



HEDGES AND BOOSTERS IN BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY MANAGEMENT RESEARCH PAPERS

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ABSTRACT

This study sought to identify the common hedging and boosting devices used in Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Industry Management research papers which are considered as one of the major requirements of the students. Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric (1997) informed the discussion on how novice writers from five different disciplines show commitment and detachment to their proposed ideas. This is revealed in their use of hedging and boosting devices. Sciences and the arts have always been seen as opposite poles in its academic orientation. Arts is characterized by subjectivity, while Science is known for its rigid adherence to objectivity. Specifically, this study tried to determine the most commonly used hedges and boosters by the student writers of the college; which part of their paper contains more/less hedges and boosters; and which type of Mojica's Hedging devices is mostly used. Student writers prefer the use of common modals, adverbs, and distancing phrases which may vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agents, in expressing their detachment to a claim. Likewise, students favor the use of common modals and adverbs in expressing their claims with commitment. They believe that citing authorities in their claims or in support to their claims especially in the introduction of research papers would make their paper more substantive.

KEYWORDS: *Hedges, Boosters, Research Papers*

INTRODUCTION

Research papers are one of the major requirements of the students in Cagayan State University, Philippines and other higher education institutions for them to be able to graduate the program they have chosen. These are also considered to be one of the major instruments/documents where one can present his ideas and learning publicly since these papers are being presented before a panel, stored in the library (of the campus or college) for others to read.



The growing interest on hedges is apparent in various research investigations spanning hedging in speaking (Lakoff, 1972; Scarcella, R. & Brunak, R., 1981; Stubbs, 1986; Coates, 1987) to hedging in writing (Hyland, 1994; Cabanes, 2007). Scholars have explored frequency and functions of hedging according to genre and different rhetorical sections of scientific papers (Myers, 1989; Hyland, 1995, 1996; Meyer, 1997; Salager-Meyer, 1997). In the Philippines, Mojica (2005) extended the study on hedging in research articles to examine how Filipino authors use this academic discourse feature in introduction, discussion, and conclusion sections. She found out that there was significant difference in the two groups of authors' ways of showing commitment and detachment to their proposed ideas: Engineers boost more while linguists hedge more. She attributed this difference to the highly technical discussions in engineering as well as to its writing conventions which may not be as rigid as that of the linguists'. Mojica further suggested that the engineers' patronage of hedging despite the probable absence of academic writing training could be influenced by the Filipino culture, known for its politeness. Despite this interest however, there has been little attention to what hedging and boosting devices are and how these are used in research articles (RAs) and practicum reports of Filipino college writers. Hence, the present study extends the study of Mojica, especially in the context of Cagayan State University-Andrews, College of Hospitality Industry Management.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This study sought to identify the common hedging and boosting devices used in Bachelor of Science in Hospitality Industry Management research papers.

Specifically, this study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the most commonly used hedges and boosters by the student writers of the college?
2. Which part of their paper contains more/less hedges and boosters?
3. Which type of Mojica's Hedging devices is mostly used?

Framework

Kaplan's contrastive rhetoric (1997) mentioned how novice writers from five different disciplines show commitment and detachment to their proposed ideas. This is shown in their use of hedging and boosting devices. She mentioned that sciences and the



arts have always been seen as opposite poles in its academic orientation. Arts is characterized by subjectivity, while Science is known for its rigid adherence to objectivity.

Given this situation, the writing of research articles and reports which impose strict adherence to its rules and conventions, may pose as potential challenge to undergraduate writers who may not be as exposed to as many articles and consequently to the conventions of writing in their academic community as their professional counterpart in the same field.

Students' proficiency in the language is also another factor in the expression of their new ideas. Hyland's study (2005) has revealed that academically advanced students use more hedging devices while 'weaker' students employ more boosting devices. Another factor affecting how students express their new ideas is their culture. Skelton and Allison (in Hyland, 2005) observed that EFL writers are more inclined to using direct and unqualified writing. Furthermore, they tend use more direct and authoritative tone, simple sentence constructions yet stronger modals that convey stronger commitments to statements.

Hedges and Boosters

This part is adopted from the study of Maurie Liza M. Nivales, *Far Eastern University, Manila, Philippines, having used the same in conducting her study.*

Categorization of hedges and boosters in the present study was adapted mainly from Mojica's 2005 study as well as Hyland's 2004 study on dialogic features. Mojica's type 1 modals/probabilities and type 2 semi-auxiliaries/epistemic verbs were combined in this study as a cover term for tentative verbs and modals (type 1). This includes modal and lexical verbs like *may, might, could*, introductory verbs like *seem, suggest, appear*, and phrases that use any or a combination of these like *it may seem to appear, it might be suggested*. *Should* is taken as a booster as in Mojica (2005). Type 2 includes tentative adjectives and adverbs like *possibly, likely, probably*. Adjective as well as adverbs like *certainly, definitely* are treated as boosters as they are used to show confidence in the claim/s. Also under type 2 are nominalized verbs like *The treatment of homo sexuals in the*



films... (Instead of the stronger verb forms like *The society treats homosexuals... in the films as...*). Type 3 includes distancing phrases which may vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agents. Rhetorical questions, imperatives (which in Mojica was labeled grammatical/stylistic means) as well as solidarity features like *it is known, it is a fact, as we all know* are grouped as type 4 engagement markers (Hyland 2004) together with second person pronoun *you*, and any explicit reference or direct address to readers. Type 5 self-mention includes any reference to the researcher/s which includes pronouns *I, we*, or nouns *researchers, writers* even when a verb follows it like *this researcher believes, we argue*. In this last category that makes use of a combination of tentative verbs and modals together with self-mention, the device is considered a hedge when the claim seems to have been mitigated: it is a booster when the claim is strengthened.

METHOD

This study examined 60 undergraduate theses written by graduates of the College of Hospitality Industry Management, CSU-Andrews. Selection of theses were limited to those written and submitted in school years 2012-2013, 2013-2014, and 2014-2015, totaling 20 theses per school year, i.e., 20 introduction sections and 20 conclusion sections per school year. Only the introduction and conclusion sections of these undergraduate papers were examined. These are the sections where writers usually use hedging and boosting devices. These devices were analyzed and coded using an adaptation of Mojica's (2005) categorization as well as Hyland's (2004) as discussed earlier.

This is a descriptive study because frequency count was used; hence, this is both qualitative and quantitative in nature. Determining the use of hedging and boosting devices used in the two rhetorical sections of these papers was accomplished employing Mojica's Hedging Devices and Hyland's Taxonomy of Boosters.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following tables show the frequency of use of hedges among student writers of the college, based on Mojica's Five Types of Hedging Devices.

Table 1.1. Frequency of use of type 1 hedging devices used by the student writers

Type 1	F	%
May	51	58.62
Appears	11	12.64
Could	10	11.49
Might	6	6.90
Maybe	5	5.75
Seem	2	2.30
Seems	1	1.15
Seeming	1	1.15
Total	87	100

As can be seen, the modal "may" is the most commonly used with a frequency of 51 or 58.62%. Citing Vassileva, Mojica (2005) suggested that modals and probabilities *may* in particular, is a favored form of hedging. This is followed by the introductory verb "appear" with a frequency of 11 or 12.64%, and modal "could" with a frequency of 10 or 11.49%.

Table 1.2. Commonly used type 2 hedging devices used by the student writers

Type 2	f	%
Likely	4	28.57
Probably	3	21.42
Likelihood	1	7.14
It is concluded that	1	7.14
It is said that	1	7.14
... are known for their hospitality...	1	7.14
Their attitude is said to be	1	7.14
... is noted to be one...	1	7.14
It was believed	1	7.14
Total	14	100



The most common type 2 hedges are the tentative adjectives and adverbs “likely” and “probably” with a frequency of 4 or 28.57% and 3 or 21.42%, respectively.

Table 1.3. Total number of Mojica’s Type 3 Hedges

Type 3	F
Total	63

The 60 research papers consist of 63 Mojica’s Type 3 Hedges. This type includes distancing phrases which may vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agents.

Table 1. 4. Frequency of use of type 4 hedging devices used by the student writers

Type 4	f	%
You	18	81.82
Yourself	1	4.55
It is a fact that...	1	4.55
Your own self	1	4.55
Your	1	4.55
Total	22	100

This table shows that of the 22 type 4 hedging devices used by the participants, the most commonly used is “you” with a frequency of 18 or 81.82%.

Table 1.5. Frequency of use of type 5 hedging devices used by the student writer

Type 5	F	%
The researchers conclude...	7	26.92
We...	3	11.54
The researchers found that...	2	7.69
We cannot deny the fact...	2	7.69
Each of us tends...	1	3.85
We need to...	1	3.85
The fact that...	1	3.85
We know that...	1	3.85
The researchers came to conclusions...	1	3.85



We understand...	1	3.85
We can see...	1	3.85
We need to...	1	3.85
We can also conclude...	1	3.85
We all know that...	1	3.85
We think this is...	1	3.85
We concluded that...	1	3.85
Total	26	100

The table shows that the most commonly used type 5 hedging devices are “The researchers conclude...”, “We...”, “The researchers found that...”, and “We cannot deny the fact...” with frequencies of 7 or 26.92%, 3 or 11.54%, 2 or 7.69%, and 2 or 7.69%, respectively. These were used in the RA’s of the participants with a tone of mitigating the participant’s own claims. Hence, they are considered hedges.

1.6. Common boosting devices based on Hyland’s Taxonomy

Boosters	F	%
Must	33	35.89
Should	26	28.26
Always	12	13.04
Truly	6	6.52
Certainly	4	4.35
Certain	2	2.17
Undoubtedly	1	1.09
Clearly	1	1.09
True	1	1.09
Precisely	1	1.09
Demonstrate	1	1.09
Indeed	1	1.09
Undeniably	1	1.09
Evident	1	1.09
Apparently	1	1.09
Total	92	100



This shows that the participants' commonly used devices to emphasize their commitment on their claim are the modals "must" and "should" with frequencies of 33 or 35.89% and 26 or 26%, respectively; the adverbs "always" and "truly" with frequencies of 12 or 13.04% and 6 or 6.52%, respectively; the adverb "certainly" with a frequency of 4 or 4.35%; and its derivative "certain" with a frequency of 2 or 2.17. This may be attributed to the participants' level of exposure to reading materials and vocabulary. The first six boosters are undeniably the most commonly used words, among the list, in most reading materials.

To sum up the most commonly used hedges in both the introduction and conclusion of the RA's of the participants, the following words and phrases are presented: Mojica's type 1: may, appear, could, might, maybe and seem; Type 2: likely and probably; Type 4: you; and Type 5: "The researchers conclude...", "We...", "The researchers found that...", and "We cannot deny the fact...".

The most commonly used boosters, with reference to Hyland's Taxonomy of Boosters, are must, should, truly, certainly and certain.

The foregoing tables show the hedges and boosters that are commonly used by the participants in their RA's. This part compares the frequency of use of these devices in two sections: introduction and conclusion.

Table 2.1. Frequency of use of type 1 hedging devices used by the student writers in Introduction and Conclusion Sections

Type 1	Introduction	Conclusion	Total	
	F	F	F	%
May	51	0	51	58.62
Appears	11	0	11	12.64
Could	9	1	10	11.49
Might	6	0	6	6.90
Maybe	5	0	5	5.75
Seem	2	0	2	2.30
Seems	1	0	1	1.15
Seeming	1	0	1	1.15
Total	86	1	87	100



This table shows the frequency of use of hedges in the two sections of the RA's- introduction and conclusion. Of the 87 hedges categorized under Mojica's Type 1, 86 are found in the introduction and only 1 in conclusion section. These students obviously show more commitment in the introduction than in the conclusion.

Table 2.2. Commonly used type 2 hedging devices used by the student writers in Introduction and Conclusion sections

Type 2	Introduction	Conclusion	%
	F	F	
Likely	4	0	28.57
Probably	3	0	21.42
Likelihood	1	0	7.14
It is concluded that	1	0	7.14
It is said that	1	0	7.14
... are known for their hospitality...	1	0	7.14
Their attitude is said to be	1	0	7.14
... is noted to be one...	1	0	7.14
It was believed	1	0	7.14
Total	14	0	100

This table goes with the result of the type 1 hedges. While there are 14 type 2 hedges in the introduction, there are no Type 2 hedges identified in the conclusion.

Table 2.3. Total number of Mojica's Type 3 Hedging Devices in Introduction and Conclusion Sections

Type 3	Introduction		Conclusion	
	54	85.71%	9	14.29%
Total				

Ranging from distancing phrases which may vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agents, type 3 hedging devices are found in the introduction with a frequency of 54 and only 9 hedges in the conclusion.



Table 2. 4. Frequency of use of type 4 hedging devices used by the student writers in

Introduction and Conclusion Sections

Type 4	Introduction	Conclusion	Total	%
	F	F	F	
You	18	0	18	81.82
Yourself	1	0	1	4.55
It is a fact that...	1	0	1	4.55
Your own self	1	0	1	4.55
Your	1	0	1	4.55
Total	22	0	22	100

There are no type 4 hedges listed from the conclusion section; however, there are 22 hedges (type 4) found in the introduction section.

Table 2.5. Frequency of use of type 5 hedging devices used by the student writers in

Introduction and Conclusion Sections

Type 5	Introduction	Conclusion	Total	%
	F	F	f	
We need to...	2	0	2	7.69
Each of us tends...	1	0	1	3.85
We know that...	1	0	1	3.85
We...	3	0	3	11.54
The researchers conclude...	3	4	3	11.54
The fact that...	1	0	1	3.85
We cannot deny the fact...	2	0	2	7.69
The researchers came to conclusions...	1	0	1	3.85
We understand...	1	0	1	3.85
We can see...	1	0	1	3.85
The researchers found that	2	0	2	7.69
We can also conclude...	0	1	1	3.85
We all know that...	0	1	1	3.85
We think this is...	0	1	1	3.85
We concluded that...	0	1	1	3.85
Total	18	8	26	100



Based on the table, there are 26 hedges under type 5 in both introduction and conclusion. However, the introduction consists of 18 while the conclusion consists of only 8 hedges (type 5).

Table 2.6. Frequency of use of type 5 hedging devices used by the student writers in Introduction and Conclusion Sections

Boosters	Introduction	Conclusion	Total	%
	F	F	f	
Must	32	1	33	35.89
Should	22	4	26	28.26
Always	12	1	12	13.04
Truly	6	0	6	6.52
Certainly	4	0	4	4.35
Demonstrate	1	0	1	1.09
True	1	0	1	1.09
Clearly	1	0	1	1.09
Undoubtedly	1	0	1	1.09
Precisely	1	0	1	1.09
Indeed	1	0	1	1.09
Undeniably	1	0	1	1.09
Evident	1	0	1	1.09
Apparently	1	0	1	1.09
Total	86	6	92	100

The table shows the frequency of use of boosters in the introduction and conclusion of the RA's. There are 92 boosters in both sections: 86 in the introduction and only 6 in conclusion.

The afore-mentioned tables reveal that the student writers of the College of Hospitality Industry Management use more devices in both commitment and detachment in introduction than in conclusion.



This corresponds to the result of the study of Nivales (2011), which states that writers tend to show both commitment and detachment in the introduction part of the RAs.

One reason of this finding is that their (student writers) conclusions are short and do not exceed one page. This may be due to the primary concern of novice writers which is for them to be able to submit their requirements in a particular course (particularly Research). Perhaps, the writers may have never thought of their work being published or even read by others but the research subject teacher; hence, there were no thoughts given on other researchers refuting their claims.

The most commonly used boosting devices, based on Hyland's taxonomy, are the modals "must" and "should", adverbs "always", "truly" and "certainly".

Table 3. Mojica's types of hedges that are mostly used

Mojica's Types of Hedging Devices	f	%
Type 1	87	41.04
Type 2	14	6.60
Type 3	63	29.72
Type 4	22	10.38
Type 5	26	12.26
Total	212	100

Based on the table, type 1 of hedges is the one mostly used with a frequency of 87 or 41.04%. Type 3 also ranked second with a frequency of 63 or 29.72%. This still corresponds to the study of Nivales (2011) whose result makes type 3 as the one mostly used by his participants and type 1 as the second. This confirms that types 1 and 2 of Mojica's hedges are the ones mostly preferred and used by student writers. Type 2 and type 4 appear to be the least preferred hedging device. The somewhat limited use of type 4 device in the sampled RAs may be attributed to the students' desire to comply with the writing conventions that caution writers to use these devices and type 2 devices were not much used as they may not be commonly employed or it may be due to students' "unsophisticated knowledge of rhetorical... features" (Hyland 2002 in Mojica 2005, p. 512).



CONCLUSION

Student writers prefer the use of common modals, adverbs, and distancing phrases which may vary from citing authority to using impersonal third person and unnamed agents, in expressing their detachment to a claim. Likewise, students favor the use of common modals and adverbs in expressing their claims with commitment. They believe that citing authorities in their claims or in support to their claims especially in the introduction of research papers would make their paper more substantive.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Teachers of Grammar and Composition 1 and 2, Business Communication and Methods of Research should incorporate in the class discussion the differences of hedges and boosters particularly in writing. They should be able to let the students master the use of these devices for them to accurately write their claims i.e. when to use hedges and boosters.
2. Linguists should conduct studies on the use of “tend”, “have to”, “precisely” and “by far” as to whether they are qualified as boosters because the researcher believes these to be boosters based on their use in the RAs; however, they are not included in Hyland’s Taxonomy of Boosters.
3. A study on the extent of use of these devices among disciplines in Cagayan State University and other higher education institutions should be conducted.

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