

A Corpus Based Study of Hedges and Boosters in the Speeches of Benazir Bhutto

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Abstract

Hedges and boosters are significant in writing since they show the writer's point of view. The paper identifies two types of metadiscourse markers in Benazir Bhutto's speeches. It further aims at analyzing the pragmatic function and frequency of selected markers. The sample included thirteen selected speeches delivered from 1989 to 1997 by Benazir Bhutto and are explained through Hyland's (1996) theories related to hedging and boosters. *AntConc* software has been used to extricate the hedges and boosters from the corpus. This study indicates that hedges (131) are used frequently as compared to boosters (150). After the analysis of the data, the finding reveals that the most frequently occurred hedges are "could" which appears 35 times and "need" 27 times. Results show that the speaker's usage of hedge marks shows her cautiousness in speaking style. Moreover, the most frequently occurring boosters are "should" which appear 65 times and "must" 34 times. This shows that the authors' voice is appeared assertive and confident. Frequency is also calculated to know which type of metadiscourse maker is used more frequently. The frequency shows that more boosters are used as compared to the hedges which show the potency of her speeches.

Keywords: AntConc software, Corpus, Boosters, Hedges, Hyland, and Metadiscourse

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In politics, the way of orating is very important. The statesmen manipulate people by different techniques and methods. Many politicians carefully write different speeches before addressing the public (Beard, 2000). Using careful language means abating the intensity of any utterance by boosting or lessening its illocutionary force through hedges and boosters (Cabanes, 2007). Benazir's speeches are considered to impact and influence a great number of audiences, especially the ones who supported her party named as Pakistan People's Party (Shafiqat, 1996). Furthermore, he claimed that she was so careful about her utterances that she used to read speeches several times before addressing the public. She has a manipulating aroma and has the power to grab the attention of the public. In her speeches, she used persuasive language that intends in making the public agree to her point. The very function of rhetorical is achieved through the specific selection of some devices and vocabulary items out of which one type of device is called the "metadiscourse markers".

In linguistics, the concept of hedges is introduced by Lakoff (1973). According to him, hedges are those words "whose job is to make things fuzzier or a little fuzzier". Another linguist Yang (2013) says that hedges are those expressions that make the meaning of speeches uncertain and doubtful. He also says that hedges serve to make an uncertain and implicit claim. Moreover, boosters are the words that intensify the speech and make a vehement impression on the listeners (Takimoto, 2015). He says that it is the impression of sureness, confirmation, and conviction. In other words, boosters are the devices aiming to strengthen the writer's claim. Salager-Meyer (1994) states three main functions of hedges and boosters in speeches: firstly, to avert any and unequivocal and absolute statement, secondly to factually reveal the assurance and certainty of knowledge; and thirdly to act as face-saving strategies between speaker and listeners. Moreover, the corpus is described as a collection of linguistic data, either recorded or written text, that can be used as a starting point for linguistic description or to verify language theories (Crystal, 1991). The ideas and practice of employing corpora in any study of language are the main focus of corpus linguistics. He further says that a computer corpus is a large collection of machine-readable texts that determines the frequency of metaphors and figural terms in a text by recognizing and emphasizing patterns, or lexical items. Moreover, McEnery and Wilson (1996) also define corpus linguistics as "corpus linguistics is the study of language based on examples of real-life language use". So, Corpus analysis is a method or a tool that can be utilized to examine a corpus that is e-based stored real-life language samples. Corpus linguistics involves the utilization or usage of computers to immediately investigate and evaluate records of authentic language. These databases are known as corpora and they can encompass any principled collection of recorded, transcribed, or composed spoken language. Examples of prominent corpora are the American National Corpus (ANC) and British National Corpus (BNC).

Literature Review

Metadiscourse is the idea that communication, whether written or spoken, is about more than merely exchanging information, assets, or ideas. It involves the attitudes, opinions, and beliefs of people who communicate with each other (Hyland, 2005). Metadiscourse, he claims, is "discourse about discourse" and refers to the author's or speaker's linguistic projection in his text to communicate with his public (Kopple, 1985). So, metadiscourse points out that the idea of communication is not only the exchange of knowledge and ideas by utilizing language, it includes the personalities, preferences, and attitudes as well. Hyland (2005) proposed a model that is known as Hyland's taxonomy of meta-discourse which

analyzes two types of classifications, one is the textual feature, and the other is interpersonal characteristics. Textual features consist of frame markers, endophoric markers, evidential and code glosses, and logical connections, however, the interpersonal features contain engagement markers, attitude markers, hedges, boosters, and self-mentions. According to Hyland, Interpersonal features involve the reader in the text and this model helps evaluate the interpersonal features of any text or genre.

Mirzapour and Mahand (2012) compared the frequency of hedges and boosters. They selected Abstract, Introduction, and Conclusion sections of twenty articles of Library and Information (LI) and Computer Science (CS) research articles written by non-native and English native writers. The result shows that the general distribution of hedges and boosters in Computer Science articles was lesser than that of Library and Information articles. Furthermore, they calculated the frequency of using hedges and boosters between native and non-native speakers. Similarly, Yazdani et al. (2014) also researched the articles related to 9/11 in the front-page English news articles. They intended to search for the use of boosters and hedges by different correspondents. Findings showed how the journalist avoided the use of such metadiscourse markers in controversial issues such as 9/11. They preferred to use inexplicit ways to convey their ideas by hedges and boosters rather than being direct. Kan (2016) carried out a similar study in which he compared articles on Turkish language and literature to search for the use of interactional meta-discourse. Each researcher selected ten papers from the fields of language and literature. The findings found that metadiscourse markers were used more frequently in Turkish language teaching than in Turkish literature.

Mai (2016) conducted an “intercultural analysis of meta-discourse markers” between American and Chinese Political discourses. There were 60 speeches taken for corpus that included both countries. The results showed that American speeches contained a much greater frequency of metadiscourse markers as compared to the Chinese ones. Batool et al. (2019) investigated the most frequently occurring hedges and boosters in opinion articles of Pakistani newspapers. They had also analyzed the writer’s stance of using hedges and boosters in opinion columns of newspapers. The data was assembled from 5 famous Pakistani English newspapers, The Nation, The Dawn, The Express Tribune, The Pakistan Observer, and The Daily Times. The sample consisted of 50 opinion articles which were selected randomly from the 5 newspapers. It comprised a corpus of 47927 words. The software which was used is Meta Pak software. The study concluded that the most commonly occurring hedge markers were ‘could’ and ‘would’. Furthermore, the most repeatedly occurring booster was ‘should’. The second part of the research paper was to decode why the writer uses hedges and boosters in opinion articles. According to them, it revealed the attitude of being cautious in his writings. Usage of boosters was certainly showing the assertiveness in writers’ voices. It means that his voice was assertive and confident. Furthermore, he wanted to convince his reader. So, boosters permitted writers to express a certain statement rather than suspicions. Terms such as ‘will, must, actually, beyond, clearly, etc’. came below the umbrella of the boosters. Gholami et al. (2014) state that there is an element of certainty about a subject by the writer. Usage of boosters by the writer shows confidence and surety about the facts that are represented by the speaker. Whereas hedges that include ‘could, perhaps, possible, on the other hand, etc’. show the writer’s suspicions instead of truths and facts. These devices are used to resist the claim that might lead to controversies.

Ismail (2012) studied 3 speeches of Barack Obama to find out the different types of metadiscourse markers employed in his speeches and the function that these markers perform in such political discourses. He came up with the result that these metadiscourse markers are

important tools to persuade and influence people. They were also a means of communication and dealing with the masses. The results showed that Obama has used more boosters as compared to the hedges in his speeches. It clearly showed the powerfulness of his speeches. Hyland (1996) also stated that hedges make the statement of a writer spurious, and it also illuminates that the information is centered on the speaker's reasoning. In short, every genre holds different kinds of features and characteristics, and every writer used the markers accordingly.

The literature review shows that no significant research is done considering the metadiscourse markers in Benazir Bhutto's speeches. This research aims to fulfill the gap to study Hedges and boosters incorporated in her speeches. The current study answers the following questions

1. What types of hedges and boosters are employed in Benazir Bhutto's speeches?
2. What is the rate of recurrence of the interactional metadiscourse markers in the selected speeches?
3. How do the hedges and boosters show up the viewpoint of the speakers in political speeches of selected figure?

Research Methodology

The data for the current study were collected from a book "Benazir Bhutto, Selected Speeches 1989-2007" compiled by Sani. H. Pahnwar in 2009. Only Thirteen speeches were selected from 1987 to 1997. Those speeches in which the issues regarding Pakistan's politics were discussed for instance democracy were selected. This criterion was set by keeping a view in mind, that even if a layman tries to read the research, he can easily understand the context and theme of those speeches. Furthermore, the text of speeches is filtered out, rest of the components like names, dates, websites, figures, tables, etc. are excluded. The total word limit is 21,604 in total. The current study will investigate the usage of hedges and boosters in Benazir's speeches; hence the research approach is exploratory. *AntConc* was used to investigate the hedges and boosters. Concordance lines where the selected word did not function as a hedge or a booster were discarded, and those concordance lines where the selected word did function as a hedge, or a booster were recorded. After that, the frequencies of these hedges and boosters were plotted on an excel sheet, and a frequency table was created.

Theoretical Framework

The present study is centered on the famous Hyland's (2005) model. Hyland's model is highly desired in modern metadiscourse studies for being the latest, uncomplicated, clear, and comprehensive. A wide number of people have chosen this framework (Abdi, 2011; Salager-Meyer, 1994; Velde & Gillaerts, 2010). According to the model, there are two types of resources in metadiscourse markers. Firstly, interactional resources are also known as textual categories. It consists of 5 further types namely, transitions, code glosses, evidential, endomorphic markers, and frame markers. Secondly, interactional resources are also known as interpersonal features. Interactional resources include hedges, boosters, attitude markers, engagement markers, and self-mentions.

Figure 2*Hyland Model for Metadiscourse (2005)*

Category	Function	Example
Interactive resources	Help to guide the reader through the text	
Transitions	Express relations between main clauses	In addition, but, thus, and
Frame markers	Refer to discourse acts, sequences or stages	finally, to conclude, my purpose is
Endophoric markers	Refer to information in other parts of the text	Noted above, see Fig. in section 2
Evidentials	Refer to information from other texts	According to X, Z states
Code glosses	Elaborate propositional meanings	Namely, e.g., such as, in other words
Interactional resources	Involve the reader in the text	
Hedges	Withhold commitment and open dialogue	Might, perhaps, possible, about
Boosters	Emphasize certainty and close dialogue	in fact, definitely, it is clear that
Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to proposition	Unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly
Engagement markers	Explicitly build relationship with reader	Consider, note, you can see that
Self-mentions	Explicit reference to author (s)	I, we, my, me, our

The current study has analyzed only two features that are hedges and boosters. According to Hyland, hedges markers are those markers that indicate the shallow engagement of the writer to the phrases and sentence; for instance, *possible, some, would, could, perhaps*, etc. and boosters are those categories that show writers emphasize or certainty for instance, *definitely, must, infact*.

Findings and Discussion

This part of the study entails the findings, its descriptive analysis, and discussion

The first research question is “What type of hedges and boosters have been used in Benazir Bhutto’s selected speeches?” After quantitatively analyzing the corpora, it has been identified that there are eighteen types of hedges used in the speeches. The detailed analysis is given below.

Use of Hedges in the Speeches of Benazir Bhutto

The table 1 shows the hedges in the speech of Benazir Bhutto. According to the data 18 types of hedges have been appeared in speeches.

Table 1*Types of Hedges in Corpus*

Types of Hedges in Corpus		
Seem	Clearly	Assume
Might	Appear	Fairly
Need	Could	Assumption
Suggest	Doubt	Sometimes
May	Perhaps	
Often	Think	

Table 2*Examples of Hedges from The Corpus*

1. I **could** declare that there is a strong relationship between the current government and military
2. I **could** assume that the current government is merely a puppet.
3. The prospects for democracy **may** depend on every institution.
4. This is not written for Pakistan, but it **might** as well be.
5. Every institution of the Pakistan **needs** to work for democracy
6. In previous days the media **could** not give details on subjudice matters because the powerful institutions were not allowing them to do so.
7. This will no doubt effect our democracy
8. **perhaps** the destiny has taken me here today.
9. Many people in the west would perceive us as terrorists and fanatics and this **needs** to be revised

Words such as “*could*”, “*seems*”, and “*perhaps*” shows the uncertainty of the speaker regarding the facts or statements that are claimed. It’s her idea or assumptions that do not possess any authentic evidence to prove the originality of the sentences. The speaker is conscious of not being completely sure to not create the concrete thought. Words such as “*may*” and “*feel*” show the speaker’s own willingness and belief. It does not state the obvious rather it creates the image of what the speaker thinks should be done. It’s one’s perspective and preference. To which the listeners can have their point of view. “*Perhaps*” and “*think*” once again lack the certainty of the thought of the speaker. They are not likely to be the truth. The lack of sole ground results in inviting different viewpoints and analyses of the audience. It saves the speaker from being targeted to any strong claims.

Table 3*Use Of Boosters in the Speeches of Benazir Bhutto*

Use Of Boosters in the Speeches of Benazir Bhutto		
Indeed	Always	Clearly
Proved	Show that	Actually
Failed	Fact	Know
Truth	Sure	True
Admit	Believed	
Shown	Must	

In the selected thirteen speech samples, 16 types of the “Boosters” have been used by Benazir Bhutto. The most used boosters are “*always*”, “*fact*”, “*true*”, “*know*”, “*proved*”, etc. Boosters for instance “*sure*”, “*clearly*” and “*always*” reveal the self-confidence and rigidity of the speaker. Here, the statements are confidently uttered along with the complete surety of the speaker’s discourse. There is no room for accusation. The audience or listeners are supposed to be agreed with the claims. Words like “*in fact*,” “*know*,” and “*must*” denote

real and authentic thoughts. The speaker expresses them clearly to generate certainty rather than uncertainty and ambiguity. Boosters reinforce the speaker's stated sentence with strong proof and assumptions to address any inadequacies or issues.

Table 4

Examples from the Corpus

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1. I will **clearly** tell who back who.
 2. I am **sure** that the prisons are lined with great men.
 3. Some of the internal forces **should** not interfere in democracy otherwise will loose our soft image in front of world.
 4. My fellows, I **must** say, my father has **proven** that he was a true democrat
 5. We **should** admit that there are certain institutions in Pakistan which do not want to work for democracy
 6. We cannot, we **must** halt their reason.
 7. We **should** protect the will of the people and their rights.
-

To answer the second research question that is what the frequency of the interactional metadiscourse markers in the selected speeches is. following analysis has been made.

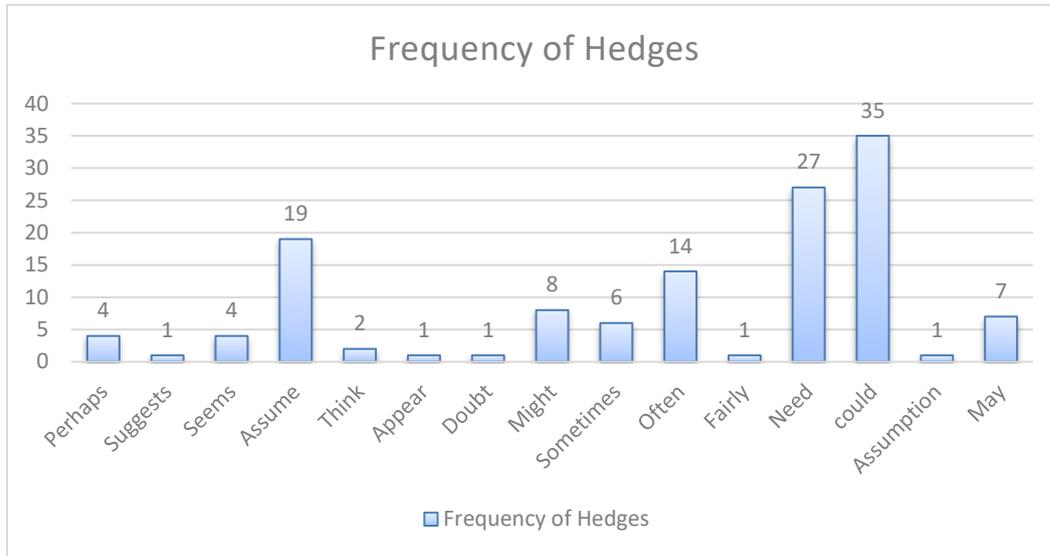
Frequency of the hedges found in Benazir Bhutto's speeches

The frequency of hedges in Benazir Bhutto's speeches is shown in Table 5. As previously stated, the total frequency of hedges is 131, with 17 different types of hedges occurring frequently. The modal verbs could and need to are the most generally employed hedge markers. Other modal verbs are used in addition to these two. "Could" was the most frequently appearing hedge, repeating 35 times. The second is "need" which appears 27 times throughout the passage. Generally, writers use modal verbs or other modal expressions when they need to express an opinion or attitude in a light and gentle manner (Batool et al.,2019).

Apart from modal verbs, there are a few other words that operate as hedges, expressing a polite tone in a more courteous manner or, in some cases, utter a significant narrative implicitly by the speaker. These include words like likely, likely, "suggest, claim, argue, almost, appear, and indicate". The third is "Assume" which came in the corpora 19 times. "suggest, appear, doubt, fairly, assumption, feel, and rather" are the least often used words. If we examine the usage and viewpoint of the statement by the writers, it can be noted that when it is deployed, it demonstrates that the writer is very cautious when making judgments. He chooses not to say something provocative that he can back up with evidence. So, hedges are the devices that show some uncertainty of the speaker. In short, they show an element of doubt, the softness of the speaker. Mrs. Bhutto used several hedges in her speeches too, while showing particular statistics that she is not sure about. She has used words such as "possible, suggests, Assume, think, could, need to," etc. These helped her arrange statements in a way that they do not seem conflicting to the audience as she is not claiming these statements, but rather is showing an element of doubt. A detailed analysis of this part is given in the discussion chapter.

Table 5

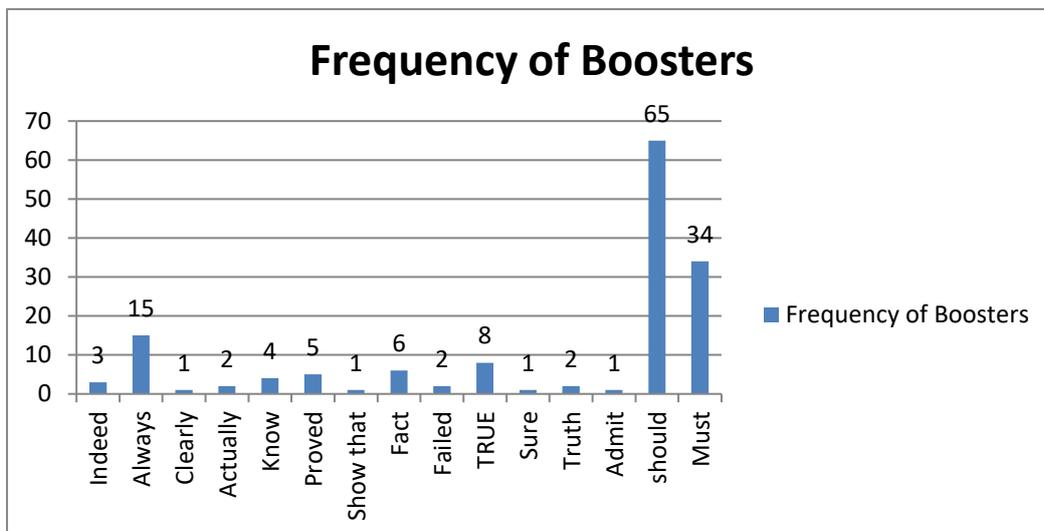
Frequency of the Hedges in Speeches



There is a total of 16 types of boosters found in the speeches of Benazir Bhutto. The frequency of the boosters is 150 as compared to hedges which is 137 according to the *AntConc* software. The most frequently used booster is “*should*” according to the corpus tool as seen in table 6. “*Should*” is used to express strong beliefs and it occurs 65 times in the corpus. Writers usually use the booster “*should*” in their writings to express powerful arguments and make recommendations through their speeches and writings. The above-mentioned instances from the corpus suggest that the writer emphasizes his position and is firm about it. *Should* is also frequently used to discuss what is the optimal or best course of action in a certain situation.

Table 6

Frequency of the Boosters in Speeches



Apart from the utilization of these markers in the form of modal verbs as a booster, there are other boosters that indicate the writer's forceful tone. Another booster in the corpus

is “*must*”. This shows that how Bhutto is intensifying the statements. The second most occurring booster is “*must*”. “*Must*” shows strong recommendations and suggestions. It expresses strong obligation and necessity. It appeared 34 times in the corpus. The boosters like “*always*” and “*true*” appeared 15 and 8 times in the corpus. These words express the speaker's certainty and assurance while presenting the facts. Whereas remaining ones are used twice or thrice wherever needed. So, boosters are devices that project the speaker's confidence about a subject. These boosting methods are used to demonstrate the speaker's trust and belief about the beliefs and facts he is providing or to make compelling recommendations.

Discussion

The third research question is how the stance of the speakers is shown by hedges and boosters. There is a never-ending struggle to attain power while influencing people involves not just the activities, but the language as well. So, words are chosen by the people to influence or to manipulate the general masses that help the politicians in gaining more power. Leaders using different hedges and boosters, create significant communicative strategies (Beard,2000). Both of these markers help in enhancement as well as suppression of statements that either prove to be powerful or lack confidentiality. They possess great power in speeches specially delivered by political figures. The message and its meaning are strengthened through these communicating devices. They further show that either the speaker is confident or lacks transparency in his statements. Boosters such as “*obviously*” and “*certainly*” claim and enhance the truthfulness of the speaker that whatever he says consists of rigid possibilities. Whereas hedges such as “*perhaps*” and “*maybe*” makes the speaker's statement a bit weaker as it does not provide rigid clarification. There is an element of “*doubt*” attached to it. Ismail (2012) also highlighted this fact. He said that Obama also in his speeches used hedges like *might* and *could*. According to him, he used these hedges to withhold full commitment to the statements. Obama says that *Global divisions will not only endure, but also possibly deepen*, where he does not fully claim that globally the world is divided into two. It is assumed that the USA wants to be the hegemon of the world so that is why he is not admitting the fact explicitly that is the division is getting obvious. Likewise, Bhutto also used such hedges to avoid any full claim. Her line like “*I could assume that the current government is merely a puppet of strong institutions*” shows that she is hesitating to make any full claim. In her speech, she talks about the government of her era. Here the use of the *could* in her statement reveals that she is not making any explicit claim. She, in fact, indirectly tells people or gathering that the government is not strong and does not represent democracy. Furthermore, at one point she submissively criticized the services. When she says that *this will no doubt effect our democracy*. She wants to highlight that the process of democracy gets disturbed if the service institution will interfere in the elections. So, in short, we have seen how Miss Bhutto is very peculiar about her statements. At one point she is criticizing institutions and on an equal level, she hesitates to make a clear-cut statement. She is not directly claiming the intended desire. As mentioned above that Yang (2013) also says that hedges are the expressions that make the meaning of utterances uncertain and sometimes serve as the means to make indirect or implicit claims. The above discussion shows uncertainty in Bhutto's statements. Likewise. Gholami et al. (2014) also stated that hedge words like “*could, perhaps, possible, on the other hand, and so on*”, reflect the writer's reservations rather than facts. These devices are used to counteract claims that could cause controversy.

Boosters are the words that intensify the speech and make a vehement impression on the listeners (Dost, 2017). He says that it is the impression of sureness, confirmation, and conviction. In other words, boosters are the devices aiming to strengthen the writer's claim. Moreover, the words like "clearly", and "should" are used to admit, for affirmation and to express a degree of certainty. Obama refers with certainty that *I am fully assured that violence will not end with the end of the combat mission*. Also, he used "clearly" to ensure the audience that health care legislation will not change their veterans' benefits. *I am fully clear in my vision, I am going to make quality, affordable health care not a privilege, but a right*. Similarly, Bhutto has almost made some explicit claims. The booster "clearly" shows the full certainty. Moving further, Miss Bhutto also makes some explicit claims like when she says "I will clearly show who favor who" it means she is making a direct claim. Making such a direct claim shows the confidence of the people.

Moving further, the data shows that the frequency of the boosters is more than that of the hedges. There is a total of 131 hedges as compared to 150 boosters. Esmer (2017) says that the use of a certainty marker that is a booster in the speeches indicated that the political leaders tend to articulate their particular feelings, concern, and commitment more evidently regarding the country's well-being. In the speeches of Miss Bhutto, she has also used boosters more than hedges. This shows that she was more certain about her claims. As it is now clear from the above discussion that hedges are mitigating words or phrases that are used to diminish the force of an utterance as well as save a speaker's face. According to Holtgraves and Lasky (1999), a speaker who uses ineffective and feeble language (hedges, tag questions, hesitation) is identified as less assertive or incompetent than a speaker who uses potent and strong language. Shafqat (1996) mentioned her eloquent style of speaking. He says that she was cautious about her words yet knew how to persuade people through words that used to grab the attention of the people. Similarly, the Chinese political figures also use boosters to make clear claims (Mai, 2016). He gives an example of a Chinese political figure who says that "There's no question in our view that every nation must protect its citizens against crime and attacks online, as well as off. But we must do it in a manner that's consistent with our shared values". The speaker explains that by using "There is no question" and "must" the speakers show certainty on the matter of protecting residents from crime and attack. He also employs the word "must" to indicate his firm belief that the style should be in keeping with the common values. Likewise, Miss Bhutto also states, "we should protect the will and right of the people". The usage of the strong booster that is "should" and committing the shared values enhance the positive image of the speaker. Mai also explains that the usage of the boosters which show the full commitment towards the claim enhances the positive image of the speaker.

Conclusion

The use of interpersonal indicators, such as hedges and boosters, in Miss Bhutto's speeches, is investigated and examined using a corpus-based approach. The goal of the study was to identify various types of metadiscourse markers in Benazir Bhutto's speeches. It aimed at analyzing the pragmatic function and frequency of selected markers. The finding indicates that the most recurring hedge was the "could" and it appears 35 times in the speeches. On contrary to this, the most frequently occurring booster was "should" and it appears 65 times in speeches. Moreover, during the study, a difference in the frequency of both hedges and boosters is uncovered. The orator has used a greater number of boosters as compared to hedges. The usage of hedges devices or expressions that indicate ambiguity may reduce the strength of the statements intended in oral discourse like speech debate (Al-Rashady, 2012).

According to the findings, when a speaker lacks significant evidence or is unsure about the issues and problems, they prefer to utilize hedges. The study also points out that hedges are employed to make indirect statements, and boosters can improve the authenticity and specificity of the statements or any discourse. Boosters are also used by speakers for their powerful recommendations; as a result, individuals choose to use them while discussing matters about which they are certain. The use of boosting markers demonstrates the speakers' confidence in their words and statements. The effective usage of a booster can persuade and encourage the audience (Beard, 2000). As a result, the appropriate application of hedges and boosters plays a crucial role in the success of political discourse. They contribute in the understanding of how the political discourses are written to facilitate political figures in making claims indirectly or directly in front of the masses. The study is useful in learning hedges and boosters as it also provides examples to understand the hedges and boosters. Along with this, the analysis shows how the use of boosters enhances the effectiveness and strength of speeches. Moreover, this study is only limited to only one political figure, one may compare it with other political figures to see the frequency of metadiscourse markers in their speeches. Along with this, future researchers can take larger data from the same political figure to analyze metadiscourse markers to reach a more generalized result.

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