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Editor-in-chief

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The Influence of Social Variables on the Use of Hedging in Mosuli Arabic

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Abstract

Hedging is one of the skills that human beings need in their everyday life for successful communication. Hyland, (1998:1) defines hedging as "any linguistic means used to indicate either a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or a desire not to express that commitment categorically". According to Schröder and Zimmer, hedging is used to refer to "the strategies of using linguistic means as hedges in a certain context for specific communicative purposes, such as politeness, vagueness, mitigation" (1997: 249). In Arabic Language, some researches conduct this phenomenon. Andrusenko (2015) translates the English categories proposed by Hyland (2005) into Arabic Language, Abbas' 2011 gives statistics of the use of hedges in Arabic and English in Academic writing, Al- Rassam (2004) identifies and classifies the linguistic devices and strategies used to express hedging in Arabic .

This study focuses on the influence of social variables such as topic, age and gender on the use of hedging in everyday interactions in Mosuli Arabic (MA henceforth.(

The data consist of 300 authentic hedged utterances used by MA speakers of different ages in everyday interaction. The collected data consist of 150 utterances by males and 150 by females on different daily topics.

According to Verschueren, "using language must consist of continuous making of linguistic choices" (2000, p.55). As a model,

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this study adopts the Adaptation Theory proposed by Verschueren in which four angles of investigation are used to conduct any linguistic phenomenon .

The study reveals typical hedging expressions (forms) that are used in all topics by speakers of all age groups and of both genders. Nine types of topics of hedging are recognized in the corpus of this study. The study shows that hedging is a gender sensitive phenomenon as far as vocabulary, types, syntactic and pragmatic forms and topics are concerned. Additionally, it proves that there are similarities as well as differences between males and females in using hedging strategy. It proves that young-children, mid- age children and old-adults use hedging less than other life stages.

Keywords: skills ؛ age ؛ gender ؛ topic.

1. Introduction

Hedging, as a linguistic phenomenon and a communicative strategy, enables the addressers to soften the force of their utterance to make them more acceptable in interpersonal relationships. Biber et al. state that in conversations hedges "can show the imprecision of word choice" (1999:557). As a Socio-Pragmatic study, this research investigates the influence of three social variables on the use of hedging in MA: the topic of the utterance, the gender and the age of the speakers.

The Model, Verschueren's Adaptation Theory, consists of four angles of investigation: the first one is the adaptation of the linguistic context which is also called "the structural objects of the adaptation" or (the adaptation of the utterance building). The second phase is the adaptation of non- linguistic context or (the adaptation of the contextual correlates). The adaptation process, as Verschueren claims, is dynamic, which is why Verschueren considers the dynamic of the adaptability as the third angle of investigation. The last angle is the salience of the adaptability

The topic (the subject is being discussed) is expected to be a vital variable that affects the use of hedging. According to Leaper and Robnett, life stages may play a role in relation to the usage of hedging (2011: 138). Since gender is strongly reflected in language, it is also expected to affect the use of hedging.

2. Statement of the problem

Hedging is one of the most important linguistic phenomena and communicative strategies. Moreover, it has been proved that it is used in different languages and dialects, yet the influence of social factors on the use of hedging in MA during everyday interactions has not been investigated.

3. Aims

The study aims at:

1. Investigating whether this linguistic phenomenon is topic determined.
2. Finding out whether using hedging in Mosuli Arabic is gender sensitive as far as the devices, types, purposes (functions), language user's interest and topics are concerned.
3. Examining the effect of age on the use of hedging in MA.

4. Research Questions

1. What are the topics that make use of hedging in MA?
2. Is hedging in Mosuli Arabic gender sensitive?
3. Are there differences in the use of hedging in Mosuli Arabic as far as the speakers' age is concerned?

5. Hypotheses

1. The topic of the utterance as a socio- pragmatic variable highly affects the use of hedging.
2. Men and women use hedging rather differently in Mosuli Arabic.
3. Speakers of Mosuli Arabic of different ages tend to use hedging in a rather different way.

6. Data Collection

The data of this study are chosen through observation and introspection. An ethnographic approach is adopted in data collection. In this sense, the data is collected without taking the consent of the participants. As the data is planned to be spontaneous, the participants are not aware of being informants in this study. Moreover, they will be anonymized when presenting the data. The data are collections of a random, purposeful selection of 300 examples of hedged utterances used by MA speakers of

different age and for both genders so that 150 examples for male MA speakers and 150 examples for female MA speakers were collected. The examples are unplanned, spontaneous, face -to -face naturally occurring spoken data. After recognizing the hedged utterance, it is noted by the researcher. Then, the collected data are transcribed using transliteration. In regard to the context of the example, age and gender, relationships of the interactant(s), place and the event of the interaction are stated at the beginning of the example as they are necessary clues for the analysis. All the examples are collected together to build a corpus for this study. Then the corpus is analyzed. The sentences are extracts of long authentic conversations of everyday daily topics. They are parts of dialogues between family members, friends, relatives, acquaintances and strangers of both genders and different ages.

7. The Procedure of the Analysis

All the written examples within the corpus are transcribed using transliteration. A list of transliteration symbols is made for MA by this study so that it can be used for the transliteration of the corpus. After that, an equivalent translation into English for all examples is provided. Then, descriptive and statistical analyses are proposed as the study is a qualitative & quantitative one. This study focuses on the first angle of investigation in The Adaptation Theory, the adaptation of the linguistic context (utterance building). Being part of the first angle of investigation, a morphological and lexical level of analysis is applied to the examples in the corpus. Then, semantic, syntactic and pragmatic levels of analysis are also conducted for them. Statistics of morphological, lexical, syntactic and pragmatic levels reveal the actual percentage of using hedging in these levels. Tables are used, to facilitate the comparison. Statistics also reveal the influence of each one of these variables on the use of hedging in MA. Then, tables of the results are provided in order to compare and illustrate the differences that these variables cause.

8. The Morphological Analysis of Hedging (Noun/ Adjective-Diminutive)

In Arabic, the morphological process which the diminutive forms undergo is known as infixation or minor derivation (Abu-Mughli, 1987: 411). Actually, this process involves the insertion of an affix

within the root of a given word (Al-Khuli, 1982: 113; Crystal, 1985: 10). In fact, word formation in Arabic takes place internally, that is infixation and modification of the root, rather than the stringing together of discrete morphemes, which is usually the norm according to Katamba (1993: 163). Hedging in Arabic in general may be manifested by the use of morphological formation process of noun or adjective-diminutives.

This device is not used frequently in MA. So, it occupies only 3.6% of the data. This means it occurs in 11 examples out of 300 examples (7 times by females and 4 times by males). In this sense, it is used 63% by females and 36.3% by males.

Considering the corpus of this research, we can observe that hedging in MA can be employed by the use of morphological formation process of noun or adjective-diminutives. It is part of the morphological choices adopted by the speakers of MA to reflect hedging. To illustrate that, let us consider the following two examples:

Example (1) وسوم جيبلي ماي.

wasũm jĩbli mᾶy
(Bring me some water, name-Dim)

Example (2) شطوري غاح يعيوني.

aṭ̀ri ɣaħ yçẽwni.
(My clever-Dim. is going to help me.)

9. The Semantic Analysis of Hedging

As far as the semantic analysis of hedging is concerned, this study adopts Hyland's typology (1998) to study hedges in MA according to the semantic perspective. In his taxonomy, Hyland divides hedges into four types:

1. Lexical epistemic verbs

This type includes verbs such as (أعتقد، أتصور) as epistemic judgement, (أستنتج، نفترض) verbs of deduction and (يبين، يظهر) verbs of evidentiary justification. This category is used 26 times (8.6%) in the corpus.

2. Modal epistemic verbs

This type includes verbs such as (يجوز، يمكن). This category is used times 30 (10.3 %) in the corpus

3. Modal epistemic adverbs

This type includes expressions or particles such as (نوعاً ما، شوية، ربما، تقريباً). This category is used 20 times (6.6 %) in the corpus

4. Modal epistemic adjective

This type includes nouns like (امكانية، احتمالية) as well as adjectives such as (واضح، محتمل، ممكن).The total use of this category is 47 times (15.6%) in the corpus

10. The Syntactic Analysis of Hedging

"Every syntactic category can be the source of hedging devices" (Fraser, 2010: 23). Fraser identifies 19 syntactic categories that can be used as hedging devices. He then adds two categories proposed by Salager- Meyer (1995). In fact, 289 examples from the corpus of this study have used the syntactic categories outlined by Fraser, which occupy about 96.3% of the total.

a. Introductory phrases such as:

(على حد علمي ، حسب معلوماتي ، بنظري، على كلام فلان ، على مودي ، بالنسبة لي ، على ما تذكر ، .....)

It is observed that this category has the highest frequency in the corpus as it is found in 106 examples. In this sense, it occupies 35.3% of the examples of the corpus.

b. Adverbs / Adjectives such as:

(تقريباً ، حوالي ، غالباً ، عموماً ، نادراً ، اساساً ، عادي ، نسبياً ، ربما ، لربما، لعل ، نوعاً ما، كأنما، عبالك ، مرات، احياناً.....)

This category is used 36 times i.e. 12% in the data.

c. Modal noun such as:

(الاحتمال ، المقترح ، الصراحة ،الحقيقة، .....)

This category occurs in 31 examples of the corpus. That means it occupies about 10.3% of the data.

d. Epistemic verbs such as:

(يبين ، يظهر، اعتقد ، اتصور ، اتوقع ، اتخيل ، اعتبر ، اظن .....)

These verbs are within the most frequent categories used in MA. They occur 30 times in the data which means that they occupy 10.3% of the data.

e. Modal verbs such as:

(يمكن ، يجوز، يصيغ ، .....)

Modal verbs occur 26 times in the data. That means they occupy about 8.6% of the corpus that use syntactic categories as a tool to show hedging strategy.

f. Modal adverb such as:

(عملياُ ، حقيقةُ، ‘الاكثر، صراحةُ،.....)

Modal adverbs occur 20 times in the corpus. As such they occupy about 6.6% of the examples that use syntactic categories as a tool to show hedging.

g. Modal adjective such as:

(محتمل، الظاهر ، واضح ، ممكن ،.....)

This category is found in 16 utterances within the data i.e. it occupies about 5.3% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

h. Metalinguistic comments by the use of such words:

(قطعاً، لاشك، لابد، حتماً .....)

This category is used 12 times in the data. So, it occupies about 4% of the data.

i. Agentless passive by using the passive form or using passive verbs such as:

(يُقال ، يُحتمل ، يُستحسن.....)

This category occurs 5 times in the data and it occupies about 1.66% of the corpus.

j. Conditional clause refers to the condition under which the speaker makes the utterance.

This category occurs 4 times in the data and it occupies about 1.3% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

k. Conditional subordinates such as:

(اذا ما ، ما دام ، ما طول، حتى لو،.....)

This category occurs 3 times in data. That means it occupies about 1% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

l. Negative question.

This category occurs 3 times in data. That means it occupies about 1% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

m. Indirect speech.

This category occurs 2 times in data. That means it occupies about 0.66% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

n. Concessive conjunctions such as:

(بينما ، حتى لو ، مع انه ، اذا ، لو ، .....)

This category occurs 2 times in the data. That means it occupies about 0.66% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

The other categories below have the least occurrence in the corpus as each one occurs only once within the data. It means that each one occupies 0.33% of the syntactic categories used in the corpus.

o. Hedging performative.

Example (3) [Context: a professor to his student in the college]

لازم اذكرك، انت ما مضطر تحضر من وقت.

lazim aðkirak ʔnta ma maḍẓar taḍħar mn waqit

(I must remind you, you are not obliged to come early.)

p. Reversal tag.

Example (4) [Context: a girl to her family at home]

الاكل طيب . ما تمام؟

elakil ṭyab ma tmam

(Delicious food, isn't it?)

q. Progressive.

Example (5) [Context: a man to his old friend]

احنا متأملين تجي تزورنا

aħna mtamlĩn tji tzũrna

We are hoping you will come and visit us.

r. Tentative Inference.

Example (6) [Context: a father to his son at home]

كان لازم تبين منارة الجيمع من هوني.

Kan lazim tbayn manarit el jĩmʕ min hũni (The minaret should be visible from here.)

s. Impersonal pronouns such as: (ويحد، اي احد، محد، ....)

Example (7) [Context: a man to his friend at home]

الويحد ما عيتصور اشقد صاغت الحياة صعبي!

alwë ħd ma ʕytṣawar aʃqad ṣaɣit alħayat ṣaʕbi

(One cannot imagine how difficult life has become!

Some examples (9 utterances) in the data use categories that are not mentioned in Fraser's categories, yet these categories serve hedging strategy. The syntactic categories found in the data are: Questions, future tense and using the particle (قد).

a) Questions

It is found that not only negative question as Fraser states can be used as a tool of hedging but questions i.e. positive ones can also be used as a tool to reflect hedging. This category occurs in 7 examples. That means it occupies about 2.33% of the data. Let's consider these two examples:

Example (8) [Context: a young man to his sister at home]

- وين اكو هالشكل حكي؟

wĩn akù hal□kil ħaki

(Who says so? There is no such thing.)

Example (9) [Context: a young man to his family at home]

- اقلك ؟ انت لازم تنتبه عالوقت.

ʔaqilak ʔinta lazim tintibh çalwaqit

(May I tell you something? You should watch the time.)

b) Future tense: this category occurs once 0.33% of the data.

Example (10) [Context: a girl to her mother at home]

-نطلع هاليوم عالسوق؟

niṭlaç halyùm çalsõq

(Are we going to the suq today?)

- دنغشع.

dinɣ□aç

(We will see.)

C) Particle "قد ": This particle occurs once in the corpus (0.33%).

Example (11) [A young man to his friend at college]

- قد يجوز نسي الموعد .

qad yajùz nisi elmawçd

(He may have forgotten about the date).

These categories can be used as a simple hedge that is, one hedge in the example or they can be used as multiple hedges that is, two or more hedges.

A. Simple Hedges:

Simple hedges by syntactic categories occur in 264 examples of the data that occupies 88% of the whole corpus (300 utterances).

B. Compound or Multiple Hedges:

According to Salager-Meyer (1995), compound and complex hedges exists sometimes in speech. In other words, two or more of the categories mentioned by Fraser can be used together to form compound or complex hedging phrases. Multiple hedges occur in 25 examples comprising8.33% of the corpus of which 20 examples are compound hedges and 5 examples are complex hedges. These forms can be

a) Hedging verb + hedging adj. / adv.

Example (12) اظن انه محتمل يكون مريض.

aẓn anahu muħtamal ykwn marĩẓ

(I think he is possibly sick)

b) Modal with hedging verb.

Example (13) يمكن يبين علينو مريض.

Yimkin ybain çalinu marĩḍ

(He may seem sick.)

c) Double hedges.

Example (14) هذا يمكن يسمونو تدخل بشؤوني.

haða ymkn ysamunu tdxul bʃũni

(This might be called intrusion with my private affairs).

d) Treble hedges

Example (15) يمكن محتمل يحسبون هذا التصرف ذكاء او شطاغة.

yamkin muħtamal yiħsibũn haða atṣaruf ðakɑ̃ ʔau ʃaṭɑ̃ɣɑ̃

(They may possibly consider this deed as a smart one.)

e) Quadruple hedges.

Example (16) اعتقد احتمال يتصورون الي يقولونو الناس صحيح.

ʔaçtaqid ʔiħtimal ytṣawarũn il yqũlũnũ anᾶs ṣaħĩħ
(I guess it might be possible that they believe what people say is true.)

It has been noticed that complex hedges (treble and quadruple hedges) mostly have low frequency in the corpus, 5 times for both of them or about 1.6% of the corpus. On the other hand, simple hedges occur 264 times. So, they occupy 88% of the whole corpus. While compound hedges occur 20 times which means they occupy about 6.6% of the data.

Other combinations which differ from what has been proposed by Salager-Meyer have been observed also in the corpus. These compound hedging forms are as the following:

a) Introductory Phrase+ (Modal noun/ Modal adjective/ Agentless phrase/ Epistemic verb)

Example (17) ما متاكدي بس احتمال يكمل الشغل هاليومين

ma mitʔakdi bas ʔiħtimal yikmal el□iɣil hal yõmẽn
(I'm not sure, but the work may possibly end within two days)

b) Metalinguistic comment+ Modal verb

Example (18)

minu yçɣf yjũz tamam منو يعغف يجوز تمام.

(Who knows, maybe it is true!)

c) Adjective/ adverb + Modal adjective

Example (19) على الاقل كل شوية حتى تاخذ الدوا.

çala ʔlaqal kil □waya ħata taxið dawa
(At least eat a little bit in order to have your medicine.)

d) Treble hedging (Negative Question +Epistemic verb + Epistemic verb

Example (20) ليش ما تحكي بصراحة ؟ اخاف تعتبرني غريبي.

lĩ□ ma tiħki biṣaraħa? axaf tçtibrni ɣarĩbi
(Why don't you speak frankly? I'm afraid that you consider me a stranger.)

11. The Pragmatic Analysis of Hedging

This study adopts the pragmatic classification proposed by Prince, Frader& Bosk (1982). It is found that pragmatic hedges occur 226 times in the corpus that is, about (75.3%) and 74 utterances (24.6%) have no pragmatic hedge. According to the classification proposed by Prince et al (1982), hedges embrace two categories which are themselves subdivided into two other subcategories:

1) Approximators are those hedges that affect the original meanings of the discourse or they denote the range of adaptation. Those hedges occur 71 times in the data about (23.6%). In general, approximators are divided into two sub- divisions:

a) Adopters which can indicate to what extent the original proposition is true. They are found in 23(7.6%) utterances in the corpus. In MA, we can mention some words as adopters such as:

(شوية، ما كثيغ ، نوعا ما ، .....)

b) Rounders tend to focus on the size of the range of items regardless the subject proximity to the precise fact. Those hedges are found in 48 utterances (16%). In MA there are some words such as:

(تقريباً ، اساساً ، بالاساس ، ما بين- الى- ، حوالي ، شيئ من هذا القبيل ، اقل من ، اكثر من ، الاكثرية ،.....)

2) Shields are words that protect the speaker from taking in the full responsibility for the propositional content of his utterance (Prince et al, 1982: 93). These hedges occur 155 times (51.6% of the corpus). They embrace two sub- categories:

a) Plausibility shields that avoid imposing the speaker's own beliefs or thoughts on others. These hedges occur 121 times (40.3%). In this sense, MA contains words such as:

(اعتقد ، اظن ، اتصور ، اتخيل ، احسب، اخاف،يظهر،يبين ، .....)

b) Attribution shields indicate the speaker's attitude indirectly by quoting others utterances. These hedges occur 34 times (11.3%). Some words from MA can show this such as:

(يقولون ، يُقال ،يقلك، حسب كلام فلان ، مثل ما تقول ، انت تعغف ، كلنا نعغف ، الناس يقولون.....)

Additionally, passive constructions also can reflect this function.

12. The Effect of Topic

It should come as no surprise that the topic of the interaction may well affect the use of hedging. Analyzing the corpus, it is found that hedging manifests itself in nine types of topics:

1. Expressing personal opinion

Hedging is used extensively in this topic. 47.6% of the data deal with this topic. That means 143 utterances of which 67 by males and 76 by females. Let's now consider this example of MA:

Example (21) [Context: a man to his friend at home]

انحاول نحكي بتجرد، اكو ناس هيم سبب المشكلة

ʔinħawil niħki bitajarud ʔakùnas hiyim sabab elmu□kila

(To be objective, there are some people who cause the problem)

2. Giving information

This topic occupies second percentage of the topics that involve hedging in the corpus. It is noticed that 34.6% of the data deal with this topic or 104 utterances of which 52 by males and 52 by females. The following example illustrates this type of topic in the data:

Example (22) [Context: a young man to his colleague at the university]

- والله بالاونة الاخيرة صاغ عدنا هذا الموضوع شوية صعب.

wallah bilʔawina elaxĩra ṣaɣ ʕidna haða elmawḍùʕ □aya ṣaʔib

(By God, recently this issue has become a little bit difficult)

3. Giving advices

Hedging is sometimes preferred by people when they give advices. In fact, it is found that this topic occupies 9% of the corpus as it occurs in 27 utterances of which 17 by males and 10 by females. The example bellow shows the use of this topic in MA:

Example (23) [Context: a man to his friend in a coffee shop]

ربما جا الوقت الي لازم تكون بينو واضح.

rubama jaa elwaqit eli lazim tkwn binu waḍiħ

(May be it's the time in which you have to be clear)

4. Requesting

This topic is found in 7 utterances of the data of which 4 by males and 3 by females. This means it occupies 2.3% of the corpus.

Example (24) [Context: a young man to his relative at home]

عتغشع، احنا مشغولين هاليوم اذا ممكن تأجل الكلام غدا

çatiɣ□aç ʔiħna ma□ɣùlĩn halyùm ʔiða mumkin tʔajil elkalam ɣada

(As you see, we are busy today. Would you postpone what you want to say till tomorrow.)

5. Commands

2.3% of the corpus manifests this topic as it is used in 7 utterances of which 3 by males and 4 by females.

Example (25) [Context: a woman to a taxi driver in the street]

اذا تطيق شوية استعجل لان متأخرة.

ʔiða tiṭĩq □way ʔistaçjil liʔan mitçaxra

(If you can, hurry up a little bit. I'm late.)

6. Guessing

3 utterances of the data deal with this topic which means 1% of the corpus. 1 utterance of this type is made by males and 2 utterances by females.

Example (26) [Context: a young man to his mother at home concerning his brother]

ʔijùz kan . يجوزكان مستعجل

mistaçjil

(He may be in a hurry.)

7. Offering

This topic may sometimes demands using hedging strategy. It is found that it occupies only 1.66% of the corpus or 5 utterances of which 3 by males and 2 by females.

Example (27) [Context: a young woman to her guests at home]

بس لو تقبلون تسمعون كلامي ، تقضون اليوم هوني عدنا.

bas lw tiqbalùn tismaçùn kalami jiqḍùn elywm hwni çidna

(Just if you listen to me, spend this day here with us.)

8. Asking / responding to asking of a favor.

This topic manifests itself only 2 times in the data (0.6% of the corpus).

Example (28) [Context: a woman to her brother at home]

ʔiða çala ṭarĩqi yarẽt twaṣilni اذا على طريقي ، ياريت توصلني

.

(If you are on my way, I wish you can give me a lift)

9. Invitation/ responding to invitation.

0.6% of the corpus deals with this topic i.e. 2 utterances of the data.

Example (29) [Context: a young woman to her friend at college concerning her party]

ɣaħ tijẽn -غاح تجين؟

(Are you coming?)

ʔaħawil bikul juhdi bas ma ʔawçid - احاول بكل جهدي . بس ما اوعد.

(I'll do my best but I can't promise)

Table (1) The Number and the Percentages of Utterances that deal with each Type of the Topics.

The type of topics	The number of utterances	The percentage
1. Expressing personal opinion	143	47.66%
2. Giving information	104	34.66%
3. Giving advice	27	9%
4. Requesting	7	2.3%
5. Commands	7	2.3%
6. Guessing	3	1%
7.Offering	5	1.66
8. Asking/ responding to a favor	2	0.66
9. Invitation/ responding to invitation	2	0.66
Total	300	100%

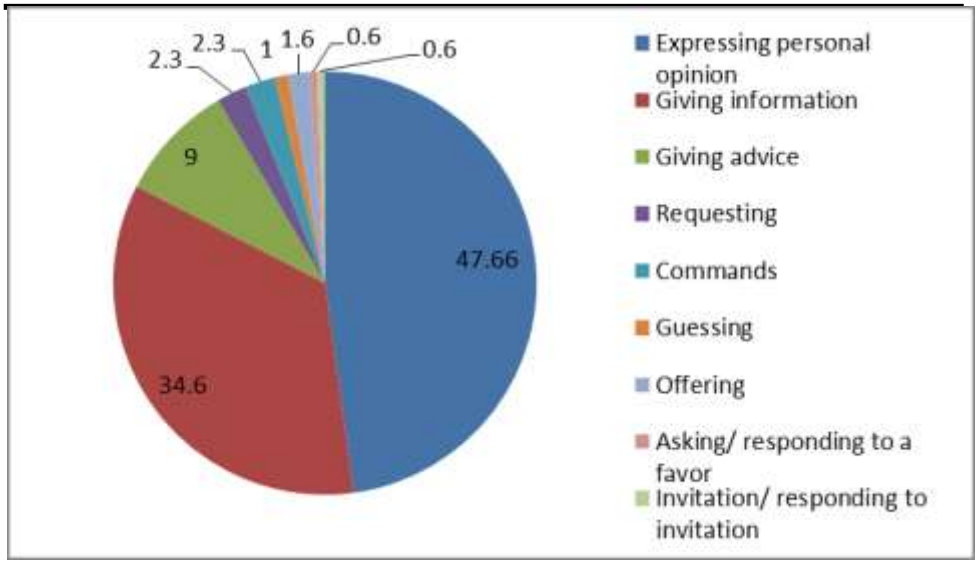

Figure (1) The Percentages of each Topic in the Corpus of this Thesis

13. The Effect of Age

Talking about the influence of age on hedging, we should pay extra attention to a number of life stages such as young- childhood, childhood, teenage or adolescence, young- adulthood, mid-adulthood and older- adulthood. As such, the data are analyzed according to four groups of age. The first age group (G1) contains speakers from 6 years old to 19 years old (teens). The second age group (G2) is specified for speakers of 20s and 30s. The third age group (G3) is devoted for speakers of 40s and 50s. The fourth age group (G4) is made for the speakers of 60s and 70s. Analyzing the corpus by taking into consideration these age groups reveals several points. To begin, speakers of the first group G1 occupies about 4.6% (14 utterances), the second group G2 occupies about 53.3% (160 utterances), the third group G3 occupies 37.6% (113 utterances) and the fourth group G4 occupies 4.3% (13 utterances). It is apparent that the first and the fourth age groups occupy the least percentage of the corpus while the second and the third group have the highest occupation. This may due to G2 and G3's tendency to be unassertive because they are more self-conscious with identity than older adults (Leaper and Robentt, 2011: 138). As for G1, they may not need too much use of hedging in their speech. Figure (2) shows

the percentage of the age group's occupations in the corpus of this thesis:

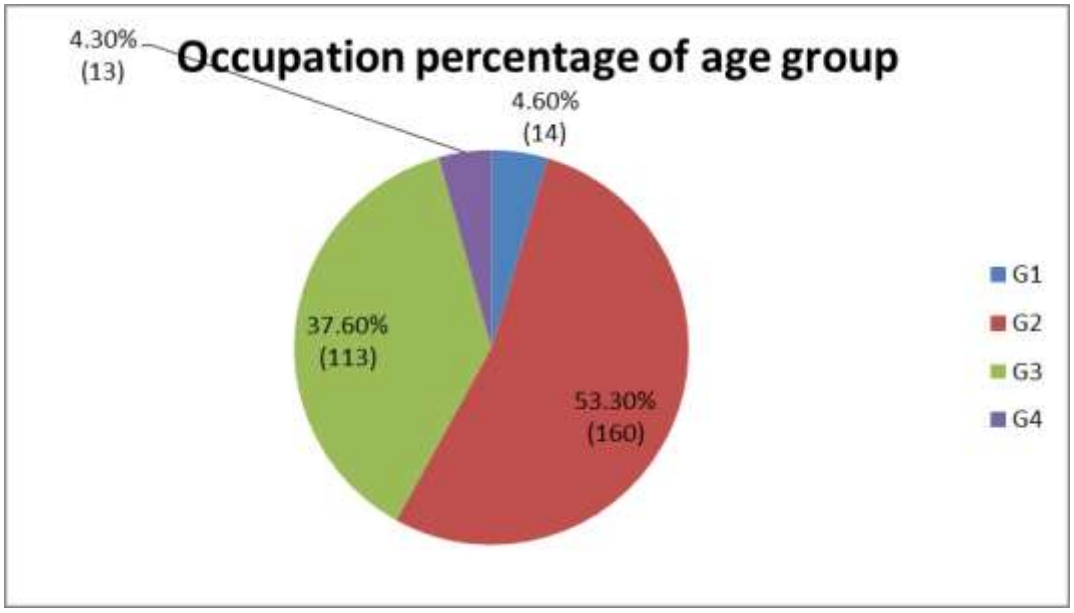

Figure (2) The Percentage of the Age group's Occupations in the Corpus.

Investigating the types of hedging used by age groups, it seems clear that G2 and G3 show a tendency to use compound hedges in 9 utterances in the corpus for each age group while G4 and G2 use complex hedges in 2 utterances for each age group.

To deduce the effect of age on the use of the devices used in hedging strategy in MA, we investigate the age groups of the speakers who use the four main devices in the corpus i.e. introductory phrase, adjective adverb, modal noun, and epistemic verbs. Certain points seem to be the most apparent. G2 shows a big tendency to use introductory phrase in 57 utterances while G3 comes second when 42 utterances of them use this device found in the corpus. For the use of adjective/ adverb device, G2 appears the greatest inclination to use this device as they use it in 26 out of 35 utterances that use this device. G3, on the other side, show clear proneness to use modal noun device to reflect hedging strategy in 17 utterances in the corpus. Epistemic verbs device seems to be used more in 16 out of 30 utterances by G2. In this sense, we can notice

that G2 shows tendency to use introductory phrase, adjective/ adverb device and epistemic verb to reflect hedging strategy. G3 seem to prefer the use of modal nouns device more, yet they also use the other devices with less proclivity. Table (2) shows the relation between the most used devices and age groups:

Table (2) The Relation between the Most used Devices and Age Groups.

The device	G1	G2	G3	G4
Introductory phrase	3	57	42	4
Adjective/ adverb	1	26	8	0
Modal noun	1	10	17	3
Epistemic verb	2	16	10	2

As far as MA is concerned, it is observed that the most popular vocabularies used to reflect hedging are the modal verbs (يمكن، يجوز) and the modal adjective (شوية) which are used by MA speakers of all ages and from rather early life stages. The word (بس) seems to be preferred by G2 as they use it in 13 utterances. Table (3) shows the most used vocabularies by age groups:

Table (3) The Most used Vocabularies by Age Groups.

The vocabulary	G1	G2	G3	G4
بس	2	13	7	0
يمكن	3	4	2	1
يجوز	1	6	4	1
شوية	1	3	3	1

Concerning the use of pragmatic hedges for Age Groups, it is noticed that all age groups show considerable tendency to use Plausibility Shields especially for G2 & G3. Rounder Approximators also seem preferred by G2 & G3. In fact, there is no difference in using adapter approximators for both G2 & G3. Below, a table that shows the number of using pragmatic hedges for each age group:

Table (4) The Number of the Pragmatic Hedges used by Age Groups in the Corpus of this Thesis.

Pragmatic Hedge	G1	G2	G3	G4
Adapter Approximators	1	11	10	1
Rounder Approximators	2	27	18	1
Plausibility Shields	8	62	18	4
Attribution Shields	1	20	10	3

To investigate the relationship between the topics of hedging strategy and the age, we decide to examine the speakers' age group in the three main topics (expressing a personal opinion, giving information and giving advices), Several points can be noticed clearly. G2 shows the greatest tendency to use hedging strategy as they deal with the first topic. So, 73 utterances in the corpus are uttered by this age group to discuss this topic. On the other side, G3 tends to use hedging strategy in 57 utterances in the whole corpus to deal with giving information. Moreover, both age groups show rather similar likelihood to use hedging strategy when they deal with the third topic (giving advices). Meanwhile, G1 and G4 show close degrees of inclination to use hedging as they deal with all these three main topics. Table (5) shows the number of the utterances for the main three topics in relation to each age group.

Table (5) Age groups & Main Topics of Hedging.

Age Group	Expressing personal opinion	Giving information	Giving advices
G1	6	8	0
G2	73	57	15
G3	58	33	11
G4	6	6	1

14. The Effect of Gender

Navigating the corpus of this research, we identify some differences as well as similarities in using hedging strategy in MA by males and females.

To begin, Females show a significant tendency to use some vocabulary in hedging such as (بس) which is used 14 times (out of 22 times) by females and the word (يمكن) which is used 7 times out of 11 times. While no differences noticed with other vocabulary that are used in hedging.

In talking about the devices of hedging used or preferred by males or females of MA speakers, it is observed that there is no difference in using simple hedges (that contain one hedge) which have the highest frequency in the corpus. 275 utterances in the corpus use simple hedges of which 138 utterances by males and 137 by females. The same can be said about compound hedges (two hedges) which are manifested in 21 utterances of which 11 utterances by males and 11 utterances by females. On the other side, utterances that use complex hedges (more than two hedges) are mostly used by males. In fact, 3 utterances of 4 that use complex hedges are uttered by males.

Let's consider using hedging devices by both males and females. Analysis reveals that males prefer using some devices more than female. Needless to say, these devices are used by female as well. Introductory phrases that have the highest frequency among the devices are males' preference. As such, 61 utterances out of 106 are used by males. This means 57.7% of them. Females use this device in 45 utterances or about 42.4% of the utterances that use this device. Metalinguistic comments device is used extensively by males. 8 utterances of 12 in the corpus that use this device uttered by males while 4utterances by females. This means that male use of this device in the corpus is 66.6% whereas females only 33.3%. Agentless passive device is preferred by males. In fact, all the utterances identified are uttered by males. Modal adverbs device manifests itself more frequently in males' utterances than in females'. Thus, out of 20 utterances that use this device in the data 14 utterances are used by males i.e. about 70% of them whereas 6 utterances are uttered by females i.e. 30% of them. Using questions device which is suggested by this study manifests itself as a tool to show hedging. Analysis shows that males tend to use this device more. Thus, 7 utterances in the data use this device of which 6 by males and 1 utterance by a female. In this sense, about 85.7% of the

utterances of this type are used by males and about 14% of them are used by a female. Along the same line, indirect speech acts device is used in 2 utterances by males in this corpus.

Concerning females, the analysis shows that female tend to use other devices more than males do. Thus, noun/ adjective- diminutive device is used by females more. Thus, 7 utterances out of 11 that use this device are used by females where 4 utterances are uttered by males. In other way 63% of utterances that use this device by females and 36.3% by males. Modal nouns device has high frequency in females' utterances. Hence, 31 utterance in the corpus use this device of which 19 utterance by females and 12 by males. In this sense, 61% of the utterances that use this device are uttered by females whilst about 38.7% of them are uttered by males. The use of epistemic verbs device shows that females use it 18 times while male use it 12 times out of 30 times. This suggests that 60% of the utterances that use this device are uttered by female while 40% of them are used by males. Females' use of modal adjectives as a hedging device is more frequent than males'. 16 utterances in the corpus use this device of which 10 by females or 62.5% and 6 by males or about 37.5% of the utterances that use this device. For conditional clause device, female use it more frequently. 3 utterances of 4 that use this device are uttered by females. Conditional subordinate device is used in 3 utterances that all uttered by females. Concessive conjunctions device is used extensively by females in the data. Thus 7 utterances that manifest this device are uttered by females. Moreover, modal verbs device tends to be used by females more than males. So, 25 utterances use this device of which 15 by females and 10 by males. Reversal tag device is females' preference as 2 utterances that use it are uttered by females. Negative questions device manifests itself in females' utterance more than males'. As such, there are 3 utterances that use this device of which 2 utterances by females and 1 by a male.

No differences are found in using adjective/ adverb device by males and females. So, this device is used in 31 utterances of which 17 by males and 18 by females. Other devices that show low frequency in the data such as: progressive verb device, tentative Inference, impersonal pronoun, hedging performative, future verb and particle

(قد) are unreliable to derive results of them. Below table (6) shows hedging devices preferred by males and female, the number and percentages of utterances by males and females in the corpus of this thesis:

Table (6) Hedging Devices Preferred by Males and Female, the Number and Percentages of Utterances by Males and Females in the Corpus of this Thesis.

Hedging device	Numbers for Males	Percentage for Males	Numbers for Females	Percentage for Females	Total of numbers
Introductory phrase	61	57.5%	45	42.4%	106
Modal adverb	14	70%	6	3o%	20
Metalinguistic comment	8	66.6%	4	33.3%	12
Agentless passive	5	100%	0	0%	5
Questions	6	85.7%	1	14.2%	7
Speech acts	2	100%	0		2
Noun- adjective diminutives	4	36.3%	7	63.6%	11
Modal noun	12	38.7%	19	90.4%	31
Epistemic verb	12	40%	18	60%	30
Modal verbs	10	40%	15	60%	25
Modal adjective	6	37.5%	10	62.5%	16
Concessive conjunction	0	0%	7	100%	7
Conditional clause	1	25%	3	75%	4
Conditional subordinate	0	0%	3	100%	3
Reversal tag	0	0%	2	100%	2
Negative question	1	33.3%	2	66.6%	3

In talking about using Pragmatic hedges, both genders seem prefer Plausibility Shields but Females show a considerable tendency to use Rounder Approximators and Plausibility Shields as they use the former 35 times and the later 70 times in the corpus. On the other hand, males tend to use attribution shields more so they use them 22 times in the corpus. Whereas no significant differences in using adapter approximators for both of males and females. Below table (7) that shows the number of utterances that use pragmatic hedges by both gender groups:

Table (7) The Number of Pragmatic Hedges used by both Genders.

Pragmatic Hedge	Male	Female	Total
Adapter Approximators	13	10	23
Rounder Approximators	13	35	48
Plausibility Shields	51	70	121
Attribution Shields	22	12	34

15. Findings and Discussions

It is worthwhile to mention that the corpus of this study contains 300 utterances of authentic MA utterances in everyday interactions that use hedging strategy. As a socio-pragmatic study, this research denotes an extra consideration to three social variables that affect the use of hedging in MA. They are as follows: The effect of the topic, the effect of gender and the effect of age. Talking about the effect of the topic, nine types of topics that use hedging strategy are recognized in the corpus of this thesis. They are arranged from the highest to the lowest occupation as follows: Expressing personal opinion, giving information, giving advices, requesting, commands, guessing, offering, asking/ responding to a favor and invitation/ responding to invitation. Concerning the gender variable, it is noticed that morphological device is more preferred by females. Moreover, some forms are more preferred by them such as (بس، يمكن). As for the linguistic devices used to show hedging in MA, it is found there is no differences between males and females concerning

the use of simple and compound hedges whereas male show some tendency to use complex hedges in the corpus. In fact, all devices used in the corpus are used by all age groups but a certain age group may show little tendency to use some devices more. For instance, introductory phrases and metalinguistic comments and modal verbs devices seem to be more preferred by males. Moreover, Agentless passive and speech acts devices are used only by males in the corpus. A "new" syntactic linguistic device is suggested by this study (The use of questions) which is mostly used by males. On the other hand, Female seem to prefer other devices such as noun/ adjective diminutive device, modal nouns device, epistemic verbs device and modal adjective device. Some devices are used extensively by females such as conditional clause device, conditional subordinate device, concessive conjunction device, reversal tag device and negative questions device which are mostly used by females in the corpus. No differences between males and females are found in the use of other devices such as adjective/ adverb device. As far as pragmatic hedges are concerned, Plausibility Shields and Rounder Shields seem to be preferred by females while Attribution Shields are used by males more. In regards of the topics used in hedging, it is found that females tend to use hedging to deal with expressing a personal opinion more than males do. While males prefer to use hedging to deal with giving information topic more than females do. But, no significant differences between them with other topics are found.

In talking about age variable, it is noticed that utterances that belong to G2&G3 occupy the largest part of the corpus. While the utterances that belong to G1& G4 have the lowest occupation in the corpus. This may mean that G2&G3 use hedging more than G1 &G4 do. It is found that G2&G3 tend to use compound hedges while G2&G4 use complex hedges in the corpus. As for the linguistic devices used to show hedging some points are found: all ages seem to prefer introductory phrases device, G2 prefer adjectives/ adverbs device and G3 seem to prefer modal nouns device.

Regarding lexicons, the forms (يمكن، يجوز، شوية) are preferred by all age groups from rather early life stages while (بس) seem to be preferred by G2 more than the other age groups.

Concerning the pragmatic hedges, plausibility shields are preferred by all age groups especially for G2&G3. Attribution shields are also preferred by G2 while no difference is noticed in the use of Adapter approximators for G2&G3.

It is found that G1 adapts their use of hedging completely in accordance with the utterer's interest. In fact, only G3 show a little more tendency to the adaptation of the hearer's interest.

As far as the topics used in hedging are concerned, G2 show a large tendency to use hedging when the deal with the three main topics (expressing a personal opinion, giving information and giving advices). G2& G3 show rather similar degree of inclination to use hedging in giving advices topic. G1&G4 show close results in the analysis when they deal with these three topics.

16. Conclusion

1. Typical hedging expressions (forms) that are commonly used by Mosuli Arabic speakers such as (بس، يجوز، شوية) can be considered as neutral hedges as they can be used in all topics by speakers of all age groups and of both genders.

2. Examining the effect of the topic as a socio-pragmatic variable, nine types of topics of hedging are recognized in the corpus of this thesis. They are arranged from the highest to the lowest occurrence as follows: Expressing personal opinion, giving information, giving advices, requesting, commands, guessing, offering, asking/ responding to a favor and invitation/ responding to invitation.

3. Hedging is a gender sensitive phenomenon as far as the vocabulary, types, syntactic and pragmatic forms, topics are concerned.

4. The study proves that there are similarities as well as differences between males and females in using hedging strategy.

5. Females tend to use hedging to deal with expressing personal opinions more than males do. While males prefer to use hedging to deal with giving information topic more than females do. But, no significant differences between them in relation to other topics are found.

6. Young- children, mid- age children(G1) and old- adults (G4) use hedging less than other life stages such as young- adults, mid-adults(G2) and adults (G3). Moreover, G1& G4 show close results in the analysis when they deal with the three main topics.
7. All age groups tend to use simple hedges while G2, G3, and G4 can use multiple hedges. On the other side, all age groups seem to prefer introductory phrases device, G2 prefer adjectives/ adverbs device and G3 seem to prefer modal nouns device.
8. Plausibility shields are preferred by all age groups especially for G2&G3. Attribution shields are also preferred by G2 while no difference is noticed in the use of Adapter approximators for G2&G3.

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تأثير العوامل الاجتماعية في استخدام أُسلوب التحوّط في اللهجة الموصليَّة

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المستلخص

يُعدُّ أُسلوب التحوط واحد من المهارات التي يحتاجها الإِنسان فى حياته اليومية للوصول إِلى التواصل الناجح، وهذه الدراسة تُركز على تأثير بعض العوامل الاجتماعية مثل: موضوع الحديث والعمر والجنس على استخدام أُسلوب التحوط في التفاعلات اليومية في اللهجة الموصلية والبيانات المختارة تتكون من ٣٠٠ مثال لغوي تلقائي يستخدم أُسلوب التحوط من متحدثي هذه اللهجة من مختلف الأَعمار في التفاعلات اليومية، التي تضمُّ البيانات على ١٥٠ مثالاً للذكور ومثلها للإِناث في مختلف مواضيع الحياة اليومية.

وأَظهرت الدراسة الفاظ نمطية تُستخدم فى كل المواضيع من المتحدثين لهذه اللهجة من مختلف الأَعمار ومن كلا الجنسين، وتعرَّفت الدراسة على ٩ مواضيع للحديث تستخدم أُسلوب التحوط، وأثبتت الدراسة أَنَّ أُسلوب التحوط بوصفه ظاهرة لغوية حسَّاس جدًا وذو قيمة كبيرة فيما يخص الأَلفاظ والأَنواع والتركيب البنائي والأَلفاظ التداولية ومواضيع الحديث، فضلًا عن ذلك أَثبتت الدراسة وجود تشابهات واختلافات بين الذكور والإِناث فيما يتعلَّق باستخدام أُسلوب التحوُّط، وأَكَّدت الدراسة أَنَّ الأَولاد بعمر مُبكر ومتوسط وكذلك كبار السن يستخدمون أُسلوب التحوط أقل من غيرهم من الفئات العمرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية : المهارات ، العمر ، الجنس.

طالبة ماجستير/قسم اللغة الإِنكليزية/كلية الآداب/جامعة الموصل.
أُستاذ مساعد/قسم اللغة الإِنكليزية/كلية الآداب/جامعة الموصل.