

Investigating The Use of Interactional Meta-discourse in Joe Biden UNGA Speech on Russia-Ukraine War

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Abstract. The study about meta-discourse markers has been widely conducted. But the interactional meta-discourse markers in diplomatic speech were rarely investigated. These gaps have been encouraging the researcher to conduct the present to analyze interactional meta-discourse contained in Joe Biden's United Nations General Assembly speech in the case of Russia-Ukraine war. First, it is to identify the types of interactional meta-discourse in Joe Biden's political speech. Second, it also determines the functions of interactional meta-discourse in Joe Biden's political speech. It employed a qualitative approach for the analysis. Then, in collecting data, it used note-taking as an instrument. In this regard, I listened and watched Joe Biden's UNGA speech in the case of Russia-Ukraine war and then took notes on any utterances containing types and functions of interactional meta-discourse. Then, for analysing data, I classified the types and functions of interactional meta-discourse using a theory from Hyland (2005). The result designates that Joe Biden explicitly intends to demonstrate his position as a neutral country while also advocating for peace. Besides, in diplomatic speech such as in UNGA, the interactional meta-discourse is interpreted differently by speakers as a tool for diplomatic engagement with representatives of world nations.

1 Introduction

In a global context where armed conflict has lost its desirability, political discord is resolved through diplomatic channels in a political assembly. A diplomatic assembly such as the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) serves as a platform for conducting diplomatic negotiations, wherein representatives from member states of the United Nations (hereafter referred to as UN) convene to deliberate upon pressing global

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issues and their potential remedies. This form of communication takes place during high-level political gatherings involving prominent international figures.

Through diplomacy, political interests are effectively negotiated and bargained. Additionally, the act of taking sides or advocating for specific factions during such political assemblies presents a significant challenge for the speaker. This challenge stems from the inherent nature of spoken discourse, particularly in political speeches, where once a statement is uttered, it cannot be corrected. The speaker's best course of action is to amend or clarify their previous statement by using phrases such as "let me explain" or "in other words" to convey revisions effectively (Nick, 2001). In other words, if careful consideration is not given to selecting suitable vocabulary and language, the speech runs a high risk of being misinterpreted. Consequently, speakers must exercise extreme caution in their choice of words to prevent misunderstandings and avoid any semantic inaccuracies. Hence, the speaker have to use interactional meta-discourse markers properly.

Interactional meta-discourse is defined as a linguistic vehicle used by writers to guide the reader to engage more deeply with a text (Adel, 2010). According to Hyland (2005), interactional meta-discourse pertains to linguistic elements employed by writers to create and control a social connection with the reader. Interactional meta-discourse markers encompass various expressions, words, or rhetorical devices that serve to guide the reader's or listener's focus and convey the author's or speaker's position. Based on Hyland (2005), there are five subcategories of interactional meta-discourse; (1) hedges, (2) attitude markers (3) engagement markers, (4) Boosters, (5) self-mentions. Research on meta-discourse markers have extensively analyzed by several scholars in different subjects.

Several Linguistics scholars such as Abusalim (2022), put his research interest on the use of meta-discourse markers in such as political speech. Meanwhile, Kuswoyo (2019) conducting their study on the use of meta-discourse in oral business presentation. Additionally, Ali et al. (2020) reviewed the role of meta-discourse markers in English Foreign Learner assignment. Having the same research interest, Zahro et al. (2021) scrutinized the function of meta-discourse markers in EFL oral and written assignment. Other previous study such as Esmer (2017)

focused on the role of meta-discourse in Turkish political campaign election.

However, as far as I know, the way how interactional meta-discourse are applied in political discourse such as diplomatic speech has never been investigated before. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to fulfill the research gap by discussing the role of language vehicle called meta-discourse markers used by politicians in diplomatic speech. More specifically, this study will discuss Joe Biden’s political speech in UNGA (United Nations General Assembly) in the case of Ukraine-Russia war.

2 Result and Discussion

Table 2. Distribution of Interactional Meta-discourse Markers

Interactional meta-discourse	Meaning	Example data	Data found
Hedges	Refrain from making a firm commitment and encourage open conversation	<i>About, could, might, perhaps</i>	31
Attitude Markers	Convey the writer's stance toward the proposition	<i>Unfortunately, stand</i>	5
Boosters	Highlight assurance or foster intimate conversation	<i>Completely, definitely, In fact, assure, asserted</i>	20
Engagement	Establish a clear connection with the reader	<i>As you can see, No matter what, wherever you are, you should understand</i>	38
Self-mentions	A direct mention of the speaker (s)	<i>I, we, my, our, us</i>	237
Total			331

In this study, Joe Biden utilized all subtypes of interactional metadiscourse. A total of 331 instances of interactional metadiscourse data were identified, categorized as follows: hedges (31), attitude markers (5), boosters (20), engagement markers (38), and self-mentions (237). Specifically, self-mentions emerged as the most frequently employed communicative tool by Joe Biden during his speech at the United Nations General Assembly concerning the Russia-Ukraine conflict. Additionally, attitude markers were the least utilized in his discourse. Based on the finding above, it can be interpreted that in diplomatic speech such as in UNGA, the interactional meta-discourse is employed and interpreted differently by speakers as a tool for diplomatic engagement with representatives of world nations. The data analysis will be presented in a descriptive form as outlined below;

2.1 Hedges

Datum 1

*President Putin chose this war. Every day the war continues is his choice. He **could** end the war with a word.*

Hedges refer to the word "could." In this context, President Joe Biden depicts an issue that has arisen due to the Russia-Ukraine war. Subsequently, in his speech, Joe Biden adds that President Putin is the reason behind this war. Biden emphasizes that the conflict between Russia and Ukraine continues to persist because of President Putin's unwillingness to cease the war.

Linguistically, "*could*" is a modal verb in English that signifies potentiality or capability in the past, present, or future. It is employed to convey the prospect of an action or event that is possible or might have occurred, but without certainty (Azar, 1997). Indirectly, Biden indicates the presence of uncertainty and doubt, which consequently generates distinct opinions among the audience. Apart from that, Biden utilizes the word "*could*" as a veiled suggestion that Russia and Vladimir Putin are the possible causes of the ongoing war. Consistent with this, Hyland (2005) argues that hedges marker is functioned as a means to signal that the information provided might not be definitive or universally valid, thereby lessening the force of the statement and recognizing the potential for different interpretations or exceptions.

2.2 Attitude Markers

Datum 2

Unfortunately, this can lead to significant adverse consequences for other nations, including both the country itself and its inhabitants.

Attitude marker express the speaker attitude toward the proposition. In this context, Biden uses the word “unfortunately” to deeply engage with his audience. Grammatically, the word *unfortunately* has a role in part of speech, namely adjective. In its role as an adjective, it serves to modify and potentially describe a noun, providing readers or listeners with more precise details about material, color, and the object in question. Despite of its function, in this context, Biden endeavors to convey his disappointment due to the war involving two countries, namely Russia and Ukraine. This is not without reason, as Biden expresses an attitude of sorrow attributed to the repercussions of the war itself. Biden claims that the war could directly lead to significant adverse consequences not only for Ukraine and Russia, but also for other nations. As mentioned by Hyland (2005), the attitude marker serves the purpose of persuading the audience through specific attitude directed at them.

2.3 Boosters

Datum 3

*I think that his ambitions are **completely** contrary to the place where the rest of the world has arrived*

The booster marker are shown by the word *completely*. Linguistically, based on Azar (1997), the word *completely* is classified into adverb that has a function to communicate the concept of entirety, signifying that something is carried out with thoroughness and comprehensiveness, with no potential for additional completion or enhancement. In his speech, Biden explains that what Putin's actions in the war clearly disrupt the existence of world peace, which nearly all countries strive to uphold. Additionally, the word *completely* is used to describe Putin misleading ambition. In other words, Biden remind the audience that Putin has different ambition with other countries as it portrayed by the word “*completely*”. The use of booster marker here is to emphasize certainty and make the audience believe that Putin has contrary ambition with all of the country who wants peace. In sum, the booster marker here may serve several functions, including presenting an exaggerated claim, and amplifying the impact of the assertion.

2.4 Engagement

Datum 4

Wherever you are, wherever you live that should make your blood run cold. We should stand with Ukraine no matter what

In this context, the engagement marker is found in the phrase “*wherever you are, wherever you live*”. According to Hyland (2005), the engagement marker is employed to invite the audience to actively participate in the discussion. However, based on the finding above, the engagement marker is also represented as imperative words and interjection. Apart from serving as a means to invite the audience to actively participate in the discussion, Biden also employs the phrase “*wherever you are*” for imperative sentences. These imperative sentences are directed at all representatives of the world nations present at the UN General Assembly, urging them to stand up and defend Ukraine against the Russian attacks. Besides, the utility of the engagement marker also extends as an interjection, as stated by Biden, to emphasize that wherever you reside and exist, you must not let your spirit falter in defending Ukraine.

2.5 Self-mentions

Datum 5

We did respond. We would be strong. We would be united. And the world would not look the other way.

In the datum 5, Self-mentions are represented in the word of “we”. Linguistically, the word “we” serves as the plural first-person pronoun, standing for the speaker or writer along with one or more other individuals or groups. According to Hyland (2005), the use of self-mention indicates the speaker's stance on the topic. In this context, Joe Biden attempts to encourage all of the ally countries to be strong and united in facing Russia invasion. Additionally, Joe Biden uses self-mentions marker “we” to represent himself as part of one institution, namely the United States of America. The word “we” is also utilized by Joe Biden to symbolize a specific faction wherein the members collaborate to foster unity and peace.

3 Conclusion

In this research, the self-mention marker is the most frequently used marker by Joe Biden in his speech at the United Nations General

Assembly. This indicates that Joe Biden explicitly intends to demonstrate his position as a neutral country while also advocating for peace. Therefore, he and other allied nations strive to mitigate the war. Besides, it can be concluded that in diplomatic speech such as in UNGA, the interactional meta-discourse is employed and interpreted differently by speakers as a tool for diplomatic engagement with representatives of world nations.

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