

**AN ANALYSIS OF HEDGES AND BOOSTERS IN DONALD TRUMP'S
PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES
THESIS PROPOSAL**



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ABSTRACT

Zelly, Dian. 2025. **An Analysis of Hedges and Boosters in Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches**. Thesis, English Language and Literature Department, Faculty of Language and Arts, Universitas Negeri Padang.

This study looks at the types and percentages of hedges and boosters in Donald Trump's presidential speeches. A qualitative approach was used, with Hyland's (2005) framework serving as the theoretical foundation, as well as Hyland's (1994) and (1998) classifications for hedges and boosters. The study's objectives are to (1) identify the different types of hedges and boosters employed in chosen speeches and (2) determine their percentages. The data includes three speeches: the inaugural address (2017), the March for Life (2020), and the inaugural address (2025). The study found four types of hedges; modal auxiliary verbs, adverbial/adjectival nominal modal expressions, if-clauses, and time references. For boosters, only one type which is Certainty Modals, appear throughout all remarks. The hedge word would appears most frequently in March for Life 2020, whereas will is the most commonly used certainty modal in all three addresses. Boosters outnumber hedges, accounting for 91% in the first speech, 75% in the second, and 95.5% in the third. These findings show that Trump's rhetorical style is heavily reliant on certainty modals, which convey confidence, determination, and assertiveness. The very minimal use of hedges indicates a desire for direct and unequivocal communication, which is consistent with his political image as a powerful and decisive leader. This study adds to prior research emphasizing the dominance of boosters in political discourse and provides additional evidence of how language choices influence popular opinions of political figures.

Keywords: Hedges and Boosters, Presidential Speeches, Political Discourse

ABSTRAK

Zelly, Dian. 2025. **An Analysis of Hedges and Boosters in Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches**. Thesis, Departemen Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris, Universitas Negeri Padang

Penelitian ini menganalisis jenis dan persentase hedges dan boosters dalam pidato Presiden Donald Trump. Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dengan kerangka teori Hyland (2005) serta klasifikasi hedges dari Hyland (1994) dan boosters dari Hyland (1998). Pendekatan kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini untuk; (1) mengidentifikasi jenis hedges dan boosters yang digunakan dalam pidato tertentu Donald Trump, dan (2) menghitung persentasenya hedges dan boosters dalam pidato tertentu Donald Trump. Sumber data penelitian ini adalah tiga pidato, yaitu Inaugural Address (2017), March for Life (2020), dan Inaugural Address (2025). Menurut hasil analisis, empat jenis hedges ditemukan: Modal Auxiliary Verb, Adverbial/Adjectival Nominal Modal Expression, If-Clause, dan Time Reference. Hanya ada satu jenis booster, Certainty Modals, di ketiga pidato tersebut. Pada pidato March for Life 2020, kata "would" adalah hedge yang paling sering muncul, sedangkan "will" adalah booster yang paling sering muncul di seluruh pidato. Secara kuantitatif, boosters digunakan lebih banyak dibandingkan hedges: 91% pada pidato pertama, 75% pada pidato kedua, dan 95.5% pada pidato ketiga. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa gaya retorika Trump sangat bergantung pada boosters (certainty modal) untuk menunjukkan kepercayaan diri, ketegasan, dan keyakinan yang penuh. Dengan hedges yang terbatas, dia menunjukkan dorongan untuk komunikasi yang langsung dan tanpa keraguan, yang sesuai dengan citra politiknya sebagai pemimpin yang tegas dan kuat. Studi ini mendukung penelitian sebelumnya yang menekankan dominasi boosters dalam wacana politik dan memberikan bukti tambahan tentang bagaimana persepsi publik terhadap tokoh politik dipengaruhi oleh pilihan bahasa mereka.

Kata Kunci: Hedges and Boosters, Presidential Speeches, Political Discourse

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Last but not least, the writer is fully aware that this thesis is far from perfection. Therefore the researcher is very open to any form of suggestion and input for the improvement of this thesis.

Padang, August 1st 2025

The Writer

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DEDICATION

First and foremost, I dedicate this thesis to Allah SWT. The Most Gracious and Most Loving for granting me strength, help, guidance and patience throughout this thesis journey

Most importantly, I dedicate this thesis to my beloved Papa who passed away last year, leaving me with long-life grief and also to my beloved Mama, the strongest and kindest woman the i ever knew. This work also dedicated to the siblings; Kak Ta, Kak Cy, Ayi, Bang Eddy, Bang Pio, Bongbong, Unat, and Ipip and to my beloved nieces; Pia, Ica, Kiki and Adik for their supports and love throughout writer's journey of conducting this research.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	iv
ABSTRAK	v
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT.....	vi
DEDICATION.....	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	viii
LIST OF TABLES	x
LIST OF FIGURES	xi
CHAPTER I.....	1
INTRODUCTION.....	1
A. Background of The Problem.....	1
B. Identification of The Problem.....	5
C. Limitation of The Problem	6
D. Formulation Of The Problems	6
E. Research Questions	6
F. Purpose of The Research.....	7
G. Significance of The Research	7
H. Definition of Key Terms	8
CHAPTER II	10
LITERATURE REVIEW	10
A. Review of Related Theories	10
B. Previous Studies.....	26
C. Theoretical Framework.....	29
CHAPTER III	31
RESEARCH METHOD	31

A. Type of Research	31
B. Data and Source of Data	32
C. Instruments of The Research	33
D. Techniques of Data Collection	36
E. Techniques of Data Analysis	38
CHAPTER IV.....	43
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	43
A. Data Description	43
B. Data Analysis and Findings	43
CHAPTER V	63
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION	63
A. Conclusion	63
B. Suggestion.....	64
REFERENCES.....	65
APPENDICES	67

LIST OF TABLES

1.1 List of Boosters Words by Hyland 1998.....	17
3.1 Checklist as Instrument of Research (Hedges.....	34
3.2 Checklist as Instrument of Research (Boosters.....	35
3.3 Example of Data Collection Table.....	37
3.4 Information of Related Speeches	38
3.5 Example of Data Analysis Table.....	40
3.6 Example of Data Analysis Table.....	41
3.7 Example of Findings Table	42
4.1 Hedges and Boosters in Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches	55
4.2 Percentages of Hedges and Boosters In Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches.....	58

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure1.Conceptual Framework.....	30
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of The Problem

Metadiscourse is the process of using language to give an audience meaning. Through organization and regard for the reader, it aids in the comprehension of the text. Hyland (2005) defines metadiscourse as the ways in which writers and speakers guide their audience's perception of the message, signaling their stance and structuring their communication.

Several researches have been done about metadiscourse, one of them comes from Hyland (2005) where he examined metadiscourse as a framework for comprehending how authors interact with readers and organize their discourse in his groundbreaking work. He presented a paradigm that differentiates between interactive and interactional metadiscourse. In 2017, Mirović & Bogdanović compared the use of metadiscourse in research articles written in Serbian (L1) and English (L2) by the same authors. The finding states that interactive metadiscourse features are more prevalent than interactional ones in both languages. Alharbi (2021) conducted a comparative analysis of metadiscourse used in applied linguistic research articles and master's dissertations. This study also found that interactive metadiscourse is more prevalent than interactional ones.

Metadiscourse as defined by Hyland (2005), is the way that writers and speakers modify their communication in ways other than simply imparting knowledge. There are two types of Metadiscourse; Interactive and interactional metadiscourse. Interactive metadiscourse are the one that structure the discourse while interactional metadiscourse allow speakers to engage with audience through

stance and attitude markers. Example of Interactional Metadiscourse are Hedges and boosters since it helps speakers convey certainty and uncertainty, influence how others view their messages.

Hedges and boosters are linguistic tools that assist authors and speakers in controlling their level of confidence and involvement in their writing. Through their participation in interactional metadiscourse, speakers are able to mold their positions and sway the opinions of their audience. Hyland (2005) states that Hedges indicate a speaker's reluctance to present statements categorically, recognizing alternative voices and perspectives in communication and it consist of "perhaps", "might", "possibly" etc. Meanwhile Boosters allow speakers to express conviction, closing down alternatives and emphasizing certainty and confidence in their arguments. For example; absolutely, definitely, clearly etc. Hyland (2005) also states that hedges and boosters are essential in persuasive discourse, including political speeches, where they assist leaders in striking a balance between diplomacy and assertiveness in order to sway public opinion.

The presidential speeches of Donald Trump offer a particularly fascinating case study for examining hedges and boosters. Trump is well-known for his audacious and unorthodox vocabulary, and his speeches frequently blend forceful language with deft hedges to steer clear of contentious issues or unclear ideas. Phrases like "the best" or "absolutely incredible" highlight confidence and self-assurance, whereas statements like "I think we'll do great things" serve to temper his boasts. Boosters are instruments to "project certainty and commitment," which are essential for preserving a speaker's credibility in the political sphere, as Hyland (2005) emphasizes.

Because of their significance in forming political narratives and public discourse, presidential speeches were chosen as the main source of data for this study. Presidential speeches serve as venues for leaders to express their vision, defend policies, and mobilize support; they are not just ceremonial. Political speeches are platforms for the expression, contestation, and negotiation of ideology and power, as suggested by Fairclough (2000). This study attempts to identify the linguistic techniques that support Trump's rhetorical efficacy and the development of his political character by examining the usage of hedges and boosters in his presidential speeches.

Multiple researches had also been conducted about presidential speeches since early 90's. The first one comes from Campbell & Jamieson (1990) where they examine a range of presidential speeches, including State of the Union addresses and inauguration addresses. They contend that these addresses have a crucial role in establishing presidential power and influencing public policy. The next one comes from Druckman & Holmes (2004) their research looks at how public approval ratings are affected by presidential addresses. They discovered that public opinions and perceptions of the president can be greatly influenced by the substance and delivery of presidential rhetoric. Another one comes from Calvo & Reyes (2022) where their study employs natural Their study analyzes more than 900 presidential speeches from ten Latin American nations over a two-century period using natural language processing. The study shows that the president's focus has shifted from one topic to another one in their speeches.

The research about hedges and boosters began in the late 20th century, which gives many major contributions on linguistic study. One of the early

researches about hedges and boosters was done in 1984 by Holmes that explore about the use of hedges and boosters in spoken discourse. The study finds out that women used more hedges (I think, maybe, perhaps) meanwhile men used more boosters (definitely, absolutely, of course). Another one comes from Hyland on 2005, his research is about metadiscourse to spoken language and the result states that political leaders uses hedges to soften claims and boosters to enhance persuasion and confidence.

Few studies have solely analyzed hedges and boosters in presidential speeches, especially those of Donald Trump, although prior research has conducted researches about hedges and boosters before. One of those prior researches comes from Hidayati & Dallyono (2015). The authors examined three Indonesian ministers' remarks about rising fuel prices. They discovered that in order to strengthen and mitigate propositions, both boosters and hedges were used as tactical instruments to affect public opinion. Ali & Abbas (2020) looked at thirteen speeches that were given between 1989 and 1997. Hedges were more common than boosters, according to the study, indicating that Bhutto used caution in her speech to successfully engage her audience. Halomoan (2024), studies about Joe Biden and Donald Trump's first presidential debate. The study revealed clear usage trends, with Trump primarily depending on boosters to convey unshakeable confidence and decisiveness and Biden regularly using hedges to convey caution and acknowledge ambiguities.

The aim of this study is to classify types of hedges and boosters and to determine the percentage of hedges and boosters in Donald Trump's selected presidential addresses. By analyzing how a world leader strategically use boosters

to highlight certainty, bolster authority, and persuade the audience, as well as hedges to soften claims, provide doubt, or create diplomatic flexibility. This study seeks to advance our understanding of political communication.

B. Identification of The Problem

Metadiscourse, namely hedges and boosters as part of interactional metadiscourse (Hyland, 2005), is significant in political speech. These language characteristics enable speakers to adjust their tone, control certainty, and impact listener perception. Previous research have investigated the use of hedges and boosters in a variety of settings, including political speeches (Ali & Abbas, 2020; Hidayati & Dallyono, 2015), debates (Halomoan, 2024), and ministerial remarks. Most of these researches, however, concentrate on rhetorical purposes or compare numerous speakers in constrained circumstances.

Although Halomoan (2024) linked Donald Trump's speech style to that of Joe Biden, few studies have focused on the types and proportions of hedges and boosters employed in Trump's formal presidential speeches. Furthermore, research on scripted and formal speeches delivered by a single speaker over multiple time periods is scarce. To close this gap, the current study examines three of Donald Trump's presidential speeches given in distinct years and contexts: the Inaugural Address (2017), the March for Life Speech (2020), and the World Economic Forum Speech (2025). The purpose of this study is to classify the hedges and boosters employed in each speech and quantify their percentage. Unlike earlier research, which relied on rhetorical or comparative techniques, this study presents a structured linguistic analysis of hedges and boosters utilizing Hyland's framework and a single speaker throughout time.

C. Limitation of The Problem

This study focuses on the hedges and boosters identified by Hyland (1994, 1998) in three official presidential speeches delivered by Donald Trump: the Inaugural Address (2017), the March for Life Speech (2020), and Inaugural Address (2025). These speeches were chosen to reflect various historical periods and communicative situations during Trump's presidency and post-presidency.

The study focuses entirely on identifying the types and calculating the percentages of hedges and boosters in the chosen speeches. It does not look at the rhetorical functions, audience impact, or pragmatic interpretations of these traits. Furthermore, the study makes no comparisons with other political personalities. This constrained scope enables a more focused language analysis of Trump's usage of hedges and boosters over time.

D. Formulation Of The Problems

Based on the identification of the problem, this research is conducted to answer this following question:

- 1) What are the types of hedges and boosters used in Donald Trump's presidential speeches?
- 2) How many percentages of hedges and boosters found in Donald Trump's presidential speeches?

E. Research Questions

1. What types of hedges and boosters are used in Donald Trump's presidential speeches?
2. How many percentages of hedges and boosters found in Donald Trump's presidential speeches?

F. Purpose of The Research

- 1). To identify the types and percentage of hedges and boosters used in Donald Trump's presidential speeches.
- 2). To calculate the percentages of hedges and boosters used in Donald Trump's Presidential speeches

G. Significance of The Research

This work has important theoretical implications in the field of linguistics, notably metadiscourse studies. By examining hedges and boosters as part of interactional metadiscourse, this study adds to our knowledge of how these linguistic characteristics function in formal presidential speeches. While earlier research has investigated hedging and boosting in a variety of political circumstances, this study extends Hyland's (1998) paradigm to scripted presidential addresses, which have garnered less attention than debates, interviews, and spontaneous statements. Furthermore, by comparing Trump's speeches from various periods, this study sheds light on how hedging and boosting methods change within the discourse of a single political figure over time. The findings contribute to our understanding of the function of metadiscourse in political speechwriting, notably in establishing authority, credibility, and audience participation.

Practically, this study is a great resource for future linguistic research, particularly discourse analysis and metadiscourse investigations. The findings provide empirical data on the frequency and types of hedges and boosters used in presidential speeches, which will be beneficial to linguists and researchers investigating language use in political communication. Furthermore, this study adds to arguments about how metadiscourse works in political communication,

notably in terms of persuasion, assurance, and stance-taking. This study contributes to the growing body of knowledge in political discourse and metadiscourse studies by conducting a comprehensive examination of hedges and boosters in formal presidential addresses.

Moreover, by examining the types and percentage of hedges and boosters used in Trump's selected speeches, this study will be useful as material on linguistic study and also as the reference for the next research. The research's conclusions may have applications in the study of political discourse in the future, especially when it comes to analyzing how politicians with various beliefs and backgrounds use hedges and boosters to interact with their constituents.

H. Definition of Key Terms

- 1.Hedges: Hedges are language elements used to convey a sense of uncertainty or caution in a statement. Examples are 'may' and 'likely.'
- 2.Boosters: Boosters are also language elements that show certainty and confidence in a statement. Examples of frequently used words are 'obviously,' and 'definitely.'
3. Speech: Speech is one of verbal type of communication which enables people to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts through spoken words.
4. Presidential Speech: An official public address given by the nation's president with the usual goals of educating, inspiring, or persuading the audience. In order to communicate official policies, national priorities, or reactions to noteworthy occurrences, these speeches are frequently prepared and organized.

5. Donald Trump: Donald John Trump is an American politician, media personality, and businessman who is the 47th president of the United States.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A. Conclusion

This study analyzed the type and percentages of hedges and boosters in three Donald Trump's presidential speeches using Hyland's frameworks. This study conducted using qualitative method and content analysis approach. It focuses on spoken metadiscourse which are Trump's selected speech; Inaugural Address 2017, March For Life 2020 and Inaugural Address 2025. The data of this study are taken from certified Youtube channel and turned into transcript.

Based on the analysis of previous chapter, it is revealed that types of hedges found in this research are modal auxiliary verb, Adverbial/Adjectival Nominal Modal Expression, If – Clause and Time Reference which is only 4 types among 7 types of hedges from Hyland's (1994) categorization. Meanwhile, types of boosters found in this research is only certainty modals among 2 types of boosters from Hyland's (1998) categorization.

According to the calculation, Trump use lots of boosters on his speech and frequently use it on every of his speech. This align with Trump personality as strong willing political figure who often mentioned assertive promise to the audience. Trump's bold boosters use show us how political figures persuade and influence the audience with their confidence, certainty and promises which is common to find in politics. However, hedges that Trump uses on his speech merely just to soften his claims and showing doubt and uncertainty .

B. Suggestion

Using Hyland's (1994; 1998) paradigm, this study concentrated entirely on identifying and calculating the percentage of hedges and boosters in three selected Donald Trump presidential speeches. Future academics should do a more extensive functional examination of how hedges and boosters influence meaning or audience perception. Expanding the data set to include speeches by other presidents and political figures, as well as comparing other political circumstances, could provide a more complete picture of how these metadiscourse features are used strategically.

Furthermore, scholars could look into the relationship between hedges/boosters and certain rhetorical goals like persuasion, alignment, or stance-taking. This study has practical implications for students, educators, and anybody interested in political speech or communication. Hedges and Boosters are used in formal discourse, particularly in high-stakes circumstances such as presidential addresses, allows speakers and writers to have a better grasp of how language builds confidence, politeness, or distance. Understanding these strategies can also assist listeners in critically evaluating political statements and detecting persuasive approaches more effectively. This study will be an useful reference for next researchers who conducts about the same topic and object of research.

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