

The Role of Hedging Devices in Iraqi Authors' English Linguistic Research Articles

Baydaa Salih Lateef

Asst. Prof. DrJuma'aQadir Hussein

Department of English,

College of Education for Humanities,

University Of Anbar

bai20h1003@uoanbar.edu.iq

ed.juma.qadir@uoanbar.edu.iq

Abstract:

This study aims to find out the use of hedging devices and their pragmatic functions in Iraqi English Linguistic Research Articles. To this end, a qualitative method of analysis is used based on Hyland's (1998) classification of hedging devices. Fifteen research articles were selected from Iraqi interdisciplinary journals, of linguistics. The findings showed that the Iraqi linguistic articles utilized four types of hedging devices: attribute hedge, reliability hedge, writer oriented hedge, and reader oriented hedge. Attribute hedges were the highest frequency used; while reader oriented hedges were the lowest one. It has been found that Iraqi linguistic articles used all types of hedging devices and they were distributed differently in the following way: Introduction (143/18.84%), discussion (470/ 61.92), and conclusion (146 / 19.24%). The total frequency of hedges were 759 times in all linguistic articles: Hedging devices were most frequently used in the discussion section than in the introduction and conclusion sections. Finally, the study implicates further application of hedging devices in both EFL and ESL contexts.

Key words: Hedging devices, qualitative method, linguistic articles

دور وسائل التحوط في مقالات بحثية لغوية إنجليزية لمؤلفين عراقيين

بيداء صالح لطيف أ.م.د. جمعة قادر حسين

قسم اللغة الإنجليزية / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

جامعة الانبار

bai20h1003@uoanbar.edu.iq

ed.juma.qadir@uoanbar.edu.iq

الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى معرفة استخدام وسائل التحوط ووظائفها البراغماتية في مقالات بحثية لغوية إنجليزية لمؤلفين عراقيين. ولتحقيق هذا الهدف استخدمت الدراسة طريقة التحليل النوعي اعتماداً على تصنيف هايلاند (١٩٩٨) لأدوات التحوط. وتم اختيار خمس عشر مقالة بحثية لغوية من مجلات عراقية متعددة التخصصات. أظهرت النتائج أن المقالات اللغوية العراقية استخدمت أربعة أنواع من أدوات التحوط: تحوط السمات، وتحوط الموثوقية، والتحوط الموجه للكاتب، والتحوط الموجه للقارئ. كانت تحوطات السمات هي أعلى تردد مستخدم؛ بينما كانت التحوطات الموجهة للقارئ هي الأدنى. لقد تبين أن المقالات اللغوية العراقية استخدمت جميع أنواع أدوات التحوط وتم توزيعها بشكل مختلف على النحو التالي: المقدمة (١٤٣ / ١٨.٨٤٪) ، مناقشة (٤٧٠ / ٦١.٩٢) ، وخاتمة (١٤٦ / ١٩.٢٤٪). بلغ معدل تكرار عمليات التحوط ٧٥٩ مرة في جميع المقالات اللغوية: تم استخدام أعلى نسبة من أجهزة التحوط بشكل متكرر في قسم المناقشة مقارنة بالأقسام الأخرى المقدمة والخاتمة. أخيراً، تتضمن الدراسة مزيد من التطبيقات في سياقات اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (EFL) والإنجليزية كلغة ثانية (ESL).

الكلمات المفتاحية: أدوات التحوط، الأسلوب النوعي، المقالات اللغوية

1.INTRODUCTION

Hedging devices are considered as one of the different types of fuzziness and uncertainty expressions which are used by speakers or writers to present their propositions as an opinion rather than a fact, also to express vague general truths and common opinions as well as hesitation and uncertainty. Hedging is an important interactional tactic in both oral and written communication, and it is applicable to language teaching as well. Teaching the appropriate use of hedges, like other pragmatic phenomena, can be quite hard for various reasons, Marakken and Schröder(1997) argue, Hedges receive their meaning from the contexts in which they appear. Another reason is that their use is frequently linked to the speakers or writer's values views, and even personalities, making their education a delicate affair (Marakken&Hartmut 1997). Therefore, hedging is a key component of discourse that allows authorsto express their confidence, doubt, or prediction. Hedging is polite and protects one's face from threats. Speakers and writers use hedging to indicate assurance or doubt about a statement, as well as to show the degree of confidence. (Khanbutayeva, 2020).

They are particularly important in academic debates about premises, assumptions, and deductions since they let authors to be a little committed to their claims and present arguments as

perspectives and opinions rather than facts Yang (2013). A communicative interaction between writers and readers should be present in all academic research articles. Academic research authors use rhetorical approach markers like hedging strategies to try to define and justify their close relationship with the research community. Hedging devices are crucial in academic papers because they serve a double purpose: they confirm a person's professional identity while also assisting in the rhetorical process of claim acceptance Ebadi&Khaksar (2015). And as cited in (Muhammed, 2020). Hedging devices are considered as one of the commentary clauses and phrases. Commentary clauses serve as indicators of 'stance' or 'style' (e.g., I think, I guess) (e.g., if I may say so). A similar statement is made by Quirk et al (1985), who claimed that comment clauses can be both style and content disjoints; they serve as hedging devices (e.g., I think) expressing hesitation over truth value, as expressions of the speaker's certainty (e.g., I am sure) as expressions of the speaker's emotive attitude towards the content of the main clause (e.g., I hope).

Comment clauses, as a linguistic category, are characterized by instability in their character, which result from inconsistency between usage and structure, according to Aijmer (1997) Although they operate like disjunct, adverbs give secondary information; they actually represent sentences structurally. This might be because of the ongoing 'grammaticalization' process

they go through. Specifically, this refers to the transformation that lexical items and constructions go through in specific situations to execute grammatical tasks and, if grammaticalized, to produce new grammatical functions. They are in a state of potential volatility and are particularly apt to alter as grammaticalizing components. Additionally, comment clauses undergo a process of evolution from their traditional 'first person form'(such as, 'I think') to modified forms, such as 'I would think' and 'I'm thinking' (Kaltenbock , 2010). That is, the phrase 'I suppose', which is considered a crucial comment, has evolved from a pragmatic marker that performs metadiscourse functions to a marker of epistemic modality, signaling lack of speaker commitment. Aijmer (1997).

Learning to write in a second language is one of the most difficult aspects of doing so. In light of the fact that even for those who know English as a first language, this may not come as a surprise. Writing well takes extensive and specialized instruction. Despite the rising amount of research on hedging, less attention has been paid to the genre of English linguistic articles published by Arab speakers of the language, particularly Iraqi writers. A less concentrated study effort was done to look into the hedging tactics utilized by Iraqi authors. Thus it is necessary to determine whether Iraqi non-native or academic writers of English utilize these specific discourse items, namely hedging devices effectively and

adequately in their written discourse and what those devices' purposes are in academic writing, as well as whether they gain from these markers to make their writing advantageous, understandable, or assertive.

Accordingly, the study aims to qualitatively examine the kinds of hedging devices and exploring the pragmatic functions behind such devices across different types of linguistic articles.

Based on the objective of the study, the researchers are to answer the following research question: ***What are the types and frequency of hedging devices used by Iraqi Authors' English Linguistic research articles, and what are their pragmatic functions?***

The study implicates a theoretical contribution to the concept of hedging from a

Pragmatic perspective. For the theoretical contribution, this study is expected to present a theoretical overview on the concept of hedging to enrich the linguistic knowledge within the pragmatic framework of hedging devices. On the other hand, for the practical contribution, readers will obtain valuable examples taken from the Iraqi linguistic research articles to be practically analyzed and analytically engaged with the language in use.

2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Hedge identification

Hedging interpretations are amazingly few in the literature. Hedging is defined by Zuck and Zuck (1986) as a method by which an author weakens a statement, whilst Markkanen and Schroder (1989) define it as any misleading or indirect language strategy of using less than one meaning. Rhetorical devices, syntactic markers, and lexical and referential markers are the three basic categories of hedges (Uysal, 2014). Denials, disclaimers, ambiguity markers, and vagueness are examples of rhetorical devices, while passive voices and if conditionals are examples of syntactic markers. On the other hand, lexical and referential indicators, which operate as point of view distance, downtoners, demonstratives, discourse particles, diminutives, and indefinite pronouns (Demir, 2018). In addition, as cited in (Muhammed, 2020). Hedging devices are considered as one of the commentary clauses and phrases. Commentary clauses serve as indicators of 'stance' or 'style' (e.g, I guess, I think) (e.g, if I may say so).

A similar statement is made by Quirk et al,(1985) who assert that comment terms can be both style and content disjoints; they can be used as hedging devices (e.g., I think) to express doubt about the veracity of statements, as declarations of the speaker's confidence (e.g., I'm sure), or as indicators of the

speaker's emotional reaction to the main clause's content (e.g, I hope). Comment clauses, as a linguistic category are distinguished by inconsistency in their character, which result from inconsistency between using and constructing, according to Aijmer (1997) Although they operate like disjunct, adverbs give secondary information; they actually represent sentences structurally. This might be because of the ongoing 'grammaticalization' process they go through. Specifically, this refers to the transformation that lexical items and constructions go through in specific situations to execute grammatical tasks and, if grammaticalized, to produce new grammatical functions. They are in a state of potential volatility and are particularly apt to alter as grammaticalizing components.

Additionally, comment clauses undergo a process of evolution from their traditional 'first person form'(such as, 'I think') to modified forms, such as 'I would think' and 'I'm thinking' (Kaltenbock, 2010). That is, the phrase 'I suppose', which is considered a crucial comment, has evolved from a pragmatic marker that performs metadiscourse functions to a marker of epistemic modality, signaling lack of speaker commitment (Aijmer, 1997).

2.2 Hedging as a Pragmatic approach with an Interpersonal Function

Hedging has been studied with an eye on the communication situation, particularly the effect of the strategy on the relationship between sender and addressee in face-to-face communication, in more recent hedging-related studies. In general, pragmatic representations the concept of hedging in the literature are typically less extensive ad hoc conceptions and ideas for the objectives of a particular study attempt than thorough analysis of the phenomenon or issue. For instance, tackling hedging in newswriting (Zuck and Zuck, 1985), defined the issue as “the process whereby the author reduces the strength of what he is writing” (p. 172), in the event that further information proves to be false.

Crismore and Vandekopple (1988) on the other hand, see hedges as things that "convey a tentative or cautious judgment of the reality of referential information,"(p.185) allows transmitters to take accountability for the supplied information, with the fundamental reason of hedging in these descriptions being the avoidance of sender responsibility for the referential information given. Many prior pragmatic descriptions, on the other hand, appear to be fairly one-sided in that they primarily focus on hedging as a tactic for senders to protect themselves. Many discussions, however, appear to be lacking in a more detailed examination of hedges in linguistic interaction, with consideration and attention given to the communication context as

a whole, including the relationship between the addressee and the discourse participants, as well as the sender's self-protection (Varttala, 2001).

2.3 Pragmatics function in context

Pragmatics is the study of how to interpret linguistic meaning in context. There are two types of context that are relevant. The first is the linguistic context, which refers to the speech that comes before the phrase or sentence to be understood. The discourse suggests the second type of context, which is situational or world knowledge. The situational context includes the speaker, hearer, and any other people in the room, as well as their opinions and beliefs about what the other person believes. It considers the environment, the conversation's subject, and the time of day. What surrounds a word or a piece of text is referred to as context in language.

To grasp what words signify, we must first understand the context in which they are employed. A word, phrase, or sentence in print is surrounded by other text. This aids the reader's comprehension of the work in question. The social situation as well as the language used in speaking assist the listener in comprehending what is being said. "You can take it whenever you need it," for example, may relate to nearly anything. If a doctor to a patient, though, utters it the context is apparent, and the listener

can deduce that it's about medication. So, the context is everything that surrounds a text, written or spoken (Fromkin, Rodman & Hyams, 2013).

Even if we don't fully grasp what the speaker has said (interpretation without identification) and even if we haven't heard everything uttered, we can sometimes infer what the speaker means from cues in the physical situation (interpretation without perception). Can you think of a time when you didn't entirely comprehend what someone said but inferred what he or she meant from the context—what the speaker was attempting to accomplish, what the circumstances seemed to necessitate, etc.? If you can't recall such an event, perhaps you can draw one up in your mind. Can you recall a time when you understood exactly what someone said but couldn't comprehend it because you didn't have enough context or didn't understand what the message was about? If not, perhaps you can create a situation (Kreidler, 2002).

Pragmatics is the study of how listeners, for instance, must integrate their semantic knowledge with other types of information and draw conclusions in order to understand what a speaker is trying to say. While semantics is the study of conventional, linguistic meaning, pragmatics is the study of how humans use this language information in context (Saeed ,2016). Context interacts with an utterance's semantic meaning in two key

ways: It is critical for determining the proposition (or inquiry, command, etc.) that a speaker wanted to express with a given utterance, and it is updated with the information conveyed by each subsequent utterance. When phenomena like anaphora, ellipsis, and deixis are involved, the first role – context-dependence of interpretation – is most clear. When these occur in a statement, the semantic interpretation is effectively incomplete, and only contextual information may be used to identify the intended truth conditions. The appropriateness of an utterance is determined by its ability to articulate a reasonable and relevant proposition in the context. Because the statement was incomplete, as with anaphora or ellipsis, or because its evidence proves meaning would appear to be unimportant or otherwise infelicitous, we must look at the context to figure out what was said (Horn & Ward, 2008).

However, pragmatics, like all of our linguistic knowledge, is governed by rules. The principles of pragmatics in producing and interpreting language in light of context involve, our beliefs, our intentions about our interlocutors and their intentions. Because members of a language community share these pragmatic rules for language production and interpretation in context, they are considered part of our linguistic competence, not just performance (Birner, 2012).

3. Methodology

The present work is qualitative; it aims at descriptively analyzing (15) linguistic articles that have been taken from interdisciplinary journals. written by different Iraqi writers. The analysis based on Hyland's 1998 classification of hedging devices. The articles were selected purposively in that only articles structured as introduction, discussion and conclusion were involved in the analysis, the process of selection was randomly selected. To meet the objective of the study, the following procedures were adopted:

1. Surfing the internet for the websites of the journals.
2. Searching and finding out the articles with the three parts: introduction, discussion and conclusion as mentioned above in the criteria for data selection.
3. Coding the essays.
4. Analyzing the data based on Hyland's (1998) classification.
5. Finding manually the frequency of occurrence for hedging devices in linguistic articles.
6. Tabulating the findings of the frequencies and percentages of hedging devices in the articles.

The linguistics articles were taken from the following Iraqi journals:

1 *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS)*

<https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v3n1y2020.pp166-173> Volume 3, Issue 1, 2020

<https://jhss.koyauniversity.org/index.php/jhss>

2. Al-Ustath Journal for Human and Social Sciences Vol. (59) No. (4) (December -2020AD, 1442AH) <https://alustath.uobaghdad.edu.iq/index.php/UJIRCO/article/download/1293/943>

3. University of Kufa scientific journal.

<https://journal.uokufa.edu.iq/index.php/index/index>

4. *Journal of Adab AL Rafidayn*, 2021, Volume 51, Issue 84.1, Pages 1-20
10.33899/radab.2021.167790

<https://www.iasj.net/iasj/journal/78/issues>

5. Cihan University-Erbil Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences

59 <https://journals.cihanuniversity.edu.iq/index.php/cuejhss>

6. *Koya University Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences (KUJHSS)* <https://doi.org/10.14500/kujhss.v4n1y2021.pp35-44>

7. *Journal of Education and Practice*

8. Journal of University of Duhok., Vol. 24, No.1 (Humanities and Social Sciences), Pp355-364, 2021 <https://journal.uod.ac/index.php/uodjournal/issue/archive>

3. Findings and discussion

To meet the objective of the study, which reads: **exploring the pragmatic functions of hedging devices used by Iraqi authors' linguistic research articles**, the articles will be analyzed in terms of dividing them into its main parts: Introduction, Discussion, and Conclusion. Consider Table 1:

Types of hedging Ling.ARs	Introduction		Discussion		Conclusion		Total	
	Freq.	Per.	Freq.	Per.	Freq.	Per.	Freq.	Per.
1	22	51.17	12	27.90	9	20.93	43	100
2	5	7.82	46	71.87	13	20.31	64	100
3	8	10	43	53.75	29	36.25	80	100
4	6	17.15	22	62.85	7	20	35	100
5	6	10.35	41	70.69	11	18.96	58	100
6	5	6.85	58	79.46	10	13.69	73	100
7	8	19.51	26	63.41	7	17.08	41	100
8	10	22.22	26	57.78	9	20	45	100
9	5	18.52	18	66.66	4	14.82	27	100
10	15	17.65	54	63.53	16	18.82	85	100
11	3	6.12	38	77.56	8	16.32	49	100
12	9	20.93	26	60.47	8	18.60	43	100
13	10	45.46	11	50	1	4.54	22	100
14	8	16.67	34	70.83	6	12.5	48	100
15	23	50	15	32.61	8	17.39	46	100
Total	143	18.84	470	61.92	146	19.24	759	100

Table (1) Frequency and percentage of Hedging devices in linguistics research articles

Based on the table, it has been shown that the total frequency of hedging devices was 759 times. The frequency and the percentage were distributed into the three parts of the article: Introduction 143/18.84%. Discussion 470/61.92% and conclusion 146/19.24%. All articles used all types of hedging devices, the highest frequency of hedging devices were scored in the discussion section, and the lowest was in the introduction section. Below is a detailed analysis of the pragmatic functions of hedging devices in the three parts of the article.

3.1. Analysis of the introduction section

The findings indicated that all types of hedges were used in this section. The most common sort utilized by authors of linguistic articles was attribute. The writer's way of presenting their argument by not exhibiting the accuracy of the argument presented is referred to as attribute. Attribute hedges include subcategories like *downgrades*, *marker of intentional vagueness* and *intensifier*.

The excerpts below were taken from the introduction section to demonstrate how the publications under investigation made use of Hyland's (1998) Attribute hedges to either prove their assertions to be true or to withdraw their statements:

“*Refusal is a complex speech act, and its realization is a **bit** difficult as it requires a high level of pragmatic competence to be performed successfully*” (Article 15)

“*...is the fact that pragmatics is not exclusively developed from linguistics, it is **rather** related to other disciplines like philosophy and....*” (Article 11)

In these two examples, the writers used the words *a bit* and *rather* which are considered as downgrades of attributed hedges.

The major role of these attitudinal markers were intended to act as a form of self-protection for the writer or speaker which might be due to a lack of awareness of

The partner's desires, attitudes, or beliefs. *A bit* was used in AR.15 to protect himself from his claim. He distanced himself from the certainty of saying that the refusal is complex and difficult to be realized because it requires a high degree of pragmatic competence; Therefore, instead of saying *...and its realization is difficult* he said *is a bit difficult*.

Markers of intentional vagueness were also considered as attributed hedges. The following excerpts illustrate them:

“*When they try to speak English; they **usually** have difficulty in pronouncing certain words and phrases*” (Article 1)

“CMC is **generally** defined as a process of human communication that takes place via computers by which people can start and”
(Article 3)

“Political discourse is a special **kind of** texts since it is full of manipulative rhetorical ways of expressing self and ideas”
(Article 6)

The words **usually, generally, and kind of** in the examples above are all used as markers of intended vagueness. They are words that describe the ambiguity. The intentional ambiguity marker is used to decrease face-threatening acts by limiting the explicitness of statements or assertions. This type of hedges was the most commonly used in linguistic articles.

- Reliability hedges

The degree of the writer's confidence in his claim was referred to as a reliability hedge. The term '*reliability hedge*' refers to a tactic used by authors to describe their arguments by demonstrating the possibility of the arguments being true. As described in table (1) above, reliability hedges were used as close as to attribute hedges in the introduction section but it was a bit little than it. The investigation has been found that reliability hedge appears 44 times in linguistic research articles, while attribute was 64 times in this section. Reliability hedges can be described by the following: (1) Modal auxiliary verb (2) Semi auxiliary verb (3)

Epistemic lexical verb and (4) Modal adverbs and adjectives. Excerpts below taken from the introduction section of the articles under investigation will illustrate that:

*“In conversation, the topic **might** change when participants take turn” (Article 7)*

*“Normally these symptoms develop during the first week after delivery and **can** be very harsh” (Article 10)*

As shown in the excerpts above the use of the modal verbs might and can soften their arguments, avoid making strong predictions or assuming certainty. L2 writers are frequently encouraged to employ excellent judgment, make appropriate use of modal verbs to moderate their statements, avoid making definitive statement or implying certainty (Hinkle 2002).

*“She **thinks** that speakers are unable to explain all of their meanings via the terms they use.” (Article 4)*

*“It also emphasizes the significance of conversation since it **suggests** a chiefly suitable and” (Article 7)*

In the above excerpts, different words were used like *thinks*, *suggests*, to explain how writers utilized Hyland’s (1998) reliability hedges to express varying degrees of assurance about their propositions and to separate themselves from their statements.

As shown in table (1) the articles used *Reliability* and *Modals* 44 times in total in this section. Because various readers can interpret data analysis differently, the existence of Hyland's (1998) Reliability hedges could indicate that authors feel it necessary to be as reliable as possible in this section. As a result, the discourse community can absolutely guarantee that the author's claims are not definitive and might be modified.

-Writer oriented hedges

These hedges can be illustrated by using either (a) Passive structure or (b). Impersonal active construction to express about writers' hedges. The findings of this study revealed that 'writer-oriented hedge' appeared 33 times in this section. The excerpts below demonstrate how the authors under consideration used these words to disassociate themselves from their claims:

“This study aims mainly at studying the incorrect vowel lengthening of English short vowels due to” (Article 2)

“In this paper, the main focuses on the metaphorical representation of postpartum depression.” (Article 10)

“It is hypothesized that Obama has used several rhetorical devices to affect the public opinion on the ...” (Article 6)

“It can be judged that literary pragmatics is decided by the society's conditions and the user's role in the” (Article 11)

The occurrence of many devices of such type of hedges can be explained by the possibility that writers used impersonal third person as a method to distance themselves from their assertions, so reducing the impact of Face Threatening Acts on the discourse community. In the extract from article 6 above, the subject and the person who hypothesize the argument were not mentioned. Additionally, the context of article 11 excerpt indicates that it is unclear who judged the argument. The purpose of such distancing phrases in these samples becomes obvious when the discourse community criticizes their work.

It has been noted that one of the distinguishing characteristics of academic and composition writing is passive structures. The passive voice is frequently used to reflect the writer's neutrality and produce an impersonal, indirect, and distanced style. Structures that front thematic information and/or remove the actor from the main focus of the phrase are common examples of the agentless passive (Hinkle, 2002).

- Reader oriented hedges

As illustrated in the table above the findings revealed that ROH was the less used type of hedges among the other three types of hedges. As in the following excerpt:

*“....and there is no simple linear path **we** can take in explaining one part in term of another” (Article 14)*

In the example above, the writers used the pronoun WE to express their propositions through the use of what is called by Hyland (2004) *self-mention reference* or *reader oriented hedges*.

3.2 Findings of the discussion section.

As seen in table(1), the most common use of hedging techniques in linguistic articles was in the discussion part. In this section, hedges appeared 470 times and had a score of 61.92% percent. In terms of the types of hedges utilized in this part, the researcher discovered that writers use all types of hedges in their articles.

-Attribute hedge

Throughout the use of down graders, markers of intentional vagueness and intensifier *attribute* hedge is utilized. According to the findings of the study analysis, attribute hedge appeared 190 times in research articles. It was the highest. It should also be noted that all authors use various forms of hedges as evidenced by the following excerpts:

*“People who are depressed have **very little** contact with the present moment....” (Article 10)*

In the example above, the writer attempts to decrease the assertion of his claim and make it appear more polite by using the phrase *very little*. Thus, instead of saying *people who are depressed have*

contact with the present moment, he prefers to add ‘very little’ to make his statement imposing and polite.

*“So the level of the sample is regarded **approximately** as a good one.” (Article 14)*

In the excerpt above, the writer used the word *approximately* in order not to show the exactness of his claim. He did not assert that the level of the sample was good but instead he preferred to use the word *approximately* to show the uncertainty of the situation.

-Reliability hedge

In the discussion section of all linguistic articles, *Reliability* hedges appeared 160 times, the highest value of this type was scored in AR.10 with 28 times while the lowest value was in AR.12 with one appearance. Reliability was referred to by different devices such as modal verbs, epistemic lexical and semi auxiliary verbs and modal adjective and adverbs. The following excerpts taken from discussion sections of linguistic articles illustrate that:

*“This week performance **may be** due to lack of practicing these forms of grammar.”*

*“The two vowel letters *e* and *a* make **a possible** environment for lengthening as many words”(Article 2)*

*“American native speakers of English **tended to** be more specific and clear in their direct refusal than” (Article 15)*

The samples above demonstrate how authors used a variety of terms in order to back off from their claims. The employment of these hedging devices seems to imply that the claims made by these authors are subjective, suggesting that their claims are not final and can be criticized. Articles. 2 and 15, for instance, included the hedge **possible and tend to** to probably infer that the assertion is only probable and not precise. The author's decision to use this hedge may have been influenced by the fact that the writer did not directly express his assertion about Americans in order to obtain primary data.

-Writer oriented hedges:

According to the findings of this study they appeared 105 times. They can be illustrated throughout the following excerpts taken from the same section of linguistic ARs

*“**Table 11 indicates** that the second year.....” (Article 15)*

*“Through analyzing the test questions, **it has been observed that** the students could answer the items that ...” (Article 14)*

By using two structures (*passive and impersonal subject*) that appeared in the excerpts above, it seems to be that all linguistic

authors tend to minimize the subjects as a strategy for reducing their current responsibility for providing clear meaning to the argument in writing; they tend to use passive structure in order to distance themselves from their claims.

Reader oriented hedges:

The findings revealed that reader-oriented hedge was the less used type compared to the other three types of hedges. The authors of ARs. 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10 used it just 15 times. Moreover, this was less scored type in all linguistic articles as in the following excerpts:

“We have already discussed the metaphorical expression of” a sea without a shore “in which.... Now we discuss the representation of this ...” (Article 10)

In the excerpt above writer used the pronoun *we*. The pragmatic value of this type of hedge comes from the fact that it can be reducing the speakers’ meaning by increasing the degree of subjectivity in his speech. Hence, hedges express to the listeners or reader that the speaker's views are not universally accurate or certain, but rather a personal opinion, judgment, or point of view that is open to debate.

3.3 Findings of the conclusion section

According to the findings of the data analysis, there is a great closeness in the frequency of hedges use in both introduction and conclusion sections that included hedging devices among all three parts of articles under investigation. The findings revealed that the total number of hedging devices used in this section was 146 times distributed between the four types of hedges. Attribute appeared 64 times, Reliability appeared 50 times, whereas writer oriented hedges appeared with 28 times and finally reader oriented hedges appeared 4 times and this was the least frequency.

-Attribute hedges

It appeared 64 times by the use of devices like down graders, marker of intentional vagueness and intensifiers as seen in the following excerpts:

*“Students prefer to correct their conversational partners and only **few** instances of the whole data opt keeping quiet and silent.”*
(Article 5)

*“However, refusal has been studied in a number of different cultures, but **little** has so far been revealed about how this speech act is used by Iraqi learners of”* (Article 15)

In the two excerpts above, the writers used these two words (*few, little*) to express their attribute hedge. This type of hedge are words or phrases, which reduce the force of another word or

phrase. They are opposite of emphatic expressions. Therefore, the word ‘few’ was used to reduce the force of the statement. Instead of saying *all data opt keeping quiet and silent* he said *few instances of the data opt keeping* Also, the word” *little*” is used to modify the act of refusal in this sentence and how it reduces this act.so instead of saying. This speech act is used by Iraqi learners emphasize that they said a little has revealed about how this speech act is used by Iraqi learners.

“**Most** of the student do not know the parts of speech so.....”
(Article 14)

“**Sometimes** it is necessary to appear more polite and to avoid what is called face threatening act” (Article 11)

“Cameron **frequently** uses indirectness in the analyzed political interview” (Article 4)

As seen in all three excerpts, the writers use the words (most, sometimes, and frequently) to express their ambiguity in order to leave room for the reader to reduce the writer’s face threatening act. The writer said that most of the student do not know the parts of speech; he avoided the matter of emphasizing and generalizing the idea by using this word.

“Running dictation is also an **invaluable tool** for teaching songs at this particular stage as the pupils” (Article 1)

As it is shown in this example, the use of the phrase (invaluable tool) was as an intensifier to persuade readers of the writer's emotional state (Running dictation for teaching songs). Empathic textual devices have the same impact as amplifiers in that they reinforce the truth of a claim or argument.

*“He **claims** that America is the best humanitarian country in the world. It **looks** for peace and.....” (Article 6).*

As described here, the use of (*looks and claims*) as hedging devices of reliability was stated by Hyland (1998) as epistemic lexical verbs to show the true possibility of the writer's argument about the American country.

*“The findings of this study revealed that the 2nd year student of English **tended to** be more direct in their refusal....” (Article 15)*

Here, *tended to* is a semi auxiliary verb. In this example, the writer used the words ‘tend to’ which included semi auxiliary verb to show his uncertainty about the direct refusal of 2nd year students.

*“**This study** investigates how the” (Article 12)*

*“Based on **the results of the current study**, it can be concluded **that** running dictation ...” (Article 1)*

In the examples above, the student did not state the subject clearly and changed with the word ‘*study*’, ‘*result*’ to diminish his role and responsibility in the argument. As with the passive structures, it can be concluded that he didn’t clarified whom was concluded that he didn’t mention the subject in order to let the ambiguity cover the place and left the reader with the ambiguity of his claim.

Finally, the use of *reader-oriented hedges* was demonstrated by the use of the pronounces (I and WE) by the writers under investigation as in the following excerpts:

“*We can conclude that since the experience of postpartum depression is an abstract phenomenon...,*” (Article 10)

“*Our study has approached the experience of.....*” (Article 10)

The use of such pronounce by the writers is to increased their subjectivity which in turn Start a dialogue with the readers about the points they made in their argument.

4. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Based on Table (1), which shows how the fifteenth linguistic articles have been pragmatically analyzedto explore the types and frequencies of hedging devices have been used in these articles and what are the pragmatic functions behind using these devices by Iraqi authors. Findingshave shown the following:

Firstly, the findings showed that the Iraqi linguistic articles utilized four types of hedging devices: attribute hedge, reliability hedge, writer oriented hedge, and reader oriented hedge. So, this finding corresponds with Hani'ah's (2019) study. Haniah mentioned that the students used all types of hedges when they wrote their research proposals.**Secondly**, attribute hedges were the highest frequency type, while reader oriented hedges were the lowest type. The heavy use of attribute hedges may be attributed to the fact that the accurate expression of discrepancies between real cases of behavior and idealized models of nature is made possible by the usage of such hedges. They allow authors to rearrange categories, precisely define entities and processes, and determine how closely results come to an idealized state. They more fully describe the characteristics of the phenomena presented. Additionally, attribute may also be modified and used widely by specifying the precise angle from which the reader may assess the reality of the assertion, avoiding a rigid interpretation of how the descriptive terminology used to characterize real-world items should be regarded.

This is in sharp contrast to the reader-oriented hedges used to restrict criticism of other people's works. The findings of the analysis indicated that this type seemed to be un popular to use among the Iraqi writers. Because the writer, in this case, use the pronoun "**We**" to express his personal opinion hence, rises the

subjectivity of the writers, which, in turn, indicates that the reader has the opportunity to respond to the writer's point of view. It is demonstrated by the participants' use of subjective viewpoints in their argument.

Thirdly, hedging devices have been used and distributed differently in the linguistic research articles. It has been found that hedging devices were found 759 times in the linguistic articles distributed in three main parts of articles in the following way: Introduction (143 / 18.84%), discussion (470 / 61.92%), and conclusion (146 / 19.24%). It has been concluded that the articles' discussion sections were more cautious and hedged compared with other parts of the article's introduction and conclusion. These findings may be attributed due to the length of the discussion section of articles within the article format, which requires more elaboration to cover all details of the question under analysis. The distinctions between the introduction, discussion, and conclusion sections of the articles included in this study can be attributed to the distinct functions that each section serves. Concerning the pragmatic function behind using these devices there were numerous underlying reasons for using hedging devices in English linguistic articles, hence pragmatic motivations. These pragmatic motivations can be broken down into four categories: First, researchers tend to express their make claims with a degree of uncertainty in order not to show the exactness of their claim and to

leave it as much as possible ambiguous. Second, they need to avoid any future criticism that could harm their reputation. Third, they attempt to seek reader acceptance by presenting facts as fragile and hesitant. Finally, in order to lessen the threat of rejection and the threat of confrontation that each communication act carries.

5. Conclusions

Based on the findings, the following conclusions are reached at:

Firstly, the findings showed that the Iraqi linguistic articles utilized four types of hedging devices: attribute hedge, reliability hedge, writer oriented hedge, and reader oriented hedge. **Secondly**, attribute hedges were the highest frequency type, while reader oriented hedges were the lowest type. **Thirdly**, hedging devices have been used and distributed differently in the linguistic research articles.

With reference to **the pragmatic functions of hedging devices used by Iraqi Authors** there were numerous underlying reasons for using hedging devices in English linguistic articles, hence pragmatic motivations. These pragmatic motivations can be broken down into four categories: **First**, researchers tend to express their make claims with a degree of uncertainty in order not to show the exactness of their claim and to leave it as much as possible ambiguous. **Second**, they need to avoid any future

criticism that could harm their reputation. **Third**, they attempt to seek reader acceptance by presenting facts as fragile and hesitant. **Finally**, in order to lessen the threat of rejection and the threat of confrontation that each communication act carries.

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