(IJRSSH) 2023, Vol. No. 13, Issue No. I, Jan-Mar **e-ISSN: 2249-4642 p-ISSN: 2454-4671**

A Pragmatic Study of Hedging in Academic Discourse[1]

Prof. Abdulkarim Fadhil Jameel PhD.

University of Baghdad
College of Education Ibn Rushd for Human Sciences, Iraq

DOI:10.37648/ijrssh.v13i01.054

Received: 08 January 2023; Accepted: 16 January 2023; Published: 29 March 2023

ABSTRACT

Academic writings are no longer seen as just impartial descriptions of factual knowledge; rather, they are regarded as socially produced rhetorical artefacts aimed at negotiating and influencing the reader. As a result, there is increased interest in hedging as a beneficial rhetorical instrument for achieving this communicative purpose in academic writing. Despite the abundance of studies on hedging in various academic genre types (e.g., textbooks, conference paper presentations, examiners' reports), it is likely that the research article has received the greatest attention in the literature. Second, the literature on hedging focuses primarily on how the notion is structured in various disciplines and across various rhetorical parts, with minimal or no attention given to its discourse functions, despite the fact that the underpinning inspiration for the use of hedging in the enactment of academic texts has been well expressed. Thus, the current study analyses the discourse roles of hedges in various academic texts using Hyland's (1998) Poly-pragmatic Model. It goes on to investigate the disparities in the discourse functions hedges fulfil in both professions. The study, which is both qualitative and quantitative in character, demonstrates that hedging in academic speech serves three pragmatic roles and that preference for these functions differs to some extent in both fields due to a variety of reasons.

INTRODUCTION

Academic language has garnered substantial attention from scholars over the last three decades or more due to the key role it plays in the research process (Drury, 2001). Academic writing has established its own set of rules that regulate its use within the discourse community (Irvin, 2010). These standards frequently take into account the differences in the subject across disciplines or groupings of disciplines, as well as the expectations of individual members. Notwithstanding of disciplinary distinctions or individual members' expectations, several aspects of academic writing stand out. They comprise objectivity, language clarity, intertextuality, meta-discourse, accuracy, and maybe hedging. The attitude shared by certain researchers that academic speech should be maintained as impartial as feasible and free of personal comments is central to these characteristics (Chris & Zawacki, 2006). As a result, authors who subscribe to this notion strongly criticize the use of vagueness in this type of writing and instead promote precision, believing that the use of vague and imprecise expressions in making claims raises questions in the minds of the readers about the writer's certainty and credibility. As a result, they hold the firm stance that epistemic components, often known as hedges, are undesirable in academic literature.

Some academics, on the other hand, advocate the use of hedging in academic writing (Hyland, 1998). They work on the notion that academic texts are not just content-oriented and instructive, but also strive to convince and influence their audience, drawing inspiration from classical rhetoric. Thus, in addition to just providing the subject matter (i.e. pragma), a book should additionally trigger the audience's thinking (i.e. ethos) to question the author's veracity and emotionally touch the reader (pathos). On this basis, they regard the implications of vagueness and imprecision conveyed by hedging in academic speech as valuable and suitable, particularly when it comes to reports on scientific research. Because of the influence that the preceding argument has had on linguistically focused studies of the rhetorics of academic discourse in recent years, there has been a surge in interest in hedging and the rationale for its usage in academic discourse. Most of these studies emphasize that, contrary to popular belief, academic texts are not neutral accounts of factual information derived from nature (Bazerman, 1988),

[1] *How to cite the article:* Jameel A.F.; A Pragmatic Study of Hedging in Academic Discourse; *International Journal of Research in Social Sciences and Humanities*, Jan-Mar 2023, Vol 13, Issue 1, 674-682, DOI: http://doi.org/10.37648/ijrssh.v13i01.054

but rather socially constructed 'rhetorical artefacts' (Hyland, 1998) in which authors, rather than having to put forward information in a simple manner, frequently engage in processes of negotiation and persuasion. Many hedging studies have paid close attention to diverse academic genres (e.g., text books, conference paper presentations, examiners' reports). Even while the underlying motives for the usage of hedging devices in the enactment of academic texts are overemphasized, very little or no attention is typically paid to the actual pragmatic tasks that these hedging devices accomplish. Furthermore, despite the general belief in the literature that there is variance in the use of hedges between disciplines (Varttala, 2001), there appears to be no single research that seeks to analyze if there is variation in the motive for the use of hedges across disciplines. The apparent omission of the subject inside the seeming disregard of the issue in the context of students' writing, along with the inadequacy of the existing literature on pragmatic analysis of the topic, produces a void that should be filled. As a result, the current study seeks to analyze the pragmatic uses of hedges in various academic writings. It goes on to investigate if there are any changes in the functioning of hedges, taking into consideration disciplinary distinctions.

The Background: Evolving Academic Discourse and the Role of Hedging

In recent years, the landscape of academic discourse has undergone a significant transformation. Traditionally viewed as objective and impartial presentations of established knowledge, academic writings are now understood as dynamic and socially constructed rhetorical artifacts.

These texts not only convey information but also engage in a complex interplay of negotiation and influence with the reader. As a consequence, researchers have increasingly recognized the pivotal role of hedging as a rhetorical instrument in achieving effective communication within academic writing.

The current study focuses on two different academic disciplines: linguistics and psychology. These two disciplines represent the soft and hard sciences, respectively, and are expected to exhibit different patterns and preferences of hedging [Hedging in Academic Writing: A Pragmatic Analysis of English and …]. The study also compares four different types of academic texts: research articles, textbooks, conference paper presentations, and examiners' reports. These texts differ in their genre characteristics, audience, purpose, and degree of formality Hedging in Academic Discourse. By analyzing the discourse roles of hedges in these texts, the study aims to provide a comprehensive and nuanced picture of how hedging is used in academic discourse and what factors influence its use. The study also contributes to the existing literature on hedging by applying Hyland's (1998) Poly-pragmatic Model, which is a comprehensive framework that accounts for the multiple functions of hedges in academic writing [Hedging in Scientific Research Articles]. The model distinguishes between three pragmatic roles of hedges: shielding the writer from the negative consequences of making strong claims, recognizing the limitations and variability of knowledge, and engaging the reader in a dialogue and building rapport Hedging in Academic Discourse. The instances of hedges are then categorized according to their pragmatic roles using Hyland's (1998) Poly-pragmatic Model. The model consists of three main categories: content-oriented hedges, which indicate the writer's assessment of the reliability or adequacy of the proposition; reader-oriented hedges, which signal the writer's awareness of the reader's expectations or reactions; and text-oriented hedges, which mark the writer's organization or development of the text [Hedging in Scientific Research Articles].

The frequency and distribution of hedges and their pragmatic roles are calculated and compared across the different types and disciplines of academic texts. The results are then interpreted and discussed in relation to the genre characteristics, disciplinary conventions, and rhetorical purposes of academic writing.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Meaning of Hedging

The terms hedge and hedging are loosely described as a barrier, limit, defense, or the act or method of protecting or defending oneself. Although the phrases hedge and hedging have been popular in linguistics and related subjects over the past three decades or more, there is no adequate definition of the concepts in the literature. According to Hyland (1998), "straightforward definitions of the notions are rather rare," as evidenced by the various terms used by different scholars to describe the linguistic phenomenon that may be viewed as hedging. Scholars have utilized words such as stance marker (e.g., Atkinson, 1999), understatement (Hubler, 1983), and downgraders (House and Kasper, 1981) in the literature where other researchers employ hedging. Additional terminology used by some scholars to indicate hedging include mitigation (Stubbs, 1983), indirectedness (Hinkel, 1997), tentativeness (Holmes, 1983), and ambiguity (Myers, 1989).

Although studies on the concept of "hedging" used not to be common (Crystal, 1975), there have been tremendous studies on the topic in the past few decades. Almost all of these studies have been based on Zadeh's (1965) work on fuzzy logic, which posits that some objects of the natural world do not easily fit into the linguistic categories available for describing the universe.

Principal of these pioneer works is George Lakoff's (1973) seminal work which draws attention to the problem of relating natural phenomena to natural language concepts.

In this study, Lakoff claims that natural language (concepts) have "vague boundaries and fuzzy edges" (1973, p.458). When Lakoff made this assertion, he was more interested in the linguistic phenomena used to talk about the more peripheral members of broad conceptual categories (Varttala, 2001).

Illustrating the viability of studying such linguistic items in the area of formal logic, Lakoff (1973) scrutinized certain groups of words which he regarded as hedges, "words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness – words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzier" (p. 471).

Even though the meaning of "hedging" has since been broadened to cover a wide range of linguistic items other than what Lakoff lists in his study, Lakoff's definition of hedges has formed the basis of many discussions on hedging. This is because it provides a solid semantic basis on which the notion of hedging rests as it throws more light on the theoretical significance of studying fuzzy expressions like hedges in natural languages using formal logic.

According to Varttala (2001), for instance, Lakoff's (1973) analysis of hedges covers linguistically indeterminate means that could express natural phenomena that are peripheral to the core conceptual categories of natural language such as "animal", "fish" or "bird" (p.5). Thus, instead of one saying that:

1. Men are animals.,

One may say that men are among the more peripheral members of the group and may say that:

2. Men are more or less animals.

In the instance in sentence 2 above, the group membership of men is qualified by the hedge (more or less) to suggest that men are not typically animals.

In effect, Lakoff's treatment of hedges can be said to be purely semantic where he focuses on the way hedging functions to reflect the conceptual categories of natural language. Thus, Lakoff can be said to have dealt with the role of hedges on conceptualization as regards the experiential component of the ideational function of language (Halliday, 1978). That is it concerns the use of hedges in what Halliday (1978) regards as the " 'content' function of language; … language as the expression of the process and other phenomena of external world", roughly corresponding to Widdowson's (1984) conceptual function of language.

Following Lakoff's (1973) study, many studies have shifted from the conceptualization function of hedges, and instead, have emphasized the function of hedging as social interaction between discourse participants.

Hedging here is viewed as a pragmatic rather than a purely semantic phenomenon. In this way, hedging has been perceived as contributing to the interpersonal function of language where we may "recognize the speech function, the type of offer, command statement, or question, the attitudes and judgments embodied in it, and the rhetorical features that constitute it as a symbolic act" (Halliday, 1978). Since hedges make comments on what is being said, they perform a metadiscoursal function where they draw attention either to the relationship between the author and the claims on the text or the relationship between the author and the reader of the text. This form is a subtype of interpersonal metadiscourse (Halliday 1978). 2.2. Hedging as a Pragmatic Phenomenon

Apart from its role in conceptualization, language serves a social purpose as it provides the means for conveying basic conceptual positions in the minds of people, thereby allowing them to get things done in social interactions (Widdowson, 1984). Thus, alongside the ideational component, language has an interpersonal element within which the speaker's role in the speech situation, his personal commitment and his interaction with others are expressed (Halliday, 1978).

In recent studies that deal with hedging, it is this interpersonal aspect of the phenomenon that has been given prominence. For instance, addressing hedging in news writing, Zuck and Zuck (1985) define the strategy as "the

process whereby the author reduces the strength of what he is writing" in case the information reported turns out to be incorrect. Here, hedging is viewed as a rhetorical means through which writers seek protection for their image. In another cross-linguistic study of hedges in philosophical texts, Markkanen and Schroder (1987, p. 48) define hedging as a strategy of "saying less than what one means". In this instance too, like the previous, hedging is presented as a strategy used to modify writers' responsibility for the truthfulness of an utterance, to modify the definiteness of an utterance, and to modify the attitude of the author to the propositions put forth in a text or even to hide this attitude.

Crismore and Vaude Kopple (1988) also see hedges as items that "signal a tentative or cautious assessment of the truth of referential'', which allow senders to reduce their responsibility toward information presented. All of these descriptions above undoubtedly capture some essential discourse function of hedging (i.e. the primary concern writers have about how to present themselves in a text). However, these descriptions are somewhat insufficient and simplistic since they seem to portray that the discourse functions that hedges perform are exclusive to writers. What many discussions on the phenomenon seem to gloss over is a more thorough analysis that does not only deal with writers' self-protection but also explore the communication situation as a whole where the relationship between the discourse participants among other things is addressed. This somehow brings to mind the issue of linguistic politeness.

According to Watts et al. (1992), the notion of linguistic politeness has to do with the ways in which human beings "successfully manage interpersonal relationships to achieve both individual and group goals" (p. 1). Linguistic politeness therefore comprises all the various forms of language structure and usage which allow the members of a socio-cultural group to achieve these goals". The notion of linguistic politeness first received attention in Grice's studies on conversational maxims where he suggested that, in order to account for language use in context, a politeness maxim should perhaps be added to the well-known maxims he had established within his cooperative principle (i.e. maxim of quality, quantity, relation, and manner).

Grice's idea became the basis for what Fraser (1990) calls the conversational-maxim view of politeness, which is found in the works of Robin Lakoff (1973) and Geoffrey Leech (1983). In Robin Lakoff's (1973) paper where she calls for an elaboration of the Gricean maxims with regards to politeness, she demonstrates that, in addition to abstract semantic and syntactic rules, language users follow rules of pragmatic competence for reasons of politeness. Here, Robin Lakoff emphasizes that underlying our behaviour during linguistic interactions are two basic areas of linguistic competence, one area being realized by adhering to the principle of clarity and the other by observing the principle of politeness. She stresses that acknowledging the importance of both areas is necessary for understanding the mechanics of cooperative linguistic interaction. Robin Lakoff's elaboration of Grice's original principle is further developed in the work of Leech (1983), which includes politeness in interpersonal rhetoric. Interpersonal rhetoric, according to Leech, involves three different sets of conversational maxims – those pertaining to Grice's cooperative principles, the principle of politeness akin to that of Robin Lakoff, and the irony principle. In Leech's (1983) theory, politeness may be realized by weighing one's linguistic behaviour against a group of maxims whereby speakers can minimize hearer cost and maximize hearer benefit (tact maxim), minimize their own benefit and maximize that of hearer (generosity maxim), minimize hearer dispraise and maximize hearer praise (approbation maxim), minimize self-praise and maximize self-dispraise (modesty maxim), minimize disagreement and maximize agreement between oneself and others (agreement maxim), and minimize antipathy and maximize sympathy between oneself and others (sympathy maxim).

Thus far, it appears that the most thorough treatment of the interpersonal features of hedging found in the literature is on politeness, which takes a centre stage in Brown and Levinson's (1987/1978) well-known study of politeness phenomena. In this popular study, hedging is viewed primarily as a negative politeness strategy. In contrast to Lakoff and Leech, Brown and Levinson (1987/1978) developed a seemingly different approach to the study of linguistic politeness. While Robin Lakoff and Leech had been interested in politeness as a part of a system of conversational principles, Brown and Levinson looked at politeness as though it were a reason not to follow conversational principles. Brown and Levinson's (1987) position is that a clear distinction should be drawn between Grice's cooperative principle and linguistic politeness where the cooperative principle will be a description of " an 'unmarked' or socially neutral (indeed asocial) presumptive framework for communication; the essential assumption 'is no deviation from rational efficiency without a reason.'

In Brown and Levinson's work, the principle of politeness is seen as distinct from such rules. It is rather viewed as a social reason to deviate from Grice's 'asocial' principles of linguistic behaviour. Brown and Levinson built their theory of politeness around Goffman's anthropology-based concept of face defined as "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. Face is an image of self-delineation in terms of approved social attributes …" (Goffman, 1967). This model reiterates the idea

that interlocutors are aware of two basic kinds of desire regarding their face (i.e. face- want) namely, "the desire to be unimpeded in one's action (negative face), and the desire (in some respects) to be approved of (positive face)". In this, Brown and Levinson attempt to account for politeness as a systemic feature of linguistic interaction.

The interpersonal aspect of hedging can be traced to Brown and Levinson's (1987) discussion on hedges where it is mentioned that hedges can be used to avoid "presuming or assuming that anything involved in the FTA is desired or believed by the hearer" (p. 144). By this, it means that hedging can be used to indicate that the speaker does not want to impose upon the hearer's desires or beliefs. Although they point out that hedges may have other functions which include the protection of positive face, Brown and Levinson discuss hedging at greater length as one of the ten strategies linked to negative face protection. In support of Brown and Levinson, Hubler (1983) discusses the idea of hedging phenomena as indicative of negative politeness and contends that hedges are primarily used in negative face work where hedging devices are "deintensifying" elements which senders can only employ " to maximize the emotional acceptability of the propositional content presented to the hearer for ratification". On the one hand, senders may hedge utterances so as to leave room for the audience's opinions. In this way, they recognize the want of self-determination. It is particularly this aspect of hedging that has been emphasized in the literature on politeness where hedges are believed to be useful means of avoiding "apodictic statements" that might be "ex-cathedra formulations" overlooking the audience's wish to judge for themselves (Hubler, 1983).

On the other hand, hedges can also be interpreted as simultaneously serving the sender's negative face needs. As explained above, hedging has previously been described as a means of self-protection. In being tentative and cautious through hedging, senders can limit their responsibility toward the sender's views. Hedging may thus allow the sender to bow out gracefully and maintain their face regardless of critical comments.

This is because the original utterances are toned down in order not to exclude the possibility of being proven wrong. In this case, hedging may be seen as a strategy protecting the sender's negative face on occasions when the sender "indicates that he [or she] thinks he [or she] had good reason to do … and act which [the addressee] has just criticized" (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 67). In the context of scientific discourse, for instance, this might be taken as the central motivation for hedging. As Salager-Meyer (2011, p. 150) suggests, in toning down the force of one's conceptualizations of the universe by hedging, it is possible to limit one's responsibility toward what is said and thus avoid embarrassing situations in case one is found to be wrong (see also Zuck and Zuck, 1985). Hedging may thus be characterized as a "primary and fundamental method of disarming routine interactional threats (Brown and Levinson, 1987, p. 146). It therefore increases the probability of acceptance by the audience. Using the following as an illustration,

Linguistic politeness is more or less the most interesting area of pragmatics.

I think that politeness theories constitute the most interesting area of pragmatics.

(Vartttala, 2001, p. 24) intimates that, in these sentences, the expressions modifying the illocutionary force are inserted to qualify the assertions. According to him, in conceptual terms, more or less distances linguistic politeness from the category of the 'most interesting area of pragmatics' and I think that modifies the force of the entire utterance placing the proposition somewhere on the continuum between absolute truth and falsehood. In this way, the hedging strategies mark the utterances as subjective views but not categorically correct assertions. According to Varttalla (2001), hedges are easily identifiable in terms of politeness since it is possible to decipher two reasons for inserting the hedging devices as indicated above. First, the hedges may be seen as indications that the sender does not want to impose his or her views on the addressees since the latter may perhaps have their own areas of interest within pragmatics.

This, he says, would constitute negative politeness toward the addressees. Secondly, he intimates that, granted that the addressees may have their own ideas about the importance of politeness theories, the hedges can be seen as a way out for the sender should the addressees object to his or her views. By hedging the conceptual categorization in the first sentence and marking the proposition as a subjective assertion in the second, the sender allows for other opinions and simultaneously protects his or her negative face against critical comments from the audience (Varttalla, 2001).

Turning to the semantic field of the types of negative politeness involved in the examples, the two interpretations described above (increasing and decreasing fuzziness) may be used to analyze the interpersonal potential of hedges. On the other hand, both more or less and I think that can be thought to increase conceptual imprecision and render things fuzzier. By virtue of the fact that More or less makes category membership

indeterminate and I think that marks the truthfulness of the proposition as uncertain underline that what is being said might not be accepted by everyone. Thus, the fuzziness of the expression allows the addressees to disagree, offering the sender the possibility to forestall potential opposition from the audience (Varttalla, 2001). Alternatively, the hedges can be thought to increase the precision of the utterances to make things less fuzzy. The hedges may thus be seen as signals either that the conceptual category involved (i.e. 'the most interesting area of pragmatics') is not an adequate portrayal of politeness theories or that the proposition does not fulfil the criteria of 'true', but is more accurately worded when hedged. By hedging in order to be more precise, the sender may also be perceived to acknowledge the addressee's negative face by not imposing categorical utterances on an audience. Thus, the sender may be presumed to understand that the information presented may in some way be subject to debate. At the same time, the sender can protect his or her own face against criticism that might follow utterances lacking the refinement brought by the hedges (Varttalla, 2001).

In brief, both increasing and decreasing fuzziness in terms of hedging may be interpreted as aiming at the interpersonal goal of negative politeness. Furthermore, it may not always be easy to say hedges aim at the protection of sender, addressee, or perhaps both. The rationale behind the use of hedges is always a matter of the individual language user and his or her conception of the communication situation. Hence, negative politeness may be employed in different contexts. In sum, due to its negative politeness potential, hedging can be regarded as part of " a system of interpersonal relations designed to facilitate interaction by minimizing the potential for conflict and confrontation inherent in all human interchange" (Lakoff, 1973). Thus, they may be more to the interpersonal relationship as a discourse function for which hedging is employed in academic texts.

METHODOLOGY

The present study was situated within both the qualitative and quantitative research paradigms. The qualitative research approach seeks to explore and understand people's beliefs, experiences, attitudes, behaviours, and interactions (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000), the goal of which "is to understand the process and character of social life and to arrive at meaning types, characteristics, and organisational aspects of documents as social products in their own right, as well as what they claim to represent" (Altheide, 1996, p. 42).

This approach is particularly relevant in the present study because the researcher sought to investigate and understand the underlying motivations (discourse functions) of the use of the hedges in academic discourse.

The analysis of the data in this study is based on Hyland's (1998) polypragmatic model of hedging. According to this model, hedges can cover an array of purposes that "weaken force of statements, contain modal expressions, express deference, signal uncertainty, and so on" (Hyland, 1998 p. 160). A model of Hedging can be illustrated as follows:

Hedging

Content-oriented Reader-oriented

Accuracy-oriented Writer-oriented

Attribute Reliability

According to this model, Hyland (1998) divides hedges within the context of academic discourse into two main categories: content-oriented hedges and reader-oriented hedges. The reader-oriented hedges mostly deal with the interpersonal interaction between readers and writers. They make the readers involved in a dialogue and address them as thoughtful individuals who respond to and judge the truth value of the proposition made.

DATA ANALYSIS

This section is devoted to the analysis of the selected academic writings. The analysis of hedging is based on Hyland's (1998) classification of hedging devices is.

1. Analysis of Introductory Verbs

This category includes verbs such as seem, tend, appear, think, indicate, and suggest. Such verbs show uncertainty about what has been mentioned. Examples of the using introductory verbs in the corpus include:

a) The study suggests the usage of this strategy in the future.

b) The researcher believes that teachers should devote much attention to…...

c) The new method appeared to be more effective in enhancing the students' writing skills.

2. Analysis of Lexical Verbs

Lexical verbs include verbs such as believe, assume, think, and realize. Using such verbs allows writers to free themselves of any commitment to their claims.

Examples of using these lexical verbs in the corpus include:

a) The previous researches assumed the relationship between vocabulary instruction and learning strategies.

b) Teachers realize the importance of integrating technology in the class.

3. Analysis of Modal Verbs

This category embodies seven modal verbs: will, would, may, might, can, could and must. These modals imply the two distinctive features of non-scientific discipline, namely, probability and uncertainty. As proposed by Salager-Meyer (2011), writers of academic articles, whether their writing is scientific or non-scientific, resort to hedging to protect themselves against readers' reactions and to reflect their modesty. Examples of the use of modal verbs in the corpus include:

a) The findings of this study will contribute to EFL writing domain.

b) The study can be beneficial for those who have poor reading skills.

c) The differences in usage must be taken into account.

d) The differences might exist at the superficial level only.

e) These findings could help in improving the listening problems.

f) The new method would be only effective if it is implemented in light of the recent principles of teaching.

4. Analysis of Modal Adverbials

This category involves seven adverbs. Examples of the use of modal adverbs in the corpus include:

a) This result certainly corresponds with the previous studies.

b) It is clearly required to have a focused approach towards technology in language classes.

c) The students have certainly achieved higher scores in the post-test.

d) The students definitely agreed on the importance of MALL.

e) The respondents have possibly affected by the impressionistic view of the old strategy.

5. Analysis of Adverbs of Frequency

The fifth hedging category in Hyland's (1998) classification is adverbs of frequency. It embraces six adverbs. Examples of the use of such adverbs in the corpus include:

a) The respondents were found to often use the computer in their classes.

b) The participants were reported to usually have access to the electronic dictionary.

6. Analysis of Modal Adjectives

The sixth category in Hyland's (1998) classification is modal adjectives. Examples of the use of modal adjectives in the corpus include:

a) The suggested method seemed to have a possible effect on the comprehension.

b) There were clear differences between the estimations of the both groups.

c) It is certain that the study will help the authorities to develop …….

d) The suggested technique had a clear effect on the motivation of the students in the three classes.

e) The participants said that MALL was possible to them in the class and that they liked to be taught through it.

7. Analysis of Modal Nouns

The seventh category in Hyland's (1998) classification is modal nouns. The use of modal nouns in the corpus is shown in the following examples:

a) The hypothesis of the study is based on the assumption that peer feedback enhances the writing skills of the learners.

b) There was a greater possibility for the students to express their views trough the suggested method.

8. Analysis of Adjective + to clause

The eighth and last category in Hyland's (1998) classification is adjectives + to-clauses. This category includes three types of clauses. The findings demonstrate, as listed in Table (10), that it may be possible to obtain was used twice; it is important to develop was used three times; and it is useful to study was used twice. Examples of the use of this category in the course include:

a) It is important to develop the students' reading abilities at this stage.

b) It is useful to study the other demographic factors that affect the students' sound production.

9. Analysis of That-Clause

The ninth category in Hyland's (1998) classification is that-clause. This category involves three types of that-clause. The analysis of the data makes clear that it could be the case that was not used at all in the corpus; it might be suggested that was used four times; and there is every hope that was used twice. The following is an example of using that-clauses in the corpus:

The researcher hopes that these findings help the curriculum designers to consider the students' needs.

CONCLUSION

In academic writing authors often have to be cautious about the way they present a piece of research, their research questions findings, results, conclusions and so on. In order to avoid categorical or absolute phrases research writers use hedges whenever necessary. The main functions of hedging are to tone down research statements in order to reduce the threat of opposition from other researchers, and to avoid overstating the results of a study which might not be valid in all circumstances. Since the results of a piece of research are hardly generalisable in all circumstances, the use of hedging is a part of salient academic writing practices, which can be done in a variety of ways. Typically, hedging is expressed through use of modal auxiliary verbs such as may, might and could, adjectival, adverbial and nominal modal expressions (possible, perhaps, probability), modal lexical verbs (believe, assume). Hedging is utterly important in avoiding "communicative failure" and allowing authors to find a way of expressing their true voice in a target discourse. Academic discourse contains many fuzzy expressions which introduce imprecision into statements, enabling the reader to get the gist of the writer's point

of view, thus playing a major role in efficient communication.

REFERENCES

1. Altheide, D. L. (1996). *Qualitative Media Analysis.* Sage.
2. Atkinson, D. (1999). *Scientific Discourse in Sociohistorical Context. The Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society of London,* 1675-1975. Mahwah. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
3. Bazerman, C. (1985). Physicists reading physics: Schema-laden purposes and purpose-laden schema, 2 (1) Written Communication.
4. Brown, P., Levinson, S. (1987) Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage, CUP.
5. Crystal, D., Davy, D. (1975) Advanced Conversational English, Longman. Chris, C. J. & Zawacki, T.M. (2006). *Engaged Writers and Dynamic*
6. *Disciplines: Research on the Academic Writing Life.* Boynton/Cook. Drury, J. (2001). *Extending Usability Inspection Evaluation Techniques for Synchronous Collaborative Computing Applications.* University of Massachusetts. Lowell.
7. Fraenkel, J. R., & Wallen, N. E. (1990). *How to Design and Evaluate Research in Education.* New York: McGraw-Hill.
8. Halliday, M. A. K. (1978). *Language as Social Semiotic: The Social Interpretation of Language and Meaning.* University Park Press.
9. Hinkel, E. (1997). Indirectness in L1 and L2 academic writing. *Journal of Pragmatics 27*, 361-386

a. Holmes, J. (1983). Doubt and certainty in ESL textbooks. Applied linguistics, 9(1), 21-44.
b. House, J., Kasper, G. (1981), Politeness markers in English and German, F. Coulmas (Ed.), Conversational Routine, Mouton, The Hague.

10. Hubler, A. (1983). *Understatements and hedges in English*. Amsterdam and John Benjamins Publishing Company.
11. Hyland, K. (1998). Hedging in academic writing and EAP textbooks. English for Specific Purposes, 13.
12. Irvin, L. (2010). What is "academic" writing?. In: Writing Spaces: *Reading and Writing (pp. 117- 128).* Parlor Press.
13. Lakoff, G. (1973). Hedges: A study of meaning criteria and the logic of fuzzy concepts. Papers from the Eighth.
14. Myers, G. (1989). The Pragmatics of Politeness in Scientific Articles. Applied Linguistics 10 (1).
15. Stubbs, M. (1983). A matter of prolonged fieldwork: Notes towards a modal grammar of English. Applied Linguistics, 7(l), l-25.
16. Widdowson, H. (1984). Explorations in applied linguistics. Oxford University Press.
17. Salager-Meyer, F. (2011). Scientific discourse and contrastive linguistics: hedging. *European Science Editing*, *37*(2), 35-37.
18. Varttala, T. (2001). *Hedging in scientifically oriented discourse. Exploring variation according to discipline and intended audience*. Tampere University Press. Zadeh, L. A. (1965). Fuzzy sets. *Information and Control 8(3), 338-353*
19. Zuck, J. G., & Zuck, V. L. (1985). Hedging in newspapers. In A. M. Cornu, J.
20. Vanparijs, and M. Delahene (Eds.), *Beads or Bracelet: How Do We Approach, LSP (pp. 172-180).* Oxford University Press.