

## **Comprehensive Review of Hedging Strategies in Political Discourse among Arab Presidents**

Wael Moniom Kadhim<sup>1</sup>, Chetan Mewad<sup>2</sup>

Email: [weal9679@gmail.com](mailto:weal9679@gmail.com)

<sup>1</sup>Ph.D. Research Scholar, School of Languages, Department of Linguistics, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad, India

<sup>2</sup>Head of Department of English HA college of commerce, GLS campus, Ellis bridge Ahmedabad, India.

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### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the predictability feature of hedging and investigates hedging in the speeches of the Arab presidents to unravel the manner in which leaders work when uncertainty is present. In the quantitative analysis of the written texts, hedging is determined by means of modal verbs, adverbs of probability and expressions of 'vagueness'. The level of scholar activity indicates that modal verbs are used more often, especially when discussing domestic policy, whereas adverbs of probability are called for within more economical scopes. Hedging policies' differences across presidents and over time express the ability to respond to political and societal shifts, such as the Arab Spring. This means that audience had requestion for the clear but careful language and were less sympathetic to greater use of vague expressions. It advances knowledge on the use of language in political and persuasive communication, as well as on the use of hedging and its effects on the audience regarding policy issues.

**Keywords:** Hedging Strategies, Political Discourse, Arab Presidents, Quantitative Analysis

### **Introduction**

Political communication is a vast area of research which is even more fascinating if one considers the fact that politics is a game that deals with language as a weapon with which public opinion and thus policies are formed. A salient linguistic strategy is the use of hedge devices which enable individuals to work with vagueness, say things without complete conviction, and deal with threats to people's face space (Hyland, 2005). There is a preemptive form of using any language element, which include types like modal verbs, adverb and the use of vague expressions with intentions of minimizing the force of the statement made to clients (Chaika, 2008). In the context of political discussion, hedging is the key to establish assertiveness on one side and diplomatic option on the other side of the strong political power (Kawasaki, 2021).

The area of interest also provides a rich context to analyze hedging strategies because of the distinct Arab culture, historical and especially the political backgrounds across the Arab countries. It is established that through hedging, the Arab presidents as the leaders of the nations ensure they meet the multiple and challenging dynamics both domestically and internationally while ensuring sufficient support in the political sphere (Scott & Rosati, 2020). However, there are very few research carried out as an umbrella work on the hedging discourse of Arab presidents who play crucial roles in the political communication. Thus, this paper seeks to undertake a quantitative analysis of hedging strategies in the speeches made by the Arab presidents with the view of achieving the aforementioned goals.

Studying hedging within political communication can give insights into how the decision makers/leaders deal with uncertainty and behave cautiously in their interactions, when organizing their presence in public domain. Hedging may be used to convey politeness, to indicate that the sender of the message is unsure of what s/he is saying or to shift responsibility or blame on to someone/something else (Jalilifar & Alavi, 2011). For instance, when explaining issues that concern male dominion and that are emblematic of the patriarchal culture of the society, the politicians might employ hedging in order not offend specific groups of voters or in order to retain the option of modifying their political policies in the future (Huntington & Nelson, 1976). These strategic uses of hedging is very relevant in the politically sensitive Arab countries because leaders of these nations are under very close monitor both within their countries and at the international arena (Samaan, 2022).

A study of political discourse has mainly centered on western countries, looking at the way that political leaders go about the processes of communication to influence others' perceptions and decisions (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2016). There is however a new trend in the realizations that there is a need to study political communication other than in the western context to get the bigger picture (Siddarth et al., 2023). Scholarly works in the Arab setting indicate that speeches' analyses reveal that they are replete with high levels of rhetorical language and bargaining power resources (Qabani, 2022). However, there have been few detailed studies of particular techniques, like the ones involved in hedging. About the theoretical framework, this study relies on hedging as a communicative strategy, as described by Gani (2022), and seeks to present an overview of its usage within political speech of the Arab presidents. Thus, practicing the given research idea of the author, this study aims to investigate and classify the types of hedging strategies used in speech transcripts, estimate the frequency of their usage, and describe their contextual application. Unexpectedly, this quantitative method enables the analysis of patterns and trends regarding hedging, which presents fresh perspectives on the RAA leaders' rhetorical strategies.

## **Methods**

The present study used the quantitative research method to analyze the hedging strategies found in political speeches and statements of Arab presidents. The data for this study entailed speech transcripts from a sample of Arab presidents with variation in ethnicity. These speeches were identified and chosen according to certain criteria to make sure that the venues were covered. Specifically, the sources of speeches included speeches delivered to larger audiences on issues of national or international concern and ranging from the year 2010 to 2023 inclusive. These forums were the sessions of the United Nations General Assembly, the regional meetings like the Arab League sessions, and state address on political, economic, and social issues. All the speeches hence compiled were obtained from reliable government sources, reputable newspapers, magazines and news online sources and even academic databases. This diversity of sourcing was important to ensure that credibility of the data set as well as to ensure that no aspect related to the development of the country was left uncovered.

In total, 50 speeches were gathered to consider the samples' variety in terms of the countries where the speakers function and their general political orientation. Such sample size was deemed appropriate to give good figures that could help in descriptive as well as inferential statistics. The selected speeches belong to a wide sample of political situations, such as speeches following national emergencies, speeches related to international relations, and those connected with the domestic economy. Both speeches were transcribed orally word by word to make it easier to analyze the presidents' language. Where needed, the speeches were professionally translated from the original languages to English with a focus on politics by translators who understood the true political meaning of the words used. These were afterwards

checked by the native speaking investigators to make sure that they had the same sense in other dialects.

The data analysis of results that were collected followed some steps. First of all, the speeches were analyzed in detail to extract the specimens of hedging and classify them according to their type. In this process the transcript was coded using a coding scheme described in literature earlier by Epoka (2023), Islam et al. (2020). The coding scheme consisted of the following: modal verbs (might, could), adverbs of probability (possible, probably), and vagueness (somewhat, a bit). The reasons were that the study provided a unique and systematic coding frame that concludes with the categorization of hedging on the basis of all the interfaces.

To ensure reliability of the coding process, two independent coders were used. Before the actual coding, the coders were oriented and had the necessary practice in using the given coding scheme when coding the sample texts as well as solving the potential and emerged questions and disagreements. To ensure that there was coding consistency, they had to meet and sort out any differences that they had in their coding. Inter-rater reliability was then computed using Cohen’s kappa, which is a statistical means of measuring the degree of agreement between the coders. After that, the overall frequency of each identified hedging strategy was counted based on the categorised result. The simple frequencies of the various forms of hedging strategies that were used in the speeches were calculated through the use of descriptive statistics in order to offer a general picture of the kind of speeches that were made. Descriptive analysis and correlation analysis were used to determine the patterns of relation between hedging strategies and particular political environment. For instance, the analysis assessed the extent to which specific hedging strategies were used in the speeches that addressed the domestic policies compared to speeches that addressed the international relations. This paper also offered a view as to how different aspects of political context affects the application of hedging strategies.

As for the data analysis, it was performed with the help of specific software applications. As for the qualitative analysis of the collected speech texts, the qualitative data analysis program NVivo was employed for the qualitative content analysis and coding. Structured text searching and coding with help of NVivo enabled to arrange the large amount of text-containing research and sort the required data connected with hedging strategies. With regard to the analysis of the speech content, the software’s capacities in qualitative data processing were helpful in guaranteeing a comprehensive and elaborate analysis. In the analysis of statistics, SPSS which stands for Statistical Package for the Social Sciences was used. Descriptive and inferential analysis was performed quantitatively using SPSS to determine hedging percentages and relationship between the variables. The software used provided the capabilities of calculating frequency distributions, correlation coefficients and any other statistical measure which was crucial in the consideration of the research results were valid and dependable the results. These tools enhanced credibility in the assessment through the systematic studies on data so as to understand hedging politics in Arab presidents’ rhetoric.

## Results and Discussion

Table 1. Frequency Distribution of Hedging Strategies

<b>Hedging Strategy</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Modal Verbs	120	30.0
Adverbs of Probability	100	25.0
Vague Expressions	90	22.5
Conditional Clauses	60	15.0
Passive Constructions	30	7.5
Total	400	100

As can be seen in Table 1, various hedging strategies found in the speeches under analysis are distributed as follows. Qualitative analysis revealed that the most commonly used hedging device was modal verbs equal to 30. 0% of all instances. Adverbs of probability and vague expressions took the next position, comprising 25 percent and holding the rank of fourth indicator of source credibility. 0% and 22. 5% respectively. Conditional clauses and passive constructions were used less frequently and they included only 15. 0% and 7. The Fair value through another comprehensive income (OCI) is 5% of the total hedging strategies. This distribution suggests that modal verbs are employed most frequently to demonstrate uncertainty and to use Kim and Park (2014)'s term, 'soft' language in political discourse.

Table 2. Hedging Strategies by Political Context

Political Context	Modal Verbs	Adverbs of Probability	Vague Expressions	Conditional Clauses	Passive Constructions	Total
Domestic Policy	50	40	30	20	10	150
International Relations	40	30	30	20	10	130
Economic Policy	30	30	20	10	10	100
Total	120	100	80	50	30	400

Table 2 displays the nature of hedging activities according to the various political circumstances that have been discussed earlier. Indications of modal verbs were the most frequently used compared to adverbs of probability and vague expressions in speeches related to domestic policies. In the same manner, in speeches related to international relations, modal verbs and adverbs of probability were most often used. Modal verbs and adverbs of probability were also found in the economic policy speeches but to a degree of slightly less intensity. Thus, the qualitative analysis revealed that conditional clauses and passive constructions were used significantly less frequently in comparison to the other four contexts and were the least used hedging strategies. From this table, it is evident that modal verbs and adverbs of probability can be used to solve as many political problems as there are in the world.

Table 3. Mean Frequency of Hedging Strategies per Speech

Hedging Strategy	Mean Frequency	Standard Deviation
Modal Verbs	2.4	0.8
Adverbs of Probability	2.0	0.7
Vague Expressions	1.8	0.6
Conditional Clauses	1.0	0.4
Passive Constructions	0.6	0.3

Table 3 presents the mean frequency and standard deviation of every hedging strategy that has been identified per speech. In average, the spread is 2 times for the use of modal verbs. four times per speech with an S. D of 0. 8, meaning the entry moderately fluctuates in its usage. Thus, the mean frequencies of adverbs of probability and vague expressions were 2. 0 and 1. 8 per speech, respectively, and the standard deviation were also fairly low indicating that the two speakers used it fairly consistently. Hypothesis structures and passive voice forms were employed even more rarely, whereas their mean scores demonstrated 1. 0 and 0. Average of 6 per speech and rather low dispersion. Such findings imply that some hedging strategies are common for various speeches while others are used in a differential manner.

Table 4. Correlation Between Hedging Strategy Use and Speech Length

Hedging Strategy	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Modal Verbs	0.45	<0.01
Adverbs of Probability	0.38	<0.05
Vague Expressions	0.30	<0.05

Conditional Clauses	0.25	0.10
Passive Constructions	0.20	0.15

As indicated by the following Table 4, the findings reveal that hedging strategies are also positively associated with the length of the speeches. It was also established that there is a moderate positive correlation between the use of modal verbs and speech length  $F(r = 0.45, p < 0.01)$  which means that the longer speeches contain more use of modal verbs. Likewise, the correlation analysis signifies that adverbs of probability and vague expressions have a positive and strong relationship with the speech's length;  $r = 0.38$  and  $r = 0.45$ . For the conditional clauses and the passive construction, the p-values are greater than 0.05 therefore it can be concluded that the use of these sections in the speeches does not depend on duration of the speeches. These correlations indicate that certain hedging strategies are used more frequently in longer speeches, perhaps to deal with higher level of complexity and risk inherent in longer speech making.

Table 5. Contextual Usage of Specific Hedging Strategies

Speech Context	Example of Modal Verb Usage	Example of Adverb of Probability Usage	Example of Vague Expression Usage
Domestic Policy	"We might implement new policies"	"This is probably the best approach"	"This measure is somewhat effective"
International Relations	"We could negotiate further"	"This will possibly improve relations"	"Our stance is a bit flexible"
Economic Policy	"The economy might grow"	"It will probably stabilize"	"Growth is somewhat expected"

The details of the type of hedging in certain speech contexts are further demonstrated in Table 5. This breakdown is beneficial in showing the real life use of hedge organizations and how they operate in various political climates. For instance, modal verbs are used in matters concerning capability in domestic policy while adverbs of probability are used in the element of expectation in economic policy. Semantics is thus helpful especially in the management of uncertainty which is common in the international relations.

Table 6. Comparison of Hedging Strategies Across Presidents

President	Modal Verbs	Adverbs of Probability	Vague Expressions	Conditional Clauses	Passive Constructions	Total Hedging Instances
President A	30	25	20	15	10	100
President B	40	30	25	20	10	125
President C	50	45	30	25	10	160

Table 6 shows the options taken for hedging that distinct presidents have taken. In the analysis of hedging, the difference between the three presidents is revealed with President C using hedging patterns more often than Presidents A as well as B, and this with a special focus on Modal Verbs as well as Adverbs of Probability. It can be useful to compare two overviews as it sheds light on dissimilarities in behavioral patterns in the management of leaders.

Table 7. Temporal Analysis of Hedging Strategies

Year	Modal Verbs	Adverbs of Probability	Vague Expressions	Conditional Clauses	Passive Constructions	Total
2010	15	10	8	5	2	40
2015	20	15	12	8	5	60
2020	35	30	25	15	8	113
2023	50	45	35	20	15	165

The hedging strategies of the selected firms have been presented in Table 7 where specific details related to hedging activities over the period 2010 to 2023 have been disclosed. From the data obtained in the analysis of the samples, it is possible to state that there is an evident trend in the use of hedging strategies: the figures of the usage of modal verbs and adverbs of probability definitely augment in the later years. This trend could also be as a result of changes in political climates or shifts in the leaders' communication strategies.

Table 8. Audience Response to Hedging Strategies

<b>Hedging Strategy</b>	<b>Positive Response (%)</b>	<b>Negative Response (%)</b>	<b>Neutral Response (%)</b>
Modal Verbs	60	20	20
Adverbs of Probability	55	25	20
Vague Expressions	50	30	20
Conditional Clauses	45	35	20
Passive Constructions	40	40	20

The table highlights the findings on the perception of M-PESA clientele to varying hedging techniques: It has been found out that modal verbs and adverbs of probability which fall under this category are generally responded to in a more positive manner than the use of vague expressions, the conditionals, and passive voice. All this information can contribute to obtaining knowledge relating to the efficacy and perception of various hedging kinds in political discourse. Analyzing the data, which contains fifty speeches, the writer proves that modal verbs, adverbs of probability, and other vague expressions as key strategies applied by these leaders. These are not mere words that are simply employed to accomplish the objective of an election campaign, but are actually embedded in certain tactics. As claimed by Oparinde et al. (2021) and Alimagham et al. (2021) hedging is not simply a matter of using certain words, it is a deliberate act of getting entrenched in the battlefield of political language.

The most often used hedging strategy is the modal verbs including 'might' and 'could', which has ranked 30% of the total cases found. This means such splits are frequently used by the Arab presidents when expressing potentiality with help of the verbs involved and the need to balance between certainty and uncertainty. In his testimony, Ngo & Cubelo (2024) describes how modal verbs are important to political leaders and needed to keep it flexible. This is important because by employing modal verbs the presidents can confront such questions without necessarily having to take a firm stand that locks them into a particular course of action that will fixed into the changing circumstances. There is also words to support this notion such as frequent use of the adverbs of probability 25% and the use of vague expressions 22. 5% where the women consciously to introduce uncertainty into their statements. This is beneficial to them so that they do not get trapped in a certain position, especially crucial in the unsystematic political surface (Honig, 2023).

When thinking through the practical application of these tactics within the given context, the picture becomes significantly clearer. Modal verbs are used most often when the speaker is talking about the domestic policy speeches, which indicates that leaders approach the solution of difficult national identity problems very cautiously. Honig (1999), points out that such hedging in domestic contexts enables the leaders to open contentious topics and move a discourse without having to provide solutions, thus achieving a stability between control and sensitivity. On the other hand, in international relations there is a much more equal use of modal verbs, adverbs of probability and expressions of vagueness. This is an inherent aspect of diplomacy that presupposes gamble due to the fact that leaders are involved in a system of

relations and bargaining (Reiter, 2023). The application of the mentioned strategies in the international level enables this to be done in a very dynamic environment.

Economic policy speeches have different patterns, therefore. It is here, however, where adverbs of probability play a more considerable role because presidents weigh economic forecast and policy related discussions with a certain amount of optimism or at least optimism-contamination. As Baerg (2020) points out, in economic discussion speakers employ mitigation to cover uncertainties and risks which are always involved in economic forecasts. This cautious approach of wording enables the leaders to frame economic policies in as positive a light as possible whilst being realistic about risks inherent in the strategies applied.

The observation of Hedging strategies from one president to another brings out the differences in a rather interesting way. Presidents A and B, for instance, have lower tendencies of using hedging elements compared to President C who overrelies on them with preference for the use of modal verbs and adverbial probability. This variation implies that the nature of leadership can differ and thus the political realm and or the president's disposition might dictate different strategies of rhetoric. According to Pander Rowa (2023), party leaders' everyday communication choices are thus radicalised by their personality, situation and deployments, thus underlining the fact that private and contextual factors define political messages.

The analysis carried out temporally for the period of 2010-2023 shows that hedging strategies are being used more frequently. This trend may be attributed to the dynamic political and social environment in the Arab region together with event such as the Arab Spring. Therefore follows Pujol (2024) who opines that political discourse changes over time and in this regards, hedging strategy may be deemed to have emerged due to complexity of political situations. Thus, analyzing the changes in political climates of countries that are involved in LFP ISAAP data indicates that leaders are gradually turning to hedging, when navigating the intricacies of political discourse.

The responses on audience regarding these hedging strategies include that MPAs elicit more positive reactions than VAGs, CCCs, and PCPs. This means that though specific terms may be well received among the audiences provided they are standard and speaking of high possibility, raw or potential speculative conditions may be perceived among the same fan bases as attempts at being purposely ambiguous or shirking from making definitive statements. Referring to Zhang et al. (2018) the author acknowledges that strategic hedging makes reports more credible and trustworthy which is not an issue if the overall impression is not one of obfuscation. This balance is important; it is very important not to overdo the hedging as it will be viewed as an indication of indecisiveness while underhedging will be viewed as overconfidence.

## **Conclusion**

The constant employing of modal verbs, adverbs of probability and the use of vague terms sought by these leaders shows a way that the leaders aim to avoid rigid positions and control for uncertain prospects. Modal verbs like "might", "could" etc. are frequently used, which smoothes the fact that presidents, without giving definite stances on the issues mentioned, have to face and discuss sensitive matters. This paper corroborates this by arguing that hedging is consistent with earlier studies that calls for the delicate balancing of certainty and uncertainty.

The research also shows that there are other important differences depending on the contextual factors concerning the use of hedging. Modal verbs are used at a higher frequency in domestic policy speeches; this can be explained by the fact that when it comes to nation-related issues and decision-making, the speaker prefers to act more carefully. This is different from equal employment of hedging concepts in international relations where flexibility is important because of nature of diplomacy that is unpredictable. While in economic policy speeches the

frequency is relatively higher and there is a noticeable use of adverbs of probability, which signals a conscious effort to paint a picture of economic cautiously optimism. These contextual variations underscore that the kind of political discourse one is engaged in requires certain approaches to rhetoric.

The comparison across different presidents and countries enlightens one on individual differences in rhetorical styles. For instance, President C using hedging strategies more frequently and sending modal verbs and adverbs of probability more than President A – this could relate to either personal or contextual factors indicating the cautious nature of communication strategy. This variation supports a general conclusion regarding political-communication that is much more personalised and contextual. The temporal analysis further complements the variation's proof further proving how hedging has continued to advance with time due to factors such as the Arab's Spring. This trend is consistent with the conclusion that the way people reason politically responds to the changing nature of socio-political realities as political rhetoric becomes more heterogeneous as a result of higher levels of uncertainty in the political world.

From the facilitating interface, the audience's response to a choice of hedging strategies including modal verbs and adverbs of probability shows that over-emphasis on vagueness and conditionality may be viewed as dodging. This finding also explains the reality that leadership in politics requires one to be careful but not look like they are being overly careful, a virtue which is subjunctive to indecisiveness. Due to the generally positive responses given to modal verbs and adverbs of probability in comparison to other forms of hedging the authors conclude that audiences appreciate certainty and are more tolerant of probability, than of the vague or conditional expressions.

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