

# Hedging Power A Metadiscourse Analysis of Article Speeches in the Guardian

Zahraa Abdul Al- Hussein<sup>1</sup> and Abbas H. J. Sultan<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Arts, Department of English, University of Kufa, Iraq

<sup>2</sup> Professor, Faculty of Arts, Department of English, University of Kufa, Iraq

E-mail: <sup>1</sup>[zahraaa.alluhaiby@student.uokufa.edu.iq](mailto:zahraaa.alluhaiby@student.uokufa.edu.iq), <sup>2</sup>[abbash.jasim@uokufa.edu.iq](mailto:abbash.jasim@uokufa.edu.iq)

ORCID: <sup>1</sup><https://orcid.org/0009-0001-3220-5655>, <sup>2</sup><http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8986-3333>

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**Abstract** - The research examines the intentional use of hedges in political speeches, concentrating on the impact of these linguistic choices on message transmission and comprehension. It looks at how utterances of caution and certainty change the tone, the way the audience reacts, and the speaker's perspective. The research delineates prevalent forms and frequencies of hedges, their application influenced by ideology, and their effects on the political setting. The qualitative technique uses language frameworks to categorise hedges, revealing that good combinations augment message impact and audience engagement.

**Keywords:** Hedges, Political Language, Discourse and Metadiscourse

## I. INTRODUCTION

Language is necessary for everyday conversation and information exchange. Discourse analysis examines power relations within discourses and the functionality of bodies of knowledge across various settings. This research analyses the use of hedges in political articles via the lens of (Salager-Meyer's, 2015) model, which integrates prevalent hedging categories and the functions outlined by (Akbas et al., 2017; Rababah & Ruman, 2015; Aertselaer, & T. A. van Dijk (Eds.)). Political speech has a big effect on public opinion and political choices, which shows how important it is to know how to use language in different contexts (Ali, 2004).

### I.1 Problem of the Study

This research addresses the inadequate comprehension of the use and functions of hedges in political publications (Fairclough, 2003). Political discourse significantly shapes public opinion and influences political choices; yet, there is a deficiency of thorough study explicitly analysing the language tactics used in political articles and their impact on persuasive reasoning (Omonov et al., 2025; Hellspong et al., 2018). To understand how arguments are made, how claims are handled, and how to talk to readers, it's important to know how authors employ hedges in political discourse.

### I.2 Hypothesis

1. Political publications utilise hedges, and the more often they do, the more likely it is that the writer is a

member of a certain political party or has certain political ideas.

2. various political articles may utilise hedges in various ways.
3. The authors of the chosen articles captivate the audience by using sentences that amalgamate hedges to persuade them of the intended message,

### I.3 Aims of the Study

1. To investigate the prevalent types and frequencies of hedges used in political articles.
2. To explore the functions and effects of hedges in political articles,

### I.4 Procedures of the Study

1. Collect a variety of political stories from the Guardian newspaper to analyse.
2. Create a coding technique based on (Salager-Meyer, 2015; Rababah & Ruman, 2015) to find and group examples of hedges in the corpus. The coding method must include the categories, frequencies, and purposes of hedges.
3. Do a quantitative analysis to look at how often and where hedges appear in the corpus. Use qualitative analysis to look at the roles and impacts of hedges.
4. Analyse the results and formulate conclusions on the prevalence, roles, and impacts of hedges in political writings. Talk about what the results mean for political discourse, media analysis, and how democracy works.

### I.5 Limit of the Study

The limits of the study are:

1. The present "study" will focus on written political articles, potentially neglecting the many hedges used in speeches and debates, among other forms of political discourse (Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012; Nariansyah, 2020).
2. The analysis will be confined to the chosen corpus of political articles and may not comprehensively

reflect all political conversation (Aijmer & Rühlemann, 2015; Hyland, 2008).

3. The research will depend on the implementation of the models proposed by (Salager-Meyer, 2015; Rababah & Ruman, 2015) in political discourse.

### 1.6 The Value of the Study

In this study, the values are:

1. The research enhances the linguistic analysis of political speech by investigating the use of hedges in political publications (Bryman & Bell, 2011). It elucidates the particular language tactics used by authors to formulate political messages, develop compelling arguments, and interact with readers.
2. The research looks at how hedges work in political writings. This information may also be helpful for those who talk about politics, such voters, policy analysts, and reporters.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 1 Discourse and Metadiscourse

1. The study improves the linguistic analysis of political discourse by examining the use of hedges in political texts (Yogesha & Thimmaraju, 2025; Xu & Pan, 2024). It explains the specific linguistic strategies that writers employ to write political messages, make strong arguments, and talk to readers (Freeden, 1996).
2. The study examines the use of hedges in political discourse. This knowledge may also be useful for those who discuss about politics, such voters, policy analysts, and reporters.

### 2 Metadiscourse and Genre

Genre is a way of talking that has changed throughout time with societal norms. Metadiscourse is intimately connected to genre norms and expectations, since they shape the utilisation of metadiscursive elements across diverse communication genres (Hyland, 2017; Hyland, 2005; Hyland, 2010). There are certain ways to employ language and rhetorical methods in academic writing, news articles, political speeches, and personal stories (Hyland & Ken, 1998a; Kashiha, 2022; Lee & Deakin, 2016; Cesur, 2018). These typically need the right use of metadiscourse. (Ädel, 2018).

## III. METHODOLOGY

### Data and Data Source

The study analyzed five political speeches from the Guardian magazine, using (Salager-Meyer's, 2015) model and (Rababah & Ruman, 2015)'s functions. The analysis focused on hedging categories and patterns in political speeches, using both quantitative and qualitative methods. (Angouri, 2010; Dörnyei, 2007; Breeze, 2019). The research was both quantitative and qualitative.

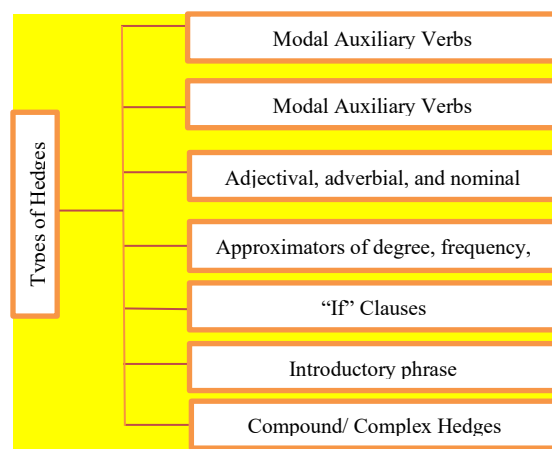


Fig. 1 Types of Hedges

The study utilized (Rababah & Abu Rumman's, 2015) methodology to examine the pragmatic purposes of hedges in two speeches. They analyzed transcripts and attributed each function to hedging words, and further pragmatic functions were added after thorough analysis (Hyland, 1998; Ho & Li, 2018).

Sample 1: ("I make no apology for saying that Boris Johnson was the wrong person to be prime minister" she said. Many of us could agree on that. But there had also been times when she wished she hadn't been first minister. She had just tried to be the best version of herself. Her voice caught and she dabbed her eyes as she recalled the responsibility. This was the human Nicola. The one she normally reserves for private consumption" (Crace, 2024). Don't worry, little people. Nicola Sturgeon can run this Covid inquiry for you. The Guardian. (<https://www.theguardian.com>). This sample is analyzed in the table no. I below:

TABLE I THE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE I

Hedges	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	The speaker uses the phrase "many of us could agree on that" to convey uncertainty about the future of Prime Minister Boris Johnson, highlighting the possibility rather than certainty of agreement.
	Modal Lexical Verbs	The speaker's actions are attributed to her own efforts, making the remark less forceful and more modest. The verb "wished" in "she wished she hadn't been the first minister" conveys a private, reflective wish.
	Approximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	"Many of us" is approximate booster of degree that shows a relative measure that softens the claim, showing it less absolute.
	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases	The word "normally" in "The one she normally reserves for private consumption", the writer shows her vulnerability typically kept private, though there are exceptions.
	"If" Clauses	Null
	Introductory phrase	Null
	Compound/ Complex Hedges	Null

Sample 2: ("The US and its allies have supported Ukraine but further US aid is held up in Congress, having passed the Senate with bipartisan support only to be blocked in the

House, which is controlled by far-right Trump allies. Calling Trump "a man of peace", Orbán said: "If the Americans don't give money and weapons, along with the Europeans, the war is over. And if the Americans don't give money, the Europeans alone can't finance this war. And then the war is

over". (Pengelly, M. (2024, March [day of the week]). Orbán says Trump \_will not give a penny to Ukraine '. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com> ). This sample is analyzed in the table no. II below:

TABLE II THE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE 2

Hedges	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	The lack of models in this sample reflects Orbán's strong confidence in his statements, and hence, creating a more assertive tone.
	Modal Lexical Verbs	"Orbán said..." contains hedge devices in its lexical verb "said". The lack of explicit hedging markers like model verbs or vague language indicates rhetorical strategies that portray Orbán as assertive and confident in his perspective. This choice presents his view in a way that seems unequivocal and definitive, potentially increasing its persuasive impact.
	pproximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	"The absent of approximators contributes to a strong, assertive tone without softened statements.

Sample3: ("In the absence of greater cooperation with the anti-Houthi bloc inside Yemen or any troops on the ground, western forces have limited other options apart from hoping more attack Son Yemen missile launch sites will finally degrade the Houthis effectiveness, or that upon a cease- fire in Gaza the Houthis will stick to their promise to end the

attacks and there will be a revival of the peace process. That requires diplomats treating the Houthis as credible partners for peace". (Wintour, P. (2024, March 11). West won't stop Houthi attacks unless it works with Yemeni authorities, say experts. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com>). This sample is analyzed in the table no. III below:

TABLE III THE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE 3

Hedges	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	"Will" in the "Houthis will stick to their promise": is used to express a strong likelihood or expectation about future action. It projects a degree of certainty regarding the Houthis commitment to cease attacks, assuming a ceasefire occurs in Gaza.
	Modal Lexical Verbs	In "hoping more attack..." the verb "Hope" signal a desire or expectation without guarantee. It introduces an element of speculation, suggesting that while attacks on missile sites might achieve a certain outcome, success is not assured.
	pproximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	"Limited other option "this phrase consists of approximates the degree to which western forces have choices. The word "limited" suggests a scarcity without explicitly quantifying it, allowing for some flexibility in interpretation.  The frequency and time are hedges in the phrase "upon a cease-fire in Gaza" introduces a time-bound condition. It indirectly establishes a sequence where the timing of events elsewhere (the Gaze ceasefire), thus providing a conditional frame of reference for their promise actions.
	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases	The text highlights the internal struggle against the Houthis in Yemen, with adverbial clauses describing limited western options and the Houthis's anticipated commitments. It also includes a nominal clause requiring diplomats to treat the Houthis as credible partners for peace, emphasizing the importance of diplomatic recognition in the peace process.
	"If" Clauses	Null
	Introductory phrase	Null
	Compound/ Complex Hedges	Null

Sample4: ("This is in response to the fact that in recent months were seen an unacceptable rise in extremist activity, which is seeking to divide Our Society and hijack our democratic institutions. It's obviously a duty of government to ensure it has the tools it needs to tackle this ever-evolving threat." Gove will on Thursday say the government is changing its official definition of extremism to catch groups that subvert British democracy and to focus more on ideology

than purely on words or actions" (Stacey, K., Syal, R., & Quinn, B. (2024, March 12). Michael Gove to name organisations affected by new extremism definition. The Guardian.

<https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2024/mar/12/michael-gove-to-name-organisations-affected-by-new-extremism-definition>) This sample is analyzed in the table no. IV below:

TABLE IV THE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE 4

Hedges	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	The modal verb "will" in "Gove will on Thursday say..." conveys assurance and intention about a future action, demonstrating the government's commitment to be sure. The aggressive and non-negotiable nature of the assertion makes it seem necessary and inevitable, influencing the reader's perception of government action as necessary and inevitable.
	Modal Lexical Verbs	Verbs like "believe" and "ensure" are used in political and reporting contexts to express the speaker's stance or assumption. "Say" conveys intention or a forecast for the future, while "focus" emphasizes the government's plan to change priorities, implying a conscious choice or necessity.
	Approximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	"In recent months" is an approximative time reference, indicating trends or events occurred over a generally defined span. The word "rise" may mean an approximate or broad increase, softening the claim. Approximators are used to reduce the force of a statement, allowing flexibility and avoiding over-claiming. They can soften or hedge a statement by indicating the uncertainty of the actual amount, degree, or time frame.
	Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases	unacceptable increase. The adjective "unacceptable" defines the noun "rise." It communicates a strong need for action and an evaluative perspective. "Democratic institutions" is a modification of "institutions," highlighting their ideological significance in relation to government policy and extremism.
		The text uses a variety of nominal modal phrases to convey complex ideas, such as the "ever-evolving threat," "duty of government to ensure," "tools it needs," and "what is meant by extremism." These phrases enhance the tone and convey the government's duty to act.
	"If" Clauses	Null
	Introductory phrase	The text uses adverbs and modal expressions to convey a persistent and unpredictable threat. It also uses nominal terms like "Duty of government" to indicate the government's obligation to act. The term "Tools it needs" refers to necessary resources. Nominal modal words are used to convey abstract or conceptual notions.
	Compound/ Complex Hedges	"It's possible that in recent months, we've seen an unacceptable rise in extremist activity." Complex hedges are more nuanced, involving clauses or modals to express uncertainty: "It's difficult to know whether the rise is as unacceptable as it seems." Hedges reduce the force of a statement, allowing for greater flexibility signaling that the writer or speaker is not making a fully assertive or definitive claim.

Sample5: ("I haven't hidden my ambitions to want to boost capital spending in the UK," she said." I absolutely want to do that, it's how to break out of this sort of doom loop of low growth and deteriorating living standards. That means prioritising capital investment, particularly capital investment that leverages in the private sector" (Partington,

R. (2024, October 4). Reeves raises hopes of investment surge. The Guardian (table no. V). <https://www.theguardian.com/business/live/2024/oct/04/pound-worst-week-bank-of-england-us-dollar-jobs-report-business-live?filterKeyEvents=false&page=with%3Ablock-66f9d238f0818b7c81cc3d4>)

TABLE V THE ANALYSIS OF SAMPLE 5

Hedges	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	"will" (in the phrase "we will work with whoever is president") Role of "will": In this case, "will" is a future auxiliary verb, used to indicate a strong future intention or certainty. The speaker is asserting that, regardless of who is elected president, the action (working with the president) will undoubtedly occur in the future. "will" (in the phrase "the US people will decide") Role of "will": Once more, "will" is used to express a future event or certainty. The speaker is certain that the decision will undoubtedly be made by the US people. "probably" (although technically an adverb, it interacts with the modality of "will" here) Role of "probably": Although it is not a modal verb itself, it qualifies the verb phrase with a degree of probability.
	Modal Lexical Verbs	"think" in the sense of "I believe it's likely as strong now as it has ever been." The function of the lexical verb "think" is to convey the speaker's belief or opinion. Although it isn't exactly a modal lexical verb, it functions similarly by expressing the speaker's subjective assessment of the circumstances, which gives the statement a degree of likelihood or uncertainty (since it is presented as the speaker's opinion rather than an absolute reality). The word "think" in this context implies a subjective modality, implying that the speaker is expressing what they believe or consider to be true rather than the circumstance as an undeniable reality. In the sentence "the US people will decide," "decide" The function of "decide" The auxiliary verbs "will" and "decide" have a different modal role, even though they are both lexical verbs. In the context of the US people choosing the outcome, it does, however, imply the ability for autonomy or choice. The verb "decide" frames the action as a conscious choice and indicates a strong type of agency or will.
	Approximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	A moderate degree is indicated by "somewhat," which is usually less than "very" but more than "slightly." For instance: "The explanation was somewhat unclear." : Indicates that the explanation was in the middle, neither entirely clear nor entirely confused. Silent: Depending on the situation, this could indicate a moderate level of intensity or a high level. Although it is not absolute, it frequently suggests a stronger degree of the adjective or adverb. For instance: "It was quite a challenge to solve that problem." : Indicates that the difficulty was noteworthy but manageable. Fairly: Suggests a moderate level, usually milder than "quite." It implies that something is partially, but not completely, true. Consider the statement, "She is fairly good at chess." : A moderate degree is indicated by "somewhat," which is usually less than "very" but more than "slightly." For instance: "The explanation was somewhat unclear." : Indicates that she is competent but not remarkable.: Indicates that the answer was neither entirely clear nor entirely unclear. Relatively: Denotes a degree in relation to another thing, usually suggesting a comparison. Although it's not an extreme situation, it's frequently used to convey that something is more than one may anticipate.

	<p>For instance: "The task is relatively easy for someone with experience." ⇒ implies that the activity is simple in comparison to other tasks or to someone with less experience.</p> <p>Occasionally: Denotes that something occurs occasionally, but not consistently or frequently. For instance: "I occasionally go hiking on weekends." : implies that the activity occurs occasionally but not often.</p> <p>Frequently: Infers a higher frequency, but it's still approximate; it's more than sporadically, but it's not always the case. For instance, "She frequently visits her grandmother.": Indicates that she sees her grandmother more frequently than seldom but not regularly.</p> <p>Seldom: A negative frequency that denotes the rarity of an event. For instance, "I rarely eat fast food." It is implied that the speaker doesn't often do this.</p> <p>Rarely: This is more powerful than "seldom," suggesting that something occurs extremely infrequently, nearly to the extent of being an anomaly. For instance, "We rarely see him anymore." suggests that it is not frequent to see this someone.</p> <p>Some: A general allusion to an unknown amount that is frequently employed in situations where the precise number is unknown or unimportant. For instance: "Some people prefer to work at night." : Indicates that the number of individuals is sufficient to give the statement meaning, but is not given.</p> <p>Numerous: An approximation, but a big amount. There is only a broad suggestion of a comparatively great quantity; the precise count is not given. For instance: "Many people are going to the concert tonight." : Although a large number of persons are implied, the precise quantity is not given.</p> <p>Several: is used to describe a modest quantity, usually greater than one but not a lot. "There are a few options left to consider." is an example. implies that there aren't many choices, but they're not overwhelming. For instance, "There are a few options left to consider." implies that there aren't many options, but rather that there are only a few. Not quite as many as "many," but more than "a few." Although the precise number may change, it usually denotes a substantial amount and is greater than a couple. For instance: "She has several books on the subject." : Provides a moderate number of books that are not specifically mentioned. "Shortly" implies that something will occur soon, but it doesn't specify when. "We'll leave soon," for instance. : Suggests that while departure is not always immediate, it is imminent.</p> <p>Later: Suggests that something will occur after a certain period of time, yet it's not apparent how long that will be. As an illustration, "We can discuss that later." : suggests a period in the future, although it is not specific or urgent.</p> <p>In a while: This indicates a longer wait than "soon," yet it still alludes to an impending occasion. "I'll be back in a while," for instance. : Although it isn't specified, it indicates the amount of time before the speaker returns.</p>
Adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal phrases	<p>Possible: This adjective suggests that although something is not guaranteed to happen, it is possible. For instance: "It is possible that she will pass the exam." : implies that success is possible but not guaranteed.</p> <p>The term "probable" implies a greater degree of possibility than "possible." For instance, "It is probable that they will arrive late." : Shows that the event has a greater likelihood of occurring than a mere possibility.</p> <p>Necessary: This indicates that something is required or must occur. As an illustration, the statement "It is necessary to complete this form before applying.": Signals that filling out the form is crucial.</p> <p>Certain: This adjective conveys total assurance. For instance: "It is certain that she will attend the meeting." ⇒ implies that the result is certain.</p> <p>Probably: Suggests a high probability yet leaves room for some degree of doubt. As an example, "He will probably be late." It implies that there is a greater likelihood of being late.</p> <p>Possibly: Indicates that something might occur without making a firm claim. For instance: "We could possibly go to the movies tonight.": suggests that going to the movies is a possibility but not a guarantee.</p> <p>Certainly: Shows that a certain event is certain to occur. For instance, "She will certainly accept the job offer." : implies that the behaviour is beyond a reasonable doubt.</p> <p>The word "definitely" conveys a greater sense of assurance than "probably."</p>
"If" Clauses	<p>Despite not being a "if" clause per se, the structure conveys a conditionality. It's basically saying, "If you get into a full-scale war, it will not lead to the objective of allowing residents to return home." This conditional is negative. It bases the argument (the most effective means of achieving the goal) on the fact that there is no war. It draws the reader's focus to the negative effects of going to war.</p>
Introductory phrase	<p>In this case, the opening phrase "US officials have urged" frames the action and makes it clear that this is a perspective being promoted by officials rather than a widely held belief. They help to establish the concept of authority (in this example, US officials) by giving the statement legitimacy and context. This avoids taking direct credit for the assertion and sets a more professional tone.</p>
Compound/ Complex Hedges	<p>Here, the usage of "could" indicates the speaker's hesitancy regarding the potential outcomes of the truce (i.e., the withdrawal of Hezbollah soldiers). "Could" serves as a hedge, implying a potential outcome but not a certain one.</p>

#### IV. RESULTS

By reading the transcripts and examining any hedges that responded appropriately to the situation, the researchers looked at each function. Rabab'ah and Abu Rumman (2015) attributed each pragmatic function of hedges to hedging words by citing instances from the transcripts that were corroborated by the researchers' interpretation.

Following a thorough analysis of the speeches' transcripts and a look at how hedges function in relation to their various occurrences, further pragmatic functions were added (table no. VI).

TABLE VI THE OCCURRENCE OF HEDGES IN THE SELECTED SAMPLES OF POLITICAL SPEECH

	Modal Auxiliary Verbs	Hedges					
		Modal lexical Verbs	Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases	Approximators of degree, frequency, quantity and time	If" Clauses	Introductory phrase	Compound/ Complex Hedges
Sample 1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0
Sample 2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
Sample 3	1	1	2	2	0	0	0
Sample 4	2	3	3	4	0	4	2
Sample 5	2	4	3	2	0	1	2
Σ fi	6	12	9	9	0	5	4
Total	45						

#### V. CONCLUSIONS

The current study's aims and hypotheses are supported by the results presented in Chapter Four, which lead to these conclusions. To summarise, these findings are:

The study confirms that political articles frequently use hedges, varying depending on the writer's political views or party affiliation. These hedges can be applied to extended speeches and are used in different types of commentary. The analysis also shows differences in hedge usage among articles, with sample 2 showing a greater use of model lexical verbs and approximates. The authors strategically use a mix of hedges to engage audiences and persuade them.

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