

ENGLISH ACADEMIC DISCOURSE: HEDGES AS THE STRATEGIC STEREOTYPE FOR ACADEMIC WRITERS.

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Among a variety of issues related to the academic discourse, which is known to be transparent, logical, objective, is its potentiality to express the author's attitude to the results or data obtained. However, as any other type of human communication, it should express the author's skepticism on the opponent's conclusions or approaches used, uncertainties or doubts on the reliability and sufficiency of the methods applied. The analysis of Ukrainian and English academic texts revealed some differences in using one of strategic stereotypes, namely, hedges, which are generally considered obligatory elements of academic discussion, integral tools of good communication. This very discrepancy attracted our attention because of pragmatic necessity to optimise EAP teaching for PhD technical students (C1 Level).

Today hedges are known to be words or phrases used by authors to express ambiguity, indecisiveness, mitigation, avoidance of harsh criticism in order to escape, for some reason or another, straightforward statements.

Among those who were first to highlight the phenomenon of the potentialities of expressing doubtfulness or indecisiveness in the English language are U. Weirich [4], who pointed out the discourse effects of vagueness and evasion, G. Lakoff, who identified hedges as lexical units are, “make things fuzzy or less fuzzy” and popularized the concept [3], C.S. Butler who showed that they constitute 1 word in every 100 in academic papers [1]. Of special importance there are the studies of B. Fraser, who introduced the idea of hedged performatives and looks at hedging as an aspect of pragmatic competence [2].

Our analysis has been based on the actual examples from 100 academic texts dealing with a variety of recent topics relevant for shipbuilding, ship design and navigation. The main sources of obtaining the necessary data are the classified journals, e.g., *The Naval Architect (NA)*, *International Shipbuilding Progress (ISP)*, *Offshore (Off)*. It has enabled to make a certain number of conclusions.

The typical hedges registered are as follows:

a) Modal markers, which make up 58%, e.g., *can, could, may, might, would*:

“An attack on OT **might** mean overriding the ship's navigational systems” [NA, Apr. 2018, p. 14].

- b) Epistemic verbs, which account for 6.5%, e.g. *seem, appear*:
“*It **seems** “the low hanging fruit” can sometimes be left to rot*” [NA, May 2021, p. 7].
- c) Verbs of mental activity, which constitute 5%, e.g. *assume, suggest, tend*:
“*It is also assumed that the resulting graphical representation can be used to help teach such a process*” [NA, Febr. 2021, p. 16].
- d) Nouns, adjectives, adverbs, which make up 11%, e.g. *possibility, probability; possible, probable; possibly, probably, likely*:
“*For a ship either sailing at a lower service or in rougher weather the influence is **probably** to be more noticeable*” [ISP, Vol. 52, No.4, 2010, p. 321].
- e) Approximators, which constitute 9%, e.g. *approximately, about, generally, somewhat*:
“*The industry recognised that cyber security is **something** of a soft target*” [NA, Aug.2019, p.14].
- f) If-clauses (4.3%):
“***if** rigs **could** continue mud circulation, 80% of drilling problems would disappear*” [Off, Nov. 2019, p. 32].
- g) Introductory phrases (5%), e.g. *We think..., We consider..., We believe...:*
“***We think** the growing commercial support given to these initiatives can provide concrete training*” [NA, Sept. 2019, p. 15].
- h) Rhetorical questions (0.2%):
“*This intrusion still caused a huge amount of damage. **What, then, would be the cost of a more targeted cyberattack?***”

Academic writers should be aware of the importance of strategic stereotypes, hedges, that provide mutual understanding, competence and respect within the world's academic community. Therefore, teaching the proper use of hedge strategies is an important, but somewhat neglected, pedagogical potential resource.

Literature

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