Hedges and Booster in the Presidential Candidate Debate to Build the Candidate's Image

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Abstract

This research analyzed use of Hedges and Booster in the Presidential Candidate Debate to Build the Candidate's Image in the YouTube Livestreaming video published on 4th February 2024. In conducting this study, the researchers employ descriptive qualitative method to describe the phenomenon of the Hedges and Booster used in the final presidential debate. Meanwhile, the theoretical framework is the theory of Brown and Levinson in 1987. The findings of the study reveal that there are 391 Hedges used and 842 Boosters used by the candidate in the final presidential debate. They use hedges to maintain their languages in the hope that the audience can follow their arguments clearly. Meanwhile, the use of booster in the languages is to boost their arguments and to reveal their objectivity in delivering the arguments.

Keywords: Pragmatics, Hedges, Booster, Debate, Indonesia Presidential Candidate

INTRODUCTION

An utterance is something that is spoken; a speech; an expression (KBBI, Depdiknas, 2005:1231). In pragmatics, an utterance is understood as the product of a verbal act (not the verbal act itself) (Leech, 1993:20). An utterance is a form of action and not merely something about the world (Austin, in Leech,

1993:280). In 2024, the people of Indonesia will conduct the 2024 General Election, which includes the 2024 Presidential Election, the 2024 Legislative Election, and the 2024 Regional Head Election. It has been determined that there are three presidential candidate pairs this year: H. Anies Rasyid Baswedan, Ph.D. as the presidential candidate with Dr. (H.C.) H. A. Muhaimin Iskandar as the vice-presidential candidate, holding the number 1. H. Prabowo Subianto and Gibran Rakabuming Raka with the number 2, and H. Ganjar Pranowo, S.H., M.I.P. with Prof. Dr. H. M. Mahfud MD as the presidential and vice-presidential candidate pair number 3. Becoming a candidate in an election certainly requires a lot of support and votes from the electorate, in this case, the Indonesian people. Therefore, these candidate pairs employ various methods such as online and offline campaigns, blusukan (impromptu visits), billboards, and many more. Political campaigns are often conducted in the form of rhetoric, packaging issues to capture public attention (Muhtadi, 2008:92). They must carry out persuasive actions using various strategies. Thus, it can be said that political campaigns are promotional activities to introduce leadership candidates to the public. One of the event series held during every general election is the debate between the presidential candidates of Indonesia in 2024.

A debate is an exchange of arguments between individuals or groups with the aim of achieving victory for one side (Hendrikus, 1991). In the context of the presidential election, debates serve as a political communication tool to gain public sympathy. Debate strategies are not limited to presenting programs, ideas, and visions but also include tactics in argumentation, body gestures, emotional intelligence, and various stage mastery tricks. There are two types of strategies in debates: offensive and defensive strategies. The offensive strategy includes techniques such as the surprise technique, counter-questioning, provocation, interruption, anticipation, exaggeration, contradiction, and denial (Kruger, 1960). Similarly, the defensive strategy employs techniques like evasion, delay, appreciation, elaboration, questioning, and compromise. Each technique is used according to the situation during the debate. The three presidential candidate pairs in Indonesia undoubtedly use different language styles in their defense, attack, and marketing efforts. Scholars such as Humboldt, Saphir, Whorf, and Cassier have attempted to explain the relationship between language and thought, or more specifically, how language influences thought. People in a debate situation will certainly use sentences they believe can convince others of their arguments and opinions. Sentences are used to express ideas and thoughts fully, both orally and in writing. Thus, the term pragmatics is known, which refers to the pragmatic rules in studying and mastering the target language. This proposal uses pragmatic linguistics to analyze the language used by the presidential candidates with Hedges and Booster theories. Hedges are often used to indicate politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1987). Hedges have the ability to soften our speech or utterances while maintaining the essential strength of the idea being conveyed. Boosters, on the other hand, are a communication strategy to enhance the strength of a statement, emphasizing certainty, strong commitment, conviction, and truth (Hyland, 1998). Based on Hyland's definition, it can be said that Boosters play a crucial role in a statement, particularly in strengthening arguments and increasing their persuasive power. During the final presidential candidate debate of 2024, there was a significant use of language containing elements of Hedges and Boosters. Previous research conducted by Surtikanti (2023) titled "Hedges and Boosters in Building the

Image of United States Presidential Candidates from the Perspective of Presidential Debate Genre" discusses the portrayal of political figures, particularly presidential candidates, within the context of campaigns. The study focuses on the use of Hedges and Boosters in presidential debates, examining their patterns and usage within the genre of debate texts. The research covers speeches by United States presidential candidates containing Hedges and Boosters during each stage of the debate, categorized into theses and arguments. Thus, the research gap identified from this and previous studies lies in the use of data and methodologies. This distinction sets apart previous research from the current study, which explores the use of Hedges and Boosters in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Candidate Debates, a current and heated topic compared to debates in previous years. This paper aims to do three things: (1) to explain the functions of Hedges and Boosters used by the presidential candidates in the final presidential debate of Indonesia in 2024; (2) to explain the realization of the functions of Hedges and Boosters used by the presidential candidates in the final presidential debate of Indonesia in 2024; (3) and to identify the differences in the functions of Hedges and Boosters used by the three presidential candidates of Indonesia in the final presidential debate of 2024. This research reveals the hidden or implicit meanings in the utterances of presidential candidates during their final debate. This is important because the messages conveyed are not always directly manifested, and understanding these implicit meanings can provide a more complete picture of the candidates' goals and messages. The author identifies communication patterns that emerge in the presidential debates, including word choice, speech structure, and the use of specific language styles. These findings offer valuable insights into the communication strategies used by the candidates and how they can influence public perception.

METHODOLOGY

This research employs a qualitative descriptive research method aimed at depicting the language phenomena used by Indonesian presidential candidates during the 2024 presidential debates. Qualitative research seeks to understand phenomena such as behaviors, perceptions, motivations, actions, and others holistically, through descriptive means in the form of words and language, within a naturalistic context, utilizing various natural methods (Moleong, 2010). The study utilizes the theory developed by Brown and Levinson (1987) to categorize the functions of Hedges and Boosters used by speakers. Therefore, the research location for this study is the social media platform YouTube. The theme chosen for this PKM-RSH research is the analysis of two linguistic elements, namely Hedges and Boosters in Indonesian Presidential Candidate Debates to Build Candidate Images. This research is conducted remotely from the UDINUS Campus via the YouTube platform as the data source for this study. In this study, the researcher employs source triangulation using two data sources: documents and informants. Data are derived from transcripts of conversations in the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates' final debate, while informants participate in focus group discussions (FGD) related to the classification of Hedges and Boosters data. In analyzing the data, the researcher utilizes data analysis theory developed by Miles and Huberman (1992), applying three stages of analysis: (1) data reduction; (2) data display; (3) conclusion drawing.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1.) Hedges (Politeness)

According to Brown and Levinson (1987), Hedges are often used to indicate politeness. Hedges have the ability to make our speech more nuanced while maintaining the essence of the ideas being conveyed. They are tentative expressions and possibilities. The use of Hedges is an action taken by speakers to demonstrate communicative wisdom or as a politeness strategy. The purpose of using Hedges is to signify that the information conveyed is not entirely certain or to mitigate the strength of meaning in a statement. The following is the result of the analysis of Hedges (politeness) in the analysis of Hedges in the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates' final debate:

Tabel 1. Analysis of Hedges

No	Types of *Hedges*	Subtype of *Hedges*	Number of Findings	%
1	*Propositional Hedges*	*Modulation*	9	*2,30%*
		Evasion	6	*1,53%*
2.	*Illocutionary Force Hedges Content Oriented Hedegs*	*Speaker Oriented*	*Attenuating Epistemic Commitment* 118	*30,18%*
			Hesitation 108	*27,62%*
			Covering Up 1	*0,26%*
			De-empahasizing 9	*2,30%*
		Content Oriented Hedges	*Expressing Condition* 91	*23,27%*
			Counter Expectation 14	*3,58%*
			Bounding Downtoner 2	*0,51%*
			Expressing Possibility 3	*0,77%*
			Agent Avoiding 1	*0,26%*
			Source Tagging 13	*3,32%*
			Limiting Generalizability 6	*1,53%*
		Hearer Oriented Hedges	*Seeking Solidarity* 10	*2,56%*
		Miscellaneous Hedges	0	*0,00%*
Total			391	*100,00%*

Based on the table above, all types of hedges used by the three candidates for the 2024 Indonesian presidential election during the fifth and final debate were analyzed. The most frequently used hedge type was Attenuating Epistemic Commitment, which functions to weaken epistemic commitment. According to Fetzer (2008), this function is marked by numerous indicators, including Sentence-opening phrases, Tentative verbs, Shielding claims expressing doubt, Epistemic modal verbs, Adjective and Nouns. Consequently, with numerous markers of Attenuating Epistemic Commitment, this type of hedge was found 118 times or

30.18% of the total. This indicates that the presidential candidates often used statements that indicate possibilities or probabilities.

The second most dominant hedge was Hesitation, with 108 clauses (27.62%). According to Brown and Levinson, this type of hedge is characterized by utterances like 'um, err, erm' and other sounds indicating hesitation. This shows that the candidates often had to think for quite a while when presenting their arguments and were very cautious in their speech to avoid making incorrect statements. Additionally, this indicates a level of uncertainty in each argument presented by the candidates. The third most common hedge type was Expressing Condition, with 91 instances (23.27%). This type of hedge, categorized under content-oriented hedges, functions to express conditions where the event in question is uncertain (Martin & Rose, 2004). This indicates that the candidates frequently used expressions about uncertain events, often through the use of if clauses. Other types of hedges found by the researchers include:

A. Counter-expectation: 14 instances (3.58%)
B. Source tagging: 13 instances (3.32%)
C. Seeking solidarity: 10 instances (2.56%)
D. Modulation and De-emphasizing: 9 instances each (2.30%)
E. Evasion and Limiting generalizability: 6 instances each (1.53%)
F. Expressing possibility: 3 instances (0.77%)
G. Bounding downtoner: 2 instances (0.51%)
H. Covering up and Agent avoiding: 1 instance each (0.26%)
I. Miscellaneous hedges: 0 instances (0%)

This demonstrates that a considerable variety of hedges were used by the candidates, indicating that careful speech is necessary to avoid conflicts or issues in the future. The researcher will further detail the results of the analysis of hedges in the final debate of the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates below.

A. Propositional Hedges (Information Oriented Hedges).
Propositional Hedges are Hedges oriented towards information.

Modulation
Modulation in Hedges involves modifiers used to adjust the impact of statements or introduce ambiguity into information (Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012). Examples of modulation include approximators such as "about," "approximately," "something," "around," etc., and adaptors such as "somewhat," "kind of," "sort of," "some," "a little bit," etc.

Excerpt 1
Approximately around 1.5 to 2 percent. (Opening speech by Prabowo)

The underlined word in Prabowo's opening speech is classified as a Modulation in Hedges because it indicates a lack of precision in the percentage information provided.

Evasion
Evasion in Hedges serves to withhold certain information expected by the speaker's interlocutor, thereby making statements without providing specific information. This function is characterized by ambiguous and roundabout language (Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia, 2012).

Excerpt 2

Our republic today is one of disparity, inequality, injustice, disparity between

Jakarta and outside Jakarta. (Opening speech by Anies)

The underlined word in Anies' opening speech falls under Evasion in Hedges because it is repeated or convoluted more than twice in its expression.

B. Illocutionary force Hedges
Illocutionary Force Hedges are Hedges with speech act strength.

Speaker oriented Hedges
Speaker-oriented Hedges are Hedges oriented towards the speaker.
● Attenuating Epistemic Commitment (AEC)
Attenuating epistemic commitment (AEC) weakens epistemic commitment. This type of Hedges classifies information regarding possibility or probability (Fetzer, 2008). It is marked by sentence-initial phrases (e.g., "I think," "in my opinion," etc.), tentative verbs (assume, predict, etc.), hedging claims expressing doubt (e.g., "I guess," "I assume," "seems," etc.), epistemic modal verbs (can, could, may, might, will, should, etc.), adverbs (a bit, often, occasionally, etc.), adjectives (just, hardly, few, etc.), and nouns (estimation, possibility, assumption, etc.).

Excerpt 3
"Our healthcare services <u>can</u> be much better" (Ganjar, Q&A Segment 1, Question 1)

The underlined word in Ganjar's response falls under Attenuating Epistemic Commitment (AEC). This is because the word is a classification of information concerning epistemic modal verbs (can, could, may, might, will, should, etc.).

● Hesitation (Hes)

Hesitation Hesitation is an intentional act used to indicate the speaker's doubt. It is characterized by sounds like um, er, erm.

Excerpt 4
"carried out, <u>eee…</u> gradually" (Ganjar, Q&A Segment 1, Question 1)

The underlined word in Ganjar's response is categorized as Hesitation, as Ganjar makes a sound indicating doubt or a pause to think, resulting in the utterance of the filler sound "eee".

● Covering up (Cov)
This function involves concealing facts and one's views. Its realization is through uttering vague statements without providing specific information on what the speaker's interlocutor expects.

E*xcerpt 5*
"<u>you didn't completely hear my statement</u>" (Prabowo, Q&A Segment 2, Question 1)

The underlined phrase in Prabowo's response is classified as Covering Up because Prabowo evades and gives a vague response without specific information regarding Ganjar's statement about Prabowo in the media.

● De-emphasizing a claim (Dem)

De-emphasizing a claim is a clarification strategy used as a mitigation policy. This function is characterized by providing a clarification of information to appease the interlocutor, yet the clarification does not answer or provide clear information expected by the interlocutor.

Excerpt 6

"which is quite urgent, and for that, we believe" (Prabowo, Q&A Segment 2, Question 3)

The underlined word in Prabowo's response is categorized as De-Emphasizing because Prabowo uses the word "quite" to downplay the claim he is making.

Content oriented Hedges

● Expressing condition (Eco)

Expressing condition is a function to state conditions or hypotheses where events may not necessarily occur (Martin & Rose, 2003). This function is marked by the presence of If clauses, "provided that," "as long as," "then," etc.

Excerpt 7
"but remember when we talk about life expectancy" (Ganjar, Q&A Segment 1, Question 1)

The underlined word in Ganjar's response is categorized as Expressing Condition because the word is an if clause that states a condition.

● Counter-expectation (Coe)

Coe Counter-expectation is a function where the speaker denies, criticizes, or gives advice while avoiding negative expressions to prevent rejection and confrontation. This function is realized by first delivering a positive message (such as praise, admiration) before conveying criticism or advice.

Excerpt 8
"That is indeed correct, it must be done, but do not forget the preventive aspect" (Anies, Q&A Segment 2, Question 3)

The underlined phrase in Anies' response is categorized as Counter-Expectation because it initially expresses agreement with Prabowo's argument, but then Anies adds further criticism of the argument.

● Bounding downtowner (Bdw)

A linguistic device used to achieve intra-textual cohesion by not emphasizing or weakening the importance of the speech act conveyed by the speaker. Often, this effect is achieved by stating that the content of the speech act is not highly relevant to the discourse as a whole. This device aligns with Brown and Levinson's relevance mitigator (1987).

Excerpt 9
"and that culture is not only maintained" (Prabowo, Q&A Segment 1, Question 3)

The underlined word in Prabowo's response is categorized as Bounding Downtowner because it does not emphasize the speech act being conveyed by the speaker.

● Expressing possibility (Epo)

This function is realized to express the possibility of an action. Speakers typically use this function to protect their image from negative expectations of the interlocutor. This function is marked by the speaker's statement about the possibility of an action that has not yet been fully completed.

Excerpt 10
"and so on, I agree, perhaps someone reported to you incomplete information" (Prabowo, Q&A Segment 2, Question 1)

The underlined word in Prabowo's response is categorized as Expressing Possibility because it conveys an expression of the

possibility of an action that might or might not happen.

● Agent avoiding (Aga)

This function is realized by using impersonal devices to create social distance. Speakers use this function to avoid confrontation with the subject or person mentioned in the discourse context. It is marked by the use of passive voice that removes the agent or subject, or by using impersonal pronouns such as "it" and "one."

Excerpt 11

"I was once told by an activist" (Prabowo, Q&A Segment 2, Question 3)

The underlined word in Prabowo's response is categorized as Agent Avoiding because it conveys the avoidance of the agent by not specifically mentioning the subject in question.

● Source tagging (Stg)

Source tagging, also referred to by Jalilifar & Alavi-Nia (2012) as a device for reducing responsibility, serves to protect speakers from opposition consequences (Hyland, 1996). This function is marked by phrases like "according to X..." (Holmes, 1984), aimed at minimizing the speaker's presence in the text.

Excerpt 12

"built by President Joko Widodo and previous presidents" (Prabowo, Opening Speech)

The underlined word in Prabowo's opening speech is categorized as Source Tagging because it brings the actions of other political figures into his argument as a device to reduce his own responsibility.

● Limiting generalizability (Lig)

This function is used to modify claims in such a way that they have a narrower effect on a situation or condition.

Excerpt 13

"if it is already born and growing, it may not be stunting" (Ganjar, Q&A Segment 1, Question 1)

The underlined sentence in Ganjar's response is categorized as Limiting Generalizability because the speaker's argument modifies Prabowo's statement, resulting in a narrower situation.

??. Hearer oriented Hedges

● Seeking solidarity (Sso)

Seeking solidarity in the context of Hedges aims for the speaker to embrace the listener by inviting their presence in the text or speech to agree with their viewpoint or claims. This function is marked by the presence of pronouns like "our," "us," "we," and mentions of "folks," etc.

Excerpt 14

"ladies and gentlemen, my beloved nation" (Anies, Closing Statement)

The underlined sentence in Anies' closing statement is categorized as Seeking Solidarity because it aims to embrace the audience by mentioning the presence of pronouns such as "ladies and gentlemen, my beloved nation".

2.) Booster

Booster is utilized to clarify and enhance the quality of the speaker's discourse towards the interlocutor. The function of Booster itself emphasizes shared information, community, and listener participation. Boosters indicate and emphasize crucial parts of speech that

can build a coherent discussion (Holmes, 1995). The use of Boosters is intriguing as they appear during conversations. Boosters do not naturally arise but are carefully employed by speakers and interlocutors for a purpose. Their goal is to convey meaning to the interlocutor, strengthening their arguments. Thus, the application of Boosters in the 2024 Indonesian Presidential Candidates' Final Debate is apt to demonstrate how each pair of candidates articulate their arguments, considering significant aspects that bolster their discourse and provide perspectives to the public regarding their leadership suitability. The following presents the results of the analysis of Boosters (politeness) in the analysis of Boosters in the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates' final debate:

Table 2. Analysis of Booster

No	Types of Booster	Subtypes of Booster		Number of Findings	%
1	*Propositional Oriented Boosters*	*Intensifying*		62	7,36%
		Personal Involvement		30	3,56%
2.	*Illocutionary Force Boosters*	*Speaker Oriented Boosters*	*Boosting Epistemic*	197	23,40%
			Force Indication	21	2,49%
			Expressing Emphasis	17	2,02%
			Source Tagging	320	38,00%
		Content Oriented Boosters	*Bounding Empathics*	35	4,16%
			Accentuating	21	2,49%
			Source Tagging	93	11,05%
		Hearer Oriented Boosters	*Seeking Solidarity*	10	1,19%
			Presupposing verification	36	4,28%
	Miscellaneous Boosters			0	0,00%
Total				842	100,00%

After discussing the identified hedges, the researcher will next address the findings on boosters. Based on the analysis, all types of boosters were found in the final debate of the 2024 Indonesian presidential candidates. The most frequently used booster type by the candidates was speaker-oriented, source tagging. This function is used to highlight the speaker or their group in their discourse, typically marked by the use of the first-person singular pronoun 'I' and the first-person plural pronoun 'we'. Although the candidates were presenting their own arguments, they often used 'we' or 'us' to emphasize their group, thereby influencing and capturing the audience's attention. This type of booster was found in 320 clauses (28%). The second most dominant type of booster was illocutionary force, speaker-oriented, boosting epistemic. This booster

functions to strengthen the information provided by the speaker and is typically marked by Opening phrases, Verbs, Claim reinforcement, Epistemic modal verbs, Adverbs, Adjectives, and Nouns. Due to the extensive use of this type of booster, speakers can provide information related to certainty. The candidates aimed to reinforce their statements by convincing the audience with certainty. This booster type was found in 197 clauses (23.40%). The next most dominant booster type was content-oriented, source tagging, found in 93 clauses (11.05%). This booster type involves using data sources to support the information presented by the candidates, thereby strengthening their claims with sources and evidence. Other booster findings included:

Intensifying, found in 62 instances (7.36%)

Presupposing verification, found in 36 instances (4.28%)

??. Bounding emphatics, found in 35 instances (4.16%)

??. Personal involvement, found in 30 instances (3.56%)

??. Force indication and accentuating, found in 21 instances (2.49%)

??. Expressing emphasis, found in 17 instances (2.02%)

??. Seeking solidarity, found in 10 instances (1.19%)

??. Miscellaneous booster, found in 0 instances (0%)

A total of 842 boosters were identified during the final presidential debate of 2024, demonstrating that the candidates frequently used discourse boosters to enhance their image and persuade the audience to trust and vote for them.

A. Propositional oriented Boosters (Information oriented Boosters)

Intensifying (Int): Elements of a sentence that emphasize reality to strengthen the power of its information. Examples include "very," "most," "more," etc.

Excerpt 1
"Thank you. Culture is <u>very</u> important, Culture is the character of a nation." (Prabowo, Q&A Session 1, Question 3)

The underlined sentence in Prabowo's response falls under intensifying because the speaker's argument emphasizes the strength of the information provided with the word 'very'.

Personal involvement (Piv)
This function emphasizes information on the speaker's or interlocutor's involvement in an event. It is marked by the presence of possessive pronouns like "his own," "her own," etc.

Excerpt 2
"I have <u>personally</u> managed pencak silat for 37 years, not to mention other cultures." (Prabowo, Q&A Session 1, Question 3)
The underlined sentence in Prabowo's response falls under personal involvement because the speaker's argument is based on Prabowo's personal experience.

B. Illocutionary force Boosters

Speaker oriented Boosters

● Boosting epistemic (Bep)
Enhances epistemic commitment by qualifying information about certainty (Fetzer, 2008). This function is characterized by sentence-initial phrases (e.g., "I believe..."), verbs (make sure...), assertive claims (I am sure...), epistemic modal verbs (going to, need to...), adverbs (surely,

extremely...), adjectives (clear, obvious...), and nouns (proof, certitude...).

Excerpt 3
"We are determined to eliminate hunger and malnutrition for the Indonesian people." (Prabowo, Closing Statement)

The underlined sentence in Prabowo's response falls under boosting epistemic because the speaker's argument provides a strong commitment.

● Force indication (Fin)
Fin is a device used by speakers to specifically emphasize the illocutionary force of their speech. This function is marked by phrases like "I ask you," "I tell you," "I want you," "I beg you," "in fact," etc.

Excerpt 4
"Thank you, Mr. Anies. First, stop the liberalization of education, stop it today." (Ganjar, Q&A Session 2, Question 2)

The underlined sentence in Ganjar's response falls under force indication because the speaker's argument is emphasized specifically.

● Expressing emphasis
This function involves explicit interventions or interpolations through prosodic features, such as stress or intonation, emphatic Yes/No/Do.

Excerpt 5
"Indonesia's wealth lies precisely in its culture, and culture is not just one sector of development but encompasses all activities." (Anies, Q&A Session 1, Question 3)

The underlined sentence in Anies' response falls under expressing emphasis because the speaker's argument is an explicit intervention with intonation emphasis.

● Source tagging (Sog)
There are two types of functions labeled as source tagging by Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012). In the context where the function is speaker-oriented, it refers to the presentation in one's own language as an authority of truth representation. This means the speaker highlights themselves or their group in their speech. It is marked by the presence of first-person singular pronouns like "I" and first-person plural pronouns like "we."'

Excerpt 6
"We are now far from the ideals of this republic." (Anies, Opening Statement)

The underlined sentence in Anies' response falls under source tagging because the speaker's argument, using the word 'we', refers to his group even though the speaker is presenting his own argument.

Content oriented Boosters

● Bounding emphatics (Boe)
Bounding emphatics strengthen or emphasize the speech they introduce, such as "besides," "furthermore," "what is more," etc.

Excerpt 7
"And we must see that helping people with disabilities is not charity but a fulfillment of their human rights and a state responsibility." (Anies, Q&A Session 2, Question 2)

The underlined sentence in Anies' response falls under bounding emphatics because the speaker's argument serves as a connecting phrase within the given argument.

● Accentuating (Acc)

Acc functions to enhance the impact and effectiveness of an idea, making the audience like and remember it without conscious effort. This encourages them to accept the idea as true. Example: repetition.

Excerpt 8

"We have just conducted a campaign <u>full of</u> spirit, <u>full of</u> contention, sometimes with harsh words." (Prabowo, Closing Statement)

The underlined sentence in Prabowo's closing statement falls under accentuating because the speaker uses repetition to encourage the audience to accept the argument presented.

● Source tagging (Soc)

Source tagging within the context of Boosters for content-oriented speech refers to presenting a source, evidence, or authority regarding the truth of a representation. Speakers use this function to further strengthen their claims based on a source (Chilton, 2004). Example: "According to Wall Street..."

Excerpt 9

"Mr. Prabowo, I have a free internet program for schools, for SMEs, but there is something interesting, sir. <u>In Pontianak on January 20,</u> you said that people who want free internet..." (Ganjar, Q&A Session 2, Question 1)

The underlined sentence in Ganjar's response falls under source tagging because the speaker uses a source of information to strengthen his argument and increase the audience's confidence and trust.

??. Hearer oriented Boosters

● Seeking solidarity (Ses)

Jalilifar and Alavi-Nia (2012) also apply the same label to the function of seeking solidarity in the context of hearer-oriented Boosters. The difference lies in seeking solidarity in Boosters that aims to enhance illocutionary force by explicitly or implicitly referring to the listener's knowledge or shared background assumptions. This function is marked by forms like "naturally," "of course," "it goes without saying," "everybody knows," etc.

Excerpt 10

"<u>Ladies and gentlemen,</u> those are some of our flagship programs as part of the nation's transformation strategy." (Prabowo, Opening Statement)

The underlined sentence in Prabowo's opening statement falls under seeking solidarity because the speaker's argument functions to seek solidarity by using the term 'ladies and gentlemen,' which includes the audience and makes them feel involved.

● Presupposing verification on rhetorical questions (Pvr)

This function represents information as something self-evident or agreed upon, which doesn't need to be explicitly stated in textual form. The speaker leaves it to the listener to supply the needed meaning through rhetorical questions (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Excerpt 11

"<u>What I am saying is, which is more important, free internet or free food for those in need, for the poor, for the lower class? That is what I mean.</u>" (Prabowo, Q&A Session 2, Question 1)

The underlined sentence in Prabowo's response falls under presupposing verification on rhetorical questions because the speaker's argument is a question he answers himself to convince the audience.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research conducted on the use of hedges and boosters in the Presidential Candidate Debate to build the candidates' image, the researcher has reached several conclusions that can address the research questions. Firstly, hedges were identified 391 times throughout the Final Presidential Debate, a figure that is almost half of the 842 instances of boosters found in the same debate. These hedges and boosters are present in the narratives and dialogues delivered by the candidates. Furthermore, the occurrences of hedges and boosters in the Final Presidential Debate vary in percentage based on their types. For hedges, the Attenuating Epistemic Commitment (AEC) marker appeared most frequently, with 118 instances accounting for 30.18% of the total. This indicates that the Indonesian presidential candidates often used statements that suggest possibility or probability. For boosters, the most common marker was the Speaker Orienter Source Tagging Booster, usually indicated by the first-person singular pronoun (I) and the first-person plural pronoun 'we'. This variant appeared in 320 clauses or 28% of the total data. Boosters are used to highlight oneself or one's group in statements, with candidates often using 'we' to emphasize their group, thereby influencing and capturing the attention of the audience. From the research conducted and the data obtained, it can be concluded that the functions of hedges and boosters are significantly present and influential in the discourse of each candidate. Hedges frequently appear in argumentation, due to the need for cautious language to avoid future conflicts or issues. On the other hand, boosters are essential as candidates need to reinforce their statements to enhance their image and persuade listeners or viewers to trust and vote for them.

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