

ON PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES: METADISOURSE PRACTICES IN POLITICAL SPEECHES

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Abstract

This study attempted to investigate the persuasive meaning of metadiscourse markers in political speeches to see to what extent and how persuasive discourse is constructed in this genre through metadiscourse practices. To this aim, twenty-six political speeches given by Barack Obama, a former president of the United States, were analyzed using a discourse analytic approach and following Hyland's (2005ab) interpersonal models of metadiscourse to identify the frequency and persuasive function of interactive and interactional devices used. The findings indicated that the persuasive meaning conveyed by metadiscourse was for the most part context-dependent, which sometimes required the speaker to rely on a combination of devices to organize his discourse, persuade audiences, attract their attention and engage them in arguments. Furthermore, interactional devices were more frequently used than interactive ones, reflecting that engaging audiences in arguments and showing one's attitude and evaluation towards propositions were more likely to contribute to constructing a persuasive political speech. Findings can be discussed in terms of raising the awareness of second language speakers toward the linguistic and pragmatic conventions of political discourse and how persuasive discourse is constructed through metadiscourse markers.

Keywords

audience, interactional, interactive, metadiscourse, persuasion, political speech

1 Introduction

Political speech is considered a communicative interaction between the addresser and the addressee in which the addresser intends to support his/her propositions by persuading the addressee to accept his/her ideas and viewpoints. To accomplish this, the addresser relies on a range of lexico-grammatical resources and linguistic features as a way to present him/herself in discourse, anticipate the audience's reactions, create affinity with the audience, and moderate personal and power relations. Metadiscourse is one of the common linguistic devices that play a pivotal role in helping addressers show their stance toward a proposition, build a cohesive speech, negotiate meaning with the audiences, and pull them into arguments. To Hyland (2005a), metadiscourse is an endeavor to direct audiences toward a writer or speaker's message and guide them through the text/speech by using a range of linguistic items. Metadiscourse is seen as a powerful

means by which the speaker constructs social and interpersonal relations with the audience as a discourse participant. Some aspects of metadiscourse such as self-reference, stance and engagement have recently been the target of a number of studies in spoken language (Jung 2003, Biber 2006, Dontcheva-Navratilova 2008, Ädel 2010, 2012, Kashiha & Chan 2014, Lee & Subtirelu 2015, Zare & Tavakoli 2016).

The present investigation builds upon this line of research to communicate the view that the choice of linguistic forms and meanings is genre-related and characterized by the type of interaction between participants. The study aims to investigate to what extent and how persuasion in political discourse is constructed through the choice of a variety of metadiscourse devices. Some examples of these devices are: *today I will discuss, I want to talk about, let's briefly look at, you might still think that, and you should know that.*

1.1 Persuasion in discourse

Persuasion has long been recognized as an art throughout history. To Miller (2015), all language styles and the ways they are used are persuasive in nature. Persuasion is an indispensable part of the interaction between members of a society and it has been conventionally regarded as linguistic behavior and strategy used either to change the attitude and reaction of interlocutors or to affect their belief and degree of agreement. It is widely believed that the presence of an addressee, either active or inactive, can facilitate the process of persuasion. Another factor that can influence the process of persuasion is the situational context in which it occurs, and this relationship can be two-way, i.e. persuasion can help build the context in various ways. The notion of persuasion has become famous for its conventional classification introduced by Aristotle, namely *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* (Braet 1992). *Ethos* deals with creating the addresser's persona and stance, *pathos* has to do with provoking the addressee's emotive reaction, and *logos* deals with providing a rationale for given arguments. It is worth mentioning that successful persuasive language use, in which the context and argument are connected to the addresser and the addressee, requires a combination of *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*.

Researchers have shown a tendency to study various strategies of persuasive language use in different contexts, registers, cultures, and disciplines (Dillard & Pfau 2002, Pettegree 2005, Lunsford et al. 2008, among others). Several scholars have defined persuasion from their perspective. For example, O'Keefe (2002: 5) defines persuasion as "a successful intentional effort at influencing another's mental state through communication in a circumstance in which the persuadee has some measure of freedom". Van Dijk (2006) looks at persuasion

as a state of the interlocutors' mindset, in which they are "free to believe or act as they please" (ibid.: 361). The definitions imply that the addresser's right to choose what linguistic features they deem necessary to persuade the addressee serves as a building block of persuasive language use. Simultaneously, the addressee is dependent and free enough to show suitable reactions to the addresser's persuasive arguments. These reactions are highly context-dependent.

There are two main views of persuasion: 1) persuasion as a social phenomenon, and 2) persuasion as a cognitive phenomenon. The first view emphasizes that persuasion is a social phenomenon that includes a series of communicative events between the speaker as the persuader and the audience as the receiver of persuasion (van Dijk 2006). The second view asserts that persuasion can be regarded as a cognitive phenomenon because it aims to manipulate and control the audience's emotions, beliefs and responses (O'Keefe 2002). However, it should be borne in mind that persuasion does not completely change the audience's habitual conventions and views; yet, it intends to build up and support the audience's current habits and thought patterns. The present study follows a social phenomenon view of persuasion because it aims to look at the social relationship between the addresser and the addressee by investigating the types of persuasive strategies that are used in political speeches and how they are constructed through metadiscourse practices.

1.2 Linguistic features in political and other oral speeches

Recently, researchers in Applied Linguistics have shown an abundant interest to investigate the discourse of oral speeches to discover how spoken genres are organized and what rhetorical properties they include. As mentioned earlier, one way to investigate the properties of a spoken genre is through identifying a wide range of linguistic features that are commonly used in them and by highlighting the types of interpersonal strategies and styles that are employed by interlocutors. As for the common strategy, persuasion, Rosingana (2018) discovered how audience persuasion is built in political discourse through the use of indirect fictional construals. Upon relying on four different areas of discourse phenomenon, Rosingana found that certain linguistic strategies such as patterns of raising awareness and principal adjustments can be used to construct persuasive processes and help audiences interpret arguments and distinguish between reality and fiction. Another strategy was to draw the audience's attention to the perception of alternative reality through restricting the use of references and those modal words that express moral obligations.

In another study, Sebera and Lu (2018) analyzed the speeches delivered by Churchill during the Cold War to see how corpus and cognitive linguistics can

play a role in exploring the persuasive discourse of politicians and determining their underlying purposes through the choice of certain linguistic features. They found that Churchill made frequent use of metaphors such as ‘person’, ‘journey’, and ‘building’ in his rhetoric in order to give importance to the nation’s vision for the future, especially ‘journey’ which collocated with other attributes to signal the mutual cooperation between the United Kingdom and the United States. In research by Veloso and Feng (2018), a political speech video released during the presidential campaign in Brazil in 2010 was studied to analyze the persuasive effect of the linguistic forms and meanings used in the video. They found that the two candidates attempted to convince audiences not to vote for the other candidate through the use of specific discursive and linguistic structures such as negative behavioral connotations.

Liukonen (2018) looked at the notion of persuasion by analyzing the discourse of David Cameron. The purpose was to investigate the types of persuasive requests David Cameron made in his public speeches on the EU referendum. To this aim, Liukonen adopted Aristotle’s rhetorical theory (i.e. the three modes of persuasion: *logos*, *pathos*, and *ethos*) to indicate how a particular form that a speaker selects could contribute to the rhetorical strategies employed in the speech. It was concluded that political speeches do not only deal with conveying the core message to audiences, but they also focus on expressing one’s opinion about what is said through constructing social relations. Chen (2017) adopted Hyland’s (2005a) model to examine the frequency and function of interactional and interactive metadiscourse markers in Hillary Clinton’s speech given in her first political campaign in 2015. The quantitative analysis revealed that all the metadiscourse resources were employed in her speech, except for endophoric markers and code glosses. Furthermore, the most frequent markers were self-mentions, boosters, and transitions, respectively. The researcher asserted that the high application of self-mentions and boosters could imply the speaker’s character as a female presidential candidate who wanted to convince and impress audiences through indicating her confidence and political stance.

In other endeavors, the use of personal and self-reference markers has also been found to contribute to forming a persuasive relationship between the speaker and audiences in political speeches. Ismail (2012) looked at the types of logical and personal markers used in political speeches delivered by an English native speaker politician. The analysis demonstrated that these markers were frequently utilized in the discourse of political speeches, establishing connections between different ideas, showing contrasts, and building persuasive relations. Moreover, the degree of social ranking between the speaker and audiences was reduced and the knowledge was shared with the help of personal markers. In another

study, Dontcheva-Navratilova (2008) examined the frequency and function of self-reference metadiscourse in the forms of the first-person pronoun *I*, the object pronoun *me*, and the possessive adjective *my* in institutional and political speeches delivered by three diplomats as general directors of UNESCO. Moreover, the study classified self-references, as markers of persuasion and evaluation, into two main categories; the interpersonal category included stance and engagement markers (hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and expressive speech acts) and the textual category consisted of inter-textual and intra-textual references (shared knowledge, signals of textual acts, and personal asides). The researcher found that *I* as the first-person subject pronoun followed by a finite verb was the most common self-reference employed in those diplomatic speeches, while *me* as the first-person object pronoun was the least frequent.

In a comparative study, Zand-Moghadam and Bikineh (2015) analyzed the types of discourse markers used in eleven political interviews with politicians from the United States and Iran. They classified the identified discourse markers into four categories including interpersonal category, referential category, structural category, and cognitive category. The researchers found that both groups of politicians relied on the use of a variety of discourse markers to accomplish their political objectives and convince their audiences. Despite this common similarity, some differences were also depicted in the two sets of interviews regarding the function of the markers used. One difference was the higher tendency of English native speaker politicians to use interpersonal discourse markers than their Iranian counterparts. The researchers suggested that such variation could result from cultural differences and the politicians' varying purposes to emphasize the development of interpersonal relations with their interviewers.

2 Corpus and methodology

This study is based on a corpus of 26 political speeches delivered by Barack Obama in the United Nations, the U.S. Congress, and his first and second presidential inaugurations from 2009 to 2016. The speeches ranged from 18 to 63 minutes and their transcriptions together with audio files were obtained from <http://americanrhetoric.com>. The total size of the corpus was 89,543 words and included six speeches given in the United Nations (25,351 words), twelve speeches given in the U.S. Congress (42,771 words), and eight speeches given in his first and second presidential inaugurations (21,421 words). The rationale for selecting these speeches is that since the purpose of this study was to investigate how persuasive discourse had been realized in political speeches through the use of metadiscourse practices, the existence and role of audiences as receivers

of such persuasion were necessary. Given this, the speeches were selected to represent the role of the audience as an active discourse participant or as a particular addressee who was not actively involved in the process of interaction across three different speech contexts.

This study applied both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative phase of the study consisted of the frequency distributions of the identified metadiscourse markers in the speeches. On the other hand, the qualitative part dealt with the analysis of the discourse function of the identified markers and the ways that these functions were used to build persuasive discourse in the speeches. A number of steps were taken in analyzing the corpus. First, the transcriptions and their audio files were downloaded from www.americanrhetoric.com. For ethics, it is stated on the website that materials owned by AmericanRhetoric.com may be used for research and educational purposes without permission. The second step was to check and match each transcript with its relevant audio file. Then, each transcript was analyzed manually to identify the types of metadiscourse markers used based on Hyland's (2005ab) interpersonal models of metadiscourse.

Due to the context-dependent nature of metadiscourse and its multifunctional feature, a manual analysis including contextual annotations was done on the corpus to discover the primary function of some ambiguous cases. In order to decrease the risk of idiosyncratic effects imposed by a single researcher and to ascertain the accuracy of the analysis, a consistent method was used in the codification of data. That is, the reliability of the coding was determined through interrater agreement. To achieve this, another researcher who was an expert in discourse analysis was asked to help the researcher in identifying the primary category of any ambiguous and conflicting cases, and an agreement was reached after a careful analysis of the context in which they were used. In cases where a marker had more than one function, the most common one was selected as the primary function. This is illustrated in the example below which was taken from the corpus used in this study:

- (1) *and today, I'd like to talk about what we've done over the last 20 months to meet these challenges.* [The U.S. Congress]

In the above case, the speaker is expressing his stance (using the self-mention *I*) through structuring and framing his discourse (using the frame marker *like to talk about*). Since the latter function appeared more prominently in the corpus and was commonly used as a point of departure to initiate speeches, frame marker was selected as a primary function. Eventually, the final list of metadiscourse markers underwent another discourse analytic investigation to explore the

persuasive meaning of each marker based on the context in which they occurred and to find what specific metadiscoursal purpose they served in the speeches in order to convince audiences.

In order to control length variation and justify the distribution and occurrence of the markers across the three contexts where the speeches took place (the United Nations, the U.S. Congress, and presidential inaugurations), the frequency counts were normalized based on Biber et al.'s (1998) raw frequency count/number of words in the text ($\times 1,000 =$ normalized frequency count).

2.1 Analytical framework

The interpersonal models of metadiscourse were first proposed by Hyland (1998, 2004) and Hyland and Tse (2004) and were further developed by Hyland (2005ab). Hyland's (2005a) model has been commonly used in the literature to investigate the use of interactive and interactional markers in a wide range of registers (Hyland 2003, Gillaerts & van de Velde 2010, Molino 2010, McGrath & Kuteeva 2012, Cao & Hu 2014, Kashiha & Marandi 2019, Kashiha 2018, 2021ab, 2022, among many others). In this study, a combination of the two models introduced by Hyland (2005ab) was employed because the adapted version is more comprehensive and contains some functions relating to spoken discourse (shared knowledge, personal asides, directives, and questions). In addition, and to better suit the purpose of the study, the sub-function of 'reader pronouns' was changed to 'audience pronouns' because the focus of this study was on speech. The taxonomy of metadiscourse has two main categories, namely interactive and interactional. Interactive metadiscourse contributes to directing the audience through the discourse and is divided into five sub-functions. Transitions indicate the relation between main ideas (*but, and, in addition, thus*). Frame markers express discourse acts, sequences, or stages in a speech (*finally, to conclude, my purpose is*). Code glosses are used to explain and elaborate a propositional meaning (*namely, e.g., such as, in other words*). Endophoric markers refer to the information given in different sections of a speech (*as noted above, as I said before*), while evidentials are used to refer to information from other sources (*according to X, Z states*).

The second main category, interactional, aims to engage audiences in discourse and indicate a speaker's attitude and evaluation toward what is being said. It has nine sub-functions including hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, directives, shared knowledge, audience pronouns, questions, and personal asides. Through hedging devices like *might, perhaps, possible*, and *about*, a speaker attempts to withhold complete commitment to propositions by showing uncertainty and opening a dialogue. Boosters, on the other hand, stress

certainty and close a dialogue (*in fact, definitely, it is clear that*). As the name implies, attitude markers show a speaker's attitude toward propositional contents (*unfortunately, I agree, surprisingly*). Self-mentions give explicit reference to the speaker by using *I, we, my, me, and our*. Directives guide audiences to carry out an action or to notice items in a way determined by the speaker (*note that, should remember that, important to know*). The shared knowledge expressions put audiences in a position inside naturally occurring agreements (*as we know, as is clear, as we are familiar*). Audience pronouns are realized by the second person pronoun *you* and its possessive adjective *your*, and are used by the speaker to address the audience and tap his/her attention during a speech. Questions mainly deal with the plan of conversational engagements and are used as another way to attract the audiences' attention (*Do you know that, the question is ...*). Finally, personal asides enable the speaker to communicate with audiences by interrupting the main flow of an argument to add another related comment (*meanwhile, in the meantime, by the way*).

3 Results and discussion

It is necessary to mention again that the present research followed the social phenomenon view of persuasion which considers persuasion as a social relationship between the addresser and the addressees and as a means through which the addresser supports and facilitates the addressees' current understanding of the topic rather than convincing them to change their beliefs. Therefore, the identified metadiscourse resources in this study mainly acted as persuasion facilitators or initiators rather than idea manipulators. With this in mind, a total of 1,746 lexical items (1.9% of the total running words in the whole corpus) were found to function as metadiscourse which carried a persuasive meaning. Furthermore, interactional types were more widely observed in the speeches than interactive ones (965 tokens compared with 781 tokens respectively). This higher occurrence may suggest that engaging audiences in arguments and showing one's attitude and evaluation toward propositions are more likely to contribute to constructing a persuasive political speech. However, Obama also relied on a variety of interactive markers as another type of persuasive strategy to organize his discourse, build a cohesive speech, and determine his preferred interpretations. In general, the quantitative finding of this study is in line with that of Chen (2017), who found interactional resources more frequent than interactive ones in Hillary Clinton's speeches. By contrast, Ismail (2012) found interactive and personal markers more prevalent than interactional markers in political speeches.

In this study, interactional metadiscourse had two features, namely speaker-oriented and listener-oriented features. The speaker-oriented dimension included features that refer to the ways in which the speaker attempted to convince audiences through expressing his views and communicating his attitudes, judgments, and commitments to audiences. The listener-oriented feature dealt with a position where the speaker convinced audiences differently by connecting to them directly, guiding them through the speech, helping them understand arguments, recognizing their doubts and uncertainties, as well as involving them as discourse participants.

Table 1 gives detailed information about the distribution of interactive and international types across the three venues where the political speeches were delivered. It is necessary to note that this study did not primarily focus on comparing the language use of the addresser in these subcorpora because all the speeches were given by a single speaker. However, an attempt was made to discuss particular examples in the light of the content and context of the speeches to see whether there was any connection established between what was said and where it was said.

	Interactive		Interactional	
	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm
United Nations	168	6.62	216	8.52
U.S. Congress	367	8.58	443	10.35
Presidential inaugurations	246	11.46	306	14.28
Total	781	8.72	965	10.77

Table 1: Frequency distribution of metadiscourse markers in political speeches

3.1 Interactive metadiscourse in political speeches

The findings show that the persuasive purpose of interactive types was to display the speaker’s endeavor to guide audiences through the speeches. The quantitative and qualitative analyses demonstrated some similarities and differences in the ways that interactive types were deployed in the three subcorpora. As illustrated in Table 2, the most frequent interactive type in the whole corpus was transitions, aligning with Chen’s (2017) work on Hillary Clinton’s speeches. In this study, transitions appeared in the forms of additive, adversative, and causative; and were mainly used to create cohesion in speech and ease the audience’s burden of understanding the connection between propositions. Within transitions, and was the most frequent realization followed by *but*, *or*, *because (of)*, *as*, and *so (that)*. In the following examples, *and* as an additive transition aims to connect sentences, adjectives, nouns, verbs, and adverbs.

- (2) *Without a deal, those inspections go away, and we lose the ability to closely monitor Iran's program and detect any covert nuclear weapons program.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (3) *Our national security policies are stronger and more effective when they are subject to the scrutiny and transparency that democracy demands.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (4) *We stand for the principle that all people have the right to express themselves freely and peacefully.* [The United Nations]

	United Nations		U.S. Congress		Presidential inaugurations		Total in the whole corpus	
	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm
Transitions	98	3.86	274	6.40	164	7.65	536	5.98
Frame markers	23	0.90	36	0.83	28	1.30	87	0.97
Endophoric markers	21	0.82	24	0.55	20	0.93	65	0.72
Evidentials	11	0.43	13	0.30	16	0.74	40	0.44
Code glosses	15	0.59	20	0.46	18	0.84	53	0.59
Subtotal	168	6.62	367	8.58	246	11.46	781	8.72

Table 2: Frequency distribution of interactive types in political speeches

Another persuasive strategy represented by interactive metadiscourse was the use of frame markers. Although accounting for almost one instance per 1,000 words, frame markers appeared in the three subcorpora to help Obama outline his discourse, refer to sequences or stages, show topic shifts, and announce the goals of his speech. In Example 5, which was taken from a speech delivered in the U.S. Congress, Obama attempted to convince the Congress and assure them of the precautions taken to control Iran's nuclear program through organizing his discourse into steps. He endeavored to do the same in Example 6 from his presidential inaugurations when he was thanking his team for their assistance. He made the argument in Example 7 convincing by drawing the attention of politicians in the United Nations to a summary of his speech.

- (5) *First, Iran will not be able to pursue a bomb using plutonium. Second, this deal shuts down Iran's path to a bomb using enriched uranium.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (6) *and finally, I want to thank the American negotiating team.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (7) *To summarize, the United States has a hard-earned humility when it comes to our ability to determine events inside other countries.* [The United Nations]

Table 2 indicates that Obama used endophoric markers in the three settings of speeches with almost similar frequency. Some examples of endophoric markers identified in the speeches are as *I said*, *what I've said tonight*, *I've already talked about*, *what I said earlier*, *as I just explained*, and *I've said before*. These markers were employed by Obama to guide different audiences through the speeches and refer them to particular information given in different sections of his speech. It appears that emphasizing and giving special importance or value to an argument through referring backward or forward was likely to establish a more persuasive speech. In other words, this way of importance marking was considered one of the strategies of building persuasion in political speeches. The use of endophoric markers is illustrated in the examples below:

- (8) *I've said before and I will repeat: There is no room for accommodating an apocalyptic cult like ISIL ...* [The United Nations]
- (9) *What I've said tonight matters little if we don't come together to protect our most precious resources.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (10) *As I just explained, not only do we keep in place for five years the arms embargo under this particular new U.N. resolution ...* [The U.S. Congress]

In Example 8, when convincing the politicians from other countries in the United Nations to accept an important decision taken by the United States regarding military interference, Obama used *I've said before* to refer to what he had already stated and *I will repeat* to put more emphasis on it. In a speech given in his presidential inauguration (Example 9), where most of the audiences were ordinary people, he used *what I've said tonight* to refer back to an important assertion that he had put forth regarding the significance of protecting the nation's precious resources. A closer look at the examples of endophoric markers showed that they mainly collocated with the self-mention *I* and were expressed in connection with this interactional metadiscourse. These types of combined use of metadiscourse markers are further discussed under the interactional category.

Another persuasive strategy represented by interactive metadiscourse was the use of evidentials, although being infrequent in the whole corpus. The speaker attempted to convince audiences to trust his assertion by backing it up with what other famous people or organizations had stated in relation to it. This again proves that this study followed the social phenomenon view of persuasion in which a relationship was built between the speaker and the audiences in order to facilitate and ensure the audiences' current understanding of a proposition rather than convincing them to completely change their belief about it. In the case of evidentials, it was depicted that supporting arguments through giving reference

to, for example, a known person in the community such as John F. Kennedy in Example 11 or a place that makes important decisions such as the U.S. Congress in Example 12 was one of the constitutive elements of political speeches that can help the speaker build persuasive discourse.

- (11) *Fifty-one years ago, John F. Kennedy declared to this chamber that “the Constitution makes us not rivals for power but partners for progress.” “It is my task,” he said, “to report the State of the Union -- to improve it is the task of us all.” [The U.S. Congress]*
- (12) *Moreover, our closest allies in Europe, or in Asia -- much less China or Russia -- certainly are not going to agree to enforce existing sanctions for another 5, 10, 15 years according to the dictates of the U.S. Congress. [The United Nations]*

In Example 11, Obama referred to a declaration from a former president of the United States as supplementary information in order to support his own argument. This is because he was aware that politicians in the U.S. Congress know the former president very well and might take his words for granted. Even in Example 12, while giving a speech to politicians from other countries in the United Nations, he relied on an order from the U.S. Congress using *according to* in order to legitimate his argument and convey this message that the situation would not change for the time being.

It was found that through code glosses, the speaker intended to either give examples or explain the topics and issues under discussion in the three settings of speeches. The realizations such as *for example*, *in other words*, *such as*, *I mean*, *including*, and *that means* were employed as a persuasive approach to rephrase or elaborate particular sections of discourse and help audiences have a better understanding of the topic. This is exemplified below:

- (13) *But that depends upon economies that tap the power of our people, including the potential of women and girls. That means letting entrepreneurs start a business ... [Presidential inaugurations]*
- (14) *Many have joined terrorist organizations such as al Qaeda’s affiliate, the Nusra Front, and ISIL. [The United Nations]*
- (15) *In other words, no deal means no lasting constraints on Iran’s nuclear program. [The U.S. Congress]*

He used two code glosses in Example 13 in one of his presidential inauguration speeches; *including* specified the group of people that his statement addressed, and *That means* elaborated his previous assertion. Such a persuasive and attention-raising strategy was further realized by giving an example using *such as* in Example 14 and elaborating using *in other words* in Example 15.

3.2 Interactional metadiscourse in political speeches

The results displayed that persuasion was further characterized and enhanced by the use of a variety of interactional types of metadiscourse. To build persuasion, Obama attempted to involve audiences in his argumentations and evaluate his degree of certainty and commitment toward utterances. Table 3 gives detailed information about the distribution of the types of interactional metadiscourse in the speeches. As can be seen, the most frequent element of persuasion was a reference to the speaker or his nation by the use of first person singular and plural pronouns referred to as self-mentions. They accounted for 3.36, 3.69 and 4.53 occurrences per 1,000 words in Obama's speeches in the United Nations, the U.S. Congress and presidential inaugurations, accordingly. The high tendency of the speaker to use self-mentions, compared to other types, suggests that the explicit reference to the speaker and his stance introduces him as a holder of discourse or an active discourse participant, thus making the speech more convincing and influencing (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2008, Chen 2017). Furthermore, persuasion was built through an abundant occurrence of the subject pronoun *I* because with *I* "the utterance has all the reliability of first-hand claim" (Hodge & Kress 1993: 92), and thus, is given extra importance and high credibility to the utterance. It normally collocated with stance verbs and adjectives such as *know*, *state* and *eager* at the beginning of speeches to demonstrate feelings and personal opinions, as in:

- (16) *I know that many are frustrated by the lack of progress. I assure you, so am I.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (17) *I am well aware of the expectations that accompany my presidency around the world.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (18) *I stated my willingness to order a limited strike against ...* [The United Nations]

	United Nations		U.S. Congress		Presidential inaugurations		Total in the whole corpus	
	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm	Raw	Norm
Hedges	43	1.69	78	1.83	54	2.52	175	1.96
Boosters	48	1.89	91	2.13	66	3.08	205	2.28
Attitude markers	11	0.43	33	0.78	13	0.60	57	0.64
Self-mentions	85	3.36	158	3.69	97	4.53	340	3.79
Directives	11	0.44	36	0.84	22	1.02	69	0.78
Shared knowledge	2	0.08	8	0.18	6	0.28	16	0.18
Audience pronouns	8	0.31	18	0.43	26	1.22	52	0.58
Questions	6	0.24	16	0.38	21	0.98	43	0.48
Personal asides	2	0.08	5	0.12	1	0.05	8	0.08
Subtotal	216	8.52	443	10.35	306	14.28	965	10.77

Table 3: Frequency distribution of interactional types in political speeches

A notable finding of this study was the high reliance of the speaker on the use of first person plural pronouns, especially inclusive *we*, to imply that audiences were also active discourse participants. The inclusive *we* along with its other forms (*our* and *us*) accounted for the most prevalent type of self-mentions in the speeches, making this strategy of audience involvement an exclusive genre-based feature of political discourse that may distinguish it from other spoken genres. Moreover, the nature of political speeches required the speaker to show a sense of patriotism to his nation through inclusive *we*. It was noted that expressing patriotism through self-mentions was more evident in the speeches given in the presidential inaugurations and the U.S. congress, where the audiences and the speaker had the same nationality, compared with the speeches in the United Nation where audiences were from different countries. The use of self-mentions is exemplified below:

- (19) *We understand that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (20) *In an interdependent world, all of us have a stake in working towards greater opportunity and security for our citizens.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (21) *Some of our most urgent challenges have revolved around an increasingly integrated global economy.* [The United Nations]

It is evident from the above examples that first-person plural carried distinct functions based on the context of the speeches. For example, in the speech given in a presidential inauguration (Example 19), it seems to refer to the president and the government, while in the speech given in the U.S. Congress (Example 20),

it (*us*) refers to the president and citizens first and then to the president and government (*our*). Therefore, it can be inferred that the use of metadiscourse is characterized and influenced by the context in which it is used (Hyland 2005a). Another interesting finding was that the speeches delivered in presidential inaugurations included more instances of audience involvement (containing inclusive *we* and its other forms), compared to those given in other subcorpora. This is because most of the audiences in presidential inaugurations were ordinary people; therefore, Obama was more likely to engage them in argumentations and made them feel like they were part of the discourse, as in:

- (22) *No longer do we have the luxury of indulging our differences to the exclusion of the work that we must do together.* [Presidential inaugurations]

Self-mentions also had the highest tendency to collocate with other metadiscourse functions including endophoric marker (Examples 8, 9 and 10), frame marker (Example 23), hedge (Example 24), booster (Example 25), and attitude verb (Example 26) or adjective (Example 27).

- (23) *I'd like to talk to you about what we've done over the last 20 months to meet these challenges.* [The United Nations]
- (24) *I believe in my core that repression cannot forge the social cohesion for nations to succeed.* [The United Nations]
- (25) *We must continually renew this promise.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (26) *If we cannot agree even on this I also hear it from some of our friends. I disagree.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (27) *and this year, I am eager to help advance the bipartisan effort in the Senate.* [Presidential inaugurations]

In some cases, in an endeavor to persuade audiences, Obama made a combined usage of various metadiscourse markers in one utterance. For example, the frame (*would like to talk to you about*) marker is expressed through a self-mention (*I*) followed by a pause (marked as a hyphen) in order to introduce a code gloss in Example 28. At the beginning of the sentence in Example 29, he indicated his objection through a combination of an adversative transition (*However*) and a self-mention (*I*) followed by a hedge (*believe*) as a persuasive act to mitigate his argument and leave room for any opposite opinion. In Example 30, the expression of attitudinal meaning (*apologize for*) is conveyed through a self-mention (*I*) followed by a booster (*will never*).

- (28) *I would like to talk to you about a subject that is at the heart of the United Nations – the pursuit of peace in an imperfect world.* [The United Nations]
- (29) *However, I do believe that it is the obligation of all leaders in all countries to speak out forcefully against violence and extremism.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (30) *I will never apologize for defending those interests.* [The U.S. Congress]

It was noted that persuasion was also marked through evaluative functions of hedges and boosters. The evaluation here refers to the speaker's judgment of the propositions and ideas, as a way to create solidarity with the audience. Likewise, hedges and boosters aim to express the speaker's epistemic stance and degree of commitment toward utterances.

Boosters were the second most frequent interactional type in Obama's political speeches, which mirrors the finding of Liukonen (2018) on David Cameron's political speeches. Moreover, it was depicted that boosters had a relatively higher occurrence in presidential inaugurations (see Table 3). Obama used boosters, mostly in the forms of simple verbs, phrasal verbs, modals, and adverbs, to express his high degree of certainty and authorial commitment regarding what he was saying and hereby persuade his audiences. This would reflect his authoritative role and position as a president who was expected to impress his audiences through giving reliable and credible messages, thus, convincing them to acknowledge and support his viewpoints, as in:

- (31) *But in this rapidly-changing economy, we have to make sure that every American has the skills to fill those jobs.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (32) *We have to remain vigilant because I strongly believe that our leadership and our security cannot depend on our military alone.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (33) *I've made it clear that the United States will never compromise our commitment to Israel's security.* [The United Nations]

It was interesting to note that boosters primarily collocated with self-mentions (as is exemplified above) to express the speaker's stance toward what he said and this was common in all three settings of speeches. In another combined use in Example 32, the boosters *have to* and *strongly* are followed by the hedge *believe* to give special importance and value to the utterance and indicate the speaker's varying degree of commitment and certainty towards what he says to the politicians in the U.S. Congress about leadership and security of the country.

Table 3 shows that hedges were also slightly more frequent in presidential inaugurations, with 2.5 occurrences per thousand words compared with 1.69 and 1.83 occurrences in the United Nations and the U.S. Congress, respectively.

Like boosters, hedges had an evaluative function of demonstrating the degree of commitment toward an utterance. However, unlike boosters, hedges were used by Obama to lower the level of certainty in his political statements or claims depending on the context. This persuasive device could enable him to refuse to take full responsibility for the accuracy of certain assertions and to indicate his willingness to express some utterances cautiously through the use of mitigating words such as *may*, *might*, *can*, *believe*, *possibly* and *perhaps*, as in the following examples.

- (34) *Many people watching tonight can probably remember a time when finding a good job meant showing up at a nearby factory.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (35) *We believe that each nation must chart its own course to fulfill the aspirations of its people.* [The United Nations]
- (36) *It might be the power of our vote that drives our democracy.* [The U.S. Congress]

In all the above examples, Obama attempted to moderate his arguments and attribute them to the expectations of his audiences as a means of persuasion. Exercising such caution in political speeches reflects the need for the appropriate respect for the views of audiences by taking into account their potential expectations and perspectives. This is because the audiences in the United Nations and the U.S. Congress were all political experts who had a position as a political authority and had some shared values with the speaker. This can justify the high occurrence of *I believe* and *I think* in the speeches given in the United Nations and the U.S. Congress. Miššíková (2007) suggests that the function of these hedges is metalinguistic because they “refer to the quality of the language used by the speaker” (ibid.: 147).

In Example 35, Obama used the hedge *believe that*, preceded by a self-mention, to open room for a potential disagreement or a difference of opinion on the part of audiences in the United Nations about his assertion on the decision of each nation to fulfill the aspirations of its people. With regard to the hedge *I think*, which is embedded in a self-mention expression, it was noted that it also functioned as an involvement device to evoke the audiences’ response and increase their engagement in discourse, as in:

- (37) *I think its message must be rejected by all who respect our common humanity.* [The United Nations]
- (38) *I think that’s not just true for us.* [The United Nations]

Audience persuasion was further facilitated by the use of attitude markers, although accounting for less than one occurrence per thousand words in the three subcorpora. These markers served another function of stance, attitudinal stance, which refers to the speaker's relationship and engagement with the addressees concerning the topic. This was a purposeful convincing strategy deployed by the speaker to noticeably manifest his opinion or assessment of a particular subject through emotive expressions, as in:

- (39) *and sadly, but not surprisingly, this body has often become a forum for sowing discord instead of forging common ground.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (40) *We have fought fiercely for our beliefs.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (41) *I come before you humbled by the responsibility that the American people have placed upon me.* [The United Nations]

In the following example, Obama used the attitudinal expression *It is my honor* at the beginning of his first speech in the United Nations to indicate politeness and gentility, and thus, impress his audiences.

- (42) *It is my honor to address you for the first time as the 44th President of the United States.* [The United Nations]

In some cases, attitude expressions such as *committed to*, *convinced that*, *confident that*, and *determined to* collocated with a self-mention and a booster to stress the importance of topics and to attribute the emotional evaluation directly to the speaker. This explicit attribution of the speaker's attitude to audiences and topics is considered a strategy of self-discourse, which can contribute to making the speech persuasive and coherent (Dontcheva-Navratilova 2008). In the following examples, the significance of the topic was expressed through a booster (*absolutely*, *strongly*), which collocated with the self-mention *I* and was followed by an expression of attitudinal meaning (*convinced*, *determined*):

- (43) *I'm absolutely convinced that was the right thing to do.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (44) *I'm strongly determined to act boldly and collectively on behalf of justice and prosperity at home and abroad.* [The United Nations]

Another persuasive strategy relating to audience involvement was through the use of directives. Directives typically guide audiences to perform an action or to perceive things in a way determined by the speaker. Obama employed imperative structures as a directive way to pull audiences into the argument and raise their awareness of the topic being discussed. For example, in his speech in the U.S. Congress (Example 45), he used *imagine* to attract the politicians'

attention to the importance and lack of diplomacy in Russia by asking them to think of the benefits of the opposite condition in which Russia had engaged in true diplomacy and worked with Ukraine and the international community. In Example 46, he made use of the directive *keep in mind* to remind politicians in the United Nations of the duration of unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran.

- (45) *Imagine if, instead, Russia had engaged in true diplomacy, and worked with Ukraine and the international community.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (46) *Keep in mind unilateral U.S. sanctions against Iran had been in place for decades.* [The United Nations]

Those speech acts that served attitudinal meanings such as *thanking* and *welcoming* were also found to function as directives or interactional engagements with the audiences. They were primarily evident in the speeches given in the United Nations and the U.S. Congress where the speaker directly addressed audiences at the beginning or end of the speeches through audience involvement pronouns, as in:

- (47) *Thank you for the opportunity to address the General Assembly of the United Nations.* [The United Nations]

Obama used audience pronouns to either implicitly or explicitly refer to the direct or indirect addressees, including people and political leaders of other countries in his speeches in the United Nations, and people and politicians of his nation in his speeches in presidential inaugurations and the U.S. Congress. Giving such explicit reference to audiences through audience pronouns, especially the second person *you*, appears to be an effective persuasive act by Obama in impressing audiences and controlling the discourse, especially in presidential inaugurations where audiences were ordinary people who needed more attention-getting devices. This can be a possible reason for a relatively higher occurrence of audience pronouns in presidential inaugurations (see Table 3). The use of these markers is exemplified below:

- (48) *Today I say to you that the challenges we face are real.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (49) *To those leaders around the globe who seek to sow conflict, or blame their society's ills on the West.* [The United Nations]

In some cases, the speaker made a combined use of a directive and an audience pronoun as a persuasive strategy in order to enhance speaker-audience relations and establish a direct engagement with audiences by guiding them to an intended meaning of discourse, as in:

- (50) *I ask you to look at the concrete actions we have taken in just nine months.* [The U.S. Congress]

Shared knowledge markers were infrequent in political speeches (16 tokens in the whole corpus). Through the few examples of shared knowledge markers such as *we know*, *It's well known to all of us*, and *we recognize that*, which collocated with first person plural pronouns, the speaker explicitly positioned audiences inside naturalized limits of agreement. This would be a successful persuasive strategy when the addresser stimulates the audiences' shared knowledge by pointing out the notions and values accepted by the sociocultural or sociopolitical community without referring to the source document. In the following examples, Obama attempted to refer to and share some knowing points with the people of his nation (Example 51), senators and heads of states in the U.S. Congress (Example 52), and members of the United Nations (Example 53) in order to activate their shared knowledge and put more emphasis on the points being mentioned:

- (51) *We know our economy is stronger when our wives, our mothers, our daughters can live their lives free from discrimination in the workplace.* [Presidential inaugurations]
- (52) *We recognize that our country cannot succeed when a shrinking few do very well and a growing many barely make it.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (53) *I put forward a new basis for negotiations in May of this year. That basis is clear. It's well known to all of us here.* [The United Nations]

In a few cases exclusive to the speeches in the United Nations, Obama persuaded audiences by relating an utterance to a specific resolution or agreement (Example 54) or by quoting or referring to a particular point or speech from himself or other politicians (Example 55) to accentuate the importance of arguments.

- (54) *Instead, we insist that the Iranian government meet its responsibilities under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and U.N. Security Council resolutions.* [The United Nations]
- (55) *President Rouhani has just recently reiterated that the Islamic Republic will never develop a nuclear weapon.* [The United Nations]

Finally, questions and personal asides were the least frequent interactional types used in political speeches. Questions carried rhetorical meanings rather than being real questions that anticipate a response from audiences. These types of questions are considered a convincing approach because they were employed

to present the main plan of conversational engagement and establish a direct dialogic involvement with audiences to attract their attention, as in:

- (56) *How should we respond to conflicts in the Middle East and North Africa?* [The United Nations]
- (57) *Do you really think that this verifiable deal, if fully implemented, backed by the world's major powers ...* [The U.S. Congress]

Personal asides were found to be a very context-oriented strategy, which included the speaker's attempt to interrupt the main flow of the argument with other comments, making the argument more appealing to audiences and seeking their response or reaction. Personal asides are considered the main feature of oral language, occurring in real-time and reflecting interlocutors' tendency and ability to directly converse with each other and interrupt each other's utterances based on conversational situations. All the identified realizations of personal asides were found to be introduced by a connector such as *of course*, *meanwhile*, *in the meantime*, *by the way*, and *while*, as in:

- (58) *In Iraq, killings and car bombs continue to be a terrible part of life, and meanwhile, Al Qaeda has splintered into regional networks and militias.* [The U.S. Congress]
- (59) *People of different races, religions, and traditions have lifted millions out of poverty, while respecting the rights of their citizens.* [The United Nations]

4 Conclusion

The present investigation analyzed the persuasive meaning of metadiscourse markers in political speeches delivered by Barack Obama, the former president of the United States. To this end, the proportional distribution and communicative functions of interactive and interactional markers were analyzed and classified based on Hyland's (2005ab) interpersonal models of metadiscourse. In general, the findings suggested that metadiscourse is a constitutive element of building persuasion in political discourse and has an effective role in organizing the discourse of political speeches. The persuasive purpose of interactive types was to display the speaker's attempt to guide audiences through the speeches, while interactional markers contributed directly to the speaker's various ways to involve audiences in his argumentations and evaluate his degree of certainty and commitment toward utterances in order to convince audiences. The results also indicated that Barack Obama relied more on interactional types than interactive ones, suggesting that engaging audiences in arguments and showing one's attitude and evaluation towards propositions were more likely

to contribute to constructing a persuasive political speech. As for the sub-types, transitions and self-mentions were found to be the most prevalent interactive and interactional markers, respectively. Furthermore, it was found that some metadiscourse markers collocated with other items to show the speaker's varying degree of interpersonality towards audiences or utterances including directing audiences, expressing stance and attitude, attracting audiences' attention, and evaluating propositions.

The current findings can provide insights into our understanding of the discourse of political speeches in general, and how audience persuasion builds around metadiscourse use in particular. The results suggest that persuasive strategies are context-dependent and they directly deal with genre-specific features, specifying the ways that an addresser positions himself in discourse and expresses his stance and engagement with the audience. These findings can inform the construction of persuasive discourse and raise novice speakers' awareness of the linguistic and pragmatic norms of political genres.

In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that despite having some limitations that need to be tackled, the findings of the present research demonstrated that metadiscourse expressions play a pivotal role in establishing and enhancing persuasion and directing audiences to perceive an underlying meaning of utterances in political speeches. However, the analysis did not focus on genre-specific and rhetorical features of political speeches. This can be a venue for future research to establish connections between the strategic use of metadiscourse devices and particular features (moves or rhetorical structure) of political speeches. Further studies can also provide insights into cross-linguistic features of metadiscourse use in political speeches to see whether cultural differences can influence such language use as well as the style of speech delivery utilized by English native and nonnative politicians.

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