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# MULTIPLE HEDGING IN THE POLITICAL INTERVIEW

**Abstract:** This paper deals with multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and phrases in political interviews in Serbian and English. Political interview, as a specific type of political discourse, is increasingly present in the media and is becoming the main form of communication between political actors and the public. This type of interview is both a source of information for the public and a means for conducting political campaigns. Since politicians are responsible to their voters for their every action and statement, they must choose carefully what to say and how to say it. One of the important characteristics of their discourse is the hedging of propositional content, because they sometimes cannot or do not want to give an explicit answer to delicate questions. In these cases, they use one or more hedges to make their statements acceptable to the public without compromising or committing themselves. Linguistic disciplines that deal with the analysis of all types of discourse, including political and media discourse, are pragmatics and critical discourse analysis, which represent the theoretical basis of this paper. Examining political interviews in English and Serbian, our goal has been to classify and describe multiple hedges

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used by politicians in conversations and determine their discursive functions, as well as to perform a contrastive analysis of the use of hedges in these two languages. The results have generally confirmed the initial hypotheses about the main functions of multiple hedges.

**Key words:** multiple hedges, non-factivity, political interview, pragmatics, critical discourse analysis.

### POLITICAL DISCOURSE AND POLITICAL INTERVIEW

Political discourse has been the subject of numerous studies and research in linguistics over the last few decades, especially within the framework of pragmatics and critical discourse analysis (Chilton, 2004; Wodak, 2009; Kampf, 2015; Randour & al., 2020). One of the most influential definitions of political discourse implies its three dimensions: participants, the political basis of the discourse and the context of communication (van Dijk, 1997, p. 12–14). According to this definition, discourse is considered *political* when it is produced by a politician who performs a political action (to govern, legislate, protest or vote) in an institutional communicative context (debates, speeches, official addresses). This definition was later supplemented because it did not include some important forms of political discourse, such as media discourse on political issues, and civic discourse dealing with politics (Fairclough 2006; Okulska & Cap 2010, among others). Currently, the most comprehensive definition may be Kampf's view of political discourse as "[…] talk and text produced in regard to concrete political issues (language in politics) or through the actual language use of institutional political actors, even in discussions of nonpolitical issues (language of politicians)" (Kampf, 2015, p. 3).

Political interview is a specific type of political discourse (Lauerbach, 2004), which has become the most direct form of communication between politicians and the public. This is a type of media interview where political discourse is produced by political elites (van Dijk, 1997). They include politicians in power, candidates for political office, members of political parties, both ruling and opposition. Montgomery (2007) distinguishes four basic types of media interviews: with (1) correspondents, (2) participants in a specific event, (3) experts and (4) "principals"[1]. The last type is actually the political interview, because the interviewees are always public figures who have some kind of social responsibility.

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[1] "Principals" are public figures with some kind of responsible role in relation to the news event (accounting). Therefore, Montgomery calls them "accountability interviews" (Montgomery, 2007, p. 261)

Political discourse is primarily dealt with by critical discourse analysis (hereinafter CDA) which "as both a theory and a method tries to uncover hidden meanings in discourse, both spoken and written, primarily in the institutional environment that is designed to have a direct but seemingly imperceptible influence on society through language manipulation" (Nikolić, M. M. & Babić Antić, J., 2019, p. 1389). One of the founders and main representatives of this discipline, Norman Fairclough, believes that the main goal of CDA is to identify, describe and interpret hidden meanings, and thus help uncover social problems and solve them (Fairclough, 1992)[2]. Some scholars believe that we should go beyond pure scientific analysis and study of these phenomena and present them openly and decisively to the public and oppose the growing inequalities in society embodied primarily in the discourse of politicians (van Dijk, 2001, 2008; Rogers, 2004).

We can see, therefore, that one of the most significant forms of language manipulation is found in the public discourse of politicians, and one of the most common strategies is to avoid answering interviewers' questions (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Heritage & Clayman, 2010). Knowing what type of shows they participate in, politicians must be prepared for sensitive and provocative questions, and therefore they often use various linguistic devices to hedge themselves against the propositional content, which critical discourse analysts consider a strategy of avoiding answers (Nikolić, M., 2014).

### HEDGING AND MULTIPLE HEDGES

**Hedging**. Even though the interest in the phenomenon of hedging had been present before (Urmson, 1952; Weinreich, 1966)[3], the term *hedges* was first introduced into linguistics by Lakoff, who defined these linguistic means as "words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy" (Lakoff, 1973, p. 471). Sometime later, through research conducted by Prince et al. (1982), Hübler (1983) and Fraser (2009; 2010) this concept went beyond semantics and entered the domain of pragmatics. These authors make a clear distinction between two types of hedges. The first type are hedges which modify the propositional content, i.e. to what level a certain part of the proposition belongs to a semantic category: *approximators* (Prince & al., 1982), *understatements* (Hübler, 1983), *propositional hedging* (Fraser, 2009; 2010). The second type of hedges, on the other hand, modifies the whole speech act, because it expresses the speaker's uncertainty about the factual status of

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[2] It is clear that the attitude of analysts in CDA is obvious and visible (Jevrić, 2017, p. 44).

[3] Urmson uses the term *parenthetical verbs* for verbs whose role is to "modify or to weaken" the speaker's commitment to the truth value of the proposition (Urmson, 1952, p. 484). Weinreich (1966), on the other hand, names and examines hedges as *metalinguistic operators.*

his utterance: *shields* (Prince et al., 1982), *hedges* (Hübler, 1983), *speech act hedging* (Fraser, 2009; 2010). This group of hedges also includes non-factive verbs such as *think, believe, guess, suppose,* etc. because the speaker remains indefinite in relation to the truth value of the propositional content.

As far as the latest research is concerned, there is still great interest in this linguistic phenomenon. Analysing hedges in different types of discourse, linguists agree that their basic function is following certain social norms, politeness, indirectness, vagueness (Kranich, 2015; Takimoto, 2015; Babić-Antić, 2017; Barotto, 2018; Zhang & Redeker, 2018).

**Non-factive verbs**. Factivity, as a linguistic term, first appears in Kiparski and Kiparski (Kiparsky & Kiparsky, 1971), who point out the difference between factive and non-factive predicates, i.e. statements. They note that the statement *I regret that it is raining* is factive, because the truth of the proposition 'it is raining' is presupposed, while the sentence *I suppose that it is raining* expresses non-factivity, since the speaker is uncertain about the truth of the propositional content. We find a similar observation in Lyons, who points out that the verbs *believe* and *think* commit the speaker to "neither the truth nor the falsity of the proposition" (Lyons, 1977, p. 795). According to this author, non-factivity can be found in the question *Did he go to Paris*, as well as in statements like *I don't know whether he went to Paris* and *He may have gone to Paris.* (ibid. 796).

Non-factivity as a pragma-semantic category can be realised by various linguistic devices such as lexical verbs, modal verbs, modal adverbs, certain non-factive expressions, questions, etc. In this paper, we focus on the use of lexical/non-factive verbs (*think, believe, assume*) and phrases (*I'm not so sure, I can just tell you this, as far as I'm concerned*) which, as markers of non-factivity, help politicians to express uncertainty about the factual status of the proposition. By using such linguistic forms, speakers realise various communicative intentions, such as hedging, indirectness, mitigation, politeness, etc.

**Multiple hedges**. Based on the analysis of the corpus, it was noticed that non-factive verbs and phrases appeared in combination with other linguistic forms that have the function of hedges. Salager-Meyer also speaks about this phenomenon. She mentions *compound hedges* which consist of several connected hedges, such as the expressions *it may suggest that, it would seem likely that, it seems reasonable to assume*, etc. (1994, p. 154-155). Such combinations of hedges can occur within a single sentence, and then we talk about compound

hedges, or in several related sentences that make one complete answer to a question in an interview, and then we refer to them as multiple hedges.[4]

**Hedges and their functions**. In addition to their primary function of reducing the illocutionary force of the proposition, hedges can have other discursive functions. Martín-Butragueño (2003) identifies the following strategies: (1) indetermination, which attenuates qualitative or quantitative explicitness, conveying uncertainty, vagueness and fuzziness[5], (2) camouflage, which tends to hide the full meaning of the message and avoid negative reactions[6], (3) subjectivisation, which tends to highlight the subjective nature of the given proposition, which is thus projected as open to doubt and therefore non-binding[7], and (4) depersonalisation, in which speakers hide themselves behind an impersonal or non-identified subject[8]. Partington (2003, p. 237-243) views hedging as one of the many strategies for answer evasion in political discourse. He distinguishes several ways to achieve this: open refusal to answer, claims of ignorance, refusal to speculate, stating the answer is well-known, and claiming that the question has already been answered. Finally, Nikolić, M. M. (2014), who also analyses evasion strategies in media discourse, identifies strategies of open and covert answer evasion.

### THE SUBJECT AND GOALS OF THE RESEARCH

In the context of the modern political interview, the interviewer's questions can be delicate and aggressive, which can put politicians in an awkward situation – they have to answer because they are responsible to the public for their activities and words, but they

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[4] Examples of multiple hedging can be found in the following papers: Fraser analyses hedging in political discourse at press conferences (Fraser, 2009); Ponteroto examines hedges in the political interview (Ponterotto, 2018); Simon-Vandenberger compares the functions of the non-factive verb *I think / I don't think* in political discourse and informal conversation (2000). However, they were not dealt with as a separate phenomenon.

[5] This strategy may comprise: epistemic modality and approximators of quantity, frequency, degree and time.

[6] This strategy may comprise: metalinguistic operators, that is, extra-clausal disjuncts such as *really, actually, in fact, it is obvious that ..., strictly speaking, generally speaking, to some extent*, etc.

[7] This strategy may comprise: first personal pronouns (*I/we*) followed by verbs of cognition (*think, believe*) or performative verbs (*suppose, suggest*), and expressions such as *to our knowledge, in our view, in my experience*; quality-emphasising adjectival and adverbial expressions such as *extremely interesting, particularly important*, etc.

[8] Agentless passive and impersonal constructions, impersonal nouns or non-human subjects such as *findings, results, data*, etc.

cannot or do not want to, so they resort to the strategy of answer evasion, either in part or in full. As we have already mentioned, one of the most common linguistic devices they use to achieve their communicative goals is hedging. Since extensive literature can be found on hedges, in this research we are dealing with a specific type of hedging – multiple hedges – about which very little has been written. Thus, the subject of this paper are multiple hedges in the speech of politicians in political interviews. Multiple hedges are sets of hedges concentrated around one non-factive verb or phrase (or several verbs or phrases) within one answer to a journalist's question. Based on some previous research (Nikolić, M. B., 2017, p. 149-150), it was noticed that non-factive verbs and phrases are one of the most frequent linguistic forms that appear as hedges in the discourse of political interviews in both English and Serbian. Hence there is the need to view these forms as the central hedges of the analysis. Individual hedges may or may not necessarily be linked, but they all relate to the same answer. The aim of this research is to identify multiple hedges, determine their structure from a pragma-semantic perspective and determine their functions from the perspective of CDA.

We started from the following hypotheses: (1) if non-factive verbs and phrases are used to express uncertainty about the factual status of the proposition, then multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and phrases are used by politicians to distance themselves even more from facts, which is manifested in discourse as avoiding a direct answer; (2) if politicians use multiple hedging to avoid a direct answer, then the use of a larger number of hedges will have additional discursive functions; (3) we also assume that politicians in power use this type of hedging to a somewhat greater extent than politicians from the opposition, and (4) that there are no significant differences between the Serbian and English corpora.

**CORPUS AND METHODOLOGY**

The research corpus consists of political interviews in English and Serbian. Each corpus contains about 20,000 words, and consists of interviews with politicians in power and politicians from the opposition[9] (about 10,000 words each).

The analysis includes the identification of multiple hedges in politicians' replies and their classification according to their structure. Firstly, a pragma-semantic analysis is done in order to determine the structure of the hedges that appear in the corpus. It mostly relies on Austin and Searle's theory of speech acts (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1976). All examples belong

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[9] Since the interviews are from 2018 and 2019, next to the name of each politician there is the function he/she held at the time of the interview.

to the group of *representatives*[10] (Searle, 1976, p. 10), whose illocutionary force is realised through the speaker's (un)certainty about the truth value of the proposition. In other words, the more insecure the speaker is, the weaker the illocutionary force of such a speech act is. Secondly, the method of critical discourse analysis is applied to determine the functions of hedges in discourse. We use Fairclough's methodological framework, which implies a three-dimensional model of corpus analysis as (1) text, (2) discursive practice and (3) social practice. We start from the identification of multiple hedges (text), whose functions we determine in the given context of confrontational political discourse in the form of political interview (discursive practice) and explore what social functions and implications they may have (social practice). Finally, by applying contrastive analysis of English and Serbian, similarities and differences between the two corpora are identified.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### IDENTIFICATION AND CLASSIFICATION OF MULTIPLE HEDGES

Since the subject of this research are multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and phrases, there is at least one non-factive verb or phrase in each hedge. Figure 1 shows the frequency of the occurrence of individual hedges within multiple ones in Serbian, and Figure 2 in English.

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[10] In addition to the representatives, Searle (ibid. p. 11-16) lists other types of illocutionary acts: *directives*, *commissives*, *expressives* and *declarations*.
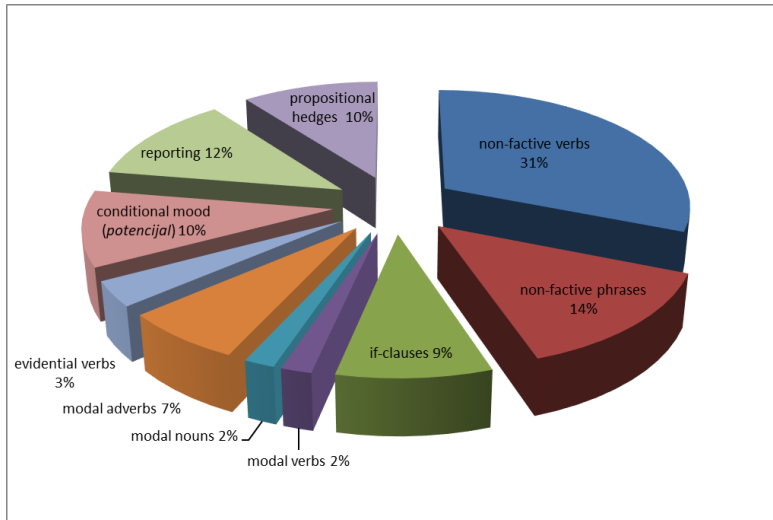
Figure 1 – The frequency of the occurrence of individual hedges within multiple hedging in the corpus in Serbian
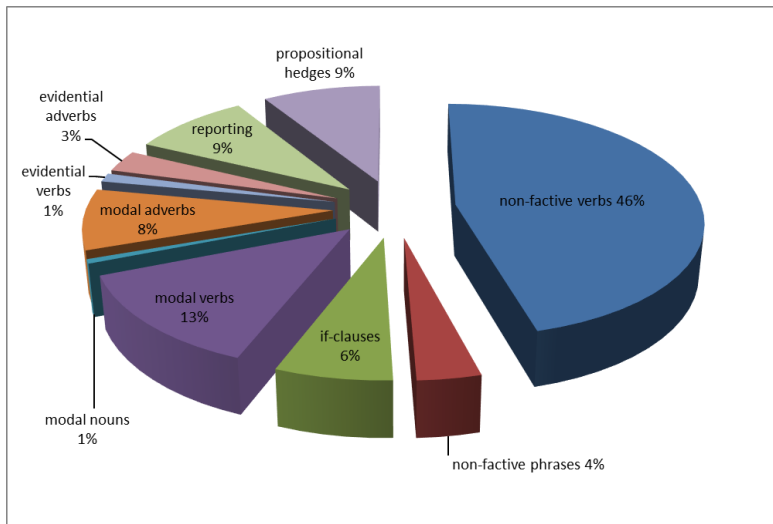


Figure 2 – The frequency of the occurrence of individual hedges within multiple hedging in the corpus in English

Non-factive verbs and phrases are, by far, the most common in both corpora. In the English corpus, their occurrence is as high as 50%, of which verbs are represented with 46%, and phrases with 4%. We find a similar situation in the Serbian corpus. Non-factive verbs

and phrases occur in 45% of the cases, with fewer verbs than in English – 31%, and more phrases – 14%. Since a large number of multiple hedges consist of more than two hedges, it was expected that non-factive elements would be represented by significantly less than 50%. However, the analysis shows that in some hedges there are two non-factive elements (Examples 1, 2, 5, 8) or more (Examples 6, 11), either alone (Example 1), or in combination with other hedges (all other examples).

In the interviews in English, politicians most often use non-factive verbs or phrases with modal verbs that appear in 13% of cases, followed by propositional hedges (9%), reporting (9%), and modal adverbs (8%). If-clauses also occur relatively often (6%). In the interviews in Serbian, non-factive verbs or phrases are most often accompanied by reporting (12%), then propositional hedges (10%), conditional mood (*potencijal*) (10%), and if-clauses (9%). Modal adverbs are also relatively common (7%). Table 1 provides an overview of the linguistic forms that occur within multiple hedges.

Table 1 - Individual elements of multiple hedges

| HEDGES | CORPUS IN SERBIAN | CORPUS IN ENGLISH |
|---|---|---|
| Non-factive verbs | *mislim (8)*[11]<br>*ne mislim (4)*<br>*sumnjam (2)*<br>*smatram (2)*<br>*verujem (2)* | *I think (56)*<br>*I don't think (7)*<br>*I believe (6)*<br>*I don't believe (2)*<br>*I assume (5)*<br>*I understand* |
| Non-factive phrases | *lično*<br>*moje mišljenje*<br>*nisam siguran*<br>*ja sam od onih koji smatraju*<br>*za mene*<br>*a što se nas tiče*<br>*imam utisak*<br>*pitanje je* | *I'm not so sure*<br>*that I can say*<br>*I can just tell you*<br>*as far as I'm concerned*<br>*as we (all) know (2)* |
| If-clauses | *(5)* | *(11)* |

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[11] If a hedge appears more than once, the number of appearances is given in parentheses.

| Modal verbs | *moći*<br>conditional mood (*potencijal*)<br>*(6)* | *can (2)*<br>*could (3)*<br>*may*<br>*might (4)*<br>*would (12)* |
|---|---|---|
| Modal nouns | *mogućnost* | *Possibility* |
| Modal adverbs | *verovatno*<br>*možda (3)* | *possibly (3)*<br>*probably(7)*<br>*perhaps*<br>*maybe(3)* |
| Evidential verbs | *delovati (deluje), izgledati (izgleda)* | *sound*<br>*seem* |
| Evidential adverbs | | *apparently*<br>*obviously (2)*<br>*we saw it all*<br>*what we have seen* |
| Reporting | *(7)* | *(15)* |
| Propositional hedges | *praktično*<br>*gotovo(2)*<br>*number approximators (2)*<br>*skoro* | *quite (6)*<br>*basically*<br>*kind of*<br>*number approximators (5)* |

We can see that the results mostly coincide in both corpora. The biggest difference is noticed between modal verbs that rarely appear in Serbian, which was expected due to the significant difference in their use in these two languages[12]. For the same reason, a large number of examples with *potencijal* (conditional mood) are found in Serbian, which is equivalent to the modal verb *would* in English.

In the English corpus, we find a total of 46 multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and/or phrases, of which as many as 32 in answers of politicians in power and only 14 in the discourse of opposition politicians, representing a ratio of 69.5% to 30.5%. We find almost the same ratio in the Serbian corpus, although there are significantly fewer hedges here, 13 in the discourse of the politicians in power and only 6 from the opposition, which is a ratio of 68.5% to 31.5%. This confirms our hypothesis that politicians in power use hedges to a somewhat greater extent. The reason for such a high frequency of multiple hedges probably

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[12] English has a significantly higher number of modal verbs and expressions than Serbian.

lies in the fact that politicians in power are accountable to the citizens who gave them their votes. In contrast, opposition politicians, who are still struggling to become the position, can express themselves more assertively and do not have to choose their words with equal care and use hedges in anything they say. The fact that hedges appear in English to a much greater extent than in Serbian cannot be fully explained from a linguistic perspective. Cultural differences should be taken into consideration as well.

### FUNCTIONS OF MULTIPLE HEDGES

The basic function of multiple hedges is not fundamentally different from the function that individual hedges have. However, when more than one hedge appears in the answer to a question, it is obvious that the degree of hedging is higher. Moreover, in addition to weakening the illocutionary force of statements, which manifests itself in political interviews as avoiding a direct answer, multiple hedges in politicians' discourse may have additional functions. It is also important to note that, although politicians in power use multiple hedges to a far greater extent than the opposition representatives, their functions in discourse do not differ. This is clear if we compare the answers of politicians from both groups to questions on the same topic. For example, in the Serbian corpus we found four answers with multiple hedges[13] to questions about Kosovo and Metohija, two in the answers of politicians in power (example 4) and two from the opposition (Example 5). All the answers to the questions about Kosovo and Metohija contain a large number of hedges (up to five), and they have the same or similar functions, which can be seen from the analysis of the examples. Therefore, in this part of the analysis, the focus is not on the position-opposition dichotomy, but on the very functions of multiple hedges in the political interview.

In order to make it easier to follow the examples, all the hedges are written in capital letters, while non-factive verbs and phrases, as central elements, are also in italics.

Firstly, we illustrate the basic function of multiple hedges in a political interview – avoiding a direct answer, and then present the examples with other functions which also appeared in the corpus.

### I DIRECT ANSWER EVASION

A large number of examples have only the basic function of answer evasion, i.e. reducing the illocutionary force of proposition, primarily in the form of uncertainty and

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[13] In our corpus, only examples that contain multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and/or phrases are analysed. There are, indeed, other answers that contain multiple hedges with the same functions, but they do not have non-factive elements.

subjectivisation. Here we present the examples we have chosen according to the structure of multiple hedges. They sometimes consist only of non-factive elements, or, which is usually the case, a combination of one or two non-factive elements and at least one other hedge.

In the first example, from the English corpus, two identical hedges are used, namely two non-factive verbs. Although the same verb appears in both cases, we consider it as a multiple hedge consisting of two individual hedges, because they refer to two different statements.

*Example* 1 (Interview 2)

> IR[14]: Has the House impeachment inquiry into the president affected your consideration of a run for Senate in Kansas at all?
> IE: No change. *I THINK* I've answered this question. *I THINK* this is number 103 or 104 times. My mission set every day when I wake up is incredibly clear. Our task at the State Department is to use all our skill to keep the American people saying, to execute American diplomacy, to make sure that American markets are open for Kansas products all around the world. That's what I'm focused on. And it's what I continue, intend to continue to be focused on.

Here we see the hedging with two non-factive verbs *I THINK* in the function of direct answer evasion. By subjectivizing his testimony, Mike Pompeo avoids answering explicitly whether he will run for senator. He actually says that he thinks he has answered the question, many times, and thus camouflages the fact that his reply is not the answer to the question asked.

*Example* 2 (Interview 10)

> IR: Uvrežen je stav da vas u ministarskoj fotelji čuva Trilaterala...
> IE: To je percepcija koja je stvorena od početka, a MOŽDA je i moja greška, jer se nikad nisam borila protiv tih priča. *MOJE MIŠLJENJE JE BILO*, kad krenu te priče da sam američki čovek, da ne treba da odgovaram na gluposti. Sada *MISLIM* da uvek treba odgovoriti. Srpkinja sam, radim u Vladi Srbije, za svoj narod i za sve građane Srbije.[15]

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[14] Due to economy, we marked the interviewer with IR, and the interviewee with IE.

[15] Translation of Example 2:

IR: There is an ingrained opinion that the Trilateral keeps you in the ministerial chair ...

This example from the Serbian corpus begins with a provocative statement in the function of the question posed to Minister Zorana Mihajlović. No politician wants to answer such a delicate question, so she resorts to covertly avoiding to answer it. She uses the modal adverb MOŽDA (MAYBE) which expresses uncertainty, along with the non-factive phrase *MOJE MIŠLJENJE JE BILO* (*MY OPINION WAS)* and the non-factive verb *MISLIM (I THINK)*, which denote uncertainty and subjectivisation, in a statement that is not an answer to the question but rather a comment on a part of the question ("stories").

In the following example, US President Donald Trump uses a significantly large number of different hedges with the same function.

*Example* 3 (Interview 3)

> IR: What was in the four page letter from the attorney general.
> IE: Well, the four page letter really was followed by 400 AND SOME odd pages very shortly thereafter with very little redaction. So IF YOU LOOK AT IT, he was very open. Again, he was very transparent. We could have redacted – again – you know, we could have redacted 90 percent of it. We didn't have to give it at all. You know it was my prerogative. I didn't have to give that 400 page document at all. I could have held it back. In fact, Rod Rosenstein, *I BELIEVE*, wanted to hold it back. Others wanted to hold it back. PEOPLE SAID you don't really have to give it at all.

In this example, Trump uses a strategy of answer evasion by changing the focus of the question. At the beginning of his answer, he repeats the key noun phrase from the question (the four-page letter) and shifts the focus to the document, while he does not mention the letter again. He uses several hedges to make the answer as vague as possible: the approximator of quantity 400 AND SOME and the if-clause IF YOU LOOK AT IT which express uncertainty, then the non-factive verb *I BELIEVE* which implies subjectivisation, as well as reporting with the impersonal noun PEOPLE SAID in the function of depersonalisation. Such a chain of hedges greatly reduces the illocutionary force of statements, which in CDA equals direct answer evasion as one of the characteristics of the political interview.

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IE: It's a perception that was created from the beginning, and MAYBE it's my fault too, because I've never fought those stories. *MY OPINION WAS*, when those stories started that I was an American man, that I shouldn't answer nonsense. Now *I THINK* you should always answer. I am a Serb, I work in the Government of Serbia, for my people and for all citizens of Serbia.

## II MULTIPLE FUNCTIONS

The following examples illustrate what other functions hedges can have, besides avoiding to give a direct answer.

In Example 4 we find a combination of answer evasion and a warning.

*Example* 4 (Interview 7)

> IR: Hoće li Kosovo dobiti stolicu u UN?
> IE: O tome se trenutno i ne razgovara, *NE MISLIM* da je moguće. Pitanje je možemo li da nađemo rešenje, postignemo dogovor. AKO NEMA DOGOVORA, ne samo da nema stolice u UN nego ni u Interpolu, OEBS-u, ni u mnogim drugim organizacijama. AKO ŽELE DA POSTIGNU KOMPROMIS, onda druga strana mora da bude spremna na značajne koncesije prema Srbiji.[16]

We can analyse this answer in two parts. The first sentence is Aleksandar Vučić's direct answer to the yes/no question, i.e. a question that requires an affirmative or negative answer. If there were no hedges: *NE MISLIM (I DON'T THINK)*, the answer would be: *it is possible*. Since this would be a factual claim, which would mean that the speaker can provide evidence for it, and in this case it is impossible, he resorts to non-factivity.

We could ask here why he used the negation of the verb: *Ne mislim da je moguće* (*I don't think it's possible*), instead of the negation of the adverb: *Mislim da nije moguće* (*I think it's not possible*). Although in the first case the statement without a hedge reads: it is possible, and in the second: it is not possible, so it would be logical to use the second variant, he still opted for the first one. The explanation can be found in the metalinguistic use of the word *ne (not)*. Its use at the very beginning of the statement can be seen as a negative answer, at least at the first glance.

In the same answer, two if-clauses are used, which primarily express uncertainty, but in this case they have a threatening connotation, so here we can talk about the warning function, which diverts our attention from the very sensitive issue of Kosovo and Metohija's admission into the UN to the negotiations between Kosovo and Metohija and Serbia.

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[16] Translation of Example 4:

IR: Will Kosovo get a seat in the UN?"
IE: It's not being discussed at the moment, *I DON'T THINK* it's possible. The question is whether we can find a solution, reach an agreement. IF THERE IS NO AGREEMENT, not only is there no chair in the UN, but also in Interpol, the OSCE, and in many other organisations. IF THEY WANT TO REACH A COMPROMISE, then the other side must be ready for significant concessions to Serbia.

The following example also has the same topic of Kosovo and Metohija, but this time the interviewed politician is a member of the opposition party, Sergej Trifunović. We have deliberately chosen two examples with the same topic to show that there is no essential difference in the functions of multiple hedges in discourse of any politician.

*Example* 5 (Interview 13)

> IR: Zašto se, po vašem mišljenju, drugi suzdržavaju da o statusu Kosova govore jasno i nedvosmisleno? Da li je to posledica hiperprodukcije ideja koje dolaze od Aleksandra Vučića (razgraničenje, pa razmena teritorija, pa ništa, pa sve...) ili nečeg drugog?
>
> IE: Zato što postoji uvreženo mišljenje o tome da je uvreženo mišljenje „naroda" da se plaše istine. Ja *NE MISLIM* da je „narod" glup, ali *MISLIM* da su političari predugo bezobrazni i da zloupotrebljavaju visok prag tolerancije koja postoji u „narodu". Ovim pitanjem su se uglavnom bavili oni koji su već probali nešto da reše pa nismo videli neke rezultate, a za divno čudo, nije se ni problem sam od sebe rešio. Kapiram i da imaju strah da bilo šta kažu u uslovima u kojima je javno mnjenje preplavljeno rečju „izdajnik". Mnogima je to VEROVATNO previsoka cena za iznošenje stava, ali ja sam već bio „PROPALI NARKOMAN KOJI KRADE PARE OD BOLESNE DECE"[17] i više ne mogu da smisle ništa ogavnije i pokvarenije čime će me uplašiti.[18]

The journalist asks two questions, and Trifunović answers the first directly. In the continuation, he uses the same metalinguistic characteristic of the word *ne (not)* at the beginning of the statement, as Vučić does in the previous example, in order to emphasize his statement. Although he distances himself from the proposition, he insists on his own opinion, which we can see from the use of the personal pronoun *Ja (I)* at the beginning of the

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[17] https://twitter.com/whistlerdick/status/1088075668473212933?lang=bg

[18] Translation of Example 5:

IR: Why, in your opinion, do others refrain from speaking clearly and unequivocally about the status of Kosovo?" Is it a consequence of the hyper-production of ideas that come from Aleksandar Vučić (demarcation, then exchange of territories, then nothing, then everything ...) or something else?
IE: Because there is an ingrained opinion that the ingrained opinion of the "people" is to be afraid of the truth. *I DON'T THINK* that the "people" are stupid, but *I THINK* politicians have been rude for too long and are abusing the high threshold of tolerance that exists in the "people". This issue was mostly dealt with by those who have already tried to solve something, so we have not seen any results, and miraculously, the problem has not been solved by itself. I also understand that they are afraid to say anything under conditions where public opinion is flooded with the word "traitor". For many, it is PROBABLY too high a price to pay, but I have already been a "FAILED DRUG ADDICT WHO STEALS MONEY FROM SICK CHILDREN" and they can no longer think of anything more disgusting and corrupt that will scare me.

statement, which is not a characteristic of the Serbian language. When a pronoun is used in this way, it is usually for emphasis.

In the second part, he discusses the reason for restraint, uses the modal adverb VEROVATNO (PROBABLY), which expresses uncertainty, and then reports in the form of a direct citation of one tweet. By quoting other people's words, which are offensive to him, he criticizes both those people and everyone who overuses the word "traitor" for people who are not afraid to say what they think.

We found similar functions of multiple hedges in the English corpus. In Example 6, the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Boris Johnson, answers a delicate question about what he will offer EU leaders during the Brexit negotiations.

*Example* 6 (Interview 1)

> IR: You say you want a deal – what exactly will you offer EU leaders this week that you're so sure they'll accept?
> IE: Well *I'M NOT SO SURE* they will accept. I hope that they will and *I THINK* they should, *I THINK* it's a very good offer - we will have to work very hard but IF YOU DON'T MIND I won't negotiate with them through your good offices.

Johnson uses a strategy of covertly avoiding to answer by changing the focus of the question. Even though the politician uses a large number of hedges in order to distance himself from the propositional content (the hedges with the non-factive phrase *I'M NOT SO SURE* and the non-factive verb *I THINK* express uncertainty and subjectivisation), it can be initially concluded that he does answer the question. However, all these hedges are used to mask the fact that he did not answer the question about his offer. At the same time, he changes the focus of the question, i.e. he repeats a part of the question that suits him and completely diverts attention from the essence. He even manages to attack the interviewer, as if he offered to mediate in the negotiations, using the conditional clause IF YOU DON'T MIND, which allegedly asks for the listener's permission. Therefore, this could be regarded as the strategy of direct attack.

We saw in the previous example that hedges could also be used to attack, in this case the interviewer. However, politicians are more likely to criticize and attack their opponents. As part of Joe Biden's overt answer evasion strategy, the two hedges have a dual function: criticism of a political opponent and self-promotion.

*Example* 7 (Interview 5)

> IR: Do you believe President Trump's children have acted properly and avoided conflicts of interest?

IE: I wasn't raised to go after the children. Their actions speak for themselves. *I CAN JUST TELL YOU* this, that IF I'M PRESIDENT, GET ELECTED PRESIDENT my children are not gonna have offices in the White House. My children are not gonna sit in on Cabinet meetings.

In the first sentence, Biden openly refuses to answer the question. However, in the second part of the reply, he actually gives an answer, but mitigated by two hedges – the non-factive phrase *I CAN JUST TELL YOU* and the if-clause IF I'M PRESIDENT, GET ELECTED PRESIDENT – as well as by the change of focus – and does not talk about Trump's children, but about his own in case he becomes president. Here, the hedges are not primarily used to hedge statements, but, on the one hand, for indirect criticism of Trump, and on the other hand, for the promotion of his own presidential campaign.

The following answer is another example of a combination of answer evasion and a strategy of attack, this time on the opposition.

*Example* 8 (Interview 3)

IR:  Are you saying the House Committee should be satisfied with the findings in the Mueller report, and they should not do independent oversight?
IE:  Well *I THINK* they should be satisfied with the findings, they spent $35 million – or SOMEBODY TOLD ME today MAYBE $40 million on the Mueller report.  They had 18 people, most of whom – *I THINK* all of whom disliked Donald Trump. They were Democrats, they contributed to the campaign of Hillary Clinton.

In this example, Trump uses a partial answer strategy to avoid answering the question. Although the interviewer is obviously seeking an explanation for Trump's position, he uses reporting with the indefinite pronoun SOMEBODY TOLD ME and the modal adverb MAYBE as a strategy of indirect attack, because in that way he points out the huge costs his opponents made for the report. Although he seemingly distances himself from the fact he cites (the amount) using reporting and the adverb, he actually uses it as an argument to attack his political opponents.

The hedges in the following example from the Serbian corpus have a similar function, which Zorana Mihajlović uses as the strategy of indirect attack on political opponents.

*Example* 9 (Interview 10)

IR: Da li najavljeni bojkot dela opozicije može da ugrozi legitimitet izbornog rezultata?

IE: *MISLIM* da ne može. Bojkotovati i ne ulaziti u borbu za ono što želite da ostvarite pokazuje koliko ste slabi. U političkom smislu, bojkot nikako nije rešenje za bilo koji deo opozicije, AKO ZAISTA ŽELE GRAĐANIMA SRBIJE DOBRO.[19]

With the non-factive verb *MISLIM* (*I DON'T THINK*), she distances herself from the propositional content, but with another hedge, the if-clause AKO ZAISTA ŽELE GRAĐANIMA SRBIJE DOBRO (IF THEY REALLY WISH THE CITIZENS OF SERBIA WELL), she indirectly attacks the opposition because her response implies that by deciding not to go to the polls, the opposition politicians do not wish the citizens of Serbia well.

### III Special cases

We will analyse two more examples which illustrate a specific use of hedges. The first one is an interesting case of double hedging from the Serbian corpus:

*Example* 10 (Interview 14)

IR: Ko su ljudi u politici?
IE: *MISLIM* da su bolidi, diletanti. GOTOVO svi.[20]

The question Čedomir Jovanović is asked receives a direct answer, albeit hedged. First, there is hedging of the propositional content, i.e. a statement that politicians are idiots and dilettantes, using the non-factive verb *MISLIM* (*I THINK*). And immediately afterwards, the illocutionary force of the same sentence is reduced with the propositional hedge GOTOVO (ALMOST). We can assume that this politician understood the exaggeration and inappropriateness of his statement, so he used another hedge. Thus, the first hedge has the function of mitigating the basic statement, and the second represents the mitigation of the already hedged first statement. Therefore, we could call this phenomenon "hedging a hedge" or "hedged hedging".

In the English corpus, we came across multiple hedges that a politician repeats during a confrontational interrogation in an attempt to avoid answering a delicate question:

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[19] Translation of Example 9:

IR: Can the announced boycott of the opposition's actions endanger the legitimacy of the election result?
IE: *I DON'T THINK* so. Boycott and not fighting for what you want to achieve shows how weak you are. In the political sense, a boycott is by no means a solution for any part of the opposition, IF THEY REALLY WISH THE CITIZENS OF SERBIA WELL.
20 Translation of Example 10:
IR: Who are the people in politics?
IE: I THINK they are idiots, dilettantes. ALMOST everyone.

*Example* 11 (Interview 1)

> IR: You say you didn't grab the journalist Charlotte Edwardes' leg at a dinner 20 years ago, what do you remember?
> IE: *ALL I KNOW IS* that it is not true.
> IR: Do you remember having lunch and sitting next to her?
> IE: I, to be honest, I CAN TELL you that it is not true.
> IR: Do you remember having that lunch?
> IE: I don't to be honest, I have no memory whatever.
> IR: So if you don't remember it how are you so sure it's not true?
> IE: Well I CAN TELL you it is absolutely not true.
> IR: But you don't remember it prime minister so why should we take your word over somebody who does?
> IE: Because it is not true, for all sorts of reasons, and I don't wish as I say to minimise importance of subject, I don't wish to you know cast aspersions on the motives of anybody who makes this type of allegation but it is not true and what I want to do is focus on our domestic agenda. And IF I MAY SAY SO, *I THINK* that what we're doing – *I THINK* there are more announcements at this conference than I have seen anywhere conservative conference.

Although these hedges are not a physical part of the same utterance, they can still be classified as multiple hedges because they appear within the answer to the same question. The interviewer resorts to a technique often used in a confrontational interview when the interviewee avoids answering the question, which is to elicit the answer by repeating the same question, repeating part of the question, or reformulating the question (Nikolić, M. M., 2018, p. 113-115). In each utterance, Boris Johnson uses hedges, first the non-factive phrase *ALL I KNOW IS*, and then the construction I CAN TELL twice, which can be viewed as a "hedged performative" (Fraser, 1975) – the modal verb CAN hedges the performative verb TELL. He finally deviates from the topic with the help of the conditional clause IF I MAY SAY SO, which allegedly asks for the listener's permission, and finally uses the non-factive verb *I THINK* twice as if to distance himself from the topic he started talking about on his own initiative.

The question that arises while reading this example is whether the public can actually believe the content of such hedged answers is true. Although in the end he explicitly claims that this is not true (Because it is not true), after three hedges, common sense tells us that such a statement should be treated with caution. Therefore, such hedging can produce the opposite effect from what was intended.

### CONCLUDING REMARKS

The analysis of multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and phrases in the English and Serbian corpora confirmed most of the initial hypotheses.

The first hypothesis (1) if non-factive verbs and phrases are used to express uncertainty about the factual status of the proposition, then multiple hedges with non-factive verbs and phrases are used by politicians to distance themselves even more from facts, which is manifested in discourse as avoiding a direct answer – is confirmed by the very fact that politicians use at least one more hedge within the same utterance with a non-factive verb or phrase, which further removes them from the truth. In all the examples, we can see that hedges are used in the function of answer evasion, partial or complete, overt or covert.

The second set of examples confirmed the second hypothesis: (2) if politicians use multiple hedging to avoid a direct answer, then the use of a larger number of hedges will have additional discursive functions. In all these examples, the basic function of hedges is to avoid a direct answer, but we also encounter the following functions: warnings (Example 4), criticism of third parties (Example 5), direct attack on the interviewer (Example 6), criticism of a political opponent and promotion of one's own campaign (Example 7), indirect attack on political opponents (Examples 8 and 9). We also came across two examples of specific use of hedges, the so-called "hedging a hedge" or "hedged hedging", where the speaker hedges his own, already hedged, statement (Example 10), and repeating hedges in replies to the same or similar question, which produces the opposite effect from what the speaker tries to achieve (Example 11). Based on the above, we can conclude that the analysed multiple hedges, whose main role in discourse is to reduce the illocutionary force of the statement, can actually have functions that are in contradiction with that.

In the quantitative part of the analysis, the third hypothesis that (3) politicians in power use this type of hedging to a somewhat greater extent than politicians from the opposition was partially confirmed. The relationship between the use of hedges in the discourse of politicians in power and from the opposition shows that the difference in the usage is actually much larger than we expected, which, as we have already mentioned, stems from the fact that the governing politicians have to pay more attention to their discourse than the opposition.

The last hypothesis (4) that there are no significant differences between the corpus in Serbian and English was also confirmed. Based on the examples, we can conclude that in the structure of multiple hedges there are differences arising from the systemic differences between the two languages (Figures 1 and 2, Table 1), but we do not notice any differences in the functions they have in the discourse.

Although hedging in various types of discourse has been analysed many times, it still poses a challenge for further research, not only from the linguistic perspective, but also interdisciplinary in scientific disciplines such as sociology, journalism, political science, psychology, cultural studies and others. Further research should include, among other things, prosodic elements such as the intonation and loudness of these hedges in politicians' speech, because neither lexical-grammatical nor pragma-semantic analysis can alone be sufficient to determine with certainty whether each hedge, single or multiple, is in fact a reflection of the speaker's insecurity, or his authority.

## CORPORA

### CORPUS IN ENGLISH:

Interviews with the politicians in power:

I1 Boris Johnson, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (www.itv.com/news/2019-10-01/full-transcript-of-boris-johnson-s-conference-interview-with-itv-news),

I2 Mike Pompeo, US Secretary of State (www.kansas.com/news/politics-government/article236599053.html),

I3 Donald Trump, President of the United States (www.foxnews.com/politics/transcript-fox-news-interview-with-president-trump);

Interviews with the opposition politicians:

I4 Hillary Clinton, opposition politician, (www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2018/10/full-transcript-hillary-clintons-remarks-kavanaugh/571984),

I5 Joe Biden, opposition politician (https://www.cbsnews.com/news/joe-biden-interview-full-transcript-watch-video-norah-odonnell-60-minutes-exclusive-2019-10-27/) ,

I6 Bernie Sanders, Senator, opposition politician (www.vox.com/2019/6/12/18663217/bernie-sanders-democratic-socialism-speech-transcript).

### CORPUS IN SERBIAN:

Interviews with the politicians in power:

I7 Aleksandar Vučić, President of the Republic of Serbia (https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/intervju-aleksandar-vucic-bice-razocarani-svi-oni-koji-samo-zele-gradsku-kasu/zt8423g),

I8 Aleksandar Antić, Minister of Mining and Energy (https://www.blic.rs/biznis/intervju-ministar-energetike-aleksandar-antic-aranzman-za-rtb-bor-je-istorijski-posao/8jewqls),

I9 Ivica Dačić, Minister of Foreign Affairs (https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/intervju-ivica-dacic-secer-mi-skoci-na-20-dok-se-dogovaram-o-povlacenju-priznanja/ lg61dkw),

I10 Zorana Mihajlović, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Construction, Transport and Infrastructure (https://www.novosti.rs/vesti/naslovna/politika/aktuelno.289.html:814554-Zorana-Mihajlovic-Dobro-je-da-se-SNS- refresh-from-the-place-to-the-top),

I11 Siniša Mali, Minister of Finance (https://mfin.gov.rs/sr/aktivnosti-1/intervju-sinise-malog-za-alo-1);

Interviews with the opposition politicians:

I12 Boris Tadić, opposition politician from the Social Democratic Party of Serbia (https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1708210),

I13 Sergej Trifunović, opposition politician from the Movement of Free Citizens (https://www.vreme.com/cms/view.php?id=1731574),

I14 Čedomir Jovanović, leader of the Liberal Democratic Party (https://www.blic.rs/vesti/politika/intervju-ceda-jovanovic-srbija-ima-dva-i-po-politicara-vucica-dacica-i-mene/ xe05s7r).

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## VIŠESTRUKO OGRAĐIVANJE U POLITIČKOM INTERVJUU

**Rezime**: Predmet ovog rada je višestruko ograđivanje sa nefaktivnim glagolima i izrazima u političkom intervjuu na srpskom i engleskom jeziku. S obzirom na činjenicu da je politički intervju, kao specifičan vid političkog diskursa, sve prisutniji u medijima, on postaje glavni vid komunikacije političkih aktera sa javnošću. Kroz ovu vrstu intervjua sprovodi se informisanje javnosti, ali i političke kampanje. Pošto su političari odgovorni svojim biračima za svaku svoju aktivnost i izjavu, oni moraju pažljivo da biraju šta će reći i na koji način. Jedna od bitnih karakteristika njihovog diskursa je ograđivanje od propozicionog sadržaja, jer na osetljiva pitanja oni ponekad ne mogu ili ne žele da daju eksplicitan odgovor. U tim

slučajevima oni pribegavaju upotrebi jedne ili više ograda kako bi njihove izjave bile prihvatljive javnosti, a da se oni pritom ne kompromituju ili obavežu na nešto. Teorijsku osnovu ovog rada predstavlja analiza jezičkog fenomena ograđivanja sa stanovišta pragmatike i kritičke analize diskursa. Prvo je izvršena deskripcija i klasifikacija višestrukih ograda koje se pojavljuju u političkim intervjuima na engleskom i srpskom jeziku, a zatim su utvrđene njihove diskurzivne funkcije. Takođe, izvršena je kontrastivna analiza upotrebe ograda u ova dva jezika. Dobijeni rezultati pokazuju da su početne hipoteze o glavnim funkcijama višestrukih ograda uglavnom potvrđene. Prva hipoteza je potvrđena činjenicom da se političari uz nefaktivni glagol ili izraz služe bar još jednom ogradom u okviru istog odgovora, što njihov iskaz dodatno udaljava od istine. Druga hipoteza je takođe potvrđena, jer je ustanovljeno da upotreba većeg broja ograda, pored osnovne, ima i dodatne diskurzivne funkcije (upozorenje, kritika trećih lica, direktni napad na intervjuera, kritika političkog protivnika, promocija sopstvene kampanje itd.). Što se treće hipoteze tiče, primećeno je da je razlika u upotrebi ograda u diskursu političara na vlasti i iz opozicije zapravo znatno veća nego što se očekivalo, što proizilazi iz činjenice da vlast mora više da pazi na svoj diskurs nego opozicija. Na kraju, potvrđena je i četvrta hipoteza, to jest zaključeno je da u strukturi višestrukih ograda postoje razlike koje proizilaze iz sistemskih razlika između engleskog i srpskog jezika, ali da u funkcijama koje one imaju u diskursu nisu uočene nikakve razlike.