



IRAQI  
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية  
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

**Journal of Language Studies**

Contents available at: <http://jls.tu.edu.iq>



## Meta-discourse Aspects in Joe Biden's Inauguration Speech

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Recived: 23 /3/ 2022 , Accepted: 20/4/2022 , Online Published : 17/7/2022

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to find the types and to explain meta-discourse strategies used in Joe Biden's selected speech. The study also tries to analyze the selected data by using the Hyland (2005) method or model in which meta-discourse is sorted in to two main kinds Textual and Interpersonal. The study has reached a number of conclusions; the most significant one is that interpersonal meta-discourse is frequently used by Biden for the purpose of affecting and directing American people.

The study tries to have the answers to the following Questions:-

- 1-What type of meta-discourse markers used in Joe Biden's selected speech?
- 2-What are the frequencies of the interactional and interpersonal meta-discourse markers in the selected speech?
- 3-What are the most important functions of meta-discourse in Biden's speech?

**Keywords:** Interpersonal Meta-discourse, Code glosses, Hedges, Attitude markers

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## جوانب الخطاب الفوقي في خطاب تنصيب جو بايدن

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**الملخص :** الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو العثور على الأنواع وشرح استراتيجيات الخطاب الفوقي المستخدمة في خطاب جو بايدن المختار. تحاول الدراسة أيضًا تحليل البيانات المحددة باستخدام طريقة (Hyland 2005) أو النموذج الذي يتم فيه فرز الخطاب الفوقي إلى نوعين رئيسيين نصي وشخصي. توصلت الدراسة إلى عدد من الاستنتاجات ؛ وأهمها أن بايدن يستخدم الخطاب الفوقي الشخصي بشكل متكرر بغرض التأثير على الشعب الأمريكي وتوجيهه.

تحاول الدراسة الحصول على إجابات للأسئلة التالية- :

- 1- ما نوع علامات الخطاب الفوقي المستخدمة في خطاب جو بايدن المختار؟
  - 2- ما هي ترددات علامات الخطاب الفوقي التفاعلية والشخصية في الكلام المختار؟
  - 3- ما هي أهم وظائف ما وراء الخطاب في خطاب بايدن؟
- الكلمات الدالة :** الخطاب الفوقي بين الأشخاص ، اللمعان الكود ، التحولات ، علامات الموقف.

### 1- Introduction

Generally, political discourse can be regarded as a tactful tool used by politicians to influence and affect their supporters and audiences. So, mass media and political figures always use variety types of meta-discourse markers in their writings and speeches. Accordingly Kopple (1985:83) says, originally the term meta-discourse refers to discourse on discourse. Hyland (2015: 1 ) goes further by showing that MD (meta-discourse) is author's rhetorical manifestation in the text, an intervention to refer to the discourse organization and expressive implications of what is being talked about. So Hyland ( 2015 :3) considers MD as a method of understanding language in use which represents a writer's or speaker's attempt to reader's or listen's perception and understanding of a text. Jakobson (1985:114) maintains that the meta-function of language can be gained by embryonic stage of MD which are used to "explain, comment on, predict about or refer to" the verbal addressing or code itself.

Meta-discourse has evolved overtime to embrace different terms such as signaling meta-talk or text reflexivity.

Harris (1959) states that MD is a way of understanding in use, whether through a non-propositional or an interpersonal perspective. Dependently, it

means by which propositional content is made coherent, intelligible, and persuasive to a particular audience or reader. MD by its internal nature is used as a self-expressions to negotiate interactional purpose In a text helping the writer or speaker to show their view points and evolve with the readers and listeners as members of a particular community. Accordingly, a writer-reader or speaker-listener relationship is developed to implement the purposes of successful communication.

Mauranen (2010:17) provides us two important tasks:- they are sharing experience and negotiating interaction in which the mutual understanding is happened between the interlocutors as it facilitates communication through providing a channel that aids them to relate to the ongoing and future discourse. The most significant of MD components are: - speech events, text/code the writer and the reader.

Basically, MD refers to show language is used out of consideration for readers or hearers based on estimation in which how best the readers can be helped to process and understanding what the writers are saying. It is a sort of design that filters the intended message to be comprehended and understood by drawing the readers' attention to the text to the extent of his/her needs for elaboration, clarification, guidance and interaction.

In this way, meta-discourse is a kind of link that connects text with context, it points to the routine, almost automatic use of conventions which are developed through participation and relationship tying the writers and readers into the net of common sense, interest and shared or background meaning or understanding. Halliday (1985:271) describes MD as meta-phenomena which are categories the language not the real world.

## 2- Scope of meta-discourse markers

Meta-discourse is basically used to show the authors' and writers' linguistic and rhetorical manifestation in the text to bracket the discourse structure and express implication of what is being said. So, MD markers studies linguistic devices to express or organize the writers' ideas and arguments in such a way that he/she tries to effect on listeners or readers through the text.

Hyland (1999), (2005) divides the categories of meta-discourse in to two main types:- textual and interpersonal.

The types with their subclasses are shown in the table below.

**Table(1) Meta-discourse model based on Hyland (2005)**

Category	Function	Examples
<b>A.Textual Meta-discourse</b>		
<i>1.Logical connectives</i>	<i>Express semantic relations between main clauses</i>	<i>In addition, but, therefore, thus</i>
<i>2.Framework markers</i>	<i>Explicitly refer to discourse shifts or text stages</i>	<i>First, finally , to repeat , to clarify</i>
<i>3.Ednophoric markers</i>	<i>Refer to information in other parts of the text</i>	<i>Notes above, see fig. 11 or table 2</i>
<i>4.Evedntials</i>	<i>Refer to the source of information from other parts</i>	<i>According to Y, D states</i>

5.Code glosses	Help readers grasp meanings of ideational materials	Namely, in other words
<b>B. Interpersonal Meta-discourse</b>		
1.Hedges	Withhold writer's full commitments or statements	Might, perhaps, possible
2.Boosters	Emphasize force or writer's certainty in message	Absolutely, in fact, clearly
3. Attitude markers	Express writer's attitude to propositional contents	Surprisingly, I agree, one claims
4-Relational markers	Explicitly refer to or build relationship with the readers	Consider, recall, imagine, you see
5. self mention	Explicit reference to author or authors	I, we, my, mine , our

### **3-Discussion and data analysis**

The main source of collected data is the speech of Joe Biden which was delivered in his inauguration speech. So the speech is analyzed according to Hyland model of meta-discourse (2005) which are of two main types :-

#### **A. Textual Meta-discourse**

They are used in all writing to make full description of words and phrases that comment on what are in the sentences. Mostly nearly all technical, academic and non-fiction writers use textual meta-discourse to bury ideas.

#### **1-Logical connectives**

They are also called sentential connectives, words or group of words which make join two or more propositions together to form connective proposition. Generally. They include “but” , “and”, “or”, “if”, “then” , “if and only if” etc. The most various sorts of logical connectives are conjunction “and” disjunction “or”, negation “not” or condition.

From the selected data , it is found that Joe used (102) logical connectives. Basically logical connectives serve as a main connection between words and phrases. The connections are in form of addition (50) times with the purpose of adding more information, contradiction “but” and “yet” 918) times to show the contradiction ideas. The following connectives are also used “so” (5) times, “not” (13), “no” (6), “only” (5) and “if” (5) times. Consider the following extracts from Biden’s speech

*1-Throuh a crucible for ages America has been a new **and** America has risen to change.*

*2-But American story depends **not** on anyone of us **not** on some of us, **but** on all of us.*

#### **2. Framework markers**

As it is mentioned in table (1), the framework markers indicate text boundaries or elements of schematic text structures, such as “my purpose”, “to conclude”, finaaly. This strategy is repeated (7) times by Biden to make an explicit discourse acts and illocutionary acts which are Biden making and performing in certain points, periods and situations such as in

*3-Here we stand in the shadow - - - - -*

### **3-Endophoric markers**

They are markers which refer to other parts of the text such as "as noted" or "see figure X". These expressions make ideational materials and often facilitating comprehension and supporting arguments by referring to earlier material or anticipating something yet to come. This marker is used once in Biden's speech as in

*3-To those 400,000 fellow Americans mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, friends, neighbors and co-workers.*

### **4-Evidentials**

They are namely meta-linguistic representations of a proposition from another source which guide the reader's interpretation and establish an authorial command of the subject. This strategy is not used by Biden.

### **5-Code glosses**

They supply additional information, by rephrasing, explaining or elaborating what has been said, to ensure the reader to be able to recover the writer's intended meaning. They reflect the writer's predictions about the reader's knowledge which are introduced by phrases ( that is called, in other words, that is, this can be defined as, etc. ) This strategy is repeated (3) times for example

*5-it is called "America" and there is one verse stands out for me.*

*6-What are common objects we love that define us America.*

### **B-Interpersonal Meta- discourse**

These put the readers into the situation and give them opportunities and chances to take part to the discourse by alerting them to author's perspective toward both propositional information and readers themselves. These features control the personality level in a text as writers acknowledge and putting them along with the argument, focusing their attention, acknowledging their uncertainty and guiding them to interpretations. (White. 2003). They consist of five types:-

### **1-Hedges**

They are pragmatic and discursal devices such as ( ) possible, may, might, perhaps) which indicate the writer's decision to recognize the alternative voices and view points and withhold complete commitment to a proposition. Generally, hedges emphasize the subjectivity of a position as an opinion rather than a fact and open that position to negotiation. Twelve hedges are used in Biden's speeches most of them show possibly and probabilities.

*7- And I believe America is better - - - - . That's democracy That America - - - - -is perhaps - - - - - . May this be the story - - - - -*

### **2-Boosters**

The use of boosters strengthening an argument by emphasizing the mutual understanding and experiences to draw the attention and make involvement with the topic, proposition and solidarity with the audience. (Hyland 1999)

Boosters in Biden’s speech are used four times as in

8-*Yet hear me clearly* - - - - -

### **3-Attitude markers**

Here in this strategy the writer’s affection is focused rather than epistemic attitude to the idea and proposition. The amounts of surprise, agreement, importance, obligation, frustration are clearly mentioned instead of conveying and commenting on the status of information. These attitude markers are expressed through the use of subordination, comparatives, progressive particles, punctuation, text location which signaled by adverbs (unfortunately, hopefully) attitude verbs (agree , prefer) and adjectives ( appropriate , logical, remarkable) .

These markers are repeated (8) times as in

9-*America has been tested and we have come out stronger for it.*

10-*We will honor them by* - - - - - .

### **4-Relational markers.**

These features are explicitly addressing readers in two ways:- by focusing their attention or including them as discourse participants . So, they also create an impression of authority, integrity and credibility that writers either highlight or downplay presence of their reader in the text such as readers’ expectation of inclusion as ( you, your, inclusive we)or rhetorical involvement by imperative or obligation as ( see, note, consider, should, must, have to)

These markers are found in the selected speech (18) times as in

10- *We must meet this moment* - - - - -

11-*Hear me out as we move forward* - - - - -

12*Take a measure of me and my heart* - - - - -

13-*You know the resilience* - - - - -

14- *Hear one other* - - - - - *see one another* - - - - -

### **5- Self-mention**

This indicates that the explicit degree author’s presence in the text which is gained by the frequency of first person pronouns and possessive adjectives ( I, me, mine , we, our, ours). The most powerful means of self-representation is the use of first person pronouns. Writers always try to stand in relation to their arguments, ideas, community, and their readers. (Hyland 2000)

Self-mention is repeated (219) times as in

15- *We look a head in our uniquely American way – restless* - - - - - *we know we can be and we must be.*

16-I understand that Americans view the future with some fear - - - - -

### **4-Conclusion**

The study has reached the following conclusions:-

1-Biden used interpersonal meta-discourse in order to be connected with his listeners, readers and audience in an interactive, clear and elaborated direction.

2-He also used boosters to talk about issues that he is certain about and he uses hedges and boosters in tactful way as a key role in the success of a political effective speeches.

3-He presented his speech successfully in which the widespread use of meta-discourse markers to provide an insight in to how his speeches have enable him to frame his intended message, resulting in a power impact on the audience and achieve his goal significantly.

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### **INAUGURATION DAY**

**Full text: Joe Biden inauguration speech transcript**

**"Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this: Bringing America together. Uniting our people. And uniting our nation," President Joe Biden said.**

**By POLITICO STAFF**

**01/20/2021 01:56 PM EST**

Chief Justice Roberts, Vice President Harris, Speaker Pelosi, Leader Schumer, Leader McConnell, Vice President Pence, distinguished guests, and my fellow Americans.

This is America's day.

This is democracy's day.  
A day of history and hope.

Of renewal and resolve.

Through a crucible for the ages America has been tested anew and America has risen to the challenge.

Today, we celebrate the triumph not of a candidate, but of a cause, the cause of democracy.

The will of the people has been heard and the will of the people has been heeded.

We have learned again that democracy is precious.

Democracy is fragile.

And at this hour, my friends, democracy has prevailed.

So now, on this hallowed ground where just days ago violence sought to shake this Capitol's very foundation, we come together as one nation, under God, indivisible, to carry out the peaceful transfer of power as we have for more than two centuries.

We look ahead in our uniquely American way — restless, bold, optimistic — and set our sights on the nation we know we can be and we must be.

I thank my predecessors of both parties for their presence here.

I thank them from the bottom of my heart.

You know the resilience of our Constitution and the strength of our nation.

As does President Carter, who I spoke to last night but who cannot be with us today, but whom we salute for his lifetime of service.



I have just taken the sacred oath each of these patriots took — an oath first sworn by George Washington.

But the American story depends not on any one of us, not on some of us, but on all of us.

On “We the People” who seek a more perfect Union.

This is a great nation and we are a good people.

Over the centuries through storm and strife, in peace and in war, we have come so far. But we still have far to go.

We will press forward with speed and urgency, for we have much to do in this winter of peril and possibility.

Much to repair.

Much to restore.

Much to heal.

Much to build.

And much to gain.

Few periods in our nation’s history have been more challenging or difficult than the one we’re in now.

A once-in-a-century virus silently stalks the country.

It’s taken as many lives in one year as America lost in all of World War II.

Millions of jobs have been lost.

Hundreds of thousands of businesses closed.

A cry for racial justice some 400 years in the making moves us. The dream of justice for all will be deferred no longer.

A cry for survival comes from the planet itself. A cry that can’t be any more desperate or any more clear.

And now, a rise in political extremism, white supremacy, domestic terrorism that we must confront and we will defeat.

To overcome these challenges – to restore the soul and to secure the future of America – requires more than words.

It requires that most elusive of things in a democracy:

Unity.

Unity.

In another January in Washington, on New Year's Day 1863, Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.

When he put pen to paper, the President said, "If my name ever goes down into history it will be for this act and my whole soul is in it."

My whole soul is in it.

Today, on this January day, my whole soul is in this:

Bringing America together.

Uniting our people.

And uniting our nation.

I ask every American to join me in this cause.

Uniting to fight the common foes we face:

Anger, resentment, hatred.

Extremism, lawlessness, violence.

Disease, joblessness, hopelessness.

With unity we can do great things. Important things.

We can right wrongs.

We can put people to work in good jobs.

We can teach our children in safe schools.

We can overcome this deadly virus.

We can reward work, rebuild the middle class, and make health care secure for all.

We can deliver racial justice.

We can make America, once again, the leading force for good in the world.

I know speaking of unity can sound to some like a foolish fantasy.

I know the forces that divide us are deep and they are real.

But I also know they are not new.

Our history has been a constant struggle between the American ideal that we are all created equal and the harsh, ugly reality that racism, nativism, fear, and demonization have long torn us apart.

The battle is perennial.

Victory is never assured.

Through the Civil War, the Great Depression, World War, 9/11, through struggle, sacrifice, and setbacks, our "better angels" have always prevailed.

In each of these moments, enough of us came together to carry all of us forward.

And, we can do so now.

History, faith, and reason show the way, the way of unity.

We can see each other not as adversaries but as neighbors.

We can treat each other with dignity and respect.

We can join forces, stop the shouting, and lower the temperature.

For without unity, there is no peace, only bitterness and fury.

No progress, only exhausting outrage.

No nation, only a state of chaos.

This is our historic moment of crisis and challenge, and unity is the path forward.

And, we must meet this moment as the United States of America.

If we do that, I guarantee you, we will not fail.

We have never, ever, ever failed in America when we have acted together.

And so today, at this time and in this place, let us start afresh.

All of us.

Let us listen to one another.  
Hear one another.  
See one another.  
Show respect to one another.  
Politics need not be a raging fire destroying everything in its path.  
Every disagreement doesn't have to be a cause for total war.  
And, we must reject a culture in which facts themselves are manipulated and even manufactured.  
My fellow Americans, we have to be different than this.  
America has to be better than this.  
And, I believe America is better than this.  
Just look around.  
Here we stand, in the shadow of a Capitol dome that was completed amid the Civil War, when the Union itself hung in the balance.  
Yet we endured and we prevailed.  
Here we stand looking out to the great Mall where Dr. King spoke of his dream.  
Here we stand, where 108 years ago at another inaugural, thousands of protestors tried to block brave women from marching for the right to vote.  
Today, we mark the swearing-in of the first woman in American history elected to national office – Vice President Kamala Harris.  
Don't tell me things can't change.  
Here we stand across the Potomac from Arlington National Cemetery, where heroes who gave the last full measure of devotion rest in eternal peace.  
And here we stand, just days after a riotous mob thought they could use violence to silence the will of the people, to stop the work of our democracy, and to drive us from this sacred ground.  
That did not happen.  
It will never happen.  
Not today.  
Not tomorrow.  
Not ever.  
To all those who supported our campaign I am humbled by the faith you have placed in us.  
To all those who did not support us, let me say this: Hear me out as we move forward.  
Take a measure of me and my heart.  
And if you still disagree, so be it.  
That's democracy. That's America. The right to dissent peaceably, within the guardrails of our Republic, is perhaps our nation's greatest strength.  
Yet hear me clearly: Disagreement must not lead to disunion.  
And I pledge this to you: I will be a President for all Americans.  
I will fight as hard for those who did not support me as for those who did.  
Many centuries ago, Saint Augustine, a saint of my church, wrote that a people was a multitude defined by the common objects of their love.  
What are the common objects we love that define us as Americans?  
I think I know.  
Opportunity.  
Security.  
Liberty.  
Dignity.  
Respect.

Honor.

And, yes, the truth.

Recent weeks and months have taught us a painful lesson.

There is truth and there are lies.

Lies told for power and for profit.

And each of us has a duty and responsibility, as citizens, as Americans, and especially as leaders – leaders who have pledged to honor our Constitution and protect our nation — to defend the truth and to defeat the lies.

I understand that many Americans view the future with some fear and trepidation.

I understand they worry about their jobs, about taking care of their families, about what comes next.

I get it.

But the answer is not to turn inward, to retreat into competing factions, distrusting those who don't look like you do, or worship the way you do, or don't get their news from the same sources you do.

We must end this uncivil war that pits red against blue, rural versus urban, conservative versus liberal.

We can do this if we open our souls instead of hardening our hearts.

If we show a little tolerance and humility.

If we're willing to stand in the other person's shoes just for a moment.

Because here is the thing about life: There is no accounting for what fate will deal you.

There are some days when we need a hand.

There are other days when we're called on to lend one.

That is how we must be with one another.

And, if we are this way, our country will be stronger, more prosperous, more ready for the future.

My fellow Americans, in the work ahead of us, we will need each other.

We will need all our strength to persevere through this dark winter.

We are entering what may well be the toughest and deadliest period of the virus.

We must set aside the politics and finally face this pandemic as one nation.

I promise you this: as the Bible says weeping may endure for a night but joy cometh in the morning.

We will get through this, together

The world is watching today.

So here is my message to those beyond our borders: America has been tested and we have come out stronger for it.

We will repair our alliances and engage with the world once again.

Not to meet yesterday's challenges, but today's and tomorrow's.

We will lead not merely by the example of our power but by the power of our example.

We will be a strong and trusted partner for peace, progress, and security.

We have been through so much in this nation.

And, in my first act as President, I would like to ask you to join me in a moment of silent prayer to remember all those we lost this past year to the pandemic.

To those 400,000 fellow Americans – mothers and fathers, husbands and wives, sons and daughters, friends, neighbors, and co-workers.

We will honor them by becoming the people and nation we know we can and should be.

Let us say a silent prayer for those who lost their lives, for those they left behind, and for our country.

Amen.

This is a time of testing.

We face an attack on democracy and on truth.

A raging virus.

Growing inequity.

The sting of systemic racism.

A climate in crisis.

America's role in the world.

Any one of these would be enough to challenge us in profound ways.

But the fact is we face them all at once, presenting this nation with the gravest of responsibilities.

Now we must step up.

All of us.

It is a time for boldness, for there is so much to do.

And, this is certain.

We will be judged, you and I, for how we resolve the cascading crises of our era.

Will we rise to the occasion?

Will we master this rare and difficult hour?

Will we meet our obligations and pass along a new and better world for our children?

I believe we must and I believe we will.

And when we do, we will write the next chapter in the American story.

It's a story that might sound something like a song that means a lot to me.

It's called "American Anthem" and there is one verse stands out for me:

"The work and prayers

of centuries have brought us to this day

What shall be our legacy?

What will our children say?...

Let me know in my heart

When my days are through

America

America

I gave my best to you."

Let us add our own work and prayers to the unfolding story of our nation.

If we do this then when our days are through our children and our children's children will say of us they gave their best.

They did their duty.

They healed a broken land.

My fellow Americans, I close today where I began, with a sacred oath.

Before God and all of you I give you my word.

I will always level with you.

I will defend the Constitution.

I will defend our democracy.

I will defend America.

I will give my all in your service thinking not of power, but of possibilities.

Not of personal interest, but of the public good.

And together, we shall write an American story of hope, not fear.

Of unity, not division.

Of light, not darkness.

An American story of decency and dignity.  
Of love and of healing.  
Of greatness and of goodness.  
May this be the story that guides us.  
The story that inspires us.  
The story that tells ages yet to come that we answered the call of history.  
We met the moment.  
That democracy and hope, truth and justice, did not die on our watch but thrived.  
That our America secured liberty at home and stood once again as a beacon to the world.  
That is what we owe our forebearers, one another, and generations to follow.  
So, with purpose and resolve we turn to the tasks of our time.  
Sustained by faith. Driven by conviction. And, devoted to one another and to this country we love with all our hearts.  
May God bless America and may God protect our troops. Thank you, America.