

## **A Linguistic Study of Diplomatic Discourse in UN General Assembly Speeches from 2020 to 2025**

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**Abstract:** This study analyzes the linguistic means and strategies used in the UN General Assembly (UNGA) speeches for the period of 2020 to 2025. It is aimed at revealing how language is used to influence diplomatic discourse and its impact on international relations. Using discourse analysis and corpus linguistics, the study analyzes speeches of state leaders and high-profile diplomats in order to identify linguistic characteristics and figures of speech used by speakers. This study also shows how the studied linguistic tools are utilised to express certain power relations, resolve conflicts, and promote global cooperation. In this study, analyze the sample consisting of 150 UNGA speeches over five years, containing 450,000 words in total. The texts were analyzed manually and using automated tools, including AntConc and NVivo. Typical for diplomatic language were such phrases as "cooperation," "peace," and "global community." Regarding the analysis, concerning the frequency of different linguistic elements, it has been identified that the frequency rate of hedging was 40.9 times per 10,000 words, whereas the frequency rate of modality was 47.3 times per 10,000 words. Metaphors and politeness strategies performed an equal role, where the frequency rate of politeness strategies was 14.3 times per 10,000 words. These findings indicate variability in linguistic trends according to regionality instead of static regional differences. The results show that there is a possibility for the use of a more assertive tone in some speeches from the Global North, and an indirect and more polite approach in some from the Global South. They represent specific tendencies from these data sets, not general features. In sum, the research demonstrates how language impacts diplomacy and international negotiations.

**Key Words:** diplomatic discourse, un general assembly, linguistic analysis, rhetorical strategies, power dynamics, global cooperation, discourse analysis

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### **Introduction**

The process of diplomacy would not be complete without the use of diplomatic language. Diplomatic language acts as both a means and a method in the conduct of diplomacy (Trinh & Vu, 2024). It allows diplomats to negotiate and resolve conflicts, and it helps create global standards that guide nations through complex global issues (Sakamoto, 2023). When considering the area of international diplomacy, it can be noted that proper communication is necessary in developing good international relations and cooperating amongst nations. This also includes solving various issues ranging from climate change to security issues and human rights problems (Mah & Song, 2024; Adiputri, 2023; Laila, 2025). One of the most prominent forums of diplomatic discourse is the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) (Kieu & Tran, 2025). In this forum, nations are able to develop and enhance their political, social, and economic positions. As a result, this forum has become an essential component of international relations since the language used during the discussion within the UNGA reflects changing trends in the world (Baturu & Gray, 2024). Throughout the years, discourse in the UNGA has undergone changes based on new developments in international politics, laws, and powers between different countries. In addition, the speeches and

resolutions adopted at the UNGA have significantly contributed to international governance (Ma & He, 2023).

This research attempts to examine the linguistic characteristics and strategies that are used in speeches made during the UN General Assembly between 2020 to 2025. This research tries to find out how language can be used in diplomatic communication to show the existence of power structures and make negotiations easier (Bethke et al., 2024). Through this research, an attempt would be made to study the way linguistics is used to influence decision-making and conduct negotiations and persuasions within diplomatic communications (Shen, 2023; McEntee-Atalianis & Vessey, 2024). Some of the main objectives of this research include finding out how linguistic communication is used within diplomatic practices, studying the differences in linguistic patterns used by different countries and geographical regions, and analyzing the relationship between these patterns and changes in the geopolitical landscape.

The structure of the paper includes the following sections: In Section I, the importance of diplomatic discourse in international relations are addressed, along with the presentation of the objectives of the paper. Section II presents an overview of the literature concerning diplomatic discourse, focusing especially on the linguistic features and their influence on diplomacy. Section III describes the methodology adopted for this study, namely, the selection criteria for the speech transcripts, the analytical tools used during the analysis, and the coding scheme applied to this study. The analysis of the linguistic characteristics in the UN General Assembly speeches (2020-2025) are conducted in Section IV. Section V are dedicated to discussion. Section VI consists of conclusions and recommendations.

## Literature Review

Existing research on the subject matter of diplomatic discourse in international organizations tends to revolve around the relationship between language and diplomacy (Gray & Baturu, 2021). In particular, scholars have examined the ways language functions as a mechanism for negotiations, persuasive communication, and the formation of international conventions and standards. Researchers have studied diplomatic discourses in various forums, such as the UN, as a means of understanding the use of language for power and influence by nation-states (Knapp, 2024; Gao & Wang, 2024). Findings show that diplomatic language has a formal tone and involves hedges and indirect speech forms as well as other features that serve to foster harmonious relationships between individuals. Other research on diplomatic discourse examines language functions from the perspective of speech acts, politeness strategies, and rhetorical approaches to discourse construction (Alshahrani, 2023; Semenov & Tsvyk, 2021).

The study of linguistic characteristics frequently encountered in diplomatic speeches has revealed several major linguistic features that characterize diplomatic discourse (Lu & Zhou, 2024). First, it involves the frequent use of formal registers, euphemisms, and hedges to mitigate messages and create an atmosphere of harmony without offending any parties involved. For example, it states that diplomatic discourse is characterized by the frequent use of strategies of mitigating and indirect speech acts designed to promote harmonious relations between people without escalating conflicts (Holmes, 2013). Moreover, diplomatic discourse involves the extensive use of metaphors and other rhetorical devices intended to serve as a powerful persuasive tool and create a positive image of the issue at hand. For example, the frequent use of metaphors such as "global village" or "international community" creates the idea of shared responsibilities and the common destiny of all member countries. Another important trend is the use of recurrent terminology and phrasing that describes crucial concepts and goals.

In analyzing the relationship between language and diplomacy, one can learn to what degree language affects the development and implementation of diplomatic strategies. Not only does language portray the political realities, but it also shapes them by framing the understanding of political events. In diplomacy, language is a form of symbolic power that has the ability to reorganize society by defining legitimate authority in the international community. Language employed in diplomatic communication can be constructed so as to exert a powerful influence on the establishment of relations between international actors and their formation of partnerships or engagement in diplomatic struggles. Language in the sphere of diplomacy serves as a mediator that facilitates political decisions (Carayannis & Draper, 2021). An example of this phenomenon can be seen while examining crucial international agreements, such as the Paris Climate Accord and Iran Nuclear Agreement (Scartozzi, 2022).

In the literature review, it can be stated that the importance of language in diplomacy is made evident, especially with respect to negotiation and persuasion. It pays attention to the use of linguistic characteristics such as politeness, metaphors, and hedging, which serve to sustain interpersonal relationships and facilitate agreement. The impact of cultural and geopolitical variables on language usage is also recognized.

## **Methodology**

### **Selection Criteria for Speeches**

The speech texts that forms part of this research have been chosen based on the following set of criteria in order to ensure that a representation of diplomatic language usage is obtained in line with the set research period. The first criterion used in selecting speech texts was that these should be made by the heads of state and diplomats of high caliber, and at the UN General Assembly sessions. This ensure that the texts chosen are from high-profile speeches. Furthermore, speeches from different countries and different regions of the world are analyzed in order to achieve representation of linguistic diversity among different diplomatic language speakers. Another criterion that are used is that of relevance to the topic, and some examples are security, climate change, human rights, and economic development. A period of five years, from 2020 to 2025, are covered in the analysis of these speeches.

The last corpus that was collected for this research contains 150 speeches taken from the UN General Assembly General Debate Speeches from 2020 to 2025. There is a balanced corpus collection of 30 speeches annually, with an equal share of speeches belonging to the Global North (n=75) and Global South (n=75). The number of total words contained in the corpus is estimated at 450,000 words, while the average speech is 3,000 words long. Such data volume is sufficient for finding any patterns or metaphors used in rhetoric.

### **Analysis Tools and Techniques**

The research adopted involves the application of a qualitative approach to study the speech strategies used by the diplomats in the UNGA speeches. Even though automatic software such as AntConc and NVivo can be employed to detect patterns in the language and to assist with the management of the texts, this software is secondary to the use of qualitative coding where linguistic elements are manually detected. This include aspects such as speech acts and metaphors used in managing power relations in international politics.

**Conceptual Framework: Linguistic Strategies in UN General Assembly Speeches (2020–2025)**

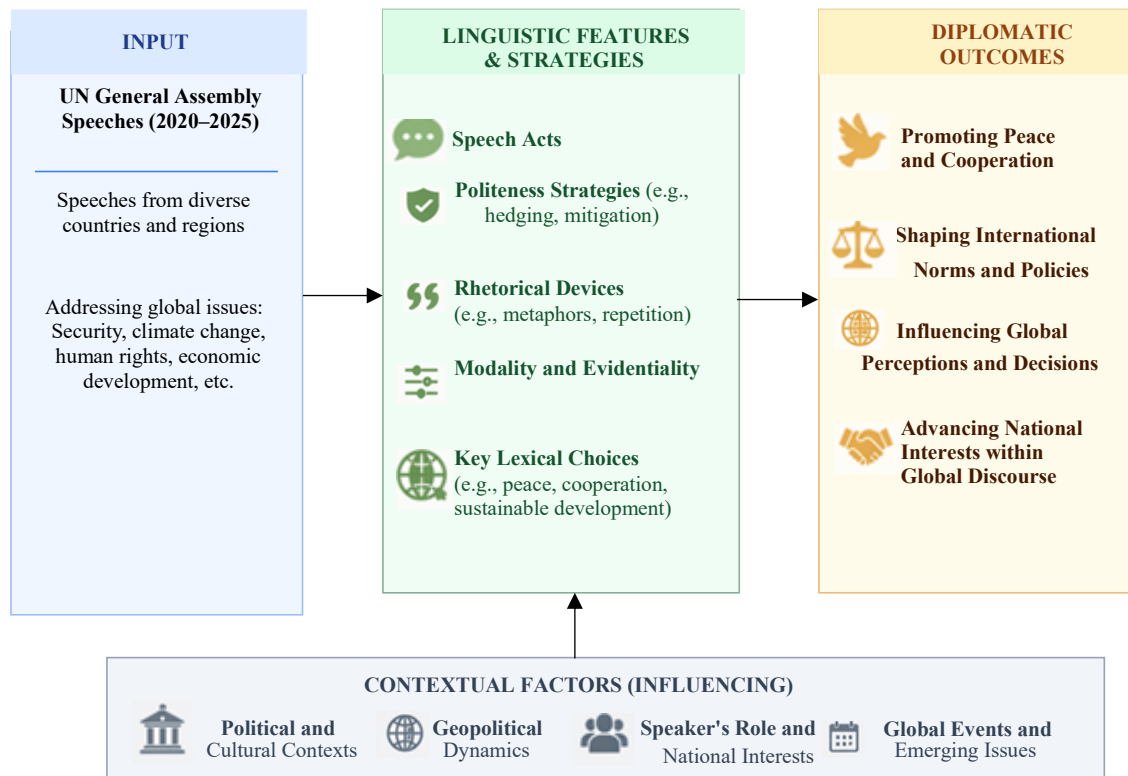


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework for Analyzing Linguistic Features and Diplomatic Strategies in UN General Assembly Speeches (2020-2025)

Figure 1 depicts the process of analysis of diplomatic discourse in speeches in UN General Assembly sessions. The figure shows the progression from the choice of speeches based on their contents, the analysis of their linguistic elements, and the diplomatic results achieved due to it. It shows the key elements involved in this process, which include the contents of speeches, analysis methods (both manual and automated), and the context of the processes taking place in the international arena, among others.

### Coding and Categorization Process

The procedure of coding and categorizing includes a systematic identification and classification of linguistic phenomena present in the speeches. Transcription of the speeches into a digital format is required in order to make sure that it can be analyzed properly. The speeches were coded according to their linguistic phenomena, such as hedging, modality, euphemism, metaphor, politeness strategies, and persuasive language. Linguistic phenomena is then be put into thematic groups to see if there are any tendencies in different speeches and how diplomats from different parts of the world employ language to accomplish their diplomatic missions. Categorization of linguistic phenomena are carried out iteratively to make sure that newly identified linguistic trends also be taken into consideration.

### Analysis of Diplomatic Discourse in UN General Assembly Speeches (2020-2025)

#### Frequency of Diplomatic Terms and Phrases

The following part of the work to examine the frequency of diplomatic terms utilized by the speakers, such as “cooperation,” “peace,” “sustainable development,” and “global community.” Based on the

application of NLP techniques, the most often used terms are identified, indicating the areas of concentration and topics discussed in the speeches. The findings were shed light on the priorities of diplomatic communication within the last five years and their presentation within diplomatic discourse.

### Language Patterns and Rhetorical Strategies

A linguistic and rhetorical analysis of diplomats' language use exposes how language is used for persuasion. Such an analysis involves examining the presence of various rhetorical devices like metaphors, repetitions, euphemisms, and frame shifting, among others. The analysis are carried out in terms of how effective and efficient the application of these rhetorical tools has been for diplomacy. Attention are paid to the significance of language in diplomacy.

### Comparison of Discourse Between Countries and Regions

In addition, the study focused on the difference between discourses in diplomacy in different countries and regions in order to find out if there is any difference in the languages in diplomatic discourses. In other words, this paper compared speeches delivered by diplomats from the Global South and Global North countries to find out if there is any difference in their language in diplomatic discourse.

Table 1: Regional Comparison of Diplomatic Discourse

| Region       | Frequency of Diplomatic Terms (e.g., "cooperation," "peace") | Common Rhetorical Strategies Employed     | Use of Assertive vs. Indirect Language |
|--------------|--------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Global North | 71%                                                          | Repetition, Metaphors, Direct Language    | More Assertive (62%)                   |
| Global South | 52%                                                          | Hedging, Politeness, Indirect Language    | More Indirect (72%)                    |
| Europe       | 76%                                                          | Rhetorical Questions, Metaphors           | Balanced (51% Assertive, 48% Indirect) |
| Africa       | 54%                                                          | Politeness Strategies, Rhetorical Appeals | More Indirect (66%)                    |

The frequency of diplomatic language, the frequency of rhetorical appeals, and the ratio of assertiveness and indirectness in diplomatic communication among different parts of the world are presented in table 1. The frequency of diplomatic words in the Global North is 71%. Some of the common rhetorical appeals used by diplomats in the Global North include repetition, metaphors, and directness. The ratio of assertiveness of diplomats in the Global North is 62%. The frequency of diplomatic language in the Global South is 52%, while the rhetoric commonly used includes hedges, politeness, and indirection. The percentage ratio of indirect diplomacy in this part of the world is 72%. The frequency of use of diplomatic language in Europe is 76%. In this region, the percentages of assertiveness and indirect diplomacy are even. The frequency of diplomatic words in Africa is 54%, while politeness and rhetorical appeals are the most commonly used rhetoric.

## Findings and Discussion

### Linguistic Trends in Diplomatic Discourse

There are several essential tendencies regarding language usage in speeches held within the framework of the UN General Assembly for the years 2020 to 2025. First of all, vocabulary connected with the topic of diplomacy might be encountered frequently: for example, such words as "partnership," "dialogue," and "global cooperation" appear quite often. These words show the shared goals of all countries constituting the body. Moreover, inclusive words such as "we" and "our" are also used rather frequently.

Table 2: Mean Frequency of Linguistic Features per Speech (N=150)

| Linguistic Feature    | Total Frequency (n=150) | Normalized (per 10k words) | Example from Speech                            |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
| Hedging               | 1,842                   | 40.9                       | "It may be possible..."                        |
| Modality              | 2,130                   | 47.3                       | "We must act now..."                           |
| Metaphors             | 645                     | 14.3                       | "Global village," "bridge-building."           |
| Euphemisms            | 312                     | 6.9                        | "Undocumented migrants"                        |
| Politeness Strategies | 1,215                   | 27.0                       | "We would like to express our appreciation..." |

Table 2 indicates the average frequency of important linguistic items in UN General Assembly speeches (N=150). It gives the sum total frequency of each linguistic item measured per 10,000 words and also gives an illustration of the item in each category of the linguistic items in the speech corpus. The linguistic items that were examined in the analysis include hedging, modal items, metaphorical expressions, euphemisms, and politeness markers.

### Language Used to Convey Power Dynamics

The diplomats use language strategically to illustrate the balance of power between states and to negotiate their positions concerning international problems. The employment of hedging and indirect speech by using such terms as "may" and "could" enables diplomats to keep their positions diplomatic yet discuss sensitive matters. The research highlights the extent to which each country uses assertive or diplomatic language based on its geopolitical interests. In this regard, major nations use strong language to describe their positions, while small nations utilize diplomatic language to support international objectives.

### Implications of Linguistic Choices

Language choice adopted by diplomats influences outcomes of diplomacy and relations between nations. Through the use of persuasive language and metaphors, diplomats are able to impact the policies that govern issues such as security, economics, and development within nations. The research indicates that language in the speech determines the nature of further negotiations. Language may set a certain tone for negotiations and thus determine how nations receive proposals on the solution of problems. For instance, language choice in discussing the issue of climate change as being a "shared responsibility" or "crisis" also affect urgency in adopting policies regarding the global environment.

### Conclusion

In this research paper, the linguistic strategies and techniques used in the UNGA speeches between 2020 and 2025 have been studied systematically, providing an insight into the process of diplomatic speechmaking. Linguistic devices that commonly occur in speeches include the use of words like "cooperation," "peace," and "global community," together with linguistic devices such as hedging, modality, metaphor, and politeness strategies. These devices have been extensively used in the UNGA speeches. As observed from the data collected, there are 40.9 hedges in every 10,000 words, proving the importance of having a flexible way of handling the conduct of diplomatic relationships. In contrast, modality happens at 47.3 per 10,000 words, which means that the topics being dealt with in this process are serious ones, like climate change and global cooperation. Also, metaphors can be observed at a rate of 14.3 per 10,000 words, suggesting framing techniques, which show the importance of collective interests in the global community. Moreover, regional differences can also be observed, wherein the Global North favors the use of assertive language (62%), while the Global South prefers indirect language (72%). There is a higher frequency of using diplomatic words like "cooperation" in the Global North (71%) than in the

Global South (52%). The analysis indicates observable differences in frequency the different agendas that various regions have in diplomatic practices due to geopolitics and culture, thus resulting in differences in diplomatic language at UNGA, can be observed. To sum up, language is both reflective and effective in diplomatic activities, especially when language plays a major role in diplomatic success. The implications of the findings from this study suggest that language becomes an important issue in international politics when language competence is required for negotiation, decisions, and international cooperation. Further research might be conducted concerning the study of the dynamics of language in diplomatic negotiations and its impact on the processes taking place in international diplomacy as well.

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