

# A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis of Stance-Taking in Democratic American Speeches of Immigration

\*Noora Adnan Abd Aljaleel, \*\*Prof. Dr. Bushra Ni'ma Rashid  
Al-Iraqia University, College of Arts, The Department of the English Language, Iraq

## تحليل اجتماعي-تداولي لاتخاذ المواقف في خطابات الهجرة الديمقراطية الأمريكية

نورا عدنان عبد الجليل

أ.د. بشرى نعمة رشيد

الجامعة العراقية/ كلية الآداب/ قسم اللغة الانجليزية

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### Abstract

Stance-taking, defined as the manifestation of speakers' attitudes, evaluations, emotions, and opinions, is one of the key features of political speech. Within the Democratic American immigration speech genre, stance-taking assumes paramount importance in molding public opinion and establishing the national identity of America. Biber & Finegan (1989), as developed by Du Bois (2007), have developed the concept of stance, which refers to the socio-linguistic strategy adopted by the speaker for creating alignments. The problem is that most of the existing studies have concentrated on the ideological polarization of the discourse, the use of metaphors, and discourse strategies, but the pragmatic means of stance-taking, such as hedging, boosting, modality, and evaluative expressions, have not been adequately investigated. The present paper aims at: Determining the most frequently utilized lexical strategies and socio-pragmatic resources that contribute to the construction of stance in the corpus of Democratic American immigration speeches. The paper used a framework including the stance markers by Biber and Finegan (1989), the socio-pragmatic stance markers by Hyland (1999), and finally the Appraisal Theory by Martin and White (2005). On the data side, this paper focuses strictly on Democratic American immigration speeches given by prominent politicians of the United States. The conclusion. The over-representation of the highest frequency categories in all three models (boosters: 27%, Verb + that clause: 33%, Graduation: Force: 21%) reveals a common rhetorical symmetry. The text is an elegant combination of the interactional authority, the syntactic credibility, and the moral alignment that characterize contemporary presidential discourse, which is built on a complex language convergence to systematically create and defend institutional legitimacy.

**Keyword:** *Stance-taking; Immigration; A Socio-Pragmatic Analysis; Democratic*

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## ملخص

يُعرّف اتخاذ المواقف بأنه إظهار مواقف المتحدثين وتقييماتهم وعواطفهم وآرائهم، وهو أحد السمات الرئيسية للخطاب السياسي. وفي سياق خطابات الهجرة الديمقراطية الأمريكية، يكتسب اتخاذ المواقف أهمية قصوى في تشكيل الرأي العام وترسيخ الهوية الوطنية الأمريكية. وقد طوّر بيبر وفينيجان (1989)، كما طوّر دو بويز (2007)، مفهوم الموقف، الذي يشير إلى الاستراتيجية الاجتماعية اللغوية التي يتبناها المتحدث لخلق تحالفات. تكمن المشكلة في أن معظم الدراسات الحالية ركزت على الاستقطاب الأيديولوجي للخطاب، واستخدام الاستعارات، واستراتيجيات الخطاب، بينما لم تُدرس الوسائل البراغماتية لاتخاذ المواقف، مثل التحوط، والتأكيد، والأسلوب، والتعبيرات التقييمية، بشكل كافٍ. تهدف هذه الورقة البحثية إلى: تحديد الاستراتيجيات المعجمية والموارد الاجتماعية-التداولية الأكثر استخدامًا التي تُسهم في بناء الموقف في مجموعة خطابات الهجرة للديمقراطيين الأمريكيين. استخدمت الورقة إطارًا يتضمن مؤشرات الموقف لبيبر وفينيجان (1989)، ومؤشرات الموقف الاجتماعية-التداولية لهيلاند (1999)، وأخيرًا نظرية التقييم لمارتن ووايت (2005). من ناحية البيانات، تركز هذه الورقة بشكل حصري على خطابات الهجرة للديمقراطيين الأمريكيين التي ألقاها سياسيون بارزون في الولايات المتحدة. الخاتمة. يُظهر التمثيل المفرط للفئات الأكثر تكرارًا في النماذج الثلاثة (المعززات: 27٪، الفعل + جملة "أن": 33٪، التدرج: القوة: 21٪) تماثلًا بلاغيًا مشتركًا. يُمثل النص مزيجًا أنيقًا من السلطة التفاعلية، والمصادقية النحوية، والتوافق الأخلاقي الذي يُميز الخطاب الرئاسي المعاصر، والذي يقوم على تقارب لغوي مُعقّد لخلق الشرعية المؤسسية والدفاع عنها بشكل منهجي.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** اتخاذ المواقف، الهجرة، تحليل اجتماعي براغماتي، الديمقراطية

### 1. Introduction

Immigration discourse is one of the most prominent aspects of public opinion, the construction of the concept of national identity, and the legitimation of the decisions taken by Democratic American politicians. Therefore, political discourse on immigration can provide an appropriate context for the discussion on the concept of stance-taking, which is the focus of this paper. Stance-taking is the linguistic strategy adopted by the speaker for evaluating, expressing attitudes, and creating alignments on matters of concern. The socio-pragmatic relevance of the concept of stance-taking is closely related to the social context of the use of language, which affects the discourse of politics. The discourse on immigration often involves the creation of ideological differences between groups of people, which can be expressed as 'us' vs. 'them', as discussed by van Dijk (2006) in his discourse on ideology. Moreover, research in political discourse has shown that politicians use language tricks in terms of metaphor, evaluative language, and evidential markers in order to position their own stance. Charteris-Black (2011) and Reyes (2011) point to these strategies. In terms of immigration rhetoric, for instance, politicians tend to use moral and emotive language in order to influence their audience's perception of an issue, which is a common phenomenon in political discourse.

### 2. Theoretical background

#### 2.1 Sociolinguistics

Sociolinguistics is a branch of linguistics that studies how language and society affect each other. It is concerned with how language works as a tool for communication and how it reveals and creates social meaning (Wardhaugh, 1986). It is an established branch of linguistics that tries to understand how things such as class, ethnicity, and gender, and an individual's position in an institution, affect how people speak and how they communicate with each other (Crystal, 1992).

From this perspective, it can be seen that language is always used in a social context. People use language to identify themselves and to identify the relationships and groups they belong to (Holmes, 2013). Therefore, sociolinguistics provides an important foundation for understanding how stance is constructed in political discourse and how people create their identity. This branch of linguistics tries to understand how language varies and changes across different social groups and contexts (Llamas, Mullany & Stockwell, 2007).

## 2.2 Pragmatics

Pragmatics is the analysis of meaning in the context in which it is used; in other words, “the way in which meaning is communicated by the speaker and the way in which meaning is inferred by the listener beyond the linguistic form of the utterances” (Yule, 1996). Pragmatics does not look at language as a set of rules, but at it as produced within social, cultural, and interactional contexts. Pragmatics are especially useful for papering political discourse, as politicians carefully shape their utterances to fulfill persuasive, ideological, and relational objectives that may have little to nothing to do with what is explicitly said (Huang, 2007, p. 12).

## 2.3 Context in Pragmatics

Context, as the further condition of all pragmatics—of meaning beyond the literal content of words—is at the centre. Without context, there is no evidence of speaker intent or what assumptions are in play, nor how an utterance should be interpreted — and hence why the concept of context has been characterized as a constitutive notion for pragmatics as a domain (Su, 2021).

Context is the set of influences evident in a communicative event that bear on how utterances are produced and understood. These are the identities and relationships of those involved, the location and function of an interaction, the information and common assumptions speakers have about each other, and the wider social and institutional context in which communication occurs (Verschueren, 2008). Van Dijk (2008, p. 1) tells us that context is “the subjective definitions of the real-time relevant properties in as far as they are represented by the participants in their mental models of the communicative situation.”

## 2.4 Socio-Pragmatics: Definition and Scope

Socio-pragmatics is the paper of how people use language in social and cultural settings. Also, it involves how norms, values, and relationships shape how meaning is understood within language. It also concerns the checking of speakers' selection of language in relation to some factors in social distance, power, and culture (Leech 1983). Leech (1983), therefore, contrasts socio-pragmatics with pragmalinguistics, as two sides of the same pragmatic coin. Socio-pragmatics is the (sub)subchapter of pragmatics that concerns, rather, with contextually relevant contextual factors - power and social distance, positionality in institutional hierarchies and cultural contexts - which together influence how communicative actions are operationalised.

## 2.5 Stance-taking

Stance-taking is one of the key terms in the field of discourse analysis and sociolinguistics, which refers to how speaker's express evaluations or position themselves and build alignment with others during interaction. Its application in linguistic research has not been without controversy, operating under the working definition that no universally accepted single term is suitable given the way it can be viewed from various theoretical lenses. That is to say, it has mostly been regarded as a heterogeneous notion in the literature (Englebretson 2007).

According to Du Bois (2007), stance-taking is a basic phenomenon and 'actors' within a communicative context — the ability for interlocutors to “deploy language instrumentally in the service of social action.” It should also be noted that he explains stance-taking is implicitly related to “evaluation” as participants are voicing some sort of evaluation towards the subject matter during the act of communication. This evaluative component is not a superficial dimension; rather, it highlights that within stance-taking are embedded forms of power.

### 2.5.1 Characteristics of Stance-Taking

Research shows that taking a stance has two common features: subjectivity and evaluation. These are characteristics that constitute the socio-pragmatic features of stance-taking, especially in politically loaded contexts such as immigration discourse (Du Bois, 2007).

### 2.6.2.1 Subjectivity

Engebretson (2007) describes subjectivity about the use of ‘reading’ as self-expression involved in communication, where stance takers present their own orientations. A stance is when an interlocutor encodes their view on something in their speech.

### 2.5.2.2 Evaluation

Evaluation is a hallmark of stance-taking, according to Du Bois (2007), who claims that ‘taking a stance necessarily invokes an evaluation at one level or another, whether overtly as in assertion or inferentially’ (p. 52).

## 3. Methodology

### 3.1 Research Design

The paper combines quantitative and qualitative analyses, adopting a mixed-methods approach, yielding a comprehensive overview of the state of the art in stance-taking in immigration discourses across America. Mixed methods research is the type of research that provides a procedure for collecting evidence, either quantitative or qualitative, and then mixing the results (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011).

### 3.2 Data Collection and Description

The data employed in the empirical analysis comprises 4 political speeches, which are deliberately and evenly distributed between two main political institutions in the United States, namely four speeches from the Democratic Party (DS1-DS4). Speeches were collected from official and public sources such as those found at the White House (whitehouse.gov), the Congressional Record (congress.gov), and reputable media outlets, including CNN, The New York Times, and C-SPAN, and had been verified from their transcripts.

**Table (1) The Data**

No.	Speaker	Speech Title / Occasion	Year	Context	Party	Code
1	Joe Biden	Remarks on Immigration Border Security, White H	2021	Executive Address	Democratic	DS1
2	Joe Biden	Address on the U.S.-Me Border Challenge	2023	Policy Address	Democratic	DS2
3	Joe Biden	State of the Union Speech	2024	Official Address Congress	Democratic	DS3
4	Joe Biden	Remarks on the Anniversary of DACA	2024	Advocacy Address	Democratic	DS4

For analysis purposes, the time period from 2021-2025 can be broken down into three broad phases based on key developments in American immigration discourse. As mentioned above, these phases do not represent any historical classification of Democratic American immigration discourse per se; rather, they provide analytical categories for better understanding the evolution of stance-taking in the field

### 3.3 Analytical Model

The method of analysis adopted in this research is an eclectic analytical model that combines Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse model, Biber's (2006) lexico-grammatical model of stance, and Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory.

#### 3.3.1 Component One: Interactional Metadiscourse Markers — Hyland (1999)

The first component of the analytical model draws on Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse model, which captures the interpersonal dimension of stance-taking. Hyland (1999, p. 5) defines metadiscourse as: "The linguistic material in texts which does not add propositional content but which signals the writer's or speaker's awareness of the unfolding discourse and of the reader or listener as a discourse participant."

This component comprises five subcategories applied in the present paper:

- a. **Hedges:** Linguistic devices that reduce the speaker's commitment to a proposition and open space for alternative interpretations, thereby signaling tentativeness or epistemic caution.
- b. **Boosters:** Devices that strengthen the speaker's commitment to a claim, conveying certainty and authority.
- c. **Attitude Markers:** Expressions of the speaker's affective or evaluative attitude toward propositional content.
- d. **Engagement Markers:** Devices that explicitly acknowledge and construct the relationship between the speaker and the audience, fostering solidarity between speaker and audience.
- e. **Person Markers:** The use of first-person singular and plural pronouns to position the speaker in relation to the audience and the political collective.

#### 3.3.2 Component Two: Lexico-grammatical Stance Markers — Biber (2006)

The second component of the model employs Biber's (2006) model of lexico-grammatical stance markers, grounded in corpus-based research on register and stance in English (Biber, 2006).

- a. **Stance verb + that-clause.** This construction explicitly positions the speaker epistemically (certainty) or attitudinally (feeling) regarding the following clause (Biber, 2006). Example: "...and I said when we became a team and got elected, that the Vice President was going to be the last person in the room." (DS3, 2021)
- b. **Stance verb + to-clause.** These structures typically convey meanings of intentionality, effort, obligation, or desirability (Biber, 2006). Example: "But the Vice President and I, and all of us here, have been working very hard to — to pass the legislation..." (DS3, 2021)
- c. **Stance adjective + that-clause.** Impersonal or structural constructions that distribute evaluation beyond the individual speaker, presenting it as generalized or collectively endorsed truth (Biber, 2006). Example: "...to provide over \$700 million to the countries in the Northern Triangle to determine [that] the best way to keep people from coming is keep them from wanting to leave." (DS3, 2021)
- d. **Stance adjective + to-clause.** These patterns contain an adjective taking a non-finite to-infinitive complement clause, dynamically oriented toward potentiality, ability, necessity, or structural obligation (Biber, 2006). Example: "Thanks for being willing to do this, and I really appreciate it." (DS3, 2021)

##### 3.3.2.2 Modal and Semi-modal Verbs

Modal verbs (must, should, may, might, will, would, can, could) and semi-modal expressions (have to, need to, ought to, be going to) are among the most frequently used stance-marking resources in English political discourse (Biber, 2006). They encode epistemic (certainty/possibility), deontic (obligation/permission), and dynamic modality (ability/willingness).

### 3.3.2.3 Stance Adverbs

Biber (2006) identifies stance adverbs as adverbial expressions that convey the speaker's epistemic, attitudinal, or stylistic orientation toward the proposition. Following Biber (2006), three functional subtypes are distinguished in this paper:

**(a) Epistemic Stance Adverbs:** Convey the speaker's degree of certainty or commitment to the truth of a proposition (e.g., certainly, probably, undoubtedly, clearly, apparently). Example: “**Actually**, the number of crossings has decreased.” (DS2, 2023).

**(b) Attitudinal Stance Adverbs:** Convey the speaker's affective or evaluative orientation toward a state of affairs (e.g., unfortunately, thankfully, surprisingly, ironically). Example: “...have been working very hard to — to pass the legislation...” (DS1, 2021),

**(c) Style Stance Adverbs:** Describe the manner in which the speaker presents the message rather than the content of the proposition by itself (frankly, honestly, briefly, simply). (Biber et al., 2006). “To be frank, we are gonna get it done.” (DS1, 2021),

### 3.3.3 Component Three: Appraisal theory—Martin and White (2005)

The third element of the analytical model is based on Martin and White's (2005) Appraisal Theory. According to Martin and White (2005, p. 1), appraisal is defined as: “... all of the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, how strongly felt each attitude is, and how values are sourced, and readers aligned.” It has three interrelated systems: Appraisal, Engagement, and Graduation.

#### 3.3.3.1 Attitude

It includes the positive and negative evaluations that provide this kind of attitude in discourse (Martin & White, 2005). We structure it along 3 semantic imperatives that are relevant for immigration discourse:

a. **Affect:** Appeals, nowater-associated enactment dealing with verbal and/or physical expression of emotions towards people, occasions, and wonder, including delights/unhappiness/settling/dissatisfaction (Martin & White, 2005). **Affect (Security/Insecurity)** “And I’m **proud** of the job that — that the Vice President is doing.” (DS1, 2021) Example: **Affect (Compassion/Empathy)** “...to the countries in the Northern Triangle to determine **the best way to keep people from coming is keep them from wanting to leave.**” (DS1, 2021).

b. **Judgement:** Evaluations of human behavior and character by reference to social norms and moral standards (Martin & White, 2005). Judgement encompasses social esteem (normality, capacity, tenacity) and social sanction (veracity, propriety). Extension: Appreciation (Complexity) “It’s our responsibility to deal with it humanely...” (DS1, 2021) Example (30): Appreciation (Valuation) “Then there's there about five big things she's coping with...” (DS1, 2021). **Appreciation:** Appraisals of aesthetic and social worth for objects, texts, and processes, not people (Martin & White, 2005). Example: “This is a beautiful country, made by immigrants.” (DS1, 2021).

#### 3.3.3.2 Engagement

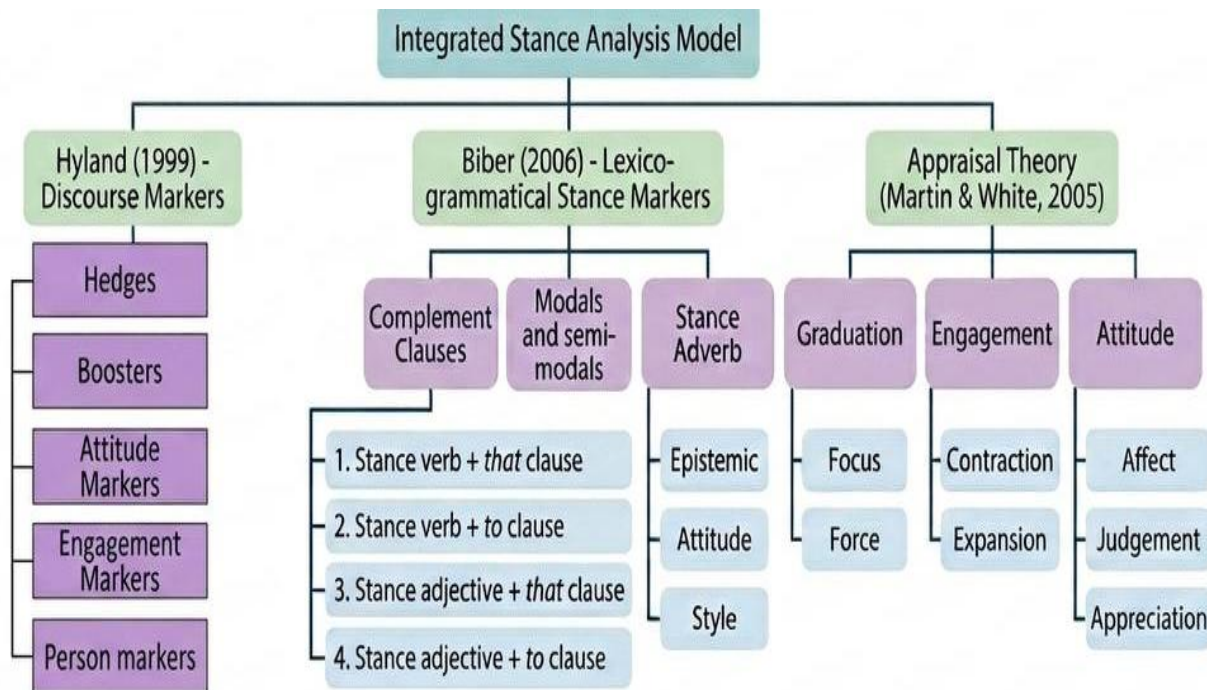
Engagement is related to the way speakers position their subjects and do their subject constructions when interacting with the subject, and to how they construct the dialogic space of a text (Martin & White, 2005). The two main subsystems identified are: **Expansion:** Resources that open the dialogic space by acknowledging alternative positions, including Entertainment (probability, possibility) and Attribution (distance) (Martin & White, 2005). Example: “Perhaps there is a middle ground.” (DS1, 2021).

#### 3.3.3.3 Graduation

The graduation system involves the way speakers move between intensities, strength, or precision of the evaluative meanings (Martin & White, 2005). There are two main axes on which graduation takes place:

- a. **Force:** Changing the intensity and/or the quantification of an evaluation (Martin & White, 2005, p. 137). A force may be exaggerated (e.g., utterly critical, very alarming, utterly unacceptable) or reduced (e.g., slightly concerning, slightly problematic). In political speeches, 'force resources' are often used to increase the emotional and rhetorical weight of evaluations in immigration discourse. **Force (Intensity: Amplification) Force (Quantification: Amount)** "...this **new surge** we're dealing with now..." (DS1, 2021).
- b. **Focus:** Adjustments in the precision or typicality of a category (Martin & White, 2005, p. 152). Focus may sharpen a category boundary (e.g., a true American, a real crisis) or soften it (e.g., something of a problem, a kind of failure). Example: **Focus (Sharpening: "Prototypes") Focus (Softening: "Vagueness")**

Figure 3.1. Integrated Stance Analysis Model (ISAM)



#### 4. Data Analysis

##### 4.1 A Brief Introduction to the Data

The dataset comprises eight political speeches and forty analytically chosen excerpts from these political speeches. The 4 political speeches, where four were selected from Democratic politicians (DS1–DS4) during the years 2021–2025.

##### 4.2 Analytical Procedure

The analysis presented in this section is conducted using the Integrated Stance Analysis Model. Therefore, each extract is analyzed using the following steps: Interactional Metadiscourse Analysis (Hyland, 1999). Lexico-grammatical Stance Analysis (Biber, 2006). Appraisal Analysis (Martin & White, 2005). Socio-Pragmatic Integration of the Results of the Previous Three Steps

##### 4.3 Analysis of Democratic Immigration Speeches

Below are the analyses of the selected extracts from the corpora of the Democrats' political Immigration Speeches

**Extract 1**

**“Back when I was Vice President, I got a similar assignment, but one of the things we did was we made sure that we got a bipartisan agreement with Democrats and Republicans to provide over \$700 million to the countries in the Northern Triangle to determine the best way to keep people from coming is keep them from wanting to leave.”**

Speech DS1 belongs to the set of speeches given by President Biden in 2021 on immigration and border security, forming the first component of the Democratic sub-corpus by President Biden from the White House as an official Executive Address. The speech can be viewed as a rhetorical turn that is central to the “Institutional Recalibration Phase” of today's border politics.

**a. Interactional Metadiscourse Model**

Based on Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse framework, there are multiple interpersonal interactional metadiscourse resources used by Biden for constructing his credibility, authority, and alignment with the target audience. The line “I was Vice President” is a self-mention resource where Biden emphasizes both his institutional legacy and his political credentials. The first-person plural pronoun in the phrases “we did” and “we made sure” is a self-mention (person marker) that occurs collectively. This resource builds a shared sense of responsibility and institutional teamwork. Third, the term “made sure” acts as a booster in that it indicates a high level of commitment, certainty, and confidence as they relate to the effectiveness of the previous policy measures.

**b. Lexico-Grammatical Stance Resources**

Taking Biber's (2006) lexico-grammatical stance framework, the quote manifests several grammatical constructions which are responsible for the linguistic representation of epistemic and attitudinal stance: using a 'complementizer ellipsis' with the stance verb 'made sure' and a that-complement clause. On the other hand, phrases like ‘the best way’ break out of this grammar and work instead as lexical evaluative adjective phrases that evaluate the strategy proposed as being good. At the same time, the quote contains several clauses with multiple forms of the infinitive that function to express the intention, purpose, and policy orientation, namely: “to provide,” “to determine,” and “to keep.” They establish a direct relationship between the administrative executive agency and their desired socio-political effects.

**c. Appraisal and Evaluation**

**Attitude:** The Attitude subsystem is expressed most clearly through Judgment, as Biden characterizes the agreement as 'bipartisan' and the associated funding as 'responsible.' The explicit mention of 'Democrats and Republicans' does not inherently carry evaluative weight; Graduation: Force (Quantification) is made possible by the use of the phrase over \$700 million, which helps to emphasize the scale of the government's efforts. **Engagement Contract:** Proclaim strategy. By explicitly emphasizing the speaker's active intervention, the phrase rules out alternative possibilities and suppresses potential counterarguments, effectively closing down dialogic space.

**d. Integrative Socio-Pragmatic Interpretation**

The interactional metadiscourse resources help to establish the perception of political experience, collaboration, and executive leadership, while the grammatical stance resources help to convey the structural certainty and purposeful, goal-oriented policymaking.

**Extract 2**

**“Today I’d like to—the Vice President and I would like to talk you about how my administration is dealing with our situation in the southwest border. Now, these actions alone that I’m going to announce today aren’t going to fix our entire immigration system, but they can help us a good deal in better managing what is a difficult challenge. On my first day in office, some of you may recall, who cover this area—and they cover it well—I sent Congress a comprehensive piece of legislation that would completely overhaul what has been a broken immigration system for a**

**long time: cracking down on illegal immigration; strengthening legal immigration; and protecting Dreamers, those with temporary protected status, and farmworkers, who all are part of the fabric of our Nation.”**

The second macro-text in the Democratic sub-corpus (DS2) is a formal Policy Address, the 2023 Address on the U.S.-Mexico Border Challenge given by President Biden. This text is a pivotal moment in the communicative process in the middle of the so-called “Institutional Recalibration Phase” of contemporary border politics.

#### **a. Interactional Metadiscourse Model**

Based on Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse framework, there are multiple interpersonal interactional metadiscourse resources used by Biden. The first is that “these actions alone... aren't going to fix our entire immigration system” is a hedge. This resource does not call into question the structural finality of the executive actions, but rather downplays it. Second, “the Vice President and I,” “my administration,” and “some of you may recall” are a mixture of self-mention (person markers) and engagement markers.

#### **b. Lexico-Grammatical Stance Resources**

As described by Biber (2006) in his lexico-grammatical stance framework: These actions... 'aren't going to fix... but they can help'... so there is a complex coordination of a negated predictive construction 'going to' and an ability modal 'can': a construction that needs a negated predictive construction and is supplemented by a contrastive coordinator 'but'. At the same time, the sentence is highly active with its transitive construction and restrictive relative clause modifier: 'I sent Congress a comprehensive piece of legislation that would completely overhaul...'

#### **c. Appraisal Resources**

According to the Appraisal Theory of Martin and White (2005), **Attitude**, Negative Appreciation: Valuation, and a metaphorical system of value that is idealized. The immigration system is 'broken,' and the current situation is a ‘difficult challenge,’ which is an explicit negative appraisal of institutional capacity. **Graduation**: Force (Intensification and Quantification), such as: a good deal, completely overhaul, for a long time. The adverbial intensifier “completely” increases the extent of the proposed legislative solution, giving more emphasis to its comprehensiveness. **Engagement**: Heteroglossic. The statement “these actions alone... won't fix...but they can help” serves as a resource of Heterogloss.

#### **d. Integrative Socio-Pragmatic Interpretation**

The interactional metadiscourse resources convey the image of a cooperative, inclusive, and balanced statesman, one who is able to act with agency on behalf of the state, while respecting his institutional counterparts and the press corps. At the same time, the lexico-grammatical stance resources rely on modal verbs and purpose infinitives to support the incremental realism/goal-oriented reform stance of his policy actions. Lastly, the evaluative appraisal resources back the proposed bill by comparing a broken status quo to an ethical and comprehensive vision of a nation.

#### **Extract 3**

**“Tonight, I come to the same Chamber to address the Nation. Now it’s we who face an unprecedented moment in the history of the Union. And yes, my purpose tonight is to wake up the Congress and alert the American people that this is no ordinary moment either. Not since President Lincoln and the Civil War have freedom and democracy been under assault at home as they are today. What makes our moment rare is that freedom and democracy are under attack at both at home and overseas at the very same time. Overseas, Putin of Russia is on the march, invading Ukraine and sowing chaos throughout Europe and beyond. If anybody in this room thinks Putin will stop at Ukraine, I assure you: He will not.”**

The third macro-text from the Democratic sub-corpus (DS3) is President Biden's 2024 State of the Union Speech, with special attention to the highly charged portions on immigration policy and border control. This is an Official Address that was

delivered to a joint session of Congress and is a pivotal rhetorical moment in the transition from the 'recalibration' to the 'Hegemonic Consolidation Phase' of the modern boundary process.

#### a. Interactional Metadiscourse Model

According to Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse framework, Biden employs to manage the structural baseline, to project absolute epistemic commitment, and to create shared situational urgency with the audience. The first occurrence of the clause, 'Tonight, I come to the Chamber to address the Nation', is a situational anchoring and explicit authorial alignment. Lexico-grammatically, the sentence is started by the temporal circumstantial adverbial 'Tonight,' marking the immediate real-time baseline of the event. And this is complemented by the self-mention resource 'I', which explicitly situates the speaker's executive personae in the architecture of the clause.

#### b. Lexico-Grammatical Stance Resources

As analysed using Biber's (2006) lexico-grammatical stance framework, a hyper-stylised syntactic inversion, grammatical complementation and conditional structures imbue absolute historical gravity and certainty to the extract. Similarly, the final sentence, "If anyone in this room thinks Putin will hold back: I promise you — he won't" is taken from a conditional adverbial clause (If) governing a matrix verb of communication (will hold him back) functioning as an epistemic posture verb of guarantee (promise).

#### c. Appraisal Resources

**Attitude** strong Negative Judgment: Social Sanction (Propriety) tokens and by strong, explicit Negative Appreciation: Valuation tokens in a systemic way. The words used to refer to the actions of an external leader, such as "invasion of Ukraine and chaos", carry strong moral condemnatory undertones of egregious tyranny. **Graduation**: Force (Intensification and Quantification) is carried out in the text through the force of the items. Through the deployment of the phrase 'unprecedented moment', the discourse activates resources of Graduation: Force (Intensification) rather than simple unmediated Attitude. **Engagement**: Heteroglossic space. I promise you: He will NOT be a resource for Heterogloss: Contract - Proclaim (Pronounce). Biden's blunt attempt to say "the prediction is certain" does help to prevent some arguments or complacency.

#### d. Integrative Socio-Pragmatic Interpretation

The discourse's strategic framing of the current policy direction within a long historical trajectory makes the speaker appear as a statesman who is "looking beyond" the past and making a policy decision that is critical to the state's security. Biden relies on these coordinated layers of language to raise the political moment to a higher level of defense of democratic civilization.

#### Extract 4

**"These young people, known as Dreamers—Hispanic, South Asians, and more—who came to America as children, only know America as their home, have been able to live and learn out of the shadows. So many of them have graduated from high school and college and are starting families on their own, building successful careers, serving our Nation in uniform, and so, so much more."**

The fourth macro-text in the Democratic sub-corpus (DS4) is President Biden's remarks on the 12th Anniversary of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program. The speech is an important rhetorical moment in the "Hegemonic Consolidation Phase" of contemporary border politics.

#### a. Interactional Metadiscourse Model

In line with Hyland's (1999) interactional metadiscourse framework, interpersonal interactional metadiscourse resources. The final line, "and so, so much more," serves as an obvious booster. This is a linguistically intensive tool that strengthens

the speaker's absolute commitment to the value of this community. The metaphorical clause “have been able to live and learn out of the shadows” is used as an attitude marker by positive evaluation, rather than as a text-level frame marker.

#### b. Lexico-Grammatical Stance Resources

Biber's (2006) lexico-grammatical stance framework, the clause “have been able to live and learn out of the shadows” thus depends on a present perfect passive-modal helper of capability “have been able to” controlling a coordinated chain of bare infinitives. This is strengthened by the use of quantified nominal pre-modifiers and intensifiers, “So many of them”, “so, so much more”.

#### c. Appraisal Resources

According to the Appraisal Theory of Martin and White (2005), **Attitude**, Positive Judgement: Social Esteem (Capacity) and Social Sanction (Propriety). When these milestones are accomplished, they evoke strong positive self-assessments of capability. “Only know America as their home” evokes positive Appreciation: Valuation, giving naturalized value to their country. **Graduation**: Force (Quantification and Intensification) is clearly operationalized throughout the text to enhance the range of positive contributions of the group. The intensive force “so, so much more” is used repeatedly as a tool of Graduation: Force (Intensification), which increases the qualitative value of their worth. This is paired with the spatial and cultural listing “Hispanic, South Asians, and more”.

### 3. Engagement

Engagement is the system that traverses the highly contracted/protective Heteroglossic space. The host of civic achievements is communicated to the audience by presenting Monoglossic statements as unchallengeable and empirical facts. This way, Biden reduces the space for dialogue by constructing these sociological successes as unquestionable facts, without offering any other perspectives.

#### d. Integrative Socio-Pragmatic Interpretation

Biden employs these overlapping linguistic layers to reimagine undocumented youth as a valuable, highly productive national asset. The interactional metadiscourse resources create the image of a person who is both paternal and compassionate, who validates the presence of these people through empathetic labelling and intense boosters. At the same time, the lexico-grammatical stance resources rely on ability perfectives and continuous participial streams to substantiate their social presence with a civic and military contribution.

### 4.4 The Result

**Table 2: Linguistic Features in the Biden Speeches**

Model Framework	Linguistic Sub-Category	Occurrences	Percentages
Hyland's Discourse Markers	Boosters	42	27%
	Attitude Markers	35	23%
	Person Markers	31	20%
	Hedges	23	15%
	Relational Markers	19	12%
	<b>Model Total</b>		<b>151</b>

<b>Biber's Stance Markers</b>	Verb + that clause	29	33%
	Modals / Semi-modals	27	31%
	Stance Adverbs	18	20%
	Adjective + to clause	13	15%
	<b>Model Total</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Martin &amp; White's Appraisal Framework</b>	Graduation: Force	36	21%
	Attitude: Judgment	34	20%
	Engagement: Contract	31	18%
	Graduation: Focus	21	12%
	Attitude: Appreciation	18	10%
	Engagement: Expand	15	8%
	Attitude: Affect	14	8%
	<b>Model Total</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>100%</b>

Hyland's framework concerns the management of a speaker's relationship with the audience. Boosters (27%) are the most salient feature of the Biden corpus, and are used to strengthen the certainty of the speaker and create the impression of confidence. This is followed closely by Attitude Markers (23%) and Person Markers (20%) that form the Hyland's framework, which concerns the management of a speaker's relationship, grammar of authorial identity, and provides a clue to the speaker's evaluative or emotional stance on the issues that are being introduced. The most frequently used one is the Verb + that clause (33%), and it is by this that Biden forms evaluations as reported facts or strong convictions. Modals and Semi-modals (31%) also have their significance and have tendencies toward necessity and future obligation (e.g., we must, we can). At the same time, the use of Stance Adverbs (20%) and Adjective + to clauses (15%) provides secondary layers of assessment that allow the speaker to communicate his/her attitude towards whole propositions or to certain actions. In Appraisal Theory, force (21%), which is a rhetorical volume control for making the message more effective. This is used concurrently with Attitude: Judgment (20%), wherein the attitudes one expresses serve to knock down the morals or social judgments of the actions of others and become a pivotal tool in political persuasion. The lower frequency features (Graduation: Focus, 12%; Attitude: Appreciation, 10%; Engagement: Expand, 8%; Attitude: Affect, 8%) suggest that the text was less focused on raw personal feelings or open dialogic discussion.

## 5. Conclusion

The present paper conducts a sociopragmatic investigation of stance-taking in American immigration discourse based on the analysis of immigration speeches made by Joe Biden. Using a combination of the Interactional Metadiscourse Model put forward by Hyland (1999), the Lexico-grammatical Stance Model by Biber (2006), and Appraisal Theory developed by Martin and White (2005), the paper seeks to examine the use of linguistic resources by which politicians construct their evaluations, position themselves ideologically, and interact with their audiences. The analysis demonstrates that the rhetorical structure is very complex, multi-layered, and highly integrated. The over-representation of the highest frequency categories in all three models (boosters: 27%, Verb + that clause: 33%, Graduation: Force: 21%) reveals a common rhetorical symmetry. The text is an elegant combination of the interactional authority, the syntactic credibility, and the moral alignment that

characterize contemporary presidential discourse, which is built on a complex language convergence to systematically create and defend institutional legitimacy.

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## Appendixes

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