

# *Gender Differences and Pragmatic Identity Construction of Stance Markers in Business Speeches from the Perspective of Communicative Action Theory*

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**Abstract:** In the context of rapid development of science and technology, the image of the founders of Apple, Xiaomi, Alibaba and other enterprises appears in people's eyes. The founders of enterprises create their own enterprise IP through speeches, goods, live broadcasts and other ways and gradually become a trend. At the same time, the enterprise managers also express their own ideas through speeches, which is conducive to the coordination of the organization and arouses the enthusiasm of enterprise employees. The words or combinations of words used by speakers to express their positions and attitudes are called stance markers. This study explores the differences in the use of stance markers by business English speakers from the perspective of different genders, expands the study of stance markers in spoken texts, helps founders and managers of enterprises of different genders express their attitudes and views through the use of stance markers in their speeches, builds entrepreneur IP, makes speeches more attractive and persuasive, and then promotes the development of enterprise economy.

## **1. Introduction**

In the 2018 China economic trend forecast released by the well-known strategic consulting agency Accenture, "stance economy" appeared in the report for the first time. Accenture believes that in the future brand building, enterprises must have their own stance and take action on certain social topics, and the brand's stance will directly drive the consumption of consumers with the same stance, so as to commercialize and brand their attitude. Speech is a common way for founders and managers to express their positions. TED is a speech platform aimed at spreading ideas and attitudes. Among them, business speeches have elite speakers from all walks of life, and there will be rich resources of position markers, providing a good opportunity for the research of stance markers.

At present, empirical studies on stance at home and abroad are mainly conducted around written language. Most of the studies on stance markers abroad are diachronic studies on stance expression, theoretical basis and research model of stance, and comparative studies on stance expression by

different scholars in different fields, including comparative studies on stance markers in different registers, comparative studies on stance markers by native English speakers and learners, comparative studies on stance markers by people of different language levels, comparative studies on stance markers by people of different ages, And a comparative study of stance markers in British English and American English. Thomas examines the expression of stances used in paper acknowledgement in two disciplines [1]. Cem & Fatma provides a comparative analysis of the use of interactive meta-discourse constructing stances by native and Turkish authors in their doctoral dissertations in English [2].

The study of gender related stance markers mainly focuses on attitude markers and deterministic expressions. The study of stance markers in China involves the study of stance markers in discourse writing. The research objects are mainly Chinese English learners. The research corpus is mostly terminological texts, which mainly observes the characteristics of the use of stance markers by English learners in terminological texts, while the study of the use of stance markers by native English speakers is less concerned; In addition, there is also a study of stance markers in court trials, which compares the use of stance markers between the plaintiff and the defendant; And gender differences in stance markers. The study of stance markers from the gender perspective is rare. Only a few research papers on gender language mainly focus on the relationship between foreign language learning ability and gender.

Through literature review, it is found that there is a lack of research on the use of relevant stance markers in spoken English from the perspective of gender differences. Based on the TED business speech corpus, this paper sorts out the characteristics of the use of stance markers in English speeches, broadens the research perspective of stance markers, provides valuable experience and practical skills for corporate speakers, and provides useful resources for corporate speakers to use stance markers.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

At first, Biber & Finegan put forward a semantic concept of stance. They expressed the stance as "the significant expression of the speaker or author's attitude, feeling, judgment or commitment to information", and then they improved the definition of the stance, which was expressed as "the vocabulary or grammar expression of the attitude, feeling, judgment or commitment to the content of the information proposition [3]" After that, the study of functional perspective makes up for this defect and brings context, function, etc. into the research level. From the functional perspective, stand is a linguistic form used to realize a specific discourse function in a specific context. Hyland defines stance as the author's discourse "voice" or the personality recognized by the community, which is an attitudinal and author oriented function [4]. Finally, from the perspective of interactive language, stance is defined as a "behavior" between interactive subjects. Du Bois pointed out that it is essentially a stance from the perspective of dialogue, proposing a unified framework of discursive stance concepts, that is, the "stance expression triangle": evaluation, positioning and clutch [5]. The stance under the interactive form not only focuses on the speaker's expression or attitude towards the text, but also on their interactive use in the actual context and the interactive results between the speaker and the listener in the interactive process.

### 2.1 Position Marker

With regard to the classification of stance markers, Hyland proposed four classification frameworks for stance expression, which are classified from the perspective of the author's cognition, judgment, emotion, participation, and so on, in order: hedges, boosters, attitude markers, and self-mentions. Lakoff regards hedges as "words that obscure things." [6]. "It can modify the

content of the discourse according to the degree of truth or scope of the discourse, and it can also indicate the direct subjective measurement of the content of the discourse made by the speaker, or propose an objective basis to make an indirect evaluation of the discourse.". Boosters are tools that enable authors to close alternatives, avoid conflicting views, and express their certainty about what they say [7]. Boosters mean that the author makes a statement with confidence and certainty.

Attitude markers reflect the author's evaluation, value judgment, importance evaluation and emotional expression of propositional meaning or related researchers or their research achievements. The linguistic means of expression of attitude markers mainly include attitude verbs, sentence adverbs and some adjectives and nouns. Self-mentions refers to the frequency of using the first person pronouns and possessive adjectives in the text, indicating the existence of speakers. Generally speaking, self-mentions can be divided into two types, one is the first person singular form, such as I, my, me; The other is the first person plural form, such as we, our, and us. Self-mentions can reveal the speaker's position on the expressed views and help establish the speaker's identity. According to Hyland's classification of stance markers, the frame diagram of stance markers is shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Hyland's classification of stance markers

Stance marker	Hedges	generally,mainly,often,approximately,around,basically,almost/may/be, perhaps,possible/ly,seem,suggest/ed,would/n't,could/could't,might
	Boosters	fact,actually,real,believe/ed,demonstrate,establish/ed,find,found,indeed,of course, definitely, must, certainly, obviously
	Attitude markers	all right, glad, happy, hate, interesting, love, mad, desirable/ly,important/ly,remarkable/ly,un/usual/ly,serious/ly,successful/ly, necessary,useful
	Self-mentions	I, me, mine, my. We, us, our

## 2.2 Theory of Communicative Behavior

Habermas, a famous German philosopher and sociologist, put forward the theory of communicative action in the 1980s: taking language as the communication medium, life world as the communication space, understanding as the communication orientation, and intersubjectivity as the main feature, to explore the communicative action that can achieve mutual understanding between people. Habermas believes that the realization of communicative action should aim at mutual understanding between communicative subjects, and by means of constructing the basis of the effectiveness of speech. A definite expression means that the author makes a statement with confidence and certainty. Therefore, Habermas summarized four universal validity requirements that need to be met for the smooth conduct of communication: the requirement of comprehensibility: the requirement that the language used by the speaker in the communication process should be stored in the listener's mind in a preset way, and the speaker should choose an understandable expression that conforms to the grammar rules; Authenticity requirement: the language used by the speaker is required to present the objective facts to the other party in the objective world; Sincerity requirement: the language used by the speaker is required to show his attitude of sincere communication and arouse resonance and trust between the two parties; Justification requirement: the language used by the speaker is required to conform to the communication norms of the social environment in which the two parties to the communication live, and the two parties to the

communication should recognize these norms to reach a consensus [8].

The theory of communicative action emphasizes that the basis of effective communication between communicative subjects is that the language resources used by both parties can meet the four requirements of universal effectiveness. As a kind of language resource, stance markers can realize the potential connection between speech interaction and the universal validity requirements of communication action theory on effective communication, which provides a new idea for the study of speech expression.

### 3. Research Method

The purpose of this study is to analyze the frequency of action markers in different gender speech corpora, and whether there are significant differences between the two types of corpora. The speech corpus used in this study is from the official website of TED Speakers. We selected 60 TED business speeches (from 30 male and 30 female TED speakers) with the largest broadcast volume of more than 6 minutes, and built two small English corpora CTMS (Corpus of TED Talks from Male Speakers) and CTFS (Corpus of TED Talks from Female Speakers). The total number of characters in the transcribed corpus CTMS is 88635, the total number of characters in CTFS is 85917. This research mainly adopts the quantitative research method to analyze the above corpus. First, the corpus is transcribed into plain text format, and Antconc 3.5.8, a corpus software package, is used for retrieval and statistics. At the same time, manual statistics is used to exclude the target words that do not meet the research purpose. Secondly, the statistics of the frequency of the tagged action markers in the TED speech corpus of men and women are made to compare whether there are significant differences between the two corpora. Finally, the pragmatic identity construction of stance markers is explored based on the communicative action theory.

### 4. Results and Analysis

This study makes statistics on the four types of action markers in the speeches of English speakers of different genders, and their overall distribution is shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Overall distribution

Value	CTMS		CTFS		Chi square	P value
	Original value	Average value	Original value	Average		
Stance marker						
Hedges	1227	138.43	1063	123.72	7.17	0.0073
Boosters	694	78.3	761	88.5	-5.44	0.1958
Attitude markers	769	86.7	749	87.1	-0.0046	0.9457
Self-mentions	3628	41.93	3411	40.57	1.95	0.1669

It can be seen from Table 2 that speakers of different genders use four types of stance markers in their speeches. This shows that speech is not only a transmission, but also interacts with the audience through the use of different kinds of stance markers and constructs an atmosphere. Speakers of different genders have the same distribution rule in the speech part. The highest frequency of the two speakers is self-mentions, followed by hedges, attitude markers and boosters.

The number of hedges used in CTMS and CTFS is 138.43/1000 words and 123.72/1000 words respectively. The number of boosters used in CTMS and CTFS was determined to be 78.3/1000 words and 88.5/1000 words respectively. The number of attitudinal markers used in CTMS and CTFS is 86.7/1000 words and 87.1/1000 words, respectively. The number of self-mentions used in CTMS and CTFS is 41.93/1000 words and 40.57/1000 words, respectively. Male speakers use more hedges than female speakers in total, which shows that male speakers tend to use a modest and

deliberative attitude to talk and express their views; On the other hand, female use more boosters than male speakers, which shows that female are good at using definite expressions to improve the credibility of their speeches, so as to gain the understanding and recognition of the audience. Female speakers tend to use descriptive position markers, while male speakers are good at using alternative persuasion methods. In addition, male speakers use fewer self-mentions than female speakers.

The four universal validity requirements of effective communication in communicative behavior theory provide a framework for English speakers to understand what universal validity requirements can be met by various stance markers in their speeches, so as to realize the interaction between speakers and listeners.

#### **4.1 The Pragmatic Identity Construction of Position Markers under the Requirement of Comprehension in Communicative Behavior Theory**

Example (1): I think what's very important is the leader has to be grounded in some core values.

The attitude marker "important" in Example (1) is an adjective used by the speaker to evaluate a certain behavior in the content of a proposition. It effectively establishes interpersonal relations with the audience, expresses its cognition to a certain extent, realizes the function of presupposition, and meets the requirement of comprehensibility in the theory of communicative action. While meeting the requirement of comprehensibility, it shows the importance of the content of the discourse, hoping to be recognized by the listener.

Example (2): Also, money often makes us feel very selfish and we do things only for ourselves.

The self-mention us and we in Example (2) are the first person plural stance markers that include the audience. The use of self reference means that the speaker and the audience belong to the same social group, and share the same knowledge and culture with the audience; Therefore, self reference realizes the presupposition function in the requirement of comprehensibility, expresses the speaker's personal will and wants the listener to participate in the discourse.

#### **4.2 The Pragmatic Identity Construction of Position Markers under the Authenticity Requirement of Communicative Behavior Theory**

Example (3): The first Industrial Revolution was based on the fact that we invented something I would call artificial power.

Authenticity requires that the language used by the speaker can truly present the objective facts to the other party in the objective world. The booster in Example (3), fact, is a nominal stance marker to express the speaker's authenticity of the content, which meets the authenticity requirements in the theory of communicative action. At the same time, it shows the confident and powerful fact assertion of the speaker, and establishes a confident speaker identity.

#### **4.3 The Pragmatic Identity Construction of Position Markers under the Requirement of Sincerity in Communicative Behavior Theory**

Example (4): Now it may seem kind of strange that such a thing can actually be patented, but it does happen all the time.

The hedges may and seem in Example (5) are the stance markers of modal verbs and notional verbs used by speakers to express their judgments about the content of discourse. The speaker has established a good interpersonal interaction with the audience through a relaxed tone, which reflects the sincere communication attitude of the speaker and conforms to the sincere requirements of the communication action theory. At the same time, it shows that the speaker is uncertain about the

content of the discourse, which eases the speaker's strength of speech.

Example (5): I sincerely believe that if there is any public system, in any country, that is in inertia, then we need to bring back the motivation.

In Example (5), the attitudinal marker and booster sincerely and believe are the stance markers used by speakers to express their confident attitude towards the topic content and their confirmatory assessment of the topic content. This kind of responsible attitude and position reflects the speaker's sincerity to the content of the words he conveys, and meets the sincere requirements of communication. The use of attitudinal markers and confirmatory expressions constructs an image of confidence, reliability and sincerity.

#### 4.4 The Pragmatic Identity Construction of Position Markers under the Legitimacy of Communicative Behavior Theory

Example(6):And without those stretch assignments, we're less likely to get promoted, and so on and so on until we are super depressed by the demographic tendencies of our senior leadership.

The hedge like in Example (6) are stance markers in the form of adverbs that express the speaker's possibility of the content of the discourse. This possibility reflects that the speaker does not put forward opinions arbitrarily, but leaves room for the audience to discuss, conforms to the norms of speech content, and meets the legitimacy requirements of the communication action theory. At the same time, it alleviates the illocutionary force of discourse content and avoids unnecessary risks.

Example (7): And I think we can all agree that joy is definitely an idea worth spreading.

In Example (7), the booster definitely and the attitude markers can and agree are the stance markers that express the speaker's clear attitude towards the content of the discourse. This clear attitude enhances the credibility of discourse information, conforms to the norms of speech content, and meets the legitimate requirements of communication. At the same time, it is also the speaker's feelings about the content of the words expressed.

Example (8) Call me one of those idealist millennials, but I think we can get there. And I don't think the idea is too terribly difficult.

The self-mention I in Example (8) constructs the identity of the speaker to reduce criticism and guide interaction with the audience. In a speech, the main feature is that the speaker and the audience can interact to meet the legitimate requirements of communication.

To sum up, both male and female speakers use stance markers to reasonably express their positions, establish a good atmosphere with the audience, build personal identity, and achieve effective communication.

## 5. Conclusion

From the perspective of communicative action theory, this paper analyzes the gender differences in the use of stance markers and the construction of pragmatic identity, so that business speakers of different genders can understand the role of stance markers in their speeches, improve the speakers' attention to stance markers, and provide reference for business founders and managers of different genders in expressing their stance under the background that stance economy has become an important trend in the current commercial society.

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