

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Research Background

Language plays an important role in political and diplomatic communication because political leaders use language not only to deliver information but also to represent political positions and build international relations (Fairclough, 1989). In political discourse, language is often used strategically to influence audiences and construct credibility in public communication. According to Reyes (2015), political actors employ linguistic resources to support political goals and establish a connection with audiences in communication. In diplomatic contexts, speakers are also expected to communicate carefully to avoid misunderstanding, conflict, or diplomatic tension. Therefore, political leaders frequently use linguistic strategies that help them maintain diplomatic caution while still appearing firm and authoritative in public discourse (Bhatia, 2014). One of the linguistic strategies commonly found in political communication is hedging, which allows speakers to reduce the degree of certainty or commitment in their statements (Raza et al., 2025).

This research focuses on the English economic diplomatic speeches of Prabowo Subianto delivered in international forums in 2025. As the president of Indonesia, Prabowo Subianto frequently discusses global economic issues such as international trade, food and energy security, industrialization, digital economy, and regional economic cooperation in diplomatic communication. His speeches are publicly accessible through official YouTube channels, making them relevant sources for linguistic analysis. In addition, Prabowo Subianto is widely recognized for his firm and direct communication style in public appearances (Purba et al., 2026). However, as a political leader involved in international diplomacy, he is also required to communicate carefully and maintain diplomatic flexibility. This condition makes his economic diplomatic speeches interesting to analyze, particularly regarding how hedges are used within assertive acts in economic diplomatic discourse.

Several previous studies have discussed speech acts and hedging in political discourse. However, studies that specifically examine the relationship between hedges and assertive acts in Prabowo Subianto's diplomatic speeches are still limited. Previous studies generally focused on speech acts or hedging separately, while the use of hedges within assertive acts in economic diplomatic communication has received less attention. Therefore, this study investigates the types and functions of hedges used within assertive acts and analyzes how hedges modify speaker commitment in economic diplomatic discourse. Through this research, the writer expects to contribute to pragmatic studies, especially in the analysis of hedging and assertive acts in economic diplomatic communication.

B. Statements of The Problem

This study investigates the use of hedges as commitment modification devices within assertive acts in President Prabowo Subianto's 2025 English economic diplomatic speeches, purposively selecting four speeches delivered at the World Governments Summit in Dubai, the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), and the APEC Summit in Gyeongju (two appearances) based on thematic homogeneity in economic diplomacy. These forums represent distinct yet complementary contexts of Indonesia's economic engagement, the World Governments Summit reflects Indonesia's vision on global governance and development; SPIEF reflects economic diplomacy amid geopolitical complexity and international sanctions, while APEC represents regional economic integration in the Asia-Pacific. The selection of four whole speeches ensures comprehensive analysis without arbitrary data reduction while maintaining a manageable corpus of 35 hedging instances for an undergraduate paper.

As a head of state speaking in international economic forums, President Prabowo is required to balance assertiveness and diplomatic caution when expressing Indonesia's positions on global economic issues. However, studies discussing the use and functions of hedging in his economic diplomatic discourse remain limited, particularly in relation to assertive acts. Therefore, this research focuses on identifying the types and functions of hedges, as well as how hedges

modify speaker commitment in his speeches. Based on the background above, the research questions are formulated as follows:

1. What types of hedges are found in Prabowo Subianto's assertive acts in the selected YouTube speeches?
2. What are the functions of hedges found in Prabowo Subianto's assertive acts in the selected YouTube speeches?
3. How do hedges modify the speaker's commitment within assertive acts in President Prabowo Subianto's economic diplomatic speeches?

C. Research Purposes and Significance

a. Research Purposes

1. To identify and classify the types of hedges used in the assertive acts of President Prabowo Subianto's economic diplomatic speeches based on Prince, Frader, and Bosk's (1980) taxonomy of hedges.
2. To explain the functions of hedges found in the assertive acts of President Prabowo Subianto's economic diplomatic speeches using Hyland's (1996) functional framework.
3. To identify how hedges modify the speaker's commitment within assertive acts in President Prabowo Subianto's economic diplomatic speeches based on speech act theory proposed by Searle (1979).

b. Research Significance

1. Theoretical Significance

This research is expected to contribute to the study of pragmatics, especially in the analysis of hedges and assertive acts in economic diplomatic discourse. In addition, this study is expected to enrich the application of speech act theory and hedging theories in the analysis of economic diplomatic communication.

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this research is expected to provide benefits for students, lecturers, and future researchers in the field of linguistics, especially those interested in pragmatics and economic discourse analysis. This study is also expected to become a reference for future studies related to hedges and assertive acts in economic diplomatic communication. Furthermore, the findings of this research are expected to provide insights into the linguistic strategies used by President Prabowo Subianto in international economic diplomatic speeches.

D. Previous Studies

Several previous studies on speech acts and hedging in political and economic discourse provide important references for this research. Brahmantya and Jurianto (2025) examined speech acts in Prabowo Subianto's interview during the 2024 Qatar Economic Forum. The study found that assertive acts were the most dominant speech act category used by Prabowo to communicate Indonesia's economic vision and development strategies to an international audience. While the study highlights the prominence of assertive acts in Prabowo's economic discourse, it does not explore the linguistic devices that influence the degree of commitment expressed in those assertive utterances.

Another relevant study was conducted by Rapiqah and Mulatsih (2024), who investigated hedging devices in Joe Biden's speech at Valley Forge. The findings revealed that modal auxiliary verbs were the most frequently used hedging devices, serving to reduce political risks and maintain credibility. Although the study provides valuable insights into the functions of hedges in political discourse, it did not analyze how hedges operate within specific speech act categories, particularly assertive acts, nor did it focus on economic diplomatic contexts.

Kadhim and Mewad (2024) conducted a comprehensive review of hedging strategies in the political discourse of Arab presidents. Their quantitative analysis revealed that modal verbs were predominantly used when discussing domestic policy, whereas adverbs of probability were more frequently employed within

economic scopes. This finding suggests that hedging strategies vary according to thematic domains, with economic discourse requiring different linguistic mitigation devices compared to general political discourse. However, the study focused broadly on political speeches without specifically examining the interaction between hedges and assertive acts in international economic forums.

Similarly, Mansour and Alghazo (2021) analyzed hedging devices in Donald Trump's speeches before the UN General Assembly in 2017 and 2018. Using Salager-Meyer's (1997) framework, they identified approximators of degree, quantity, and time as the most frequently used hedging category, followed by modal auxiliary verbs. Their study demonstrated that hedges were strategically employed to mitigate claims, express uncertainty, and avoid direct criticism in international diplomatic settings. Nevertheless, the research did not investigate how hedges function within specific illocutionary acts, particularly assertive acts, nor did it examine economic diplomatic discourse specifically.

Rabab'ah and Abu Rumman (2015) examined hedging in the political speeches of King Abdullah II of Jordan. The study demonstrated that hedges were strategically used to express uncertainty, reduce categorical commitment, and maintain diplomatic politeness in political discourse. Although the study provides a comprehensive analysis of hedging in political speeches, it does not investigate the relationship between hedges and speech acts, particularly assertive acts, nor does it address economic diplomatic contexts.

Although previous studies have examined either speech acts or hedging in political discourse, limited attention has been paid to the interaction between hedges and assertive acts in economic diplomatic contexts, particularly in the speeches of President Prabowo Subianto at international economic forums. Studies by Brahmantya and Jurianto (2025) focused on speech act classifications in economic interviews but did not analyze hedging. Meanwhile, Rapiqah and Mulatsih (2024), Kadhim and Mewad (2024), Mansour and Alghazo (2021), as well as Rabab'ah and Abu Rumman (2015), investigated hedging in political discourse without relating it to assertive acts or economic diplomacy. Therefore, this study seeks to fill the gap by examining hedges within assertive acts in President Prabowo Subianto's

economic diplomatic speeches at the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) and the APEC Summit in 2025. This research applies Prince, Frader, and Bosk's (1980) taxonomy to classify hedges into shields and approximators; employs Searle's (1979) Speech Act Theory to identify assertive acts; and utilizes Hyland's (1996) framework to explain the functions of hedges. Consequently, this study is expected to contribute to the understanding of how hedges influence speaker commitment in economic diplomatic discourse.

E. Clarifications of Terms

1. Speech Act

A speech act refers to an utterance that performs an action rather than merely conveying information. According to Austin (1975), when people speak, they do not simply produce sentences but also perform actions such as promising, apologizing, requesting, or declaring. Austin (1975) distinguishes among three dimensions of speech acts, the locutionary act (the literal meaning of an utterance), the illocutionary act (the speaker's intended communicative function), and the perlocutionary act (the effect of the utterance on the listener). Building upon Austin's work, Searle (1969) argues that speech acts are governed by social rules and conventions, enabling speakers to accomplish communicative purposes through language. Thus, speech act theory emphasizes that language is not merely a means of expressing thoughts but also a form of social action that shapes interpersonal interaction (Austin, 1975; Searle, 1969). This research focuses on illocutionary acts found in President Prabowo Subianto's diplomatic speeches.

2. Illocutionary Act

In the framework of speech act theory, an illocutionary act represents the core functional dimension of an utterance, referring specifically to the performance of an act in saying something, which carries a particular communicative force and intended meaning (Saurer, 1989). According to Searle (1979), these acts are not random but are governed by precise rule-directed intentionality, allowing speakers to perform distinct linguistic functions that alter the psychological or social reality

between interlocutors. To systematically analyze these functions, Searle categorizes illocutionary acts into five distinct classes based on their illocutionary point and direction of fit: assertives (committing the speaker to the truth of a proposition), directives (attempting to get the hearer to do something), commissives (committing the speaker to a future course of action), expressives (expressing a psychological state or emotion), and declarations (bringing about immediate changes in an institutional state of affairs). By utilizing this taxonomy, this study provides a structured pragmatic framework to identify, classify, and interpret the underlying communicative intent and force embedded within the selected data.

3. Assertive Acts

Assertive acts are speech acts through which speakers commit themselves to the truth of the propositions they express. According to Searle (1979), the purpose of assertive acts is to represent how things are in the world by conveying beliefs, descriptions, assertions, conclusions, or predictions that the speaker considers to be true. Through assertive acts, speakers express their commitment to the accuracy or validity of the information they communicate. In this study, assertive acts refer to statements, claims, opinions, and predictions expressed by President Prabowo Subianto in international diplomatic forums, where such utterances are analyzed as expressions of the speaker's commitment to the truth of the conveyed propositions.

4. Hedges

Hedges are linguistic devices that speakers use to express uncertainty, reduce the strength of a statement, or indicate a lower degree of commitment to the truth of a proposition. According to Yule (1996), hedges enable speakers to qualify their statements by making them less direct or less absolute, thereby reflecting caution, politeness, or uncertainty in communication. In this research, hedges are analyzed as linguistic devices that modify the speaker's level of commitment within assertive acts, influencing how certainty and stance are conveyed in President Prabowo Subianto's diplomatic speeches.

5. Shields and Approximators

Shields and approximators are two categories of hedging devices proposed by Prince, Frader, and Bosk (1980). According to Prince et al. (1980), shields are hedges that reduce the speaker's commitment to the truth of a proposition by attributing the information to another source or by expressing uncertainty, whereas approximators modify the propositional content itself by making it less exact or precise through expressions of approximation or imprecision. This distinction highlights that shields affect the speaker's degree of commitment, while approximators affect the accuracy or specificity of the proposition being conveyed. In this study, shields and approximators are used as the analytical framework for examining how hedging devices influence the expression of assertive acts in President Prabowo Subianto's diplomatic speeches

6. Speaker Commitment

Speaker's commitment refers to the degree of certainty, confidence, or responsibility that a speaker expresses regarding the truth of a proposition. According to John R. Searle (1979), assertive speech acts inherently involve a commitment by the speaker to the truth of what is being asserted, although the strength of this commitment may vary depending on the linguistic expressions employed. The use of hedging devices can modify this level of commitment by signaling uncertainty, caution, or reduced certainty about the proposition being communicated. In this study, speaker's commitment is identified through the use of hedges in assertive acts to examine how President Prabowo Subianto expresses different degrees of certainty and responsibility in his diplomatic speeches (Searle, 1979).

7. Economic Diplomatic Speeches

Economic diplomatic speeches refer to formal public addresses delivered by state leaders or government representatives to communicate national interests, strengthen international relations, and promote cooperation on economic issues within diplomatic settings (Akbarova, 2024). According to Hocking (2005),

diplomatic communication serves as a strategic instrument through which governments articulate policies, negotiate interests, and foster international cooperation. In this research, economic diplomatic speeches specifically refer to President Prabowo Subianto's English-language speeches delivered at international economic forums in 2025, namely the World Governments Summit (WGS), the St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF), and the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju, with the speech data obtained from official YouTube channels. These speeches constitute the primary data for analyzing the use of hedges in assertive speech acts.

8. World Governments Summit (WGS)

The World Governments Summit (WGS) is a premier global knowledge-exchange network established under the leadership of the vice president and prime minister of the UAE and ruler of Dubai. As stated on its official website, the summit functions as an international hub where world leaders, policymakers, tech pioneers, and global organizations deliberate on critical matters concerning future governance, public policy innovation, and multilateral cooperation. For the purpose of this research, WGS refers specifically to the 2025 World Governments Summit, where President Prabowo Subianto delivered an English-language diplomatic speech that serves as one of the core data sources for investigating hedges in assertive acts.

9. St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF)

The St. Petersburg International Economic Forum (SPIEF) is an annual international economic forum organized by the Roscongress Foundation under the auspices of the President of the Russian Federation. According to the official SPIEF website, the forum serves as a global platform where heads of state, government officials, business leaders, academics, and international organizations discuss key issues related to the global economy, international trade, investment, and sustainable development. In this research, SPIEF refers specifically to the 2025 St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, where President Prabowo Subianto

delivered an English-language economic diplomatic speech that constitutes one of the primary data sources for analyzing hedges in assertive speech acts.

10. Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC)

Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is an intergovernmental economic forum established to promote sustainable economic growth, free and open trade, investment, and regional economic integration among economies in the Asia-Pacific region. According to the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, APEC provides a platform for member economies to cooperate on trade facilitation, economic and technical cooperation, innovation, and inclusive development through dialogue and consensus-based decision-making. In this research, APEC refers specifically to the 2025 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting held in Gyeongju, Republic of Korea, where President Prabowo Subianto delivered an English-language economic diplomatic speech that serves as one of the primary data sources for analyzing the use of hedges in assertive speech acts

