

A Socio-pragmatic Study of Hedging in Iraqi Arabic

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ABSTRACT

Among the different types of linguistic means are the expressions of fuzziness and uncertainty which are used by speakers widely. These types of expressions are called hedges. Many scholars have studied this phenomenon from both semantic and pragmatic perspectives. Hyland (1998:1) defines hedges as Devices used to convey tentativeness to reflect uncertainty. Lakoff, Brown and Levinson (1987) develop different perspectives on the basis of speech act theory and consider hedges as strategies for minimizing the threat to face. Hedges are considered a very important part in languages and they play an effective role in communication. Hedges are universal, that is, they are found in all languages and according to this type of expressions Many Iraqi people use them in their daily speech and we are unaware of the use of this phenomenon in Iraqi language. e.g / what are the functions, the strategies or the types that are used the most. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, hedges have not been dealt with in Iraqi Arabic. Hence, this study addresses the following questions: How do Iraqi people use hedges? And What type of hedges do Iraqi people use the most? This study aims at the identification of the pragmatic types of hedging, shedding light on the functions of such a pragmatic phenomenon. Therefore, it is hypothesized that It is hypothesized that: hedging is used in Iraqi Arabic serving identifiable pragmatic functions. As far as the use of hedging is concerned, the present study is limited to the use of hedges in Iraqi Arabic. To serve the aims of the study, a data including a number of educated and uneducated Iraqis is chosen is selected for this purpose.

Keywords:

Hedging; types of hedging; pragmatic functions; strategies of hedging;

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1. Introduction

The concept of hedging was firstly put forward by the American linguist George Lakoff (1972:485) Who defined it as "a word or group of words whose Job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy". However, different schools made different definitions of the same pragmatic phenomenon. Hyland (1998:23) suggests that hedge is "any linguistic means used to indicate either a lack of a complete commitment to the truth of a proposition or a desire not to express that commitment categorically ". In addition, Thompson (2001: 7) claimed that hedge is a term or an expression of uncertainty. Fraser (2010:143) also defined it as words or expressions that come in the form of models, tag questions, fillers or uncertainty

markers that can attenuate the Force of the speech acts and express ranges or levels of uncertainty towards the propositions in the speech. George yule (2014: 131) mentioned hedges and defined it as "a word or phrase used to indicate that you are not really sure that what you are saying is sufficiently correct or complete".

2. Definitions of Hedging

In most of the recent work relating to hedging, many scholars have analyzed hedging with an eye on the communication situation, and specially to show its effect in face to face communication .Addressing hedging in news writing, **zuck and zuck**(1085 cited in verttala , 2001:172) defined hedging as " The process whereby The author "reduce the strength of what he is writing.

Furthermore, in across -linguistic treatment of hedging as a strategy of "saying less than one means". Hedging appears in more than one analysis relating to pragmatics whose main functions are to modify the speakers' responsibility for the truthfulness of utterances, and to modify the definiteness of utterances or its information.

Brown and Levinson (1987:50) State that "hedging is a particle word, phrase that modifies the degree of membership that is private, or true than perhaps might be expected". However, Holmes (1984:4) demonstrates that there are a variety of linguistic means by which a speaker can signal a wish not to impose that is to say, hedges of utterance. While Hubler produce the strength of (1983:10) starts from the presumption that in language use "there are opposition to all sentences ", the use of the hedging phenomenon provides an opportunity to prepare for possible opposition. This illustrates that Hubler takes the reasons underlying the use of hedges to be pragmatic by nature in so far as he emphasized the international aspects underlying hedging. So since hedging is closely related to the attitude a speaker has towards the proposition expressed and inferring the speaker's propositional attitude is in fact a pragmatic process.

3. The Pragmatic Classification of Hedges

In this study, hedges are classified into four major types. the researcher put together all the types which are considered hedges and that have been mentioned and classified by different scholars. this classification is the eclectic modal that is used in chapter three in analyzing the collected data. Starting with H.F.prince et . al., they (1982:29) state that Hedges are very important means that are frequently used as expressions of uncertainty or as a very important field in fuzzy language. They classified hedges into two kinds: Approximators and shields.

3.1 Approximators

Approximators are the expressions that can either change the meaning of the proposition or provide alternative meaning proposition, but according to different situations. In other words, the original

truth condition of the proposition can be affected by approximators sometimes even the meaning of proposition can be changed by them. These Approximators are divided into Adaptors and rounders. (Ibid)

A) Adaptors

They are regarded as the expressions or the words that express the degree of correctness and clarity, The uncertain tone of the speaker. Some examples about them are as follows:

Sort of, kind of, almost, to some extent, quite, little bit est.

1. e.g. Judging from his daily performance he is a little bit lazy.

In the example above, the original degree of certainty and absoluteness has been changed in accordance with the real situation through using a little bit. (ibid)

B) Rounders

These expressions indicate that the information or data of something is not precise or accurate, in another words they indicate the inexact preciseness of terms.

Rounds are like :- Approximately, roughly , about, essentially etc

2.e.g) The number of victims dying from the tsunami in this area are approximately three million.

The example above shows how the expression "approximately" makes the original accurate data less precise (ibid).

3.2 Shields

Shields are words or expressions used to indicate that speakers are not fully sure of the validity of the proposition they reflect, the speakers personal stances without affecting the truth condition.

These shields can be classified into plausibility shields and attribution Shields (ibid)

A) Plausibility shields

They are used by the speakers to show their own attitude towards a proposition mostly they express speakers uncertainty of the truth value of the proposition. Simply speaking, plausibility shields are ways used to show that the statement is not absolutely right

They usually include first pronoun and they are like : I think, I guess, I assume , As far as I am concerned ,etc

.3.e.g) as far as I am concerned his proposal is the best of all that we have received.

This example shows us the speakers and uncertainty which is done by using the expression " as far as I am concerned " (ibid).

B) Attribution Shields

They are terms or expressions used by speakers to express their attitude indirectly and these expressions help the speaker to avoid taking the responsibility if the proposition is false, they include : according to him, as it will not, the possibility will be, someone suggests that,..... etc

.4.e.g) it is reported that the original habitat of this kind of deer is in Northern America

In the example mentioned above we see that the speaker expresses his opinion indirectly by using attribution shields like "it is reported that" and this expression helps the speaker to avoid being responsible for the proposition if it was not true (ibid) .

Hedging as a Politeness Device

Holmes (1988:2) speaks about Hedging and says that it can be expressed through epistemic device.

Also he tackles epistemic modality and treats it as a politeness "difference rather than uncertainty.

"Device which reflects

many other writers (e.g Myers 1989;Hinkel 1997)

considered hedging as one of the negative politeness strategies which implies distancing oneself and avoiding imposition on other

For Myers (1989:14), he believes that some of the hedging expressions show that the relationship between the writer and the reader in scientific articles can be interpreted as the politeness marker and not all of them have the role of expressing probability.

So Hedging and politeness are not synonyms, however as Myers points about hedging is a politeness strategy when it's makes a claim , or any other statement, as being provisional, bending acceptance in the literature, acceptance by the

community in other words acceptance by the readers (1989:12).

4. Methodology

In this chapter the investigation of hedging in Iraqi Arabic will be performed through certain steps . The first one is the collection of data. In this step, the researcher records the daily spontaneous speech and the conversation of the educated and the uneducated Iraqi people by using a tape recorder. The sample may involve .

e.g/ a speech or a conversation between a teacher and his students , father and his son, young boy and an old man or a doctor and his patient and so on.

The second step is the selection of the Iraqi Arabic words and expressions which imply hedges in their meanings.

And then comes the step of analyzing the data .this step includes the process of classifying the Iraqi Arabic hedges as ,per the English classification of hedges which is considered the eclectic model of this study and that has been mentioned in chapter two.

4.1 Data Collection & Analysis

This section involves the process of using a tape recorder the researcher recorded over twenty conversations from different Iraqi Arabic Contexts , the expressions which have kind of fuzziness or uncertainty and out of these twenty conversations are almost fifty hedging expressions have been analyzed as mentioned in the table below. The following formula is used to calculate percentages of the hedging types that have been mentioned in the conversations.

$$\text{A- percentage} = \frac{\text{hedges number}}{50} \times 100\%$$

B- The total number of hedges types which are used = 50 .

Starting with Adapters which are the first type of Approximators hedges three of them has been mentioned in the conversations and one of them is:

e.g) nawean ma → kind of.

The percentage of using this type is 6% .the second type of hedges is Rounders which are the second type of Approximates hedges.

Five of this types have been expressed and one of them is: e.g) taqribaan → approximately).

The percentage of using this type is 10% .the third type is plausibility which is one of the types of shields hedges . thirteen of this type have been used in the conversations and one of them is: e.g) hasabeilmi → as far as I know .

They represent the type that is used the most , and the percentage of using this type is 26% so it is the highest among the other types of hedges .

Attribution shields are the fourth type of hedges ten expressions from this type have been mentioned in the conversations , one of them is : (e.g/ hasab ma madhkur → it is reported that)

The percentage of this type 10%. The fifth type is compound hedges and the first of these compound hedges model auxiliary with lexical verb and hedging content .

For example: (sayazhar → it would appear)

None of this type has been used and the percentage is 0% .

The sixth type is double hedges it is the second type of compound hedges four of this type have

been mentioned one of them is: (e.g/ hadhaihtimalyushir → this probably indicates) the percentage of using this type is 8%.

The seventh one is Triple Hedges which are the third type of compound hedges two of them have been used one of them is (e.g/ Ybdw min almaeql an nuftaraddhik → It seems reasonable to assume that) .

The percentage of using this type is 4% .

The eighth type is quadruple hedges they are the fourth type of compound hedges none of them has been used they are like : (e.g\ Qadybdwmuatwaqaeneiilaahadin ma dhlk → It may appear somewhat speculative that) .

The percentage is 0% the one before the last type The one before the last type is model auxiliary verbs eight of this type have been mentioned the commonest one is (e.g\ yumkin → might be) .

The percentage of using this type is 16% .

The last type of hedges that have been used in the conversation is if clause.

Five of them have been mentioned one of them is : (e.g/ iidhasahih → if true) . The percentage is 10% .

Hedges in Iraqi Arabic

Hedges Types				The number of hedges used	p.
No.	Types	Utterances			
		Arabic Romanized	English translation		
1	(Approximators) Adaptors	Nawean ma	Kind of	3	6%
2	(Approximators) Rounders	Taqribaan	Approximately	5	10%
3	(shields) Plausibility	Hasabeilmi	As far as I know	13	26%
4	(Shields) Attribution	Hasab ma madhkur	It is reported that	10	20%
5	(shields) Model auxiliary with lexical verb and hedging content	Sayazhar	It would appear	0	0%
6	(shields) compound hedges. A- duple hedges	Hadhaaihtimalyushir	This probably indicates	4	8%
7	B-Triple hedges	Ybdw min almaequl an nuftaraddhik	It seems reasonable to assume that	2	4%
8	Quadruple hedges	Qadybdwmuatwaqaeilaahadin ma dhlk	It may appear somewhat speculative that	0	0%
9	Model auxiliary verbs	Yumkin	Might be	8	16%
10	If clause	Iida sahih	If true	5	10%

5. Conclusions

The study of hedges has drawn much attention from researchers and hedges have showed great

Communication value in many fields however the study of this concept in Iraqi Arabic is of a great significance.

Hence, this study aimed mainly first. To find out what the functions of hedges are in Iraqi Arabic and this has been concluded throughout the study that is, Iraqi people use different types of hedges depending on the context and what is required in situations.

For example (it is reported that) most of the Iraqi people use this type of hedges when they want to

express their opinions without taking the responsibility of what is said.

While, to the other types some are used to express uncertainty other are used to make things fuzzy or to leak the truth of the condition etc.

And according to the findings that have been reached by the researcher the hypothesis that Iraqi people use hedges a lot is confirmed. Second to identify the most common type used by people and also this has been concluded.

The type that is used by different Iraqi people is "plausibility shields" for example (as far as I know or I think) these hedges have reached the highest percentage which is 26% while some other types from shields hedges like (it would appear), or quadruple hedges like (it may appear somewhat

speculative that) have not been mentioned in any of the twenty conversations and the percentage is 0%. So the hypothesis that not all hedging types used frequently and there should be a specific type that is used most is confirmed.

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