

# Hedging in different types of discourse

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*The article describes discourse features of some of the most common hedges observed in modern English and explores their communicative impact on the utterance. The authors apply Prince et al.'s (1982) classification of hedges into approximators (modify the propositional content conveyed in the utterance) and shields (modify the truth value of the utterance) to analyse hedging behaviour in two discourse genres: the interview and political speeches. The paper aims to identify the most common types of hedges used in the two types of discourse, explore their structural types and pragmatic features, and account for their usage in the two types of discourse. The study is conducted within the framework of contemporary linguistics, such as functional grammar, pragmatics and comparative analysis. The authors make inferences about the nature of hedging, key features of hedges and their discourse-marked specifics.*

**KEYWORDS:** hedging, political speech, interview, approximator, adaptor, rounder, plausibility shield, attribution shield



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

This paper deals with hedging, a phenomenon widely used by native speakers of English in everyday conversation and writing. Despite considerable theoretical research on hedging which has been conducted since it became the topic of linguistic study in the 1960s (Lakoff, 1973; Prince et al., 1982; Crismore & Vande Kopple, 1997, 1999; Crompton, 1997; Cabanes, 2007; Caffi, 2007; Fraser, 2010; Brown & Levinson, 2014) the nature of hedging, classes of hedges, their pragmatics and discourse features remain understudied. Moreover, discourse-marked specifics of hedging behaviour are left outside the

scope of most investigations of modern English.

The practical value of the research is that it provides insight into the use of hedges in two different discourse genres which differ in their primary purposes and the degree of spontaneity: the interview (spontaneous, informal) and political speeches (planned, formal). Appropriate hedging behaviour requires awareness of the functions of hedges and structural patterns they are used in. When non-native speakers fail to hedge correctly, they may be perceived as impolite, offensive, or arrogant. If they misinterpret a hedged utterance, they may misunderstand the interlocutor's

intention. Hedging is part of the target culture that foreign speakers and language learners should be aware of. This article aims to study the frequency of hedges in the two discourse types, their collocability and pragmatic functions.

## 2. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The analysis focuses on the two categories of hedges, approximators and shields (Prince et al., 1982), in interviews of British celebrities and in political public speeches of British Prime Ministers (2000-2013). The choice of the sources of material was determined by the differences in the communicative purpose, degree of formality and spontaneity of the two genres, which makes the study of hedging discourse oriented. Among the methods used for linguistic assessment of the corpus data are quantitative and comparative analyses. The sources of material subjected to investigation comprise authentic scripts of interviews with British actors, singers, musicians, TV-hosts as well as political public speeches by British Prime Ministers, obtained from the BBC, the Guardian and the Independent.

## 3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

### 3.1 Research history

Research on hedging first appeared in the 1960s in the field of logic and philosophy. Later researchers focused on the semantic and pragmatic features of hedges. The term '*hedge*' in linguistics was introduced by Lakoff (1972, p. 195) who defined

the phenomenon as a means to make things '*fuzzier or less fuzzy*'. This view was further developed in the works by Prince et al. (1982), Crismore (1990), Fraser (2010), Crismore and Vande Kopple (1997, 1999), Caffi (1999), Brown and Levinson (2014), and others.

Although Lakoff (1972) understood hedging widely as both reinforcement and attenuation of the propositional content, today hedges are treated differently with their reinforcement aspect being laid aside. Hosman (1989) studied the interactive effects of intensifiers and hedges in speech and concluded that hedges have an influence on perceptions of attractiveness and credibility, while intensifiers do not. This is, probably, the main difference between these two notions. Hübler (1983) in the book *Understatements and Hedges in English* shows the difference between the notions of '*hedge*' and '*understatement*'. In his view, understatement deals with the propositional content of the sentence, whereas hedging focuses on the speaker's attitude to the situation. To prove his point of view he suggests the following examples:

- a. *It is a bit cold here.*
- b. *It is cold in Alaska, I suppose.*

According to Hübler (1983), (a) contains an understatement, while (b) is a hedge because it pertains to the speaker's attitude.

*‘Hedging is part of the target culture that foreign speakers and language learners should be aware of’*

### 3.2 Classifications of hedges

The notion of hedging is a controversial issue in linguistics. Classifications of hedges are numerous and often display noticeable differences. This may be because the underlying principles of research on hedging are different. Researchers view hedges from different perspectives, and different variables are taken into consideration in classifying them. Moreover, the classes of hedges subjected to analysis may vary considerably. For example, Lakoff (1972) focused on propositional hedging, Fraser (1975) considered performative verb hedging, and Brown and Levinson (2014) investigated the speech act aspect of hedging, describing hedges in terms of politeness strategies.

A multidimensional approach was introduced by Prince et al. (1982). Relying on the conclusions made in earlier studies, the scholars suggested that hedges should be divided into two major classes – approximators and shields. The first class (approximators) hedge the propositional content and may be further subdivided into adaptors and rounders. Adaptors, such as *somewhat, kind of, sort of, some, a little bit*, apply to class membership and contribute to the interpretation of

the utterance. Rounders, such as *about, approximately, something, around*, indicate a range, within which a notion is approximated. The other major class (shields) pertain to the degree of uncertainty about the propositional content that the speaker expresses and may reflect the extent of their involvement. These hedges fall into two groups: plausibility shields and attribution shields. Plausibility shields, such as *I think, probably, I take it, as far as I can tell, I have to believe right now, I don't see that* convey the speaker's uncertainty, doubt about what is being said. The other subclass – attribution shields – comprises expressions contributing to the truth value of the proposition, as in *according to, presumably, at least, to somebody's knowledge*, etc. They often make mention of the source of information.

Prince et al.'s (1982) distinction of hedges into approximators and shields is often criticised as purely theoretical. Skelton (1988) points out that this classification is sustainable only in the abstract. He believes that approximators could easily function as shields.

To illustrate this, he offers the phrase, *'It's made of something like rock'* claiming that *something like* here is an approximator as it makes the context fuzzier. But if we use *I suspect* in the same phrase it will be regarded as a shield. On the whole, shields are more frequent in speech and can extend over more than one sentence.

Salager-Meyer (1995) includes the following classes of words in the taxonomy of hedging devices.

1. Shields: *can, could, may, might, would, to appear, to seem, probably, to suggest*.
2. Approximators of degree, quantity, frequency and time: *approximately, roughly, about, often, occasionally, etc.*
3. Hedges expressing personal doubt and direct involvement: *I believe, to our knowledge, it is our view that, etc.*
4. Emotionally charged intensifiers: *extremely difficult/interesting, of particular importance, unexpectedly, surprisingly, etc.*
5. Compound hedges: *could be suggested, would seem likely, would seem somewhat, etc.*

Salager-Meyer (1995) includes intensifiers in the class of hedges and analyses the frequency of their occurrence and distribution in different genres. Her findings suggest that case reports and research papers contain fewer hedges than editorials, and in reviews the use of the passive voice is one of the most common hedging devices.

Caffi (1999, 2007) in the course of the research on *mitigation* – which is defined as either lessening

the intensity or force of something unpleasant or attenuation of the possible unfortunate effects on the recipient – introduces another classification of mitigating mechanisms singling out three major types: bushes, hedges and shields. *Bushes* are expressions that aim to reduce the precision of the propositional context and, as the result, affect the truth value of a proposition. *Hedges* are expressions that affect the emotive and relational aspects and reduce the degree of the speaker's commitment. Finally, *shields* are devices used to avoid personal self-ascription and disclaim responsibility, for example by assigning it to a different speaker. Caffi's (1999, 2007) mitigators resemble Prince et al.'s (1982) hedges, although the labels are applied differently.

Chan and Tan (2009) elaborate on Salager-Meyer's (1995) theory. According to their linguistic investigation, all hedges can be grouped into: adverbials (e.g. *approximately*); epistemic verbs (e.g. *suggest, seem, appear*); modal verbs (e.g. *may, can, would*); cognition verbs (e.g. *believe, suppose, think, surmise*); hypothetical constructions (*if*-clauses + adjectives, adverbs, nouns expressing modality); anticipatory *it*-clauses and *there is/are*.

Crompton (1997, p. 280) suggests another typology of hedges: copulas, other than *be* (e.g. *The result appears to be that...*); lexical verbs (e.g. *The result suggests that...*); modal verbs (e.g. *The*

result might be that...); probability adverbs (e.g. *The result possibly is that...*); probability adjectives (e.g. *It is possible that the result...*).

### 3.3 Functions of hedges

The controversial character of hedging has brought about a great diversity of views of the functional aspect of hedges. There is no consensus among linguists concerning the purposes of hedging either. Lakoff (1972) mentions two reasons why hedges are used in the first place: to express uncertainty or to soften the speech to be polite. Prince et al. (1982) and Skelton (1988) believe that the main function of hedges is to convey information in an unobtrusive and unostentatious way. Crystal (1987) explains the use of hedges by the speaker's intention not to be precise, avoid further questions and their unwillingness to tell the truth. According to Salager-Meyer (1994, 1995), explicit expression of facts, opinions, information or claims might not seem very appropriate, even impolite in many situations. Besides, hedging allows speakers to present information and report research results to the audience in a more precise way: *'Hedging may present the strongest claim a careful researcher can make'* (Salager-Meyer, 1994, p. 151). Brown and Levinson (2014), Cabanes (2007) and Fraser (2010) consider hedges in terms of positive and negative politeness. Positive politeness strategies minimise the threat to the hearer's positive face, make them feel satisfied, valued and relaxed, whereas negative politeness

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strategies serve to mitigate the effect the utterance may produce on the recipient, especially if the rank of imposition the utterance conveys is high, make it more tentative and less impinging. What all researchers agree upon is that hedges are discourse features which functions may succinctly be described as follows: they contribute to precision, politeness and attenuate the negative imposition.

## 4. STUDY AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Approximators: Adaptors

This study aims to explore speakers' hedging behaviour in interviews and political public speeches, two genres representing oral discourse. The interview is characterised by a relatively high degree of spontaneity and instantaneous decision making because in the majority of cases the interviewee cannot even predict what questions they will be asked. Besides the interviewee is likely to receive loaded or inconvenient questions to which they may have difficulty in finding an answer. Political public speeches, by contrast, are

generally prepared in advance. They are expected to be well-organised and strategically planned to satisfy the goals set by the speaker. Yet, they also allow for a certain degree of spontaneity, primarily due to the unexpected character of the audience's reaction. Political public speeches are usually referred to as quasi-spontaneous discourse genres.

Since the class of hedges is vast and displays great diversity, we have chosen the most frequently occurring items for our analysis. According to Prince et al. (1982), the most frequently used adaptors are *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat*. These are hedges that affect the truth value of the proposition, make it less representative, thus attenuating its imposition.

#### 4.1.1 Adaptors in the interview

Since the interview involves a lot of spontaneity, speakers tend to use many hedges to mitigate the imposition of their utterances and sound less categorical. Quantitative comparison of *kind of* and *sort of* (the most common adaptors) allowed us to conclude that during the interview speakers tend to use *kind of* more frequently than *sort of* (57% and 43% correspondingly), although it is noteworthy that this difference is not considerable.

*Kind of* and *sort of* may modify various parts of speech and are normally used in pre-position to the modified item. The most commonly used distribution pattern for *sort of* is *sort of* + verb

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(58%), reporting verbs being the most frequent class, as in:

(1) *You sort of think: 'Oh Christ, I'm going to have to just let go of the expectation and just play the part and try be as truthful about who I feel April is as I possibly can be.'*

(2) *We played it on a tape cassette, and he just sort of said <...>*

In 25% of instances of *sort of* it was followed by a noun or a noun phrase: *sort of* + noun/noun phrase, as in:

(3) *It was sort of a solo flight.*

(4) *But I did study Shakespeare, that was sort of my thing.*

The pattern *sort of* + adjective was encountered in

17% of cases, as in:

(5) *I work with new people all the time and in different places, and it can be quite disorienting and so it's sort of nice to be working with the same person again.*

The adaptor *kind of* is used in the interview in a similar way. The most common pattern found in the corpus is *kind of* + verb (45%). Interestingly, verbs preceded by *kind of* in our interview corpus either belong to the informal register and/or are emphatic, as in:

(6) *I had to kind of bang on people's doors for it to get made, so it was interesting.*

(7) *Sam wants to give Charlie the perfect first kiss because her first kiss kind of sucked.*

This is a notable difference, bearing in mind that *sort of* modified primarily reporting verbs.

In 29% of the *kind of* corpus, it preceded a noun or a noun phrase (*kind of* + noun/noun phrase), as in this example:

(8) *<...> as opposed to kind of a failure of what she wanted him to be.*

*Kind of* may also modify adjectives (19.5%), as in this example:

(9) *'Penny Lane' was kind of nostalgic, but it was really a place that John and I knew <...>*

Occasionally, *kind of* and *sort of* were used as hesitation fillers which allowed the speaker to find the right word in case they felt doubtful or had to search for words, or have not come up with an idea, as in:

(10) *I don't think victims are particularly attractive, in kind of as a character trait, you know?*

(11) *So, it's sort of – it's a fabulous way to get into character. If you've got such an extreme costume <...>*

Instances of *kind of* modifying clauses were observed in 6.5% of the *kind of* corpus (*kind of* + subordinate clause):

(12) *I think that's kind of how most people do this stuff.*

No such examples were found for *sort of*, which suggests that this hedge can hardly modify clauses.

Despite Prince et al.'s (1982) evidence for the most frequently used adaptors being *sort of*, *kind of*, *a little bit* and *somewhat*, our analysis shows that this hedge is infrequent in the interview examples. There were only eleven occurrences of *a little bit* in the ten interviews analysed. The structural



patterns observed in the case of *a little bit* are as follows:

*A little bit* + adjective (39%):

(13) *I was a little bit nervous to the point that Beryl was offering so many cups of tea and biscuits to me that I think she thought she was playing Mrs. Hudson.*

*A little bit* + adverb (30%):

(14) *But I would find moments throughout playing April and Hanna where I would understand them a little bit more as time went by.*

Verb + *a little bit* (31%):

(15) *If I watch an actor doing something like that, at a certain point I think you start to switch off a little bit and tune out.*

*A little bit* in the hedging function was used in the preceding position to adjectives and adverbs, and in post-position to verbs. No considerable differences were observed in the occurrence rate of *a little bit* with different parts of speech.

The results obtained in the course of the analysis of interviews with British celebrities point to a high frequency of *sort of* and *kind of* in the hedging function. *A little bit* was rare. No instances of *somewhat* were registered.

Several situations where *almost* seemed to function as an adaptor were found in the corpus. It modified the propositional meaning of adjectives and verbs and was used in the preceding position:

(16) *He can smell the dwarves, and he knows there's something else going on the mountainside. He's almost telepathic.*

(17) *There's so many teenage TV series and movies and whatever else, that it's kind of a subject matter people almost hate to hear.*

#### 4.1.2 Adaptors in political public speeches

None of the above adaptors (*kind of*, *sort of*, *a little bit*, *somewhat*) was observed in the corpus subjected to analysis. This can be because any modification of the propositional content with the aim of making it sound fuzzy or vague in political public speeches will produce an undesirable effect of being perceived as an unreliable person by the public. The purpose of hedging runs counter to the requirements set for politicians. Apart from a variety of other requirements, they need to sound confident and knowledgeable and avoid evasive statements.

#### 4.2 Approximators: Rounders

Rounders represent a class of hedges which modify the propositional content presented in figures, statistics, deictic markers of time and measurements. They are normally used when the



exact or precise information is of no importance to the speaker. Among the most common rounders in Prince et al.'s (1982) classification are *almost*, *about*, *approximately* and *something between*.

#### 4.2.1 Rounders in the interview

Rounders such as *almost*, *about*, *approximately*, *something between* were attested in the corpus of interviews with British celebrities, however, they were infrequent. The interview rarely contains much statistical data in the first place, which makes rounders somewhat unnecessary. Of the four rounders attested in the interview corpus, the hedge *almost* was the most common (72%). *Almost* used as a rounder normally modifies nouns (76%) and adverbs (24%), as in:

(18) *It was almost a week, 5 days that we were in that green orangery thing, a lovely conservatory near Bristol.*

(19) *And it seems that, when you read about Lili's story, she would blend almost immediately in the world.*

The pattern *almost* + *like* + (*numeral* + *noun*) + *gerund* was frequently used in the interview with the meaning 'similar to', as in:

(20) *Almost like two magnets repelling each other.*

(21) *<...> it became almost like doing a one man*

*show to the most surreal audience of people you know.*

However, it remains unclear whether *almost* functions as an adaptor or a rounder here. Such cases of ambiguity are not infrequent, which proves it was not for nothing that Prince et al.'s (1982) classification of approximators into adaptors and rounders came in for severe criticism.

The rounder *about* is considerably less frequent (28%) than *almost*. It is used to modify nouns and noun phrases (usually numbers and measurements):

(22) *About 6 weeks ago, I travelled to Edmonton Alberta to show Connor the movie at his hospital.*

(23) *About a third of them were given to me by <...>*

No instances of *approximately* and *something between* were found in the interview corpus.

#### 4.2.2 Rounders in political speeches

According to Wardhaugh (2010), hedges are typical of colloquial spontaneous speech which means that they are hardly ever used in political public speeches that belong to quasi-spontaneous discourse types and are traditionally planned in advance. However, the analysis conducted on our

corpus proves the opposite: politicians often use rounders to hedge utterances which contain statistics pertaining to the issue discussed. Information supported by statistical data is usually perceived by the recipient as highly reliable, and therefore sounds more convincing to them.

However, everyone understands that exact numbers are of no interest to the public. Few of them are going to assess the information presented for their attention. Moreover, hedging allows speakers to disclaim responsibility for what is being said and convey information in an unostentatious way. Among the most common rounders (approximators of degree) are *almost*, *about*, *roughly*, *approximately*, *nearly*, etc.

In our corpus comprising political public speeches *almost* (53%) and *nearly* (40%) were rather frequent, while *about* turned out less common (7%). The most common pattern for *almost* was *almost* + numeral + noun/noun phrase (62, 5%):

(24) *Leave aside that almost two mln children are brought up in households where no one works.*

The other two patterns observed are noticeably less frequent. *Almost* modified adjectives (19%) and adverbs (18,5%) (*almost* + adjective):

(25) *It seems almost impossible to believe now, that so recently, the T& G were mulcted for*

*£50,000 by an Order of the Court.*

(26) *But despite all of them, I believe there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge almost unknowingly to set its own objectives.*

In (25) and (26), the function of *almost* is closer to that of adaptors rather than rounders, i.e. *almost* influences the truth value of the proposition attenuating its force.

The rounder *nearly*, which is semantically equivalent to *almost*, modified only nouns and noun groups (usually numbers and measurements):

(27) *Nearly a third of your income of £37 million comes from private individuals and companies and we would like to thank them very much indeed.*

The rounder *about* always preceded statistical data presented in figures:

(28) *The £2.5bn Pupil Premium that I first wrote about 10 years ago.*

The rounders *approximately* and *roughly* were not found in the political speeches analysed.

### 4.3 Shields: Plausibility shields

Shields unlike approximators do not affect the truth value of the propositional content conveyed

in the utterance. They pertain to the relationship between the content and the speaker. Plausibility shields show the speaker's commitment to the truth of the propositional content. They make the statement of ideas less categorical and are intended to help the speaker disclaim responsibility for the general truth of the information conveyed in the utterance. To this group belong *I think, I take it, probably, as far as I can tell, right now, I have to believe, I don't see that*, etc. (Fraser, 2010).

#### 4.3.1 Plausibility shields in the interview

Among the plausibility shields found in the interview are *I think, I suppose, I believe, I guess, as far as I'm concerned* and *I assume*. They are widely used by interviewees, which seems quite natural as in the course of the interview people express their own thoughts and opinions that they might want to make less categorical or straightforward.

The analysis of ten interviews with British actors, TV-hosts, musicians and artists shows that among the plausibility shields attested in literature *I think* is the most common (87%). It either precedes the propositional meaning presented in the form of a clause or follows it, as in these examples:

(29) *I think when you're making an album, as the songs are piling up, one of the good things about it is that you will often write the song that you need.*

(30) *Actually, I would have said the opposite, I think.*

Several instances of *I think* may occur in the utterance.

(31) *I think we in the Beatles had always liked 'Rain' but I think we thought of that as a song, as a kind of radio thing, 'Paperback Writer' was a bit more immediate.*

Other plausibility shields are less common in the interview: *I suppose* (6%), *I guess* (4%), *I mean* (2%). *I believe* (1%) has the lowest frequency among the plausibility shields in the interview:

(32) *So, I suppose the closer a character comes to me, the more challenging I actually – in a funny kind of way, I think I'd find it.*

(33) *So, I guess I try and do things and keep people around me who to an extent normalise what is in one sense a very abnormal situation to be in on that level.*

(34) *You had to put off filming, I believe, because of availability.*

There are instances in the corpus where different plausibility shields are used by the speaker.

(34) *No. No, I think it would – you'd be cutting*

*your nose off to spite your face if you turned down a fantastic script and a fantastic character simply because it was set 200 years ago. I mean, apart from, I think period films now means anything from ten years ago to the beginning of time. So – you know. I mean, no. I do love period films, personally. I love the fact that you can escape into a completely different reality. I think for me, what I love about film is that it's complete escapism. And I find personally that seeing these costumes, these weird societies, helps me to forget my life, and actually just dive into the story. So, I think that's why as an actress, I like being in them, as well. It's a way into a fantastic fantasy world.*

The plausibility shields *I assume* and *as far as I am concerned* were not found in our interview corpus, due to their formal character. The interview is for the most part informal, so the use of forms which indicate a high degree of formality would be a stylistic mismatch.

#### **4.3.2 Plausibility shields in political speeches**

Despite the evidence found in literature for the infrequency of plausibility shields in political discourse, instances of *I think* and *I believe* were observed in our corpus of political speeches, as in the following examples:

(35) *But I think that in our modern world, in these times of stress and anxiety...the family is the best welfare system there is.*

(36) *But despite all of them, I believe there is in every Conference a general will that seems to emerge almost unknowingly to set its own objectives. And I believe this Conference is in the process of doing the same thing.*

(37) *And it reflects those themes and priorities which the Party established in opposition and which we believe are the ones which should now most concern a Labour Government.*

The plural *we* instead of *I* is frequently used in political public speeches to seek common ground (Brown & Levinson, 2014) and build rapport.

#### **4.4 Shields: Attribution shields**

Attribution shields assign responsibility to someone other than the speaker and affect the degree of the speaker's commitment. Such phrases as *according to one's estimates*, *presumably*, *at least to one's knowledge*, etc. can be examples of this kind of hedges. The analysis of the two types of oral discourse, both spontaneous and pre-planned, provide no data on the use of attributive shields.

### **5. DISCUSSION**

Previous research into the problem of hedging limited the phenomena to colloquial speech only, spontaneous speech with pauses, repetitions and hesitations, conditions, the frequent usage of hedges. This viewpoint may lead to the conclusion

of their extremely low frequency of occurrence in utterances pre-planned. This is partially true, as the overall frequency of hedges in political public speeches is lower as compared to interviews. However, it wouldn't be correct to say that hedging is not applicable to public discourse. Certain types of hedges used for suitable purposes are quite common there and contribute to the pragmatics of the utterance.

Interviews representing oral spontaneous speech abound in adaptors (*kind of, sort of, a little bit*), which makes the utterance less categorical, less certain, and this adds a touch of casualness to what is being said. They are used in various contexts and modify different parts of speech. There are examples where adaptors are used several times in the paragraph. The discourse nature of interviews accounts for the low frequency of rounders (*approximately, something between, etc.*). On the other hand, their functional specificity makes rounders communicatively justified in political public speeches – they are used for efficiency. The use of shields in the material subjected to analysis is stylistically and functionally marked. The colloquial plausibility shields (*I believe, I think*) are used in texts of spontaneous interviews, while their more formal variants (*I assume, as far as I am concerned*) prove to be zero frequent. Political public speeches provide additional data on the use of plausibility shields (*I think, I believe*). These hedges reinforce

the speaker's involvement, which contributes to the positive perception of the speech by the audience.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Hedging is a multidimensional phenomenon combining semantic, pragmatic and cognitive aspects. The pragmatically correct use of appropriate types of hedges serves as a natural instrument of language. The findings obtained in the course of this research allow us to suggest interpretations of hedges in two types of oral discourse, namely interviews and political public speeches. Interdependence between the type of the hedge used, its stylistic reference and communicative message of the utterance is a proven fact. Adaptors tend to be avoided in political speeches and discourse due to their casual style. This class of hedges is used as a stylistic device adding intrigue and increasing expectation. In the interview, on the contrary, adaptors prove to be frequently used as this type of discourse presupposes a certain degree of spontaneity and casualness. Rounders are more commonly used in political speeches than in interviews due to their informative character. Politicians prefer to use approximate figures instead of giving exact information in their speeches. In interviews, rounders accompanied by figures appear less frequently which can be explained by the absence of facts and statistics in this type of discourse. Nevertheless, rounders

turned out to be commonly used in the interview with adjectives or verbal actions making the statement vague or less certain. Plausibility shields are most frequent in interviews, which is quite understandable, as the interview is organised as a string of questions asked in order to get interviewees' personal answers, which are mostly spontaneous. When used in political public speeches, they emphasise the involvement of the speaker and their authority. Attribution shields are rarely used in both interviews and political public speeches. Interviews as an example of oral spontaneous/quasi-spontaneous speech are expectedly full of hedges of various types used in combination with different parts of speech. The variety of hedging devices is accounted for by the nature of the given type of discourse. The interviewees tend to use them to mitigate the utterance and demonstrate a low degree of certainty to protect themselves from possible criticism on the part of the interviewer and the audience. The choice of the hedging device is determined by the speaker's communicative aim,

the function of the hedge and the linguistic item it modifies. The appropriate use of hedges enables the speaker to realise their communicative goal in a way most appropriate to defend themselves and save face. The data proves that political public speeches do not deny hedging. By using hedges politicians aim to produce a desirable effect on the audience and evoke a desirable emotional response from them. These hedges have the following functions: limiting the truth value of the proposition to the speaker's opinion and judgments, shifting responsibility, attenuating the impact of the speech act, mitigating the proposition, supporting the statement with facts and statistics in an unostentatious way. The study demonstrated the role of hedging awareness in building effective interpersonal communication. The hedges under analysis in the two types of oral spontaneous and pre-planned discourse prove to be stylistically and functionally marked. Being a controversial area of modern communication, this topic presents opportunities for further linguistic analysis.

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