



## 1. Introduction

### What is hedging? – Hedging helps soften writer's claims.

'Hedging emphasises the subjectivity of a position by allowing information to be presented as an opinion rather than a fact and therefore open that position to negotiation.' (Hyland, 2005, p.61)

In previous research on academic writing textbooks (Hyland, 1994; Myers, 1992), it was found that although lexical items were introduced and explained, their roles in hedging were not clearly explained.

e.g. Lexical verbs such as 'seem', 'suggest', and 'indicate' are only explained as being used to convey the writer's ideas with neutrality, connotation, opinion, or uncertainty. However, they are also used as a hedge to show that writer is not prepared to guarantee a preposition and to protect themselves.

### 2. Analysing Academic Writing Textbooks

This study analysed a total of **10 academic writing textbooks** used in upper-intermediate and advanced levels at Japanese universities.

They are published by two Japanese publishers and eight American or British publishers. The textbooks were published from 2007 to 2020.

The analysis focused on 1) Explanation of functions of hedging  
 2) Exercises used in the textbook

#### Textbook 1: *Academic Writing Skills, Student's Book 2* (Chin et al., 2012)

[Half page in the section 'Avoiding Overgeneralization']

1) Hedging is used to **avoid 'overgeneralization'**.

Lexical forms were introduced, such as verbs (e.g. *seem, tend*), modal verbs (e.g. *may, could*), adjectives (e.g. *some, few*), adverbs of frequency (*usually, sometimes*), adverbs of certainty (*probably, perhaps*), and nouns (e.g. *assumption, probability*).

2) There is only one exercise to identify hedges in a model essay in the textbook.



#### Six textbooks have no information about hedging.

**Textbook 3:** *Basic Steps to Writing Research Papers* (Kluge & Taylor, 2007)

**Textbook 4:** *Effective Academic Writing* (2nd Ed.) (Liss & Davis, 2012)

**Textbook 6:** *Longman Academic Writing Series 3: Paragraphs to Essays* (4<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (Oshima & Hogue, 2017)

**Textbook 7:** *Longman Academic Writing Series 4: Essays* (5<sup>th</sup> Ed.) (Oshima & Hogue, 2017)

**Textbook 8:** *3-point Academic Writing, Organization, Content, Language*. (Onabe et al., 2019)

**Textbook 9:** *Writing Essays: From Paragraph to Essay* (Zemach & Ghuldu, 2020)

#### Textbook 2: *Academic Writing Strategies: Focus on Global Issues for Sustainable Development Goals* (Nakatani, 2020)

[Eight pages in the chapter 'Hedges and Boosters']

1) Function of both **softening claims** and a **protection to authors** were explained with the two types of hedging including **'approximators'** and **'shield'**. Metadiscourse and boosters were also introduced.

In terms of lexical hedges, only modal verbs (e.g. *can, could, may, and might*) were explained on the page 'Focus on accuracy: Hedges'.

2) There are several exercises to practise hedging. First, learners are required to define differences between sentences with and without hedges. Second, they need to write a solution paragraph using the sample hedges from the template (e.g. *I think we should (not), this is because, in my opinion, in order to solve, and for example*).

On the grammar page 'Focus on Accuracy: Hedges', modal verbs such as *can, could, may, and might* are explained and learners are required to identify their meanings among the sentences.

e.g. 1. It is said that convenience stores have negative aspects.

2. It **can** be said that convenience stores have negative aspects.

3. It **could** be said that convenience stores have negative aspects.



#### Textbook 5: *Final Draft 3* (Aquino-Cutcher et al., 2016)

[Half page in the section 'Grammar for Writing: Modals for Hedging']

1) Only modal auxiliary verbs (e.g. *can, could, may, and might*) were introduced as hedges which **help make the sentence tone softer**.

2) There is only one exercise to choose the correct modal verbs from one of two choices in each sentence.

e.g.

1. We could/must find a cure for AIDS.

2. Paying people to stay in school might/will seem like a good idea at first, but it's not the best solution.



#### Textbook 10: *Writing Research Papers: From Essay to Research Paper* (Zemach et al., 2020)

[Four pages in the section 'Academic Language: Hedging']

1) Hedges make **the claim more tentative and help readers to believe that it is more likely to be true**. Lexical and strategic hedges were introduced, such as adverbs (e.g. *slightly, possibly*), modal verbs (e.g. *can, might*), quantifiers of modifiers (e.g. *several, some*), qualifying phrases (e.g. *it seems that, it is possible that*), and if-clauses.

2) There are several sentence-making exercises and an exercise to identify hedges in the paragraph.

e.g. 1. Driving at night is dangerous, and there will be accidents.

→ Driving at night is **somewhat** dangerous, and there **could** be accidents.

2. Driving at night is more dangerous than driving in the day.

→ **It is possible that** driving at night is more dangerous than driving in the day.



## 3. Conclusion

### 1. Writing strategies are the first priority.

Out of 10 textbooks, six did not discuss hedging. The language introduced in these textbooks primarily related to strategies for writing essays and research papers. Learners have to first acquire skills in writing strategies using academic language.

### 2. Teachers need to explain what hedges are while providing examples and exercises.

Learners of English still need to know how to negotiate their claims with readers indicating their stance while using hedging. Teachers need to introduce what hedges are and how to use them in English essays and research papers. Sample paragraphs and essays in the 10 textbooks used a sufficient number of examples of hedging, and teachers can use them as examples.

### 3. Timing and disciplinary practices in the use of hedging

The timing and use of hedging may differ according to academic discipline. Hyland (1995) found that over 80% of hedges were used to soften claims and opinions in the result and discussion sections.

Writing styles and its strategies may also differ between hard and soft disciplines. Hedges are generally used more often in soft disciplines (e.g. education, linguistics, and history) than hard disciplines (e.g. medicine, technology, and biology).

As the introduction of hedging in textbooks are generally quite simple. Teachers might need to add explanations and examples of hedging, and give learners additional practice.

### References

- Hyland, K. (1994). Hedging in academic writing and EAP textbooks. *English for Specific Purposes*, 13(3), 239-256.
- Hyland, K. (1995). The author in the text: hedging scientific writing. *Hong Kong Papers in Linguistics and Language Teaching*, 18, 33-42.
- Hyland, K. (2005) *Metadiscourse, Exploring interaction in writing*. Bloomsbury.
- Myers, G. A. (1992). Textbook and the sociology of scientific knowledge. *English for Specific Purposes*, 11, 3-17.

**Acknowledgement:** This work is supported by JSPS KAKENHI grant number JP19K00761.