes to the persuasiveness of political arguments. Analyzing stance features can reveal the strategic choices politicians make to appeal to voters and influence public opinion. Additionally, the types of stance markers can highlight the key issues at play in a campaign and how these issues are framed by political leaders. The analysis can also reveal how political discourse evolves and adapts to different contexts, offering valuable insights into the dynamics of political communication.

1.1 Purpose of the present study

To fill the gap in previous studies, which have mainly focused on analyzing the linguistic features of Trump's campaign speeches in isolation, this paper investigates the role of stancetaking in shaping his persuasive rhetoric and its potential impact on the electorate. This study examines three key stance features: boosters, self-mention markers, and attitude markers. These features are particularly relevant because they directly contribute to the construction of a speaker's stance, their credibility, and their persuasive appeal to audiences. By analyzing these specific stance features, this paper aims to shed light on the linguistic mechanisms behind Trump's persuasive rhetoric and its potential impact on the American political landscape. Trump's presidency was marked by a highly unconventional and polarizing communication style, with a significant impact on both political discourse and public opinion. Examining the stance features in Trump's rhetoric can provide crucial insights into how language shapes political narratives and influences public perception.

This study utilizes a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative content analysis and interpretative analysis, to provide a comprehensive analysis of the use of stancetaking features in Trump's election campaign discourse and address the following research questions:

1. To what extent did Trump employ boosters, self-mention markers, and attitude markers in his election campaign speeches?
2. What are the main goals that Trump achieves by using boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention markers in his speeches?
3. What are the most common linguistic features that reveal Trump's stance in his speeches?

1.2 Previous studies on US election campaign discourse

US election campaigns have always received much attention in discourse studies intended to analyze how the event and its social actors are discursively represented. Election campaigns are a microcosm of how language constructs reality. They are a battleground where opposing narratives clash and different interpretations of events and actors are presented. By examining the language used by candidates, media outlets, and the public, researchers have gained insights into the persuasive power of language, the construction of political narratives, and the broader impact of election campaigns on society. In different periods, this political experience has been pictured as a struggle of diverging constructions of actors and events, while election campaign discourse as a powerful medium of persuasion that attracted substantial attention from discourse analysts. The analysis of campaign discourse has focused on various discursive strategies, including stancetaking used to create an effective relationship with an audience, to guide the audience's understanding and interpretation of messages, thus establishing credibility.

Having explored this group of strategies, researchers (e.g., Benoit et al., 2003; Etemadfar & Namaziandost, 2020; Kadim, 2022; Sukma, 2017; Wang & Liu, 2017; Yaser & Rasti, 2020) validated the contributory role of stance features in establishing an effective relationship between the orator and the audience. For example, Sukma (2017), who analyzed stance features applied in US President Obama's 2012 election campaign, revealed the high frequency of attitude markers in the corpus and explained it by Obama's attempt to build an emotional relationship with his audience. Obama's election campaign speeches were also explored by Yaser and Rasti (2020), who intended to compare the ways in which Barack Obama and Mitt Romney presented themselves to capture the audience's attention during the 2012 election campaign. Critical Discourse Analysis was applied to identify common strategies in their speeches, including

positive self-representation, others' negative representation, legitimization, delegitimization, and persuasion. The analysis revealed that while Obama frequently focused on evoking the myth of the "American dream", Romney mostly used the others' negative representation strategy.

Donald Trump's election campaigns have been marked by a distinct and often divisive rhetoric. Scholars have sought to understand the linguistic features and rhetorical strategies that underpin his communication style, exploring its potential effects on public discourse and political polarization. Quam and Ryshina-Pankova (2016), for example, made an attempt to explore patterns of interaction in Trump's speeches in terms of differences from those used by Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders. Degani (2016) compared Trump's 2016 speeches with Clinton's in terms of lexical frequency and concluded that Clinton used much more complex language, while Trump's discourse relied more often on "us versus them" dichotomies. Dichotomies in Trump's election campaign speeches were also explored by Breeze (2017), who showed how Trump uses a full range of attitudinal resources positioned within a highly polarized vision of affairs in which the American people is represented as the victim of the political establishment. These studies, taken together, highlight a recurring theme in Trump's discourse: the construction of a stark "us versus them" narrative—a strategy that seems to be central to his communication across different contexts. The consistency of these findings across different studies suggests that this divisive rhetoric, combined with a reliance on simpler language, represents a deliberate strategy aimed at engaging a specific segment of the population and potentially alienating others.

Etemadfar and Namaziandost's (2020) study, focusing on the persuasive elements of Trump's campaign speeches, revealed a strategic use of metadiscourse markers, further solidifying the patterns observed in prior research. The study found that Trump's speeches relied heavily on attitude markers and commentaries, suggesting an intentional approach to shaping the audience's perceptions and conveying a sense of authority and commitment. Focusing on the first presidential debate in 2016, Quang and Murad (2020) revealed that Donald Trump employed a combination of four distinct strategies. These included self-acclamation, where he presented himself as a successful and capable leader; verbal attacks on his opponent; self-rectification or image-enhancement through defending against accusations; and extra-vocalization, which involved using non-verbal cues like interruptions to disrupt the flow of the debate. By strategically combining these approaches, Trump sought to control the narrative, project an image of strength, and undermine his opponent's credibility. This emphasis on self-promotion and attack, as identified by Quang and Murad,

aligns with Kadim's (2022) findings regarding Trump's campaign speeches. Kadim found that Trump's campaign speeches relied heavily on metaphors, pronoun usage, hyperbole, and other rhetorical tools to create a stark distinction between "us" (Trump and his supporters) and "them" (his opponents). This "us versus them" narrative, a core element of Trump's rhetoric, effectively reinforces the strategies observed by Quang and Murad in the debate setting. It appears that Trump consistently employed a strategy of emphasizing division and polarizing his audience, whether in formal debates or campaign speeches.

Even though the election campaign discourse has been extensively examined from different perspectives and the findings obtained are valuable, there seems to be insufficient research on how it is discursively constructed, drawing upon the concept of stance as an effective persuasive tool of political discourse. The present study therefore examines stancetaking and its linguistic realization in Trump's election campaign discourse.

1.3 Stance and its components

Previous research has confirmed that stance is a crucial metadiscursive feature, and speakers make choices on using stancetaking devices to interact with an audience in a wide range of discursive practices. Stance is regarded as a valuable tool for enhancing the persuasiveness of claims, establish credibility, or construct authorial identities and negotiate with an audience. Given the importance of stance in shaping persuasive communication, it is essential to examine its role in the discourse of Donald Trump, a figure known for his distinctive and often controversial communication style. Trump's communication often relies on a combination of strong assertions, emotional appeals, and direct attacks on opponents, all of which contribute to a specific stance that he projects onto his audiences.

The term 'stance' was introduced by Biber and Finegan (1988), who defined it as the linguistic expression of commitment to the proposition. The later study specified the definition by referring personal feelings, attitudes, value judgments, and assessments to this category (Biber et al., 1999). Stance, a key aspect of metadiscourse, has been described as using linguistic features not only to express the speaker's own perspectives but also to engage with and shape the listener's understanding and response. Hyland (2005), for example, referred stance to the type of evaluation, conceptualizing it as an attitudinal dimension that includes features used by writers to present themselves and convey their judgements and opinions. According to Hyland (2005), stance is composed of the three components of stance: evidentiality, affect, and presence. Evidentiality refers to the writer's expressed commitment to the reliability of the proposition and its

potential impact on the reader, while affect involves a wide range of attitudes towards what is said and deals with linguistic means for construing emotional reactions. Presence, for its part, is concerned with the extent to which the speaker/writer projects themselves into the text.

In Hyland's (2005) model, the three components of stance are realized through the use of four stance features—hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention markers. Hedges are words or phrases that soften claims, express uncertainty, or indicate a lack of complete commitment to a statement. Examples include *perhaps*, *maybe*, *it seems*, or *it is possible*. Boosters, on the other hand, strengthen claims, express certainty, or convey a strong commitment to a statement. Examples include *must*, *certainly*, *obviously*, or *I am sure*. Attitude markers express the speaker's personal feelings, judgments, or opinions about a proposition (*surprising*, *crucial*, *tragic*, *serious*). Finally, self-mention markers directly refer to the speaker's own involvement in the communication, often using phrases like *I believe*, *in my opinion*, or *as I see it*. Hyland's model provides a useful framework for analyzing how speakers use language to express their stance and how those expressions shape their communication with audiences. By understanding the different stance features and their functions, we can gain deeper insights into how Trump constructs his persuasive rhetoric and how his stance contributes to his communication strategies.

2 Methodology

With the aim to show how stance features can enhance the persuasiveness of claims in election campaign discourse, 18 of Trump's speeches given at rallies in the US states over the past two years were scrutinized and interpreted. Transcripts of these speeches were collected from the website *rev.com*. The size of this corpus is 177,952 words. The speeches vary in length from about 7,500 words to 15,000 words. On average, Trump's speeches selected for the study are about 8,000–9,000 in length.

For the purpose of this study, Hyland's (2005) taxonomy of stance resources was adopted as being comprehensive, encompassing a wide range of linguistic features, from indicators of authorial presence to expressions of certainty and feelings toward social events and actors. Given the focus of this study on examining the persuasive strategies employed by Donald Trump, Hyland's model provides a particularly relevant framework. This model, encompassing features that range from expressions of certainty to indicators of authorial presence, allows for a comprehensive analysis of how Trump constructs his stance and engages with his audiences. It should be noted that hedges as a type of stance were excluded from the analysis as mitigation can weaken claims and reduce the

degree of reliability of speakers' statements, blurring the edges of arguments and making them less clear and impactful, which is not typical of election campaign discourse requiring claims to be asserted categorically rather than prudently to justify policies suggested by candidates, distinguish themselves from opponents, and establish clear ideological positions. Voters may perceive hedging as a sign of weakness or lack of conviction, which can be detrimental to a candidate's chances of winning. Even though hedges may convey an attitude of deference to recipients, their ability to express doubt about the truth of statements and open room for a potential disagreement does not contribute to enhancing the persuasive effect in election campaign discourse intended to influence recipients' beliefs and actions.

Additionally, Hyland and Zou's (2021) typologies of boosting and self-mention markers and the model of attitudinal stance proposed by Mur-Dueñas (2010) were adopted as the initial model for revealing boosters, attitude markers, and self-mention markers.

As the study aims to analyze how stance is realized linguistically in Trump's discourse, methods of quantitative and qualitative analysis were applied. The texts were downloaded from the website, converted to the Microsoft DOCS format, and analyzed to calculate the total number of stance features in total and by categories. The quantitative analysis followed in two stages. First, the texts were scrutinized for stance features using Wordsmith Tools (version 8). Every occurrence of a stance feature was manually double checked in context to verify that it was serving the stancetaking function. This was done by comparing every occurrence with the definition of stance provided by Hyland (2005). Examples that did not match the definition of stance were excluded from the count. Each type of stancetaking (boosting, attitude, and self-mention) was then analyzed to determine its frequency. The quantitative analysis was thus combined with a manual qualitative analysis of the examples, which was conducted to interpret the findings of the quantitative analysis. To ensure in-depth exploration into the use of stance features, examples were taken from the corpus, and explanations were provided to describe the persuasive functions of stance features found in the corpus.

3 Findings

The quantitative analysis of the corpus revealed that the raw frequencies and shares of stance features do not differ significantly. The most frequent stance feature is boosting accounting for 36.3% of 22,244 stance items found in the speeches. Among boosters, Trump prefers certainty and intensity markers, while extremity markers were the least frequent ones in the corpus. Self-mention markers with 7,239 occurrences (32.5%) rank second. The analysis revealed that

Trump opts for first-person plural inclusive and first-person singular pronouns rarely exploiting the persuasive power of exclusive *we*. Attitude markers with 6,946 occurrences (31.2%) are the least frequent feature in the corpus (see Table 1). The preference for assessment reflects the evaluative nature of the genre of election campaign speeches as candidates seek to present judgements relating to a range of features of their opponents.

Stance features	Raw frequency	Percentage
Boosters	8,059	36.3
Certainty boosters	3,398	15.4
Intensity boosters	3,412	15.3
Extremity boosters	1,249	5.6
Attitude markers	6,946	31.2
Assessment markers	4,843	21.8
Significance markers	665	3.0
Emotion markers	1,438	6.4
Self–mentions	7,239	32.5
I-pronouns	2,623	11.8
Inclusive we-pronouns	4,411	19.8
Exclusive we-pronouns	205	0.9
Total	22,244	100

Table 1: Distribution of stance features in the corpus

The following sections present the contextual analysis of the stance markers used by Trump in his election campaign speeches to sound more convincing.

3.1 Boosters

Because every point made in Trump's speeches is subject to the recipients' interpretation and acceptance, boosters make persuasion more effective by strengthening the asserted position. By skillfully managing the use of boosters, speakers can modulate their evaluative stance towards both the information conveyed and the audience, thus making their discourse more persuasive (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2025). Boosters emphasizing certainty, for example, help in convincing the recipients of reasonability of future presidential policies. By conveying a clear stance towards the certainty of a proposition, Trump uses these features to project credibility as a national leader and an image of authority and conviction in his decision-making. Here is an example from the corpus in which Trump uses boosters to underpin his confidence in contrasting his and Biden administrations.

(1) *There has **never** been a greater contrast between two successive administrations in **all** of American history, ours being greatness, and theirs being failure*.

The speaker leaves no doubt that he absolutely believes what he is claiming, which helps him appear convincing, thus exercising control over recipients' beliefs. The boosting adverb *never* and the pronoun *all* intensify the claim and make it sound categorical, enhancing the persuasive effect of Trump's utterance, which consists in contrasting policies pursued by his administration and the Biden one as being greatness and failure respectively.

Example (2) from the corpus features a certainty booster—the adverb *of course* enhancing authorial commitment regarding what Trump is saying.

(2) *And **of course**, we will do whatever it takes to bring back **honesty, confidence,** and **trust** in our elections*.

Trump promises his electorate to change the situation with the election in the USA in such a way that few recipients can disbelieve that he is able to eliminate cheating. The boosting adverbial expression *of course* is a helpful marker frequently used to emphasize speaker's confidence. In this example, we can also see attitudinal stance expressed through the attitude nouns *honesty*, *confidence*, and *trust* conveying Trump's view of democratic election. They are used to emotionalize the claim thus enhancing the persuasive effect.

The analysis also revealed that Trump often uses what Vassileva (2001) calls "belief boosters" such as *I believe*, *I think*, *in my view* to carry the assurance of their conviction. These boosters underline this individual stance by providing a stamp of personal authority to help arouse audience involvement. In the following example, double employment of the belief booster helps Trump instill confidence in his audience—he persuades them that he is able to stop destroying the country by the Biden administration:

(3) *I actually say that the date, remember, this November 5th, **I believe** it's going to be the most important date in the history of our country. **I believe** that.*

A combination of two stance features—the first-person singular pronoun *I* and the boosting verb *believe*—contributes to emphasizing Trump's authoritative role as a national leader who is expected to impress his audience through giving credible messages, thus convincing them to support him in November 2024.

In addition to indicating certainty, Trump also amplifies the emotive strength of his claims through the use of boosters emphasizing intensity. These lexical items are employed to add color to claims, as illustrated in the following example:

(4) *Well, I'm not predicting World War III, but I will say this, we're* ***very*** *close and they're only talking about nuclear weapons.*

(5) *Biden has* ***totally*** *humiliated our nation on the world stage, starting with the Afghanistan disaster.*

Intensity markers add a strong emotional charge to Trump's statements, making them more memorable and impactful. This heightened emotional coloring can resonate with audiences, creating a stronger emotional connection. Persuasion in these two fragments is realized through the use of two boosters. In (4), the adverb *very* enhances the degree of a quality expressed with the attitude marker *close*. The adverb *totally* in (5) amplifies the strength of the claim about devastating policies pursued by Joe Biden.

Among the boosting devices used by Trump, extremity markers were less frequent but also employed in the corpus. As Hyland and Zou (2021) put it, they mark the upper edge of a continuum and remove any alternative ideological constructions and views. Trump uses these resources to create both positive and negative representations. In the following example, he exploits the superlative adjectives *the worst* and *the most crooked* to upgrade the proposition and emphasize the negative characteristics of Joe Biden, thus contributing to the persuasiveness of the claim.

(6) *I'm telling you, he's* ***the worst*** *president we've ever had and the most incompetent president we've ever had. And he's also* ***the most crooked*** *president we have ever had.*

In the example below, the extremity marker helps Trump to emphasize his achievements during his presidency in 2016-2020.

(7) *Three years ago, we had* ***the most secure*** *border in US history.*

The extreme nature of superlative adjectives can polarize audiences and reinforce pre-existing beliefs, potentially hindering open discussion and critical thinking.

3.2 Attitude markers

Attitude markers indicate affective perspectives also influencing the recipients and projecting a positive image of the speaker and a negative image of her/his opponent in the election campaign or an enemy outside the country. Predominantly realized in adjectives, adverbs and nouns, these stance resources enable the speaker to present information as true, false, important, disturbing or

surprising, and create different images of social actors thus emotionalizing the speech. The following instance features negative emotion tokens used to reveal Trump's evaluation of the Biden administration and discredit them to induce negative feelings towards the US President in the audience.

(8) *For millions of Americans, the past two years under Joe Biden have been a time of **pain, hardship, anxiety** and **despair.***

The example illustrates Trump's negative appreciation of the Biden administration, whose policies are destroying both the US economy and the US image. The statement sets a strong emotional tone, painting a bleak picture of life under Biden. The use of emotionally charged words like *pain*, *hardship*, *anxiety*, and *despair* evokes a sense of suffering and dissatisfaction.

In his 2024 election campaign speeches, Trump reserves many of his explicitly inscribed negative evaluations for the US President. He formulates affect overtly labeling his emotions and in doing so takes an affective stance. By presenting his emotional side, Trump emphasizes the strength of his beliefs. Recipients' emotions are appealed to by emotional lexical items, which convey negative feelings towards to the Biden administration, thus creating their negative image and emphasizing the need to vote for Trump, who will stop these policies.

In describing the Biden administration, Trump frequently uses assessment markers such as *illegal* (88 occurrences), *incompetent* (41 occurrences) and *corrupt* (48 occurrences), as in the following example:

(9) *But those sanctions were lifted by the **corrupt** Biden administration*.

The words *illegal*, *incompetent*, and *corrupt* carry significant negative connotations. They imply serious wrongdoing and a lack of competence, undermining the legitimacy and credibility of the Biden administration. The high frequency of these terms further amplifies their impact. The repetition reinforces the negative message and makes it more memorable for the audience.

The analysis revealed that while the Biden administration is depicted as evil, the American nation and Trump administration are always represented with positive assessment markers:

(10) *Together they help build America into the **greatest** nation in the history of the world.*

This strategy aims to contrast the negative portrayal of the Biden administration with a consistently positive representation of himself and the American nation,

implying that Trump sees himself and his administration as a defender of the nation against a corrupt and harmful administration.

It should be noted that one of the most frequent positive assessment markers were the adjective *great* (935 occurrences), *big* (312 occurrences), and *nice* (162 occurrences). The attitude marker *great* mainly occurs in the context of his political motto (Make America great again), as in Example 11:

(11) *We're going to go on to defeat **crooked** Joe Biden, and we're going to, very simply, make America **great** again*.

By juxtaposing *crooked* with *great*, Trump creates a stark contrast between his vision of a future America and the image he paints of his opponent. *Crooked* evokes distrust and disdain, while *great* evokes nostalgia, patriotism, and hope. This binary framing is designed to simplify the political landscape and solidify support for his own candidacy.

Great is also used to describe the US economy as *the greatest economy* and the Americans as *great people*, to picture his job as *great job* and to present Trump himself as a person who makes *great deals*. Similar positive connotations are attributed to Trump's family described as *great family* and some of the political leaders who are his *great friends*. This consistent use of *great* establishes a positive framing for all aspects of his leadership, his administration, and his vision for America.

The presence of both positive and negative assessment items in Trump's discourse indicates speaker's high emotional intensity and personal involvement, thus contributing to the build-up of his personal identity and persuasiveness of his claims.

Significance markers were less frequent in the corpus and employed to emphasize the importance of some events, features, or actions, as in:

(12) ***Importantly**, after decades of rising energy costs, the United States had finally attained the impossible dream of American energy independence, which soon would've turned into energy dominance.*

The overt marking of importance is a key feature of persuasive discourse, and election campaign speeches are a clear indication of an evaluation of the event or action. Significance markers can persuade audiences by convincing them of the importance of specific events or actions. They are particularly forceful when combined with boosters:

(13) *It's a **very important** thing. I haven't even heard it mentioned in two years. That's a **very important** thing.*

Combining the significance marker *important* with the booster *very* creates a double emphasis on the importance of the issue. This intensifies the message, leaving little room for doubt.

The analysis also revealed that negative evaluations were given not only to Biden and his administration, but also to immigrants, thus creating one more dichotomy "Americans vs immigrants", which is frequently emphasized in Trump's rally speeches. This highlights that Trump's negative assessment markers are not limited to political rivals but extend to a specific demographic group: immigrants.

(14) *Our southern border has been **erased** and our country is being **invaded** by millions and millions of unknown people, many of whom are entering for a very **bad** and **sinister** reason, and you know what that reason is. We will be paying a **big** price for this **invasion** into our country for years to come. Hundreds of thousands of pounds of deadly drugs, including very lethal fentanyl, are **flooding** across the now open and totally porous southern border. The **blood soaked** streets of our once great cities are cesspools of **violent** crimes which are being watched all over the world as leadership of other countries explain that this is what America and democracy is really all about. How **sad**.*

The vocabulary used in this excerpt indicates a negative evaluation of the immigration from Mexico, and assessment and emotion markers help Trump persuade his audience that the problem of immigration is acute and demands urgent measures which the Biden administration cannot take. This identifies the specific dichotomy that Trump fosters, emphasizing a division between "real Americans" and immigrants. While creating a contrast between the Americans presented as victims and the immigrants depicted as an aggressive force, Trump emphasizes the opposition of the Biden administration's immigration policy and that conducted by himself in 2016–2020. The affective impacts of this juxtaposition serve to gain popular support and constitute the affective configuration of Trump's election campaign discourse.

3.3 Self-mention markers

Self-mention manifests the explicitness of an authorial presence through the employment of first-person pronouns. These markers allow speakers to create a unique voice and deliberately assert their presence within the text. They contribute to developing a relationship with recipients and help to build credibility and positive images of the speaker, thus playing a significant role in arguments.

The *I*-pronoun is one of the most effective ways of signaling personal identity, speaker's beliefs, experience and intentions. In addition to contributing to greater speaker visibility in discourse, *I*-utterances have "all the reliability of first-hand claim" (Hodge & Kress, 1993, p. 92). When someone speaks from a place of *I*, it often feels more genuine and less contrived than a generalized statement. This can build trust with the audience, making them more receptive to the speaker's message. The frequent use of this type of stancetaking indicates speaker's attempt to present him/herself as a holder of discourse, thus making the claims more convincing and giving extra importance to them (Kashiha, 2022).

The study found *I*-pronouns used to realize several discursive functions. They are used by Trump to represent an overt acceptance of personal responsibility and to build a personal ethos of authority:

(15) ***My*** *view is now that we have abortion where everybody wanted it from a legal standpoint*.

Using *I* to express personal beliefs can create a sense of authenticity and personal connection with the audience. This can make Trump appear more relatable, even when advocating controversial positions. The self-mention marker in (15) clearly demarcates Trump's conviction and desire to strongly identify himself with the argument. Personal reference indicates the perspective from which his statement should be interpreted.

Trump also frequently uses *I*-pronouns as part of the performative phrase *I want to thank* to demonstrate gratitude to those who support him in the election campaign. Demonstrating the ability to be grateful is also a very efficient strategy for imparting confidence in the speaker. Gratitude builds rapport with the audience by showing that the speaker values their support and acknowledges their contributions. This can make the audience more receptive to Trump's messages and more likely to identify with his perspective. The following expression acknowledges the audience's presence at the meeting:

(16) ***I want to thank*** *you all for being here tonight*.

I-pronouns were also found in reference to past actions or past experiences. In (17), although Trump emphasizes his institutional role, the use of *I*-pronoun conveys a sense of personal responsibility, thus building credibility.

(17) *And everyone thought when* ***I did*** *the wall,* ***I built*** *the wall, and they thought, "Oh, that would hurt me with the Hispanic vote."*

By referencing his past actions and accomplishments, Trump uses *I* to build his credibility and highlight his experience. This can be particularly persuasive in areas where he lacks formal expertise, as he can draw on his business background or personal experiences.

The most frequent use of *I*-pronouns was found in references to future actions, which is typical of election campaign speeches: most Trump's promises are formulated as *I*-claims:

(18) ***I will keep*** *America out of foolish and unnecessary foreign wars just as I did for four straight years.*

The use of *I* implies personal accountability for the speaker's actions and plans. This is particularly persuasive when advocating for change or challenging the status quo, as illustrated in the above examples.

First-person plural pronouns perform a variety of discursive functions, including appealing to unity and shared experience, expressing consensus, sharing duties, or creating positive images. The corpus features predominantly inclusive uses of *we*-pronouns depending on whether the speaker is including the audience and others in the purview of *we* (see Example 19).

(19) *But* ***our*** *movement has the power to save America. And* ***we*** *must do that.* ***We*** *can once again build the greatest economy in the history of the world.* ***We*** *can bring back strong borders.* ***We*** *can give our police the support they need and the respect they deserve. And* ***we*** *can restore hope to communities all across* ***our*** *land.*

The inclusive *we*-pronoun displays Trump's desire to express solidarity with the American citizens in their attempts to make America great again. The use of *we* helps evoke a sense of collective action and shared purpose, suggesting that the audience is working together towards a common goal. This can be persuasive in encouraging support for Trump's policies or actions.

In the following excerpt, Trump also uses inclusive *we* to contrast himself and his supporters with the Democrats:

(20) ***We*** *will defeat the radical left Democrats that are trying to destroy* ***our*** *country from within, and likewise protect* ***us*** *all.*

This example features a clear opposition of positively presented *we* (Trump's supporters) and negatively presented *they* (the radical left Democrats) who have destroyed the country. The first-person plural pronoun is a valuable linguistic tool used here to promote a dichotomist worldview of "us" (good, i.e., the Republicans) versus "them" (bad, i.e., the Democrats). Its use is well explained in

terms of van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square Model of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. The strategy of positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation is very common in political discourse. In Trump's speeches, it is employed in two contexts: first, to contrast his administration and the Biden one; and second, to position himself with the ordinary people (*we*) in opposition to immigrants (*they*) who are constructed as a problem for the Americans:

(21) ***We** have millions and millions of people flowing into **our** country illegally. **We** have no idea who the hell **they** are. **They** come from prisons and **they** come from mental institutions, and it's just killing **our** country*.

This example is also an illustration of Trump's preference for employing the inclusive marker *we*. By using this pronoun instead of *I*, Trump seeks to create speaker-audience solidarity so as to promote agreement with the propositional content. With this pronoun Trump creates a sense of shared identity with his audience, implying they are united in their goals. This can be particularly effective in mobilizing supporters and fostering a sense of belonging within his base.

4 Discussion

Drawing upon Trump's speeches made at the rallies in 2023–2024, this study made an attempt to illustrate how stance features can be exploited in election discourse with the aim to influence the voters and win them over. Seeking answers to the research questions, the study revealed some trends in the use of stance features by Donald Trump.

The study found that Trump almost equally relied on the three types of stancetaking—boosting, attitude, and self-mention—each contributing to his communication strategy in a specific way: expressing certainty, indicating affective attitude, and presenting his discoursal self.

Boosters serve to magnify the importance and certainty of claims. They convey a sense of confidence and conviction, projecting an image of a leader who is decisive and sure of his knowledge and abilities. The heavy use of boosters in Trump's speeches suggests direct communication and confident rhetoric. Amplifying strength and certainty, boosters create a sense of emphasis, signaling that the speaker strongly believes in their message and is confident in its validity. Using these devices, Trump seeks to suppress alternative ideas and present his claims with conviction, leaving little room for ambiguity or doubt. In persuasive texts such as election campaign speeches, where strong language and persuasive appeals are essential for gaining support and influencing public

opinion, boosters are helpful in creating an impression of assurance and instilling trust and confidence in the audience.

Attitude markers convey emotions and judgments, aligning Trump with specific values and positions. They aim to connect with the audience on an emotional level, expressing shared feelings and concerns. The high density of these markers in Trump's speeches might correspond with the explicit communication style inherent of individuals being oriented to be transmitters of feelings and preferring to hold the burden of communication (Lee, 2021). Attitude markers were predominantly used by Trump for emotionalizing claims by appealing to negative or positive feelings. The role of the affective dimension of persuasive discourse has been emphasized in a number of studies. Particularly, Breeze (2019) argues that political success often hinges on a politician's ability to tap into and express emotions that resonate with a broad audience. In the same vein, van Dijk (2006) argues that appeals to the attitudes and emotions of the recipients are those discourse structures that enhance the persuasive effect of arguments. The analysis revealed that Trump tends to project positive assessments and emotions onto himself, his friends, and his family as well as the Republican party he represents, while negative lexical items were used to depict the Biden administration and the US enemies. This dichotomy is well explained in terms of van Dijk's (1998) Ideological Square Model. As Breeze (2017) points out, presenting issues in terms of dichotomies is a pervasive tactic in political communication.

Self-mention markers place Trump at the center of the narrative, emphasizing his personal involvement and responsibility. They also project an image of self-confidence and leadership. These markers are used almost as frequently as other types of stance features also serving the persuasive purpose. By directly acknowledging their own perspective, speakers can appear more transparent and relatable. This can help build trust with the audience, making them more receptive to the speaker's message. Self-mention markers can also demonstrate the speaker's personal investment in their message. This can be particularly powerful in persuasive contexts where the speaker is trying to convince the audience to take action or adopt a particular viewpoint. As Hyland (2005) put it, the presence or absence of self-mention markers is a conscious choice by speakers to adopt a particular stance and authorial identity. For example, *I*-pronouns are employed by Trump to express gratitude, to refer to his past experiences and actions, to emphasize something important, to present himself as a strong leader capable of taking personal responsibility for political decisions, or to signal his individual self. The directness of *I*-statements can also convey conviction, making Trump's claims appear more solid and less open to debate.

Self-mention realized through *we*-pronouns indicates Trump's intentions to speak for others, thus constructing national identity, to appeal to unity of the American people or to shared experiences, and to contrast his supporters (*we*) with those supporting the Biden administration and the Democrats (*they)*. Most of the first-person plural pronouns (93%) found in the corpus are inclusive, which means that Trump tends to involve the audience in his speeches.

The use of *we* implicitly defines an "other", an opposing group, represented by *they*—in this case, the Biden administration and, by extension, their supporters. This creates a sense of opposition and "us against them" mentality. This common strategy of political rhetoric—the framing of the world in terms of dichotomies—is one of the mainstays of political rhetoric (Breeze, 2017), which enhances the persuasiveness of claims. This feature of Trump's rhetoric was also emphasized in Degani's (2016) study, which revealed Trump's preference for "us against them" dichotomies.

5 Conclusion

The analysis showed that all three types of stance features were employed by Trump to maintain an image of a strong political leader, to justify his authority, and to guide the nation. Through the use of straightforward emotional and personal language, Trump conveys his concern over the future of the USA with clarity and conviction. Leveraging language as a powerful tool to connect with his supporters and advance his agenda and manipulating the stance features are of great value to the politician as it helps emphasize or de-emphasize social actions or social actors, persuade recipients into believing or doing something, and build a strong and appealing image as a leader.

Overall, the empirical material and the interpretative analysis showed that an attempt to draw upon the concept of stance could be valuable in the analysis of election campaign discourse, and this concept opens a new area for research in the study of this type of political communication. Therefore, I hope this article provides insights into the field of political discourse analysis, underscoring the importance of critically analyzing the language used by politicians and identifying the subtle ways in which stance markers can shape our understanding of political events.

I am conscious that the small size of the corpus employed in the present study may affect the findings, and more research should be carried out on this issue. Despite this limitation, I believe that the goal of this research—to demonstrate that stance features can serve a persuasive purpose and are exploited by politicians to gain support and enhance credibility—has been achieved. The article showed that the strategic use of stance features is of great value to the

politician as it helps emphasize or de-emphasize social actions or social actors and persuade recipients into believing or doing something.

I suggest that further research be conducted to investigate this topic either by extending the methodology or examining election campaign speeches from other perspectives. It would also be interesting to compare these findings to those obtained on Trump's speeches given on non-election occasions or election campaign speeches delivered during the 2016, 2020, and 2024 campaigns. Analyzing how the American political culture, with its emphasis on individual leadership and charisma, shapes the use of self-mention markers in political discourse is also of research interest. Overall, further research on the use of stance features in political discourse has the potential to unveil valuable insights into the dynamics of political communication, the role of personality in persuasion, and the impact of cultural factors on political speech styles.

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UNCERTAINTY MARKERS IN SPOKEN LEARNER DISCOURSE

Petra Huschová

Abstract

The paper discusses linguistic forms conveying epistemic stance in L2 spoken production, focusing on expressing uncertainty. The source of stance markers is a subset of the Corpus of Czech Students' Spoken English, particularly informal student-student discussions on a given topic. The main aim of the corpus analysis is to identify a variety of grammatical devices indicating the speaker's uncertainty about the truth-value of a proposition and to examine their distributional patterns and positional preferences. Additionally, the paper explores roles of the construction *I think*, the most frequent stance marker in the discussions analysed. The findings indicate that Czech learners of English tend to employ a restricted set of items recurrently and use *I think* not only to express uncertainty but also to mitigate potential disagreement and signal turn-taking.

Keywords

epistemic stance, uncertainty markers, L2 spoken discourse, Czech learners of English

1 Introduction

Reflecting the speaker's degree of commitment to the veracity of information and helping to manage discourse, epistemic stance markers play an important role in natural spoken interaction. Therefore, advanced L2 speakers of English should acquire the pragmatic skill of stance-taking to be able to evaluate the content of their utterances as well as "to take their parts in co-constructing the interaction in a manner appropriate to the social context, interlocutor roles, and purpose of the exchange" (Gablasova et al., 2017, p. 613) (see also Xu & Cao, 2023). The Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) (Council of Europe, 2020) lists discourse management and propositional precision, which includes qualifying opinions and expressing degrees of commitment, among abilities of L2 speakers' pragmatic competence (see Castello, 2023). Understanding how Czech learners of English employ epistemic stance markers in face-to-face interaction can thus shed light on some pragmatic aspects of their spoken production.

The current paper investigates how advanced Czech learners of English exploit English resources of epistemic stance to convey their attitude to a proposition and an addressee. The main aim is to identify and discuss epistemic stance markers which signal the speaker's uncertainty, focusing on overt grammatical devices,

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that is, epistemic verbs, adverbs, adjectives, and nouns. The objectives are to examine a variety of linguistic forms expressing uncertainty, to explore their contexts of occurrence and distributional patterns, and to discuss functions of the marker *I think* in the interaction process. In order to investigate the usage of uncertainty markers by Czech learners of English, a subset of the Corpus of Czech Students' Spoken English (CCSSE) (Ježková, 2015) is analysed, particularly 114 student-student face-to-face interactions in which the interlocutors discuss a given topic and are expected to co-construct the interaction, express their stance and justify their viewpoint.

2 Epistemic stance

Stance-taking can be defined as "the positions we take towards our propositions and audience" (Hyland & Zou, 2021, p. 1), implying that it is a part of social interaction (Coates 1987, p. 120; Gablasova at al., 2024, p. 187). Du Bois (2007) emphasizes: "No stance stands alone. It is the stance utterance with *its dialogic context* that is the relevant unit for stance interpretation" (p. 158). Similarly, Kärkkäinen (2003) highlights that stance-taking is "an interactional practice engaged in by coparticipants in conversation, rather than an isolated mental position of an individual speaker" (p. 16).

Generally, stance refers to how speakers express their feelings, degrees of certainty and assessments of their own as well as others' propositions (Biber, 2006; Wu & Paltridge, 2021). This broad definition of stance thus includes a variety of concepts discussed in the scholarly literature, for example, 'attitude' (Halliday, 2004), 'evaluation' (Hunston & Thompson, 2000), or 'affect' and 'evidentiality' (Hyland, 1999). Hyland and Zou (2021, p. 3) explain that affect indicates the speaker's feelings and affective attitudes, whereas evidentiality concerns the reliability of the knowledge contained in propositions. Holmes (1990, p. 201) labels the two main functions of stance markers 'affective' (related to the speaker's attitude to the addressee) and 'epistemic' (related to the speaker's degree of certainty).

Epistemic stance, corresponding to Hyland's (1999) conception of evidentiality, is defined as the speaker's position to the status of information in a proposition and assessment of its reliability, which implies that it concerns the speaker's degree of certainty (Biber et al., 2021, p. 964; Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 1). As Hyland and Zou (2021) state, epistemic stance markers "convey the speaker's judgements of the reliability that might be invested in a statement, either casting doubt or asserting certainty" (p. 5). Based on the degree of certainty, they distinguish between hedges, that is, devices that withhold the speaker's complete commitment to the truth-value of a proposition, and boosters, that is, devices that allow to present one's claims with assurance.

Uncertainty markers, the focus of the current paper, can be viewed as a basic and dominant category of hedges (Vold, 2006, p. 64) because hedges are characterized as means that qualify utterances to mitigate their strength in terms of the author's lack of knowledge to the truth of the proposition (Crompton, 1997, p. 273; Hyland, 1995, p. 34). Additionally, hedges explicitly offer a personal assessment of the speaker's claims to addressees who can provide their alternative views (Hyland & Zou, 2021, p. 5). Similarly, Brezina (2009) emphasizes "the process of negotiating knowledge" in which uncertainty markers indicate not only the degree of likelihood of the truth value in a proposition but also justify the speaker's beliefs in a particular social setting (p. 43). Accordingly, in this paper, uncertainty markers are understood as multifunctional interactional devices whose interpretation is reliant on the immediate discourse context (Coates, 1987; Gablasova et al., 2024; Holmes, 1990; Kärkkäinen, 2003; White, 2008).

2.1 Categories of epistemic stance markers

Epistemic stance can be expressed and encoded through an array of devices (paralinguistic, grammatical, lexical); however, this paper focuses only on linguistic forms that overtly convey the speaker's position to a proposition. Therefore, based on the theoretical framework of epistemic stance proposed by Biber et al. (2021) and Biber (2006), the following grammatical devices have been included in the investigation: adverbs, modal verbs, and lexical verbs/adjectives/nouns followed by a complement clause (Biber, 2006, pp. 101–102; Biber et al., 2021, pp. 964–966). Biber et al. (2021, p. 962) argue that epistemic adverbs and complement clause constructions are the clearest cases of grammatical marking of stance because they comprise the component expressing a stance that frames the component presenting a proposition. Other studies (e.g., Brezina, 2009; Gablasova at al., 2024; Kärkkäinen, 2003) also report the above-mentioned word classes as the major categories of epistemic stance markers commonly appearing in spoken discourse.

Since the scope of this study is narrowed to uncertainty markers, Table 1 includes only the forms that can convey the speaker's uncertainty. Based on synthetizing the previously reported uncertainty markers (Biber et al., 2021; Biber, 2006; Brezina, 2009; Gablasova et al., 2024; Hoye, 2013; Xu & Cao, 2023), Table 1 summarizes all the expressions that were searched for in the corpus discussions. Drawing upon Xu and Cao (2023, p. 5), the uncertain position is perceived as a continuum ranging 'from not knowing whether something is true to believing that something is true'. Therefore, the category of adverbs includes also disjuncts that in terms of likelihood allow for some doubt (Hoye, 2013, p. 194).

Category	Linguistic form
Modal verb	*could, can, may, might, would, should*
Lexical verb	*think, don't know, suppose, guess, believe, doubt, assume, seem, appear*
Adverb	*maybe, perhaps, possibly, probably, apparently, arguably, conceivably, likely, presumably*
Adjective	*(un)likely, not sure/certain, possible, probable, doubtful*
Noun	*possibility, probability, likelihood, assumption*

Table 1: Grammatical devices conveying the speaker's uncertainty

2.2 Multifunctionality of epistemic stance markers: Communicative functions of *I think*

As mentioned above, epistemic stance markers are multifunctional items that genuinely convey the speaker's position to both a proposition and an addressee. Du Bois (2007) explains their multifunctional nature through the notion of the stance triangle as "I evaluate something, and thereby position myself, and thereby align with you" (p. 163). In other words, the speaker simultaneously evaluates a proposition, positions himself/herself to its truth value, and expresses agreement with other interlocutors. White (2008) argues that speakers employ epistemic stance markers primarily to position themselves with respect to other speakers (to make space for alternative perspectives), whereas their standpoint with respect to the truth value of a proposition is of secondary importance.

Regarding specific social functions of epistemic stance markers in spoken interaction, Kärkkäinen (2003, p. 26) lists, besides displaying the degree of certainty, a politeness/face-saving function, achieving conversational actions (such as avoiding agreement or disagreement), constructing discourse statuses of participants, and regulating aspects of interaction (like topic transition). As this paper is concerned with functions of the marker *I think* in spoken production by Czech learners of English, communicative functions of this epistemic phrase in spoken interaction are briefly introduced here.

Firstly, *I think* primarily functions as a device of epistemic stance conveying the speaker's subjective perspective. As Aijmer (1997), Baumgarten and House (2010), Caprario (2023), Coates (1987), Holmes (1990) or Kärkkäinen (2003) observe, *I think* can be used tentatively to indicate the speaker's uncertainty or deliberatively to expresses certainty and deliberative opinion.

Secondly, *I think* is commonly employed as a device of discourse management and organization. Kärkkäinen (2003) argues that this epistemic phrase often "simply marks a boundary of some kind in the talk" (p. 121), meaning that it functions just as a routine organizational device. Baumgarten and House (2010)

agree that L1 speakers often use *I think* as "the pragmaticalized verbal routine" to organize their discourse, but they point out that L2 speakers employ it mainly to evaluate their propositions in terms of degrees of certainty (p. 1197). This functional diversity of *I think* is also noticed in spoken trial discourse investigated by Szczyrbak (2020), who concludes that this construction functions as a hedge when it is found with other uncertainty markers or as a discourse marker when co-occurring with other discourse-organizing devices. Caprario (2023), analysing classroom discourse, identifies an additional function of deciding in real time.

Thirdly, *I think* acts as a face-saving device signalling that a proposition can be questioned and further discussed, thus helping to manage relations between interlocutors (Baumgartner & House, 2010; Caprario, 2003; Coates, 1987; White, 2008). Kärkkäinen (2003, p. 105) adds that speakers can use *I think* to introduce a different perspective and to signal that they disagree with the prior turn. Myers (2010) observes that, in the discourse of blogs, *I think* mainly signals a relation to another person, rather than marking epistemic uncertainty.

In summary, the epistemic marker *I think* can perform different functions in spoken discourse, often simultaneously, depending on the context in which it occurs. Besides signalling the speaker's perspective, it is commonly utilized as a device of discourse management and a face-saving device.

3 Methodology

3.1 Data for corpus analysis

This paper exploits the Corpus of Czech Students' Spoken English (CCSSE) (Ježková, 2015) as the source of epistemic stance markers in question. The corpus was compiled at the University of Pardubice (Department of English and American Studies) and comprises informal spoken English (153,295 words) recorded in 228 monologues, 228 dialogues and 114 discussions. The participants were 228 native Czech learners of English (aged 19 to 22 years), 71% females and 29% males. All the participants were first-year university students (from three Czech universities) enrolled in a Teaching English as a Foreign Language programme. Their average level of proficiency in English was B2 (according to the CEFR), which is the officially declared level of secondary school leavers in the Czech Republic.

For the purpose of the current study, only one subset of CCSSE was analysed. The selected categories of uncertainty markers were excerpted from 114 student-student discussions on a given topic (the total number of words in the sub-corpus examined was 39,101; the average number of words per discussion was 343). The discussions covered eleven topics, mostly related to the students' English

language learning experience or their university studies: the teaching profession, university tuition fees, the internet as a source of information, working while studying, studying abroad, professional agencies offering ready-made seminar papers, social networks in one's life, the school leaving exam, healthy eating, studying in one's hometown, living in university halls of residence. The discussions were designed to be interactive tasks and the participants, who were social equals and had known each other for some time, were expected to express their stance and justify their viewpoint, as illustrated in this sample excerpt from the corpus:

> <Discussion no 4: working while studying>
> <Speaker A, female, 20 years old, 11 years of learning English, 1 week in English speaking country>
> <Speaker B, female, 19 years old, 9 years of learning English, 0 weeks in English speaking country>
>
> *<A> Well I think that (er) it's good to work while you're studying because you need some money for your life.*
> *<B> Yes, it's true, but I think that you don't have a much time to your activities for example, when you do some sports then you can't do this because you are at work.*
> *<A> Sure and maybe you've got, you don't have a time for studying too much but, (er) when you've got some good work when you you have to work maybe only one day in week, so I think it's good.*
> *<B> Yeah it's good and you have more money for some parties and and so on. And you are independent person I think. That you don't need the money from your parents which is also good.*

3.2 Corpus analysis

In the first stage of analysis, I searched the discussions for the linguistic forms listed in Table 1. In the second stage, I manually analysed all the occurrences collected because the uncertainty reading can be just one of their potential readings. Therefore, I examined them in their linguistic and situational context to ensure that they convey the speaker's uncertainty.

The manual analysis uncovered a large number of instances which did not convey uncertainty in the category of verbs, particularly modal verbs and the lexical verb *think* proved to be ambiguous in their nature. Interpretation of these verbs is highly context sensitive and, as highlighted by Holmes (1990), their reading "cannot be identified in a social and textual vacuum" (p. 186), which is reflected in (1) and (2).

(1) *a.<A> So we both live in a in a hall of residence of University.*
<B> Yes. So the thing it's better than renting a flat […]
<A> Why do you think?
<B> Well I'm not sure because I haven't tried yet, but well it ***could*** *have some advantages. For example (er) you have more room (er) more, more space and (er) […] you don't have to share bathroom with so many people.*

b.<B> We are needed.
<A> Yeah. And ***could*** *you name any benefits?*
<B> Benefits? Well, there was a time when being teacher meant something and and we are were resp= respected but I don't really think that's that's the case today.

The two exchanges in (1) demonstrate the indeterminate nature of modal verbs, meaning that one form can express different kinds of modality. Therefore, the semantic content of the modals in question was examined in conjunction with contextual co-occurrence patterns, that is, syntactic criteria that affect their epistemic and non-epistemic interpretation. The uncertainty reading belongs to the domain of epistemic modality because epistemic modality "qualifies the speaker's commitment to the truth of the modalised proposition" (Huddleston & Pullum, 2002, p. 52), thus marking "to what extent one can rely on the information which is being conveyed by the proposition" (Vold, 2006, p. 65). Modal verbs interpreted epistemically typically occur with inanimate subjects and stative verbs. In contrast, non-epistemic meanings, sometimes termed "root" modality (Coates, 1983; Leech, 2004; Papafragou, 2000), refer to actions and events controlled by humans or other agents, implying that the subject is usually animate and the verb dynamic (Biber et al., 2021, p. 484).

Based on this epistemic-root distinction, only (1a) has been included in this study because here the speaker B uses *could* epistemically together with another uncertainty marker (*I'm not sure*) to clearly communicate a lack of certainty due to having no experience with renting a flat. Also, the modal verb *could* co-occurs with the inanimate subject *it* and the stative verb *have.* Contrarily, in (1b), *could* in the utterance *And could you name any benefits?* is employed it its root meaning to convey a request and co-occurs with the human subject *you* and the verb *name* denoting an activity. With respect to the focus of this paper, only epistemic readings of the modal verbs listed in Table 1 are within the scope of the analysis, namely epistemic possibility of *can*, *could, may,* and *might* (e.g., *I think it can be useful but the disadvantage is bigger*), hypothetical possibility/tentative prediction of *would* (e.g., *It would probably help me to, (er) be more independent*) and tentative inference/assumption of *should* (e.g., *Well, maybe, England. It it should be better*) (see Hoye, 2013, p. 82).

Nevertheless, the most challenging structure to interpret was the construction *I think*, which, as mentioned in 2.2, can communicate the speaker's deliberative opinion or the speaker's uncertainty, which is shown in (2a) and (2b) respectively.

(2) a. *<A> So what do you think about internet social networks in our life?*
*<B> Okay, (er) so **I think** that internet social networks are really important (er) in in my life I really don't use those social networks like twitter, tumblr and such as these, but but the only one I have is facebook and that's just because most of my friends are there and that's like the cheapest or free way how to contact them and talk to them when we're separated.*

b. *<B> And the university dining hall? I have no experience.*
*<A> Me neither. But (er) I, **I think** in university dining hall there's quite good food as I heard it from other students and I'm going to go there a few weeks so I, **I think** there will be good food for students and (er) wide choice of food and […]*

In (2a), the student expresses his opinion on the role of social networks in his life, not communicating any doubt about the proposition. This example of deliberative *I think* also illustrates its typical context of occurrence—initial position and the presence of the complementizer *that* (see Coates, 1987; Holmes, 1990). On the other hand, in (2b), the student lacks sufficient evidence and thus tentatively communicates what she believes to be true. Following Caprario (2023) and Vold (2006), the construction *I think* is interpreted as tentative if it is possible to substitute it with an explicit uncertainty marker; for example, both utterances containing *I think* in (2b) could be paraphrased *Perhaps/maybe there's (will be) quite good food*. Accordingly, only the occurrences of *I think* at the uncertainty end (illustrated in 2b) are included in the current study (292 instances), while those at the certainty end (illustrated in 2a) are excluded from further discussion (267 instances).

Finally, it is essential to note that this categorization of *I think* may be problematic in some cases because the distinction between the two interpretations of *I think* is not always clear-cut and seems to be fuzzy. As Vold (2006, p. 70) points out, readings of polysemous markers can be related to each other and thus distinguishing between them may not be always relevant. Leech and Coates (1980) or Coates (1995) argue that such cases are not necessarily mutually exclusive and could be discussed in terms of merger.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Overall findings

The analysis of 114 discussions in CCSSE yielded a total of 640 instances conveying the speaker's uncertainty. Regarding the major categories of uncertainty markers, the results in Table 2 show that lexical verbs are predominant, with the preponderance of *I think*. The other two frequent categories are modal adverbs and modal auxiliaries. This finding is congruous with Gablasova et al.'s (2024) study of L2 spoken data, which reveals that verbal expressions of epistemic stance (lexical verbs) are prevalent, followed by adverbial expressions. In L1 spoken production, Kärkkäinen (2003, p. 37) reports that the most common means to mark epistemic stance are lexical verbs (60.7%), mainly *I think* and *I don't know*, together with a few modal adverbs (18.8%) and epistemic modals (17.8%), which indicates that Czech speakers of English rely on the same categories of epistemic stance markers as L1 speakers and tend to employ them with roughly the same frequency.

Category of uncertainty marker	No. of occurrences (%)	Linguistic form	No. of occurrences	%
Lexical verb	**364** (56.9%)	***(I) think***	**292**	**45.6**
		(I) don't know	35	5.5
		(I) guess	23	3.6
		(I) suppose	7	1.1
		seem	4	0.6
		(I) believe	2	0.3
		(I) doubt	1	0.2
Modal verb	**129** (20.1%)	***would***	**54**	**8.4**
		could	35	5.5
		can	20	3.1
		should	8	1.3
		may	6	0.9
		might	6	0.9
Adverb	122 (19.1%)	***maybe***	**97**	**15.2**
		probably	22	3.4
		perhaps	2	0.3
		presumably	1	0.2
Adjective	**21** (3.3%)	*not sure*	15	2.4
		possible	6	0.9
Noun	**4** (0.6%)	*possibility*	4	0.6
Total		**640**		

Table 2: Markers of the speaker's uncertainty in CCSSE

As for the most frequently used forms in CCSSE, Table 2 shows that Czech learners of English favour three items when conveying uncertainty, that is, the lexical verb *think*, the modal adverb *maybe* and the modal verb *would*. The occurrences of these three items make up approximately 69% of all the data, while the remaining 17 forms represent only 31% of the uncertainty markers collected. These results are in line with the prior studies of L2 spoken production by Gablasova et al. (2017; 2024), who observe that a small set of epistemic markers accounts for almost two-thirds of all stance markers identified (2017, p. 630), with *I think* (44.3%) and *maybe* (16.5%) being the most common lexical verb and adverb respectively (2024, pp. 197–198). Likewise, a limited range of high-frequency epistemic stance expressions is found in spoken American English by Kärkkäinen (2003), who thus concludes that the expression of epistemic stance follows "a very regular and routinized pattern in everyday speech" (p. 97). Although *I think* in her research outnumbers the other forms and categories of epistemic stance markers, it represents only 11.5% of the total. However, in CCSSE, *I think* is much more dominant (45.6%), which might suggest that Czech L2 speakers tend to overuse it.

In summary, Precht (2003, 2006) highlights that even though there is a wide range of forms available for us to express our commitments, "it would seem that we are culturally 'programmed' to use a very limited, very specific subset of these options" (2003, p. 133). This applies to the analysis of CCSSE as well because Czech L2 speakers prefer a restricted set of linguistic forms to convey their uncertainty (see Table 2) and tend to use them in recurrent patterns (see 4.2).

4.2 Distributional patterns of uncertainty markers in CCSSE

This section deals with the placement of uncertainty markers in utterances, but only those items that show syntactic mobility are taken into account here. This means that all the occurrences of modal verbs (129 instances) and the lexical verb *seem* (4 instances) have been excluded from further discussion because their position in a clause is constrained syntactically, see (3) and (4).

(3) *(Er) […] It's hard to say […] (er) […] I think that the education* ***could*** *be free for everybody, (er)…*

(4) *they just post everything like what they're doing right now and they have thousands of friends even though they don't know them and they're all around the world so that's kind of crazy, it* ***seems*** *like that to me.*

Both the modal auxiliary *could* in (3) and the lexical verb *seem* in (4) are placed after the subject because it is their only appropriate position in these clauses. In

contrast, the other uncertainty markers collected can occur in different positions. For example, the utterances in (5) reflect the syntactic mobility of *I guess,* which commonly appears in initial or final position in the corpus discussions.

(5) *a. I'm not quite sure but, (er) it will be probably somewhere in the USA* ***I guess****.*
b. Okay, so ***I guess*** *you are from economic school.*

Figure 1 demonstrates that the dominant pattern in CCSSE is the placement of uncertainty markers in initial position, that is, before a proposition itself, as in (5b), where *I guess* precedes the propositional information *you are from economic school*, or in (6), where *maybe* communicates the speaker's uncertainty about the subsequent proposition *it's cheaper.*

(6) *Well, it's […] (er) easier to get to school and* ***maybe*** *it's cheaper […] the transportation.*

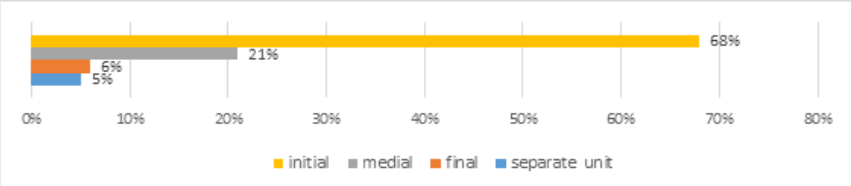


Figure 1: Placement of syntactically mobile uncertainty markers in CCSSE

Additionally, the results in Table 3 show that initial position is preferred with all the categories of syntactically mobile uncertainty markers in CCSSE. Biber et al. (2021, p. 963) explain that the overwhelming preference for this position reflects the primary function of stance markers, that is, serving as a frame that communicates the personal perspective to propositional information. Since speakers generally tend to first identify their stance, initial position is considered to be unmarked (Kärkkäinen, 2003, p. 183).

Regarding epistemic lexical verbs, they typically co-occur with the first-person subject in singular, which overtly marks the speaker's stance, as in (5) or (7) (see Kärkkäinen, 2003; Thompson, 2002). Since they express the speaker's stance towards an issue in the complement clause, Thompson (2002) labels them "complement-taking predicates or CTP-phrases". However, she argues that they can be reanalysed as epistemic parentheticals equivalent to epistemic adverbial phrases due to the fact that they "can and do float away from CTP position" (p. 134) (see Louro & Harris, 2013). This is apparent in (5b), where *I guess* could be moved from initial position (*so, you are from economic*

school I guess) or could be replaced with an epistemic adverb (*so probably you are from economic school*).

	Initial position	Medial position	Final position	Separate unit	Total
Lexical verb	262	51	25	22	**360**
Adverb	64	50	6	2	**122**
Adjective	14	6	1	-	**21**
Noun	3	-	1	-	**4**
Total	**343**	**107**	**33**	**24**	**507**

Table 3: Positions of individual categories of syntactically mobile uncertainty markers in CCSSE

Considering the CTP-phrase *I think*, the most frequent uncertainty marker in CCSSE, 225 out of 292 (i.e., 77%) instances appear in initial position and a common pattern is the absence of the complementizer *that* after *I think:*

(7) *<B> Well, I would like to try the United States if I would have to choose.*
*<A> Me too […] but **I think** it's (er) expensive.*
*<B> Well, yes but **I think** this school can give us some money to go there or I am not sure.*

This finding is in line with prior studies dealing with *I think* (Aijmer, 1997; Ariel, 2009; Baumgarten & House, 2010; Louro & Harris, 2013; Szczyrbak, 2020), which conclude that the zero complementizer dominates in spoken discourse. Ariel (2009, pp. 20–21) notes that the complementizer is often absent because the CTP-phrase serves as a mere epistemic framing for the complement that contains contextually more relevant information. Aijmer (1997) adds that the recurrent phrase *I think* has been pragmaticalized and "developed into a discourse marker or modal particle which is syntactically a speech-act adverbial" (p. 1) (see Thompson, 2002). Regarding the occasional presence of the complementizer *that* in spoken interaction, Kaltenböck (2009) clarifies that it can be motivated by rhythmic purposes or by bridging a hesitation phase, which implies that the complementizer may act like a filler allowing the speaker to get some time.

The other common position of uncertainty markers in CCSSE is medial position, with 21% of syntactically mobile uncertainty markers (see Figure 1). Table 3 indicates that it is epistemic adverbs that often occur medially (41% of adverbs), that is, within a proposition, as in:

(8) *That's **probably** true.*

It has been found out that 33 out of 97 (i.e., 34%) occurrences of *maybe*, the predominant adverb in CCSSE, are placed medially. However, a closer examination of these occurrences reveals that medial position of *maybe* is sometimes inappropriate (9), in contrast to *maybe* in initial position (6).

(9) *a. *So it would be **maybe** little problem but I think it worth to try it.…*
*b. *you have to **maybe** be with touch, in touch with, with…*

Such inappropriate usage of *maybe* may stem from the influence of the students' mother tongue because in Czech the corresponding adverb '*možná*' commonly appears in medial position. The general preference for initial position of *maybe* is reported by Castello (2023, pp. 259-260), who observes that *maybe* is by far the most frequently utilized epistemic adverbial in turn-initial position, with L2 speakers (Italian and Swedish learners) employing it more extensively than L1 speakers. Hoye (2013) explains that although epistemic adverbs are often found in medial position, their most frequent placement is initial, which is associated with their thematic role: "their scope is sentential making them ideal 'scene-setters' for what is to follow" (p. 185).

Two remaining positions, at the end of an utterance and an utterance itself, are rare in CCSSE (6% and 5% respectively) and mostly associated with epistemic lexical verbs (see Table 3):

(10) *If you are beginner and trainee, I think you have to pass some exams and after this, this work isn't really time time wasting **I think**.*

(11) *<B> (er) Personally, I would not have the courage to study anywhere but in my hometown. […] Yeah, because because of this, like, I would be afraid probably.*
*<A> Yeah, **I think so**.*

Final position of an epistemic lexical verb, that is, after a proposition, as in (5a) or (10), could be perceived as a kind of afterthought due to the unplanned nature of spoken face-to-face interaction. Biber et al. (2021) state that speakers may realize that their previous proposition "needs qualification, and so add a hedging comment clause" (p. 972). Regarding markers that occur as separate utterances, mainly *I (don't) think so* is used this way to communicate that "one believes that something is true" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., Definition 1), as in (11), where the epistemic formula *I think so* communicates that student A believes that B's proposition is true.

Finally, the analysis of distributional patterns of uncertainty markers shows that they commonly co-occur in CCSSE:

(12) *(er) yes, I have thi= thought about it, too. But, (er)* ***I think*** *it* ***would*** *be […] very interesting but also dangerous and* ***maybe*** *I, I I* ***would*** *go there […] but only with someone else.* ***I think*** *on my own it* ***would****, I* ***would*** *I* ***would*** *be scared* ***I think****.*

(13) *Well, I'm* ***not so sure*** *about the pricing of flat, flats nowadays,* ***I guess*** *if you split with a lot of people it* ***would*** *be,* ***presumably****, cheaper.*

Examples (12) and (13) reflect co-occurrence of uncertainty markers in the immediate context within one's turn. In such congruous combinations, these markers express the speaker's high degree of uncertainty and hesitation. This finding is in alignment with Kirkham's (2011) claim that co-occurrence of epistemic stance markers may contribute towards constructing "a more tentative stance" (p. 211) or with Szczyrbak's observation (2020) that it may attenuate the speaker's precision of a proposition. Additionally, Examples (12) and (13) illustrate collocations of modal verbs with adverbs of uncertainty/likelihood which, according to Hoye (2013), signal the epistemic reading of the modal. However, only 15 cases of modal-adverb clusters have been identified in CCSSE, with *would + maybe* (5 instances), and *would + probably* (4 instances) being the most frequent ones.

4.3 Functions of tentative *I think* in CCSSE

When examining contexts of occurrence of the preponderant uncertainty marker *I think,* some of its communicative functions attested in previous studies (see 2.2) were identified in the CCSSE discussions as well. The analysis reveals that Czech learners do not employ *I think* only as an uncertainty marker, but also as an interactional device helping to organize their discourse and as a device of politeness. Additionally, these functions of *I think* seem to be often performed simultaneously, meaning that *I think* can signal initiating a turn and communicate the speaker's belief at the same time (15 and 16) or mitigate disagreement alongside marking the speaker's tentative perspective (17 and 18) (see Baumgartner & House, 2010). Nevertheless, some instances convey just the speaker's uncertainty, particularly when *I think* is found in medial position, where it is associated with approximation (see Hoye, 2013):

(14) *At the beginnings it was hard but after* ***I think*** *two months you are used to […] to speak with mistakes.*

As a boundary marker, tentative *I think* routinely signals turn-taking in CCSSE, typically appearing as a second part of an adjacency pair:

(15) *<B> But if you rent a flat you can live with people you like. If you don't want them they will not annoy you by by, I don't know, hearing music loud and so…*
<A> ***I think*** *I will maybe in three years rent a flat with my friends but really now I don't have any in this city so it's best for me if I live at home.*

(16) *<A> Yes that's what students usually do. As as our teacher said 'Students lie and students cheat'.*
<B> ***I think*** *the blame is on both sides … (er) but more on the students because, the agencies, it's their business.*

In (15) and (16), employing *I think* in the starting-point function, the students react to the preceding turn by the other interlocutor and at the same time convey their degree of certainty at that point. Whereas *I think* in (15) expresses the student's uncertainty, in (16) its tentative and deliberative interpretation seem to be merged because it could be paraphrased both as *perhaps the blame is on both sides* and *my opinion is that the blame is on both sides*.

As a politeness device, tentative *I think* is commonly employed in CCSSE when negotiating the point of a discussion, particularly to mitigate potential disagreement:

(17) *<A> I don't like fast foods and it's not tasty at all. And organic food I guess I've never tried, in in some kind of vegan … I've never been there.*
<B> Okay. <u>But</u> ***I think****, on the other hand, that in the, in the university dining hall, there are a lot of students and maybe, (er) you may, (er) you may…*
<A> Yeah, it's a bit crowded and you can wait long time, so […] but it's cheap and some= sometimes there are no people and you get your food as quick as you get there.

(18) *<A> But, (er) there are some disav=, disadvantages such as for some students it could be harder than for the other students for example the students for, students of grammar schools.*
<B> Well, I take your point, <u>but</u> on the other side ***I think*** *(er) some students, (er) from, for which it's harder, (er) they should learn more and then they can pass it easier.*
<A> Yes, <u>but</u> ***I think*** *some students aren't able to learn more and improve their self.*

In (17) and (18), the interlocutors do not share the same perspective on the issue discussed, which might be perceived as potentially face-threatening. Therefore, using the connector *but* followed by *I think,* they express partial agreement with the preceding proposition and then justify their belief.

Since this study is concerned only with tentative *I think*, other functions of this epistemic phrase reported in the prior studies (Baumgarten & House, 2009; Kärkkäinen, 2003) have not been observed in the CCSSE discussions. Some of

them, for example, closing one's turn or expressing agreement, could likely be associated with deliberative *I think.*

5 Conclusion

The analysis of student-student discussions in the Corpus of Czech Students' Spoken English indicates that expressing uncertainty in Czech learners' face-to-face interaction tends to be regular and routinized both at the level of linguistic form and in terms of distributional patterns.

The speaker's uncertainty is conveyed through a restricted set of linguistic forms in CCSSE. Advanced Czech learners of English favour the lexical verb *think*, which dwarfs all the other uncertainty markers identified. The other two frequently employed items are the adverb *maybe* and the modal auxiliary *would.* These three preferred uncertainty markers outnumber all the others, accounting for 69% of all the data. Similar tendencies have been observed both in L1 and L2 spoken discourse (see Gablasova el al., 2024; Kärkkäinen, 2003). Distributional patterns and positional preferences of the markers in question appear to be recurrent in the corpus discussions. Nearly 70% of syntactically mobile uncertainty markers are placed in initial position, which implies that the students tend to establish their stance before a proposition itself. Epistemic lexical verbs are typically used with the first-person singular subject and without the complementizer *that.* Additionally, uncertainty markers often co-occur in the immediate context within one's turn and thus upgrade the speaker's degree of uncertainty and hesitation. Some of the findings could be discussed in terms of the speakers' L1 background (Czech), which may account for a preference for specific uncertainty markers as well as positional preferences, for example, favouring the adverbs *maybe* and *probably* and placing them in medial position.

Regarding the usage of *I think*, the predominant uncertainty marker in CCSSE, the investigation confirmed its multifunctionality attested in previous studies. Besides marking the speaker's uncertainty, *I think* can simultaneously act as a discourse-organizing device or a device of politeness. In Baumgartner and House's (2010) words, *I think* expressing subjective evaluation "is usually embedded in an utterance or sequence of utterances which fulfil other functions in the discourse" (p. 1191) (see Aijmer, 1997). In CCSSE, *I think* tends to convey the speaker's uncertainty at a particular point in an exchange alongside signalling turn-taking or it often justifies the speaker's belief when helping to negotiate alignment. Additionally, it has been found that, in terms of expressing degrees of certainty, the phrase *I think* seems to be indeterminate in its nature because some instances could be assigned both the tentative and deliberative reading. Thus, distinguishing between these two readings of *I think* may not be always relevant and some instances could be interpreted as cases of merger.

Finally, limitations of the present study and directions for future research should be mentioned. Although this study uncovers tendencies and preferences in the usage of selected categories of uncertainty markers in spoken production by Czech learners of English, due to its narrow focus, it does not address some related issues. For example, it would be useful to address possible influences of the speakers' L1 (Czech) and to compare systematically the usage of uncertainty markers by Czech speakers against native speakers' performance. Furthermore, as prosody may affect the interpretation of epistemic stance markers, it would be helpful to analyse the transcribed data alongside recordings. Regarding the marker *I think,* since the distinction between its tentative and deliberative use can be greatly blurred, it would be beneficial to explore the usage of this epistemic phrase as such in order to capture all its interactional functions. The generalizability of findings could be increased by extending the corpus and enlarging the scope of research; other speaking tasks, a wider range of forms conveying uncertainty or learners with different proficiency levels could be included in future research. Also, individual preferences in linguistic choices among speakers could be taken into consideration. It might be interesting to examine individual variables, for example, to explore differences in the use of stance markers in terms of gender.

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A FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS OF METADISCOURSE MARKERS IN POLITICAL DISCOURSE: PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES IN NETANYAHU'S SPEECHES

Shatha Naiyf Qaiwer and Bahram Kazemian

Abstract

This study aims to examine the persuasive impact of metadiscourse (MD) markers in political speeches. It seeks to determine the extent to which MD practices contribute to the construction of persuasive discourse within this genre. To achieve this objective, a discourse analysis is applied to ten political speeches delivered by Benjamin Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel. Hyland's (2005a, 2005b) interpersonal models of MD are employed to investigate the frequency and persuasive impact of interactive and interactional devices utilized in speeches. The research has revealed that the persuasive intent conveyed through MD was largely dependent on the context. Consequently, Netanyahu often employed a combination of techniques to structure his discourse, influence audiences, capture their attention, and engage them in arguments. In addition, interactional devices were employed more frequently than interactive ones, indicating that engaging audiences in arguments and demonstrating one's stance and assessment of propositions were more likely to contribute to the construction of a persuasive political speech. The research results can be shared with foreign and second language learners, instructors, and speakers to enhance their understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic conventions employed in political discourse. Additionally, it can shed light on how persuasive discourse is constructed using MD markers.

Keywords

political discourse, metadiscourse markers, persuasion, Netanyahu's speeches, audience

1 Introduction

Metadiscourse (MD) is a prevalent linguistic tool that plays a crucial role in enabling speakers to effectively convey their stance on a proposition, construct a coherent discourse, negotiate shared understanding with their audience, and engage them in the discussion. Hyland (2005a) defines MD as a deliberate effort to guide readers or listeners through a text or speech by employing various linguistic elements. MD serves as a potent tool for speakers to establish and maintain social and interpersonal connections with the audience as an active participant in the discourse. Recently, several studies have focused on specific aspects of MD, including taxonomy of hedges, rhetoric-specific features of interactive MD, intercultural analysis of MD markers, textual and interpersonal MD markers, MD in policy documents, stance and engagement, as well as in various contexts of political, media, and academic discourse. (Cao & Hu, 2014;

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Ho, 2016; Hyland, 2005a, 2005b; Kashiha, 2022; Mansour & Alghazo, 2021). Our research aims to convey the notion that the selection of linguistic forms and meanings is directly influenced by the type and the nature of the interaction between participants. The purpose of this research is to examine the degree to which and the manner in which persuasion in Political Discourse (PD) is constructed through the selection of various MD mechanisms. Some examples of these devices are: *today I will discuss*, *I would like to talk about*, *I stated clearly that*, *I believe that*, *specifically, Israel will not allow* and *now remember this*.

1.1 Purposive persuasiveness in discourse

In the context of communication, MD plays a crucial role in conveying the intentions and objectives of speakers, as highlighted by Hyland (2005a). It enables them to project their interests, viewpoints, and assessments into a text and to process and refine concepts with consideration for potential audience/reader responses. Additionally, political speakers use language strategically to communicate their carefully crafted objectives to their audience, aiming to influence, convince, and sway them towards the desired outcomes and interpretations (Woods, 2006). As a persuasive tool, MD aids speakers in effectively engaging their audience, conveying relationships, apprising audiences of varying levels of certainty, and guiding their comprehension of a speech. Indeed, MD contributes to the logical, credible, and emotional appeals that have been characteristic of persuasive discourse since ancient Greece.

In his book, Hyland (2005a) posited that rhetoric is fundamentally viewed as the art and strategies of persuasion. Aristotle differentiates rhetoric from the more theoretical form of argumentation known as dialectic, describing it as the skill of identifying accessible methods for constructing persuasive evidence. It is essential to recognize that persuasion techniques must be adapted to accommodate variations in the three primary elements of communication: the speaker, the audience, and the substance of the argument. One additional element that may impact the process of persuasion is the situational context in which it transpires. This relationship can be reciprocal, as persuasion can contribute to the development of the context in various ways.

Persuasion in Political Speeches (PSPs) refers to the use of language, rhetoric, and communication strategies to influence and persuade audiences to adopt a particular point of view, support a specific policy, or take a desired course of action. Political figures often use persuasive techniques in their speeches to rally support, build coalitions, and advance their agendas. The concept of persuasion has gained widespread recognition for its traditional categorization introduced by Aristotle, encompassing ethos, pathos, and logos. Ethos involves establishing

the speaker's persona and authority, pathos aims to evoke emotional responses in the audience, and logos presents logical reasoning and evidence to support arguments (Hyland, 2005a, p. 64). It is important to note that effective persuasive communication, where the context and reasoning resonate with both the audience and the speaker, necessitates a strategic integration of ethos, pathos, and logos.

Persuasion can be viewed in two primary ways: as a social phenomenon and as a cognitive phenomenon. The social perspective emphasizes that persuasion is a social process involving a series of communicative interactions between the persuader and the audience (van Dijk, 2006). The second viewpoint posits that persuasion can be considered a cognitive phenomenon as it seeks to influence and steer the audience's emotions, assumptions, and reactions (O'Keefe, 2002). Nevertheless, it is essential to recognize that persuasion does not entirely alter the audience's customary practices and perspectives. Instead, its purpose is to reinforce and support the audience's existing habits and thought patterns. This study adopts a social phenomenon perspective on persuasion, inspecting the interpersonal dynamics between the speaker and the audience. The purpose of this research is to gain a thorough comprehension of the strategies employed by Netanyahu to achieve persuasive outcomes in PSPs through an examination of the patterns of MD marker usage. This study quantitatively analyzes the distributional patterns of MD use across ten selected speeches by Netanyahu. Additionally, a qualitative analysis will be conducted to examine how Netanyahu employs MD to effectively appeal to rationality, credibility, and affection.

1.2 Linguistic characteristics in PD and PSPs

Applied linguistics researchers have recently demonstrated a significant interest in analyzing the discourse of oral speeches to gain insights into the organization and rhetorical characteristics of spoken genres. Furthermore, the investigation of MD markers has garnered considerable attention from numerous researchers globally. These markers have been analyzed in a diverse range of languages and across various genres, including academic texts (Hyland, 2004, 2005a, 2005b), opinion columns (Dafouz-Milne, 2008), and research article abstracts (Mansour & Alghazo, 2021). A review of the literature reveals a dearth of articles on PD in comparison to other forms of discourse. However, less attention was paid to the use of MD markers as persuasive tools in political discourse. Noteworthy articles addressing persuasive perspectives in political discourse are discussed below.

With regard to the persuasive function of MD, Ho (2016) conducted an analysis of 12 documents pertaining to the Hong Kong government's education policy reforms to investigate the government's use of MD markers in an attempt

to persuade the public to accept these plans. In a comparative study of Chinese and American PSPs, Mai (2016) investigated the influence of MD markers on persuasion. In a study conducted by Rosingana (2018), the intricate mechanisms by which political discourse employs indirect fictional construals to achieve audience persuasion were meticulously dissected. In research conducted by Veloso and Feng (2018), the persuasive impact of linguistic forms and meanings employed in a PSP video disseminated during the 2010 Brazilian presidential campaign was meticulously examined.

In a distinct research study, Abusalim et al. (2022) delve into the usage of textual and interpersonal MD markers within the domain of political discourse, particularly examining their influence on persuasion. In 2017, Chen utilized Hyland's model to scrutinize the frequency and function of interactional and interactive MD markers employed in Hillary Clinton's speech during her initial political campaign in 2015. In another study, Dontcheva-Navratilova (2008) inspected the frequency and function of self-referential MD in institutional and PSPs given by three diplomats serving as UNESCO's directors-general. In a comparative analysis of MD markers employed in academic and PD, Kashiha (2021) examined the usage of MD markers that serve to engage the audience in academic lectures and PSPs, adhering to Ädel's (2010) taxonomy of MD. Another study conducted by Kashiha (2022) sought to examine the persuasive significance of MD markers within PSPs. In her 2008 paper, Dafouz-Milne seeks to explore the function of MD markers in persuasion.

With respect to the aforementioned, it has come to our attention that there is a notable absence of research focusing on MD markers and their persuasive functions within the realm of political discourse, with only a limited number of studies addressing this specific area. Consequently, this study endeavors to rectify this gap and contribute novel insights to the study of MD markers in political discourse. More specifically, the study aims to identify and ascertain the predominant MD markers employed in Netanyahu's PSPs, along with their instrumental role in constructing and achieving persuasion.

2 Methodology

2.1 Corpus

This research is based on a collection of ten PSPs delivered by Netanyahu. The speeches were delivered at various locations and on different occasions, including the UN (in 2015, 2016, 2017 and 2023), AIPAC in 2012, Congress on Iran in 2015, the Conflict with Gaza in 2021, his final speech in 2021, a news conference in 2023, and a televised address in 2023. The duration of the speeches

ranged from 10 to 60 minutes. The full transcripts, along with the corresponding video files, were sourced from reputable online platforms such as *YouTube*, *Vox*, *Rev*, and *Times of Israel*. The corpus encompasses a total of 27,500 words, comprising four speeches delivered at the UN (13,126 words), one presented in the US Congress (3,927 words), another at AIPAC (1,792 words), and four additional addresses totaling 8,720 words (see Table 1).

Titles of speeches	Words & Years	Length of speeches	Range from 692 to 4,367 words
1) A News Conference:	**692 words in 2023**	**Average length**	2,750
2) Televised Address	961 words in 2023	**Total No. of markers**	9,155
3) AIPAC	1,792 words in 2012	**Total No. of words in speeches**	27,500 words
4) The UN	2,455 words in 2017	**Total No. of Interactive MD markers**	3,211 markers
5) Conflict with Gaza	2,700 words in 2021	**Total No. of Interactional MD Markers**	5,944 markers
6) The UN	2,754 words in 2023		
7) The UN	3,777 words in 2015		
8) to the US Congress	3,927 words in 2015		
9) The UN	4,140 words in 2016		
10) His Final Speech	4,367 words in 2021		

Table 1: Description of the corpus and MD markers

The speeches were chosen because the purpose of this study was to examine how persuasive discourse was achieved in PSPs through the use of MD practices. The existence and role of audiences as receivers of such persuasion were essential. Therefore, the speeches were selected to represent the audience's role as an active discourse participant. The rationale for the selection of Netanyahu's speeches was strategically made due to his prominence as a highly controversial global leader, garnering significant attention in the context of the recent Israel-Hamas conflict. Therefore, analyzing his speeches can be crucial in understanding his reliance on lexico-grammatical resources and linguistic features. Additionally, it can shed light on his utilization of the interpersonal model of MD, seasoned with purposive persuasiveness, to sway, alter, and control the attitudes and reactions of interlocutors. This is accomplished to some degree through not only word selection but also MD markers, which are linguistic tools used to establish a connection with the audience and structure the speech for smooth processing by the recipients (Hyland, 2019).

2.2 Instrument and procedure

This study applied both quantitative and qualitative analyses. An initial functional analysis of a segment of the dataset revealed the types of MD markers employed in all speeches. Our analysis encompassed not only lexical items that serve as MD markers, such as code glosses and transitions, but also syntactic structures, including passive voice, *if*-clauses, negation, and so forth, all of which were identified as potential strategies in political discourse for hedging, boosting, engaging, persuading or building rapport with the audience or even modulating a message. The quantitative phase involved analyzing the frequency distributions of the identified MD markers in the speeches. Conversely, the qualitative component focused on analyzing the discourse function of the identified markers and how these functions were utilized to construct persuasive discourse in the speeches. A systematic approach was undertaken to analyze the corpus. Primarily, the transcriptions and their corresponding video files were downloaded from the above websites. Subsequently, a thorough verification process was conducted to match each transcript with its respective video file. Finally, each transcript was meticulously analyzed manually to identify the types of MD markers employed, drawing upon Hyland's (2005a, 2005b) interpersonal models of MD as the theoretical framework.

Prior to commencing the analysis of the designated corpus, we undertook measures to ensure the coder reliability of the analysis. This involved computing both intra-rater (with a three-month interval) and inter-rater reliability using Cronbach's alpha. To calculate the inter-rater reliability, a distinct portion of the intended corpus was independently analyzed. Upon obtaining a Cronbach's alpha of 0.95 for the results, any discrepancies stemming from differences in interpretation were subject to negotiation, leading to a consensus on the methodology for analysis. Given the context-dependent nature of MD and its multifunctional characteristics, we conducted a manual analysis with contextual annotations on the corpus to identify the primary function of ambiguous cases. To mitigate the risk of idiosyncratic effects from researchers and ensure analysis accuracy, we employed a consistent data codification method as well. Specifically, we determined the coding's reliability through interrater agreement. In order to accomplish this, two researchers who were experts in discourse analysis were consulted to assist the researchers in identifying the primary category of any ambiguous and conflicting cases. After a thorough analysis of the context in which they were used, an agreement was reached.

Ultimately, the finalized MD markers were subjected to a further discourse analysis to ascertain their persuasive intent within the context of the speeches. This analysis aimed to identify the specific MD functions employed to influence and convince the audience. To ensure consistent length and even distribution

of markers across the ten speech contexts, we normalized the frequency counts using Biber et al.'s (1998) method. This involves dividing the raw frequency count by the number of words in the text and multiplying the result by 1,000 to obtain the normalized frequency count.

2.3 Analytical framework

The interpersonal models of MD were initially introduced by Hyland (1998, 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) and were subsequently expanded by Hyland (2005a, 2005b). Hyland's (2005a) model has been widely utilized in the literature to examine the employment of interactive and interactional markers across diverse registers (see section 1.2). In this research, an amalgam of the two models presented by Hyland (2005a, 2005b) was utilized and adopted to serve the purpose (see Table 2). The proposed version is a little more comprehensive, encompassing functions related to political discourse, such as negation, progressive form, agentless passive, if clauses, personal asides, directives, and questions. Furthermore, to better align with the study's objective, the sub-function of 'reader pronouns' was modified to 'audience pronouns', considering the focus on PSPs. The MD taxonomy can be broadly categorized into two primary types: interactive and interactional. Interactive MD (Table 2), denoting 'information flow', aids in guiding the audience through the discourse and is further divided into five sub-functions (transitions, frame markers, endophoric markers, evidentials and code glosses) (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b).

The second primary category, interactional often called 'formulaic devices', seeks to engage the audience in a discourse and convey the speaker's stance and assessment of the subject matter. It comprises five sub-functions, including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers encompassing a more extensive category proposed in the study, including directives, shared knowledge, audience pronouns, rhetorical tropes and rhetorical questions, personal asides and so forth (see Table 2).

In the context of communication, hedging serves as a rhetorical strategy, as defined by Fraser (2010). By employing hedging devices, a speaker can avoid making a definitive commitment to a proposition. This approach demonstrates a degree of uncertainty and invites further discussion and exploration of the topic at hand. To effectively analyze the corpus and based on Fraser's category, we propose some ubiquitous hedging structures exploited extensively in political discourse as 'illocutionary force hedges' in our study (see Table 1). These structures include Agentless Passive, Negation, Progressive Form, and *If*-clauses (Fraser, 2010). Engagement markers are the various methods orators employ to engage the audience in the discussion and directly address them, either to

capture their attention or involve them as active participants in the discourse. These functions are primarily fulfilled through the use of the key engagement features like questions, directives (*see*, *note*, etc.), references to shared knowledge (*as we know*, etc.), audience pronouns (*you*-groups) and personal asides (*meanwhile*, etc.).

Category	Function	Examples
Interactive Resources aid to guide the audience through texts/talks		
Transitions	Express semantic relation through the text/talk	*in addition /but/thus/and*
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or text stages	*finally/to conclude/ my purpose here is to*
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text/talk	*noted above/see fig./in section 2/as follows*
Evidentials	Refer to source of information from other texts/talks	*according to X/ Y (2022), Z states that, to quote X, etc.*
Code glosses	Help readers grasp functions of ideational material	*namely, e.g., such as, in other words*
Interactional Resources aid the audience in the argument		
Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitment to proposition including agentless passive, negation, progressive form, *if*-clauses, etc.	*might, perhaps, possible, probable, appear, isn't it, I think, unless, as long as*
Boosters	Emphasize force or writer's certainty in proposition	*in fact, definitely, it is clear that*
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	*unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly, hopefully*
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to authors(s)	*I, we, my, our*
Engagement markers	Explicitly refer to or build relationships with audiences including directives, questions, shared knowledge, audience pronouns, rhetorical questions, personal asides, rhetorical tropes	*consider, note that, should remember that, as we know, you can see that, you, your, do you know that, meanwhile*

Table 2: A proposed model of MD in political discourse adopted from Hyland (2005a, p. 49)

3 Results and discussion

It is imperative to reiterate that the current study adheres to the social phenomenon perspective of persuasion. The speaker's role is to support and enhance the audience's existing comprehension of the subject matter rather than attempting to induce a change in their beliefs. Consequently, the MD resources identified in this study primarily served as persuasion facilitators or catalysts rather than idea manipulators. In this regard, a total of 9,155 lexical

items (about 34%) were identified as serving persuasive MD functions. In addition, interactional types were more frequently observed in the speeches than interactive ones (5,944 vs. 3,211 tokens, respectively). It is possible that engaging audiences and expressing one's stance and assessment of propositions may be more effective in crafting a persuasive PSP. Nevertheless, Netanyahu also employed a range of interactive markers as an alternative persuasive strategy to structure his discourse, construct a coherent speech, and establish his preferred interpretations. Generally, the quantitative results of this study align with those of Chen (2017) and Kashiha (2022), who observed a higher frequency of interactional resources compared to interactive resources.

In this research, interactional MD exhibited two primary characteristics: speaker-oriented and listener-oriented features. The speaker-oriented dimension encompassed elements that alluded to the methods employed by the speaker to persuade audiences by expressing his perspectives and conveying his attitudes, judgments, and commitments to the audience. In the listener-oriented feature, the speaker effectively engaged the audience by establishing a direct connection, guiding them through the presentation, clarifying arguments, acknowledging potential doubts, and actively involving them in the discourse. Tables 3 and 4 provide a comprehensive overview of the distribution of interactive and international types across the ten venues where the PSPs were delivered.

				Interactive		**Interactional**	
	Raw	Total No. of MD markers	Total percentage in the speech	MD markers	Percentage in the speech	MD markers	Percentage
A News conference	692 words	304	43.92	101	14.59	203	29.33
Televised Address	961 words	280	29.13	98	10.19	182	18.93
AIPAC	1,972	502	28.01	162	9.04	340	18.97
The UN (2017)	2,455	989	40.28	400	16.29	589	23.99
Conflict with Gaza	2,700	1,025	37.96	353	13.07	672	24.88
The UN (2023)	2,754	967	35.22	305	11.11	622	24.11
The UN (2015)	3,777	1,192	31.55	444	11.77	748	19.83
to the US Congress	3,927	859	21.90	300	7.63	559	14.23
The UN (2016)	4,140	1436	34.68	489	11.81	947	22.87
His Final Speech	4,367	1,601	36.66	562	12.86	1,039	23.79

Table 3: Percentage and frequency distribution of MD markers in the corpus

3.1 Interactive MD in PSPs

Our research indicates that the primary objective of interactive types was to guide the audience through the speeches. The quantitative and qualitative analyses revealed both similarities and differences in the deployment of interactive types within the corpus. As shown in Table 3, the most prevalent interactive type in the entire corpus was transitions, which is consistent with Chen's (2017) research and Kashiha's (2022) study. In the present study, transitions manifested in the forms of additive, adversative, and causative; they were primarily employed to foster cohesion in discourse and alleviate the audience's cognitive burden in comprehending the interconnectedness of propositions. In the context of transitions, the most commonly used word was *and*, followed by *because*, *but*, *or*, *also*, *so*, *equally*, *while*, *whereas*, as in:

(1) *But today we do have a voice. We do have a state. And we do have protective power. And therefore, I told the […].* [His Final Speech, 2021]

In terms of interactive MD, evidentials (792 tokens, about 3%, Norm: 28.8) and frame markers (772 tokens, about 3%, Norm: 28.07) were the most frequently employed persuasive strategies (see Table 4). While infrequent in the entire corpus, the speaker sought to engender audience trust in their assertion by referencing the statements of other notable individuals or organizations on the subject. In this case, evidentials, as follows, can serve as constitutive elements of PSPs. Additionally, referencing influential decision-making bodies, such as the U.S. Congress and the UN, can enhance the speaker's ability to construct persuasive discourse.

(2) *Moses said that the people's fate […] the blessing and the curse.* [UN, 2023]

(3) *In the G20 conference, President Biden, Prime Minister Modi and European and Arab leaders announced plans for[…].* [UN, 2023]

In the above examples, Netanyahu employed evidentials as supplementary information to bolster his argument. This strategic approach was informed by his understanding that the audiences in the U.S. Congress, the UN, and other relevant entities are well-versed in these matters and may otherwise discount his statements. Frame markers assisted Netanyahu in structuring his discourse as well, referencing sequences or stages, indicating topic shifts, and declaring the objectives of his speech. In the provided instances, Netanyahu endeavored to persuade the audience and instill confidence in the measures implemented to manage Iran's nuclear program by structuring his discourse in a sequential manner. In (5), he attempted to achieve a similar objective by expressing gratitude to his supporters for their assistance. In (4), he effectively conveyed his argument by emphasizing the critical significance of his speech to the audience.

(4) *The first major concession would leave Iran […]. But the second major concession […].* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

(5) *From here, I would like to appeal to the supporters […]. I would like to say to you: I am proud of you.* [Televised Address, 2023)

It was discovered that the speaker used code glosses to provide supplementary information by restating, clarifying, or expanding on what was said. This was done to ensure that the audience could comprehend the speaker's intended message and the subjects and issues being discussed in ten speech settings. The realizations, as follows, were employed as a persuasive approach to reword or delineate particular sections of discourse and help audiences have a better understanding of the topic.

(6) *It means making a moral distinction between […]. It means holding Hamas responsible for […]. It means making clear that the use of human shields is […].* [A News Conference, 2023]

In one of his speeches, he employed three code glosses to further elaborate on his preceding assertion. This persuasive and attention-grabbing strategy was further enhanced by providing an example using phrases like *such as*, *including* or *in other words* and so forth, throughout the speeches.

As indicated in Table 3, Netanyahu employed endophoric markers (168 instances, 1 %, Norm: 6.1) across ten speeches with a relatively consistent frequency (see Table 4). It seems that placing emphasis and assigning particular significance or value to an argument by referencing previous or subsequent points was likely to create a more persuasive speech, as in:

(7) *That's why I said two years ago that the greater danger is not that Iran […].* [UN, 2023]

(8) *For three months I have repeatedly called for dialogue and also said that I would leave […].* [Televised Address, 2023]

In the aforementioned examples and others found within the speeches, when attempting to persuade international politicians within the UN to accept his argument or a significant decision made by the US or UN concerning military intervention, Netanyahu utilized the phrases *I've said before* to reference previously stated information and *I ended that* or *I also said that* to emphasize specific points. Upon further examination of the endophoric markers, it was discovered that they were primarily associated with the self-referential pronoun *I* and were utilized in conjunction with the interactive MD.

	A News Conference	Televised Address	AIPAC	The UN 2017	Conflict with Gaza	The UN 2023	The UN 2015	To the US Congress	The UN 2016	His Final Speech
Total Words	692	961	1,792	2,455	2,700	2,754	3,777	3,927	4,140	4,367
Raw MD	304	280	502	989	1,025	967	1,192	859	1,436	1,601
Norm	-	-	280	402	379	351	315	218	346	366
Engagement	72	40	100	153	201	209	194	105	285	235
Attitude Markers	74	58	47	192	116	230	140	77	205	304
Self-Mention	28	37	48	143	147	123	210	138	266	264
Trans-itions	37	35	71	140	144	140	172	90	176	212
Hedges	25	45	124	74	164	78	136	188	114	188
Evident-ials	39	14	40	132	45	57	104	95	150	116
Frame Markers	13	39	37	84	95	68	109	77	112	138
Boosters	4	7	21	27	44	22	68	49	77	48
Code Glosses	8	5	7	22	45	21	38	29	25	65
Endo-phoric	4	5	7	22	24	19	21	9	26	31

Table 4: Frequency distribution of MD markers in the Corpus.

3.2 Interactional MD in political speeches

The findings revealed that the use of various interactional types of MD further defined and strengthened persuasion. To build persuasion, Netanyahu sought to engage audiences in his arguments and assess his level of certainty and commitment towards statements. Tables 3 and 4 provide a detailed breakdown of the distribution of both MD types in the speeches. In terms of interactional MD, engagement markers can be predominantly employed to actively involve the audience in the presentations and foster a collaborative and harmonious rapport between presenters and the audience. In this research, several rhetorical tropes, including parallelism, power of three (three-part listing), antithesis, and rhetorical questions, are presented and considered within the engagement marker category. These devices not only enhance the persuasiveness of discussions but also actively involve audiences in the arguments, prompting them to contemplate the presented discourse.

Rhetorical analysis involves examining persuasive, emphatic, effective, and contrasting strategies, particularly in the context of political discourse. Political rhetoric, in particular, aims to guide its audience toward specific thoughts, opinions, and ultimately, actions. The primary objective of politicians is not to present factual information, but rather to employ persuasive strategies (Kazemian & Hashemi, 2014; Woods, 2006). According to Cuddon (2012), parallelism refers to the repeated use of similar syntactic and lexical structures within or across sentences. In the realm of oratory, the rhetorical device of three-part listing falls under the broader category of parallelism. By employing parallel constructions and the rule of three or more in sequences, they not only enhance the clarity, consistency, impact, effectiveness, and aesthetic appeal of the sentences, but also ensure that they are easily retained and remembered by the audience. They also generate a familiar clap-trap rhythm that the audience perceives as both compelling and suitably political (Kazemian, 2015; Woods, 2006). Antithesis, as defined by Cuddon (2012), is a literary device that employs contrasting ideas to generate a distinct and transparent association between two concepts. This technique involves juxtaposing or connecting opposing or noticeably different meanings, frequently utilizing parallel structures to enhance the contrast.

(9) *For the first time in my lifetime, […] Israel is not <u>their enemy</u>. They recognize that Israel is <u>their ally</u>. <u>Our common</u> enemies are Iran and ISIS. <u>Our common</u> goals are <u>security, prosperity and peace</u>.* [UN, 2016]

In the above excerpt, the use of antithesis between *their enemy* and *their ally* and the parallel structure of *our common* accompanied by a three-part listing

of nouns serve as rhetorical devices to enhance persuasion, aesthetic appeal highlighting disparities. These techniques effectively engage the audience and draw them into the argument presented.

The most commonly used persuasive elements in the speeches (Tables 3 and 4) were engagement markers (1,594 tokens, 5.8%, Norm: 58), attitude markers (1,443, 5%, Norm: 52), and self-mention (1,404, about 5%, Norm: 51). In contrast to Kashiha's study (2022), hedges (1,136, 4%, Norm: 41.3) and boosters (367, 1.3%, Norm: 13) were the least employed markers in the speeches (see Table 4). The speaker's frequent use of engagements and self-mentions indicates a primary focus on engaging the audience. This approach aims to direct the audience's attention and actively involve them as participants in the discourse; this explicit reference to the speaker and his stance establish him as an active participant in the discourse, enhancing the persuasiveness and impact of the speech (Chen, 2017; Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008). Additionally, persuasion was achieved through the frequent use of engagement markers, as well as the pronouns *I* and *you.* The use of *I* lends credibility to the statement, as it implies firsthand knowledge and experience. This, in turn, enhances the overall persuasiveness of the utterance, as in:

(10) *Well, I disagree. I don't believe that Iran's radical regime will change for the better after this deal. […]* [To congress on Iran, 2015]

(11) *We deeply appreciate the great alliance between our two countries. But when it comes to Israel's survival, we must always remain the masters of our fate.* [APIAC, 2012]

In the above examples, the sentence in (10) commences with a frame marker (*well*) to denote topic shifts; self-mention *I* is employed in conjunction with an attitude marker *disagree* and a hedge (*believe*). *Radical regime* may be viewed as an attitude marker conveying the speaker's affective, rather than epistemic, stance towards the proposition. The phrase *this deal* is deemed an endophoric marker alluding to the nuclear agreement with Iran; the phrase has been utilized 82 times and the term *Iran* is employed 382 times in the speeches, underscoring the speaker's preoccupation with the agreement. In (11), the exclusive *we* as a self-mention is employed with the attitude marker *deeply appreciate*. Additionally, *we* is utilized with the double boosters *must always*. The first *our* is inclusive, while the second one refers exclusively to the speaker and his people.

It is widely acknowledged (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b) that speeches convey information about the speaker, but the convention of first-person pronouns is arguably the most effective method of self-mention. The inclusion or exclusion

of explicit self-mention statements is typically a deliberate decision made by speakers to assume a specific stance and establish a contextually relevant authorial identity. One significant observation from this study was the speaker's frequent use of first-person plural pronouns, encompassing both exclusive and inclusive *we*-groups (*we*, *our*, *us*) throughout the speeches. This suggests that the speaker predominantly assumes the role of the discourse controller, while simultaneously acknowledging the active participation of the audience in the discourse. The exclusive *we*-group as self-mention and the inclusive ones as engagement markers accounted for the most prevalent types in the speeches, making this audience involvement strategy a unique genre-based feature of PD that may distinguish it from other spoken genres. Furthermore, Netanyahu has extensively employed the terms *Israel*, *Jewish people*, and exclusive *we*-groups referring to himself and his government, as in:

(12) *Well, Israel has the same policy. We are determined to prevent Iran […]. We leave all options on the table.* [AIPAC, 2012]

(13) *It is time for all of us to decide if we're willing to fight for a future […].* [A News Conference, 2023]

It is clear from the above examples that the use of first-person plural pronouns varied in function depending on the context of the speeches. For instance, in the speech delivered at AIPAC (12), it appears that the terms *Israel* and *we* refer to the president and the government, whereas in (13), the pronouns (*we*, *our*, and *us*) encompass the president and the audience. Thus, it can be concluded that the use of MD is defined and impacted by the context in which it is utilized (Hyland, 2005a, 2005b).

(14) *While Israel seeks peace with all our neighbors, we also know that peace has no greater enemy than the forces of militant Islam.* [UN, 2016]

As previously mentioned, the majority of sentences in the speeches are an amalgam of various markers. This suggests that the speeches were not spontaneous, but rather carefully planned and potentially written by professional speechwriters with the intent to influence and gain support from the audience. In the opening of (14), the speaker conveyed his objection by combining an opposing transition (*while*) with a self-mention (*Israel*) and a frame marker (*seeks*) followed by shared knowledge (*we also know that*) and an attitude marker (*greater enemy*) to announce his government's objective regarding peace. In (15), the speaker employs a causative transition marker (*because*) coupled with a

booster (*in fact*) to establish connections between previously discussed segments of his discourse. Subsequently, he presents a three-part listing to convey the impending dire consequences of the action.

(15) *Because what that does is, in fact, encourage the terrorists. It gives succor, it gives support. It gives encouragement to the terrorists, […].* [Conflict with Gaza, 2021]

Rhetorical questions (RQs) are another type of engagement marker frequently used in PD. According to Kazemian et al. (2021), rhetorical questions can be used to convey the speaker's intentions to the audience and encourage them to ponder over and engage with the argument. The speaker has posed 117 (0.4%, Norm: 4, see Table 4) RQs in the corpus as follows:

(16) *So is there no limit to the UN's absurdities when it comes to Israel?* [UN, 2017]

(17) *And why was this? Why were these good intentions? Why did they always meet failure?* [UN, 2023]

By utilizing these strategically planned RQs throughout the speeches, the audiences may feel compelled to contemplate the questions and can be engaged in the discourse as well. These types of questions are considered a persuasive approach because they were used to present the primary plan for engaging in conversation and establish a direct, interactive dialogue with audiences to capture their attention.

Personal asides were discovered to be a highly context-driven tactic, which entailed the speaker's attempt to disrupt the primary argument's flow with additional remarks, making the argument more appealing to audiences and eliciting their response or reaction. All the identified instances were found to be introduced by a connector such as *of course* and *by the way*, as in:

(18) *But from past experience, and I have such experience – you know that I've made two comebacks from the opposition, two comebacks – from past experience.* [His Final Speech, 2021]

As previously discussed, the use of attitude markers, the second utilized marker in the corpus (1,443, 5% and Norm: 52), further facilitated audience persuasion (see Table 4). These markers served an additional function of stance, specifically attitudinal stance, which pertains to the speaker's relationship and engagement with the audience regarding the topic. This was a deliberate persuasive tactic employed by the speaker to clearly express his viewpoint or evaluation of a specific topic using emotive language, as in:

(19) *History has given us an extraordinary opportunity, unprecedented in the annals of nations.* [Televised Address, 2023]

(20) *Sure, they say, Iran is cruel, but it's not crazy. It's detestable but it's deterrable.* [AIPAC, 2012]

In the following example, Netanyahu employed the polite and respectful expression *I am deeply humbled* at the commencement of his address to the US Congress (2015). By utilizing this expression, he aimed to convey a sense of modesty and appreciation, thereby leaving a favorable impression on his audience.

(21) *My friends, I'm deeply humbled by the opportunity to speak for a third time before […].* [To the US Congress, 2015]

Occasionally, the speaker has used attitude expressions such as *committed to*, *convinced that*, *confident that*, and *determined to* in conjunction with a self-mention and a booster to emphasize the significance of certain topics and directly attribute the emotional assessment to himself. This explicit attribution of the speaker's stance to audiences and topics is viewed as a self-disclosure strategy that can enhance the persuasiveness and coherence of the speech (Dontcheva-Navratilova, 2008). In the following examples, the significance of the subject matter was conveyed via a booster (*absolutely*), which co-occurred with the self-mention (*I* and *we*) and was followed by an expression of attitudinal meaning (*confident*, *determined*).

(22) *I am absolutely confident that the revolution in Israel's ties […].* [UN, 2017]

(23) *We are determined to prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.* [AIPAC, 2012].

Another persuasive strategy related to audience engagement was the use of directives. Directives typically guide audiences to take a specific action or perceive things in a manner determined by the speaker. Netanyahu used imperative structures as a directive method to engage audiences in the argument and heighten their awareness of the subject matter under discussion. For example, in (24), he employed the phrase *make sure* three times, emphasizing its importance with the booster *actually*. In (25), the speaker employed the directive *listen closely* in conjunction with self-reference (*I*) to capture the audience's attention and emphasize the significance of the argument they were about to present.

(24) *Make sure that the inspectors actually inspect. Make sure that the snapback sanctions actually snap back. And make sure that Iran's violations […].* [UN, 2015]

(25) *Listen closely to what I'm about to say. I'll be pleased to […].* [His Final Speech, 2021]

Those speech acts that conveyed attitudinal meanings, such as expressing gratitude or warm welcome, were also observed to serve as directives or interactive engagements with the audience. These were mainly apparent in the speeches where the speaker directly engaged with the audience at the commencement or conclusion of the speeches through the use of audience involvement pronouns and exclusive *we*-groups, such as:

(26) *Thank you for your support and it warms our heart to see that […] had actually the Israeli flag […]. for us. We appreciate that and we appreciate […]* [On conflict with Gaza, 2021]

The strategic use of audience pronouns, particularly the second person pronoun *you*, appears to be an effective persuasive technique employed by Netanyahu to engage audiences and exert control over the discourse. He directly addressed the audience in his speeches using phrases such as *my friends*, *ladies and gentlemen*, when he wanted to introduce a new argument, change the subject, or draw their attention, as in:

(27) *So you see, my friends, this deal has two major concessions* [to congress on Iran, 2015]

(28) *Ladies and gentlemen, this is a turning point, a turning for leaders and nations.* [A News Conference, 2023]

In certain instances, the speaker employed a combination of a directive and an audience pronoun as a persuasive tactic (Examples 1, 2, 8, 16, 20, 27, 28 and 29) to strengthen speaker-audience rapport and establish direct engagement by guiding the audience toward the intended interpretation of the discourse, as in:

(29) *I only ask of you one thing: Continue to act responsibly and do not be dragged into any provocation.* [Televised Address, *2023*]

Shared knowledge markers were used sparingly in the speeches, with only 16 instances found across the entire corpus. These markers, such as *we know*, *It's well known to all of us*", and *we recognize that*, were often accompanied by first person plural pronouns, indicating the speaker's intention to position the

audience within implicit boundaries of consensus. This persuasive strategy is effective when the speaker invokes the audience's shared knowledge and values, which are widely accepted within the sociocultural or sociopolitical community, without explicitly citing a source document, as in:

(31) *You know the peace process began over two decades ago.* [UN, 2015]

(32) *As you know, I took a fairly active role in them.* [UN, 2017]

It was observed that persuasion was also indicated through evaluative functions of hedges and boosters. The evaluation in this context pertains to the speaker's assessment of the propositions and concepts, serving as a means to establish rapport with the audience. As previously discussed, Netanyahu showed a notable preference for hedges (1,136, 4%, Norm: 41) over boosters (367, 1%, Norm: 13). As presented in Tables 3 and 4, hedges were the fourth most prevalent category of interpersonal MD markers. Within hedges, the proposed functions (agentless passive, *if*-clauses, negation, and progressive form) along with modal verbs and epistemic verbs were the most frequent. Hedges are employed to convey uncertainty, hesitation, probability, and a lack of commitment, as in:

(33) *According to the deal, not a single nuclear facility would be demolished. Thousands of centrifuges used to enrich uranium would be left spinning. Thousands more would be temporarily disconnected but not destroyed*. [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

In the speeches, 177 passive sentences (1%, Norm: 6) are employed, intentionally omitting and suppressing the agents. It is evident that the speaker seeks to avoid accountability for his assertions and aims to maintain an objective stance. Consequently, content-oriented hedges, particularly passive constructions, effectively serve this purpose.

(34) *If the world powers are not prepared to insist that Iran change its behavior before a deal is signed, at the very least […].* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

As illustrated in (34), the sentence commences with an if clause and proceeds with two passive constructions that demonstrate the speaker's uncertainty or lack of commitment in the argument. The subsequent sentence once again incorporates an *if*-clause, a frame marker (*want to*), code glosses (*like*), and an engagement marker (*let it*).

(35) *If Iran wants to be treated like a normal country, let it act like a normal country.* [To the US Congress on Iran, 2015]

To Fraser (2010), negative sentences and progressive forms can be categorized as forms of hedges. This is because they imply that a statement is based on the speaker's plausible reasoning rather than absolute certainty. This indicates the level of confidence that should be attributed to it, as in:

(36) *Perhaps you can now understand why Israel is not joining you in celebrating this deal. If Iran's rulers were working to destroy your countries, perhaps you'd be less enthusiastic about the deal. If Iran's terror proxies were firing thousands of rockets at your cities, perhaps you'd be more measured in your praise. And if this deal were unleashing a nuclear arms race in your neighborhood, perhaps you'd be more reluctant to celebrate.* [UN, 2015]

It has been observed that most progressive forms are accompanied by *if*-clauses in which the speaker attempts to avoid making a definitive commitment to a proposition. Numerous markers are present in (36) above, such as hedges (*perhaps*, *is not joining*, *if*-clauses, *were working*, *would*, *about*, *were firing*, *were unleashing*, agentless passive), self-mention (*Israel*), audience pronouns (*you*, *your*), transition markers (*and*), and attitude markers (*enthusiastic*, *reluctant*). These indicate that the speaker has employed MD markers to negotiate interactional meanings in the speeches, express his viewpoints, and engage with the audience as members of a specific community. Contrary to numerous research studies conducted on MD markers (e.g., Chen, 2017; Kashiha, 2022, etc.), boosters (367 instances) were the least frequent interactional type observed in Netanyahu's PSPs. This may potentially indicate a less assured, less decisive, and less authoritative image of the speaker. Additionally, it was observed that boosters were used with relatively higher frequency in four UN speeches (194 instances). This would reflect his authoritative role and position as a president who was expected to impress his audiences by delivering reliable and credible messages, thereby persuading them to acknowledge and support his perspectives, as exemplified in:

(37) *I know that some well-intentioned people sincerely believe that this deal is the best way to block Iran's path to the bomb.* [UN, 2015]

(38) *let me be clear: Israel will not allow the terrorist regime in Iran to develop nuclear weapons – not now, not in a decade, not ever.* [UN, 2016]

In the above examples, boosters (*clear*, *not ever*, and *never*) are employed with engagement markers (*let me*, *allow* and *to develop*), and attitude markers accompanying three-part phrases (*not now*, *not in a decade, not ever*) emphasizing certainty to establish rapport by indicating involvement with the subject matter

and alignment with an audience. It is noteworthy that the speaker frequently used boosters in conjunction with self-referential pronouns (e.g., *I*, *me*, *Israel*) to convey their stance on the discussed topics.

The reason for the frequent use of *I believe* and *I think* in the speeches delivered at the UN and the U.S. Congress is that the majority of the audience members are political experts who share similar values and hold positions of authority. Miššíková (2007) posits that the function of these hedges is metalinguistic as they "pertain to the caliber of language employed by the speaker" (p. 147).

(40) *[…] and that I believed that these many common […] peace in our region.* [UN, 2023]

(41) *I think it's time to talk about the costs of not stopping Iran.* [AIPAC, 2012]

In a notable instance (40), Netanyahu employed the hedge phrase *believe that* preceded by a self-referential statement, to create space for potential disagreement or differing viewpoints among the UN audience. Regarding the hedge *I think* (41) embedded in a self-mention expression, it serves as an engagement tool, eliciting audience responses and enhancing their active participation in the discourse.

4 Conclusion

In general, the research findings indicated that MD is an integral component in constructing persuasion within political discourse and plays a significant role in structuring the discourse of PSPs. The primary objective of interactive types was to demonstrate the speaker's endeavor to guide audiences through the speeches. In contrast, interactional markers directly contributed to the speaker's diverse methods of engaging audiences in their arguments and assessing their level of certainty and commitment towards utterances to persuade audiences. The findings also revealed a preference for interactional types over interactive ones, indicating that engaging audiences in arguments and expressing personal attitudes and evaluations towards propositions were more likely to contribute to the construction of a persuasive PSP. Regarding the subcategories, engagement markers, attitude markers, self-mention and transitions were found to be the most prevalent interactional and interactive markers, respectively.

Our recent findings can offer insights into the broader discourse of PSPs and the specific role of MD in shaping audience persuasion. The results indicate that persuasive strategies are highly contextual and directly address genre-specific characteristics. They specify how a speaker positions themselves within a discourse and conveys their stance and engagement with the audience. These findings can guide the development of persuasive discourse and enhance

novice speakers' understanding of the linguistic and pragmatic conventions of political genres.

In closing, it is worth noting that while there are some limitations that require attention, the results of this study indicate that MD expressions play a crucial role in building and strengthening persuasion, guiding audiences to discern the underlying significance of statements in PSPs. Nevertheless, the analysis did not concentrate on genre-specific and rhetorical aspects of PSPs. This could be an avenue for future research to establish connections between the strategic use of MD devices and specific features (moves or rhetorical structure) of PSPs. Further research may also yield insights into cross-linguistic characteristics of MD usage in PSPs. This could reveal whether cultural differences influence language use and speech delivery styles among native and non-native English-speaking politicians.

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REVIEWS

Tinga, T. (2025). *The Africa rising discourse: Tropes, trophies and social actors*. Routledge. 108 pp.

In recent years, the studies of "Africa Rising" has been well established as a predominant global discourse, recontextualizing how the continent is identified in economic, political, and media spheres (Iqani & Judge, 2025; Seekings, 2021). Despite its worldwide applications, scant attention has been stressed on the intricacies and power relations surrounded within this discourse. Tracy Tinga's *The Africa rising discourse: Tropes, trophies and social actors* bridges this gap by thoroughly investigating the changing narrative of "Africa Rising" that has been prevalent over the two decades. The book, contextualizing Africa with hope, economic development, and transformation, marks a great transition from previously pessimistic portrayals. Tinga scrutinizes the language, imagery, and social forces behind this narrative, showcasing its intricacies, contradictions, and the power dynamics that frame it. The book also provides an innovative, cross-disciplinary insight that questions readers to rethink how Africa is perceived in both worldwide and nationwide settings.

The book is thematically structured into 6 chapters that provide the intricacies of the "Africa Rising" discourse. Chapter 1 introduces the discourse's emergence and its relationship with Afro-pessimism, emphasizing its cross-disciplinary characteristics. Chapter 2 explores the main symbols, metaphors, and images that establish Africa's rising narrative, with a concentration on cities and democracy. Chapter 3 moves to Afrocentric digital platforms, featuring how African content creators question dominant representations. Chapter 4 discusses the importance of diverse social actors, e.g., governments, corporations, and China, in framing the discourse within worldwide neoliberal frameworks. Chapter 5 delves into the selective visibility of "trophy countries" and the impacts of transnational institutions on international insights. Finally, Chapter 6 provides a reflective finding that challenges whether the discourse illustrates genuine development or the improvement of neoliberal agendas in Africa.

Chapter 1 shapes the "Africa Rising" discourse as a purposeful narrative, forming Africa's worldwide image in Afro-pessimism. It features how both discourses have historically served ideological functions, primarily legitimizing colonialism, then neoliberal internationalization. The chapter examines the cross-disciplinary characteristics of these narratives, combining them with communication, postcolonial, and development research, and reveals how Africa's portrayal is greatly involved in broader political, economic, and epistemological power structures.

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Chapter 2 features the symbolic language and imagery relevant to the "Africa Rising" discourse, contrasting them with Afro-pessimistic tropes. It explores how metaphors, visuals, and narratives construct Africa as dynamic and progressing, particularly through depictions of urban centers as globalized, economic hubs. The chapter also highlights the importance of democracy within this narrative, showcasing how its portrayal frames perspectives of national success or failure across the continent.

Chapter 3 discusses how Afrocentric digital platforms are recontextualizing the "Africa Rising" discourse by enhancing positive representations and questioning historically negative portrayals. Shifting concentration from transnational media to national and diasporic voices, it emphasizes the strategic adoption of self-representation to reclaim narrative control. The chapter explores the increasing agency of African content creators, illustrating how digital media serve as a transformative space for rethinking Africa through practical, internally-driven insights.

Chapter 4 delves into the important social actors, e.g., governments, citizens, corporations, and media, who formed and are formed by the "Africa Rising" discourse. It emphasizes how neoliberal forces, particularly in China and BRICS nations, influence Africa's development narrative through economic and political involvement. By looking at these international and national actors as both agents and subjects, the chapter shows how Africa's rise is involved in shifting global power dynamics and neoliberal engagements.

Chapter 5 examines the selective characteristics of the "Africa Rising" discourse, demonstrating how only certain "trophy countries" are perceived as symbols of continental development. It shows the fluid standards for gaining or losing this status and how transnational institutions make impacts on these transitions. It also shows how international perspectives, and investment issues, are contextualized by external actors who decide which countries symbolize Africa's rise, featuring imbalanced visibility and power hierarchies in the continent.

The book ends with exploring whether "Africa Rising" showcases genuine growth or the greater entrenchment of neoliberalism in Africa. It shows how digital media, South-South relations, and progress agendas frame the discourse, highlighting their entanglement in international power structures. Essentially, Chapter 6 confirms this point; instead of displacing Afro-pessimism, the increasing narrative tends to reinforce it, illustrating the discourse's epistemological intricacies and its impact on how Africa is internationally perceived.

The book's greatest contribution lies in its cross-disciplinary approach, taking from communication research, postcolonial theory, African research, and international advancement discourse. For example, Chapter 1 shapes the "Africa

Rising" discourse in a historical continuum, connecting it to Afro-pessimism and colonial-era clarifications. The author thoroughly examines how these narratives work as media rhetoric and tools involved in international systems of power, economics, and knowledge production. This complexity helps audiences see deeper implications beyond superficial optimism, showcasing the importance of legitimizing current neoliberal internationalization and framing epistemological models in different disciplines.

Another significant contribution of the book lies in its strong focus on African agency, especially in Afrocentric digital media platforms. Chapter 3 emphasizes how digital and social media spaces, directed by African creators and the diaspora, question prevalent Western narratives by generating counternarratives that showcase intricacies and varieties. For instance, the author examines how platforms, e.g., Twitter and YouTube, allow content producers to frame Africa's story by adopting self-representation as a useful tool to contest stereotypes. The analysis highlights the transformative potential of grassroots digital involvement and shows the changes of narrative control in a growingly linked world.

The book's in-depth analysis of how only certain "trophy countries" gain visibility among the "Africa Rising" discourse is thorough and comprehensive. Chapter 5 excels in how transnational institutions and international investors describe Nigeria, South Africa, and Kenya as symbols of continental advancement, while other countries are overlooked. Hence, it frames international insights and investment flows, discussing contemporary inequalities. Moreover, in Chapter 4, the book delves into China's increasing economic importance and its geopolitical interests, illustrating how external powers make impacts on the prevalent countries in the discourse. The analysis shows the neoliberal undercurrents and power asymmetries that underpin the supposedly positive "Africa Rising" narrative.

However, the book pays limited attention to the daily realities of ordinary Africans in connection with the "Africa Rising" discourse. While the investigation thoroughly includes media narratives, global power dynamics, and elite actors, a significant gap still exists on how grassroots communities understand or are influenced by these moving representations. For instance, Chapter 4 explores citizens as social actors but focuses on the wider neoliberal and geopolitical models, without comprehensively investigating national, daily truths or resistance beyond digital elites. This issue may require audiences to study thoroughly how these discourses connect with daily realities on the continent.

Another limitation is the insufficient attention to the role of digital platforms in Chapter 3, which, illustrating the growth of Afrocentric media, could benefit from wider consideration of traditional media's evolving role alongside digital spaces. Although the chapter highlights the impact of transnational media institutions,

it prioritizes digital content creators without discussing how television, radio, or print media, still highly influential in many African settings, interact with or contest the "Africa Rising" narrative. Expanding this exploration can offer a more valuable overview of the media ecology framing African representation and the engagement of various readers with these competing discourses.

Overall, the book offers a comprehensive critique of one of the most influential narratives framing current perspectives of Africa. Its cross-disciplinary approach, concentrating on African agency, and critical analysis of international power dynamics make it a valuable read for scholars and students in Media and Communication Studies, African Studies, Development Studies, and Digital Media. While it can engage readers to study ordinary life experiences or traditional media trends, the book's rigorous discussion and nuanced insights offer useful tools for those who want to understand how discourse frames Africa's representation in an intricate, globalized world. Practitioners, policymakers, and journalists will also find it valuable for critically featuring on the stories they tell and the power structures those stories both reveal and reinforce.

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