

ENGAGING STUDENTS' WRITING COMPETENCY ON METADISCOURSE MARKERS USING DONALD TRUMP PRESIDENTIAL SPEECHES

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Abstract

This study aimed to investigate the implication of Donald Trump Presidential speeches as the teaching material of Metadiscourse Markers (MM) in writing class. It employed a qualitative study of English students after the pandemic situation. The research population consisted of 30 second-year students (male and female) from one selected class of Contextual Written Language Skills (CWLS) in the English Education Department of State University of Medan, Indonesia. The CWLS students' writing ability was assessed using a questionnaire and Donald Trump Presidential speech transcripts taken from millercenter.org. The study referred to Hyland's metadiscourse taxonomy (2005) and Lee's contextual factors in writing (2016). The findings revealed that there was a distinct improvement in CWLS students' writing ability between males and females on MM. This study also found that methodological variables such as teaching material and instructional design were some of the influencing factors in the learning process of MM using Donald Trump Presidential speeches.

Keywords: students' knowledge, metadiscourse markers, Donald Trump's speeches

INTRODUCTION

In Indonesia's education system, it is demanded that students are proficient in English. One of the government's goals is that Indonesian human resources should be proficient in English to work internationally, which is reflected in the Indonesian National Qualification Framework, or KKNI (2012). There are many ways to study English. One of them is the use of political speeches as teaching resources. Donald Trump's political speeches have gained much attention since the election of U.S. President back in 2016. He often uttered hate speeches towards his opponent, for instance, 'crooked Hillary' (Book et al., 2020). On another occasion, he called his opponent motherf***er, son of a b***h which led him to impeachment in re-elected as President (Reyes & Ross, 2021). Therefore, many researchers have investigated his political speeches to interpret his implied meaning and his political purposes in delivering his speeches (Book et al.,

2020; Elder, 2020; Reyes and Ross, 2021; Stoner, 2021; Alenisi, & Abusaleek, 2022).

Despite many studies investigating Donald Trump's political speeches, very little research has attempted to show how President Trump's speeches has affected the teaching material of English. Researchers tended to focus more on the speech implicature and the political view of Trump's speeches along with his political intention (Elder, 2020; Stofner, 2021; Alenisi & Abusaleek, 2022). Hence, English language learners were unaware that the President Donald Trump frequently utilized MM in his political addresses, particularly in direct remarks (Hyland, 1998) to achieve his goals. President Donald Trump used MM to interact with the people of the United States to show his attitude or commitment, to hedge his opinion, or to boost his policies (Hyland, 2005). Thus, MM should be introduced to English language learners due to their significant role in the delivery of a speech.

Metadiscourse Markers (MM) were rhetorical devices intended to increase audience involvement when speaking or writing (Hyland, 2005). MM is applied by the authors to acknowledge and share responsibility of one specific issue as well as the expectations of the readers. Despite the topics on MM in written material, such as letters (Huang & Rose, 2018; Yang, 2021) and essays (Alkhathlan, 2019) have been extensively studied yet there hasn't been any research on how Donald Trump's presidential speeches can help English students learn about metadiscourse markers. Data from 2020-2021 indicated that English language learners still struggled in studying English (Zali, Mohammad, Setia, Benjamin & Razlan, 2020; Ramzan & Hafeez, 2021; Chen, 2021; Yang, 2021). They have to study many things (i.e., grammar, ideas, organization, vocabulary, voice, cohesion, and coherence) to write English effectively. They require metadiscourse markers. Students need to familiarize themselves with MM due to their roles in effective writing, conveying the coherence and cohesion of the text, building text organization, and encouraging them to write effectively. Thus, this paper focuses on Hyland's taxonomy (2005) to classify the metadiscourse markers.

Table 1. Hyland's (2005) Taxonomy on Metadiscourse Markers

Interactive Markers	Examples
1. Transitions	In addition, and, but, thus
2. Frame markers	Firstly, finally, in conclusion
3. Endphoric markers	As noted above that, see figure 1, the previous section
4. Evidentials	According to Hyland (2005, p. 49), It is in line with Lee (2016)
5. Code glosses	For instance, such as, in other words
Interactional Markers	Examples
1. Attitude markers	I believe, I think, I agree
2. Self-mention	I, the author
3. Engagement markers	We, our
4. Hedges	May, can, probably, assume, around, perhaps
5. Boosters	Will, must, definitely

According to Hyland (2005), MM was classified into two main categories: interactive markers and interactional markers. Writers use interactive markers to assist and guide the readers in understanding the content of the text. Hyland (2005) has classified interactive markers into 5 sub-categories: (1) transitions were used to accentuate the semantic relation between the meaning of the main clauses (i.e., *and*, *but*, *though*), (2) frame markers were used to indicate numbering order or sequences in a text (i.e., *first*, *at last*), (3) endophoric markers referred to the previous information that the writers have discussed in the text (i.e., *as stated previously*), (4) evidential usually referred to others' investigation under the same topic (i.e., *Hyland's investi-*

gation, Lee stated that), and (5) code glosses which assisted readers in understanding conceptual information. They included signaling words (i.e., *namely, like, in other words*).

Another main category is interactional markers. Writers use interactional markers to engage the readers in the discussion. The students also need to learn the function of interactional markers to write efficiently. They must participate in the discussion and do the assessment of Donald Trump's speeches to gain knowledge. Hence, Hyland (2005) has classified interactional markers into 5 sub-categories: (1) attitude markers referred to writers' or speakers' personal feelings or attitudes towards their claims (i. e., *I feel, I believe*), (2) self-mention was used to directly point the authors or speakers by using pronouns (i.e., *I, my*), (3) engagement markers were used to build the bond between speaker and audiences or writer and readers by using the third plural pronouns and possessive pronouns (i.e., *we, our*), (4) hedges were words to soften the force of a statement and win over audiences or readers on a particular topic (i.e., *may, can, should, would*) and on contrary (5) boosters were words that increase the impact of a statement to emphasize the speaker's or writer's conviction on a certain subject.

As it has been discussed in the previous paragraph, English students face obstacles in acquiring their knowledge of MM. They struggled to structure their ideas, connect one clause to the next, and draw the reader into the writing (Yang, 2021). It was a challenging task for them to write effectively and comprehensively (Zali et al., 2020). Thus, MM should be introduced in an appealing, captivating, and challenging way to the students. Donald Trump Presidential speeches consisted of many controversial issues that provoke the debate on race, ethnicity, religion, and human rights. He proclaimed himself as someone who will make America great again. With his new economic ideas, he made references to his ten years of business experience available to Americans. Entrepreneurs, Politicians, Practitioners, Policymakers, Researchers, and Educators will learn a lot from his expertise. It is also beneficial to students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL), especially the 30 second-year students (male and female) in the English Education Department of State University of Medan, Indonesia. They can relate to his remarks.

Speech is a craft of persuading listeners to do the speaker's intention. Thus, a speaker must use a rhetorical device to limit his commitment while delivering his speech such as Trump's speeches. Trump's remarks are chosen as teaching resources because they are distinctive, surprising, and unpredictable. His positive and negative comments can help English learners understand more on how to use MM in academic writing or delivering a speech. Thus, the 30 second-year students of the English Department of State University of Medan should acknowledge these metadiscourse markers material to improve their proficiency in writing and speaking.

Referring to Lee's argument (2016) on the contextual factors in writing, it is found that the CWLS students' writing proficiency level of the English Education Department of State University of Medan, Indonesia were affected by a variety of contributing variables. The contextual factors determining students' writing skills were (1) learner variables, (2) situational variables, and (3) methodological variables. The first variable was learner variables. Learner variables were the variables affecting students' self-esteem. The elements that originated from within such as students' motivation, learning style, goals, and L1. The second variable was situational variables. They referred to other elements like the teacher, physical environment, and socioeconomic circumstances that impact students' proficiency. The last was methodological variables. Methodological variables are also known as the teaching method's influencing elements such as instructional design, teaching materials, and teaching techniques.

Illuminated by these findings (Nasir, Naqvi, & Bhamani, 2013; Cahyono, & Amrina, 2016; Alkathlan, 2019; Zali et al., 2020; Chen, 2021; Ramzan, & Hafeez, 2021) the present study tries to analyze students' knowledge of MM using Donald Trump's Presidential Speeches. This

paper aimed to answer the following questions:

1. How is the CWLS students' writing competency on MM after having Donald Trump's presidential speeches as the teaching material?
2. What are the contextual factors influencing CWLS students' writing competency?

METHOD

This study was designed as an explorative analysis with the qualitative method that employed a writing test and questionnaire (Tracy, 2013). It involved one selected group of 30 second-year CWLS students (males and females) of the English Education Department of State University of Medan. The writing assessment was applied to test their writing competency using the speeches of President Donald Trump. The purpose of employing this method aimed to measure the students' writing ability using Donald Trump Presidential speeches.

The research population consisted of 30 second-year students (males and females) of the English Education Department of State University of Medan, Indonesia who enrolled in the Contextual Written Language Skills (CWLS) class. The group was selected due to their competencies in English. They have passed the teaching material of English Grammar. For the second year, they have continued with CWLS. Thus, they needed to be engaged with MM to improve their writing skills.

The instruments of the study consisted of writing assessment and questionnaire. Initially, the researcher assessed the 30 CWLS students' writing competency using one of the speeches from President Donald Trump to measure their understanding on MM. Next, the researcher handed out the questionnaire consisting of ten (10) important questions to find out the 30 CWLS students' views on using Donald Trump presidential speeches as writing material. These questions were divided into three (3) main parts. Part 1 (questions 1 to 3) consisted of three questions about the 30 CWLS students' views on writing material. Part 2 (questions 4 to 6) consisted of three questions talking about President Donald Trump speeches. Part 3 (questions 7 to 10) consisted of four questions talking about MM in President Donald Trump' speech.

The procedure of this study consisted of three stages including (1) the preliminary stage, (2) the teaching stage, and (3) the assessment and questionnaire stage. The preliminary stage initially started with the literature study on students' writing problems, finding the source of the problem, and designing the solutions using a teaching plan. The next stage was preparing the teaching material along with the MM assessments. The assessments consisted of one of Donald Trump's presidential speeches. The CWLS students were instructed to underline the MM that they found in the text. Then, they were asked to explain the function of each MM. For the final task, they were asked to write a simple speech using MM that they have learned. Last, the questionnaire stage. The purpose of sharing the questionnaire is to find the students' personal opinions on the teaching material. The study was conducted from August to November 2022.

The pre-test was conducted at the beginning of the teaching process. The purpose of the pre-test is to measure CWLS students' writing proficiency level before they were treated with the MM teaching material. The MM teaching material was taught for 12 meetings with 6 meetings offline and 6 meetings online due to the post pandemic situation. This study was conducted in the CWLS course. The purpose of this course for the students is to identify academic writing concepts along with writing skills. The students were expected to write different academic essays. They learned about the essay and its components, coherence and cohesion, transitional signals, and other interactive and interactional markers.

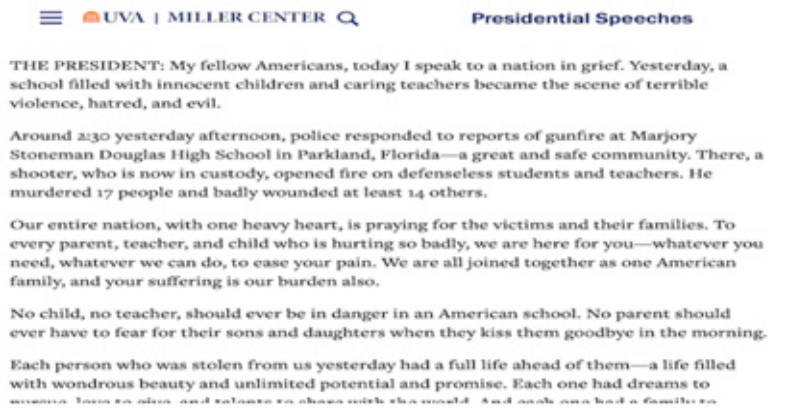


Figure 1. The assessments of MM teaching material (Statement on shooting in Parkland, Florida, 25 February 2018)

The students easily acquired more knowledge on MM by using Donald Trump Presidential speeches. It is in line with Hyland’s argument that the MM found twice as much in direct speech (1998). After the students discussed one particular topic such as coherence and cohesion, they were assessed using Donald Trump Presidential speeches transcripts taken from the millercenter.org website. They were required to find MM in President Donald Trump’ Speech and underlined it. Next, they were asked to write a simple speech using MM. At the end of 12 meetings, they were asked to fill up a questionnaire. Each of these questions required logical, critical, and innovative thinking to improve AWLS teaching material.

The last stage of the study was to assess the students with one of President Donald Trump’ speeches. The purpose of the assessment is to find out the teaching outcome and students’ influencing factors in gaining knowledge on MM by using Donald Trump Presidential speeches. The assessments have been given for 12 meetings, while the questionnaire was only given once. A writing rubric was used to analyze CWLS students’ writing tests. The rubric consisted of some score to assess CWLS students’ competences. The research findings will be explained using an explorative argument.

Table 2. Rubric for Academic Writing

Criteria	Excellent	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Needs Improvement
Thesis	The statements are clear, match to the topic, and have novelty	The statements are fairly clear, match to the topic, and have originality	The statements are vague, and do not fully match to the topic	Totally out of topic
Organization	Fully supports the topic, MM are effective	MM are appropriate, ideas are unorder	MM are ineffective	Unclear ideas, no MM
Support	Concrete ideas development, original, and convincing	Solid ideas but less original reasoning, have appropriates examples	Too broad, and have doubt ideas, many repetitions	Off-topic consisted of faulty assumption

Criteria	Excellent	Meets Expectations	Approaches Expectations	Needs Improvement
Sources	Referred to expect theory, develop own ideas, various sources	Referred to expect theory, develop own ideas, using some quotes	Referred to some relevant sources, develop own ideas, using inappropriate paraphrase	No relevant sources, overuse of paraphrase
Style	Various, effective sentences, appropriate MM, stress and tone is smooth and suit to the readers	Some various effective sentences, accurate MM, less stress, and intonation	Little sentences variations, less MM, inconsistencies tone, and tenses	No variety in sentence
Conventions	Error free, full of evidence	Few grammatical errors	Mechanics weakness repetition	Many error in grammar

Adapted from USC Centre for excellent in teaching (2023)

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

CWLS Students’ writing competency on MM after having Donald Trump’s presidential speeches as the teaching material

The pre-test indicated that each student of CWLS class hasn’t been well-acquired with MM. The result showed most of the CWLS students got less than 50% of correct answers. One of the influencing factors was the teaching material. Initially, the CWLS students needed to be introduced to MM material. Hence, they have noted the role of MM in writing. Then, they also needed to have more intriguing, and prominent assessments for instance Donald Trump Presidential speeches. These kinds of assessments helped them in practicing their MM, simultaneously. It was inferred that CWLS students’ writing competency should be engaged with challenging learning and assessment material. It is in line with Cahyono and Amrina’s argument (2016) that English teachers are guided to increase students’ writing proficiency level by working on the language use aspects. The language used in Donald Trump Presidential speeches helped the students to improve their writing skills.

Table 3. Distribution of Topics in the Donald Trump’s Speech

No	Topic	Correct Answers in %	
		Male	Female
1.	Inagural Address, January 20, 2017	55	70
2.	Adress to join the session of congress, February 28, 2017	75	75
3.	Statement on shooting in Parkland, Florida, 25 February 2018	80	85
4.	Address at the world economic forum, 26 January 2018	82	90
5.	State of the Union Adress, 30 January 2018	82	87

The finding revealed there was a distinction result on students’ comprehension between males and females. Once, they have been taught the MM teaching material using Donald Trump Presidential speeches, their writing abilities were improved. Most female students understood more about MM because they have watched the news on Donald Trump’s hate speech issues during his role as U.S. President. Despite their incompatible writing proficiency levels, they have more understanding of MM and they have well-acquired with each role. Moreover, they have been involved in deciding the assessment material by sharing their thoughts via questionnaire.

From the ten MM referring to Hyland’s theory (2005), students mostly used attitude markers (I think, I agree), transitions markers (but, and), code glasses (such as, like), and hedges & booster

(maybe, can, will, must) in their speeches to share their opinion on a particular issue. It is indicated that they needed to speak up on their personal views confidently and MM assisted them to write an effective speech.

The contextual factors influencing CWLS students' writing competency

Another finding of this investigation indicated that the student's writing proficiency levels were influenced by particular factors. According to Lee's argument (2016), environment, instructional strategy, and students' motivation have an impact on students' writing abilities. In this case, the instructional strategies of teaching material and teaching assessments were the influencing factors. The students' learning outcomes were impacted by modifying one of these teaching strategies, i.e., teaching material, and teaching assessment (Nasir et al., 2013; Ramzan & Ha-feez, 2021).

Corresponding to the CWLS students' learning material needs, a questionnaire consisting of 10 questions was applied as one of the research instruments. The researchers organized the related category of questionnaire into three parts. Part 1 (questions 1 to 3) consisted of three questions about the 30 CWLS students' views on writing material. Part 2 (questions 4 to 6) consisted of three questions talking about President Donald Trump speeches, and part 3 (questions 7 to 10) consisted of four questions talking about MM in President Donald Trump' speech. These questions led the CWLS students to understand the topic and assessments in the writing materials. According to the questionnaire result, the researchers found that students enjoyed and asked for more assessments during the learning process. It was shown in the questionnaire choices. Most of the students (90%) have chosen 'strongly agree' in corresponding to the question no 10: *Do you think English teachers should give more challenging material like Donald Trump Presidential speeches to improve your writing competency. Moreover, all of them have chosen 'strongly agree' in corresponding to the question number 8: Do you think studying MM will improve your writing proficiency level?.* It was indicated that CWLS students' writing competency has improved through the implementation of MM in President Donald Trump' speech as teaching material.

The pre-test showed that 30 CWLS students' writing competency level were pre-intermediate (Hartfiel et al., 1985) and they were unfamiliar with MM. However, the 30 CWLS students' writing competency have improved after they have MM in President Donald Trump's speech as the teaching material. They enjoyed having Donald Trump Presidential speeches as the writing material. It was indicated that the methodological variables (the teaching method) were the influencing elements in the CWLS students' writing competency. The instructional design, teaching materials, and teaching techniques have affected the learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the teaching process to engage CWLS students' writing competency of metadiscourse markers (MM) using Donald Trump Presidential speeches has been accomplished. The result revealed there was a distinct improvement in students' writing abilities. Despite this, female students have gained more advantages in their awareness of political situations back in 2016-2021. Most students have engaged in MM as teaching material and have raised their writing abilities in using MM as a rhetorical tool in effective writing.

Additionally, from the assessment result, the researcher found that the student's writing proficiency level was improved. It was due to the assessment material using Donald Trump Presidential speeches. Students considered the tests challenging and innovative. Moreover, they have understood the role of MM to write a speech or other academic writing. They employed interactive and interactional markers to organize their ideas which resulted in effective writing. From the ten MM referring to Hyland's theory (2005), they frequently used attitude markers

(i.e., *I think, I agree*), transitions markers (i.e., *and, but*), code glosses (*such as*), hedges and boosters (i.e., *maybe, can, about, will, must*).

Another finding was the contextual factors influencing CWLS students' writing competency in mastering MM in President Donald Trump' speech. This study revealed that methodological variables (the teaching method) such as instructional design, teaching techniques, and assessment materials were the influencing factors in involving CWLS students' writing competency of MM. The questionnaire indicated that students were eager for logical, critical, and innovative assessments to develop their writing skills. It is in line with Lee's contextual theory (2016), the methodological variable was one of the important elements in improving students' writing awareness. Instructional design, teaching materials, and teaching techniques were the elements of the methodological variables. They have impacted on the students' willingness to engage in new knowledge. Donald Trump Presidential assessment led to the student's curiosity about MM used by the President. Further, the questionnaire also led students to speak about their perceptions on the kind of assessments they will have in the future (i.e., *Will you have more tests using the speech of President Donald Trump*). Most of their answers were 'strongly agree'. It was indicated, students enjoyed the teaching and assessment material on MM using Donald Trump Presidential speeches.

Globally, the advantages of using Donald Trump Presidential speeches not only helped to improve the student's writing skills, but it also gave them confidence in speaking fluently. We concluded the use of Donald Trump' speeches as teaching material was beneficial for English learners to improve their English language skills. Admittedly, this investigation has flaws, and the findings cannot be generalized to other research. We have some limitations in the research findings exploration as we have only taken one selected class as the research subject. Thus, we don't compare the treatment from different classes. Hopefully, the research findings will increase teachers' awareness of the methodological variable in teaching, particularly about MM in the Presidential speeches as one of the English teaching materials.

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