

Ministry of Higher Education  
and Scientific Research  
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## **Hedging as politeness Markers in English language**

### **A RESERCH**

**SUBMITTED TO THE DEPARTMENT OF  
EDUCATION AL-QADISIYA UNIVERSITY AS  
PARTIAL FULFILLMENT REQUIREMENT  
FOR Certificate THE College of Education  
Department of English**

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بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

IN THE NAME OF ALLAH THE BENEFICENT THE MERCIFUL

إِنَّ الَّذِينَ آمَنُوا وَعَمِلُوا الصَّالِحَاتِ أُولَٰئِكَ هُم  
خَيْرُ الْبَرِيَّةِ (7)

صدق الله العلي العظيم

سورة البينة

آية (7)

# **DEDICATION**

**I dedicate this paper to God Almighty  
my Creator, my Strong pillar, my  
Source of inspiration, Wisdom,  
Knowledge and Understanding.**

**I also dedicate this research to my  
Mother who has encouraged and  
prayed for me.**

**-To My father & husband .**

**-To my brothers, dearest friends .....**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

**Special thanks to the staff of the English department and my fellow classmates and friends.**

**I am profoundly grateful to my supervisor, Miss Raj'aa Mordan Fleh for her valuable advice for her always generous and wise guidance from the initiation to the completion of this research.**

## **Abstract**

The aim of the research is to comparatively investigate the politeness strategies and hedges used by non-local English talking in scholastic setting. It was presumed that the local speakers in academic setting use politeness more frequently than hedges and non-local speakers vice-versa prefer to use hedges instead of politeness strategies.

This paper consist of two section, section one consist of politeness, politeness principle and politeness strategies . Section two consist of hedging patterns.

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# Section ONE

## 1.1 What Is Politeness

Politeness is a phenomenon which Yule (1996:106) characterizes as a specific system which limits the possibility of conflict between people in associations, and the danger to the person's "public face" persona - either speaker's, listener's , or both . In other words , the utilization of polite expressions, and having manners ought to be dealt with as the strategies of maintaining face-threatening situations A couple of years after the fact, Yule ( 1998 : 60 ) reclassifies the idea of politeness as a respectful method for social behavior, which varies from Cameron (2007,134) demonstrates that nowadays the frequent use of the polite expressions.

For example, Hi , how are you today ? or " Have A nice day" particularly by shop assistants , or other new people , never again fills in as a sign of politeness or having manners, but is treated more frequently as annoying , rude and over-familiar, since people don't trust in the sincerity of the phrases, therefore, being familiar with procedures that can be used when the face-threatening situations happen to protect the self-image which shows to the general public is an advantage to a wide range of speakers specially when a wide public is included keeping in mind the general population picture, , Goffman (2005, 10 ) claims that keeping in mind the end goal to be polite , one must be familiar with two viewpoints - considerateness and self-respect.

This way, by thinking about oneself as well as other people, politeness strategies will be used and seen effectively. Rather than being interpreted as

sarcastic or ironic. Politeness, as well as impoliteness, can be communicated by intonation anyway it changes from culture to culture, depending on the language's phonetic qualities. Curlpaper (2005) examines British TV test appears and described, how the hosts use the pitch, force and stops suggest a sign of impoliteness.

Despite what might be expected by using different pitch and avoiding pauses would make a polite manner of speaking Spencer – Oatey ( 2001,3 ) states that every one of the meanings of politeness has one specific element behind them-human interaction which keeps up or promotes interpersonal relationship. In any case, it is still difficult for linguists to come to the conclusion from which point of view - hearer's or the speaker's - politeness procedures should be focused on. A few researchers (Eelen, 2001; Terkourafi, 2001; factories, 2003) argue that politeness ought to be examined from the listener's point of view.

"To be polite is ' to act properly' according to the hearer's expectations " (Eelen, 2001, 128). Watts (2003, 119) as well claims that whether or not the politeness use by the speaker relies upon its listener's assessment. Regardless of whether the speakers had intentions to apply politeness strategies and as they would see it the conduct is fitting, from the listener's point of view the intention and behaviour of the speaker may not be seen correspondingly. In a more recent studies politeness is characterized as a " sociocultural phenomenon, generally to be characterized as showing consideration for others " (Wang, 2014, 217). However indicating thought for others not always can be seen as a strategy of politeness, but instead be translated as a simple gesture of manners or a trait of humans \_ worrying about your friend, and other comparable circumstances. Liu



and Allen (2014, 652) watch that "characterizing politeness is a challenging task and an ongoing debate". Politeness is available in each culture and is applied to various situations differently furthermore, in this manner, it is such a difficult task to find one particular depiction which could be connected to each circumstance

## 1.2 Politeness Principle

As indicated by Yule ( 1996:60) , ' politeness ' might be considered as a fixed concept , more specifically , as " polite social behavior or etiquette , inside a culture " . With a more solid definition to follow, Yule understands politeness as a range of principles expressing politeness in any social interaction which may include being tactful, liberal, modest and sympathetic to others. Urbanova and Oakland (2002:42) recommend a definition which, contrasted with Yule (1996), makes the idea clearer.

They characterize politeness as " the capacity of the speaker to show respect , discretion , and positive attitude " Hirschov'a (2006) , as opposed to Yule ( 1996 ) and Urbanov'a and Oakland (2002), offers an extremely detailed and sophisticated approach from the Pragmalinguistic perspective , since she describes politeness as an exceptional method for using the language which focuses on "smooth communication, self-fulfillment and Self-protection of the person in the cooperation with other conveying people " (ibid.: 171) . So also, Lakoff summarizes what is mean by politeness in three principles: "do not impose, give options, and make the addressee feel good – be friendly " ( as quoted in Hirschov'a 2006: 171).

Similarly, Lakoff summarizes what is mean by politeness in three principles: "do not impose, give options, and make the addressee feel great – be friendly " ( as quoted in Hirschov'a 2006: 171). Both Hirschov'a ( 2006) and Yule (1996) consider a specialized term ' face ' a pivotal term for describing politeness. Yule (1996:60) introduces face as " a public self – image of a person " , which is very similar to Hirsch's (2006:171) " self – evaluation and self – projection of

participants of a communication " Deriving the term ' Face ' from social psychology , once again measurement is given to the concept of politeness which is determined by Yule as " awareness of another person's face " (ibid.:60) .

In various words, the face is tightly connected to the social separation and closeness. The social distance is shown by linguistic instruments expressing respect and deference. members of any English conversation are supposed to determine the relative social distance between them ( ibid). There are two subcategories concerning face. ' Negative face ' propose offering space to Disagreement or refusal, or " to be independent to have the flexibility of action and not to be imposed on by others " ( Yule 1996: 61).

The correct inverse of the negative face is ' positive face ' being described as " fields of concepts, interests, wishes in which the individual needs to be respected and positively evaluated " ( Hirschov'a 2006: 172). Yule (1996), using a basic and clearer definition, understands positive face as " the need to be accepted, even liked , by others, [ the need ] to be dealt with as part of the group"(ibid.:62).

### 1.3 Politeness Strategies

Politeness principle is isolated into four strategies: ' the direct conduct', ' positive politeness ' Negative politeness', and indirect conduct ' (Hirschova 2006:171 ).

The first concept is based on coordinate talking and direct behaviour the addresser does not use long sentence or expressions, simply requests or commands. He or she acts rudely because the circumstances enable them to do so or the circumstance is urgent. This phenomenon is well known for notices when there is no opportunity to think about appropriate language (Hirschova 2006: 172). Short orders (e.g. look out! or Be careful! ) signal high degree of urgency . This standard is acceptable only in of urgency. This standard is acceptable only in communication in which the participants are familiar with each other.

The second kind, 'positive politeness', is an expression of solidarity( appreciating addressee's positive face, sharing the same values ) and demonstration of sensitivity towards the addressee's.In spoken language, special devices for example ' on record'expressions, that incite a polite atmosphere are used. This sort of expression can be noticed in a friendly and familiar discussion in which The relationship between the addresser and addressee is relatively close but still, as Hirschov'a ( 2006) comments, there is a social distance between the participants. chosen topics are nice to be discussed or provoke nice feelings ( ibid . : 173).

The third strategy – ' Negative politeness ' – empowers the speaker to avoid conflicts (e.g.refusals, dis agreements, critique etc. ) by hesitating and softening the utterance with devices for example modality or indirect questions. In fact , the intended enunciation is presented in a careful way with asset of polite phrases ( e.g. could ) you be so kind as ..... , sorry to bother you , but ....) The addresser is extremely indirect so as not to hurt the addressee's negative face , but at the same time tries to find a compromise to satisfy his or her needs too . Expand developments are , as in any other language , strictly given by etiquette and formal social conduct of a particular culture chirschov'a 2006 : 174 ) . Negative politeness is more frequently used on formal social occasions and signals the unfamiliarity between the members or their different social status.' Indirect conduct' is the last strategy methodology by Hirschor'a (2006) .

It contrasts from the conventional language in the way that the statements are deliberately confusing or misleading. Devices like irony ( e . g . Just on time as always!) , rhetorical questions ( e . g . who cares ! ) , rhetorical questions ( e . g . who cares!) , tautologies or incomplete articulations ( e.g. And then he came and ... ) go hand in hand with the indirect conduct . The translation of such utterances depends on the relationship between the addresser and recipient; the closer the relationship is, the less confusing the utterance is perceives to be

( Hirschov'a 2006 : 175).

## Section TWO

### 2.1 What is Hedging?

Hedging has received much consideration in relation to conversational principles as a means to facilitate turn-taking, show politeness, mitigate face-threats, but it is also considered a means of conveying vagueness intentionally. Politeness and hedging have become types of social interpretation of verbal and non-verbal behavior revolving around the idea of saving face, thus playing a crucial role in social connection procedures . In language studies, hedging has come to designate a manifestation of language by means of which speakers take precautionary measures to shield themselves from the negative effect of their sayings or to shield themselves or their interlocutors from any damage to the concept of face caused by their articulations .

Lakoff analyses hedges as “words whose meaning implicitly involves fuzziness-words whose job is to make things fuzzier or less fuzzy” (1972: 271) and he talks about words and phrases manifesting hedging power (like rather, very, in a manner of speaking) defining a few limits in how to interpret linguistic items as hedges. Lakoff also discusses the fact that hedges “interact with felicity conditions for utterances and with rules of conversation” (1972:321), thus setting the directions for interpreting hedges as manifestations conditioned by pragmatic factors.

A hedge has later been characterized by Brown/Levinson (1978:145) as : "a particle, word or phrase that modifies the degree of membership of a predicate or a noun phrase in a set; it says of that membership that it is partial or true only in specific regards, or that it is more valid and complete than perhaps might be expected " the boundaries of hedging are, thus, extended to "negative politeness which is used for avoiding dangers to the face of the participants. This definition includes in hedging both detensifiers and intensifiers. In any case, hedges are often limited only to expressions showing that "the match between a piece of knowledge and a category is less than perfect" Chafe,(1986: 270). Hedging represents a crucial aspect of language as the proper utilization of hedges reflects a high degree of efficiency in social interaction by demonstrating the ability to express degrees of certainty and mastering rhetorical strategies required under conversational circumstances: "Hedging refers to any linguistic means used to indicate either a) a lack of complete commitment to the truth value of an accompanying proposition, or b) a desire not to express that commitment categorically." (Hyland 1998:1).

The study of hedging has deepened over the past twenty years. Literature includes various works on the topic and various labels are used to denote this category, such as softeners (Crystal Davy, 1975), weakeners (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987), & downgrades (House & Kasper 1981), compromises (James, 1983), tentativeness (Holmes, 1983), understatement (Hübler 1983), evidentially (Chafe 1986), downtoners (Greenbaum et al. 1990), diminishers / downtoners (Biber & al.,1999), stance markers.

Atkinson( 1999) Namasaraev (1997: 67) distinguishes 4 parameters that characterize hedging strategies: - Indetermination – adding a degree of fuzziness or uncertainty to a single word or chunk of language ; - Depersonalization – avoiding direct reference by using "we" or “the authors” or some other impersonal subjects ; - Subjectivisation – using I + think/ suppose, assume and other verbs of thinking with the purpose of signaling the subjectivity of what is said, as a personal view instead of the absolute truth ; - Limitation – removing fuzziness or vagueness from a part of a text by limiting category membership. According to Hübler (1983) hedges are used to increase the appeal of the expression, to make it more acceptable to the interlocutor and thus increase the probability of acceptance and reduce the chances of negation. This could also explain the actual term hedge as the attitude of the speaker trying to protect him/herself from potential rejection on the part of the interlocutor. House and Kasper believe (1981) that "both these functions – one defensive and ego-oriented the other protective or alter-oriented are fulfilled by politeness".



## **2.2 Modal Auxiliaries: May, Might, Can, Could, Should**

### **Would, Must.**

Especially in their epistemic senses modal verbs reflect the speaker's attitude and help them express ideas indirectly, which makes modal verbs perfect candidates as hedging devices. Moreover, they allow speakers to be fuzzy about an informational content, avoid face-threatening acts and formulate illocutions so as not to offend the listener.

#### **Example:**

"But **if** a woman is partial to a man, and does not endeavour to conceal it, he

**Must** find it out."

## **2.3 Lexical Verbs with Modal Meanings.**

Mainly the so-called speech act verbs used to perform acts like evaluating, assuming or doubting rather than merely describing: the epistemic seem and appear, also believe, assume, suggest, estimate, tend, think argue, indicate, propose, speculate, suppose etc. When used epistemically as hedging elements these verbs express the speaker's strong belief in the truth of the utterance or, on the contrary, the speaker's unwillingness to vouch for understanding the utterance as more than a personal opinion.

**Example:**

"Your sister, **I understand**, doesn't approve of second attachments".

"No," replied Elinor, "her opinions are all romantic " "Or rather, **as I believe, she considers them impossible** to exist."

## **2.4. Approximates Of Degree, Quantity, Frequency and Time**

Can occur under the type of adjectives and/or adverbs the purpose of which is to weaken the meaning of the speech part they accompany: somewhat, somehow, a lot, much, little, about, approximately, roughly, hardly, scarcely etc. Such hedges are employed when the exact amount isn't known or is irrelevant when the speaker wishes to render fuzziness about the amount in the cases when undecided numbers or amounts are used etc.

**Example:**

"I know **so many** who have married in the full expectation and confidence of **someone** particular advantage in the connection, or accomplishment or good quality in the person, who have found themselves entirely deceived [...]"

"Depend upon it, **you see but half**. You see the evil, but you do not see the consolation. There will be **little rubs** and disappointments everywhere, and we

are all apt to expect **too much**; but then, if one scheme of happiness fails, human nature turns to another.”

## 2.5. Discourse Epistemic or Evidential Phrases.

They are used to check the source of knowledge as indirect or hearsay (People say, It has been said that), the author's doubt and hesitation regarding the truth of what follows (I dare say, To tell the truth, I have a notion) or, on the contrary, a high degree of certainty and commitment about the utterance (Upon my word, To our knowledge, To be sure, I can tell you, It is our view that We feel that).

### Example:

**To be sure it will. Indeed, to say the truth**, I am convinced within myself that your father had no idea of your giving them any money at all. The assistance he thought of, **I dare say**, was only such as **might be reasonably expected of you**.

## 2.6. If Clauses

Render hypothetical meaning, so they imply uncertainty along with any other epistemic markers which may happen inside an If clause to enhance the speaker's doubt in reality of the utterance. If clauses are the preferred option in rendering hypothetical meaning with actions which are deemed possible only if certain conditions are met. The reason why they play an important role as hedges is that speakers can use if clauses to invoke potential barriers in the way of their future or past actions which could enable them to disclaim responsibility for the absoluteness of their statements. Typical conditional

clauses may contain explicit or implicit conditions: If true..., If anything..., Unless..., Should one...etc.

**Example:**

If therefore **she actually persists** in rejecting my suit, perhaps it was better not to force her into accepting me, because **if** liable to such defects of temper, she **could** not contribute much to my felicity.

## **2.7. Negative constructions**

(Litotes)- In rhetoric, the term litotes designates a figure of speech in which understatement is employed for rhetorical effect when an idea is expressed by a denial of its opposite, principally via negating the negative. For example, rather than saying that something is attractive (or even very attractive), one might merely say it is “not unattractive.” Litotes is a form of understatement, therefore the effect obtained by using this figure of speech is that the resulting appreciation is more reserved, more cautious and it hedges the speaker against expressing praise too enthusiastically. Our corpus has provided us with a number of contexts in which the use of negative prefixes with adjectives or of verb negation functions as a diminisher of statements quality, therefore as hedging devices:

**Example:**

“He was **not an ill-disposed** young man unless to be **rather cold hearted**, and **rather selfish**, is to be ill-disposed: but he was, **in general**, well respected; for he conducted himself with propriety in the discharge of his ordinary duties.”

## 2.8. Compound and multiple hedges

Also referred to as **harmonic combinations** (Lyons 1977: 807, Coates 1983: 45) describe combinations of a modal auxiliary and another modal word expressing the same degree or type of modality. A harmonic phrase can refer to an element in the context of the modal verb that reinforces echoes or disambiguates (Coates 1983: 41). Harmonic combinations refer to two forms with the same modal meaning, which are mutually reinforcing (Halliday 1970: 331, Coates Modally harmonic adverbs make a particularly important 1983:45).contribution to the modal meaning comprised in the sentence in the sense that the stronger the harmony, the less ambiguous the modal meaning is. In fact, Huddleston & Pullum (2002:180) distinguish

Between strong, medium and weak harmony between modal elements:

The meeting **must surely** be over by now (**strong modal harmony**)

The meeting **should probably** be over by now (**medium modal harmony**)

The meeting **may possibly** be over by now (**weak modal harmony**)

**The most common types of compound hedges are:-**

1. Modal auxiliary + lexical verb/ modal adverb: **It would seem/appear; it would indicate that;**

2. A lexical verb followed by a reinforcing hedging adjective/ adverb  
**Multiple hedging** refers to the presence of more than one hedge, not necessarily inside the same construction, but within the same utterance.

### **Example**

Miss Smith is **a very good sort of girl**, and **I should be happy** to see her respectably settled. I wish her extremely well and, **no doubt**, there are men who **might** not object to. Everybody has their level **but as for myself (1), I am not, I think (2), quite so much(3) at a loss.**

## Conclusions

politeness ' might be considered as a fixed concept , more specifically, as " polite social behavior or etiquette , inside a culture " . With a more solid definition to follow, Yule understands politeness as a range of principles expressing politeness in any social interaction which may include being tactful, liberal, modest and sympathetic to others as indicated by Yule.

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This research dealt with a specific aspect, which is hedges which is one of the most important aspects that can be utilized .



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