Hedges Seen in the Main Characters of The King’s Speech Movie

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Abstract: Hedges are strategy in minimizing threats on “face” in a conversation. The data is taken from the original movie script and analyzed based on the hedges taxonomies of Salager-Meyer (1997) and Sukarni (2007). Findings showed that there were seven kinds of hedges and modal auxiliary verb was the most significant hedges in minimizing threats. In conclusion, the variety of hedges used by people in their conversation is determined by minimizing threats on “face” in conversation.

Keywords: hedges, negative politeness, conversation

Language is not simply a means of communicating information – about weather or any other subjects. It is also an important means of establishing and maintaining relationships with other people (Trudgill, 2000: 1). In line with the importance of language as a means of establishing and maintaining relationships, people need politeness strategy.

Politeness strategy is a strategy which is used in order to engage in social interaction to have a relative harmony (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61). Because threats to face are ubiquitous in social interaction, there is a tendency to use strategies that show higher degree of politeness. Thus, socially competent people must have means for performing face-threatening acts while still maintaining each other’s face (Spiers, 1998: 32). Therefore, politeness strategies are developed in order to save the hearers’ face. In line with the above statement, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) assume that being regarded as polite is achieved in part by maintaining, and, in case of threat, saving desired or conventionally valued aspects of others’ face. Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) elaborate that face refers to a speaker’s sense of linguistic and social identity, which is defined as “the public self-image” that every member (of the society) wants to claim for himself. Dealing with relative harmony, therefore, people tend to use politeness strategy in their daily communication.

Salager-Meyer (1997: 2) also mentions in daily communication, people tone down their statements in order to reduce the risk of opposition and minimize the threat-to-face that lurks behind every act of communication. In addition, people manage their utterance in the purpose of minimizing the hearer’s assumption regarding the freedom of the speaker by using hedges (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 131).

The study about hedges was conducted by Salager-Meyer in 1997. In her study, Salager-Meyer found the use of hedges in scientific discourse. Salager-Meyer (1997) defines hedges as a linguistic resource which conveys the fundamental characteristics of science – those of doubt and skepticism. Then, Salager-Meyer proposed the taxonomy of hedges that is expressed through the use of the following strategic devices: modal auxiliary verbs; modal lexical verbs; adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrases; approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time; introductory phrases; if clause. Referring to Salager-Meyer’ research (1997), in 2007, Fraser (2007: 202-213) concerned the
phenomenon of hedges in political discourse. Fraser conducted a study in the extent to which George Bush would use hedging in response to challenging questions posed to him by reporters. In his research, Fraser showed that there were numerous examples of neutral hedging, hedging where there was no indication that it was being used for evasion or politeness purposes but rather conveying a lack of precision. Another research on hedge in EAP Medical was conducted by Irigiliati in 2007.

Sukarni (2007: 110) in her research on The Importance of Pragmatics for the Teaching of English stated the types of hedges as *lexical verb; adverbials; words that convey the truth of a statement; modal verbs, adjectives; modal noun.* Besides, *hedges are also combined with the use of emphatics and strong words.* Thus, in this study, the researcher is going to combine the hedges’ taxonomies proposed by Salager-Meyer (1997) and Sukarni (2007) in analyzing the data taken from a movie script of The King’s Speech movie. (See Table 1.2)

**Table 1.2 Salager-Meyer’s and Sukarni’s Taxonomies of Hedges**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Kinds of Hedges</th>
<th>Salager Meyer’s Taxonomy of Hedges in Scientific Discourse</th>
<th>Sukarni’s Taxonomy of Hedges in Medical Discourse</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Modal auxiliary verb (MAV)</td>
<td>may, might, can, could, would, should</td>
<td>Would</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Modal lexical verb (MLV)</td>
<td>seem, appear, believe, assume, suggest, estimate, tend, think, argue, indicate, propose, speculate</td>
<td>indicate, appear, propose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase (AAM)</td>
<td>(probability adjectival: possible, probable, un/likely), (noun: assumption, claim, possibility, estimate, suggestion), (adverbs: perhaps, possibly, probably, practically, likely, presumably, virtually, apparently)</td>
<td>possibility, assumption, estimate, likely, quite, almost, usually</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Words that convey the truth of a statement (WCT)</td>
<td>approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, generally, usually, somewhat, somehow, a lot of</td>
<td>probably, generally, evidently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency, and time (App)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Introductory phrase (IP)</td>
<td>I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that we feel that</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>If-clause (IC)</td>
<td>if true, if anything</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Hedges combined with the use of emphatics (HCE)</td>
<td></td>
<td>of course, clearly, obviously, definitely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Strong words (SW)</td>
<td></td>
<td>significant, substantial, and powerful</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In this study, hedges will be seen in the main characters of The King’s Speech movie. The researcher chooses The King’s Speech movie as the subject of the study because it has an interesting given context of the movie in which the conversations mostly took place in the area of British Empire that full of intricate situations faced by the main characters of the movie. Based on a preliminary study conducted by the researcher, the researcher found that a phenomenon of politeness strategy especially hedges in the heading of negative politeness is frequently produced by the four main characters of The King’s Speech movie. Therefore, the focus of the research is only on hedges in the four main characters namely Bertie, Elizabeth, Lionel and Cosmo Lang. Thus, it appears a point of view that encourages the researcher to deeply investigate kinds of hedges used by the main characters of The King’s Speech movie.

METHOD

The method in this study is descriptive qualitative since it was aimed at describing the characteristics of a phenomenon which was the performance of hedges seen in the main characters of the movie (Johnson & Christensen, 2004: 347). The data source was movie script which was taken from the official website of The King’s Speech movie. In order to support the accuracy of analysis, the researcher also needed the movie of The King’s Speech.

The data collection process and data analysis were carried out in cycles. Several steps that were done in collecting process and analyzing the data were as follows: First, the researcher started by searching for the utterances of the main characters which contained hedges expression based on hedges taxonomies of Salager-Meyer (1997) and Sukarni (2007). Second, the researcher began to categorize the hedges found in the data. Third, the researcher explained the frequency of hedges then the fourth step is making conclusion of the study.

RESULT

The result showed that there were 124 utterances containing hedges uttered by the four main characters of The King’s Speech movie. There were seven kinds of hedges used by the main characters that are modal auxiliary verb (67.7%); if-clause (14.5%); modal lexical verb (6.5%); strong words (4.8%); hedges combined with the use of emphatics (3.2%); approximator of degree, quantity, frequency, and time (0.8%); adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase (2.4%). The findings of the research can be seen in the following table.
## Table 3.1 Frequency of the Use of Hedges Used by the Main Characters in *The King’s Speech*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Kinds of Hedges</th>
<th>Frequency of the Use of Hedges</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>Pre-</td>
<td>Climax</td>
<td>Post-Climax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>MAV</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>MLV</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>AAM</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>WCT</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>App</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>IC</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>HCE</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>SW</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>CH</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>124</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In this study, the occurrence of hedges used by the main characters seen in the four parts of the movie, which were introduction, pre-climax, climax and post-climax part of the movie. Based on the results of the study above, there were different amount of hedges in every part of the movie. There were three kinds of hedges in the introduction part of the movie; seven kinds of hedges were in the pre-climax part of the movie; four kinds of hedges were in the climax part and one kind of hedges is in the post-climax part of the movie.

In the introduction of the movie, there were three kinds of hedges used by the main characters of *The King’s Speech* movie that were modal auxiliary verb (MAV: would, will, can, should); modal lexical verb (MLV: think, seem); and *if-*clause (IC: if). In the pre-climax part of the movie, the researcher found seven kinds of hedges that were modal auxiliary verb (MAV: may, might, can, could, would, should, will); modal lexical verb (MLV: think, appreciate, believe); adjectival, adverbial and modal noun phrase (AAM: possibly); approximator of degree, quantity, frequency and time (App: a lot of); *if-*clause (IC: if); hedges combined with the use of emphatics (HCE: absolutely, precisely, of course); and strong words (SW: must, will).

Then, in the climax part of the movie, there were four kinds of hedges that were modal auxiliary verb (MAV: may, might, can, would, should, will); modal lexical verb (MLV: believe); adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase (AAM: perhaps, apparently); and *if-*clause (IC: if), meanwhile in the post-climax part of the movie, there were only one kind of hedge used by the main characters that is modal auxiliary verb (MAV: shall).

### DISCUSSION

Based on the result of the study above, there are seven kinds of hedges used by the main characters that are modal auxiliary verb (MAV); *if-*clause (IC); modal lexical verb (MLV); strong words (SW); hedges combined with the use of emphatics (HCE); approximator of degree, quantity, frequency, and time (App); adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase (AAM). Following are the examples of those hedges seen in the four main characters of *The King’s Speech* movie that are Bertie (BT), Lionel (LN), EB (Elizabeth) and CL (Cosmo Lang).
Modal Auxiliary Verb (MAV)

U560 LN 1 : Can’t they carry on privately?
U561 BT 2 : if only they would.
U562 LN 3 : Where does that leave you?
U563 BT 4 : I know my place! I’ll do anything within my power to keep my brother on the throne.

In that particular situation above, the main character of the movie, Bertie used modal auxiliary verb in the form of “would” and “will”. The use of “would” in his utterance explained impossibility of his brother, Edward, married a twice-divorced American woman while his brother was going to the throne. In this case, according to the rule of British Kingdom, the king as head of the Church of England could not marry a divorced woman. Then, Bertie used another modal auxiliary verb in the form of “will” to convince that he had a power as His Royal Highness The Duke of York to keep his brother on the throne. He wanted to his freedom not to be forced to replace his brother on the throne and minimize other assumptions from Lionel.

If-Clause (IC)

U48 EB 1 : And what if my husband were the Duke of York?
U49 LN 2 : The Duke of York?
U50 EB 3 : Yes, the Duke of York?

In the above conversation, Elizabeth wanted Lionel to come to Palace in conducting speech therapy however Lionel stood to conduct the therapy in his special room then he said that he had his own game, turf and rules for everyone without any exception. Then, Elizabeth used if-clause “if” (U48 line 2) to give certain conditional in order that Lionel changed his rules. It seemed that Elizabeth forced Lionel to break his own rule, but by using this hedge Elizabeth wanted to minimize the threatening of her utterances towards Lionel’s negative face.

Modal Lexical Verb (MLV)

U123 EB 1 : She can. By the way I think I found someone rather interesting.
U124 BT 2 : On Harley Street. A doctor.
U125 EB 3 : Out of the question. I’m not having this conversation again.
U125 EB 4 : The matter’s settled.
U125 EB 5 : His approach seems rather different……

The above conversation took place in Buckingham Palace. In this context, Elizabeth was going to talk about Bertie’s speech impediment. After having speech therapy with modern method by modern speech therapist, Bertie felt uncomfortable with that. Therefore, Elizabeth was trying to propose another speech therapist that lived in Harley Street to Bertie. In this situation, when proposing this matter to Bertie, Elizabeth used modal lexical verb in the form of “think” (U123 line 1) to soften the impact of Elizabeth’s claim towards Bertie’s negative face. It was done by Elizabeth in order to his suggestions accepted by Bertie to continue healing his speech impediment to other therapist. Then, to convince her statement, Elizabeth also used another modal lexical verb “seem” (U125 line 5) in order to persuade Bertie to try it first because Elizabeth believed that new speech therapist in Harley Street had different method.

Strong Words (SW)

U627 BT 1 : Plans for the Coronation – I think that’s an even bigger mistake.
U627 BT 2 : I’m not a King. I’m a naval officer.
U627 BT 3 : It’s the only thing I know about.
Dear, dear man… I refused your first two marriage proposals, not because I didn’t love you, but because I couldn’t bear the royal cage. Could bear the idea of a life of tours and public duties, a life that no longer was really to be my own. Then I thought… he stammers so beautifully… they’ll leave us alone.

But if I must be Queen, I intend be very good Queen. Queen to a very Great King indeed.

In the above example, Elizabeth hedged her utterance using kind of hedges in the forms of strong words “must” (U629 line 11). The use of strong word “must” here delivered a strong point revealing what she would do as the consequence of her own certainty predictability in the future “She will became great Queen for Great King”.

Waiting for a king to apologize, one can wait rather a long wait. I’m afraid we’re slightly late. This is home. Myrtle’s at bridge. I’ve made sure the boys are out. It’s lovely. Absolutely lovely.

In the utterance U632 line 3, Lionel was welcoming Bertie and Elizabeth in his home. As a member of The British Royal family, visiting a house of ordinary person was an uncommon one. However, in showing that Elizabeth was comfortable in his house, she hedged her utterance “absolutely” in responding Lionel’s utterance in U633 line 4. It was done by Elizabeth to emphasize the message of her own pleasure towards Lionel.

Inquiries have been made! You have no idea who I have breathing down my neck. I vouched for you and you have no credentials. But lots of success! I can’t show you a certificate — there was no training then. All I know I know by experience, and that war was some experience. May plaque says, ‘L. Logue, Speech Defects’. No Dr., no letters after my name. (with mock seriousness) Lock me in the Tower.

On what charge? Fraud! With war looming, you’ve saddle this nation with a voiceless King. Destroyed the happiness of my family… all for the sake of ensnaring a star patient you knew you couldn’t possibly hope to assist!

In this particular moment, the problem was when Bertie had decided that Lionel, without any credentials of speech therapist, become his partner who cured his speech impediment. Then, Lionel asked for Bertie’s trusty of his ability to cure his speech impediment. However, Bertie was getting angry because Lionel believed too much to Bertie that he could finish his duty as a King like what his
dad, King George V, did. Thus, Bertie hedged utterance using modal auxiliary
verb and adjectival, adverbial, and nominal modal phrase “couldn’t possibly”
(U706 line 5) in “…patient you knew you couldn’t possibly hope to assist”
indicating his complaint in this situation indirectly towards Lionel. He realized
that although Lionel had no diploma or training in terms of speech therapy, he
found that his unconventional methods did work. When Bertie hedged his
utterance using those two hedges above, he actually felt that he doubted his own
condition. If we analyzed deeper again that the use of Bertie’s utterance in
“…patient you knew you couldn’t possibly hope to assist”, it sounded more
polite rather than when he used utterance like “…patient you knew you couldn’t
absolutely hope to assist.”

In this study, the occurrence of hedges used by the main characters seen in
the four parts of the movie, which were introduction, pre-climax, climax and post-
climax part of the movie.

![Column Chart 3.2 Flow of the Use of Hedges seen in the Main Characters of The King’s Speech](chart.png)

In the development of the movie as seen in the Column Chart 3.2 above,
there are different variety and different frequency of hedges used by the main
characters of the movie. It connotes that there are different situations related to
communicative strategy in minimizing threats to others’ negative face. The shift
in the occurrence of hedges from the introduction part to post-climax part of the
movie described into graphics above is influenced by weights of threats faced by
the main characters in every part of the movie. Therefore, it encourages the main
characters to use different variety of hedges in every stage of the movie. Thus, the
variety of hedges used by people in their conversation is determined by threats
being faced in that conversation.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this study, the discussions of hedges under the heading of negative
politeness strategy have been the core of the analysis. In The King’s Speech
Movie, there are seven kinds of hedges frequently used by the main characters
that are modal auxiliary verb (MAV); if-clause (IC); modal lexical verb (MLV);
strong words (SW); hedges combined with the use of emphatics (HCE); approximator of degree, quantity, frequency, and time (App); and adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase (AAM). And the most significant hedge in minimizing threats on “face” is modal auxiliary verb because it frequently appears in the every part of the movie.

In addition, the use of those seven hedges is different in every part of the development of the movie. In the introduction part of the movie, there are three kinds of hedges that are modal auxiliary verb; modal lexical verb; and if-clause. In the pre-climax part of the movie, there are seven kinds of hedges that are modal auxiliary verb; modal lexical verb; adjectival, adverbial and modal noun phrase; approximator of degree, quantity, frequency and time; if-clause; hedges combined with the use of emphatics; and strong words. In the climax part of the movie, there are four kinds of hedges that are modal auxiliary verb; modal lexical verb; adjectival, adverbial, and modal noun phrase; and if-clause, meanwhile in the post-climax part of the movie, there is only one kind of hedges that is modal auxiliary verb.

Regarding to the shift in the occurrence of hedges from the introduction part to post-climax part of the movie, it can be concluded that the shift in the occurrences of hedges is influenced by different weights of threats faced by the main characters in every part of the movie. Therefore, it encourages the main characters to use different variety of hedges in every stage of the movie. Thus, the variety of hedges used by people in their conversation is determined by threats being faced in that conversation.

It is suggested that this study can be used as a reference to teach their students and to give the view how actually hedges are used in conversation and in certain situation which take place in the applied art. Specifically, it will be useful for teaching culture, the ways of speaking, and also writing. Teaching pragmatic and sociolinguistics should focused on the socio-cultural norms of politeness and appropriateness in performing various type of speech acts, such as requests, apologies, compliments, and complaints. Thus, the teaching of ways of speaking in the L2 has to include developing learners’ heightened awareness of the socio-cultural features of interaction so as to provide appropriateness. For students, it is suggested investigate the results of the study in understanding hedges as one of socio-cultural norms of politeness and appropriateness in performing several speeches. Thus, the students will attain not only linguistics competence but also socio-cultural competence in learning a language. For other researchers, it is suggested to develop this study to get understanding about the hedges and how it is applied a better in a real life situation. It can probably be done by conducting interdisciplinary research on hedges in other studies.

REFERENCES


