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# Hedges Function in Masculine and Feminine Feature's Language: A Pragmatics Analysis

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The purpose of this study is to criticize the gender language features proposed by Coates (2013) proposed in Lakoff's theory (1975) by investigating speeches expressed by two different genders in interviews. The method used in this research is the descriptive qualitative method. Data were analyzed based on the theory of Coates (2013) to find language features based on gender and use the taxonomy of the hedging strategy proposed by Martin-Martin (2008). The results of the research show that male-female language features can be used by the opposite gender by looking at the perspective of the use of hedges and strategies in the concept of speech expressed by gender (male, female).

### Keywords: feature language; gender; hedges; hedging

#### INTRODUCTION

In social life, humans are surrounded by gender knowledge. In the field of linguistics, gender has become a variable in linguistic research. Holmes (2008) argues that the term gender is used to distinguish humans based on sociocultural behavior such as speech. Besides, Tong (2009) states that "there is a fact used by society as the foundation of constructing a masculine and feminine as gender identity" there is a difference between women's speech and men's speech. The relationship between gender and language has been a major issue in sociolinguistics since the early 1970s. Men and women have different speech styles. Lakoff (via Holmes, 2008 p.298) states that the differences in language use between men and women are morphologically different because women are more characterized by linguistic features or forms. In other words, the differences in men's and women's languages include vocabulary, voice, tone, style, and syntactic structure. In general, men's speech is considered logical, concise, and prioritizes important topics. Meanwhile, women are considered emotional, full of pleasantries, and talk at length. This statement is supported by Lakoff (1975) states that linguistic features are used more by women

than men because women express uncertainty more often and have less confidence in conveying speech. Moreover, Lakoff explained that the linguistic feature often used by women is lexical hedges like *you know, I mean, well.* Most women more often use these linguistic features to express opinions. Lakoff supports this statement; he states that "women used more hedging and boosting devices than men." Hedges and boosting are linguistic features that are used to express a lack of confidence or show any expression of uncertainty or tentative sentences. (Lakoff, 1975 via Holmes, 2008, p. 299).

Women and men have different language features, Coates (2013) developed the theory of Lakoff (1975) about language features based on gender, Coates characterized women's language features including topic and topic development, minimal responses, hedges, tag questions, and jam session turn-taking model. Meanwhile, male language features include topic choices, monologues and playing the expert, questions, verbal sparring, and a one-at-at-time turn-taking model. In the use of hedges contained in female language features, Salager-Meyer (1997), describes hedges into several different grammatical forms, namely *Auxiliary Verbs Model, Modal lexical verbs, Adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrase, Approximator, Introductory phrases, If -clauses,* and *Compound hedges*. All these taxonomies are used for ways of being more precise in reporting results. Hedging may present the true state of the writers' or speakers' understanding and may be used to negotiate an accurate representation of the state of the knowledge under discussion.

In this study, the focus of language features based on gender is Hedges. The linguists believe that gender influences the use of hedges. Coates (2013) states that hedges such as *I think, You know, I'm sure, Sort of, Perhaps* is a form of linguistics used to express uncertainty when speaking. Epistemic stance adverbials, including hedges, are related to the certainty, reliability, and limitation of propositional contents (Liu and Tseng, 2021). The new form that falls into the hedges classification is like, which is usually used by young English speakers. This is used by young speakers as a form of an effort to reduce speaking style. Lakoff (1975) states that hedges are "sounding of feminine" and reflect the position of women in society. Similar to Lakoff, Preisler (1986) argues that "linguistic tentativeness signals are correlated of both sex and interactional role, which is either task-oriented or socio-emotional". Preisler's data show that although women's language is characterized by the use of assertiveness strategies, this also includes the use of hedges.

However, Holmes (2008) has a different statement than Lakoff and Preisler's statement. Holmes (1995) stated that hedges are used by women as an act of politeness and solidarity with the interlocutor, rather than as a form of expressing uncertainty when delivering a speech. Holmes also argued that speakers use hedges in their speech to make it easier for the interlocutor to understand the speaker's meaning. He also revealed that women use hedges more often than men so that according to him, women are considered more supportive and polite. Also, Coates (2013) states "when talk does become more personal, it deals with matters such as drinking habits or

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personal achievements rather than feelings. Topic choice is not a superficial matter: it has profound consequences for other linguistic choices. Hedging, for example, is closely correlated with more personal and/or sensitive topics". In other words, unlike women, men will use hedges in their speech if the topic or context they are talking about is a matter of personal or sensitive matters.

As part of folk linguistics, it has been argued by linguists that women are more polite than men. To test this claim, it is necessary to know about politeness or politeness and how it occurs linguistically in different social lives. Brown and Levinson (1987) expressed two terms "face" as a form of politeness strategy, namely: Negative face as a form of freedom from action and freedom from interference, and Positive face as a form of desire to be appreciated by others and to maintain a positive self-image. Holmes (1995) indicates that although the politeness theory put forward by Brown and Levinson (1987) does not cover as broad as they claim, it is proven as a tool to investigate the pragmatic meaning and function of hedges. As is the case with other linguistics strategies, hedges can convey a lack of assertiveness but are also used to promote solidarity and as a negative politeness strategy (Tanaka, 2009). Brown and Levinson (1987) state that "hedges are particles, words, or phrases that modify the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set". According to previous studies, "the fuzzy hedges" was constructed by Lakoff, and the main point of hedges is some words that make things "fuzzy". In linguistics forms, hedges utilized as a modify a noun phrase or predicate subordinate relationship between expression (Wang, 2016). The function of hedges is to avoid making explicit statements and thus sound more polite. Hedging devices are useful in expressing opinions while softening them in the process (Almusaway, et al. 2019). Hedges utilized as a connect tools to the type of the conversation topic, to neutralize the sensitivity of the assertions ((Mohajer and Jan, 2015). The hedges forms can range from a single lexical item to syntactic structures, which do not ease the task of establishing a definition and hedges can appear alone or in clusters (Hassani and Razmdideh, 2019). The important thing of hedges lies in the fact that interlocutors expect claims to be warranted in terms of the assessments of reliability they carry, and appropriate in terms of the social interactions they appeal to (Hyland, 2000).

Martín-Martín (2008) describes the taxonomy of the hedges function in a socio-pragmatic study as a politeness strategy. He argues that it is unlikely that the hedges function will appear without considering the linguistic and contextual aspects of the situation. Martín-Martín (2008) classified the hedges function into three strategies, namely *Strategy of Indetermination, Strategy of Subjectification*, and *Strategy of Depersonalization*. In the use of language as a linguistic phenomenon, there are differences regarding gender. This phenomenon can be easily analyzed in

daily conversations, interviews, or in a debate. In events involving the speech, several lexical hedges will appear. Therefore, the differences between women and men in speaking will appear in the linguistic features of each gender. On events that involve the speech, several lexical hedges will appear. Therefore, the differences between women and men in speaking will appear in the linguistic features of each gender.

To be used as references, some researchers have been conducted previously relates studies such as Wright and Hosman (1983) Language Style and Sex Bias in the Courtroom: The Effects of Male and Female Use of Hedges and Intensifiers On Impression Information illustrates that the sex of the witness was related to subjects' evaluations of their credibility and attractiveness when using hedges and when using intensifier. Mohajer and Jan (2015) in *Preserving Face and the Use* of Hedges in Masculine World of Men. The research finds that Iranian men try to protect their faces by inserting hedges and try to preserve the addresses' faces which is an indication of solidarity by using hedges feature in their interactions. Namaziandost and Shafiee (2018) in Gender Differences in the Use of Lexical Hedges in Academic Spoken Language among Iranian EFL Learners: A Comparative Study constructs that female student had a wide range variation in picking hedges in their speech while male students were not sufficiently productive in picking the hedges. Besides, Mirzapour (2016) in Gender Differences in the Use of Hedges and First Person Pronouns in Research Articles of Applied Linguistics and Chemistry illustrate the way male and female use hedges and first person pronoun in study of discourse of research article in Applied Linguistics and Chemistry. Also, Multifunction of Hedges Used by English Department Students: Gender Role Perspective by Kholisoh and Setiawan (2018) construct that men and women used hedges as a politeness strategy to express uncertainty and sustain interpersonal relationships and Based on the preliminary studies, regarding language features according to gender, namely, this research intends to find the functions of hedges in both men and women features language. The objectives of this research are utterances that conveyed in two videos of actors and actresses interviewing about career and personal life.

#### RESEARCH METHOD

The technique used in this data collection is document analysis, which is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents in printed or electronic form Bowen (2009). This study used the descriptive qualitative method. The way to get data is by watching two videos on the Youtube channel First We Feast: Hot Ones with Halsey, as a female respondent and First We Feast: Hot Ones with Shawn Mendes, as a male respondent. First We Feast: Hot Ones is a show hosted by Sean Evans who interviews musicians and actresses about his career life. Then the data is analyzed and classified according to the language features of lexical hedges according to Salager-Meyer (1997) and the hedges strategy based on Martín-Martín (2008) from gender respondents in the two videos.

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#### **RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

Table 5.1 .Lexical Hedges as Fillers

-		
Features Fillers	Female	Male
Like	40	61
Well	4	-
You know	14	4
I mean	5	2
Probably	2	3
Actually	1	1
Just	5	22
Total	71	93

Table 5.2. Lexical Hedges as Lexical Verb

	2	
Features Lexical Verb	Female	Male
It seems	-	1
I think	2	4
Total	2	5

Table 5.3. Lexical Hedges as Modal Auxiliary Verbs

Features Modal Auxiliary Verbs	Female	Male
Would	-	1
Could	-	1
Total	-	2

The number of female and male respondents who used lexical hedges was quite different. Total women expressed hedges as much as 73 hedges while men hedges as many as 100 hedges. Male respondents tend to use the lexical hedge in their speech. The following is a table that describes the tendency of Halsey (H) as a female respondent and Shawn Mendes (SM) as a male respondent in using the hedges strategy in his speech which was taken from the video footage First We Feast: Hot Ones.

#### Like

Table 5.4. The use hedges 'like' in female respondent

H: "kind of <i>like</i> twinkle or drops"				
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function		
like (adjective)	Indetermination	Approximator		

Table 5.5. The use hedges 'like' in male respondent

SM: ".....You got to go to Vancouver, Victoria Island and you can rent a boat for *like* \$45......"

Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
like (adjective)	Indetermination	Approximator

In their speech, Halsey and Shawn Mendes used the word hedges 'like'. In this case, both respondents try to reduce the uncertainty in their speech so that it is accepted by listeners. The use of hedges 'like' is usually more often used by women to express a personal opinion or avoid a commitment. However, in this context, Halsey and Shawn Mendes describe hedges 'like' as an indetermination strategy that serves as an invitation to other people or listeners to agree with their speech and to indicate an unwillingness to make a proposition clearer and more comprehensive.

#### Well

Table 5.6. The use hedges 'well' in female respondent

H: "wellfor us it's l	ike a putting thing in a track"	•
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
well (adjective)	Subjectification	Introductory phrase

#### You know

Table 5.7. The use hedges 'you know' in female respondent

H: "I love Shawn Mendes, you know"				
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function		
you know (phrase)	Subjectification	Introductory phrase		

Table 5.8. The use hedges 'you know' in male respondent

SM: "I was	obsessed	with	Youtube	cover	you	know	how	people	covering	whatever
top pop songs"										

Data Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
you know (phrase)	Subjectification	Introductory phrase

In their speech, both respondents used hedges in the phrase 'you know'. In this case, both Halsey and Shawn Mendes try to get the audience's attention. Besides, they use hedges you know which have a level function of subjectification strategy to convince listeners to hear the truth from a proposition spoken by Halsey and Shawn Mendes by opening the listener's emotional state which aims to demonstrate the same knowledge.

#### I mean

Table 5.9. The use hedges 'I mean' in female respondent

H: "I mean it's supposed to involve some batches"				
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function		
I mean (phrase)	Subjectification	Introductory phrase		

Table 5.10. The use hedges 'I mean' in male respondent

SM: "I was on tour w	ith the biggest artists in the v	world, <i>I mean</i> , my song was taking off"
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
I mean (phrase)	Subjectification	Introductory phrase

In their speech, both Halsey and Shawn Mendes use hedges in the phrase 'I mean'. Similar to the use of 'you know' hedges, in this case, both respondents try to grab the listener's attention. to convince listeners to believe the truth of a proposition put forward by both Halsey and Shawn Mendes.

#### **Probably**

Table 5.11. The use hedges 'probably' in female respondent

H: "Probably the funniest thing about New Jersey is the people"			
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function	
Probably (adjective)	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	

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Table 5.12. The use hedges 'probably' in male respondent

SM: "Yes it's <i>probably</i> true but it's annoying"				
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function		
Probably (adverb)	Indetermination	Epistemic modality		

Both Halsey and Shawn Mendes use hedges 'probably' as a form of indetermination which functions as an epistemic modality. Both of them use this to cover up uncertainty in a proposition conveyed by each respondent.

#### Actually

Table 5.13. The use hedges 'actually' in female respondent

H: "I actually get nervous when my album came out"			
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function	
Actually (adverb)	Indetermination	Approximator	

Table 5.14. The use hedges 'actually' in male respondent

1	1 1 1		
SM: "I actually thoug	ht about it"		
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function	
Actually (adverb)	Indetermination	Approximator	

Both Halsey and Shawn Mendes use hedges "actually" in their speech. As with hedges 'probably', both of them mention the word to cover up doubts in a sentence conveyed by both respondents.

#### Just

Table 5.15. The use hedges 'just' in female respondent

H: "my boyfriend and l	just seeing each other"	-
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
Just (adverb)	Interdetermination	Approximator

Table 5.16. The use hedges 'just' in male respondent

SM: "you just see the	staff walking around"	
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
Just (adverb)	Interdetermination	Approximator

In both Halsey and Shawn Mendes' speech, the use of the hedges' just 'is conveyed by both of them to shorten the proposition that both Halsey and Shawn Mendes uttered to cover up an unwillingness to say more.

#### It seems

Table 5.17. The use hedges 'It seems' in male respondent

1 4010 5.1	in the abolicages in se	sems in mare respondent
SM: "It seems fine"		
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
It seems (phrase)	Depersonalization	Agentless passive

In the speech conveyed by Shawn Mendes, there is a hedge 'it seems' which indicates that the strategy is conveyed to reduce the variable existence of a proposition by using passive construction which aims to relieve the speaker from expressing more propositions in his speech.

#### I think

Table 5.18. The use hedges 'I think' in female respondent

1 4010 5.	10. The use heages 1 in	inii in icinaic respondent	
H: " I think I've burnt away"			
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function	
I think (phrase)	Subjectification	Personal pronoun + cognitive verb	

Table 5.19. The use hedges 'I think' in male respondent

SM: "I think I can	't control anything"	·
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
I think (phrase)	Subjectification	Personal pronoun + cognitive verb

The speech conveyed by both Halsey and Shawn Mendes is a strategy that aims to signal that what they are conveying is a subjective or personal opinion. With this hedges strategy, Halsey and Shawn Mendes indirectly engage listeners to be involved in the current communication situation.

#### Would and Could

Table 5.20. The use hedges 'would' in male respondent

1 4010 3	20. The abe neages wou	iiii iii iiiaie respondent
SM: "She would li	ke to expect burst"	
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function
Would (word)	Indetermination	Epistemic modality
Table 5	21 The use hedges 'cou	ld' in male respondent

Table 5.21. The use hedges 'could' in male respondent

SM: "the best thing I <i>could</i> do is pull random people"			
Data	Hedges Strategy	Strategy Level Function	
Could (word)	Indetermination	Epistemic modality	

Hedges 'would' and 'could' conveyed by Shawn Mendes in this speech, he expressed his belief to do something. In other words, Shawn Mendes uses this strategy to provide an estimate on an aspect that will occur in a particular context.

Table 5.22. Recapitulation of the number of hedges strategies used by both genders

Hadaas Stuatam	Feminine	Masculine	—Total
Hedges Strategy	Frequencies	Frequencies	—Totai
Indetermination	48	89	137
Subjectification	25	10	35
Depersonalization	-	1	1

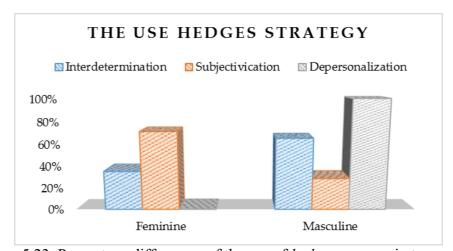


Figure 5.23. Percentage differences of the use of hedges strategy in two gender

Based on the analysis of the two First We Feast videos, it produces different trends and hedges strategies. Shawn Mendes as a male respondent tends to use hedges compared to Halsey as

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a female respondent. The two respondents used different hedges strategies with different frequencies. Shawn Mendes used Hedges indetermination strategy as much as 89 strategies, subjectification as much as 10 strategies, and depersonalization as much as one strategy. Meanwhile, Halsey used indetermination strategies as many as 48 strategies, subjectification as 25 strategies. Indetermination is the dominant strategy in the use of hedges in propositions, both expressed by Shawn Mendes and Halsey, to obscure a proposition to avoid face-threatening acts. Then, the hedges subjectification strategy ranks second in this case.

Subjectivation is used by both Shawn Mendes and Halsey. By using this strategy, speakers have a relationship with both positive politeness and negative politeness so that the content of the propositions spoken by the two genders is based on their beliefs and provides the opportunity for their listeners to participate in the chat. Furthermore, the depersonalization strategy was only spoken by Shawn Mendes. Using this strategy, Shawn Mendes ignores personal attributes in his proposition and engages the listener to participate in the proposition so that the proposition in his speech appears objective and acceptable to the listener. The constant use of hedges that conveyed by both participants is an indication of negative politeness strategies that aims to maintain the speaker's territory (Brown and Levinson, 1987 in Tanaka 2009).

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the results of the analysis and findings, it shows that men have a higher frequency than women in using hedges and their strategies. Although Lakoff (1975) and Coates (2013) state that hedges are a feature of women's language and Coates also states that men use hedges on personal or sensitive topics as described in the literature review section, in reality sometimes this does not happen. This is not only seen from the context of what is being discussed but other aspects such as the type of speech or the strategy for using hedges as discussed in this study. Thus, this study can conclude that the language features based on gender are not always based on the gender stereotype dimensions of the speakers themselves, in other words, men can use women's language features and vice versa by looking at the factors that influence it such as the strategies being used, voice quality or non-verbal cues, and the culture and environment that influence them. These factors can be used as a reference for further research. In addition to the features of the language of women hedges, other features of gendered language also need further research that can be discussed in relation to cultural differences, communities and so on.

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