Certainty/Uncertainty as an Important Trait of Authorship: A Linguistic Analysis of Urdu Newspaper Discourse

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Abstract

The way writers distinguish their opinions from facts and figures and convey their message with certainty or uncertainty is central in journalistic discourse. This study deals with the certainty and uncertainty of the propositions thewriters make in Urdu newspapers. A corpus of one millionwords is compiled to find hedges and boosters in Urdu newspapers. The corpus is analyzed to draw the results by using Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction as a theoretical framework. This study aims to analyze metadiscourse interaction markers i.e. hedges and boosters. The result shows that hedges are the interaction markers with the highest frequency in Urdu newspapers which suggests that uncertainty is a key feature in Urdu journalistic discourse when the writers share their viewpoints.

1. Introduction

Written language has a supremacy over spoken language. This is undoubtedly due to the importance of writing in all aspects of day to day life. The style and ways of interaction play a vital role in sharing information in conversation through written language. Texts are noticeable traces of the process of mediating a message (Widdowson, 2007). The main purpose of language is to share our ideas and experiences which is obviously the key purpose of communication. Language is used for exchanging our experiences with friends and family. The language in use is analyzed through discourse analysis which is defined as a "method for analyzing the ways that specific features of language contribute to the interpretation of texts in their various contexts" (Barton, 2005; p. 57).

The possible inferred meaning from the definition suggests that discourse analysts not only try to provide a detailed analysis of the text but also

aims to find out the meaning beyond the sentences to consider the impacts that participants, goals, situations and results of an interaction will have on the text. So discourse analysis realizes forms and functions of a language as well as its cultural and social features. Moreover, it leads to better understanding and effective communication. The analysis of discourse is the analysis of language in use and the ways in which linguistic forms are used for social purposes. The analysis of language beyond grammatical structures tends to adopt a limited approach that what possible purposes of language use might be, drawing a distinction between transactional and interactional uses of language.

Urdu is a national language of Pakistan and enjoys the status of official language as well. It is linguafranca in Pakistan as it is widely spoken and understood all over Pakistan. Urdu is the symbol of integrity among all the ethno-linguistic nations inhabit in Pakistan (Rehman, 1996). Mostly, Urdu is used as a first language in the urban areas (Census 2001: 107). Among the total population of Pakistan, only 7.4 percent people have Urdu as their mother tongue and these 7.4 percent people are mostly urbanized. It has been portrayed as the language of national unity by the elite of Pakistan (Rahman, 1996). This language is one of the sources to create a unified Pakistani identity. Moreover, an important role of Urdu is to resist any ethnicity which could break the federation. It is also serving as a medium of instruction in education as well as medium of interaction between Sindhi, Punjabi, Balochi and Pashto (Rahman, 2002).

The language of newspaper discourse is quite interesting, since the writers try to convince anonymous readers who may share the writer's point of view or who may not. In fact, editorsattempt to give their readers "an accurate, interesting, thorough account of events and the writer's purpose is to persuade the reader"(Mencher, 1989; p.2).Hough (1998; p.1) advocates that "news is what people need or want to know, whatever interests them, whatever adds to their knowledge and understanding of the world around them". The primary objective of a daily newspaper is "to present the news of the day, to foster commerce and industry, to inform and lead public opinion" (Hough; p.205). Therefore, editors try to unearth the hidden aspect of the news for their readers. They try to highlight information in a way which they believe can support their opinions. In fact, newspaper is a kind of discourse that "contributes to the construction of systems of knowledge and belief" (Fairclough, 1992; p. 64).

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Newspaperssometimes may formulate or shape people's opinions about something by the use of interaction markers. These interaction markers help us to identify how a writer projects his/her voice and asserts his/her opinions and judgments on one hand and how the author engages his/her readers and seeks the attention of the reader on the other. Discourse analysis is important for news analysis because it can make classical approaches more explicit.

1.1 Research Questions

- How are the hedges and boosters used in Urdu journalistic discourse?
- What kind of impact these hedges and boosters can have on readers?

1.2 Delimitation of the Study

Interactional metadiscourse has been a study of great interest for pedagogical, interlingual, intralingual and interdisciplinary studies. This study also works in the same way but certain things are delimited by the researchers. The data for this research comprises only two newspapers. The reason for selecting these newspapers is their circulation and the criterion set by Nwogu (1997). The selected data meets all the given above criteria for the compilation of corpus. The data for this study has been taken from opinion and editorial sections of the newspaper published in three months. Moreover, only hedges and boosters are analyzed from Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction.

2. Literature Review

The term metadiscourse was first coined by Harris (1959) to offer the different ways to understand the language in use. It represents the speaker's attempt to guide the receiver's perception towards a text. It was then adopted in discourse analysis in middle of 1980. The term metadiscourse is widely used in current discourse analysis and language education, referring to an interesting and relatively new approach to conceptualize interactions between text producers and their texts and between producers and users (Hyland, 2010). The concept of metadiscourse was developed by the researchers around the world (Williams, 1981; Kopple, 1985; Crismore, 1989). Kopple (1985) considered metadiscourse in terms of style lists and presented various kinds of metadiscourse. His idea towards metadiscourse i.e. "discourse

about discourse" intended to direct the readers rather presenting information to the readers.

The studies of Williams (1981) and Lautamatti (1978) served a kind of basis for research in metadiscourse. A survey of written texts reveals that the writers belonging to different cultures have been using metadiscourse in their writings of different periods, disciplines and genres. It has been used by authors from Greek era to modern world. For example metadiscourse was used in Greek and roman comedies and poetry by Aristophanes, Plautus, Virgil, Homer Ovid and Aristotle. Later on metadiscourse was used in essays and tragedies by Stern, Fielding, Cervantes, Dickens, Goethe and Eliot, novelists; Barthes, Fsowler, Calvino, Borjes; historians: Commager, Handlin, scientists: Darwin, S. J. Gould. Moreover, the survey also shows the frequent use of metadiscourse in magazines, technical articles books and reports (Crismore, 1989).

3. Research Methodology and Data Collection

The research is basically descriptive in its nature. The researchers have analyzed and described the occurrence of hedges and boosters in Urdu Newspapers discourse. However a corpus is used to findthe frequency of all the hedges and boosters. The data for this study has been collected from the following daily newspapers from 1 April, 2015 to 30 June 2015:

1. Jang
2. Nawa-e-Waqat

The corpus comprises 1 million words. The selection of two Urdu newspapers is set under four criteria. The first three criteria for the sample selection of corpus as suggested by Nwogu (1997) are representativeness, reputation and accessibility while the forth criterion is circulation. According to him the corpus taken for research should be representative which suggests that the taken data should represent the whole. In this respect, the data that are taken for corpus building and research is representative as the newspapers are published from several cities of Pakistan. For instance, these two newspapers are published from eight cities of Pakistan. So the sample taken for corpus building is representative.

As far as the reputation is concerned, the selected sample is undoubtedly taken from renowned newspapers with a huge viewership. The third criterion is accessibility which suggests that either the selected sample

for corpus can be mechanized for the analysis or not. The selected sample can be obtained easily by copying it from the official websites of the concerned newspapers which can be run into corpus readable softwares. The forth criterion is circulation. Out of 424 daily newspapers of Pakistan two Urdu newspapers *Jang*and *Nawa-e-Waqt* are selected considering the most circulated newspapers (Audit Bureau of Circulation, 2011).

For corpus building the data is copied in "html" form from official websites of these newspapers. After that data are pasted into a Notepad file. This is converted into a ".txt" file in Notepad to make "html" file readable for the software to analyze corpus. For Urdu, the encoding of file is changed from ASCII to UTF-8. The reason is that it is the only encoding that is used for the readability of Urdu in corpus analyzing software. These changes are done for making Urdu script readable for analyzing data in software because the software does not read the Urdu file saved in standard settings.
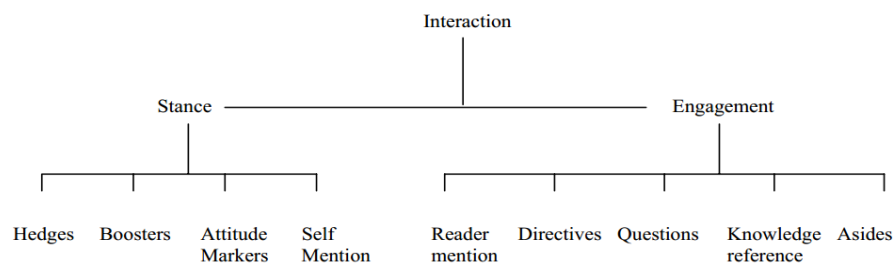
For filing the copied data taken from websites of newspapers, the copied text of the newspapers is saved in different files and each file contains day and month with the caption of either column or editorial. The built corpus set contains three hundred and sixty four files which include columns and editorials of three months.

For data analysis, Urdu corpus is added in Antconc to analyze interaction markers. Frequencies and occurrences of the interaction markers are checked by the use of concordance tool. The concordance result is saved in a .txt Notepad file to see the functionality of interaction markers in sentences. After saving the file, the interaction markers are seen manually to check if they really work as interaction markers in the context or not.

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework applied in this research is Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction which analyzes the interactional features of discourse. This model of interaction primarily deals with two dimensions being stance and engagement (Hyland, 2005a). Stance is called the textual voice which refers to the ways in which a writer projects himself/herselfin a text and conveys his/herjudgments, opinions and commitments. In other words, it is the way in which a writer intrudes and stamps his/her personal authority onto his/her arguments or step back and

disguise his/her involvement. Stance is entirely author oriented approach that leads the audience towards authors' textual voice (Hyland, 2005a). On the other hand, engagement is the reader oriented approach in which a writer recognizes the presence of others, pulls them along with his/her arguments, focuses their attention, acknowledges their uncertainties, includes them as a discourse participants and guides them to interpretations (Hyland, 2005a). Stance includes four main elements: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions and engagement comprises of five elements: reader pronouns, personal asides, appeals to shared knowledge, directives and questions. Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction is given in the figure below.

Interaction

Stance ——————————————————— Engagement

Hedges   Boosters   Attitude Markers   Self Mention   Reader mention   Directives   Questions   Knowledge reference   Asides

Figure 3.1: Hyland's model of Interaction (2005a)

3.1.1 Stance Markers

The first part of Hyland's (2005a) model of interaction is considered as a backbone to the representation of the author's stance in written texts. They aim to explore the ways in which speakers and writers project their opinions, personal feelings and judgments. Stance deals with writer oriented features of interaction and expresses different kinds of opinions, personal feelings and assessments that include even attitude of the writer towards particular information. It also includes how certain the writer is about veracity, how the writer gets assess and what perspective the writer is taking to the reader about a particular piece of information. Stance comprises four elements: hedges, boosters, attitude markers and self-mentions.

3.1.1.2Hedges
Hedges are devices like possible, seem, might and perhaps, which show the writers' choice to withhold complete commitment to a proposition and allows information to be presented as an opinion rather than accredited fact. Hedges also allow the editors to open discursive space so as to make readers dispute their interpretations. They involve readers as

participants in their ratification, modesty, respect or deference for the views of other colleagues.

3.1.1.3Boosters

For Hyland (2005b), boosters are words like clearly, obviously, evidently and demonstrate, which allow the writers to convey their certainty in their statement. Such words mark the involvement of the reader with the topic and also show solidarity with their audience. The other function of boosters is to stress group membership, shared information and engagement with readers (Hyland, 1999).

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

4.1 Hedges

■ پاکستان کے لوگ **شاید** اس الزام سے بھی محفوظ نہ رہیں کہ وہ ------

■ سفیر نور محمد کو ایرانی دفتر خارجہ میں بلاکر **بعض** معاملات پر تحفظات کے اظہار کے علاوہ باسلام -----

■ میرے **اندازے کے مطابق** پاکچیناقتصادی راہداری سے پاکستان میں ------

■ ڈاکٹر عمر انفاروف کے قتل کے ایک **مہینہ** سے ہولتکار معظم علیخانکیگر فتار یاسکی -----

■ اسمعابدے پر دستخط کرنے کے باوجود **ایسا محسوسہوا** کہنہ فقطپاکستانمگر چینکیطرف --------

These instances of hedges are traced from corpus systematically to quote for data analysis and discussion. Here a few instances will be discussed for elucidation. In first example, the author uses a hedge **شاید** presenting his/her statement as an opinion rather than an accredited fact to present his/her stance. By doing so, the writer gives space to the readers to dispute his/her opinion as he/she presents his/her stance in the example with uncertainty (Hyland, 2005a). In 3rd example, another hedge is present that explicitly depicts the writer's modesty, respect and difference for views of readers. The writer in this example involves the readers by sharing his/her opinion by using a hedge **اندازے کے مطابق**. The use of hedge in this example suggests that the writer first admits that it is his tentative estimation of the writer and then presents his/her stance. The 5th example shows another use of hedge where the writer does not claim his/her judgment and gives the audience a chance to have a different opinion. Here the writer shares his/her opinion using the hedge **ایسا محسوسہوا**. The writer does not impose his/her statement rather he/she makes sure that he/she is uncertain about his/her opinion (Hyland 2005a).

مجموعی	معمول	امکانات	ممکنہ	متنازعہ	فقط
کئی	متوقع	تقریباً	اندازہ	متعدد	زرا
چند	کچھ	عموما	شائد	دیگر	گزشتہ
بیشتر	غالباً	بظاہر	مبینہ	بعض	اکثر
سناکہ	نہیں سمجھتا ہوں	سمجھتا ہوں	کچھ عرصہ قبل	دیکھنے اور سننے میں یا	اگر دیکھا جائے
میڈیا کے مطابق	نہیں سمجھتا ہوں	سمجھتا ہوں	ممکن نہیں ہے	ممکن ہے کہ	دیکھنے میں ایا
اطلاعات کے مطابق	ایک رپورٹ کے مطابق	ایک انداز سے مطابق	اندازہ ہے کہ	اندازہ ہوا کہ	ظاہر ہوتا ہے کہ
لگتا ہے جیسے	یوں لگتا ہے کہ	لگتا ہے کہ	محسوس نہیں ہوا	محسوس ہوا جیسے	محسوس ہوتا ہے کہ
بہت سال پہلے	کچھ نہ کچھ	معمول کی بات یہ ہے کہ	پتہ چلتا ہے کہ	کافی ہے کہ	کافی حد تک
طرح طرح کی	ہمارے خیال میں	میرا خیال ہے کہ	میرے خیال میں	کسی حد تک	سنا ہے کہ
	دیکھنے کا موقع ملا	دیکھنے کا اتفاق ہوا	ضرورت سے زیادہ	کم سے کم	زیادہ سے زیادہ

Table 4.1: List of hedges present in Urdu journalistic discourse

4.2 Boosters

■ بھرپور مہم چلائی جس سے پارٹی کی سیاست کو **شدید** نقصان ہو رہا ہے اس کا اثر پنجاب کے -----

■ احتساب کے نظام یا پھر گڈگورننس کے لئے **حقیقی** دبائو نہیں ڈالرہا۔ مسلم لیگ(ن) مرکز-----

■ ریلیف پیکیج کے لئے ڈیڑھ ہار بروپے کار کھ کھا جانا **بلاشبہ** ایک اچھا اقدام ہے تاہم ضرور ہے کہ اس -----

■ اور شہریوں کے تحفظ کے لئے امن کر اچیمیں **انتہائی** ضرور ہے۔ انہوں نے دہشتگردوں اور-----

■ بنکیہ منافع **دراصل** نفعو نقصان میں شراکت کینیادپر کھولے ---

Boosters are taken from corpus systematically to elaborate them. A few instances out of these ten will be explained for data analysis and discussion. The first example exhibits a booster which is used by the writer to make his/her statement effective and stressful. The function of boosters as suggested by Hyland (1999) can be seen in this example. For instance a booster **شدید** is utilized by the author to present his/her statement with assurance to influence the readers.   In3example the

author stresses his/her proposing by using a booster which makes this proposition an accredited fact rather than his/her opinion. The writer here uses بلاشبہ to present his/her stance towards the statement. This example also presents how boosters are used to acknowledge shared knowledge and information between writer and readers. The 5th example reveals another instance of booster where the writer presents his/her statement as a fact. The booster دراصل convinces the readers to accept the statement of the writer as a fact. The use of دراصل stresses the information of the writer and changes it into a fact. By using booster the writer exploits and affects the judgments of the readers (Hyland, 2005a).

یقیناً	شدید	بھرپور	انتہائی
انتہا	بالکل	بھاری	ٹھیک
وسیع	خوب	تیز	بلاشبہ
سنگین	حقیقی	لازم	لازمی
ٹھوس	بخوبی	نہائیت	لاتعداد
نمایاں	سارا	دراصل	بڑا
پورا	پورے	پوری	مکمل
تمام	بڑے	بڑی	بہتری
اعلی	بہت	بہت حد تک	حقیقت یہ ہے کہ
حقیقت ہے کہ	حقیقت میں	خاص طور پر	خاص بات
کوئی چک نہیں	سب سے بڑی بات	فوری طور پر	صرف اور صرف
سب سے زیادہ	پوری طرح	خاصی حد تک	واضح طور پر

Table 4.2: List of Boosters present in Urdu journalistic discourse
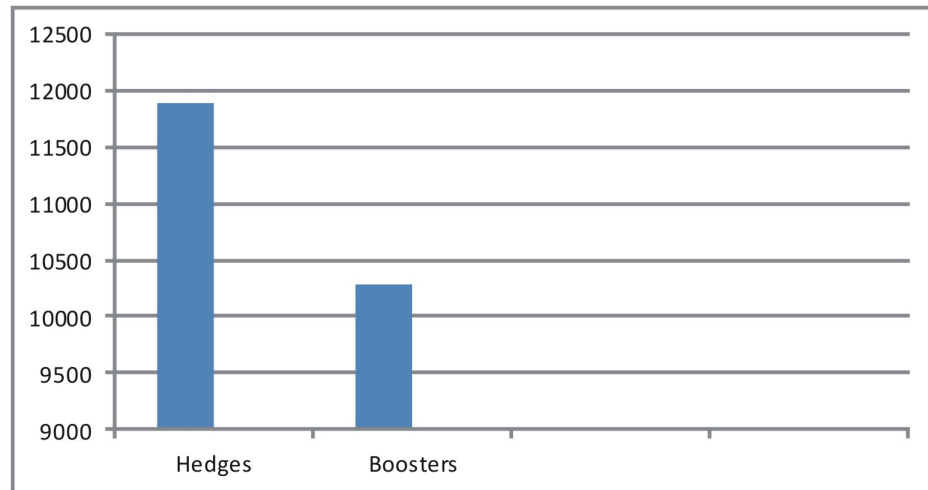
Figure 4.1: Quantitative analysis of hedges and boosters

The figure given above highlights the frequencies of Hedges and Boosters in Urdu corpus to show how certainly or uncertainly the writers convey their viewpoint in Urdu newspaper writing. Their frequency exhibits that hedges are used with higher frequency than Boosters. A number of eleven thousand eight hundred and eighty seven (11887) hedges while ten thousand two hundred and eighty eight (10288) boosters are used in Urdu corpus. The accumulative results show that hedges are used more frequently as compared to boosters which imply that the journalistic writers prefer to convey their message with uncertainty and give the audience a chance to dispute the viewpoint or judgments of the writers.

5 Conclusion

This study highlights hedges and boosters present in Urdu journalistic discourse. A list of hedges and Boosters is traced out of one million Urdu corpus. The results also reveal that hedges are preferred in Urdu news writing which suggests that the writers convey their statements with uncertainty and give the audience a chance to accept or reject the viewpoint of the writers. So it can safely be concluded that uncertainty is the most important trait of Urdu journalistic discourse.

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