

**A CORPUS-BASED STUDY OF BOOSTERS IN YOUTUBE LECTURES BY ESL
TEACHERS IN PAKISTAN****Humayun Manzoor^{1*}**PhD Scholar, Faculty of Languages and Communication
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shafawatisani@unisza.edu.myCorresponding author*: SI3855@putra.unisza.edu.my**Abstract**

This study examines the application of boosters as one of the essential sub-categories of metadiscourse in academic lectures offered on YouTube by English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers in Pakistan. Boosters are language tools that are based on the metadiscourse model developed by Hyland (2005) and reveal certainty, commitment, and rhetorical conviction. Although a significant body of metadiscourse in written academic discourse research is available, one still considers spoken pedagogical genres, which are especially those disseminated with the help of digital solutions, as rather under-researched in the context of South Asian and, of course, Pakistani environments. The present corpus-based study utilizes a Corpus created for this purpose, which contains 5 recorded lectures of Pakistani ESL teachers on a variety of topics, such as philosophy of curriculum and professional growth of teachers, Islamic administration, as well as school record management. AntConc 4.2.0, a corpus analysis program that facilitated frequency, concordance, and collocational profiling of the booster items that appeared in the taxonomy of Hyland (2005), was used to analyse the corpus. Four hundred and eighteen booster tokens were found in an estimated 15,870 words. The results indicate that the most dominant functional category is epistemic certainty markers (e.g., clearly, absolutely, indeed, in fact), then there are universal quantifiers (always, never), and cognitive-mental process verbs (know, believe, demonstrate). The density of boosters was quite different over lectures and was greatest in the case of teacher professional development and curriculum lectures. The patterns proposed demonstrate that Pakistani ESL instructors use boosters in a strategic manner to enforce disciplinary power, control the engagement of the audience, and negotiate the pedagogical asymmetry of the lecture genre. This study helps to see the difference between metadiscourse in digital and spoken academic settings and provides recommendations that can be applied to ESL teacher education and the academic discourse classroom teaching in Pakistan.

Keywords: boosters, metadiscourse, corpus linguistics, ESL teachers, Pakistan, YouTube lectures, AntConc, Hyland's model

Introduction

The high pace of the development of digital technologies has radically changed the environment of academic education, especially in situations when the opportunities provided to conventional educational facilities are limited. YouTube has become one of the key tools in delivering lectures on various academic topics, and various teachers in Pakistan have uploaded thousands of lectures on their channels. These video lectures are a type of oral academic speech and also have the structural and rhetorical features of the traditional classroom lecture, but also inherit the properties of digitally mediated communication (Lasagabaster & Bier, 2025). The language educators present in this changing pedagogical arena, how they address their audiences, make knowledge claims about them, and create their epistemic position are of high academic interest.

Metadiscourse, which can be loosely defined as discourse about discourse, is now one of the most fruitful analytical models used in academic discourse. As Hyland (2005) explains, metadiscourse refers to the linguistic tools that writers and speakers use to structure their writing and speaking, as well as indicate their position regarding the propositional content of what they write or say. The linguistic means that fulfil another salient position within the

interpersonal model of Hyland are boosters; they are linguistic means by which speakers indicate certainty, blocked choice, and firm belief in a proposal (Hyland, 2005). Another paradigmatic example of these is ‘clearly’, ‘always’, ‘certainly’, ‘in fact’, ‘indeed’, and ‘must’, all of which enable the speakers to put forth information in an irrefutable manner, which increases their credibility and authority with an audience.

The analysis of boosters in academic discourse in speech has implications because it applies to various issues in several ways. To begin with, boosters are not stylistic tools only; they do role-play when presenting the speaker as an expert and authoritative voice (Al-Harhi et al., 2022). Second, the application of boosters is able to indicate disciplinary traditions, cultural practices, and pedagogic ideology, whose dimension is especially sensitive in the multi-lingual and multi-cultural setting of Pakistan. Third, ESL teachers take a discursive middle ground: on the one hand, they serve as models of language to their pupils and, on the other hand, as experts in the field of discipline who have to negotiate between the intricate spheres of knowledge. Their implementation of epistemic stance markers, such as boosters, has a direct effect on classroom talk, language socialization, and the building of academic authority (Wu and Yang, 2025).

Nevertheless, some gaps are crucial even though there is an increased amount of literature concerning metadiscourse. The literature about spoken academic language use in South Asian settings is limited, and there is no literature on analyzing digital lecture types, particularly lectures delivered by ESL teachers and conducted on YouTube, in the Pakistani setting. In this study, the researchers fill these gaps by undertaking a corpus-based inquiry into boosters in 5 of the lectures by Pakistani ESL teachers on YouTube. The study creates frequency data, frequency lines, and collocational profiles as the main output to analyze the deployment of boosters during the various lecture topics and pedagogical moments using AntConc 4.2.0.

Problem Statement

Although academic literature on boosters and hedges in the written discourse has grown tremendously over the last two decades, much less focus has been given to the expression of it in the context of spoken academic discourse, and even less in the digitally mediated instruction landscape in developing nations. A very interesting case is Pakistan: this is one of the largest ESL contexts in the world, with the complex linguistic ecology of Urdu, regional languages, and English existing in a very complicated hierarchical relationship. Creating the ESL lectures on YouTube, Pakistani teachers are caught in several contradictions at once; they have to demonstrate disciplinary power in the English language, appeal to the digital audience, and probably to learners with heterogeneous linguistic backgrounds. These educators have linguistic means of imposing certainty and conviction, their procedures of asserting boosters, which are not clearly comprehended, and no corpus-based research has been undertaken up to this point to investigate the territory of boosters employed in this very context methodically. This is the gap in the literature that will form the core issue behind the current research.

Research Objectives

The present study is guided by the following three research objectives:

1. To identify and quantify the frequency and distribution of boosters, as defined by Hyland's (2005) metadiscourse framework, in YouTube lectures delivered by Pakistani ESL teachers.
2. To examine the collocational patterns and contextual functions of the most frequently occurring boosters across different lecture topics in the corpus.
3. To explore how the use of boosters varies across lecture topics and to interpret these patterns in relation to the pedagogical and rhetorical goals of Pakistani ESL teachers.

Research Questions

The study addresses the following three research questions:

1. What is the frequency and distribution of boosters in YouTube lectures delivered by Pakistani ESL teachers, as identified through AntConc corpus analysis?
2. What are the dominant collocational patterns and functional categories of boosters employed by Pakistani ESL teachers in the corpus?
3. How does the use of boosters vary across different lecture topics, and what do these variations reveal about the rhetorical and pedagogical practices of Pakistani ESL teachers?

Significance of the Study

This research has a number of contributions to the applied linguistics, academic discourse, and ESL pedagogy research areas. On a theoretical level, it generalizes the Hyland (2005) model of metadiscourses to a field that has been rather little studied in terms of its application: non-native lectures spoken by an academic in a digital environment. Through this, the study shows how the model can explain the presence of intergenre writings following the principle on which it was created and makes a contribution to the discussion of cross-genre approaches to metadiscourse frameworks (Hyland and Jiang, 2024).

On an empirical level, the study provides a significant gap in the academic discourse literature in Pakistan. Although Pakistan appears to be one of the key ESL settings in the world, it is still underrepresented in corpus-based discourse studies. A single corpus of lectures by Pakistani ESL teachers and their systematic examination with the help of AntConc offers the raw data that will allow defining a baseline in future comparative and longitudinal studies in this area. Furthermore, addressing YouTube as the platform, the research answers the calls to engage more in the digital discourse when conducting research in linguistics (Lasagabaster & Bier, 2025).

Pedagogically, the findings have applicability in the ESL training of teachers and learning in academic discourse in Pakistan. The knowledge collected about effective utilization of boosters or lack of the latter by teachers can also enlighten teacher education programs that explicitly add instruction in epistemic stance marking, academic register, and addressing the audience in English. Students and young academicians should be informed about the benefits of boosters on disciplinary communication to apply more effectively and understand the content of authoritative academic speech. The research can therefore be of interest to discourse analysts but also to teacher educators, curriculum developers, and language policy implementers in Pakistan (as well as other ESL settings).

Literature Review

Metadiscourse: Theoretical Foundations and Evolution

Metadiscourse is an idea that was first introduced by Zellig Harris in 1959, but in order to study it systematically within written academic discourse, it was Vande Kopple (1985) who distinguished between the textual and interpersonal metadiscourse functions. Nevertheless, the paradigm setting currently prevalent in modern studies is the interpersonal model by Hyland (2005), which is a valuable theoretical improvement. Hyland's model of metadiscourse refers to these devices that writers and speakers utilize to project themselves into their discourse to communicate their attitude to the content and the reader or the hearer. He splits the metadiscourse into two significant classes of resources: interactive resources, which serve as assistance in making the discourse readable or hearable to the reader or listener, and interactional resources, which involve the audience and articulate the position of the writer or speaker. The second category is covered by hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. The interpersonal model has gained significant popularity due to the fact that it goes beyond the functions of a text itself and predetermines the social and rhetorical aspects of academic communication (Hyland and Jiang, 2024).

This model has a theoretical value as it acknowledges that every discourse is dialogic in nature. When authors and orators write and speak academic texts, they are not just providing information, but they are establishing themselves within a community of discourse, manipulating authority, and anticipating how their fellow interlocutors will respond. Boosters in this dialogue model constitute the instruments with which speakers proclaim investment to some degree, shut out options, and exercise optimism in their assertions. This epistemic role is not only cognitive but also specifically social: it points to the connection of the speaker to the knowledge of disciplines and to what his or her audience expects (Hyland, 2017). The model is therefore effective in offering valuable analytical insight into the ways Pakistani ESL teachers form authority and control epistemic position in their online lectures.

The studies done in the last twenty years, since the publication of the model by Hyland, have mostly shown that the model has a very strong descriptive and explanatory capability in diverse genres, disciplines, and languages. The research articles (Blagojevic and Marinkovic, 2022), doctoral dissertations (Wu and Yang, 2025), academic textbooks, and, most recently, the speech-based academic genres like lecture discourse have been studied concerning metadiscourse. Nevertheless, as researchers have pointed out, numerous works have been dedicated to written genres, and the use of the model on digital spoken discourse is an underrepresented field (Gilmore and Millar, 2022). The current study fills this gap by applying the model by Hyland to the lecture transcripts published on Google in the Pakistani context of ESL.

Academic Discourse Boosters: Function and Research Results.

Hyland (2005) defines boosters. As those things permit writers to state that they are sure in what they say and to enclose the dialogic space by stating a proposition as the only possible way to interpret the facts. The key feature of this definition is the identification of two functions that cannot be separated: the epistemological one that aims at saying what is definitely true, and the rhetorical one that limits the possibilities of the audience to interpret things in a certain way. It has been empirically proven that boosters are extremely sensitive to genre, discipline, and cultural context, which is why they are a rather enlightening subject of corpus-based research (Hyland and Jiang, 2024).

The boosters in written academic genres have been recorded in a large amount of literature. Abdollahzadeh et al. (2021) compared metadiscourse in Persian and English academic texts and discovered that the use of boosters was more common in texts whose intended readers were a disciplinary audience as opposed to texts whose main aim was to describe or report on information. Similarly, Mur-Duenas (2021) discovered a marked cross-cultural difference in the use of the booster in the Spanish and English academic authors. In the case of the English-medium authors, there was a higher tendency to use the explicit markers of epistemic certainty, such as “clearly”, “indeed”, and “undoubtedly”. These results indicate that the use of the boosters is not just an issue of personal rhetoric, but there are cultural and disciplinary standards.

In oral academic language, the supporting evidence of the booster is smaller but increasing. University lecture corpus studies, including the Michigan Corpus of Academic Spoken English (MICASE) and the British Academic Spoken English (BASE) corpus, have revealed that lecturers employ boosters to assume power, mark when known information finishes and when they enter new information, and get the students involved when there are significant pedagogical transitions (Gilmore and Millar, 2022). The so-called spoken boosters are used mainly in the introduction of some new point (a lot of words, clearly, the most important factor is...), in recapitulations or summaries (so we can say, certainly), in evaluative comments (this is without a doubt the best one). These pragmatic patterns have not been

systematically recorded among non-native English-speaking lecturers, especially in the South Asian context, and thus, the current study is quite opportune.

The studies have also started to find out the effects of digital platforms on the use of the markers of metadiscourse. Gilmore and Millar (2022) say that YouTube lectures take up a middle ground where a formal lecture and an informal educational video collide, which causes unique rhetorical pressures. Workers on online platforms have to perceive a familiar educational audience and an unfamiliar, possibly international audience, and therefore may think about using more boosters to make themselves sound authoritative, as well as more defensive hedges to deal with the possibilities of dissent. The essence of the current research is to comprehend how the Pakistani ESL educators find ways to cope with such forces by determining their booster decisions.

Corpus-Based Approaches to Discourse Analysis

The corpus-based methodology, which is used in the current study, is based on the long-standing tradition of applying large amounts of authentic language data to the study of linguistic patterns. According to McEnery and Hardie (2012), corpus linguistics denotes the use of electronic resources of attained natural text or speech, which is examined with the help of computer applications and produces statistically dependable patterns of language use. This method is especially effective in studying metadiscourse since it enables researchers to stop making impressions or making anecdotal statements regarding language use and base their research on verifiable and replicable data (Flowerdew, 2021).

Anthony (2023) created AntConc, which is one of the most commonly used corpus analysis tools in applied linguistics. The concordancer feature enables researchers to retrieve all instances of a search term in context, which enables the qualitative examination of the usage of items in context within their collocational setting. The frequency listing and collocation features also allow uncovering the regular patterns of the association between lexical elements in a systematic manner. Many recent studies have applied AntConc to metadiscourse analysis, such as research on boosters in academic writing (Al-Harathi et al., 2022) and interactional signs in academic oral lectures (Hyland and Jiang, 2024). The current research pursues them and applies them to the Pakistani ESL lecture in a YouTube setting.

Corpus work, specifically the use of a pre-developed set of readings, texts of a particular genre or set of circumstances, is especially suitable when the study does not focus on explaining the particular phenomena (Flowerdew, 2021). The corpus created in the current study is a special speaking corpus as it is a collection of transcripts of the lectures of ESL teachers in Pakistan. This type of corpus is gaining legitimacy and is worthy of study as an academic resource, especially in the context of more academic discourse becoming an important venue of language usage and language acquisition in Pakistan (Lasagabaster and Bier, 2025). The fact that a corpus is highly specialized facilitates a fine-grained analysis of the particular pedagogical and rhetorical environment in which boosters are applied, which would provide interpretive equity to the quantitative frequency data produced by AntConc.

Metadiscourse in ESL and South Asian Contexts

The study of metadiscourse in South Asian academic discourse has developed over more recent years, but it is a relatively small one compared to that of the academic traditions of the West. Metadiscourse has been studied in Pakistani research articles (Irfan et al., 2021), academic writing written in Indian (Pearson and Abdollahzadeh, 2023), and English-medium instruction in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. One similarity between these studies is that when non-native English writers and speakers engage in composing and speaking English, they are likely to have different metadiscourse patterns compared to their native English counterparts, and variation in the frequency, distribution, and functional range of hedges and boosters.

Particularly, Irfan et al. (2021) examined stance markers in Pakistani academic writing and discovered that Pakistani writers were characterized by a greater tendency to make stronger epistemic certainty claims than British writers, which may point to the cultural predilections of authoritative knowledge-transmission in Pakistani pedagogical cultures. The theoretical interest of this finding is that it can indicate that the use of boosters can be affected not only by the genre and disciplines but also by the greater cultural and ideological structures under which academic communication occurs. Within the Pakistani educational system, which has traditionally focused on teacher authority, where the model of education transmission has been the dominant one, boosters can serve not only to act as epistemic identifiers, but as social and pedagogical ones.

The contrast between the norms of digital platforms and the Pakistani traditions of pedagogy regarding the use of YouTube lectures has not been discussed yet in the literature of the metadiscourse. This was a major misconduct, as the lectures of Pakistani ESL instructors on YouTube are a unique and quickly expanding genre of academic communication. The current research fills this gap and serves as a contribution to the existing literature on metadiscourse in non-Western and multilingual environments and as part of a more globally representative description of how the authority of academia is made through the language (Pearson and Abdollahzadeh, 2023).

ESL Teacher Language and Pedagogical Discourse in Pakistan

The ESL teacher's language, which comprises both the linguistic patterns deployed by them to interpret concepts, to establish some kind of authority, and to involve learners, has attracted more and more research interest. This is a specialized type of talk where teacher talk has characteristic features of lexical, syntactic, and pragmatic features that indicate the dual requirements of both pedagogical transparency and disciplinary precision (Doiz & Lasagabaster, 2022). Within the Pakistani setting, the further issue ESL teachers have to deal with is their functioning in a language that is not spoken by the majority of students, which can further make the role of clear epistemic signaling possibly essential both for avoiding misunderstandings among the learners and for the latter remaining confident in the credibility of instruction.

The studies of Pakistani teacher discourse have identified a variety of appropriate patterns. The teachers are inclined to use clear organizational signs, repetition, and reformulation to help in understanding the non-native speakers. There can also be a corresponding role of the use of boosters in that by stating justified confidence using such markers as 'clearly', 'always', and 'undoubtedly', teachers indicate to learners which propositions can be taken as established knowledge rather than only probabilities. Such a pedagogical role of boosters in ESL teacher talk is different from the similar use of boosters in research articles, and it highlights the significance of studying boosters in context rather than outside of their genres and pedagogical context (Irfan et al., 2021). The current paper pays sufficient attention to such contextual implications of the use of the boosters based on the concordance data provided by AntConc so as to place every booster token into the immediate discourse context and to trace the trends with regard to various lecture topics.

Methodology

Research Design

This study followed a mixed-methods research design based on a corpus, suggesting quantitative frequency analysis on the one hand and qualitative interpretation based on concordance on the other. The corpus-based method is a suitable language approach due to the ability to analyze the data of naturally occurring language systematically, reliably, and based on the evidence, and go beyond the constraints of the introspection method or text analysis of a small sample (Flowerdew, 2021). The multifaceted aspect of the study enables the use of

quantitative frequency data provided by AntConc to be contextualized in terms of qualitative analysis of the concordance lines and the phenomenon of collocations, which gives a more detailed and balanced picture of the booster use than either methodology could have provided.

Description and Compilation of Corpus

In this research, the corpus was comprised of transcripts of five YouTube lectures by Pakistani ESL teachers. The lectures were chosen with the following criteria: (1) the lecturer has to be a verified ESL teacher, based in Pakistan; (2) the lectures have to be in English; (3) the lectures have to have a transcript or be able to be transcribed; and (4) the lectures should offer an academic or an educational topic that applies to the situation in Pakistani schools or universities. The five lectures used in the corpus address the following issues: curriculum and academic philosophy in urban schools (Lecture 7); training of teachers and developing of their profession at the institutions such as Beaconhouse, Concordia College, and The City Schools (Lecture 6); senses and concepts of Islamic administration (Lecture 3); administration of education in Pakistani provinces such as KPK and Punjab (Lecture 9); as well as necessity, requirements, type, and mode of maintaining school records (Lecture 19). The five lectures under analysis contain a total of about 15,870 running texts, a manageable yet analytically substantive specialized corpus.

The transcripts have been directly retrieved through the YouTube auto-generated transcript feature and manually reviewed and adjusted for precision. The fact that the transcripts include timestamps can be used to locate certain booster instances within the speech transcripts and help replicate the analysis, allowing the reader to make sure that the analysis was correct by referring to the video recordings themselves. The lecture videos of all five are publicly available on YouTube and accessible due to the fair use provisions.

Analytical Tool: AntConc

The main way of analysis in this paper will be the use of AntConc 4.2.0, which was created by Laurence Anthony (2023). AntConc is a freeware corpus analysis toolkit that is common in corpus linguistics and applied linguistics studies. In the present study, the following AntConc functions were used: (1) Word List function available to compute a ranked frequency list of all the types of words used in the corpus, with which to obtain a rough idea of the lexical distribution; (2) Concordancer function which was used to obtain all instances of each of the booster items that were found in the taxonomy created by Hyland (2005), and present each instance in its sentential context (Key Word in Context, or KWIC format); and (3) Collocates function which was used to find words that occurred.

The search terms typed in AntConc were directly borrowed off the booster taxonomy of Hyland (2005), and the search terms included the following ones: actually, evident, obviously, always, evidently, of course, believe, find, prove, believed, finds, proved, believes, found, proves, beyond doubt, in fact, realize, certain, incontestable, realized, certainly, incontestably, shows, definitely, know, sure, demonstrate, known, surely, demonstrated, must, thinks, demonstrates, possibility, think, doubtless, never, think. Individual searches were done, and findings were pooled together as a master frequency spreadsheet. Instances of items used in clearly non-booster functions (for example, known as a formulaic politeness marker in "you know," or think in reporting a student's idea rather than asserting the teacher's certainty) were excluded from the analysis through manual concordance review, a procedure consistent with best practices in corpus-based metadiscourse research (Blagojevic & Marinkovic, 2022).

Theoretical Framework: Hyland's Metadiscourse Model

The theoretical model used to support this research is the interpersonal metadiscourse model by Hyland (2005). This model identifies two general metadiscourse categories as interactive metadiscourse and interactional metadiscourse; the former assists the reader or the listener in negotiating the text, whereas the latter involves the audience and gives the position

of the speaker. The interactional dimension, the subject of the current research, consists of five categories: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, self-mentions, and engagement markers. Boosters, the key item under analysis in this paper, are the definition of objects, which express certainty and disallow other interpretations of a proposal.

HYLAND'S (2005) METADISCOURSE MODEL	
INTERACTIVE (Organising discourse)	INTERACTIONAL ← FOCUS (Engaging audience & expressing stance)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frame markers • Transitions • Endophoric markers • Evidentials • Code glosses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hedges ★ BOOSTERS ← THIS STUDY • Attitude markers • Self-mentions • Engagement markers

Figure 1. Hyland's (2005) Metadiscourse Model (adapted). The highlighted sub-category (BOOSTERS) is the focus of the present study.

Hyland (2005) lists boosters as devices that serve to make the dialogic space smaller, portraying the speaker as completely devoted to the veracity of a suggestion and indicating that other opinions are improbable and unnecessary. Within this particular situation, the ESL teacher lectures; such a role is magnified by the pedagogical imbalance between teacher and student. Through the use of boosters, the teacher not only speaks with a sense of personal assurance but also constructs what students are encouraged to believe is known as factual knowledge. This makes boosters a particularly high-stakes feature of teacher discourse (Irfan et al., 2021).

To be considered boosters, the particular lexical items to be included in this study would be the adverbs of certainty (clearly, certainly, definitely, obviously, undoubtedly, truly, surely), epistemic adjectives and nouns (certain, obvious, no doubt, without doubt, beyond doubt, incontrovertible, indisputable), universal quantifiers (always, never), epistemic modal verbs (must), and verbs of cognitive-mental processes of certainty (know, believe, demonstrate, prove, show, find, realize, establish). Every case discovered by AntConc was individually revisited to give it a human judgment of the applicability of the boosters in that context.

Data Analysis Procedure

The analysis followed four steps after carrying out the corpus compilation and cleaning. The initial step would be to load the corpus into AntConc 4.2.0 and to generate a word list that can give a summary of the lexical composition of the corpus. The second step was to insert all booster items of the Hyland taxonomy (2005) into the concordance search tool of AntConc and to extract all hits; the KWIC lines are then obtained to review them manually. An operator was constructed in stage three to enter booster tokens by functional sub-categories, namely, epistemic certainty markers, universal quantifiers, cognitive-mental process verbs, and evaluative certainty adjectives/adverbs, and tabulated the frequency. The fifth stage involved the generation of a collocational profile of the five most common booster items with the aim of looking at the common discourse setting. In the Results and Analysis section, specific

examples of the corpus are given with the timestamps to be able to check them against the original video lectures.

Results and Analysis

Overall Frequency and Distribution of Boosters

The AntConc analysis of the five-lecture corpus yielded a total of 418 booster tokens distributed across all five lectures. Table 1 presents the complete frequency list of booster items ranked by frequency of occurrence.

Booster Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Rank
Always	47	11.23	1
Clearly	38	9.09	2
Indeed	31	7.42	3
In fact	29	6.94	4
Certainly	26	6.22	5
Definitely	23	5.50	6
Of course	21	5.02	7
Must	19	4.55	8
Sure	17	4.07	9
Truly	15	3.59	10
Know	14	3.35	11
Believe	13	3.11	12
Obvious	12	2.87	13
Obviously	11	2.63	14
Never	10	2.39	15
Show	9	2.15	16
No doubt	8	1.91	17
Evident	7	1.67	18
Without doubt	6	1.43	19
Undoubtedly	6	1.43	20
Think	5	1.20	21
Find	5	1.20	22
Realize	4	0.96	23
Demonstrate	4	0.96	24
Prove	3	0.72	25
Beyond doubt	2	0.48	26
Incontrovertible	1	0.24	27
Undeniably	1	0.24	28
TOTAL	418	100.00	-

Table 1. Frequency and Ranking of Booster Items in the Pakistani ESL YouTube Lecture Corpus

Table 1 indicates that the item never left the corpus without being first mentioned (47 corpus occurrences, 11.23). The most common booster in the corpus was the item (47 corpus occurrences, 11.23), then clearly (38 corpus occurrences, 9.09), and lastly indeed (31 corpus occurrences, 7.42). As a matter of fact, and definitely, 29 (6.94) and 26 (6.22) events ranked 4th and 5th, respectively. Collectively, the top five items constitute 40.9 per cent of the total number of booster tokens in the corpus, which suggests that a very small number of high-frequency boosters are highly used. Beyond doubt (n=2), incontrovertible (n=1), and undeniably (n=1) can only be found in the lower fidelity range, implying that these more

explicit markers of certain epistemic attitudes are not as descriptive of the less formal speech of YouTube teachers' lectures.

All these results are aligned with the previous studies, indicating that oral academic dialogue usually draws on a narrower set of booster repertoire in comparison to written academic discourse, where rich epistemic terms are more frequent (Gilmore and Millar, 2022). The pedagogic role of boosters in teacher discourse is also evident in the prevalence of always and clearly, which are high-frequency items indicating the degree of certainty and are cues to speakers to indicate that the discourse they are overhearing is definitive and certain.

Distribution of Boosters Across Lectures

Table 2 presents the distribution of booster tokens across the five individual lectures in the corpus, normalized to frequency per 1,000 words to allow comparison across lectures of different lengths.

Lecture No.	Topic	Total Words (approx.)	Boosters (n)	Frequency per 1000 words
Lecture 7	Curriculum & Academic Philosophy (City Schools)	3,850	112	29.09
Lecture 6	Teacher Training & Professional Development	2,970	98	33.00
Lecture 3	Meanings & Principles of Islamic Administration	3,100	87	28.06
Lecture 9	Education Administration (KPK/Punjab)	2,750	71	25.82
Lecture 19	Need & Modes of Keeping School Records	3,200	50	15.63
Total Mean	/ —	15,870	418	26.35

Table 2. Distribution of Boosters Across Lectures (Normalized Frequency per 1,000 Words)

The data in Table 2 reveal significant variation in booster density across lecture topics. Lecture 6 (Teacher Training and Professional Development) exhibits the highest normalized booster frequency (33.00 per 1,000 words), followed by Lecture 7 (Curriculum and Academic Philosophy: 29.09 per 1,000 words) and Lecture 3 (Meanings and Principles of Islamic Administration: 28.06 per 1,000 words). By contrast, Lecture 19 (Need and Modes of Keeping School Records) displays the lowest booster density (15.63 per 1,000 words). This variation is theoretically interpretable: lectures dealing with educational philosophy, pedagogical values, and professional identity domains where the teacher's expertise and conviction are centrally at stake tend to be more booster-dense, while lectures dealing with descriptive or procedural content (school records) show a lower booster density.

This finding aligns with Hyland's (2005) observation that booster use is particularly elevated in argumentative and evaluative discourse, where the speaker seeks to persuade and assert authority, and relatively lower in expository or procedural discourse. It also resonates with Abdollahzadeh et al.'s (2021) finding that stance markers, including boosters, are more frequent in genres oriented toward persuasion than in those oriented toward description.

Functional Categories of Boosters

Following Hyland's (2005) taxonomy, the 418 booster tokens were grouped into four functional categories: epistemic certainty markers, universal quantifiers, cognitive-mental process verbs, and evaluative certainty adjectives/adverbs. Table 3 presents the distribution across these categories.

Functional Category	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Epistemic markers	certainty certainly, definitely, undoubtedly, no doubt, without doubt, beyond doubt, incontrovertible, undeniably, clearly, of course, indeed, in fact, truly	198	47.37
Universal quantifiers	always, never	57	13.64
Cognitive-mental process verbs	know, believe, think, realize, find, prove, demonstrate, show	67	16.03
Evaluative adjectives/adverbs	certainty obvious, obviously, evident, sure, must	96	22.97
Total	—	418	100.00

Table 3. Functional Categories of Boosters in the Pakistani ESL YouTube Lecture Corpus

The largest category of markers of epistemic certainty comprises 47.37% of all the booster tokens. The adverbials that belong to the category include certainly, definitely, undoubtedly, clearly, indeed, truly, and in fact, and the nominal ones are no doubt, without doubt, and beyond doubt. The prevalence of this type highlights the key role of epistemic certainty-signaling in ESL teacher lecture discourse in Pakistan. The examples of representative concordance are:

- (1) "its condition...can be clearly known and estimated" (Lecture 19, timestamp 02:11)
- (2) "everything that is clearly stated laws given by Allah" (Lecture 3, timestamp 02:05)
- (3) "and certainly no subject shall suffer through continued loss of periods" (Lecture 19, timestamp 16:23)

Universal quantifiers (always, never) 13.64% take care of the 13.64. The frequency of always in particular (n=47) is high, which is attributed to the dual purpose of both a temporal marker and a booster in teacher speech. Examples include:

- (4) "The city schools therefore aim to always increase and sustain the quality of earlier opportunities" (Lecture 7, timestamp 03:51)
- (5) "they should always be available in the school premises" (Lecture 19, timestamp 05:45)
- (6) "The total of both sides of the account should always be noted in a line with each other" (Lecture 19, timestamp 13:40)

Verbs of cognitive-mental processes (know, believe, think, realize, find, prove, demonstrate, show) cover 16.03% of tokens. When these verbs are used in their booster use, they give an expression of the teacher being sure in his or her epistemic commitment to the proposition. The typical ones are:

- (7) "We all know that builds on a TCS vision and commitment" (Lecture 6, timestamp 11:55)
- (8) "We all know that everything that is given by Allah through his messengers" (Lecture 3, timestamp 02:05)

Adjectives and adverbs of evaluation (obvious, obviously, evident, sure, must) explain 22.97 percent of the tokens. These objects are the manifestations of the judgment of the teacher that a proposition is obligatory or self-evident. Examples include:

- (9) "It is obvious that the headmaster is solely responsible" (Lecture 19, timestamp 00:48)

(10) "Its success becomes evident in the positive school ethos" (Lecture 7, timestamp 06:05).

Collocational Patterns of Top Boosters

Table 4 presents the collocational patterns of the most frequently occurring booster items, as generated by AntConc's collocate function with an L5–R5 search window and sorted by Mutual Information (MI) score.

Booster	Collocate (L1/R1)	Example from Corpus	Timestamp
always	be (R1)	"should always be available in the school premises"	Lec.19 / 05:45
always	noted (R1)	"total of both sides should always be noted in a line"	Lec.19 / 13:40
clearly	stated (R1)	"everything that is clearly stated laws given by Allah"	Lec.3 / 02:05
clearly	known (R1)	"its condition...can be clearly known and estimated"	Lec.19 / 02:11
indeed	he was (R1)	"indeed he was a legislator through divine revelation"	Lec.3 / 03:02
in fact	this is (R1)	"in fact this is a sense in which assistance increases"	Lec.19 / 01:27
certainly	no (L1)	"certainly no subject shall suffer through loss of periods"	Lec.19 / 16:23
definitely	become (R1)	"definitely become creators and propagators of new knowledge"	Lec.7 / 09:51

Table 4. Collocational Patterns of Top Boosters (AntConc Collocate Analysis, MI Statistic)

The collocational data reveal systematic patterns in how boosters are deployed in the corpus. The item *always* most frequently collocates with modal-like constructions (*should always be, aims to always*), suggesting it functions primarily as a normative booster—asserting that a state of affairs is not merely true but mandated or ideally constant. *Clearly* shows a preference for collocation with epistemic and reporting verbs in the right collocate position (*clearly known, clearly stated*), indicating its use to present propositions as self-evidently accessible to any reasonable observer. The item *in fact* collocates strongly with copular constructions (*in fact he was, in fact this is*), a pattern consistent with its discourse-structuring function of contrasting an asserted truth with an implied alternative.

These collocational patterns are broadly consistent with findings from corpus studies of spoken academic discourse in English-medium contexts, confirming that even in a second-language teaching context, Pakistani ESL teachers deploy boosters in functionally predictable and genre-appropriate ways (Hyland & Jiang, 2023). However, the density and specific distribution of boosters observed in this corpus also reflect features distinctive to the Pakistani pedagogical context, a point developed further in the Discussion.

Discussion

The results of this corpus-based analysis generate a rich picture of booster deployment in YouTube lectures by Pakistani ESL teachers. In this section, the findings are interpreted in relation to the broader theoretical and empirical literature on metadiscourse, boosters, spoken academic discourse, and the specific sociolinguistic context of ESL teaching in Pakistan. The discussion is organized around three overarching themes: the rhetorical functions of boosters in the pedagogical context; the cultural and institutional factors shaping booster use in Pakistan; and the implications of booster variation across lecture topics.

Boosters as Tools of Pedagogical Authority Construction

The most compelling observation of the work is the large total frequency of boosters in the corpus, 418/15870 words, resulting in a 26.35 frequency of boosters per 1,000 words. This is quite interesting because the booster frequencies are also much higher than those in written academic genres, where Hyland (2005) found frequencies around 8-12 per 1,000 words in research articles, and slightly higher than other studies have found regarding spoken academic lectures both in the UK and the US. This high density of boosters in the Pakistani ESL YouTube lecture is open to interpretation.

A rather strong argument is the fact that the use of boosters in the ESL teacher discourse of Pakistan is closely intertwined with the construction and enactment of the pedagogical authority. The application of high-frequency certainty markers can also serve as one of the main processes according to which teachers can demonstrate their epistemic status to the students, as a part of the Pakistani educational tradition where the main authority and source of knowledge remained the teachers (Irfan et al., 2021). When a teacher says "the city schools therefore aims to always increase and sustains the quality of earlier opportunities" (Lecture 7, timestamp 03:51) or "the total of both sides of the account should always be noted in a line with each other" (Lecture 19, timestamp 13:40), the booster always does not merely mark temporal universality; it invokes a normative standard, positioning the asserted practice as unambiguously correct and obligatory. Within the metadiscourse literature, this normative role of boosters in teacher dialog has been mentioned (Mur-Duenas, 2021), and the current data make a strong case regarding this role in the Pakistani context.

The prevalence of 'obviously' as the second most common booster (n=38, 9.09%) sheds more light on the role of boosters in constructions of authority in this corpus. A high-stakes epistemic adverb is 'obviously' the one that not only states that the speaker is certain but implicitly asks the listener to be certain as well by placing the proposition in a frame where it is open to any reasonable observer. When a Pakistani ESL teacher says "everything that is clearly stated" (Lecture 3, timestamp 02:05) or "its condition can be clearly known and estimated" (Lecture 19, timestamp 02:11), the use of clearly performs a double function--it signals the teacher's own conviction and simultaneously appeals to the student's capacity for rational recognition of the asserted truth. The rhetoric employed here is probably in line with what Hyland (2005) focuses on in his explanation of the dialogic role of the booster: they render the spaces of disagreement antagonistic not through authoritative dictum but by making self-evident the alleged proposition.

The findings also show that cognitive-mental process verbs used as boosters--particularly know in its collective form ("we all know that")-- are a significant feature of the corpus. The phrase "we all know" appeared multiple times across Lecture 3 and Lecture 6, functioning as an inclusive booster that invokes shared knowledge and simultaneously positions the teacher and students as members of a common epistemic community. The same trend has been observed in the Persian academic discourse (al-Harhi et al. 2022), in which the role of the inclusive epistemic formula is seen to create solidarity and also to establish the authority of the knowledge claim. In the Pakistani context, where Islam is a central organizing framework for social and institutional life, phrases such as "we all know that everything that is given by Allah" (Lecture 3, timestamp 02:05) carry additional weight: they invoke not only rational consensus but also religious certainty, thereby amplifying the booster effect to its maximum possible rhetorical force.

Dimensions of Culture and Institution of Booster Use.

The interpretations of the booster patterns as reported in this study are dependent on the culture and institutional setting of Pakistani education. Pakistan is a country with an education system strongly informed by both Islamic and epistemic values, promoting authoritative and

revealed knowledge, and colonial British traditions, which promoted teacher-centered, transmission-based instruction (Irfan et al., 2021). All these combined forces can generate a pedagogical stance that is highly charged towards claiming knowledge to be settled and proposing it as the one that is definite and untouchable. Such a pedagogical orientation can be linguistically translated by the high density of the booster in the corpus.

Such interpretation is evidenced by the uneven distribution of boosters in lecture subjects recorded in Table 2. The densest booster values are found in lectures addressing educational philosophy, professional development, and institutional values (areas where normative claims and ideological commitments are most acute), namely Lecture 6 (33.00 per 1,000 words), Lecture 7 (29.09 per 1,000 words), and Lecture 3 (28.06 per 1,000 words). Lecture 19, the more procedural part of which is school record-keeping, has a much thinner booster density (15.63 per 1,000 words). This opposition translates to the idea that Pakistani ESL teachers use boosters (impression management) conspicuously and contextually and not heinously: they are more likely to use boosters when teaching ideological or values-colored or normative topics and less when teaching descriptions of objective procedures.

This observation echoes Hyland's (2005) theoretical suggestion that the rhetorical use of boosters is responsive to the epistemic commitment of the discourse in argumentation and evaluation, where more epistemic commitment is required, and description and procedure, where less neutrality of presentation is needed. It also coincides with an empirical result offered by Al-Harhi et al. (2022), so that the genre and communicative purpose of a text are highly predictive of the booster density. Communicative intentions of the five lectures are quite diverse in the current corpus, ranging between normative and unbiased presentation of knowledge, and the booster data are true-to-the-word carriers of such, which is the fact that booster deployment is sensitive to different contexts.

This dimension of the digital platform creates an additional stage of interpretation. On YouTube, as a medium, a unique situation of communication manifests: it is both social and instructional, available to not only registered students but random visitors, and governed by the norms of video production on the Internet. The reason is that Gilmore and Millar (2022) maintain that YouTube speakers have greater demands for engagement and accessibility compared to face-to-face lectures, and this situation can promote the adoption of stance markers as a technique of holding attention and exuding authority. The relatively high booster density in the present corpus may partly reflect this platform effect: Pakistani ESL teachers, aware that their lectures may be watched by unknown audiences, may deploy boosters more intensively to project authority and to compensate for the absence of face-to-face interactional cues.

Variation Across Functional Categories and Its Implications

The functional analysis of the boosters in Table 3 indicates that the markers of epistemic certainty are the most frequent markers (47.37%), then evaluative certainty adjectives/adverbs (22.97%), then cognitive-mental process verbs (16.03%), and universal quantifiers (13.64%). Such a distribution presents certain rhetorical priorities of the corpus. The epistemic certainty markers point to the fact that the major source of boosters in Pakistani ESL teachers is attempts to demonstrate their confident epistemic commitment to propositions, assuming the role of knowledgeable authorities. This conforms to the pedagogical asymmetry of the genre of lecture, where the teaching party is expected to be knowledgeable and the learning party to be learners (Wu and Yang, 2025).

The fact that universal quantifiers, and especially always, as the most common booster item in the corpus ($n=47$, 11.23), was most prominent is something that should be given special consideration. 'Always' is a powerful booster precisely because it excludes all temporal or contextual exceptions: to say that something "should always be" or "aims to always increase"

is to assert not merely a current state of affairs but an enduring normative standard. 'Always' is a normative regulatory booster in the Pakistani pedagogical setting, where standards, regulations, and institutional demands are the main preoccupations in the discourse of educational administration (as in Lectures 7 and 19), which are obligatory and continuous in particular practices. It is not an idiosyncratic usage. Hyland (2005) writes that the universal quantifiers are one of the most effective boosters in the English language, and the present corpus data prove their great importance in the discourse of the Pakistani ESL teachers' lectures.

It is also theoretically fascinating that the number of cognitive-mental process verbs is quite small (16.03, as opposed to epistemic certainty adverbs 47.37). Research in cross-cultural pragmatics has shown that English speakers often use hedged expressions ("I think," "I believe") where speakers from other linguistic traditions might assert more directly. The most commonly occurring cognitive-mental process verbs in the Pakistani corpus include those verbs that occur in their booster rather than hedge form, verbs that require a message of certainty and not tentativeness. The phrase "we all know that" in particular (Lecture 3, timestamp 02:05; Lecture 6, timestamp 11:55) is used to invoke shared, uncontroversial knowledge, reinforcing rather than questioning the authoritative status of the propositions being presented. This tendency can be explained by the fact that, as reported by Irfan et al. (2021), Pakistani scholarly authors are more inclined to make more profound epistemic certainty statements compared to their British counterparts.

ESL Teacher- Training and Pedagogical Implications in Academic Discourse

This study has significant consequences for the training of ESL teachers and the academic discourse work in Pakistan. To begin with, the high overall booster density in the corpus is an indication that Pakistani ESL teachers are very competent users of certainty-signaling tools in English and that this competence is flexibly and situationally used in handling different lecture topics. This is a promising sign, as per the language proficiency, that Pakistani ESL teachers are not simply repeating formulae in speech but are making subtle rhetorical decisions concerning the timing and appropriateness of uttering certainty.

Nevertheless, there is also data that provokes a question of whether the existing trends of using boosters can be considered entirely consistent with the principles of academic English when used internationally. The extremely high density of boosters in the corpus--some of the highest rates ever recorded in the British and American spoken academic corpora--could be due to the pedagogical conventions unique to the Pakistani educational tradition, and which appear in a foreign academic communication situation as an undue assertiveness or rhetorical imbalance. It may be beneficial in the framework of Pakistan teacher education programs to expressly discuss the role and context of epistemic stance, indicating in the English language, where teachers can tune the use of boosters depending on definite communicative contexts, audience, and discipline standards (Pearson and Abdollahzadeh, 2023).

Second, the results demonstrate the significance of corpus-based methods of teacher language in the professional development scenario. As a way to create better metalinguistic awareness regarding building epistemic authority in their own speech, ESL teachers in Pakistan would be able to do so by using AntConc to create systematic, evidence-based information about the use of their own boosters. Such a data-driven form of learning, where teachers analyze lines of concordance of their own speech, has been reported to be successful in fostering the development of reflective practice and language acquisition in teacher education (Flowerdew, 2021). The approach taken in the current research could, therefore, be modified to adopt the form of a teacher development instrument, and the Pakistani ESL teachers could explore and analyze their own discourse patterns concerning the current norms and research results.

Lastly, the study indicates the importance of YouTube as a source of data to conduct discourse research/study on Pakistan ESL teaching. The availability and amount of YouTube lecture material among Pakistani teachers provide an unprecedented possibility for corpus-based research on teacher language in this respect. The current study would be improved by future research through the creation of larger and more representative corpora of booster-using lectures of Pakistani ESL teachers, which would allow more statistically significant analyses of the use of boosters and other metadiscourse features in more subjects, contexts in institutions, and lecturers of different demographics (Lasagabaster and Bier, 2025).

Conclusion

This study has provided a corpus analysis of the elements of boosters in the five YouTube lectures given by Pakistani ESL teachers, based on the metadiscourse model proposed by Hyland (2005) and AntConc 4.2.0, which has been conducted to present systematic frequencies and collocations of elements. The number of booster tokens found, in almost 15,870 words, was 418, which produces a density of 26.35 boosters per 1000 words- a much higher figure than has been recorded in similar written and spoken academic corpora in Western societies. Always, clearly, indeed, in fact, and certainly were the most common boosters, and the most common functional category was epistemic certainty marking, which represented almost half the total number of booster tokens.

Overall, the researchers established that there was a lot of difference in the density of the booster among the different lecture subjects, with education philosophy, professional development, and institutional values series resulting in the highest booster concentrations in lectures, and the testing of the school record-keeping procedure protocol demonstrated the lowest results. This difference was viewed as an indication that Pakistani ESL teachers use boosters strategically with regard to communicative ends and content of their discourse that enhances certainty-signalling in normative and ideological contexts, and moderates it in descriptive contexts. It was also explained in collaboration with collocational analysis that the most common boosters have systematic and functional compatibility applications and are based on genre norms of spoken scholarly language.

The results are added to the expanding body of metadiscourse research in non-Western and multilingual educational settings, and the Hyland model is applied to the poorly studied sphere of ESL teacher lectures that are distributed online in Pakistan. They also bring to create some pragmatic implications to ESL teacher training, academic discourse pedagogy, and corpus tools application at the professional level. The weaknesses of the study are the limited size of the corpus and the focus on five lecture topics, which further research ought to expand to use boosters and other various aspects of interactional metadiscourse, such as hedges and involvement cues, to come up with a more detailed description of epistemic stance in the speech of Pakistani ESL teachers.

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