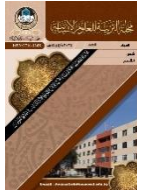




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Stance and Engagement Resources in Biden's Speeches on the War in Ukraine

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Abstract

The present study employs Hyland's (2005) framework of stance and sources of engagement to analyze the USA president Joe Biden's speeches regarding the war in Ukraine. The aim of this study is to examine the rhetorical strategies used by Biden to express his position and engage his audience on this critical international issue. By applying Hyland's (2005) framework, this paper offers insights into the linguistic and rhetorical choices employed by Biden to convey his stance and elicit engagement from the audience. The findings shed light on the discursive strategies utilized by Biden to shape public perception and influence policy decisions

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مجلة علمية فصلية محكمة، تصدر عن كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / جامعة الموصل



الموقف و مصادر التفاعل في خطابات بايدن عن الحرب في اوكرانيا

رنا عبد الستار عبد¹

جامعة البصرة / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية / قسم اللغة الانكليزية¹

المُلخَص	معلومات الارشفة
توظّف الدراسة الحالية نموذج هايلاند (2005) في تحليل الموقف ومصادر التفاعل لتحليل خطابات الرئيس الأمريكي جو بايدن المتعلقة بالحرب في أوكرانيا. وتهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تفحص الاستراتيجيات البلاغية التي يستخدمها بايدن للتعبير عن موقفه وإشراك جمهوره في هذه القضية الدولية الحساسة. يقدّم هذا البحث من خلال تطبيق نموذج هايلاند (2005) رؤى حول الخيارات اللغوية والبلاغية التي يوظفها بايدن للتعبير عن موقفه واستثارة تفاعل الجمهور. وهكذا فقد سلّطت النتائج الضوء على الاستراتيجيات الخطابية التي استخدمها بايدن لتشكيل الرأي العام والتأثير في قرارات السياسة العامة.	تاريخ الاستلام : 2025/11/16 تاريخ المراجعة : 2026/2/3 تاريخ القبول : 2026/3/8 تاريخ النشر : 2026/6/1
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1. Introduction

Political discourse is central to communication about governance, policy, societal issues, as well as conflicts and crises, as it shapes public opinion and engagement (Fairclough, 2000; van Dijk, 2002). Political speech, as a key component of political discourse, refers to a formal or semi-formal address delivered by a politician, government official, or public figure with the purpose of persuading, informing, or mobilizing an audience around political matters, often to promote particular views and ideologies. In times of war and crisis, politicians rely heavily on speeches to shape the course of conflict, influence both domestic and international audiences, justify their actions, and rally collective efforts and allies (Beard, 2000).

The war in Ukraine has been a significant global concern, drawing the attention of political leaders and the general public alike. In this context, the speeches delivered by the American president Joe Biden play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and garnering support for his country's foreign policy. The present study analyzes the stance and engagement resources utilized by Biden in his speeches on the war in Ukraine, employing Hyland's (2005) framework of interactional metadiscourse, especially the ones related to stance markers and engagement resources in discourse.

The current study aims to answer the following questions:

- How does Biden express his stance on the war in Ukraine in his speeches?
- In what ways does Biden engage his audience in his speeches about the war in Ukraine?
- How consistent are Biden's messages across different speeches, and what does this consistency (or lack thereof) reveal about his administration's strategy?
- How useful is Hyland's (2005) framework in dissecting the nuances of political rhetoric and engagement in this context?

2. Literature Review

Stance and engagement are two crucial elements in analyzing the interpersonal aspect of language use, as they reveal the addresser's positioning and their relationship with the addressees. In political discourse, they shape its nature and quality. Both play a significant role in shaping public opinion, fostering democratic dialogue, and influencing policy decision.

Stance in discourse involves the way speakers position themselves in relation to both what they say and their interlocutors. In this context, stance encompasses the attitudes, judgements and evaluation that speakers reflect towards the content they are

discussing. Biber and Finegan (1989) recognize certain lexical and grammatical forms through which the speaker’s stance can be identified. Similarly, Du Bois (2007) describes stance as a public act by a social actor, achieved dialogically through certain linguistic forms that he labels as evaluative, affective, and epistemic.

Engagement in discourse refers to the speaker’s attempt to involve their interlocutors in what is presented to them. In addition to being a means of communication, discourse provides a space where individuals actively participate in processes that shape and reflect power dynamics, identities, and cultural norms. This interaction is bidirectional, as individuals can influence and be influenced by the broader social context at the same time.

The present study utilizes Hyland’s (2005) model of stance and engagement, which he considers a key component of metadiscourse analysis . This framework is considered to be a significant contribution to the field of discourse analysis and language studies. It provides a comprehensive understanding of how writers / speakers express their attitudes, beliefs, and emotions in their texts.

Hyland (2021) explains that stance is a dimension of attitude that pertains to how writers/speakers portray themselves and their beliefs. In contrast, engagement is dimension of alignment, wherein they recognize and establish a connection with their audience by capturing their focus and involving them as active participants. Figure 1 is adopted from Hyland (2005) in which he sums up the elements of interaction in

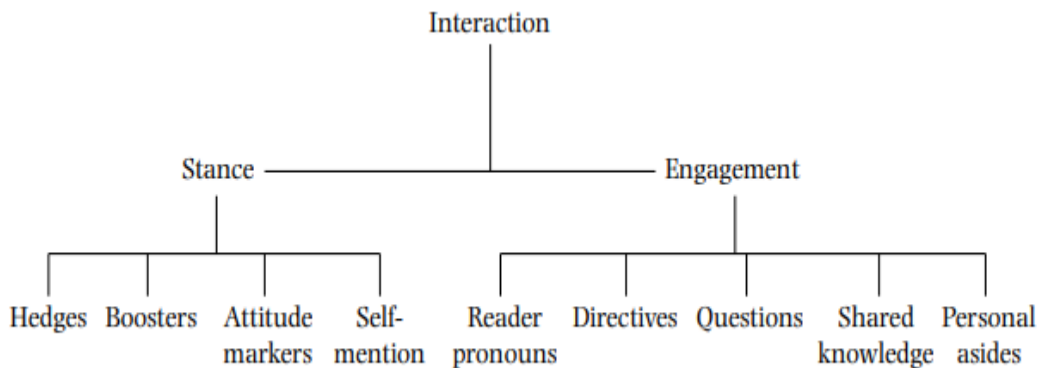


Fig.1: Elements of Interaction in Discourse (adopted from Hyland, 2005)

Accordingly, stance encompasses four categories, as follows:

1. Hedges: These are words or phrases that speakers use to tell their addressees that what is said is merely guesses, and not based on absolute facts. Thus, hedges can

be employed to convince the audience through “opening a discursive space where interpretations can be disputed” (Hyland, 2005). Common forms of hedges include: modal verbs (may, might, could, would, should); adverbs of frequency (usually, often, sometimes, rarely); adverbs of degree (somewhat, kind of, sort of, slightly); qualifying adjectives and adverbs (possibly, probably, likely, perhaps); vague expressions (a bit, a little, something like, around); tag questions (isn't it? don't you think? right?); and forms of cautious language (it appears that, it seems, As far as I can tell). However, speakers have to bear in mind that using hedges with no sufficient evidence might be sometimes inappropriate especially when they challenge what the addressees are convinced of (ibid).

2. **Boosters:** Unlike hedges, they are the forms used by speakers to confidently state their beliefs and assert propositions with certainty. Boosters like, adverbs of degree (extremely, absolutely, completely, totally, highly, very, really, definitely, by no means, and incredibly) increase the intensity of an adjective or another adverb; intensifying adjectives (amazing, fantastic, extraordinary, incredible) make the nouns they modify more emphatic; repetition (repeating a word or a phrase to emphasize a point); exclamations; superlative adjectives (using the highest degree of an adjective); emphatic modals (will, must, shall); intensifying verbs showing a strong action or state (love, hate, adore, despise); hyperboles (exaggerated statements not meant to be taken literally); and exaggerated questions (rhetorical questions with implied strong answers) show speakers' full commitment to the truth-value of such propositions.
3. **Attitude markers:** They expose the speakers' attitudes towards both the subject matter and the audience, expressing astonishment, agreement, detest, and so on through expressions like unfortunately, surprisingly, etc. In this context, Hyland (2005) contends that attitude markers have a crucial function in enhancing the effectiveness of the speaker's arguments through expressing solidarity with the addressees suggesting for them how to respond to what has been raised.
4. **Self-mention:** These are linguistic devices used by the writer/speaker to refer to themselves so as to establish their own presence and positioning within discourse. These linguistic forms include personal pronouns such as **I**, **we**, and **our** through which speakers cannot only explicitly refer to themselves, but also indicate responsibility and accountability for what is said.

The second dimension of the interpersonal interaction in Hyland's (2005) is engagement, which is defined as an alignment aspect in which writers/speakers recognize and establish a connection with their audience by directing their focus and involving them as active participants (Hyland, 2021). Accordingly, engagement resources in discourse refer to the linguistic and rhetorical devices used by speakers or

writers to actively involve the audience in the communication process. These resources are employed to create a sense of connection and inclusivity, as well as to maintain the interest and attention of the audience.

Figure (1) above shows that the engagement dimension of interaction is actually made up of five resources. Starting with readers/listeners pronouns, they serve as linguistic tools to explicitly incorporate the addressees into discourse by directly using the pronouns “You” and “Your” (Al-Rickaby, 2020). Moreover, in political speeches, politicians intend to address their audience by using the inclusive pronoun “we” to establish a sense of unity with them and indicate a stronger connection by acknowledging common objectives between themselves and their addressees. It has to be stated that this category is labelled in the present study as listener’s or audience’s pronoun as the focus here is on speeches which are delivered orally by politicians to their audience.

Furthermore, engagement resources can also include the use of questions and directives, which are aimed at stimulating the audience's involvement. Questions can be rhetorical, encouraging the listener to reflect or consider the speaker's point, while directives explicitly ask the audience to take action or provide input. Hence, directives may comprise commands, suggestions and obligations. Through the incorporation of such prompts, speakers can create a more interactive and dynamic discourse, making the audience feel valued and active participants in the communication process.

Two additional essential engagement resources in Hyland’s (2005) model are shared knowledge and personal asides. The former refers to the common understanding and background information shared by both the writer/speaker and the audience on a given topic. This component includes facts, concepts, and assumptions that are presumed to be familiar to both parties in the communicative exchange. Through shared knowledge, writers and speakers establish a connection with their audience through creating a sense of belonging to a specific discourse.

Personal asides, on the other hand, reflect the addresser’s attempt to introduce personal experiences, opinions, and beliefs into the discourse. These serve various purposes, mainly adding a personal touch, illustrating a point, or making discourse more relatable. In doing so, personal asides contribute to creating an authentic and credible discourse that can engage the audience emotionally, making the message more interesting and convincing.

Stance and engagement resources have been explored separately in a number of studies on political discourse. For instance, Hanfan (2020) investigated engagement strategies in the Chinese diplomatic discourse using Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal framework. The study identified the use of inclusive pronouns and epistemic modals as a means of maintaining interpersonal relationships and addressing sensitive topics. Another study, conducted by Roventă-Frumușani (2022), examined the relationship between stance-taking, gender, and political communication in the Romanian presidential elections. The findings revealed that female candidates use stance-taking strategies in a carefully planned manner to navigate a male-dominated political sphere.

Even though Hyland's (2005) model of stance and engagement was originally designed to these two features together in academic discourse, several studies have adopted this model to analyze them in political discourse. Kashiha (2022) justifies this approach as the model provides a structured framework for examining how speakers use language to express their stance and engage audiences through various sources of information and rhetorical strategies.

To begin with, Ajayi (2019) explored stance markers and engagement devices in public discourse produced in traditional and social media by political entities opposing Buhari's administration in Nigeria. While no quantitative analysis was conducted, the qualitative findings showed frequent use of the four categories of stance in the model, along with possessive pronouns, directives, and questions as engagement resources. Another study, conducted in 2019 by Mengyu and Abdul Rahim, compared stance and engagement features in Mahathir Mohamad's speeches from 1999 to 2018. The findings revealed a shift toward more assertive and personalized rhetoric in 2018, marked by an increased use of self-mention and a decrease in hedging, highlighting an evolution in strategies for audience interaction in political speech.

Ntalala (2023) applied Hyland's model to examine interpersonal metadiscourse features in Malaysian parliamentary debates. The results showed a frequent use of boosters to assert strong positions and attitude markers to convey emotions. Regarding engagement resources, the reader pronoun (you) and questions had the highest frequency of use among other linguistic forms, reflecting how language can be strategically employed to persuade, assert authority, and express solidarity in political discourse.

Lastly, Raza et al. (2025) compared the use of hedges and boosters in Trump's and Biden's inaugural speeches using Hyland's framework. They found that Trump employed more boosters and fewer hedges, reflecting his bold, populist, and assertive style. Biden, on the other hand, used more hedges and moderate boosters, indicating a more cautious, inclusive, and diplomatic rhetorical approach.

Few studies have been conducted to examine the language patterns and discourse structure of Biden's speeches, particularly those related to the war in Ukraine. Ahmed (2023) investigated the linguistic forms Biden used to delegitimize the Russian invasion of Ukraine by applying van Leeuwen's (2007) model of (de)legitimation strategies in discourse. The results indicated that moral evaluation was the most prominent strategy, realized through the use of negative evaluative modifiers to condemn Putin and Russian aggression. The strategy of authority followed, marked by the use of first person pronouns, while rationalization strategies ranked third, reflected in Biden's use of structures indicating explanation and prediction.

Mahfoud and Khaldaoui (2023) applied van Dijk's ideological square model to conduct a critical discourse analysis of Biden's first speech on the war in Ukraine. Their study identified Biden's use of the us-them dichotomy to portray the U.S. and its allies as defenders of democracy, while representing Russia and Putin as threats to global peace and freedom. Additionally, Shovak and Petiy's (2023) study analyzed Biden's speeches using Aristotle's rhetorical appeals; ethos, pathos, and logos, along with stylistic devices. The study concluded that Biden employed these appeals to persuade audiences, condemn the Russian assault, and rally support for Ukraine and democratic values through discursive strategies such as personal experience, inclusive language, historical references, and expressive stylistic elements like metaphor, repetition, and rhetorical questions.

The current study aims to examine the two features of stance and engagement in Biden's speeches on the war in Ukraine. Five speeches will be analyzed to determine whether there has been a change in Biden's views, beliefs, and attitudes toward the war, as the speeches were delivered at different times, on various occasions, and under diverse circumstances. This allows for an exploration of how Biden may have adjusted his stance and engagement strategies based on context, audience, and purpose. To achieve this, the study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses.

3. Methodology and Data Selection

This study utilizes both quantitative and qualitative analyses. The quantitative phase involves the frequency distributions of identified stance markers and engagement resources in the speeches. Meanwhile, the qualitative phase focuses on analyzing the discourse functions of these markers and how they were used to construct persuasive discourse. The research design is mixed in nature, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The study examines and interprets textual data (speeches) to explore stance and engagement resources. While qualitative methods are particularly effective in analyzing language use and rhetorical strategies employed by politicians in their public addresses, they must be validated by quantitative data.

The primary sources of data for this study are the U.S. president Joe Biden's speeches which are specifically related to the war in Ukraine. The speeches selected are five in number, and they are collected from official resources, such as the White House website, press releases, and transcripts of public addresses. The collected speeches span a significant time frame so as to cover key events and developments related to the conflict. Table 1 exposes Biden's five speeches examined in the present study.

Due to the context-dependent nature of stance markers and engagement resources and their multifunctional features, a manual analysis with contextual annotations was conducted on the corpus to determine the primary function of some ambiguous cases. The study relies on simple statistics to count the number of these linguistic devices used by Biden in a corpus of five of his speeches on the war in Ukraine. In addition to the raw frequency value of each linguistic device, the study also calculates the frequency per 1,000 words for each one, which is obtained by dividing the raw frequency of each category by the number of words in a speech and then multiplying the result by 1,000.

Table 1: Biden's Speeches examined in the Present Study

	Topic	Time	Place	No. of Words
Speech 1	The first speech Biden delivered after Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine	February 24, 2022	The White House	2909
Speech 2	The United Efforts of the Free World to	March 26, 2022	The Royal Castle in	3486

	Support the People of Ukraine		Warsaw, Poland	
Speech 3	The Request to Congress for Additional Funding to Support Ukraine	April 28, 2022	The White House	2066
Speech 4	Ahead of the One-Year Anniversary of Russia’s Invasion of Ukraine	February 21, 2023	The Royal Castle in Warsaw, Poland	2769
Speech 5	The Request to Congress for Supplemental Funding to Support Ukraine	December 12, 2023	The White House	1787

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Stance Markers

Table 2 exposes the stance markers Biden used in his speeches so as to reflect his position towards the main issue discussed in these speeches which is the Russian invasion of Ukraine as well his position from the audience. Analyzing the frequencies of stance markers in these five speeches provides insights into the rhetorical strategies Biden adopted and the overall tone of his messaging.

Table 2 : Frequency Distribution of Stance Markers in Biden’s Speeches

Stance Markers	Speech 1		Speech 2		Speech 3		Speech 4		Speech 5		Total	
	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds	Ra w F.	F per 1000 wor ds
Hedges	7	2.41	5	1.43	10	4.84	30	10.83	5	2.8	57	4.37
Boosters	82	28.19	68	19.51	40	19.36	63	22.75	32	17.91	285	21.89
Attitude	14	4.81	17	4.88	29	14.04	17	6.14	16	8.95	93	7.14

Markers												
Self-Mention	102	35.06	92	26.39	80	38.72	105	37.92	35	19.59	414	31.80
Total	205	70.47	182	52.21	159	76.96	215	77.64	88	49.25	849	65.21

Starting with hedges, which are linguistic devices expressing doubt or uncertainty, the raw frequencies of Biden’s stance markers have clearly shown that hedges scored the least number of occurrences. In his speeches, Biden used hedges sparingly (scoring 57 occurrences in the five speeches) as he aimed to appear confident of his country’s and the NATO allies' support for Ukraine against Russia. Moreover, Biden likely understood that excessive hedging would portray him to the world—and, most importantly, to Russia—as a leader who is uncertain or lacks conviction. The following are examples of hedging constructions Biden used in his speeches:

1. “**If** Russia pursues cyberattacks against our companies, our critical infrastructure, we are prepared to respond.” (Speech 1)
2. “Let me say this, **if** you’re able to listen: You, the Russian people, are not our enemy.” (Speech 2)
3. “We **would** stand up for the sovereignty of nations.” (Speech 3)
4. “There **should be no doubt**: Our support for Ukraine will not waver, NATO will not be divided, and we will not tire.” (Speech 3)
5. “It’s simple. **If** Russia stopped invading Ukraine, it would end the war.” (Speech 4)
6. “**unless** we walk away” (Speech 4)
7. “We’ll continue to supply Ukraine with critical weapons and equipment **as long as we can**”. (Speech 5)

The low frequency of hedges in the examined corpus strongly reinforces Biden’s deliberate effort to show his confidence in the steady support that the United States and NATO are showing for Ukraine. At the same time, it suggests his intention to avoid displaying any sign of weakness or hesitation in front of Russia. Hedges like *if* (e.g., “If Russia pursues cyberattacks...”) and *would* (e.g., “We would stand up for the sovereignty of nations”) express hypothetical conditions, adding some degree of flexibility to Biden’s message. The highest frequency of hedge usage occurred in Speech 4, delivered ahead of the war one-year anniversary. This speech reflects Biden’s adoption of a more cautious tone due to the unexpected length of the conflict, which

led to a shift in the political and public atmosphere. Interestingly, hedge usage dropped significantly in Speech 5, where Biden sought to show certainty to gain the congress approval for additional aid. Examples such as “unless we walk away” and “as long as we can” express doubts about future support. Using hedges in this way reflects Biden’s careful and cautions style, while also showing his readiness to adjust his language and policy as the situation evolves.

Boosters, on the other hand, are linguistic markers employed to signify the strength of statements and reflect confidence and certainty. In the context of Biden’s speeches about Ukraine, these markers function to assert the U.S. government's unwavering support for Ukraine and communicate a firm stance against Russia’s actions. Thus, boosters in Biden’s speeches appear to greatly outnumber hedges, with a total of 285 occurrences in the five speeches examined. Moreover, Table 2 shows that Biden’s use of boosters declined from 82 in Speech 1 to 32 in Speech 5, indicating a shift from initial strong declaration of support to a more tempered approach as the conflict progressed and the situation became more complex.

It has been noticed that certain types of boosters generally recur in Biden’s speeches, most importantly the modal auxiliary "will," repetition, and some forceful adverbs. Biden frequently uses "will" in his speeches as a rhetorical strategy to convey certainty, commitment, and resolve. This modal verb constitutes (23%) of the boosters employed in the speeches (with 64 instances). It serves to reassure allies, deter opponents, and garner support by making clear, firm promises about future actions and intentions. The choice of “will” strengthens Biden's statements and enhances the persuasive impact of his speeches. The main functions that “will” serves in Biden’s speeches are:

8. “We **will** limit Russia’s ability to do business” (Speech 1) (Commitment)
9. “We **will** not tire. We **will** not falter. And we **will** not fail.” (Speech 2) (Emphasis)
10. “The world must and **will** hold Russia accountable.” (Speech 3) (Determination)
11. “We **will** continue to deliver critical support to Ukraine.” (Speech 5) (Assurance of Uninterrupted Assistance)
12. “President Putin’s craven lust for land and power **will** fail. And the Ukrainian people’s love for their country **will** prevail.” (Speech 4) (Certainty)

13. "And Ukraine **will** emerge from this war proud, free, and firmly rooted in the West, unless we walk away." (Speech 5) (Certainty)

'Will' in example 8 indicates Biden's commitment to taking all necessary measures to stop Russia's aggression and support the Ukrainians. This is reinforced in example 9 through the repetition of 'will,' which emphasizes this commitment and highlights the U.S. determination and perseverance, as further reflected in examples 10 and 11. Examples 12 and 13 reveal Biden's confidence in the eventual failure of Putin's actions, the success and freedom of Ukraine, and the certainty of continued aggression if Putin is not stopped.

Biden has also utilized another form of boosters which is repetition, both through repeating specific words and phrases and through parallelism, to strengthen key points and rally support in his speech. He consistently reiterated particular phrases to underscore critical aspects of the conflict. This technique is designed to embed his perspective in the audience's mind, making sure they understand the critical need to support Ukraine in its struggle against Russia, as in the following instances:

14. "There is **no doubt** – **no doubt** that the United States and every NATO Ally will meet our Article 5 commitments." (Speech 1)
15. "Kyiv stands strong. Kyiv stands proud. It stands tall. And most important, it stands free." (Speech 2)
16. "Ukraine will **never** be a victory for Russia. **Never.**" (Speech 3)
17. "The entire world is watching what we do, so let's show them who we are. **America stands** for freedom today, tomorrow, and **always**. **America stands** against tyranny and against oppression, and **America stands** with the people of Ukraine." (Speech 4)

The repetition of strong forms of negation, such as **no doubt** (in example 14) and **never** (in example 16), underscores Biden's resolute stance, reflecting his certainty about the commitment of the U.S. and its allies to support Ukraine in resisting Russian aggression. A similar effect is achieved through parallelism in examples 15 and 17. The use of the parallel structure (**Kyiv/It stands** + adjective), along with the superlative form **most important**, highlights the paramount significance Biden places on Kyiv's freedom. Likewise, the use of parallelism and the adverb **always** reinforces Biden's determined stance on upholding American values and supporting Ukraine. The repetition of **America stands**, combined with **always**, serves to emphasize a firm and unwavering determination to defend freedom and oppose tyranny and oppression.

Attitude markers express the speaker's feelings or evaluations regarding the subject matter. Biden's use of attitude markers varied, totaling 93 instances, with the highest count in Speech 3 (29 instances). This suggests that in this speech, he aimed to convey a more emotional or personal connection to the situation in Ukraine, perhaps invoking empathy for the Ukrainian people and their struggles. This can be attributed to the fact that Speech 3 was delivered before Congress with the intent of requesting additional funds for Ukraine.

Biden used emotional language to emphasize the brutality of Russia's actions and the bravery of the Ukrainian people. He often described the war as **"senseless"** and **"brutal"** and praises the **"courage"** and **"determination"** of the Ukrainian armed forces and people. The majority of the attitude markers in Speech 1 were in the form of adjectives that strongly negatively evaluate Russia's actions in Ukraine, such as **"brutal assault"**, **"premeditated attack"**, **"flagrant violation of international law"**, **"naked aggression"**, and **"unjustifiable war"** that would lead to "severe costs", initiated by Putin, who is described as a "tyrant" and "the aggressor" with a **"sinister vision"** who started a war based on **"outlandish and baseless claims"**. In Speech 2, Biden continued to express strong condemnation of Russia's **"unjust war"** against Ukraine. At the same time, he expressed deep admiration for the Ukrainian people **"brave resistance"**. Similarly, in Speech 3, Biden referred to the war as **"Putin's aggression"**, **"brutal invasion"**, and **"Russia's continued assault"**, which has caused **"immense human costs"**, highlighting the terrible consequences of the invasion and condemning the suffering it has brought about, particularly in relation to the **"horrific evidence of their atrocities and war crimes"**. Regarding the Ukrainian side, Biden emphasized the righteousness of the Ukrainian people's struggle as this war is their **"fight for freedom"**, praising the courage of the **"brave Ukrainian fighters"** and referring to them as **"warriors"**, a term that conveys respect and valor.

In Speech 4, Biden's attitude markers clearly delineated his stance. He condemned the Russian invasion and Putin's actions as a **"murderous assault"**, framing it as a deliberate and heinous act; **"the largest land war in Europe since World War Two"**, stressing its historical significance and impact; and **"crimes against humanity"**, emphasizing the severity of the actions taken by the Russian forces against the Ukrainians and categorizing these actions as morally **"abhorrent"**, a word Biden repeated twice to reflect his strong feelings toward Russia's actions, particularly regarding the atrocities committed against civilians. He framed the conflict as a critical struggle between democracy and autocracy, with freedom as the ultimate value at stake. So, **"Kyiv stands strong! Kyiv stands proud. It stands tall. And most**

important, it stands free", because **"the Ukrainian people are too brave"**. Similarly, Biden's attitude markers in Speech 5 illustrated his condemnation of Russia's **"brutal total invasion"** of Ukraine, while also expressing his positive evaluation of Ukrainian resilience, which he believed to end the conflict with an **"enormous victory"**. Hence, Biden asserted that **"Putin has failed – failed in his effort to subjugate Ukraine"**. The repetition of **"failed"** underscored Biden's negative judgment of Putin's actions and his belief in the failure of Putin's objectives. Meanwhile, Biden expressed that he is **"incredibly proud"**, showing a strong positive attitude towards the American people's role in supporting Ukraine, which reflects national pride and solidarity.

Self-mentions include personal pronouns; "I", "we", "us", etc., and reference to the groups that the speaker belongs to or represents. This category of stance markers indicates the speaker's presence and authority in discourse. Biden's speeches featured a significant total of 414 self-mentions (Table 2). The highest counts were 105 and 102 in Speeches 4 and 1, respectively. Biden used more self-mentions in his first speech on the Ukrainian war and his speech on the war one-year anniversary compared to other speeches on the same topic. In his initial speech addressing the start of the Russian aggression, Biden used more self-mentions as he likely had to establish his own and his country's authority on the issue, particularly regarding the suitable response that had to be directed to Russia. So, Biden needed to show confidence and decisiveness in his first remarks. In the war one-year anniversary speech, Biden had to increase his use of self-mentions so as to reinforce his leadership and the United States' commitment to Ukraine, helping garner public support for their involvement in the struggle. The other speeches used fewer self-mention forms due to Biden's interest to focus on other issues related to the war and encourage shared international resolve.

It is also important to notice that the sub-categories of self-mention forms that Biden employed in his speeches have greatly varied in their frequency of occurrences. Table 3 exposes that, in terms of personal pronouns, Biden used 232 instances of the collective pronouns (we, us, and our) compared to only 92 instances of the singular pronouns (I, me, and my). The use of single personal pronouns in political speeches serves to indicate authority, commitment, and personal involvement in the issue discussed. Biden's use of these pronouns in his speeches reflects his desire to assert his personal authority as president and underscore his personal leadership, responsibility, and direct involvement in supporting Ukraine. These pronouns help to personalize his commitment and authority, reinforcing his role as a decisive and

engaged president who is actively shaping U.S. actions on the global stage, for instance:

18. "I just approved today" (Speech 3)

19. "I will not walk away from Ukraine" (Speech 5)

20. "My team is working with Senate Democrats and Republicans" (Speech 5)

Through the use of first-person pronouns in these examples, Biden conveys his direct role, personal authority, commitment, involvement, and leadership in the ongoing support of his country for Ukraine, emphasizing that every effort made is driven by his directives.

Collective pronouns, on the other hand, scored the highest frequency of occurrence due to Biden's desire to foster the sense of unity and shared responsibility among the Americans and allies in supporting Ukraine. It is worthwhile to mention that the reference of these collective pronouns varied across Biden's different speeches based on context and audience. For example, Speeches 2 and 4 are addressed to European allies. Thus, Biden emphasized here the shared values and commitment to collective defense through the NATO. However, in domestic speeches, mainly Speeches 1, 3, and 5, the collective pronouns framed the conflict as a matter of American interests and identity, for instance:

21. "We'll continue to supply Ukraine with critical weapons and equipment" (Speech 4)

22. "Let's show them who we are. America stands for freedom today, tomorrow, and always." (Speech 5)

The use of the collective pronoun in example 21 highlights Biden's emphasis on unity and shared responsibility among the allies—namely, the U.S. and NATO—in providing necessary resources to Ukraine. Meanwhile, in example 22, the collective first-person pronoun serves as a direct appeal to Americans, urging them to support Ukraine by invoking a collective identity rooted in the values of freedom and democracy.

It has also been noted in Table 3 that Biden mentioned the United States (and America) 55 times, compared to 36 mentions of NATO. This suggests that Biden aimed to assert American national identity and emphasize the importance of domestic unity as a fundamental pillar of international stability. This indicates that Biden prioritizes internal matters in order to be a strong leader on the global stage.

Table 3 : Frequency of Self-Mentions in the Speeches

Self Mentions	Pronouns (I, me, my)	Pronouns (We, Us, Our)	America	The United States	The NATO	Total
Frequency	91	232	15	40	36	414

4.2 Engagement Resources

Biden’s speeches demonstrate a strategic use of engagement resources which can be analyzed through the frequencies of listener’s/audience’s pronouns, directives, questions, shared knowledge and personal asides. Depending on the frequencies of these resources presented in Table 4 below, this analysis reveals how Biden seeks to connect with audience, assert authority, and create a shared narrative.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Engagement Resources in Biden’s Speeches

Engagement Resource	Speech 1		Speech 2		Speech 3		Speech 4		Speech 5		Total	
	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words	Ra w F.	F per 1000 words
Listener’s pronouns	3	1.03	18	5.16	2	0.96	20	7.22	3	1.68	46	3.53
Directives	10	3.44	10	2.87	7	3.39	5	1.81	10	5.6	42	3.23
Questions	0	0	0	0	0	0	8	2.89	0	0	8	0.61
Shared Knowledge	6	2.06	6	1.72	12	5.81	5	1.81	9	5.04	38	2.92
Personal Asides	5	1.72	7	2.01	8	3.87	5	1.81	6	3.36	31	2.38
Total	24	8.25	41	11.76	29	14.03	43	15.54	28	15.68	165	12.67

Starting with the first strategy, namely, using the listener’s pronoun “you”, it is evident that the frequency of this pronoun in Biden’s five analyzed speeches varies significantly, peaking at 20 occurrences in Speech 4, while Speech 2 ranks second with 18 occurrences. As previously mentioned, the use of certain linguistic forms largely

depends on the speech context and audience. Biden addressed the people of Poland and Europe in these two speeches, both centered on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, delivered on different occasions—Speech 2 was given one month after the war began, and Speech 4 was delivered after one year of the conflict. The issues Biden addressed in these speeches primarily focused on rallying support for Ukrainians. Therefore, directly addressing the audience with the pronoun “you” effectively serves similar objectives in both speeches, as outlined below:

- Direct engagement with the audience, as in :
 23. “**You**, the Polish people, know that in the face of Putin's assault, **you're** not just defending **your** own nation, but defending the values that bind us together as a free and democratic people.” (Speech 2)
 24. “**You** remind us that freedom is priceless, it's worth fighting for, for as long as it takes.” (Speech 4)
- Emphasizing shared responsibility and empowerment, e.g.
 25. “**You** are the ones who can ensure that the history of this age is written not by tyrants, but by those who believe in democracy and freedom.” (Speech 2)
 26. “**You** have the power to make sure that freedom prevails.” (Speech 4)
- Creating a sense of unity and solidarity, as in :
 27. “This is the moment where we must demonstrate our resolve, our unity, our strength — and **you**, the people of Europe, must remember what **you've** accomplished.” (Speech 2)
 28. “**You** stood with us, and the American people stood with **you**.” (Speech 4)
- Appealing to shared values and emotions, e.g.,
 29. “When **you** see those women and children fleeing from their homes, you understand the cost of war in ways most of the world cannot.” (Speech 2)
 30. “**You** know what it’s like to fight for your freedom, and you understand that the fight for freedom is never over.” (Speech 4)

These shared points underline Biden's consistent rhetorical strategy of making his audience feel directly involved, responsible, and united in the common cause of defending freedom and democracy. In the remaining three speeches, fewer instances of the pronoun "you" have been used due to the specific context and purpose of these speeches. In the first speech (only 3 instances), Biden mainly referred to the measures that his administration and their allies would adopt to limit Russia's power, while in Speeches 3 and 5 (2 and 3 instances, respectively), Biden announced a new package of urgent aid to Ukraine, urging the Congress to approve it as soon as possible. Additionally, it is important to note that Biden also used the pronoun "you" to address both the Russian people and Putin himself, as illustrated below:

31. "Let me say this, if **you**'re able to listen: **You**, the Russian people, are not our enemy." (Speech 2)
32. "Our unity at home, our unity with our Allies and partners, and our unity with the Ukrainian people is sending an unmistakable message to Putin: **You** will never succeed in dominating Ukraine." (Speech 3)

In example 31, Biden uses "you" to address the Russian people and separate them from their government, attempting to separate from their leadership aggressive actions appealing to their conscience and sense of responsibility. In example 32, he addresses Putin directly, using "you" to confront and challenge him personally, reinforcing Western unity against his aggression.

In terms of directives, which are instructions aiming at guiding the audience, they totaled 42 across the speeches examined (Table 4). The highest frequency was in Speeches 1, 2, and 5 (10 each). They show Biden's intention to involve the audience in the message and call them to action through supporting his policies. This suggests that the speaker is adopting a proactive approach to leadership, seeking to direct public discourse and policy support. The directives that Biden used has been formed in variable structures such as imperatives and statements indicating suggestions or recommendations, as in the following examples:

33. "Let me say it again: **Our forces are not and will not be engaged in the conflict with Russia in Ukraine.**" (Speech 1)
34. "For God's sake, **this man cannot remain in power.**" (Speech 2)
35. "**Let's get both of these critical tasks done.** No delays, no excuses, just action **now. Now.**" (Speech 3)
36. "**Let us move forward** with faith and conviction and with an abiding commitment to be allies not of darkness, but of light. Not of oppression, but of liberation. Not of captivity, but, yes, of freedom." (Speech 4)
37. "Putin is banking on the United States failing to deliver for Ukraine. **We must, we must, we must prove him wrong.**" (Speech 5)

Across these examples, Biden employs directives to emphasize leadership, inspire action, and express moral urgency. Whether handling military policy, political action, or ideological stance, the directives aim to unify his audience around what he considers to be clear, decisive goals. The repeated use of imperatives underscores his commitment to justice, freedom, and support for Ukraine. Overall, Biden's directives demonstrate his intent to assert authority, encourage action, and convey moral clarity. His use of techniques like repetition, contrasting ideas, and urgent calls for action

signals his aim to rally support, reinforce common values, and firmly oppose the Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Regarding the third strategy for engaging the audience; namely questions, Table 4 shows that Biden used them sparingly with a total of 8 only, all concentrated in Speech 4. Questions are often used in political speeches to engage the audience's critical thinking and draw attention to critical issues. The absence of questions in the other speeches indicates that Biden favored declarative statements to project a more authoritative stance in those contexts. Additionally, Biden confronted his audience with a number of questions that he and the leaders of other countries in the NATO asked themselves at the beginning of the war. These questions were:

“Would we respond or would we look the other way? Would we be strong or would we be weak? Would be — we would — would we be — all of our allies — would be united or divided? Would we stand up for the sovereignty of nations? Would we stand up for the right of people to live free from naked aggression? Would we stand up for democracy? What kind of world do we want to build?”

Through these questions, Biden invited his audience to reflect on their moral and political responsibilities. He also asserted the importance of being united in order to have one principled response to the Russian aggression. These questions aimed to garner support, strengthen resolve, and emphasize the broader implication of this conflict on shaping the future world for the next generations.

The use of shared knowledge, which refers to references to common experiences or facts, totaled 38 instances. Table 4 displays that the highest count of these forms occurred in Speech 3, with 12 instances. This indicates Biden's reliance on collective understanding to reinforce his arguments. Such an approach helps create a sense of unity and shared purpose between the speaker and his audience on one hand, and among the audience themselves on the other. The following examples would clarify how Biden engaged his audience in his speeches:

38. "Putin is the aggressor. Putin chose this war. And now he and his country will bear the consequences." (Speech 1)
39. “References to historical events: Hungary 1956, Poland 1981, Czechoslovakia 1968, and the Berlin Wall falling in 1989” (Speech 2)
40. "Russia is the aggressor. No if, ands, or buts about it. Russia is the aggressor." (Speech 3)
41. "An attack against one is an attack against all. It's a sacred oath. A sacred oath to defend every inch of NATO territory." (Speech 4)

"Backed by the strong and unwavering support of the United States and our allies and partners of more than 50 nations — 50 nations — in Europe and the Indo-Pacific." (Speech 5)

Through political facts and historical analogies, Biden aimed at creating a common ground with his audience to make his speeches engaging and persuasive. These shared knowledge forms work to build a common understanding, justify actions, and reinforce alliances, all of which are essential in sustaining support for the U.S. and NATO's position on the war in Ukraine.

The last of the engagement resources is the personal asides, which signal these elements that add a personal touch to the speeches, making them relatable and humanizing his personality. This technique can enhance the audience engagement by providing a glimpse into the speaker's personal beliefs and experiences. Table 4 shows that Biden's personal asides totaled 31, with a peak of 8 instances in Speech 3. The following examples expose the personal asides that Biden adopted in his speeches:

42. "This is critical to me." (Speech 1)
43. "Having lost children myself — I know that's no solace to the people who've lost family." (Speech 2)
44. "Ha, we're going to 'accommodate' them. We're going to seize their yachts, their luxury homes, and other ill-begotten gains of Putin's kleptoc- — yeah — kleptocracy and klep- — the guys who are the kleptocracies." (Laughs) (Speech 3)
45. "I'll never forget, last year, visiting with refugees from Ukraine who had just arrived in Warsaw, seeing their faces exhausted and afraid — holding their children so close, worrying they might never see their fathers, their husbands, their brothers or sisters again." (Speech 4)
46. "For Ukraine to be standing strong and free is an enormous victory already." (Speech 5)

These represent the major techniques that Biden used as personal asides in his speeches. They contribute to build a connection with his audience through reinforcing his credibility and adding a humanizing and a personal touch to his political discourse around the war in Ukraine. They further show Biden's stance and enhance the emotional resonance and persuasive power of his speeches.

5. Discussion

Examining Biden's speeches regarding the war in Ukraine reveals the strategic use of various rhetorical devices to express stance and engage the audience. Applying Hyland's (2005) framework of stance and engagement resources has enabled a deeper understanding of these rhetorical choices and how they reflect broader political and ideological goals.

Regarding research question1, which is related to how Biden expresses his stance on the war, the findings presented above demonstrate that boosters have been consistently used to reinforce Biden's commitment to Ukraine. Previous studies discussed earlier support this observation. For instance, Raza et al. (2025) highlighted Biden's cautious style through the moderate use of boosters and strategic hedging. Similarly, Ntalala's (2023) study affirmed that political figures often use boosters and attitude markers to assert strong positions

The careful use of hedging reflects Biden's intention to introduce flexibility into his messaging, aiming to sound diplomatic and open to adjusting his language and policies as the situation evolves due to the complexities of the war in Ukraine. Hedges such as "if" and "as long as we can" serve to reveal Biden's cautious style, as he considers the fluctuations occurring both domestically and internationally regarding the war. This aligns with Mengyu and Abdul Rahim's (2019) study, which observed a decrease in the use of hedging over time as political pressures increased, indicating a shift toward a stronger tone and more direct language.

In terms of attitude markers, Biden has consistently employed language rich in emotionally evaluative modifiers, both positive and negative. He primarily used positive modifiers when referring to the United States and its allies, portraying their support for Ukraine as an effort to uphold democratic values and freedom. Additionally, Biden used positive language to describe the Ukrainian people and army, praising their resistance and bravery in confronting the Russian invasion. In contrast, negative evaluative modifiers were mainly directed at Putin, the Russian aggression, and the devastating consequences of the war. This can be compared to Biden's use of the us-them dichotomy as referenced in Ahmed (2023) and Mahfoud and Khaldouy (2023). Biden's attitude markers function not only as expressive tools, but also serve to persuade and engage the audience, urging them to support the Ukrainian cause.

The results exposed above have also demonstrated Biden's frequent use of self-mention forms, especially collective pronouns like "we" and "our". This illustrates his reference to unity and solidarity. Ajayi (2019) arrived at a similar result, demonstrating that inclusive pronouns are frequently used in the Nigerian political context to reflect a collective political identity opposing dominant power structures. Biden has used these forms to refer to the United States and the American people as part of the international coalition working to protect global peace and freedom. This also aligns with the findings of Ahmed (2023) and Shovak and Petiy (2023).

In regard to engagement resources (Research Question 2), Biden's speeches show a pronounced use of listener/audience pronouns, directives, and shared

knowledge, which serve to directly involve the audience and invoke their support. Hanfan (2020) similarly demonstrated that inclusive pronouns and directives are essential in diplomatic discourse to manage relationships and encourage cooperative behavior. Biden's use of "you" when addressing Polish citizens or American voters invites identification and responsibility, encouraging them to see themselves as active participants in the defense of democratic values against Russian aggression. Meanwhile, his use of the same pronoun to address his opponent, namely Putin, serves as a rhetorical device that is both confrontational and isolating.

Directives, such as imperatives and strong recommendations, are consistent with what Hyland (2005) describes as engagement tools that guide audience reaction. These were also noted in Ajayi's (2019) study, where Nigerian leaders used directives to direct public discourse and challenge political inertia. In Biden's case, his repetition of calls to "act now" and "stand together" reflects urgency and leadership during a geopolitical crisis.

The use of shared knowledge and personal asides further adds a dimension of emotional resonance and credibility. Shovak and Petiy (2023) showed how Biden blends logical appeals with pathos by referencing personal experience and historical parallels, a strategy that enhances his legitimacy and fosters trust. For example, Biden's recollection of meeting Ukrainian refugees or the historical references to Cold War events helps situate the current conflict within a broader ideological narrative, much like the strategy noted in Roventă-Frumușani's (2022) analysis of stance in Romanian presidential campaigns.

Rhetorical questions, although used minimally, served as powerful devices to frame the conflict in moral and existential terms. These moments, especially in his one-year anniversary speech, resemble the ideological framing observed by Mahfoud and Khaldoui (2023), where the strategic use of questioning serves to morally elevate one's own stance while discrediting the opponent's actions.

Answering the third research question concerning **message consistency**, the results indicate a stable pattern in Biden's rhetorical strategies across time and contexts. From his first speech in 2022 to the most recent ones in 2023, Biden's discourse has persistently emphasized support for Ukraine, condemnation of Russia, and calls for collective international action. This mirrors the findings of Mengyu and Abdul Rahim (2019), who noted consistent ideological framing in political leadership even as rhetorical styles evolve.

Last but not least, the present study is set to answer one more essential question which is related to how Hyland's (2005) framework of stance and engagement

resources can be feasibly applicable to analyze these two features in political discourse, mainly the genre of political speeches. The analysis of the data and the results obtained reveals that the framework is a structured approach to understanding how politicians communicate their stance and interact with their audience. This can be consolidated through the four stance categories, which have been effectively presented in the corpus of speeches under investigation. The frequency of their use clearly reflects a specific position or attitude that Biden intends to convey, depending on the situation requirements. This further applies to the engagement resources that Biden has deliberately employed to engage his audience and reinforce the persuasive impact of his speeches. Overall, it can be concluded that Hyland's (2005) model of stance and engagement resources has efficiently provided significant insights into the effectiveness and coherence of Biden's political discourse.

6. Conclusion

The current study utilizes Hyland's (2005) model of stance and engagement resources to examine these two features in a corpus comprising five speeches delivered by Joe Biden on the war in Ukraine, across different times, occasions, and contexts. Based on the analysis conducted, it can be concluded that Biden has effectively employed the linguistics devices associated with these two discourse features to construct a coherent and persuasive rhetoric.

To begin with stance markers, the findings demonstrated Biden's heavy reliance on boosters to express confidence in his own attitudes, his country's position, and the unwavering support of its allies for Ukraine against Russia. This strong confidence is reflected in the relatively limited use of hedges, whose presence increased notably in the final speech, indicating a shift toward a more diplomatic and cautious tone in response to the evolving complexity of the conflict. The attitude markers used throughout the five speeches revealed a consistent pattern, reflecting Biden's perception of the main agents in the conflict, namely the Russians, the Ukrainians, and the United States and its allies. These stance markers were reinforced by Biden's frequent use of self-mention forms, particularly the collective ones, to assert a political position grounded in unity and solidarity.

Regarding the rhetorical strategies Biden employed to engage his audience, the findings indicated a high frequency of second person pronoun "you" and directives, which were used to urge listeners to actively participate in resisting the Russian aggression. Biden also referred to historical facts and shared personal experiences to humanize his discourse and foster a sense of relatability to the conflict. Furthermore,

although rhetorical questions were used less frequently, they proved effective in morally framing the conflict.

Finally, with respect to the effectiveness of the adopted model, it can be said that Hyland's (2005) stance and engagement resources framework has proven to be a powerful analytic tool. It successfully uncovered the nuances of Biden's views, attitudes, and beliefs about the war, while offering a well-structured classification of the rhetorical strategies that speakers use to build persuasive political discourse. This, in turn, highlights how such rhetoric can engage audiences and position them as members of a shared discourse community.

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