

The Use of Hedging Devices in Scientific Research Papers by Iraqi EFL Learners

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Abstract

Hedging is a discursual resource for expressing uncertainty, skepticism, and open-mindedness about one's propositions. Hedging devices are tools used by the academic writers to present their claims or arguments in a polite, acceptable and respectful manner. In this study, the focus is on the use of hedging devices in academic research papers of Iraqi learners of English as a foreign language. The sample of this study consists of sixty students. Thirty students were enrolled in an experimental group that received instruction designed to increase their ability to use hedging devices. The other thirty students were enrolled in a control group, which received no instruction. The findings of analyzing their research papers after instruction indicate that the experimental group shows statistically significant increases in the use of hedging devices in research papers. This proves that instruction plays a significant role in increasing the learners' use of these devices.

1. Hedging in English

1.1 Definition of Hedging

The term 'hedging' in its literal sense refers to the idea of 'barrier', 'limit', 'defence', or to the means used to protect or defend oneself. It has been generally taken to mean those expressions in language which make messages indeterminate, that is, they convey inexactitude, or in one way or another mitigate or reduce the strength of the assertions that speakers or writers make (Heng and Tan, 2002:6).

The concept of 'hedging' as a linguistic term was coined first by Lakoff (1972:195) who was not only interested in the communicative value of hedges but also concerned with the logical properties of words and phrases like 'rather', 'largely', 'sort of', 'very' in their ability "to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy".

Following Lakoff, many linguists like Brown and Levinson (1987: 40); Bach and Harnish (1979:225) and Leech (1983:140) define the concept of 'hedging' as a device of achieving a linguistic vagueness. Their various definitions pointed to a great variety of motives in using devices, for instance, face-saving strategies intended to obtain speakers' or writers' acceptance, mitigation or modification of utterances, avoidance of commitment and intentional vagueness.

In the same sense, Holmes (1997:32) treats hedges as devices that convey purposive tentativeness so that the speaker or the writer "can create conviviality, facilitate discussion, show politeness and oil the phatic wheels". They present the writers' efforts to persuade readers of the correctness of their claims, helping them gain acceptance for their work, as in the following examples:

(1) He could not live without her, I guess (Yule, 1996:38).

(2) I personally think that the conclusion has no relation to the topic.

(Ventola, 1997:160).

The writer in (2) renders a criticism or suggestion to be less authoritative. By limiting the scope of the claim of knowledge, he is making his suggestion as a "personal opinion"

rather than assertion , allowing the readers to choose the more persuasive explanations and have their own judgments.

1.2 Taxonomy of Hedges

Hedges occur as mitigating devices which attenuate the propositional content of the message. Many linguists like Hyland(2000:156);Skelton(1988:22); Myers (1989:52); Rounds(2008:14);Channell(1994:25);Banks(1994:13)...etc. agree that attenuation can be achieved in different ways employing diverse linguistic and non-linguistic strategies. They(ibid.) try to capture the multi-functional nature of hedges which enable them to have a range of meanings at the same time. Hedges according to them (ibid.) can be classified into content-oriented and reader-oriented hedges.

1.2.1 Content-Oriented Hedges

Content-oriented hedges mitigate the relationship between propositional content and a representation of reality. They hedge the correspondence between what the writers say about the world and what the world is thought to be like. The motivations for these hedges fall into two overlapping categories, concerning the writer's focus on propositional accuracy or on self-protection from the consequences of poor judgment. These are accuracy-oriented hedges and writer-oriented hedges(Skelton,1988:22).

1.2.1.1 Accuracy-Oriented Hedges

These types of hedges involve the writer's desire to express propositions with greater precision in areas often subject to revision. Hedging here is an important means of accurately stating uncertain claims with appropriate caution to reduce the risk of uncertainty on objective grounds. The main function of accuracy-oriented hedges is to imply that the proposition is based on plausible reasoning in the absence of knowledge .They enable readers to distinguish between what is actual and what is only inferential(Myers,1989: 52).Here are some examples:

(3) Researchers may have found a cure for influenza.

(4) The writer's language displayed a little discrimination.

(5) Johnson (2007) appears to ignore the adverse psychological side-effects of this approach (Rounds,2008:14).

The use of 'may' , 'little' and 'appear' in the above examples indicates the writers' uncertainty about their propositions. Tentativeness is intentionally used by them to avoid the readers' criticism.

Content –oriented hedges can be further classified into attribute and reliability hedges.

1.2.1.1.1 Attribute Hedges

The principal role of these hedges is to specify the extent to which a term accurately describes the reported phenomenon. They help the writers to specify more accurately how far their results "approximate to an idealized state". Attribute hedges can fall into downgraders, markers of intentional vagueness and intensifiers(Channell,1994:25).

1.2.1.1.1.1 Downgraders

This type of hedging devices is considered to be polite for being non-imposing.

These are represented by expressions such as 'just', 'just in case', 'a bit', 'a few', 'a little', 'rather', 'slightly', 'scarcely',...etc which Quirk et. al (1985:446) label as downtoners.

The main function of these attitudinal markers lies in the fact that they serve as a form of self-protection of the speaker or writer, the reason for which may be insufficient knowledge of the partner's wants, opinions or beliefs as in example(6) and (7):

(6) The theory arouse just few insignificant problems.

(7)The research questions are slightly vague (Myers, 1997:7) .

1.2.1.1.1.2 Markers of Intentional Vagueness

Markers of intentional vagueness represented by pragmatic markers such as 'kind of', 'sort of', 'more or less', 'somehow' ..,etc and approximators of quantity, frequency and time such as 'mainly', 'generally', 'much', 'often', 'usually', 'approximately' ... ,etc.(Banks, 1996:43). The main aim of such markers is to redress a face-threatening act in a way that it decreases explicitness of an utterance and hence enables the writer to be less direct and bald in communicating his/her meaning:

(8) Songs and rhymes often fall outside the category of humorous language play.

(9) It is a kind of fun to do the impossible.

(10) The length of the metal bar was approximately 22 cm. (Powell,1985:55)

1.2.1.1.1.3 Intensifiers

This group includes certain expressions such as 'extremely interesting', 'particularly important', 'major element', 'increase attention', 'potentially effective', 'significant role', 'useful tool', 'particularly reliable', ...etc. That is to use certain emphatic expressions that Hyland (2000:62) names "intensifiers", which are used to convince the readers of the writer's emotional state. At the same time, these expressions can be considered as a positive politeness strategy as they show solidarity with discourse community by exhibiting responses that assume shared knowledge and desires:

(11) Linguistic politeness is the most interesting area of pragmatics.

(12) It is absolutely clear that students are unaware of the use of hedges in academic writing.

(13) The headmaster was extremely helpful and supportive to his teaching staff.

1.2.1.1.2 Reliability Hedges

Reliability hedges indicate the writer's confidence in the truth of a proposition. They acknowledge subjective uncertainties and are motivated by the writer's desire to show possibility and contingency. The principal motivation here is to clarify the state of knowledge, to hedge against complete accuracy rather than protection against overstatement. In these core cases, acknowledgement of factual uncertainties predominates over attempts to disguise the author's opinion(Banks,1994: 13).

Reliability hedges are most commonly expressed by epistemic modality. The use of an epistemic modal expression as a hedging device can be said to be motivated by a wish to be more polite, state matters less directly and leave more room for non-face-threatening intervention (such as disagreement) on the part of the addressee. Hyland (1998: 351) notes that "deference, humility, and respect for colleagues' views" are conveyed through the use of epistemic modal markers .

Frase(2005:6) and Lyons(1977:452) agree that epistemic modality can be defined as the speaker's opinion or attitude towards the proposition that the sentence expresses or the situation that the proposition describes. It is related to the sender's knowledge and beliefs concerning the information that is presented, extending to the sender's confidence or lack of confidence in the truth of the proposition expressed. Modality is a useful insurance that limits our responsibility in pointing out the limitations of propositional information.

Coates(1987:66) assures that epistemic modality markers are the lexical items most typically associated with the phenomenon of hedging in English, especially by authors who identify hedging exclusively with the epistemic mode, or the idea

of probability or possibility. (Vold, 2006:32) shows that they can be realized by means of:

1. Modal auxiliary verbs expressing possibility, such as 'may', 'might', 'can'...,etc.

- 2.Semi-auxiliary verbs such as 'to look', 'to seem', 'to appear'...,etc.
- 3.Epistemic lexical verbs such as 'suggest', 'allow', 'tend', 'contribute', 'intend','aim','propose' , 'speculate', 'assume'...,etc.
4. Modal adverbs such as 'perhaps', 'possibly', 'probably'...,etc.
5. Modal nouns such as 'possibility', 'assumption', 'suggestion', 'tendency'...,etc.
6. Modal adjectives such as 'probable', 'likely', 'possible'..., etc.

The following examples can be used in these senses:

- (14) There is a tendency to under-declare the amount of taxes to be paid.
 - (15)Researchers may have found a cure for influenza.
 - (16) The experiment on cloning could be dangerous to humanity.
 - (17) Morphemes seem to be acquired first.
 - (18) The new regulations appear to safeguard women, but they do not.
 - (19) Septicemia is likely to result, which might threaten his life.
 - (20) Our analyses suggest that high doses of the drug can lead to relevant blood pressure.
- (Palmer,1990:75)

1.2.1.2 Writer-Oriented Hedges

The use of these markers may refer to those cases in which the writers diminish their presence in the text by using various impersonal, agentless and passive structures in order to relieve themselves of responsibility for the truth of the propositions expressed and consequently to save the speaker's face from criticism against the negative consequences of the proposition he/she presents(Swales, 1990:175). This is syntactically realized by means of agentless passive and impersonal constructions. Examples of using passive construction are:

- (21) However, the role of attempts to control intrusive thoughts in childhood anxiety disorders seems to have been neglected.
- (22) The death squads are thought to be connected with Shiite militias.
- (23) Mr. Cameron was said to be very angry at reports yesterday.(Ibid.)

When using impersonal active constructions, usually the subject is replaced by some non-human entity such as : findings, results, data, as in the following examples:

- (24)Our analyses suggest that high doses of drug can lead to relevant blood pressure reduction.
- (25)The data show that in Third World Countries the extensive use of land to grow exportation products tends to impoverish these countries' even more.
- (26)The results indicate that higher doses of fish oil can benefit individuals with untreated hypertension. (Crompton, 1997:46)

1.2.2. Reader-Oriented Hedges

Reader-oriented hedges make readers involved in a dialogue and address them as thoughtful individuals to respond and judge regarding the truth value of the proposition. Such a type of hedging emphasizes the subjective attitude of the speaker towards the message (Lewin, 1998:93).

The pragmatic role of this type lies in the fact that it attenuates the speaker's meaning by increasing the degree of subjectivity of the utterance. By using attitudinal hedges, the addressee transforms an assertion into a question phrase , which signals a lack of certainty and high degree of indeterminacy on the part of the speaker and consequently implies the necessity of confirmation on the part of the hearer(Yang,2003:19). Hence, hedges imply to the hearer that the speaker's utterance is not to be taken as something universally true or definite, but rather as a personal opinion, judgment or belief, which is open to further negotiation. Accordingly, such markers can render an argument to be less authoritative. For example, in an

attempt to ask her lover about their future, Joy expects that he has already told his wife about their relationship. She says:

- (27)a. What are your plans? I don't mean this weekend, I mean long-term plans about us.
 b. Ah, well, I thought I wouldn't say anything to Hilary until she's well-settled in her training for marriage guidance. (Ventola,1997:160)

Introductory phrases as 'in my view', 'in my opinion', 'it seems to me...',etc. can also be used to show subjectivity:

- (28) It seems to me that trying to live without friends is like milking a bear to get cream for your morning coffee.(ibid.)

One could state a proposition as a fact to say:

- (29)a. The medicine will help you recover quickly.

Or one could use a hedge to distant oneself from that statement by saying:

- b. In my view, this medicine could help you recover quickly.

(Ventola,1997:160)

1.3 The Significance of Hedging Devices in Research Papers

The use of hedges is vital for written types of academic texts, because they express doubt and tentativeness which are central to the interactive character of academic discourse . It is believed that the use of these devices in academic writing is one of the systematic means by which academics create knowledge (Hyland, 1998:352). He (ibid.: 353) claims that “academics construct knowledge as members of particular linguistic communities and their decisions are influenced by their disciplines”. Hedges also “represent the writers' efforts to persuade readers of the correctness of their claims, helping them to gain acceptance for their work”. Therefore, hedges soften the overstatement of a claim. In other words, they imply that “a statement is based on plausible reasoning rather than certain knowledge and they have a conciliatory role” (ibid.: 354). In sum, hedges balance objective information and subjective evaluation as stated by Ventola (1997:152). They can be a powerful persuasive factor in gaining acceptance for claims. Instead of saying 'I know', members of academia should rather 'assume' or 'suggest' even when addressing other scholars(Bazeman,1988: 34).

Hedges are a major contribution to the negotiation of social knowledge, because “writers must socially mediate their arguments, shaping their evidence, observations, data and knowledge valued by their community” (House, 1996:25). He(ibid.) calls them ‘disciplinary gate keepers. Crompton (1997:67) suggests that hedging in language seems to be a “subset of commentative language which serves the function of modulating propositions”.

The general role of hedges in a scientific paper is to signal a writer’s anticipation of the negotiability of claims. Hedging expressions can be used in describing methods and results, discussing findings, drawing conclusions from the evidence, persuading readers, and establishing interpersonal relationships between readers and writers. Hedging devices show that the researchers do not intend to discuss the findings and conclusions of their research categorically. Through using hedges, writers also attempt to improve the chance of persuading their readers by taking a cautious perspective in their statements. Such a non- categorical perspective will invite the readers to evaluate the writer's claim and make their own judgment regarding its validity(Varttala,2001:38). According to Swales (1990:49) hedging is one of the strategies through which writers can persuade their readers to accept the claim or assertion made without observing or replicating the experimental scene.

Hedging has received some attention as a feature of written discourse mostly in research papers . Hyland (1998: 255) has analyzed the adequacy of a range of textbooks (a corpus of 22 textbooks) in providing students with information on hedging and argues that

there is a neglect in covering this topic of “qualifying categorical commitment and facilitating discussion” .He (ibid.) comments:

Generally the presentation of hedges in published texts is poor , with information scattered , explanations inadequate,

practice material limited , and alternatives to modal verbs omitted. This failure to adequately represent hedges therefore gives misleading information to students concerning both the importance of the concept and frequency of different devices .”

Hedging appears to be an area which EFL learners find problematic and often a neglected area in teaching (Jordan,1997:11) .Curnick (2000:61) shows that as hedging is seen as an important way of modulating the propositional content and expressing the writer-reader relationship , it seems useful to raise learners’

awareness of its presence in research papers .Hedges often seem to be unnoticed by EFL writers and readers. Thus, learners often appear to be unaware both of hedges as a constitutive feature of scientific writing and of the functions they play in the interaction between writer, reader, context and language conventions of academic genres and discourse communities. It seems that hedges are a pervasive discoursal resource in academic writing and they should therefore receive more attention in the teaching of English for academic purposes.

Gilbert(1991:29) attributes the unawareness of EFL learners of hedging devices to their instructors by saying that " unfortunately instructors of writing for EFL learners often unwittingly give the impression that writing research papers in English requires direct linear arguments and that they are weakened by any personal references or hedges" .Bloor & Bloor (1991:73)on the other hand, attribute this directness to the textbooks which advice EFL learners "to avoid hedging altogether". As a result , learners become so direct in their writing and that considered inappropriate and they are criticized for being offensive. Due to the lack of material devoted to this topic, Bloor&Bloor(1991:76); Hinkel(1997:27); Hyland(1998:69) and Shaw&Liu (1998:83) assure that learning how to use hedging devices effectively is something that can be taught by making learners aware and drawing their attention to hedging by direct instruction.

2.Methodology

2.1 Introduction

This section attempts to display a practical representation of what is theoretically presented in section one. It investigates the effects of instruction on the use of hedging devices in scientific research papers by Iraqi EFL learners. The purpose of this instruction is to increase the students' use of these devices in their academic writings.

2.2 Sample

The participants in this study are (60) second year students at the University of Al-Qadisiya, College of Education, Department of English. The students are enrolled in a twenty-week course for teaching methods of research. The course is designed to prepare students to write academically acceptable papers in their fields of study.

Throughout the course, students receive instruction on various aspects of writing. Thirty of the students are enrolled in the control group section, which the researcher meets on Sunday from 8:30 to 10:30. The other thirty students are enrolled in the experimental group section, which the researcher usually meets on Monday from 8:30 to 10:30.

2.3 Procedure

First, prior to the instruction, the data on the students' use of hedging is collected from both the control group and the experimental group by asking them to write research papers on their fields of study. The researcher examines them in order to make sure that the groups are roughly equivalent and to become familiar with the types of hedges that the students were producing.

Next, students in experimental group may complete practice tasks, in which they will be actively engaged in hedging exercises designed to increase their awareness of hedging strategies used in academic writing. Finally, the researcher asks both groups to write other research papers. The data of these papers will be analyzed to confirm whether the students are using hedging strategies more than they did previously.

2.4 Techniques of Instruction

The Instruction involves several activities that are included as part of the normal flow of the course. In the first instruction class meeting, the researcher presents various explanations on hedging strategies provided with ample examples. Students then work in pairs to complete a practice task in which they have to answer ten of the twelve prompts given (see Appendix I). Afterwards, the researcher asks each pair to report on their answers. Students begin discussing different functions of hedging devices used in that exercise. For homework, the researcher gives her students a worksheet in which they have to hedge ten prompts and turn them in the next class (see Appendix II). In addition to bringing in the completed prompts, each student has to write a research paper from his/her field of study on the next class meeting. They are not told what they would be doing with the papers.

During the following class meeting, another task (see Appendix III) dealing with restatement of bald claims is presented. As with the other task, students are asked to work in pairs to complete the task and afterwards participate in a discussion of the different types of restatements that could be made to soften the claims. Then, the researcher talks generally about hedges and cases in which they are and are not appropriate and their importance in research papers. Students look through the research papers they have brought to class for hedges and discuss what they found, what types of statements are likely to be hedged, and what is their effect on the reader. One aspect of this part of the treatment is to focus further the learners' attention by asking them to notice hedging devices, thus heightening their awareness.

Throughout the classroom instruction, all students were actively engaged and on task. Many commented on the direct relevance of the instruction to the enhancement of their understanding of language routinely used in academic research papers and to the improvement of their own writing.

2.5 Data Analysis

The hedges examined in this paper were used to qualify or moderate the claim being made and generally fall into: downgraders, markers of intentional vagueness, intensifiers, markers of epistemic modality, depersonalization markers and personalization markers.

2.5.1 Pre-Instruction Results

The pre-instruction data consists of (60) research papers written by the students, ranging in length from approximately 500 words to 2500 words. The topics of the papers varied are all related to their fields of study. The students in the control group employed a total of (134) hedges. The students in the experimental group employed a total of (122) hedges.

In order to achieve the aim of the study mentioned above(see 2.0) ,learners' first papers were scored by the researcher. The researcher gave one mark for each hedging expression used. Accordingly ,the achievement scores of the control and experimental group were compared (see table 1).

Table(1)
Achievement Scores of Subjects of the Control and Experimental Group in Pre-Instruction Research Papers.

Control Group				Experimental Group			
subject	score	subject	score	subject	score	subject	score
1	4	16	6	1	5	16	6
2	5	17	7	2	7	17	2
3	7	18	4	3	3	18	7
4	5	19	5	4	2	19	5
5	4	20	3	5	4	20	4
6	3	21	4	6	6	21	1
7	2	22	9	7	3	22	7
8	5	32	5	8	5	23	4
9	3	24	3	9	3	24	4
10	8	25	6	10	4	25	3
11	3	26	3	11	3	26	4
12	4	27	2	12	2	27	5
13	5	28	3	13	2	28	6
14	4	29	7	14	5	29	7
15	3	30	2	15	3	30	0

As table (2) below shows , the mean score of the experimental group is (4.1000) with a standard deviation of (1.88186),whereas the mean score of the control group is (5.6667) with a standard deviation of (7.26510).

To determine whether there is a significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups before instruction ,the t-test formula for two independent samples is applied. The results indicate that the computerized and tabulated t-values are(-1.143) and (2.00)respectively ,with the degree of freedom (58).Since the computerized t-value is lower than the tabulated one, then it can be said that there is no significant difference between the achievements of the two groups before instruction at the level of (0.05).This proves that the two groups are equivalent.

Table(2)

The t-test Value of the Achievement Scores Between the Subjects of the Control and Experimental Group in Pre-Instruction Research Papers.

Group	N	Mean	Standared deviation	t-value		d.f	Significance difference at the level of 0,05
				com	tab		
experimental	30	4.1000	1.88186				No statistical difference
control	30	5.6667	7.26510	-1.143	2.00	58	

2.5.2 Post-Instruction Results

At the end of instruction period, both groups are asked to write research papers. The post-instruction data consists of (60) research papers written by the students ranging in length from 1000 words to 2750 words. The control group sample contained a total of (141) hedges, whereas the experimental group sample contained a total of (604).

Learners' second papers were scored by the researcher by giving one mark for each hedging expression. Accordingly ,the achievement scores of the control and experimental group were compared (see table 3).

Table(3)
Achievement Scores of Subjects of the Control and Experimental Group in Post-Instruction Research Papers.

Control Group				Experimental Group			
subject	score	subject	score	subject	score	subject	score
1	6	16	5	1	23	16	13
2	4	17	3	2	24	17	32
3	3	18	2	3	27	18	28
4	6	19	5	4	20	19	24
5	3	20	8	5	28	20	22
6	5	21	3	6	15	21	19
7	5	22	4	7	25	22	20
8	4	32	3	8	17	23	15
9	1	24	2	9	16	24	14
10	8	25	4	10	14	25	20
11	10	26	4	11	27	26	23
12	6	27	6	12	23	27	15
13	5	28	5	13	12	28	14
14	11	29	2	14	18	29	14
15	7	30	1	15	22	30	20

In table(4) below the results show that the achievement of the subjects of the experimental group outweighs considerably that of the control group. This is so since the mean score obtained by the experimental group is (20.166) with a standard deviation of (5.408), whereas the mean score of the control group is (5.133) with a standard deviation of (2.674).

Results of the application of the t-test formula for two independent samples to point out the significant differences in the achievement scores between the experimental and control group are as follows: the computerized t-value is (13.648), the tabulated one is (2.00), with the degree of freedom of (58). Since the computerized t-value is higher than the tabulated one, the difference in the mean scores of the two groups is significant at (0.05). In other words, there is a highly significant difference between the achievements of the subjects of the experimental group who were instructed the various types of hedges and subjects of the control group who did not receive instruction. This difference is in favour of the experimental group.

Table(4)

The t-test Value of the Achievement Scores Between the Subjects of the Control and Experimental Group in Post-Instruction Research Papers.

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation	t-value		d.f	Significance difference at the level of 0,05
				com	tab		
experimental	30	20.166	5.408	13.648	2.00	58	statistically different
control	30	5.133	2.674				

The low value of subjects' achievement in the control group might be due to the lack of material devoted to the use of hedges in their textbooks. As Hyland (1998:255) points out that negligence in providing learners with sufficient information on hedging and how it facilitates discussion might play a great role in making this topic problematic to EFL learners. Accordingly, this justifies the high value of the experimental group samples after instruction. In other words, learners' exposure to direct instruction on hedging devices and how they play a significant role in the interaction between writer and reader might increase learners' use of these devices in their scientific research papers. Consequently, it is important for the instructors of to avoid directness when teaching learners how to write their research papers and encourage them mitigate their statements by using different kinds of hedging expressions.

Following the taxonomy presented in this study, in table (5), the researcher reports the numbers and percentages of each type hedging devices obtained from the analyses of experimental group research papers before and after instruction:

Table(5)

Percentages of the Types of Hedges Achieved by the Subjects of the Experimental Group Before and After Instruction

Strategy	Number of hedges before treatment	%	Number of hedges after treatment	%
Downgraders	20	16.3	97	16.0
Markers of vagueness	18	14.7	90	14.9
Intensifiers	17	13.9	80	13.2
Epistemic Modality	27	22.1	135	22.3
Depersonalization Markers	25	20.4	127	21.0
personalization Markers	15	12.2	75	12.4

Totals	122		604	
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Below are examples taken from the experimental group scientific research papers:

1.Number of downgraders as a percentage of total hedges:pre-instruction(16.3%);post-instruction (16.0%):

-The description of a sentence, clause or other items may be just a list of the choices that the speaker has made.

-Yule(1996:127) defined coherence in a slightly different way by saying that " it is the familiar and expected relationships in experience which we use to connect the meanings of utterances, even when those connections are not explicitly made.

-Audiolingualism was attacked as being unsound in terms of language theory and learning theory because it scarcely encouraged learners to use their innate and creative abilities to derive and make explicit the underlying grammatical rules of the language.

2 Number of markers of vagueness as a percentage of total hedges: pre-instruction (14.7%) ;post- instruction (14.9%) :

-The Communicative Approach in language teaching is primarily a theory of language as communication.

-According to Chomsky(1957:63), a grammar generally represents the knowledge that speakers have of their language.

-The child's production of language is minimal at the two and three word stage, this production is somehow sufficient to reflect a great deal of the conceptualization and thinking on the part of the child.

3.Number of intensifiers as a percentage of total hedges : pre-instruction (13.9%);post-instruction (13.2%):

-The lexicon is a crucial part of that sub-component. It is like a dictionary consisting of a number of lexical entries.

- The most important view is that thought is simply behaviour - verbal or nonverbal, covert or overt.

-In Cooperative Language Learning , the teacher plays a significant role in creating highly structured and well-organized learning environment in the classroom.

4.Number of epistemic modality markers as a percentage of total hedges: pre-instruction (22.1%) ;post- instruction (22.3%):

-Anaphora might refer to the subsequent reference to an already introduced entity.

-Perhaps the most dramatic example of an organ which has adapted itself for human articulation is the larynx- the 'voice box' which houses our vocal cords.

-There is a tendency for a vocative to take an initial, medial, or final position in the sentence.

5.Number of depersonalization markers as a percentage of total hedges: pre-instruction(20.4%);post- instruction (21.0%):

-The sentence ' if John threw the ball' is said to consist of a subject 'John' and a predicate ' threw the ball'.

-It is demonstrated that the use of positive politeness forms to emphasize closeness between speaker and hearer is called "solidarity"

-The data show that 90 per cent of the human race are born with their brains 'wired ' for language in the left hemisphere.

6.Number of personalization markers as a percentage of total hedges: pre-instruction(12.2%);post- instruction (12.4%):

-In my opinion, the most important role for the teacher is that as facilitator of learning , since he must move around the class helping students and groups as needs arise.

- I preferred to list some of the considerations involved with respect to the use of 'a' and 'the'.
- Cooperative learning ,in my view, raises the achievement of all students,including those who are gifted or handicapped.

Conclusions

For researchers and writers, the ability to appropriately use hedging devices is requisite. They might help the writers to present their statements and claims cautiously, accurately and modestly to meet their discourse community's expectations and place themselves in an honorable position as valued members of the respective discourse community. Moreover, 'hedging' allows them to anticipate criticisms and to avoid confrontation resulting from making bald and presumptuous statements. This study arrived at the following conclusions:

1. Iraqi EFL learners have difficulty in interpreting and using hedging devices appropriately in their academic research papers due to each of the following reasons:

- a. No systematic attention is given to the use of these devices in their textbooks in covering this topic
- b. The lack of instructions given by teachers which might play a great role in increasing the Iraqi EFL learners' use of these types of devices in research papers.

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Appendix I

Q1. *Each of the sentences below is an absolute statement. Re-write Ten of the sentences using one of the devices of hedging:*

1. Female managers , due to their nurturing nature, avoid confrontation and delegation of duties.
2. The Standardized method of testing is ineffective for indicating student success.
3. The use of cultural dialect in The Complete Tales of Uncle Remus is insulting and demeaning to African American.
4. Only female nurses will be able to develop an empathetic relationship with the patient.
5. Differences between Israeli and Arab World views are part of the problem.
6. The only way to help alleviate the pain from this disorder is through physical therapy.
7. Housing costs have gone up so much that it's on unfightable battle.
8. Insects will be the first victims of climate change.
9. Excessive use of a mobile phone during pregnancy lead to fetal damage.
10. Children who miss more than two weeks of school a year will not achieve their expected grades in the exam.
11. Car passengers who do not wear seat belts will suffer more serious injuries than passengers who do wear their seat belts.
12. Women only shop between 9 a.m and 3 p.m whereas men only shop between 2 and 5 p.m.

Appendix II

Q2. Identify the Hedging Expressions in ten of the following sentences then point out their functions:

1. The results indicate that the situation in which tertiary students use English least is in interactions with their grandparents.
2. Our results seem to suggest that in third world countries the extensive use of land to grow exportation products leads to impoverish these countries' population.
3. The party was somewhat spoiled by the return of the parents.
4. The evaluation is based on the number of exercises and quality of information devoted to relevant concepts and linguistic items.
5. Genrally, girls were extremely eloquent speakers compared to boys.
6. I personally think that students in Hong Kong have little need to speak English outside the classroom.
7. United States may have been engaged in military action in Vietnam in order to establish a power base there.
8. His views on the matter were quite well received.
9. Septicemia is likely to result, which might threaten life.
10. My salary is around 2000 dollars per a month.
11. The queen of England tends to be very popular and seems to be loved and respected by many of her citizens.
12. There were approximately 400 people in the hall.

Appendix III

Q3. see what you can do with any five of the following sentences.

Make the sentences academically respectable and defensible:

1. Economic sanctions are ineffective
2. Alcohol causes people to become violent.
3. Passive smoking causes cancer.
4. Recycling is the best solution to the waste disposal problem.
5. Physical exercise lessens the severity of depression.
6. Great novels do not make great films.
7. private schools provide better education than do public schools.

الخلاصة:

استخدام الوسائل المطاطية في البحوث الإنكليزية للطلبة العراقيين من متعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية

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يعد الكلام المطاط وسيلة من وسائل التعبير عن الاحتمالية، الشك والافتتاح الذهني في النصوص الخيرية لشخص ما. يستخدم الأكاديميون الوسائل المطاطية للتعبير عن مآيز عمونه ويناقدونه بطريقة محترمة ومقبولة ومؤدبة. وقد ركزت هذه الدراسة على استخدام وسائل الكلام المطاطية من قبل المتعلمين العراقيين اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية في كتابة بحوثهم العلمية. تكونت عينة البحث من ستين طالباً وطالبة، أنخرط ثلاثون منهم في مجموعة تجريبية تلقت تعليماً ينمي قابليتهم على استعمال وسائل الكلام المطاطية بينما أنخرط الثلاثون طالباً الآخرون في مجموعة ضابطة لم تتلق تعليماً لتلك التعبيرات. وقد أظهرت نتائج تحليل البحوث العلمية التي كتبت من قبل المجموعتين بعد مدة من التدريس فروقاً ذات دلالة إحصائية لصالح المجموعة التجريبية مما دلل على أن للتدريس دوراً مهماً في زيادة استعمال المتعلمين للأساليب المطاطية.

